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An analysis of teacher perceptions toward teaching writing as a process

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Official Advisor

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose for the Problem

Students are graduating from our schools unable to write. Businessmen are concerned because prospective employees are unable to write concise, cohesive paragraphs. College professors are concerned because many students enter their classrooms unable to meet the writing requirements of their courses. High school teachers are concerned because they have watched a decline in their students' ability to write. It would be difficult to find an educator who does not believe that teaching students to write effectively is a major goal of the education system. With this goal in mind, the question becomes, how do we best teach students to write?

Gone are the days when writing was taught as a series of fixed, sequential steps that required students to produce perfect grammar, spelling, and penmanship in their first and only draft. The movement from product based writing to teaching writing as a process became popular in the mid 1980's. Educators found that learning to write requires much more than simply adding special knowledge and skills to spoken language (Graham & Harris, 1988).

Researchers studying the composing process discovered that writing takes place in overlapping and recursive stages (Bos, 1988). These stages include pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing (Walshe, 1982).

In addition to guiding students through the various stages of writing, educators must also create an environment conducive to writing. Children naturally like to talk about the things they have discovered. Students need an environment that provides an atmosphere where students feel safe to take risks and make mistakes as they try to put into words their feelings about their new discoveries (Smith & Staab, 1985). Students also need opportunities to listen to and read good writing, to ask questions about their writing, and to watch and think with others as they compose (Bos, 1988).

How to teach grammar is an issue that has been discussed for years. Teaching grammar has moved full circle from a skill taught in isolation by diagramming sentences, to teaching grammar as it occurs during writing, and finally to a call for return to formal grammar instruction. The concerns about grammar are legitimate. Students must learn that correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling are essential for clear, effective communication.

As an english major and a teacher, this writer agrees with the current research that writing should be taught as a process. However, this writer is concerned that students are missing out on basic skills required for effective

writing. Therefore, this writer surveyed a sample of intermediate and junior high school teachers and analyzed their perceptions about teaching the writing process.

Problem Statement

The purpose of this study was to analyze the perceptions of intermediate and junior high school teachers toward teaching writing as a process.

Assumptions

To conduct this study, a Likert-type questionnaire with open-ended questions was used to gather and analyze the perceptions of intermediate and junior high school teachers toward teaching writing as a process. It is assumed that the questionnaire was valid and reliable because the questions were based on research. It is also assumed that the teachers selected to complete this questionnaire answered in a manner that reflects their personal experiences.

Limitations

As in all studies, there are limitations. One such limitation is that the sample size of the teachers surveyed was small. A second limitation is that

all of the teachers surveyed were from a limited geographical area. A final limitation of this study is that teaching writing as a process may be interpreted and practiced differently by the various teachers surveyed.

Definition of Terms

The Writing Process. The writing process includes the various stages a writer goes through in order to produce a written work. These stages include pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing (Petty and Petty, 1987).

Grammar. Grammar is the set of formal patterns in which the words of a language are arranged in order to convey meaning (Enos, 1987).

Usage. Usage is the form or expression and the choice of words a person makes when writing or speaking (Enos, 1987).

Teacher Perceptions. Teacher perceptions include teachers' interpretations, observations, and opinions related to professional training and classroom experiences.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Students have been learning how to write since the beginning of formal education. Providing students with the skills they need to write clearly and effectively has always been a primary goal of our education system. The ability to convey your thoughts through writing is a life skill that every student needs. The question for educators becomes how do we best teach students to write?

During the 1970's, writing was taught as one step (Walshe, 1982). Students were given a topic by their teacher and they were expected to produce a final copy. The philosophy was that writing was simply one step beyond speaking. Since all students could speak and converse with one another, writing simply required students to write their thoughts on paper. This approach to teaching writing began to change in the mid 1980's. Researchers discovered that rather than expecting students to produce a final copy in one sitting, writing should be taught as a process that includes pre writing, rough draft, revising, and editing (Langer, 1982). Writing is complex and involves much more than recording our spoken language. A writer must

be able to generate conversation without the benefit of a conversational partner. A writer must be able to produce written text that may be much longer than a conversation. Finally, a writer must consider the perspective of the audience, something that does not necessarily take place during a conversation (Graham and Harris, 1988).

There are several principles that support teaching writing as a process. Writing is no longer considered a set of sequential skills that is taught in isolation (Vaughn and Zaragoza, 1992). Rather, the writing process takes place in overlapping and recursive stages (Bos, 1988). Some students may produce several rough drafts of an assignment while other students only require one draft. Some students' writing may require more extensive revision and editing than others. When writing is taught as a process, students learn to move between the different stages of the process in order to produce their writing.

