

The Georgia Journal of Action Research



Volume II
2008 -2009
Edited by
Dr. Charles E.. Jenks



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RUNNING HEAD: Causes and Impacts of Teacher Stress

Teaching: 24/7 or 8/4?
Causes and Impacts of Teacher Stress

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Project Proposal

Research indicated teaching is a profession that comes with a high level of stress. My project will concentrate on finding out main factors of stress within an elementary school setting. The study will focus on determining when levels of stress are the highest during the school year and what strategies teachers should try to implement within their life to take precautions to avoid stress in the educational environment.

During the 2007-2008 school year, I will implement the following surveys and strategies to come to a conclusion about teacher stress.

- An open ended survey given to approximately twenty-five elementary (PK-5) teachers (Appendix I)
- Likert Scale Modeled Statement Survey with a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) given to the same teachers (Appendix II)

By implementing the above surveys and action research methods throughout the 2007-2008 school year, I hope to find out the common causes of teacher stress, prime time for teacher stress, and be able to suggest methods teachers can use to avoid stress. I will plan on presenting the information to the teachers evaluated in Spring 2008 at the school. In the presentation, I will not only present information gathered but give suggestions to teachers on how they can reduce their stress level while at work.

Abstract

This article discusses teacher stress. It states the numerous factors leading to teacher stress and explores times in which teacher stress is exemplified. Although teacher stress varies from person to person due to varying personal and professional expectations, the article explores reasons elementary school teachers get stressed, the most common time for teacher stress, and what happens when stress causes even the strongest teachers to break.

Teaching: 24/7 or 8/4?
Causes and Impacts of Teacher Stress

Working eight to four, having two months off each year for summer break, and having daily plans available at your fingertips sounds like an ideal job. However, the aforementioned qualities of the teaching profession are actually not so cut and dry. On a daily basis, teachers are faced with obstacles in which they need to overcome. Usually, a teacher's work hours go beyond the typical eight to four job. Many teachers arrive at school by 7am or stay until the building closes at 6pm attending before and after school mandatory meetings, and not to mention the amount of work they take home with them. Some teachers also work additional jobs to supplement their income or go to school for higher education during the year and summer months. They work diligently adapt lesson plans to meet the needs of every individual within their classroom. But, how much is too much? How much can a teacher handle before "enough is enough"?

The following study will explore stress in the educational setting. In order to effectively conduct the research, the definition of stress, causes and effects of stress, and strategies on how to avoid stress need to be studied. The literature review attempts to set the tone for the research that will be conducted on teacher stress during the 2007-2008 school year at an elementary school.

Teacher Stress

Teacher stress not only affects the individual teacher but also the students and the entire school system (Hansen and Sullivan, 2003). In order to effectively conquer stress, teachers must first understand exactly what stress is. Stress has three main components and includes the stressor, strain, and appraisal (Hansen and Sullivan, 2003). These three build off of one another

and have a domino affect. The stressor is the event(s) that occur in the workplace. Once the stressor is present, a person feels the psychological and physiological effects, which are referred to as strain. How the individual reacts to the stressor is the appraisal (Hansen and Sullivan, 2003). Stress is considered to be physiological, negatively affecting the way your brain and nervous system operate (Isreal, 2005). Teachers are responsible for how they react to the stressors therefore being able to determine their own level of stress. Dolly Parton once stated everyone should “Recognize that stress is a perception and you have control of your perceptions.” When stress becomes a daily burden draining of energy and drive, it negatively affects one’s life.

Stress should not always be considered a negative feeling. It can sometimes act as a motivating source with positive outcomes (Taylor et al, 2004). For some individuals, personal outcomes are better when the individuals are under pressure. Teachers are constantly under high levels of stress. The expectations of the society are continually changing and growing. In order to perform effectively, teachers must have the ability to cope with stress (Bindhu & Sudheeshkumar, 2002). Eustress is the good type of stress and provides adrenaline rushes that help one make great achievements (Crute, 2004). Positive aspects to stress can motivate teachers to explore new instructional strategies, adopt innovative approaches to increasing student motivation, and reflect on their teaching (Nagel and Brown, 2003).

Causes of Teacher Stress

By stepping foot in an educational setting, one quickly comes to the realization that school is a major source of stress for both students and teachers. In the realm of professions, teachers experience more work-related stress than non-teachers (Taylor et al, 2004). Stress stems from a situation that makes one feel frustrated, angry, or anxious. Causes of stress vary

from person to person but teacher stress stems from within the educational setting. Many internal and external factors cause stress to the school environment. Teachers carry the burden of expectations to excel in numerous roles. Due to the circumstances, those expectations demoralize and debilitate teachers (Taylor et al, 2004). Common stressors for educators include the introduction of new curriculum, paperwork, discipline issues, grade level conflicts, and administration. The National Education Association reports that eighty-eight percent of teachers experience moderate to high levels of stress (Crute, 2004). High job demands and low control over how the job is done allows stress amongst teachers to multiply (Reese, 2004). Teachers are at a particularly high risk level of stress due to other factors as well such as overcrowded classrooms, testing pressures, paperwork, anxious parents, and stressed-out students (Moore, 2002). Teachers today feel stressed more than ever due to the emphasis placed on standardized test scores as part of their annual evaluation. Due to the No Child Left Behind Act, teachers are expected to differentiate their instruction to meet the needs of every student while having to keep up with the changing standards (Azzam, Perkins-Gough, & Theirs, 2006). Many teachers feel pressured towards the need to teach to the test. In turn, teachers become frustrated about the lack of power they have in what they teach (Reese, 2004). In addition to meeting the standards set forth at both the national and state levels, teachers are being bombarded with excessive amounts of paperwork. In past years, paperwork simply included the task of taking and keeping track of student grades and progress. Over the past few years, the task has evolved into a more arduous task to include paperwork for Student Support Teams (SST), The Pyramid Approach-Responsiveness to Intervention (RTI), Early Intervention Plan (EIP), and Individualized Educational Plans (IEP). Once the paperwork is complete, teachers are expected to monitor and assess students through benchmarks beyond what is expected for students without special

circumstances. Teachers are also expected to be on school improvement teams to help meet the needs of the school improvement plan. The extra work within just this one committee can cause teachers unnecessary stress. Keeping up with standards is not the only factor causing teachers to stress out. Student behavior plays a large role in teacher stress levels. Student misbehavior is seen as a “producer” of teacher stress (Quinn, 2003). Students are also affected by levels of teacher stress. When teachers feel overwhelmed, it causes students to also feel overwhelmed. This in turn affects the students’ level of achievement on standardized test scores which cycles back around and raises teacher’s stress levels again (Reese, 2004). The level of stress in teachers increases when teachers view their discipline procedures are not supported by administration.

Many researchers indicate that leadership within the educational environment also plays a direct role in causing teachers stress (Jarvis, 2002). Since administrators are involved in issues such as student discipline and staff conflict, they set the tone for the entire working environment (Taylor et al, 2004). Both teachers and administrators need to have the same ideas about effective discipline in order to relieve stress during different situations. Administrators are responsible for numerous facets which greatly impact teacher stress levels. Teacher morale, motivation, and job satisfaction should be a high priority amongst administrators (Kelly and Colquhoun, 2005). If administration can keep teachers having a positive morale, high motivation, and contentment with job performance, the teacher retention rate will most likely increase. Administrators need to help teachers improve their stress levels to positively change the overall school’s climate (Isreal, 2005). The simple act of setting up shared decision making processes in schools allows teachers to participate in school processes rather than feel subordinate to their principals School districts are also at risk to losing good teachers to higher paying districts and higher paying jobs (Jehlen, 2007).

