Helping Students Become Better Writers by Writing and Creating Their Own Published Books

Mary Anne Zimmerlee

A Classroom Research Study
Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of

Masters of Science in Education

Curriculum and Instruction

University of Wisconsin Oshkosh
Oshkosh, Wisconsin, 54901-8621

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Approval                                      Date

First Reader: ________________________________  _____________

Second Reader _______________________________  _____________
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Abstract

When students do writing activities in the classroom and know that the teacher or their parents will be the only audience reading their papers, they are not always motivated to do their best work. Through the use of directed mini-lessons and David Melton’s book Written and Illustrated by… (1985) the children became more critical of their sentence structure, illustrations, and revising techniques. David Melton combined the use of the creative, right brain along with the academic, left brain to encourage children to use their optimal thinking skills using time constraints as well as length constraints to create their masterpieces of literature. The students were motivated to do their best because these published books would not only be shared with their classroom peers, but their grandparents, grade-level peers, and the entire school body.

Using pre and post-test writing samples, the children were even able to see how their writing skills had improved over the course of the year. They are much more critical of grammar, correct verb tense and spelling errors, too.
Study Sequence

July, 2005
Identified ten problems/challenges related to classroom that if researched will help me to teach better

Started research journal

August, 2005
Attended several district workshops related to writing
- Kidspiration
- 6 Traits +1
- Collins Writing Workshop

Started literature research with Jean Erdman’s help and resources from the Fox Valley Writing Project

September, 2005
Set up reading folders for my class and brainstormed writing topics

October, 2005
Announced David Melton’s writing project to class and parents (newsletter)

Collected writing samples for data analysis

November, 2005
WKCE testing interrupted project

Fifth graders and parents helped to bind books

Continued to work on stories

December, 2005
Edited stories with fifth grade help

Holiday projects and programs interrupted the project again

Continued literature review

January, 2006
Set up binders for layout of books

February, 2006
Solicited help from parents/grandparents to type their stories.

Students began to work on matching pictures to the text and follow the layout plan
March, 2006
Made the book jackets for the book (front and back covers, synopsis and author information).

Took post-writing sample and analyzed data.

Shared completed books with grandparents and parents on Grandparents Day/Pop N’ Read.

April, 2006
Displayed students’ books in front lobby and library

Reported results in final paper
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Many of my third grade students struggle with writing. They have difficulty with sentence structure, fluency, word choice, and grammar. I conducted this study to determine whether teaching writing mini-lessons and implementing the Melton Classroom Publishing Project, creating and publishing their own books, would help my students become better writers.

SITUATING THE PROBLEM

This study was conducted in my third grade classroom during my twentieth year of teaching. The school in which the study was conducted is a rural elementary school with an enrollment of approximately three hundred students; the school serves a primarily Caucasian, low-middle class community.

Over the years, as I taught using materials from the Houghton Mifflin Writing Workshop, I noticed that the children seldom put forth much effort in their writing. They were enthused with the prewriting and drafting stages, but struggled with the revising and editing stages. They relied on me to do most of the work. Typically, what was supposed to take several days, stretched into a couple of weeks, and when I worked with individual students, the other students would get restless and end up becoming behavior problems. To keep this from happening, I would assign some sort of busy work to control the class.

Rarely, if ever, was the writing that my students completed well enough for publishing. Sure, I would have the students do the traditional rewriting of their work, and occasionally post them on the classroom bulletin board, but the publications were never seen by more than the teacher, parents, or classmates. I had a feeling that this was part of the
problem. If a student does not have a significant audience other than the classroom teacher, why bother doing your best?