Another principle that supports the writing process approach is that it provides students with the opportunity to learn writing and grammar skills within heterogeneous mixed groupings (Vaughn and Zaragoza, 1992). Teachers often experience diversity among their students' academic ability. This diversity can be especially great in students' ability to write. Teaching writing as a process allows teachers to provide different types of instruction

depending on their students' needs. Teachers can use full class instruction to provide the same information to all students. While the students are engaged in writing, the teacher can use individual instruction to help a student with a specific need. In the course of reviewing students' writing, teachers may discover a problem that several students are experiencing. Teachers may then provide small group instruction for those students. Finally, teachers may use peer instruction to allow students to conference each others' writings (Vaughn and Zaragoza, 1992).

Several studies support the effectiveness of the writing process in the regular classroom with normally achieving students (Atwell, 1987 and Calkins, 1983). However, only a fraction of the research concerning the writing process has focused on low achieving students (Bos, 1988). As inclusion in the regular classroom becomes the preferred learning environment for learning disabled students, teachers face even greater challenges. Writers, regardless of their age, know far more than they can explain because consciousness consistently lags behind performance (Graves, 1982). Researchers have found this to be particularly true for learning disabled students who typically possess more knowledge about their topic than is reflected in their writing. Despite their knowledge about a topic, learning disabled students produce shorter writing samples that include fewer

sentences, shorter words and more grammar, spelling and punctuation problems (Hauck and Bellingsley, 1989). Learning disabled students learn better when a process is modeled. Consequently, teaching writing as a process allows learning disabled students to observe their peers organizing, drafting, editing, and revising their writings (Bos, 1988). These observations of the writing process help learning disabled students improve their own writing.

Researchers agree that teachers should model every stage of the writing process for their students (Bos, 1988). The first stage that should be modeled is the prewriting stage. During the prewriting stage, students select a topic for writing (Bishop, 1987). Topics can come from a variety of sources and the best topics are those that are important to the writer. Topics can be supplied by the teacher, they can result from class discussions, they may be found on a classroom list of possible topics. However, research indicates that the most effective topics are those selected by the students. Self-selected topics place fewer demands on students' organizational and planning processes (Bos, 1988). This is especially true for learning disabled students.

Once a topic has been chosen, students must then consider the purpose or goal of their writing. Is the writing assignment meant to inform or to

entertain? Who is the intended audience? After students have answered these questions they can begin to form a framework or guideline for their writing. Teachers can use different strategies to help students with their guidelines. Free writing is one strategy that can be used. During a free writing exercise, students simply write as quickly as they can any idea they can think of about their topic for a certain amount of time. Preferably, these ideas are written as only one word or a phrase. Students then go through their list and look for common themes.

A web or semantic map can also be used to generate ideas for writing. A web begins with a central idea and focuses on determining items that support that idea (Petty and Petty, 1989). For example, students may choose the state of Ohio as the central idea for their writing. The supporting items for this web could include: famous leaders from Ohio, tourist attractions, cities, and major industries. Under each of these ideas, students would list examples.

A final technique for generating writing ideas is brainstorming. This technique can be done as a class or individually. Similar to free writing, the brainstorming technique allows students to write a list of ideas about their topic. No idea is rejected while brainstorming and there is no time limit. Once students feel comfortable with their generated list, they begin to look

for ways to organize their ideas into a framework for their writing (Petty and Petty, 1989).

Once students complete the pre-writing stage, they begin the drafting stage of the writing process. During the drafting stage, students select their vocabulary and begin the task of writing their ideas on paper (Boss, 1988). Planning and revising overlap during the drafting stage as students try different lead or beginnings to get started, and use the conventions of grammar, punctuation, and spelling. During the drafting stage students may find the following strategies to be helpful. Students should be encouraged to cross out ideas on their paper rather than erase them. Students should be encouraged to use arrows or markers to indicate how sections of their paper related to one another. Finally, penmanship should not be a concern during the drafting stage (Boss, 1988).

Teachers may find that some students require several drafts of a paper while other students require only one. Students who do require several drafts should continue in the drafting stage until they feel comfortable with their piece of writing. After students have completed their rough draft they move on to the revision stage.

Revision is the third stage of the writing process and for most students, revision is the most difficult stage. According to research, the ability to

revise separates written text from our spoken language (Enos, 1987). During the revision stage, students must learn to look at what they have written and see how their writing can be improved (Santelmenn, 1981).

Oral revision takes place when students read their writing aloud and by listening to their words, students' writing mistakes become apparent (Kohl, 1978). Reading a piece of writing illustrates for a student the differences between writing and speaking and separates the two into different crafts. However, often times a student's speech is more consistent in both sentence structure and content than a student's written work (Fleming, 1982). Therefore, oral revision allows students to find inconsistencies and inaccuracies in their writing and correct them.