Teachers today also are pressure to continue their education to receive additional advanced degrees. The reasoning behind their desire to obtain advanced degrees is two-sided. Teachers would like to increase their knowledge by staying up to date on the most recent teaching techniques while at the same time being able to increase their salary. Teaching is one of the lowest paying professions in the United States and therefore in order to receive any type of pay increase, teachers must follow through by earning additional degrees to earn more money (Jehlen, 2007). When a teacher is contracted to teach a class while simultaneously attending a higher education institution, the stress level of that particular educator increases greatly. Most teachers hold themselves to extremely high expectations as a student therefore furthermore increasing their stress level (Hansen and Sullivan, 2003). When a teacher acting as a student becomes stressed, the stress also follows into the classroom where the teacher is teaching and therefore has a negative effect on the students within the class (Reese, 2004).

Effects of Teacher Stress

In Thompson's opinion, teaching used to be a more leisurely profession (Thompson , 2006). The main effect of stress is that it greatly impacts teacher retention (Jarvis, 2002). The cycle of stress is very difficult to break especially due to some of the long term effects it may have. There are proven to be at least fifty common symptoms of stress. They include but are not limited to headaches, back pain, frequent colds, heartburn, anger, depression, overeating, under-eating, and insomnia. More serious effects of stress are heart disease and hypertension (Crute, 2004). Due to stressful challenges, one third of new teachers leave the profession after the first five years of teaching (Reese, 2004). Stress affects both teachers' personal and professional environment (Isreal, 2005). Teachers are often exhausted from overworking, loss of sleep and racing thoughts of what to do in class, that it can impact preparation for class lessons, class

demeanor, and relationships with others (Isreal, 2005). Teachers' home lives are also deeply impacted by their levels of stress. Teaching is a profession in which one truly takes a great deal of "work" home with them. The "work" ranges from grading papers to worrying about a particular student's home life or thinking about a certain situation that occurred during the school day. Teachers have a very difficult time separating issues at school and home. Therefore, many teachers suffer from unsuccessful marriages, problems with their own children, and true depression (Richter, 2003). Teachers who are taking higher education classes while trying to maintain their classroom have increased levels of stress on both their home and school life. Stress is not one fold, it affects all aspects of life.

Numerous manifestations follow teacher stress. Exhaustion begins first physically and then becomes emotional exhaustion. Stressed teachers have incredibly short fuses that include impatience, irritability, and anger (Isreal, 2005). All of the characteristics are expressed to both students and colleagues. Teachers who are stressed have a repression of feelings, lethargy, and depression (Crute, 2004). Research shows there are more frequent absences in teachers who feel stressed. These track back mainly to exhaustion; both physical and emotional (Isreal, 2005). When teachers become stressed, they lose their sense of humor and their ability to stay organized. Stressed teachers feel as though their world is being turned upside down. It becomes very difficult for them to get a grasp on activities going on inside and outside of their classrooms (Truby and Trierweiler, 2005). It is pertinent that educators take control on their own lives managing their own stress in order to be able to effectively assist their students (Isreal, 2005).

Avoiding Stress

Coping with stress is the process of developing ways to decrease its effects and to get through difficult tasks despite the stress (Bindhu & Sudheeshkumar, 2002). Although it is

impossible to avoid stress, one must learn how to manage it (Crute, 2004). There are numerous strategies teachers can use to overcome and cope with stress. Nagle and Brown encourage implementation of the “ABCs of Managing Stress” (Nagel and Brown, 2003). In order to manage stress, teachers need to acknowledge what event is causing the stress. Once it is determined, teachers need to devise a plan to overcome the stressful situation and creatively implement a way to solve the problem. Teachers also need to include personal behavior modifications. Exercise provides benefits that build resiliency to stress, burns stress hormones, and proves to have a long term effect in preventing future stress episodes (Nagel and Brown, 2003). Other behavior modifications such as meditation and breathing help create emotional balance (Nagel and Brown, 2003). Teachers should also be encouraged to seek more support and vent to friends and family while finding brief exercise breaks and improving their diets (Richter, 2003). Teachers need to learn how to manage their time better to help cope with stress. Teacher reflection and thinking positively are other methods teachers can use to cope with stress. Communication provides a way for teachers to prevent or minimize the impact of stress (Nagel and Brown, 2003). Verbal language is not the only means of communication a teacher should take part in. Body language is a very useful resource when dealing with communication. It should be used as a form of communication that affects student behavior and self-regulation (Nagel and Brown, 2003). Both the verbal and nonverbal communication used within a classroom contributes greatly to the overall level of stress in the classroom.

Teachers can use a variety of strategies to help them avoid bringing stress from school to their home environment. Time management skills prove to be a useful tool in helping achieve both work and quality family time. Another strategy teachers should use to help lower stress is the implementation of a “to-do list” within their lives (Truby and Trierweiler, 2005). If a list is

made the night before and followed the next day, stressful situations can be avoided (Burmark and Fournier, 2003). Teachers should be sure to take time to relax and enjoy the company of their family through family selected activities. If teachers learn how to balance their home and school life, stressors will not put as much strain on a situation and may end up being an eustress as opposed to a stressful situation (Crute, 2004).

Summary

Reducing stress will help improve experiences with teachers and students therefore increasing the success of the school in educating pupils (Hansen and Sullivan, 2003). Teacher stress is not a light topic. Many school districts are trying to implement stress management seminars to help with teacher retention but with the constantly changing standards and expectations of the profession, will it help? The bottom line is that something needs to be done in order to protect the schools' investments in their teachers. Stress, if not treated with care, can prove to be deadly. Can school districts afford the knowledge of knowing stress was the leading factor in an employee's life?

Methodology

Research Design

The research on teacher stress will be conducted on a group of approximately twenty-five elementary school teachers during the 2007-2008 school year. This study will be conducted through the qualitative and quantitative approaches to research; more commonly referred to as the mixed methodology approach. The teachers will be given an open ended survey to complete in which they will share their opinions about teacher stress (See Appendix I). For the quantitative part of the study, I will use another survey (Appendix II) on a Likert Scale. This survey will have statements in which teachers scale one to five on their opinions with the statements. From the information gathered, analysis will be made to find averages of teacher's feelings and opinions.

Data Collection

My research questions are:

1. What is defined as teacher stress?
2. What causes teacher stress?
3. What effects does stress have on teachers?
4. How can teachers avoid stress?

To answer question one, teachers will be asked to write a metaphor stating what their definition of stress is will be on the survey found on Appendix I. Once approximately twenty-five teachers have responded, a general analysis of what teacher stress is will be made.

Two surveys will be given to research what factors cause teacher stress. One survey (Appendix I) will be open ended while another (Appendix II) will be used to find averages of teacher opinions. A specific question will be asked on the survey (Appendix I) to ask teachers when their stress level is at its highest.

Both surveys will be used to gather information on what effects occur when teachers get too stressed. Research on all of these topics will also be gathered.

Data Analysis

Analyzing Survey #1 (Close Ended Survey)

Teachers at the chosen school filled out a survey using a Likert Scale of 1-5. Votes of 1 showed strong disagreement while votes of 5 showed strong agreement. There were a total of seventeen statements; each one looking at a different aspect of teaching.

Statement 1: I like my job.

Teachers were asked to rate how much they liked their job. Results were positive from all teachers with all thirty-seven responses being in agreement. Twenty-nine of the responses strongly agreed with the statement while eight responses just agreed.

