

Write On!

The Official Newsletter of the Middle School Writing Project

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Conclusion

Lara-Jeane Costa, PhD
Project Director

The Middle School Writing Project (MSWP) has concluded for the 246 students who participated in the small-group sessions. In addition to the three middle schools in Orange County and Kestrel Heights, we were very excited to add two Chatham County Schools to our project! Over the four years, we screened over 1,500 sixth graders, and over 700 were eligible for the study. Thank you to all of the fantastic students, parents, staff, teachers and administration who contributed to the study.

The students participated in a small-group writing program that met twice a week for 30 minutes. During the program, students produced weekly writing samples and participated in various writing activities and strategy development tasks. The participants were also given assessments that evaluated their reading ability, writing ability, and other skills such as memory in sixth and seventh grades.

Throughout the project students received gift cards as our way of saying 'thank you.' It's our little way of expressing how much we appreciate all their hard work!

Even though the students' participation is complete, we still have lots of work to finish examining the data.



We have begun to take a look at some of the information collected during the project, and we are excited to be able to share some findings.

So far, using both knowledge gained through the elementary project (completed in previous years) and new data coming from the MSWP, we have published 2 book chapters and 15 research articles, and participated in over 20 conference presentations. We have quite a few other publications in the works, so stay tuned, and check out page 3 for a more detailed account of our findings and presentations.

Our work for this project is closing. We hope to capitalize on what we have learned to help change the practice of teaching writing. If you need a resource for best practices, please reach out to us!

Best Practices for Teaching Writing*

- 1) Explicitly teach appropriate **writing strategies** using a Model-Practice-Reflect instructional cycle — “I do”, “We do”, “You do”
 - ◇ Explicitly teach strategies for planning and goal setting, drafting, evaluating, revising, and editing.
 - ◇ Instruct students on how to choose and apply strategies appropriate for the audience and purpose.
- 2) Integrate **writing and reading** to emphasize key writing features.
 - ◇ Both writers and readers use similar strategies, knowledge, and skills to create meaning.
 - ◇ Use a variety of written exemplars to highlight the key features of texts.
- 3) Direct students to construct more complex, **sophisticated sentences** using the sentence-combining approach.
 - ◇ Combine sentences using connectors.
 - ◇ Embed an adjective or verb from one sentence into another.
- 4) Use **assessments** of student writing to **inform instruction and feedback**
 - ◇ Assess students’ strengths and area for improvement before teaching a new strategy or skill.
 - ◇ Analyze student writing to tailor instruction and target feedback
 - ◇ Monitor students’ progress regularly

* references on page 4

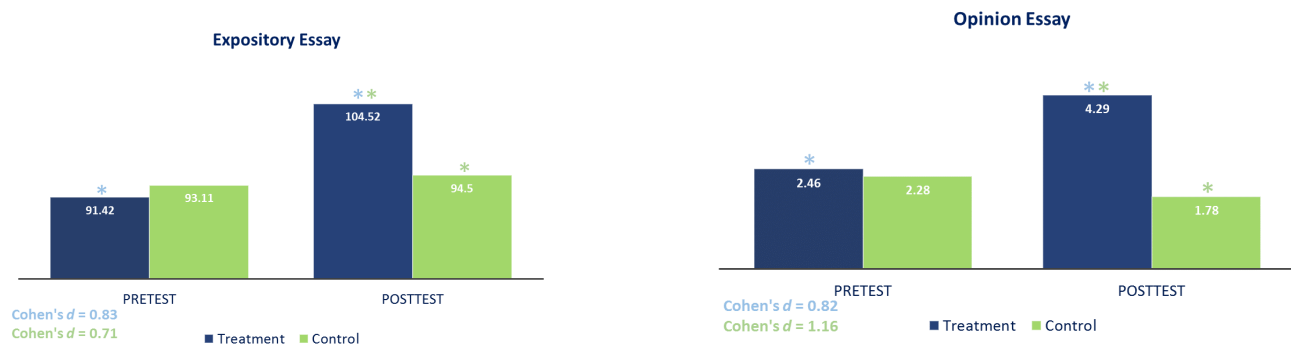
Thank you from the UNC Middle School Writing Project!

Thank you to all of the families, Orange County and Chatham County Schools faculty and staff, and Kestrel Heights faculty and staff for your support! Thank you especially to all of the students who are helping us to understand which strategies can help improve writing development for Middle School children. We are also grateful to the Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences for providing funding for this study.

*Stephen Hooper, PhD
Principal Investigator*

What Have We Learned?

Students make significant gains with less than 12 hours of instruction over 12 weeks



Where Have We Been?

Efficacy of the self-regulated strategy development writing intervention for sixth grade students in a randomized controlled Trial: Treatment results and nine month maintenance

Progress Monitoring: Curriculum Based Measures with Students with Writing Disabilities

Writing Research Across Borders, Bogota, Colombia

Relationship between Teacher Ratings and Student's Written Language

American Psychological Association, Toronto, Ontario

Writing Disabilities and Reading Disabilities in Elementary School Students: Rates of Co-Occurrence and Cognitive Burden

Council for Learning Disabilities, San Antonio, Texas

Efficacy of SRSD Writing Intervention: Middle School Randomized Control Trial

Institute of Education Sciences, Washington, DC

First Grade Predictors of Early Elementary School Writing Skills through Fourth Grade

International Neuropsychological Society, Boston, Massachusetts

What's Next?

Internalizing and Externalizing Behaviors of Children with and without a Writing Disability

Society for Research in Child Development, Austin, Texas

The relations among the development of written language and executive functions in elementary aged students

American Psychological Association, Washington, D.C.

Relevant Publications

Check out what we've been writing!

Costa, L. C., Green, M. B., Sideris, J. & Hooper, S. R. (in press). First Grade Cognitive Predictors of Writing Disabilities in Second, Third, and Fourth Grade Elementary School Students. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*

Costa, L. C., Ahmad, U., Edwards, C., Vanselous, S. Yerby, D. C., & Hooper, S. R. (2014). The writing side. In B. Miller, P. McCardle, & R. Long (Eds.), *Teaching reading and writing: Improving instruction and student achievement* (pp.21-33). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Writing Tips References

From page 2

Graham, S., Bruch, J., Fitzgerald, J., Friedrich, L., Furgeson, J., Greene, K., Kim, J., Lyskawa, J., Olson, C.B., & Smither Wulsin, C. (2016). *Teaching secondary students to write effectively* (NCEE 2017-4002). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE), Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from the NCEE website: <http://whatworks.ed.gov>.

Graham, S. & Perin, D. (2007). *Writing next: Effective strategies to improve writing of adolescents in middle and high schools—A report to Carnegie Corporation of New York*. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.

Want to know more?

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