A second type of revision, and perhaps the most difficult, is transformation revision. During transformation revision, students learn to change or transform their writing through sentence combining, sentence expanding, word addition, and word deletion (Fleming, 1982). All of these revision strategies can help students produce more clear and coherent writing. Developing writers finally view writing as a process during the revision stage and consequently learn to write more effectively.

Developing writers often regard the revision stage as the time to merely make a few minor grammatical corrections. Successful writers have flexible

composing strategies and re-read their text frequently in order to guide its development. Successful writers also have a wealth of successful previous writing experiences to draw on (Bishop, 1987).

The revision stage helps students develop meaningful writing using the various strategies of revision. Once this stage is completed, students move on to the editing stage. During the editing stage, students actively manipulate our language with a conscious attention to form (Enos, 1987). Developing writers learn that correct punctuation, spelling, and grammar are essential for effective communication (Bratcher, 1987). Most students will be able to correct the majority of their errors by reading their writing aloud.

In addition to the four stages of pre-writing, drafting, revision, and editing, the writing process also has other unique characteristics. One such characteristic is the importance of modeling. Teachers must extensively model each stage of the writing process for their students (Newman, 1983). Students cannot be expected to work through the various stages until they have the knowledge of how each stage of the process works and what is expected of them. Only then can students begin to work independently.

Modeling is also dialogic in that it provides the medium through which students and teachers can exchange information and ideas about their writing (Langer, 1982). This exchange of information includes providing students

with the opportunities to listen and read good writing, ask questions about their writing and other students' writing, and finally to watch and think with others as they compose (Bos, 1988).

A second characteristic that is unique to the writing process is conferencing. Teachers can utilize conferencing in several different ways. The teacher may choose to meet with a student individually and together they review the student's writing. During this time, students are encouraged to ask questions and to evaluate their written work. Teachers need to respond honestly but with discretion about the student's work. It is important that teachers talk about at least one positive aspect of the student's writing. Conferencing is also the time when teachers can give specific instruction if they see an area of weakness in a student's work. However, if there are several problems that need attention, teachers should deal with only a small number of these concerns at a time (Petty and Petty, 1989).

Conferencing can also be done by students. However, for this to be effective, students must clearly understand what is required of them. Students must be trained to work in groups, they must be taught group roles, they need to know what to look for in a paper, and finally, they must use some type of conferencing checklist (Bishop, 1987). Peer conferencing must be modeled extensively and teachers must monitor these conferences for them to work.

A final characteristic important to the writing process is sharing. When students share their writing with their peers or their teacher their writing is validated. Sharing allows students to move from writer-based to reader-based prose thus allowing students to perceive themselves as authors (Bishop, 1987). In addition, when students chose a piece of writing to share, they are often more willing to tackle the revision and editing stages of the writing process. Finally, sharing their writing provides students with the opportunity to receive positive feedback about their work.

The final issue that must be addressed is the issue of grammar. Over the years, several reasons have been given for teaching formal grammar. These reasons include: studying grammar will improve students' scores on standardized tests; studying grammar will help students master another language; studying grammar will help students be more effective listeners and speakers; and finally, studying grammar will help students be better readers and writers (Weaver, 1996). Unfortunately, fifty years of research does not support the teaching of formal grammar (Harris and Rowan, 1989). Research indicates that training in formal grammar does not transfer in any significant way to writing or even recognizing "correct" English (Weaver, 1996).

With so much evidence to the contrary, why do many teachers continue to teach grammar as an isolated subject? Perhaps one explanation is that

teachers do not realize that students can learn and apply several grammatical concepts without learning to analyze and label the various parts of speech. Recognition of this fact can be a starting point for teachers to experiment with different approaches to teaching grammar. One such approach is to teach grammar by immersing students in different types of literature and pointing out the way authors structure their writing. Teachers can also read to students various written works that are more sophisticated in grammatical structures than their students' writings. A second approach is to teach effective punctuation rather than "correct" punctuation found in handbooks. This can also be accomplished by examining different types of written text. But perhaps the most effective way to teach grammar is by using concept learning (Harris and Rowan, 1989).

The term concept refers to a mental abstraction that has certain essential attributes (Harris and Rowan, 1989). One such grammatical concept is a complete sentence. The first step to teaching the concept of a complete sentence is to provide students with a complete definition. This definition assumes that students have an understanding of subjects, verbs, phrases and clauses, which represent essential attributes of a complete sentence. At this point, students may need background information. Although it may seem that providing this information is a regression of sorts, research indicates that

background information is both effective and necessary for a concept to be learned (Harris and Rowan, 1989).

Once students understand what comprises a complete sentence, teachers move on to the next step of concept learning by providing clear, typical and varied examples of complete sentences. These examples should represent all of the critical attributes of a complete sentence and they should be listed in easy to difficult order. Easy examples represent critical attributes students rarely confuse. Difficult examples illustrate attributes students find more confusing (Harris and Rowan, 1989). The best examples can be found by examining students' written work.