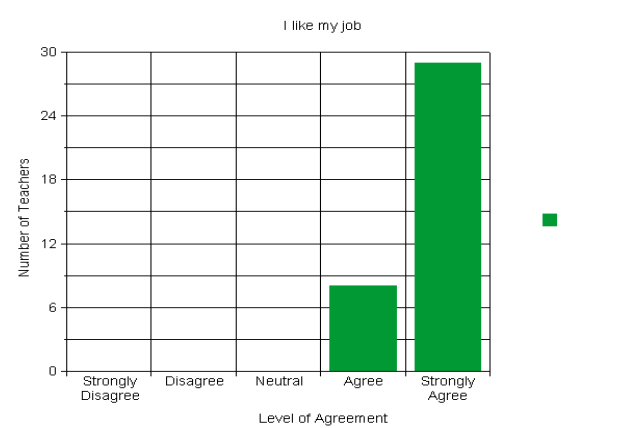


Figure 1.1

Statement 2: I look forward to coming to work everyday.

Results show the fact that all teachers look forward to coming to work everyday. Fourteen teachers strongly agreed with the statement while twenty-three teachers simply agreed with the statement.

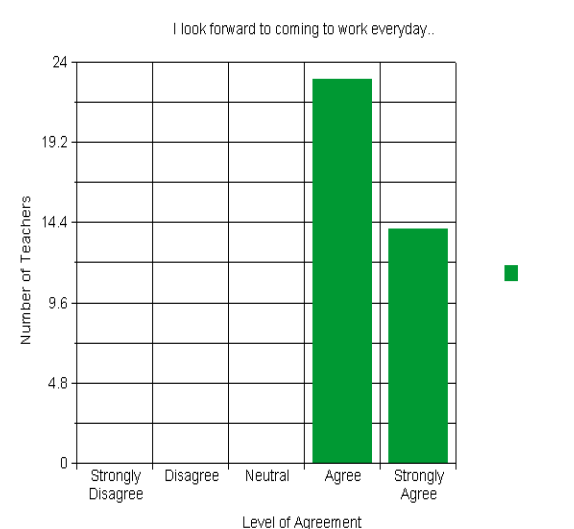


Figure 1.2

Statement 3: I feel freedom to within what I teach in my classroom.

A majority of the teachers at the school feel freedom within what they teach in their classroom. Seven of the teachers were neutral on the statement; not really agreeing or disagreeing. Thirteen of the teachers agreed that they had freedom to teach within what they want in their classroom while seventeen teachers strongly agreed with the statement.

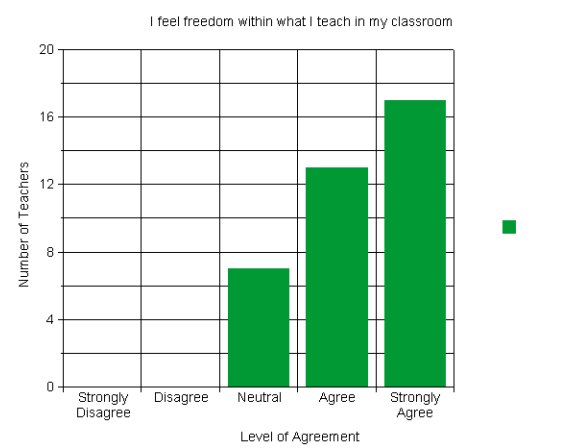


Figure 1.3

Statement 4: My time is well managed and spent during the school day.

Most of the teachers agreed that time is well managed and spent during the day although one teacher disagreed with the statement. Eight of the teachers were neutral on the statement; neither agreeing nor disagreeing. Nineteen of the teachers agreed with the statement and nine teachers strongly agreed that their time was well managed and spent during the day.

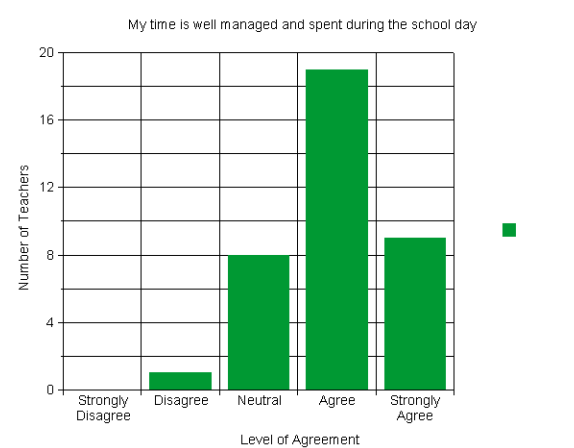


Figure 1.4

Statement 5: I feel respected by my students.

Overall, teachers surveyed agreed with this statement. Nineteen teachers agreed that they felt respected by their students. Eighteen of the teachers strongly agreed that they felt respected by their students. Many teachers commented that this response varies from year to year based on their student population.

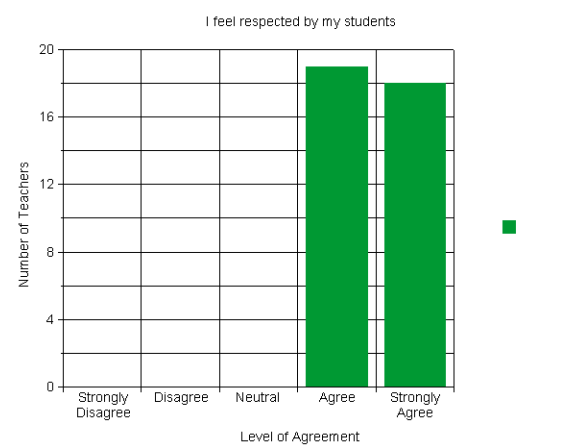


Figure 1.5

Statement 6: If given the chance, I would choose the teaching profession again.

Teachers within the school would more than likely teach again if they were given the chance. One teacher disagreed with the statement, two were indifferent not sure whether or not they would. Ten teachers agreed that they would choose the teaching profession again and an overwhelming number of twenty four teachers strongly agreed that they would choose teaching again.

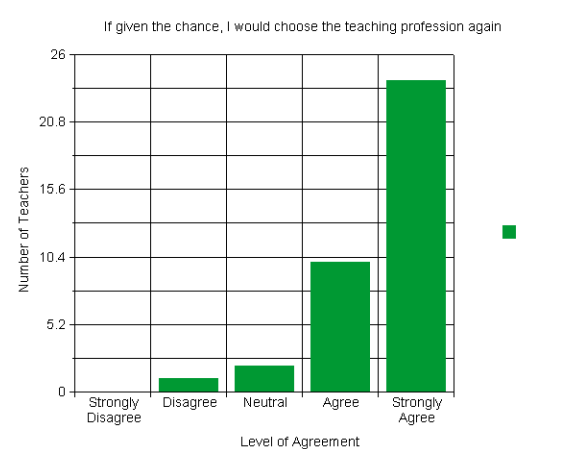


Figure 1.6

Statement 7: I feel overwhelmed by expectations at school.

A majority of the teachers have an overwhelmed feeling due to expectations at school. Seven teachers strongly agree with the statement that they feel overwhelmed by expectations, sixteen

teachers agree, eleven teachers are neutral, two teachers disagree, and one teacher strongly disagrees. Overall, it is apparent that expectations at school overwhelm teachers.

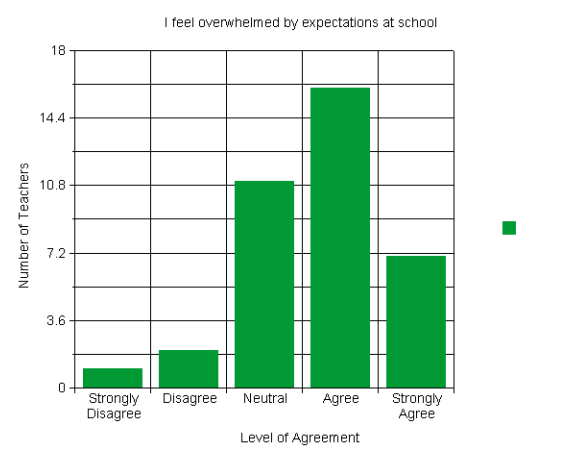


Figure 1.7

Statement 8: Before and After School meetings are worth my time.