My concerns for my students’ lack of interest in writing prompted me to look into David Melton’s classroom publishing process described in his book, *Written and Illustrated By...* (1985). This book serves as a lesson guide for helping children to write, illustrate, and publish their own sixteen page book. In the following section, Melton’s seventeen step-by-step modified lesson sequence is described.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

According to the Wisconsin Model of Academic Standards for English Language Arts Performance Standard B, by the end of Grade 4 students will (B.4.1) “Create or produce writing to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes”. We have all been trained to use Writer’s Workshop to take our students through the required phases of writing development: Prewriting (brainstorming), Writing the first draft, Revising, Editing, and Publishing. Unfortunately most of the writing is only viewed by the classroom teacher and is occasionally posted on a hallway bulletin board for the school audience. If the audience is vague to students and they only sense themselves or the teacher as their audience, they don’t understand what that audience needs or wants (Graves, 1994) and subsequently their work will not improve.(p.73)

David Melton (1985) in his book *Written and Illustrated By...* gives step-by-step instructions on how children use the academic brain and the creative brain to write and publish their own books that could be viewed by all students in their building. In his workshops, Melton taught participants at many ability levels, children through adults. Some
parents were astounded that their children were interested in this endeavor. As with all teachers, David Melton (1985) found it was his job “to find at what levels of skills each student was functioning,” and to help that student accelerate from his or her abilities to the next level and beyond (p.14).

Melton states that our public schools are primarily set up to focus on the academic brain so that we teach students to become functioning adults. It is much easier to teach and score analytical thinking processes (reading directions, figuring numbers, and learning basic employment skills). Little time is given to the creative part of our brain, which is also an important part of our education, too, because it helps to develop problem-solving skills.

Throughout his workshop Melton switches back and forth from academic thought processes to creative ones, thus forcing the participants to use both sides of their brains, helping to create finished products that are well beyond the depth and breadth that the participants ever thought possible. Some works have even been compared to those of professional writers. When the students focused on a specific audience they became more particular about how their stories were written attending more to details as well as the quality of the illustrations. These finished works would be put on display in the school library for children of all grade levels to enjoy, thus giving the students more incentive to put forth their best effort when publishing their written work: their peers will be their critics.

Other authors (Calkins, 1996, Routman, 2005, and Fountas and Pinnel, 2001) of teaching writing have also placed an emphasis on the publishing aspect of writing as well as teaching specific writing strategies through the use of mini-lessons. Short mini-lessons allow the students to apply the strategy immediately to their writing. Children need to write every day on topics that they are interested in writing about. The contrived, teacher-prompted
topics often produce stilted writing samples, but may at least be a start in their writing early in the year. Routman has suggested having writing folders where students keep several of their samples to be pulled out and reviewed as new strategies are taught.

Children are to write on lined paper, skipping every other line so as to be able to revise and edit their work. Teachers often get confused between these skills. Revising is changing, adding, or omiting parts in their writing. Editing is the grammar and punctuation changes that must be corrected. It is often the teacher who takes on the wearisome task of doing both of these which deters the students from learning how to work on these two areas themselves. Through Melton’s publishing project, students are encouraged to do revising themselves because of the restrictions as to the number of pages required to complete the book.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Twenty-two third grade students participated in this study, twelve girls and ten boys. No special needs students were included in the study.

Data Collection

Before I began my research, I collected a writing sample of each child by having the class respond in writing to a picture from the book Mommies Say Shhhh! by Polacco (2005). The book was new to the library and to the students. (The picture is of a young, barefoot girl lying on her stomach by a tree in a field with several white rabbits surrounding her. In the background there is a farmer chasing a squirrel and his wife staring at some birds flying in the sky.) A writing analysis chart was developed (Appendix A) for assessing the writing samples. The goal was to increase fluency and descriptiveness of the number of words, the
number of adjectives, the number of sentences, and the number of pages of the students’
writing. The same picture prompt (identical picture) was used when completing the post-
assessment.

Intervention

I began this research in October, 2006, by reading through the entire step-by-step
process that David Melton details in his book so that I could modify the process to fit my
classroom situation. Melton did his writing project in a one-week workshop setting in the
1980’s. I had to accommodate the various natural interruptions that occur in a typical
elementary classroom setting (Art, Music, Physical Education, special assemblies, Parent-
Teacher conferences, holiday projects, and the WKCE testing). While I tried to conduct
writing time consistently everyday for the proposed amount of time, flexible scheduling often
occurred. I began my project on a Friday at the end of the day, one-minute before the
dismissal bell rang. This is important in Melton’s book. It not only alerted the “academic”
brain in a non-threatening way, it jumpstarted their “creative” brain. They had the entire
weekend to subconsciously think about what they could use for a topic.