A second strategy for teaching a concept is to provide students with matched set of examples and non-examples (Harris and Rowan, 1989). A matched set of examples may include the following: He is brave. He's brave. These examples would help students who do not recognize a verb as part of a contraction. A non-example may be: He brave. This non-example lacks the critical attribute of a verb, making the non-example a fragment rather than a complete sentence.

Research indicates that students learn concepts by forming clear, concise examples of a concept. The more examples a students can form the more complete is the students' understanding of the concept (Harris and

Rown, 1989). Once a concept is learned, students must practice discriminating apparent from real examples of a concept. This includes both practice and feedback (Harris and Rowan, 1989).

The best time to teach grammatical concepts is during the revision stage of the writing process. The concepts a teacher chooses to teach should be determined by students' writings. Students should be taught a concept only when their writing suggest both a need and a readiness (Weaver, 1996). Therefore, it is critical that teachers examine their students' work and look for common errors that can be taught individually, in small groups, or to the entire class, depending upon the need.

In conclusion, teachers must remember that their students develop as writers when they struggle with an imbalance between their intentions and the problems at hand. Writers continually change the problems they solve. Beginning writers may struggle with spelling and handwriting. Older writers may struggle with the best way to put their thoughts on paper. More advanced writers may struggle with revision and organizing their work. Whatever the struggle, a student with a problem produces a moment for teaching that student how to improve his writing. And quality writing is the work of a lifetime, even for the talented (Santelman, 1981).

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

Subjects

The subjects chosen for this study were intermediate and junior high school teachers from schools in Southwestern Ohio. These subjects intermediate and junior high school teachers who have experience teaching writing.

Setting

Schools. The public and private schools in which these educators teach vary in enrollment.

Communities. The schools are located in Southwestern Ohio and represent rural, suburban, and inner city educational settings.

Data Collection

Construction of the Data Collecting Instrument. The instrument was constructed by the writer using information obtained from the review of the literature, thereby establishing content validity. The instrument was a Likert questionnaire with fifteen forced choice questions and three open-ended

questions. Teaching writing as a process and teaching grammar was addressed in the instrument. The instrument was reviewed by high school and college English teachers and the recommended changes were made prior to administering the instrument.

Administration of the Data Collection Instrument. The instrument was reviewed and comments were returned to the writer prior to the beginning of the 1997-1998 school year. Any necessary changes were made, and the instrument was mailed with a cover letter and a self-addressed, stamped envelope by September 10. The completed questionnaires were returned to the writer by mail.

CHAPTER 1V

RESULTS

Presentation of Results

Five table are used to present the percentage results of the Likert portion of the questionnaire (See Tables one, two, three, four, and five). Table one presents the percentage responses to the statements on questionnaires completed by forty fourth and fifth grade teachers. Table two presents the percentage responses to the statements on questionnaires completed by thirty sixth, seventh, and eighth grade teachers. Table three presents the percentage responses to the statements on questionnaires completed by twenty seven teachers with one to five years of teaching experience. Table four presents the percentage responses to the statements on the questionnaires completed by seventeen teachers with six to ten years of teaching experience. Table five presents the percentage responses to the statements on the questionnaires completed by twenty five teachers with eleven or more years of teaching experience.

The first column of each table contains the statements from the questionnaire. The response choices to the statements include : 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = undecided, 4 = disagree, and 5 = strongly disagree. All percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number.

TABLE 1

FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADE TEACHERS' RESPONSES
TO TEACHING WRITING AS A PROCESS

STATEMENT	1	2	3	4	5
1. Writing should be taught as a process.	62	33	3	0	2
2. Students should write every day.	60	33	5	0	2
3. Teachers should write with their students.	30	45	20	3	2
4. Students need positive feedback about their writing.	75	23	0	0	2
5. Students need exposure to models/examples of good writing.	74	24	0	0	2
6. Prewriting is an important part of the writing process.	50	43	5	0	2
7. Drafting is an important part of the writing process.	60	35	3	0	2
8. Revising is an important part of the writing process.	60	35	3	0	2

9. Editing is an important part of the writing process.	56	34	7	0	3
10. Students should share their writing.	56	36	5	0	3
11. Students should be taught how to diagram a sentence.	15	20	35	20	10
12. Grammar should be taught in isolation.	10	20	14	34	22
13 Grammar instruction is an important part of the writing process.	34	63	0	0	3
14. Grammar instruction should be integrated with instruction in writing.	51	32	12	2	3
15. Students' writing should be evaluated only in terms of correct grammar.	0	5	8	28	59

Ninety five percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that writing should be taught as a process. Three percent were undecided and 2 percent strongly disagreed.