Often times, teachers have meetings before and or after school. Teachers often wonder if these meetings are worth their time. Seven teachers strongly agree that these meetings are worth their time, eight teachers agree with the statement and eleven of the teachers are neutral to the statement. Eight teachers disagree with the statement which shows that they feel before and after school meetings are not worth their time. Two teachers strongly disagree with the statement showing strong feelings towards the fact that these meetings are not worth their time.

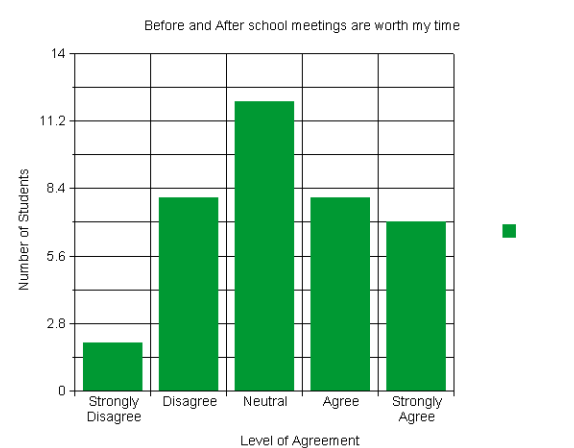


Figure 1.8

Statement 9: I know what is expected of me at school.

Expectations at school are ever changing. Therefore, teachers sometimes feel a strong sense of uncertainty towards their school expectations. Thirteen teachers strongly agreed with the statement demonstrating that they know their expectations; seventeen teachers agreed with the statement, five teachers were neutral on the statement, and two teachers disagreed with the statement. Overall, teachers within this particular school feel as if they know what is expected of them at school.

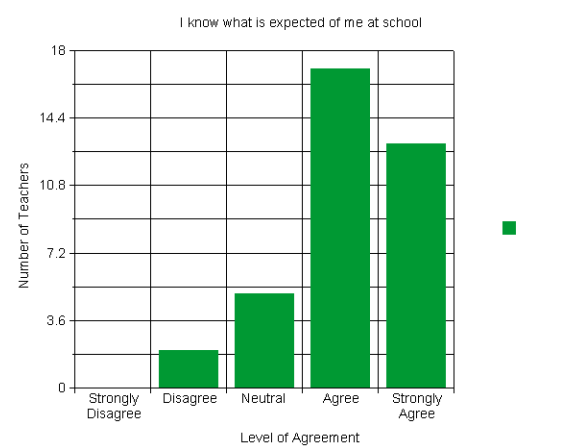


Figure 1.9

Statement 10: I have ample time to do the duties needed to be performed in the teaching profession.

Teaching is a very demanding job. Students have diverse learning styles and many different needs. Teachers today feel a strong feeling of lack of time to do the duties they feel like need to be done within the teaching profession. Seven teachers strongly disagreed with the statement. Eleven teachers disagreed with the statement, nine teachers were neutral on the statement, eight teachers agreed with the statement, and two teachers strongly agreed with the statement. More than half of the population surveyed does not think they have ample time to do the duties need to be performed in the teaching profession.

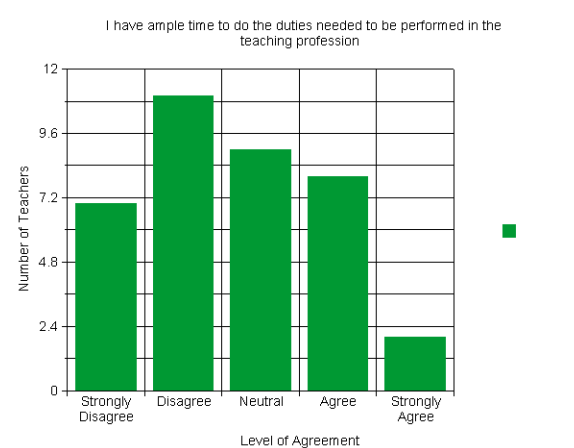


Figure 1.10

Statement 11: I have parental support.

Parents play a major role in their child’s education. In order for a teaching environment and teacher to be effective, teachers need to feel as though they have parental support. A majority of teachers feel as though they do have parental support although teachers stated that this varies from year to year based on the class. Three teachers strongly agree that they have parental support, Twenty-two teachers agree with the fact that they have parental support, eleven teachers

neither agree nor disagree with the statement, and one teacher feels as though she does not have parental support.

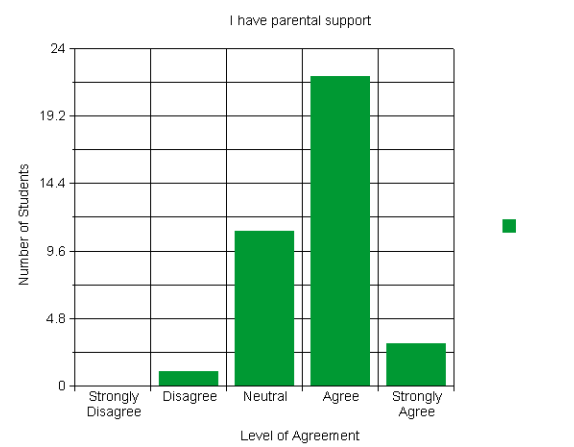


Figure 1.11

Statement 12: I effectively take care of discipline within my classroom.

Discipline is a very tough topic within classrooms today. Teachers have to be very careful as to how they handle situations. Many times it is up to the teacher to handle the discipline problems to keep many students from having to constantly go up to the office. Overall, the teachers feel as though they can effectively take care of discipline within their classroom. One teacher is neutral on the statement while sixteen teachers agree, and twenty teachers strongly agree with the statement. Overall, teachers feel as though they are effectively taking care of discipline within their classroom.

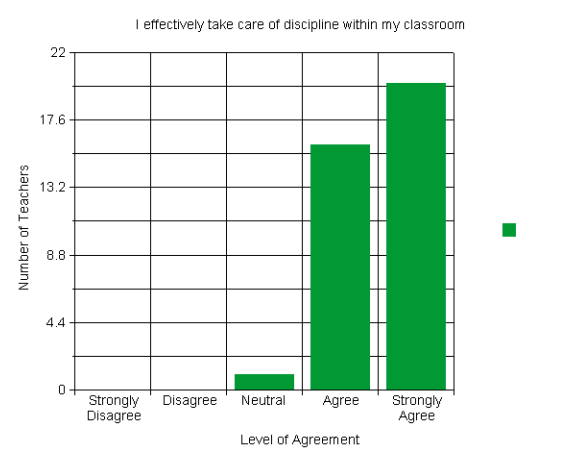


Figure 1.12

Statement 13: My administration supports my decisions.

All of the teachers feel as though the administration supports their decisions. Two of the teachers were neutral on the statement; neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement. Seventeen teachers agreed with the statement and eighteen teachers strongly agreed with the statement. Overall, teachers feel as though the administration supports their decisions.

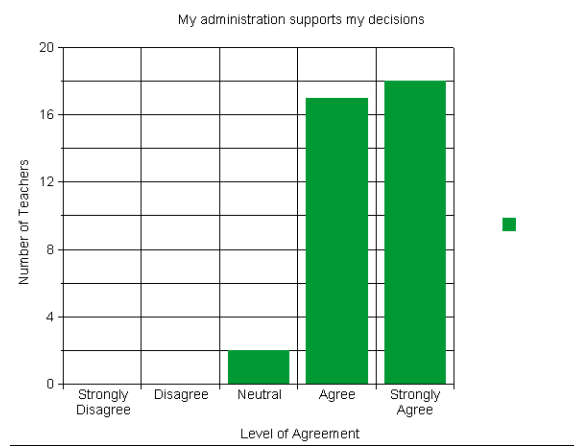


Figure 1.13

Statement 14: My administration gives me freedom within my classroom.