Session One

On Monday I had twenty books from many different genres on display in a bookrack
situated on a table at the back of the room. Over the weekend I had taken them home and
previewed the ones I was not familiar with so that I could make intelligent comments about
each one. I had post-its located in each book to show a captivating picture or to read an
interesting section to them. I informed the children that they could look at the titles but
could not touch nor read the books until after I had shared them later on for our project.
had previously discussed this with our school librarian who helped pick out appropriate third
grade books for each genre. The genres were:

- Fairy Tales
- Mystery
- Fantasy
- Biography
- Autobiography
- Western
- Sports
- Historical Fiction
- Whodunit
- Self-Help
- Ecology
- Myths
- Legends/Tall Tales
- Humor
- Poetry
- Science Fiction
- Adventure
- Folk Tales
- Informational
- Historical

The students were excited by the titles and couldn’t wait to look at them. A synopsis
of each one was presented and I ended with… “And this is my favorite book.” The session
took approximately forty-five minutes before recess so that they were immediately removed
from the room to engage their creative brain to think again about what they’d like to write
about when it was their turn.

Session Two

This session was much shorter as we only needed to come up with a name for our
publishing company, apply for the position of author/illustrator, and sign our contracts. The
students submitted up to three names, which I wrote on the board. We voted on our favorite
one and became the “Extreme Publishing Company”. Next we filled out the “Application
for Employment” (Appendix B). We discussed the terms (qualifications, experience, special
interests, and hobbies) and had the children sign their names at the bottom. Some even signed in cursive to make it really official. I had previously taken pictures of each student and we used these to attach them to the “photo of applicant” section of the form. Later I posted these in the hallway before Parent-Teacher conferences.

Next, I passed out the “Contract of Agreement” (Appendix C) on which the students wrote out their name (author/illustrator), date, and publisher (Extreme Publishing Company). I then laid out the groundwork for the rest of the form. They were then given five minutes to write their title and a brief synopsis of the book. Rather than have them recopy this form I just made a second copy of each on the office copy machine. I kept the original and gave them a copy for their writing folder. Now was the time for the “creative” brain to kick in for the fifteen to twenty minutes writing session. The work was collected and stored in their writing folders. At this point, too, I sent a parent letter home explaining the project (Appendix D).

Session Three

Prior to the lesson I made a 22 x 28-size chart and assigned editor partnerships. I had some misgivings on this since this is where the greatest problem occurred in the past. I then taught a mini-lesson on the parts of a story. We discussed how the beginning introduces the characters and establishes the setting, the middle develops the conflict, and the ending follows through with the solution to the conflict. The students were then given thirty minutes to write their stories. They were to write on one side of the paper only and were to skip lines. I cautioned them to just write, as we would take care of the spelling and punctuation at a later time.
Session Four

I had attended a workshop the previous spring where the instructor (Christiana) had given a wonderful activity for grabbing the reader’s attention. Here I had a laminated 22 x 56-inch chart posted on the front chalkboard on which these different categories were listed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Describes the setting</th>
<th>Traditional (once upon a time)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduces characters</td>
<td>Sounds (Woosh!)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describes something</td>
<td>Facts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclamation</td>
<td>Feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In preparation for this session I had gone through my classroom library looking for specific books that fit each of these categories. On this day I passed out a book to each child and had them copy onto a 3x5-index card just the first sentence or word that was used to begin each story. With fun-tac we then discussed and posted each beginning under its category. Some fell into two categories so we put them in between the two appropriate ones. While leaving this posted in the classroom I had them go back to the beginning of their stories and see if they thought they had captured the reader’s attention. That was all we worked on for this day.

Session Five

According to Melton, this session was to introduce, through a mini-lesson, the guidelines we would use for the editing process. (Appendix E). After discussing this with the entire class, the students were to meet with their assigned partner to check for the specific areas. This turned out to be a fiasco. I then decided to arrange for help from the fifth graders.
We did this at a later time since some of the students were still not finished with their writing.