Ninety three percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that students should write every day. Five percent were undecided and 2 percent strongly disagreed.

Seventy five percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that teachers should write with their students. Twenty percent were undecided and five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Ninety eight percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that students need positive feedback about their writing. Two percent strongly disagreed.

Ninety eight percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that students need exposure to models/examples of good writing. Two percent strongly disagreed.

Ninety three percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that prewriting is an important part of the writing process. Five percent were undecided and two percent strongly disagreed.

Ninety five percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that drafting is an important part of the writing process. Three percent were undecided and two percent strongly disagreed.

Ninety five percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that revising is an important part of the writing process. Three percent were undecided and two percent strongly disagreed.

Ninety percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that editing is an important part of the writing process. Seven percent were undecided and three percent strongly disagreed.

Ninety two percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that students should share their writing. Five percent were undecided and three percent strongly disagreed.

Thirty five percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that students should be taught how to diagram a sentence. Thirty five percent were undecided, twenty percent disagreed, and 10 percent strongly disagreed.

Thirty percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that grammar should be taught in isolation. Fourteen percent were undecided, and fifty six percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Ninety seven percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that grammar is an important part of the writing process. Three percent strongly disagreed.

Eighty three percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that grammar should be integrated with instruction in writing. Twelve percent were undecided and five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Five percent of the teachers surveyed agreed that students' writing should be evaluated only in terms of correct grammar. Eight percent were undecided, and eighty seven percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

TABLE 2

SIXTH, SEVENTH, AND EIGHTH GRADE TEACHERS'
RESPONSES TO TEACHING WRITING AS A PROCESS

STATEMENT	1	2	3	4	5
1. Writing should be taught as a process.	73	20	3	0	4
2. Students should write every day	55	32	10	3	0
3. Teachers should write with their students.	39	35	23	3	0
4. Students need positive feedback about their writing.	87	7	3	0	4
5. Students need exposure to models/examples of good writing.	87	10	0	0	3
6. Prewriting is an important part of the writing process.	73	17	3	7	0
7. Drafting is an important part or of the writing process.	80	10	7	0	3
8. Revising is an important part of the writing process.	83	10	3	0	4
9. Editing is an important part of the writing process.	87	7	0	3	4
10. Students should share their writing.	59	29	9	0	3

11. Students should be taught how to diagram a sentence.	14	25	32	18	11
12. Grammar should be taught in isolation.	7	10	17	31	35
13. Grammar instruction is an important part of the writing process.	43	43	7	3	4
14. Grammar instruction should be integrated with instruction in writing.	41	45	10	0	4
15. Students' writing should be evaluated only in terms of correct grammar.	0	0	3	37	60

Ninety three percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that writing should be taught as a process. Three percent were undecided and four percent strongly disagreed.

Eighty seven percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that students should write every day. Ten percent were undecided and three percent strongly disagreed.

Seventy four percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that teachers should write with their students. Twenty three percent were undecided and three percent disagreed.

Ninety four percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that students need positive feedback about their writing. Three percent were undecided and four percent strongly disagreed.

Ninety seven percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that students need exposure to models/examples of good writing. Three percent strongly disagreed.

Ninety percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that prewriting is an important part of the writing process. Three percent were undecided and seven percent disagreed.

Ninety percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that drafting is an important part of the writing process. Seven percent were undecided and three percent strongly disagreed.

Ninety three percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that revising is an important part of the writing process. Three percent were undecided and four percent strongly disagreed.

Ninety four percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that editing is an important part of the writing process. Seven percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Eighty eight percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that students should share their writing. Nine percent were undecided and three percent strongly disagreed.

Thirty nine percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that students should be taught how to diagram a sentence. Thirty two percent were undecided and twenty nine percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Seventeen percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that grammar should be taught in isolation. Seventeen percent were undecided and sixty six percent strongly disagreed or disagreed.

Eighty six percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that grammar instruction is an important part of the writing process.

Seven percent were undecided and seven percent strongly disagreed or disagreed.

Eighty six percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that grammar instruction should be integrated with instruction in writing.

Ten percent were undecided and four percent strongly disagreed.

Ninety seven percent of the teachers surveyed strongly disagreed or disagreed that students' writing should be evaluated only in terms of correct grammar. Three percent were undecided.