Twenty teachers strongly feel as though the administration gives them freedom within their classroom. Twelve teachers agreed with the statement that their administration gives them freedom within their classroom while two teachers were neutral on the statement.

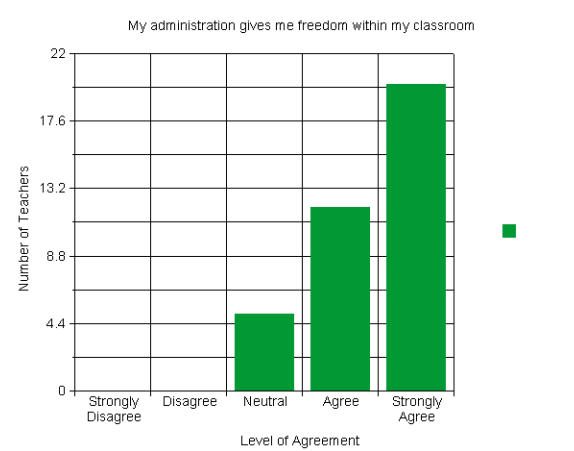


Figure 1.14

Statement 15: I feel supported by my school district.

Beyond the administration, teachers are affected by the decisions made by their school district. . Teachers need to not only feel respected and supported by their administration but also by their school district. Six teachers strongly agreed with the statement, nineteen teachers agreed, eleven were neutral, and one teacher strongly disagreed.

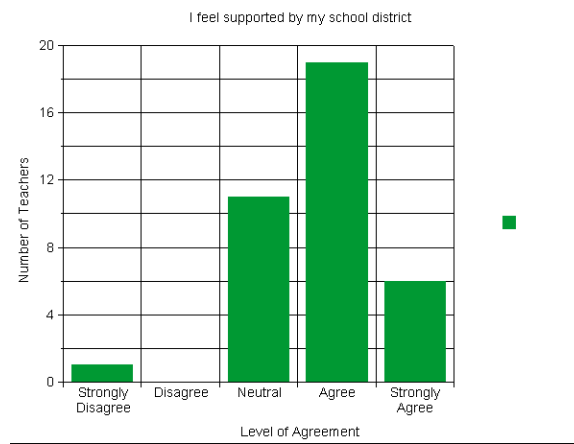


Figure 1.15

Statement 16: I feel respected by my administrators.

Teachers need to feel respected by their superiors. Most of the teachers (twenty-four) in the school strongly agreed with the statement that they felt respected by their administrators, nine teachers agreed with the statement, and four teachers neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

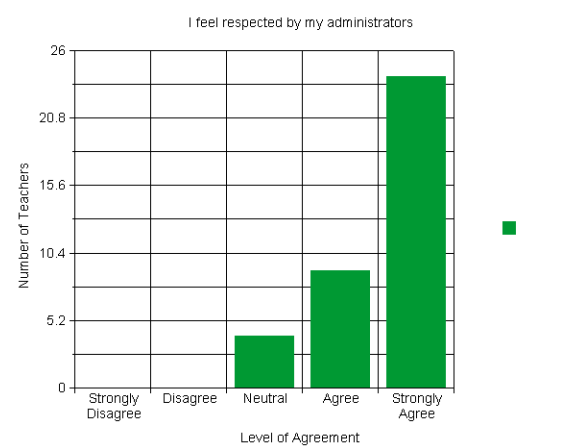


Figure 1.16

Statement 17: When needed, my administrators effectively take care of discipline problems.

Discipline problems that go beyond the classroom must be dealt with by the administration. Teachers both agree and disagree with the decisions that are made by the administration. However, once teachers give the students to their administrators, they are giving up the right to take care of the problem themselves. Two teachers do not feel as though the administration effectively takes care of discipline problems, eight teachers are neutral on the statement, seventeen teachers agree with the statement, and ten teachers strongly agree with the statement.

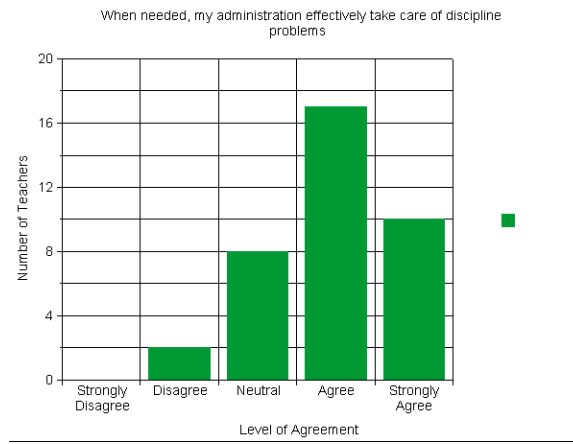


Figure 1.17

Analyzing Survey #2 (Open-Ended Survey)

Teachers were given a fifteen question/fill in the blank survey. Out of the surveys given out, only thirty six surveys were filled out and turned back in.

Item #1: Names on Paper

Teachers were given the option to put their names on their survey. Out of the thirty-six surveys, twenty-three teachers put their names on it while thirteen teachers chose to leave that section blank.

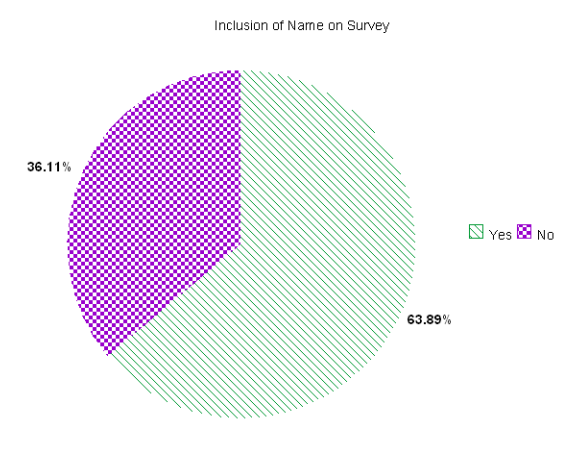


Figure 2.1

Item #2: Gender Identification

Teachers were asked to fill out their gender. An overwhelming majority of thirty-four surveys returned were from women while only two were returned from men.

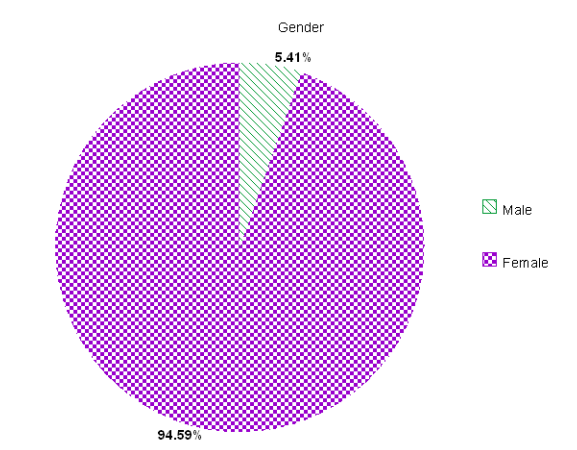
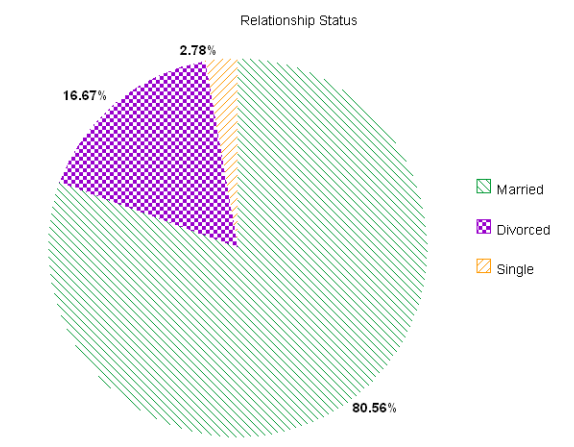


Figure 2.2

Item #3: Relationship Status

Teachers were asked to show their relationship status of married, divorced, or single. Twenty-four teachers are currently married, six divorced, and one is currently single.