Session Six

Melton advised at this point to recopy the work with the students’ revisions and editing. We were not even finished with the writing yet and I knew that third graders do not like to recopy their work. After consulting with my project advisor, we thought it best to take a break from the writing to keep the students motivated. So I arranged to have the fifth graders, along with several parents, help put the book together. Each child needed the following supplies:

- Glue
- 12-inch ruler
- Scissors
- Darning needle
- Masking tape
- A push pin
- Dental floss
- 17 x 11 inch paper — 7 per student (one would be for the title page)
- 8 ½ x 11 inch chipboard — 2 per student (to make the book cover sturdy)

- These next two items were precut and would be used later upon completion of the book.
  - 25 x 11-inch paper — 1 per student (book jacket)
  - 15 x 21-inch paper — 1 per student (book cover)

I had discussed with my advisor, an easier way to bind the book and we tried it. I typed out the instructions (Appendix F) for the fifth grade teacher to preview with her class and had given copies to the parents upon their arrival to read before I actually brought my class into the library where we had more room to work. I had hoped the fifth graders would
be able help, especially with the increments of measurement. This did not seem to work the way I had planned. They had trouble marking the increments!

Session Seven:

This is where the breakdown from Melton’s plan started to happen in my class. We were to be ready for the layout of the book but WKCE testing began at the end of October and many students still did not have their stories completed yet. So we took a break from the writing until almost after the three holidays (Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas) since there were too many interruptions and projects we needed to finish. Again after meeting and discussing this with my advisor, we decided to wait and try to pick up the momentum again in January. Some students did have their writing finished, some were still working on it, and some had totally misplaced their writing since they did not put it in their writing folders as they were expected to do. A few of them needed to restart their stories and I sent it home as an assignment to do on a weekend. At this point Judith, my advisor, suggested that I have each child draw their first picture on 8 1/2 x 11 paper and put it in their writing folder. The next time they were to draw their last picture and put it in their folder also. I then had each one put eight pieces of blank paper into a binder and we numbered them 0-15 as Melton showed on his “Layout Sheets for Text Pages” (Appendix G). Page 0 is their first picture and their writing begins on page 1. After passing out the layout page and giving them a quick mini-lesson, the students had three minutes design their layout as to how they wanted to set up their books.

Session Eight

Again, I had the fifth graders come to our rescue to help with the editing of their first drafts. I gave them the editing sheet (Appendix E) that I had previously used with my class.
Using and overhead projector, I took a section of one of my students’ papers and did a mini-lesson in front of the third and fifth graders on how to edit their papers. We then took a twenty-minute session to have them go over their stories. Eight and nine year olds just don’t quite understand what it is they need to do when they edit their work and are unable to help spell many of the unfamiliar words that were used in their stories.

Session Nine

Now the students were instructed to start cutting apart their stories and using a glue stick try to fit the story to the layout. They placed these written sections on the blank pages in their binders. They needed to keep in mind each specific picture they would be drawing to match the writing. This proved to be quite a challenge for some students. It took several weeks for some of the students to complete this activity and forced some to revise their stories again.

Session Ten

A grandmother of one of my students volunteered to type these stories for the students. So at this point I had to have a one-on-one conference with each student who had finished their layout so that I could go over the final revision and editing process to make the job easier for the volunteer. She was then given their binders to take home and type their final copies. When she returned them, I made copies of each child’s story in case mistakes were made later on. (This turned out to be a very wise decision on my part.)

Sessions Eleven, Twelve, Thirteen

The students, who had finished their stories and had gotten the typed pages back, were ready to set up their books in their binders. The typing and the pages should match up with their formats they had set up previously. While most could see how the book went
together, some had difficulty. I had them come to my table and I used paper clips, their typed pages, and blank sheets of paper to put the pages together so they could see where they had to draw their pictures. This also helped as a guideline for when they actually put their “real” book together. They then had three sessions and assigned homework to finish drawing and coloring their pictures.

**Sessions Fourteen, Fifteen, and Sixteen**

We now began the task of setting up the writing and designing of the book jacket. The students spent one thirty-minute class period drawing and coloring the front cover. Next after using several books from the library as examples, they did a quick twenty-minute writing of the summary of the story to share on the inside of the front flap. The next day we did the same with the “About the Author” page for the back flap. The volunteer took them home to type for me. The third day they made and colored a quick design for the closing page of their story.