TABLE 3

TEACHERS WITH ONE TO FIVE YEARS EXPERIENCE
RESPONSES TO TEACHING WRITING AS A PROCESS

STATEMENT	1	2	3	4	5
1. Writing should be taught as a process.	81	19	0	0	0
2. Students should write every day.	70	26	4	0	0
3. Teachers should write with their students.	33	56	7	4	0
4. Students need positive feedback about their writing.	85	15	0	0	0
5. Students need exposure to models/examples of good writing.	85	15	0	0	0
6. Prewriting is an important part of the writing process.	68	32	0	0	0
7. Drafting is an important part of the writing process.	70	30	0	0	0
8. Revising is an important part of the writing process.	78	22	0	0	0
9. Editing is an important part of the writing process.	78	19	3	0	0
10. Students should share their writing.	70	26	4	0	0
11. Students should be taught how to diagram a sentence.	8	23	35	31	3

12. Grammar should be taught in as a separate subject.	7	4	15	41	33
13. Grammar instruction is an important part of the writing process.	33	63	0	0	4
14. Grammar instruction should be integrated with writing instruction.	67	22	7	0	4
15. Students' writing should evaluated only in terms of correct grammar.	0	0	7	11	82

One hundred percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that writing should be taught as a process.

Ninety six percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that students should write every day. Four percent were undecided.

Eighty nine percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that teachers should write with their students. Seven percent were undecided and four percent disagreed.

One hundred percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that: students need positive feedback about their writing, that students need exposure to models/examples of good writing, and that prewriting, drafting, and revising are important parts of the writing process.

Ninety seven percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that editing is an important part of the writing process. Three percent were undecided.

Ninety six percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that students should share their writing. Four percent were undecided.

Thirty one percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that students should be taught how to diagram a sentence. Thirty five percent were undecided, thirty four percent disagreed, and strongly disagreed.

Eleven percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that grammar should be taught in isolation. Fifteen percent were undecided, while seventy four percent strongly disagreed or disagreed.

Ninety six percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that grammar is an important part of the writing process. Four percent strongly disagreed.

Eighty nine percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that grammar instruction should be integrated with writing instruction. Seven percent were undecided and four percent strongly disagreed.

Ninety three percent of the teachers surveyed strongly disagreed or disagreed that students' writing should be evaluated only in terms of correct grammar. Seven percent were undecided.

TABLE 4

TEACHERS WITH SIX TO TEN YEARS EXPERIENCE
RESPONSES TO TEACHING WRITING AS A PROCESS

STATEMENT	1	2	3	4	5
1. Writing should be taught as a process.	53	35	12	0	0
2. Students should write every day.	52	29	12	0	0
3. Teachers should write with their students.	41	41	18	0	0
4. Students need positive feedback about their writing.	82	12	6	0	0
5. Students need exposure to models/examples of good writing.	88	12	0	0	0
6. Prewriting is an important part of the writing process.	61	29	5	5	0
7. Drafting is an important part of the writing process.	70	12	18	0	0
8. Revising is an important part of the writing process.	70	18	12	0	0
9. Editing is an important part of the writing process.	70	18	6	6	0
10. Students should share their writing.	47	47	6	0	0

11. Students should be taught how to diagram a sentence.	24	18	34	6	18
12. Grammar should be taught in isolation as a separate subject.	6	18	18	18	40
13. Grammar is an important part of the writing process.	35	47	12	6	0
14. Grammar instruction should be integrated with writing instruction.	35	53	12	0	0
15. Students' writing should be evaluated only in terms of correct grammar.	0	6	-	50	44

Eighty eight percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that: writing should be taught as a process, and that students should write every day. Twelve percent were undecided.

Eighty two percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that teachers should write with their students. Eighteen percent were undecided.

Ninety four percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that students need positive feedback about their writing. Six percent were undecided.

One hundred percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that students need exposure to models/examples of good writing.

Ninety percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that prewriting is an important part of the writing process. Five percent was undecided and five percent disagreed.

Eighty two percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that drafting is an important part of the writing process. Eighteen percent were undecided.

Eighty eight percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that revising is an important part of the writing process. Twelve percent were undecided.

Eighty eight percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that editing is an important part of the writing process. Six percent were undecided and six percent disagreed.

Ninety four percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that students should share their writing. Six percent were undecided.

Forty two percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that students should be taught how to diagram a sentence. Thirty four percent were undecided, six percent disagreed and eighteen percent strongly disagreed.

Twenty four percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that grammar should be taught in isolation as a separate subject. Eighteen percent were undecided and fifty eight percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Eighty two percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that grammar instruction is an important part of the writing process. Twelve percent were undecided and six percent disagreed.

Eighty six percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that grammar instruction should be integrated with instruction in writing. Twelve percent were undecided.

Ninety four percent of the teachers surveyed disagreed or strongly disagreed that students' writing should be evaluated only in terms of correct grammar. Six percent agreed.