Item #4: Number of Kids

Teachers were asked how many children they had of their own. Five teachers have no child, seven teachers have one child, sixteen teachers have two children, five teachers have three children, one teacher has four children, and two teachers have five or more children.

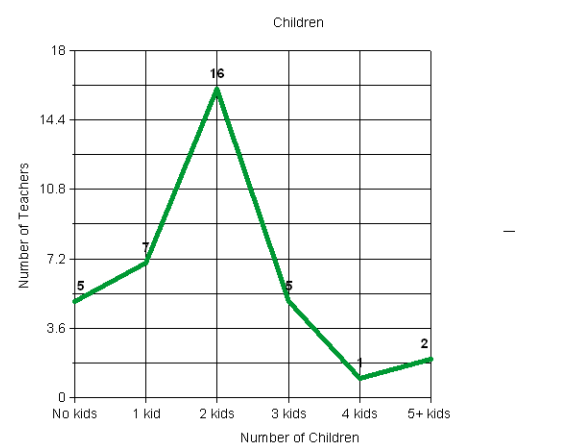


Figure 2.4

Item #5: Teaching Experience

Experience among teachers varies from first year teachers to teachers who have taught for over thirty years. There is currently one teacher in her first year teaching, one in his second year teaching, one in her third year, three in their fourth year, one in her fifth year, four in their sixth year, one in their seventh year, two in their eighth year, one in the ninth year, three in their eleventh year, three in their fifteenth year, one in their sixteenth year, one in their eighteenth year, one in their twenty-first year, one in their twenty-second year, three in their twenty-fourth year, three in their twenty fifth year, and five teachers who have been teaching thirty years and beyond.

Item #6: Are you stressed as a teacher?

Teachers were given the opportunity to state whether or not they felt stressed as a teacher. Out of the thirty-six teachers surveyed, twenty-seven teachers do feel stressed, while nine state they are not stressed.

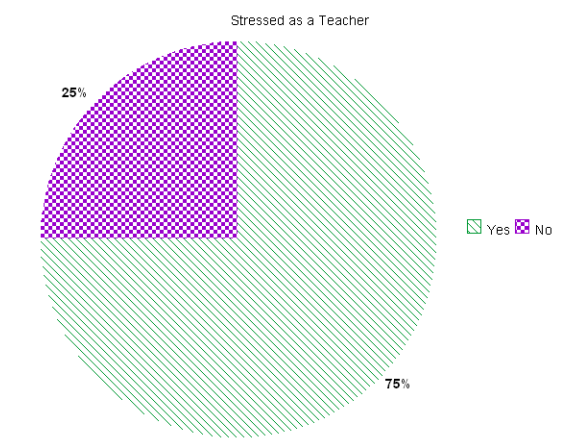


Figure 2.6

Item #7: Causes of Stress

Out of the twenty-seven students who said they were stressed, they were given the opportunity to list why they were stressed. The results varied but some were common among teachers.

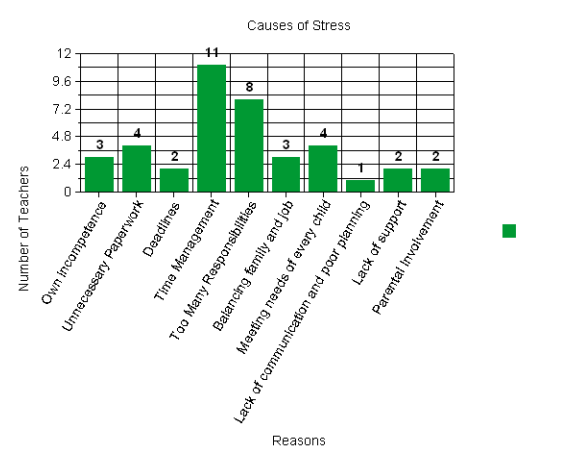


Figure 2.7

Item #8: Arrival at School

Teachers are employed to be at school from 8am-4pm. In order to prepare for the upcoming day, teacher’s arrival varies between the hours of six am and eight am. Below is a graph demonstrating the times that teachers arrive at school on a daily basis.

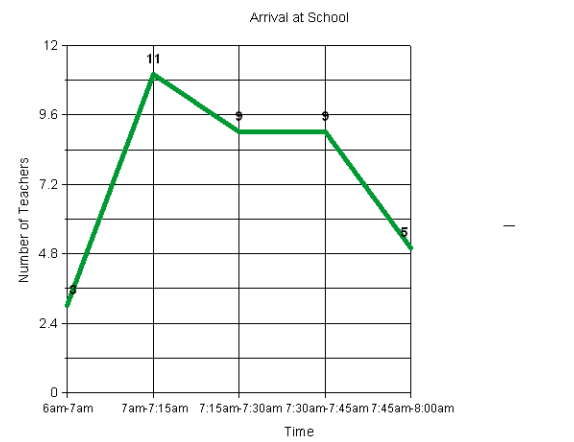
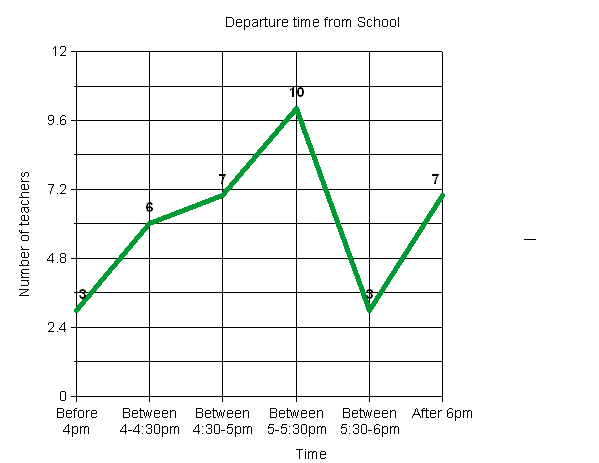


Figure 2.8

Item #9: Departure from school

Teachers are allowed to leave at 4pm on a daily basis. However, in attempt to get their thoughts together from the day and get ready for the next day, teachers leave school at a variety of times.



Item #10: Times of the year teachers feel most stressed

Throughout the year, teachers feel more stress at certain time. Below demonstrates times in which teachers feel the most stressed.

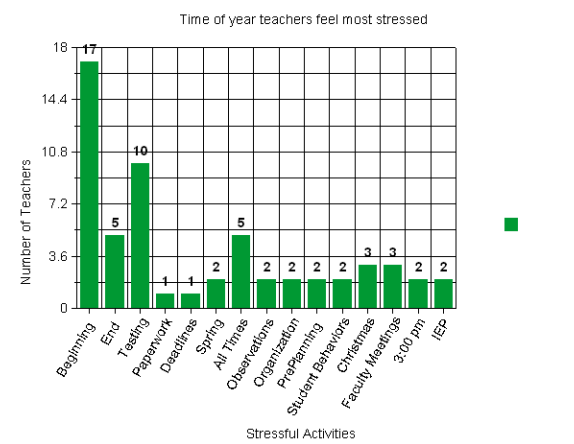


Figure 2.10

Item #11: Do you bring school work home? If so, please elaborate.