**Session Seventeen**

Prior to putting the jacket together, I pre-marked and pre-folded the 25 x 11 paper for each student. (I used the chipboard as a guideline for the folds. A ruler would have worked, too.) We glued on the front and back cover pictures and the inside flaps (summary of the story and “About the Author”) for the jacket cover. I then had the aide laminate them all and we saved them for the final day of completion.

**Sessions Eighteen, Nineteen, and Twenty**

Prior to gluing the pages into their bound books, I checked and set up each child’s binder to make sure they had the correct pictures matching the correct text. I paper clipped the pictures and text to each page. (Several students needed modifications, but they were
minor.) The children then needed to number the pages very carefully with marker to help them when they needed to insert the pages into the bound book. We then did the title page(s), the closing page in the book and started to put the entire book together. I reiterated several times that they must be careful or they could ruin their many months of work with one simple error. After this was complete, some pages needed to be trimmed which I took care of myself. We finally put the book jackets on, taped the top and bottom edges and put them on display in the classroom.

Session Twenty-one

Our whole school had Grandparent’s Day and this was the perfect opportunity to share our books. Our visitation was scheduled for the morning and we had over thirty grandparents come to visit. They thoroughly enjoyed the books that the students read to them. I had a couple of students read their entire book, which took much too long, so I had several come up and just read the first three pages, show the corresponding pictures and read “About the Author”. We ran out of time before all the students could share their books, so the remaining eight students would read theirs later. In the afternoon we had “Pop N Read” where the parents were invited in to see our books also. We had the remaining eight students share their books.

The students wanted to take their books home over the spring break, but I reminded them that we were going to have them put on display in the library display case for the entire school to enjoy. Up to this point, the students had been reading each other’s book during D.E.A.R. (Drop Everything And Read) time each morning. They even began to find several typing and spelling errors in each other’s writing now.
In April, their one-half of their books were put on display in the school’s display case in the front lobby of school, and the other half was put out in the library display case for the rest of the school to enjoy.

Findings of Data Analysis

As a result from this research it was shown, from the chart below, that on the average there was 58.9% improvement on the number of words used with a median of +12 (maximum was +98% and minimum –70%). There was a 42.7% improvement in the number of sentences written with a median of +29 (maximum was +200%, minimum –33%). The number of adjectives used showed an increase of +212% with a median of 100 (maximum was +800%, minimum, -300%). Finally the number of pages written increased 28.6% with a median of 0 (maximum was +200%, minimum, -80%).
Table 1 - Pre and Post Test Data Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Total Number Words</th>
<th>Total Number Sentences</th>
<th>Total Number Adjectives</th>
<th>Total Number Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Pre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alicia</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allyson</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandon</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>+78</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brina</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>+814</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandler</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colten</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>-5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connor</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>+12</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devin</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erica</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>-14</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frankie</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>+53</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keisha</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>+96</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koby</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>+26</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kody</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>+65</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyle</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>+52</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kylene</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>+22</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logan</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mallory</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>-32</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Maranda</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>-70</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Megan</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabrina</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>-16</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shahn</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>+98</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>+52</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Maranda was tested and placed in a LD program after Christmas. This affected her scoring. The quality of her work was much better. The first attempt at writing was about a dog instead of the rabbits.

** Megan was out of town when the post-test was given.
CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE PLANS

At the onset, this sounded like a terrific project. The students were excited. I was excited. Even the parents were excited. The major problem was that we started with the project too early in the school year. After hand-binding the book, writing of the stories started in mid-October. I realize that this was a mistake since I had not considered all of the fall semester interruptions. Shortly after we started writing, the project was interrupted with the WKCE (late October through the beginning of November). After that, holiday projects and music rehearsals demanded class time. The project was put on hold for two months. Finally, in January, when we attempted to begin again, the students had forgotten their stories.

Once the students were able to reread their stories, I had conferences with them about the story revision process. After trying to model how to revise, using several students’ pieces, with lots of post-its, I assumed the kids would be able to work with assigned partners and do the same thing. I was wrong. I now realize that I expected too much of them and that Calkins (1986) was right - third graders “do not understand that the purpose of revision is not to correct but to discover. They do not understand that by attending to what is said and unsaid in one draft, they can discover new meanings”. (pg. 88).