TABLE 5

TEACHERS WITH ELEVEN OR MORE YEARS OF EXPERIENCE
RESPONSES TO TEACHING WRITING AS A PROCESS

STATEMENTS	1	2	3	4	5
1. Writing should be taught as a process.	58	33	0	0	9
2. Students should write every day.	46	42	4	4	4
3. Teachers should write with their students.	32	32	28	4	4
4. Students need positive feedback about their writing.	68	24	0	0	8
5. Students need exposure to models/examples of good writing.	76	16	0	0	8
6. Prewriting is an important part of the writing process.	48	36	8	4	4
7. Drafting is an important part of the writing process.	64	28	0	0	8
8. Revising is an important part of the writing process.	60	32	0	0	8
9. Editing is an important part of the writing process.	60	28	4	0	8
10. Students should share their writing.	44	36	12	0	8

11. Students should be taught how to diagram a sentence.	9	26	35	17	13
12. Grammar should be taught in isolation as a separate subject.	13	25	13	33	16
13. Grammar instruction is an important part of the writing process.	42	54	0	0	4
14. Grammar instruction should be integrated with writing instruction.	42	42	8	4	4
15. Students' writing should be evaluated only in terms of correct grammar.	0	4	8	40	48

Ninety one percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that writing should be taught as a process. Nine percent strongly disagreed.

Eighty eight percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that students should write everyday. Four percent were undecided, four percent disagreed, and four percent strongly disagreed.

Sixty four percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that teachers should write with their students. Twenty eight percent were undecided and eight percent strongly disagreed or disagreed.

Ninety two percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that students need positive feedback about their writing. Eight percent strongly disagreed.

Ninety two percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that students need exposure to models/examples of good writing. Eight percent strongly disagreed.

Eighty four percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that prewriting is an important part of the writing process. Eight percent were undecided and eight percent strongly disagreed or disagreed.

Ninety two percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that drafting is an important part of the writing process. Eight percent strongly disagreed.

Ninety two percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that revising is an important part of the writing process. Eight percent strongly disagreed.

Eighty eight percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that editing is an important part of the writing process. Four percent were undecided and eight percent strongly disagreed.

Eighty percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that students should share their writing. Twelve percent were undecided and eight percent strongly disagreed.

Thirty five percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that students should be taught how to diagram a sentence. Thirty five percent were undecided and thirty percent disagreed.

Thirty eight percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that grammar should be taught in isolation as a separate subject. Thirteen percent were undecided and forty eight percent strongly disagreed or disagreed.

Ninety six percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that grammar instruction is an important part of the writing process. Four percent strongly disagreed.

Eighty four percent of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that grammar instruction should be integrated with instruction in writing. Eight percent were undecided and eight percent strongly disagreed or disagreed.

Eighty eight percent of the teachers strongly disagreed or disagreed that students' writing should be evaluated only in terms of correct grammar. Eight percent were undecided and four percent agreed.

Summary of Responses from Open-Ended Questions

In addition to the fifteen forced choice statements on the Likert questionnaire, the teachers surveyed were also asked the following open-ended questions:

What is your biggest challenge in teaching students to write? What techniques have provided you with the most success in teaching writing? How do you teach grammar?

Twenty teachers responded that their biggest challenge in teaching students to write involves the writing process itself. They stated that teaching students to follow all of the stages of the writing process is sometimes difficult, especially the revising and editing stage. According to the teachers, many students do not want to revise and edit their writing. Problems with grammar, sentence fragments, and punctuation errors were also listed as a challenge.

Two challenges cited by twenty four teachers were the challenges of time and motivation. The teachers stated that there is rarely enough time to thoroughly explain the writing process, adequately conference with every student, and meet the individual needs of students. Motivating students and

moving them beyond the "I don't know what to write about" phase is also difficult for many teachers.

Fifty two teachers responded to the question: What techniques have provided you with the most success in teaching writing? Four teachers stated that providing a variety of topics kept students motivated to write. Eight teachers responded that teaching students to write and rewrite provided success. Ten teachers responded that thoroughly modeling the writing process worked for them. Five teachers cited individual conferences with students helped them meet students' needs. Seven teachers use examples from literature as models of different styles of writing for their students. Twelve teachers use journals to encourage their students to write. Finally, six teachers stated that integrating writing across the curriculum has improved their students' writing.

The responses to the open-ended question: How do you teach grammar? fell into three categories. The categories include: techniques that follow the writing process; traditional grammar instruction; and teaching grammar through literature. Twenty five teachers use techniques that follow the writing process. These teachers use samples from their students' writing to teach grammar mini lessons. These teachers use conferencing to address

students' grammar needs. Finally, these teachers design grammar lessons that meet the specific grammar needs of their students.

Thirty one teachers use traditional methods to teach grammar. These methods include: Daily Oral Language assignments; Language Arts Review sheets; and grammar assignments from an English textbook.