Although teachers only get paid for the hours between eight am and four pm, teachers often times find themselves taking home work that they could not find time to do during school hours. Out of the thirty-six teachers surveyed, twenty-seven teachers admit to bringing school work home while nine teachers state they do not bring school work home.

Item #12: Do you have an additional job? If so, what is it and how many hours do you work?

In order to meet the needs of their own personal commitments, teachers often times find themselves having additional jobs. Out of the thirty-seven teachers surveyed, fifteen teachers have additional jobs outside of teaching and taking care of their own personal family. Twenty-two teachers do not have an additional job but state that taking care of their own personal family is their other job. Jobs that teachers work on the side include but are not limited to the following. Many teachers find themselves working at the before and after school program for two to three hours daily, working in the BUGS program on Saturday mornings for four hours, working in their church, martial arts teacher, and factory work (40-50 hours per week).

Item #13: Are you currently taking classes to higher your education? If so, where and how often do you have classes? How often do you spend on your school work on a weekly basis?

In order to higher educate themselves and earn additional pay, teachers opt to take classes to earn a higher degree. Out of the thirty-seven teachers, eight teachers are currently taking higher education classes; two are working on their Masters while five just currently completed their Masters work. One of those five is continuing her education to get her Specialist Degree. The Masters program of choice meets one night a week for four hours with four additional study hours required each week. The two students still working on their Masters degree are also taking a class that meets once a month for four hours. The Specialist student is taking classes three nights a week for four hours each for the first eight weeks in the semester as well as taking three classes in the second eight weeks term. There is one student who is currently working on her Specialist in Administration and goes to class one night a week for four hours.

Item #14: Do you do school work over the summer? If so, please elaborate.

Twenty-two teachers state they work over the summer while fourteen teachers wait school officially starts back to begin working. Of those teachers that work over the summer, their work includes but is not limited to the following types of work. Although some teachers come in about six to eight days before preplanning to prepare for the upcoming year, other teachers may use the summer to gather materials they may need, research, find websites and ideas, make new letters for orientation, begin projects, write songs on chart paper, redo things that may have messed up during the year, computer updates and searches, organizational things such as setting up the classroom, look over textbooks and work on lesson plans. Teachers also do school work for classes that they are taking to higher their education.

Item #15: Please write an original metaphor to define/describe teacher stress.

Teachers were asked to write a metaphor to define or describe teacher stress. The following responses were given. Although not all teachers wrote metaphors, I am not excluding their responses.

1. Digging a hole that keeps getting refilled.
2. The need to make every minute count is stressful. I would die for a planning period like a high school teacher!
3. inevitable (spelling?)
4. Education is the vehicle that we ride to success.
5. Teaching is like cross county running... some hills and bumps but if you keep moving you will eventually get where you need to go.
6. All consuming, constantly motivated management of multiple responsibilities
7. Not original but chaotic
8. Are you kidding me? I can't think deep. I am too stressed!
9. balloon- ready to pop at any time
10. on my toes, always "moving" toward reaching a certain goal for each child, worrying/thinking about students away from school (child's bad home life), and basically wondering when will you get to another task that has to be completed by a certain time not to mention trying to successfully teach all of the GPS standards. (Hope this is not too negative!)
11. The teacher's stressed brain was a wall, bouncing every worry back over the tennis net.
12. Teacher stress is a reoccurring illness that eats away at the joy of teaching and leaves frustrated, although dedicated teachers.
13. Teaching is like a balancing beam act... sometimes you nail it and sometimes you feel like you fell right off!
14. teaching: stress :: going to the dentist: drill
15. You're glad you did it once it's over, but there's always more work that can be done.
16. A day of teaching is like dancing on a fire-ant mound.
17. Teacher stress is like trying to fit a camel through the eye of a needle- then getting it to pass the CRCT on level three.
18. I am the eye of the storm. (Calm surrounded by chaos.)

19. Teachers make lots of lemonade!! Lemon Pie, etc! and go into the room to get the kids smiling. We get lemons from Administration, Parent, students, society in general-keeping perspective makes it doable.
20. Sometimes I feel like a hamster on an exercise wheel at the end of a very busy week.
21. Teacher stress is an annoying mosquito that you can never seem to smack! (In other words, it is almost an inevitable part of the job-or any job for that matter!)
22. Pressure to improve test scores and control student behavior are major stressors for educators.
23. A “currently dormant” volcano
24. Under too much stress to think of a metaphor

Results and Findings

When analyzing the data collected in the close ended survey, it is apparent teachers have very strong opinions about issues at school. All teachers surveyed report liking their job although not all of them strongly agreed with the statement. Twenty-three of the teachers surveyed report that they agree with the fact that they look forward to coming to work everyday. Nineteen of the teachers strongly agreed with this statement. Overall, the teachers within the school look forward to coming to school everyday. Teachers began to have differing opinions on whether or not they have freedom to teach what they like within their classroom. Seven teachers were neutral on the topic; neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement. Thirteen teachers agreed with the statement and seventeen teachers strongly agreed with the statement. Most teachers feel as though their time is well managed and spent throughout the day; nine in strong agreement and nineteen in agreement. Eight teachers were neutral on the topic and one disagreed with the statement. All thirty-seven teachers feel respected by their students with nineteen in agreement and eighteen in strong agreement. If given the chance to teach again, twenty-four teachers would definitely do this, ten would do it, two are unsure, and one would not teach again if given the chance. Teachers proved to feel overwhelmed by the expectations at school with seven teachers strongly agreeing with the statement, sixteen agreeing, eleven neutral on the topic, two disagreeing, and one strongly disagreeing. It should be noted that both males disagreed with the statement; one strongly disagreed while the other simply disagreed. Teachers had mixed emotions on whether or not before and after school meeting were worth their time. Two teachers strongly disagreed with the statement, eight disagreed, twelve were neutral on the topic, eight agreed, and seven strongly agreed that these meetings are worth their time. Thirteen teachers strongly agreed that they know what their expectations at school are, seventeen agreed

with the statement, five were neutral, and two disagreed. Many teachers feel as though they do not have ample time to do the duties needed to be performed in the teaching profession. Seven teachers strongly disagreed with the statement that said they had ample time, eleven disagreed, nine were neutral, eight agreed and two strongly agreed. Over half of the teaching population does not feel as though they have ample time to complete the duties that are expected of them in the teaching profession. An overwhelming amount of teachers feel as though they have parental support. One teacher does not feel as though she has parental support while eleven are neutral on the statement. Twenty-two teachers agree with the fact that they do have parental support and thirteen teachers strongly agree. Teachers feel as though they can effectively handle discipline within their classroom. Only one teacher was neutral on the statement while sixteen agreed and twenty teachers strongly agreed. Overall, the assumption can be made that teachers feel as though they effectively take care of discipline problems within their classroom. Administration plays a key part in teacher stress. If teachers do not feel as though they have administrative support, their level of performance may decrease. Eighteen teachers strongly agree with the statement that they feel they have the administrators support, seventeen agree with the statement and two teachers are neutral. Twenty teachers strongly agree with the fact that the administration gives them freedom within their classroom, twelve teachers agree that freedom is given within their classroom, five teachers are neutral on the subject. Support goes beyond the administration to the school district. Six teachers strongly agreed with the fact that they had school district support, nineteen teachers agreed with the statement, eleven teachers were neutral, and one teacher strongly disagreed. When teachers responded whether they felt respected by their administrators, twenty-four strongly agreed, nine agreed, and four were neutral. Overall, most teachers feel respected by their administration. Teachers responded a little bit differently when

asked about how effectively discipline problems were handled by the administration. Ten strongly agreed with the statement, seventeen agreed, eight were neutral, and two disagreed.