During the course of the research, one of the students was tested and qualified for the Learning Disabilities program. When she wrote her pre-test sample, it did not match the picture prompt. She had written two and one half pages about a dog! On the post-test, while she wrote considerably less, the writing at least matched the picture.

If I had this to do over again, which I will definitely do next year, I would do a lot of writing in the first semester with quick, short mini-lessons. I’d have them just write for fun
in September, and I’d have them keep all their samples in their writing folders. As the semester progressed, we could revisit the writing samples as different mini-lessons were introduced. Some of the mini-lessons I would use just to get started would be:

- Grabbing the reader’s attention
- Story Elements: Beginning (setting and characters), Middle (conflict), Ending (resolution)
- Using the “Teach Aloud” format I’d write a piece of my work on an overhead, making sure to skip lines, so that I could model how to revise and edit our work. I’d have student input as to what needed to be done.
- Write and revise a class story
- Later revise anonymous papers from a other classroom, other teachers, or other samples from previous students
- Use magazines, books, pictures, to create dialogue
- Use student work on the overhead to give constructive feedback.
- The list could go on and on and many ideas would be chosen from the needs of the students in my particular classroom.

I would model, model, model, different strategies to being successful writers. I’d actually write excerpts of my own writing on an overhead transparency as a model and have them help with revising and editing. It’s amazing how they like to find and point out mistakes that teachers make.

Next year, I intend to begin Melton’s project after the winter break and set aside three weeks to complete these books. I will not allow the project to drag on as I did this year. I realize that this caused the students to lose interest. I also lost interest.
As for developing a story, I’d keep it much simpler. I’d have them draft out eight pages of story along with only eight pictures. I might even try introducing the project with wordless books, have them draw their own eight page wordless book, then add the text.

Another area of concern was putting the books together. Instead of having the fifth graders help like I did, I’d try to elicit several more parents to come in and work with small groups. Having the twenty-two third graders, and twenty-five fifth graders in one area and expect them all to listen to directions at the same time was a fantasy. I assumed the fifth graders knew how to measure one-half inch apart on a piece of paper. They didn’t. I’d also intend to set up a Writer’s Corner with bookbinding supplies so that the students who finish early will be able to begin a second book.

I realize that I could have avoided many of the problems that developed while conducting this project. However, I consider the experience a valuable one. By learning what not to do, I have learned what to do. I intend to complete this project with my students each year in the future, and I know that over time, the process will improve, and my students will benefit.
References


APPENDIX A

Pre and Post Test Data Findings.

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APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT

DATE: ____________________________

NAME: ____________________________

ADDRESS: ____________________________
   (street) ____________________________
   (city) ____________________________
   (state) ____________________________
   (zip code) ____________________________

TELEPHONE NUMBER: ____________________________

AGE: ____________________________

PHOTO OF APPLICANT

I WISH TO SECURE EMPLOYMENT AS AN EDITOR AND ART DIRECTOR AT THE:

________________________________________________________________________

QUALIFICATIONS:

________________________________________________________________________

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________________________________________________________________________

EXPERIENCE:

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SPECIAL INTERESTS AND HOBBIES:

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I WISH TO SECURE THESE JOBS BECAUSE:

________________________________________________________________________

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(Signature of Applicant)

Permission to copy granted to teachers
APPENDIX C

CONTRACT OF AGREEMENT

PARTIES OF AGREEMENT: _________________________________ DATE: __________

1. AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR:

2. PUBLISHER:

IT IS MUTUALLY AGREED: AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR will write an original book of superior
quality and prepare the most brilliant illustrations for said book within a period of time
not to exceed ______ working days and nights. Within the framework of this time
allowed, AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR will assemble said book, design a masterpiece book
jacket and bind all materials with the express purpose of delighting and astounding all
readers and viewers of said book.

PROPOSED BOOK TITLE:

BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF STORY:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

NUMBER OF PAGES: ______ MEDIA FOR ILLUSTRATIONS: 

AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR hereby promises to explore and expand the widest boundaries of
his or her creative potentials; to pay the utmost attention to all instructions; and to be
keenly aware and appreciative of the creations of other authors and illustrators for the
duration of and beyond the time limits of this specific Contract of Agreement.