Finally, seventeen teachers use literature to teach grammar. These teachers use examples of unique sentence structure found in literature to show their students different styles of writing. They also use examples found in books the students are reading.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Providing students with the necessary skills to write clearly and effectively is a challenge that writing teachers' face every day. Finding the best techniques to facilitate writing is a difficult, on going process for teachers. The purpose of this study was to analyze the perceptions of intermediate and junior high school teachers toward teaching writing as a process. The author studied the literature concerning teaching writing and compared the literature research to the actual observations and opinions of writing teachers.

A Likert type questionnaire consisting of fifteen statements and three open ended question relating to the writing process was administered to one hundred and thirty teachers. Seventy completed surveys were returned. The responses were tabulated.

The results indicate that a high percentage of educators teach writing as a process that includes prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing. However, many teachers stated that although they teach writing as process, one of their biggest challenges is motivating students to actually follow the various stages. According to many teachers surveyed, the most challenging stages

for many students are the revising and editing stages. For many students, revising and editing their writing is difficult. Teaching students to follow the writing process stages through individual conferences and whole class instruction is necessary but also time consuming. Writing teachers stated that the lack of time was a challenge for many of them.

A high percentage of teachers also agreed that: students should write every day; students need positive feedback about their writing; and that students need exposure to models/examples of good writing. Once again, the issue of adequate time was a factor for many writing teachers. Finding the time for students to write daily, conference with the teacher, and expose students to examples of good writing is a difficult challenge for many teachers.

Among the teachers surveyed, there was disagreement on the subject of grammar. On the issue of teaching grammar in isolation, an almost equal percentage of teachers agreed with the statement, disagreed with the statement, or were undecided. This disagreement concerning the most effective way to teach grammar is supported by research.

Many teachers incorporate grammar instruction with the writing process. Grammar instruction is tailored to the specific grammar needs of students. Teachers use samples from students' writing as examples for grammar mini

lessons. Finally, teachers provide specific grammar instruction to individual students while they conference with their students. Teaching grammar as part of the writing process is supported by the literature.

Many teachers still teach grammar in isolation. An equal number of teachers who responded to the survey teach grammar by using an English book or by using daily oral language assignments. Teaching grammar in isolation is not supported by the literature.

Conclusion

The writer concludes that most teachers are teaching writing as a process. This approach to teaching writing is consistent with the literature. Many teachers are still divided on the issue of grammar instruction. This disagreement has been ongoing for many years and has been acknowledged in the literature. This disagreement was also evident in the responses to the questionnaire. Of the teachers that incorporated grammar instruction into the writing process, a high percentage of these teachers provide grammar instruction appropriate to their students' needs. This method of grammar instruction is supported by research.

Recommendations

The writer recommends in-service training be provided for teachers to inform them of the principles and characteristics of teaching writing as a

process and incorporating grammar instruction that meets their students' needs into the writing process. The writer also recommends that teacher perceptions toward teaching writing as a process continue to be studied to explore the relationship between teacher agreement with principles and actual use of the approaches.

Dear Teachers,

September 4, 1997

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. The results will be used for a course I am taking at the University of Dayton. Since I am researching teacher perceptions towards teaching writing, only teachers who teach writing need to complete this questionnaire. In addition, only teachers who teach grades four through eight should be surveyed. When you have completed the questionnaire please return it to my mailbox.

Once again, thank you for your time. If you have any questions about the questionnaire please call me at (513) 424-6382.

Sincerely,

Mary Bidwell

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS TOWARD
TEACHING WRITING AS A PROCESS

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

1. How many years have you been teaching? _____
2. What grade do you teach? _____
3. How would you describe your school setting?
Rural _____
Suburban _____
Inner City _____

DIRECTIONS:

Please read the following statements about teaching writing as a process and circle the number which best describes your perceptions:

- 1 = Strongly Agree
 2 = Agree
 3 = Undecided
 4 = Disagree
 5 = Strongly Disagree

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| 1. Writing should be taught as a process. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. Students should write every day. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. Teachers should write with their students. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. Students need positive feedback about their writing. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. Students need exposure to models/examples of good writing. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6. Prewriting is an important part of the writing process. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 7. Drafting is an important part of the writing process. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 8. Revising is an important part of the writing process. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 9. Editing is an important part of the writing process. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 10. Students should share their writing. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 11. Students should be taught how to diagram a sentence. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

- 1 = Strongly Agree
2 = Agree
3 = Undecided
4 = Disagree
5 = Strongly Disagree

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12. Grammar should be taught in isolation as a separate subject. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. Grammar instruction is an important part of the writing process. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. Grammar instruction should be integrated with instruction in writing. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. Students' writing should be evaluated only in terms of correct grammar. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

PLEASE BRIEFLY ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

16. What is your biggest challenge in teaching students to write?
17. What technique(s) have provided you with the most success in teaching writing?
18. How do you teach grammar to your students?

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