



Difference in Writing Capabilities of Students Without English Speaking Parents and How Their Abilities Can Be Improved

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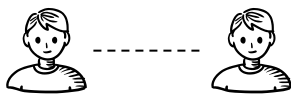
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INTRODUCTION

To help improve the writing capabilities of students who cannot get writing help at home, a 4 week free tutoring program was implemented that was accessible from home. Several ELL students took a survey to determine how much help they receive from their parents and how hard they find writing to be. From these students, five were selected to participate in the program. Their writing capabilities¹ were observed, based on the researcher’s rubric and Common Core Standards, before and after using the program to see if it was effective.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE



The gap between the writing capabilities of native English speakers and English language learners is a serious problem. Native English speakers have one key resource that English language learners do not – parents to help at home. There have been on going efforts at closing the gap between ELLs and their peers by improving the in-class curriculum, especially since the No Child Left Behind Act that was implemented in 2002.³ A few options have been provided for students who need help outside of what they are already being provided in class.



However, most options are not accessible for all students. Online tutoring help is quite expensive⁴. Other on-site programs, even if they are free, are still inconvenient for many students.



The students might only be able to get help on certain days, have to make an appointment, or simply have to travel too far. An after school program, similar to the intern researcher at JLS middle school last year, lead by Kim Lohse, might have great resources: teachers, volunteers, and laptops, but still would not be able to accommodate all the students who could benefit from it. Getting the students who need help to come to the writing center proved difficult. Lohse explains, “I think one of our other challenges is that the group of students who may need this center most, are the ones who might not seek help on their own.” Lohse also commented on the negative side of holding the center after school, “many students have conflicts with sports and so on after school, [and] many teachers have conflicts after school.”²



My program is free and accessible from home, available whenever the student needs it. If a child does not have the resources in middle school, a crucial point in developing their writing skills and when the achievement gap begins to widen, the child will also struggle in high school, and in applying for colleges. Intervention at an early age, as with many learned skills, will give these students the opportunity to be successful throughout their life.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

The research is applied with the intention that the knowledge from this research will be used to solve a problem facing our society; disparity in students’ writing capabilities. The general population targeted is middle school students who do not have English speaking parents.⁵ The case study is on two JLS seventh graders in the ELL program who do not get help with their writing outside of school and who find writing difficult.



Data was collected through short essays that were administered to the participants before and after they received free, accessible tutoring. They received either an explanatory, narrative, or argumentative essay prompt. Using the rubric and common core standards (below), the researcher has graded the student’s papers and assigned them a numerical value.

Basic Writing Capabilities	Proficient (3)	Competent (2)	Emergent (1)
Grammar	There <u>very few</u> grammatical errors.	There are <u>some</u> grammatical errors.	There are <u>many</u> grammatical errors.
Mechanics	There are <u>very few</u> spelling, capitalization, and punctuation errors.	There are <u>some</u> spelling, capitalization, and punctuation errors.	There are <u>many</u> spelling, capitalization, and punctuation errors.
Vocabulary	Writer chooses their words carefully. Adjectives are used heavily throughout writing. Synonyms and other word relationships are used throughout.	Writer chooses words deliberately but not with extra thought. Nouns and Verbs still dominate but Adjectives are used more freely, there are more descriptions. Synonyms are used to replace repetitive words.	Writer gives no thought to the words they choose. Nouns and Verbs are used far more often than Adjectives. Words are repeated.
Structure	There is both an introduction and a conclusion. Writing has a clear and purposeful path, transitions help the reader go from one paragraph to the next.	There is either an introduction or conclusion. The paragraphs do not transition into each other.	There is no introduction nor conclusion. The writer skips around, causing the flow of the topics to be disorienting.

Common Core Standards Reached (essay will correlate to one of these standards)	All (5) Partial (3) None (0)
Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence. -Introduce claim, acknowledge alternate or opposing claims -Support claim with logical reasoning and relevant evidence -Create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), reasons, and evidence. -Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.	
Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content. -Relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples. -Appropriate transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts. -Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.	
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences. -Context and point of view, introduce a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically. -Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters. -Use a variety of transition words to convey sequence and signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another. -Use sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events. -Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events.	

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Student Scores Before	Basic	Common Core	Total
Student 1	6	0	6

Gram.		1	Common Core: Explanatory
Mech.		1	Relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations
Vocab	2		Appropriate transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships.
Struct	2		Precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.

Student Scores Before	Basic	Common Core	Total
Student 2	6	3	9

Grammar		2	
Mechanics			1
Vocabulary			1
Structure		2	

Student Scores After	Basic	Common Core	Total
Student 1	6	3	9

Gram.		1	Common Core: Argumentative
Mech.		1	Introduce claim and organize the reasons and evidence logically.
Vocab	2		Support claim with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources.
Struct	2		Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

Student Scores After	Basic	Common Core	Total
Student 2	8	3	11

Grammar		2	
Mechanics		2	
Vocabulary			1
Structure	3		

Both case studies show that scores did improve after using the tutoring program.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS / REFERENCES

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