PUBLISHER also promises to recognize and delight in the creative genius of AUTHOR/
ILLUSTRATOR; to promote the development of professional attitudes and discipline; to
encourage the growth and acceleration of imagination and skills; and to express both
respect and delight by the marvelous elements within and the outstanding results of
AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR'S said book.

________________________________________
AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR

________________________________________
PRESIDENT OF PUBLISHING COMPANY

Permission to copy granted to teachers
Dear Parents,

I am so excited about a project we have started in our classroom! Our classroom has been turned into The Extreme Publishing Company and during the next 5 weeks, each student will be writing and illustrating their own original 16-page book! With the help of Mrs. Backhaus’s fifth grade we will be assembling the books out of special paper and binding them ourselves!

We have already filled out “applications for employment” listing our qualifications, experiences, and special interests/hobbies. We also filled out contracts stating our proposed title and brief summary of the story. We will spend the next few days/weeks writing, revising, editing, and illustrating our work.

Each child has agreed to be an Editor and Art Director. The Editor will help their assigned partner look for missing capital letters, missing punctuation, and may make suggestions for better sentences or ask for more details. The Art Director will make suggestions for things to be added to their pictures. (Lots of students like to draw that one item that looks like it caught in a blizzard.) The students have agreed to make brilliant illustrations with lots of background. Each student must write their own manuscript and do their own
illustrations. They may accept or reject suggestions made to them, however, since this is their project.

We will share these books with a Kindergarten class and the books will eventually be put on display in the school library. Three books will be chosen by Mrs. Smits and/or Mr. Adams to be copied professionally and kept in the Jefferson library for future students to read. All the books will be sent home at the end of the school year. The students are really excited about this and I hope you share in our enthusiasm. There may be a time or two when their stories may be sent home for them to work on. You may help them, but please do not write the story for them. This must be their own work. Suggestions would be appreciated, but remember, your child has the right to accept or reject that suggestion.

We hope you become as excited about this project as we are and look forward to a new edition for your bookshelf. As soon as plans are completed, you will be invited to attend an “Author’s Party to celebrate the unveiling of our students’ book.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Zimmerlee
APPENDIX E

Student Editors

❖ It is the student editor’s job to help **improve** the work.

❖ Editors give positive feedback. (no negative remarks)

♦ If you find a misspelled word, draw a line through it then spell it correctly above the word.

*The dog chazed the cat.*

♦ If you know of a better word that could be used, draw a line through the word and write the synonym above it.

*The colors of the rainbow were pretty!*

♦ If a sentence is not needed **lightly** cross it out.

♦ If you don’t understand a sentence, ask the writer to explain it.

♦ If an entire section needs editing, write that section on a different piece of paper.

Check for:
❖ Spelling
❖ Grammar
❖ Punctuation

♦ Give **positive** comments about their work! Tell them what you liked.
APPENDIX F

Building the Book

1. Fold six sheets of 11 x 17 paper in half. Do each one individually.

2. Put the sheets together, then open them up to see the middle. With a pencil, mark off ½ increments on the fold line. Using a “t” pin, poke holes through the dots (this will make it easier to sew).

3. Tape the thread end on the outside, then proceed to sew from one end to the other. Tape off this other end, too.

4. Fold another 11 x 17 sheet in half. Leaving approximately 1/8-inch down the center, glue one sheet of chipboard to each side.

5. Place glued chipboard onto the 15 x 21-inch sheet (white paper side down. Tape the corners down.

6. Cut triangles out of outside corners (approximately ¼ to 1/8 to edge) and the top and bottom centers of spine.

7. Overlap the edges and glue them down.
8. Glue bound pages into the book cover by placing glue onto the chipboard side and carefully adjusting the outer pages to become glued into the book cover evenly.

9. That’s it! Put your name lightly with pencil on the inside front cover page.
APPENDIX H

Student Work

Allyson is coordinating her pictures with her text.

Keisha used watercolor paints to illustrate her pictures.

The books are all on display in our classroom.

The students are very proud of their completed books.