When teachers were given an open ended survey, it provided them the opportunity to give honest and open responses. Out of the surveys given out, thirty-six surveys were returned. Twenty-three out of thirty six teachers opted to put their name on the survey. Thirty-four of the responses were from females while two were from males. Twenty-nine teachers are married, six divorced, and one teacher is single. Five teachers do not have children of their own, seven teachers have one child, sixteen teachers have two children, five teachers have three children, one teacher has four children, and two teachers have five or more children. Of the teachers who filled out the survey, the teaching experience among them varied greatly. Seven teachers are within their first five years of teaching, eight teachers have six to ten years of teaching experience, six teachers have eleven to fifteen years experience, two teachers have sixteen to twenty years experience, eight teachers have twenty to twenty-nine years experience, and five teachers have thirty or more years of teaching experience. Twenty-seven teachers admitted to feeling stressed as a teacher most of the time while nine teachers said they were not. The causes of stress included their own incompetence, unnecessary paperwork, deadlines, time management issues, too many responsibilities, balancing their job with their family, meeting the needs of every child, lack of communication, poor planning, lack of support, and parental involvement. Teachers cope with all of their responsibilities by going beyond the eight to four job. Three teachers report arriving at school between the hours of six and seven am, eleven teachers state they report for work between seven and seven fifteen, nine teachers arrive between seven fifteen and seven thirty, nine teachers arrive between seven thirty and seven forty-five, and four teachers

report to work between seven forty-five and eight am. Teachers leave at varying times as well. Three teachers leave before four pm. These teachers are the half-time EIP teachers who often times work beyond their hired eight to twelve job. Six teachers leave daily between four and four thirty, seven teachers leave between four thirty and five, ten teachers leave between five and five thirty, three teachers leave between five thirty and six, and seven teachers leave after six in the evening. Twenty-seven teachers report taking work home with them when they leave. This work includes but is not limited to papers to be graded, lesson plans, books to read, and reports to finish. Fifteen teachers report having an additional job during the school year. Most of these teachers work in the before and after school program and/or the BUGS program on Saturdays. One teacher has an additional job working in a factory forty to fifty hours a week. Numerous teachers reported that if you counted being a mom, housewife, and servant to their lord then yes they did have an additional job. Eight teachers are currently taking classes to higher their education. Two teachers are currently taking classes one night a week for four hours while also doing four study hours a week. These two teachers are also required to attend class one night a month at another school for an additional credit. Five teachers just recently finished their Master's degree going one night a week for four hours with four additional study hours. One of those five teachers is continuing education taking classes three nights a week for four hours to work on her Specialist. One teacher is working on her Specialist going one night a week for four hours. Twenty-two teachers report doing school work over the summer. This work includes getting organized for the upcoming year, looking over textbooks, researching materials, getting new ideas for the upcoming year, updating materials, and simply getting their classrooms ready for their new crop of kids. Teachers were asked to give a metaphor in which they could describe/define teacher stress. Although teachers responded to the statement, not all given

answers were metaphors. The answers that were given proved that teachers feel stress from a variety of places and have very strong emotional feelings towards stress and stressors.

Conclusion

Stress amongst the workplace is very common. In education, stress levels are increasing every day. Stressors include having too much paperwork, not having enough time, pressure from local and state administrators, and behavioral problems within the classroom. In today's society, it is important for teachers not to lose hope in their job and to keep a positive attitude. In order to do this, teachers need to keep their stress levels as low as possible. Although it is not possible to get rid of all stress, it is important to try and maintain stress at low levels. There are many ways that one can work at lowering stress levels. Teachers should try to lower their stress by watching their diets. It is proven that a healthy diet will help lower stress levels and keep the body healthier which in turn allows a person to feel better. In conjunction with a better diet, teachers should exercise at least three times a week. Exercise helps lower stress levels and increases a person's metabolism giving them more energy. The more energy teachers have, the more energized they will feel throughout the day allowing them to handle everyday situations with less stress upon them. Teachers should also make sure they have a good organizational routine within their classrooms and at home. When a person feels more organized, they are more likely to feel less stress within their environment. Setting up reminder systems is also a good organizational and managing technique. Some suggestions to doing this is to write out daily to do lists the night before and carry them around with you. As you finish a job, you can mark it off of your list. Also, having a list at your fingertips allows any last minute additions to be added to the same list as opposed to having different lists everywhere you turn. As mentioned earlier, not all stress is bad and it is important to have some stress within your life. It is important to know how to channel stress so it is positive as opposed to negative. Teachers who are able to manage and

maintain their stress will be able to provide a more beneficial learning environment within their classrooms as well as a healthy relationship out of the classroom.

Recommendation for Further Studies

As society continually changes and expectations are gradually growing in the workplace, it is necessary that in order to obtain more information on teacher stress –causes and possible remedies to avoid stress- needs to be obtained. Many factors come into play when determining whether or not teacher stress is present and to what extent teachers are stressed within the teaching environment. Further studies need to be held in order to find out what the stressors are and how teachers adapt to these stressors. Longitudinal studies could also be performed to see how stress changes over time in a specific educational environment. A study such as this could pinpoint stressors and their effects on the teachers as they try to be the best educators possible.

Appendix I

Name (optional) _____

Gender _____M _____F

Married Divorced Single

Children 0 1 2 3 4 5+

How many years have you been teaching? _____

On an average, do you feel stressed as a teacher? _____ Yes _____ No

If so, what would you contribute most to your stressed feelings?

What time do you arrive at work? _____

What time do you leave work? _____

What time of the school year do you feel the most stressed? Why?

Do you take school work home with you? If so, please describe.

Do you have an additional job? If so, what is it and how many hours do you work?

Are you currently taking classes to higher your education? If so, where and how often do you have classes? How often do you spend on your school work on a weekly basis?

Do you do school work over the summer? If so, please elaborate.

Please write an original metaphor to define/describe teacher stress.

Appendix II

Please respond to the following statements by circling 1 to 5. 1 states strong disagreement with the statement and 5 represents strong agreement with the statement.

I like my job.

1 2 3 4 5

I look forward to coming to work everyday.

1 2 3 4 5

I feel freedom within what I teach in my classroom.

1 2 3 4 5

My time is well managed and spent during the school day.

1 2 3 4 5

I feel respected by my students.

1 2 3 4 5

If given the chance, I would choose the teaching profession again.

1 2 3 4 5

I feel overwhelmed by expectations at school.

1 2 3 4 5

Before and After school meetings are worth my time.

1 2 3 4 5

I know what is expected of me at school.

1 2 3 4 5

I have ample time to do the duties needed to be performed in the teaching profession.

1 2 3 4 5

I have parental support.

1 2 3 4 5

I effectively take care of discipline within my classroom.

1 2 3 4 5

My administration supports my decisions.

1 2 3 4 5

My administration gives me freedom within my classroom.

1 2 3 4 5

I feel supported by my school district.

1 2 3 4 5

I feel respected by my administrators.

1 2 3 4 5

When needed, my administrators effectively take care of discipline problems.

1 2 3 4 5

Appendix III

Cover Letter to Teachers to include with Survey

August 14, 2007

Fellow Educators:

As many of you are aware, I have just finished another chapter in my life by completing my Masters of Education degree. Since I am not married, have no children of my own, and basically have no life outside of school, I have decided to continue my education at Augusta State University to earn my Specialist in Teaching and Learning. As part of the requirements for my specialist degree, I have to write a thesis. I have chosen the topic of “Teacher Stress” since it seems to be overwhelmingly popular throughout the field of education. As we all try to do our best at educating the students we are given year in and year out, I feel as though stress can play both a negative and positive role in how effective we are as educators. Through conducting my research, I hope to find out exactly what stresses us out here at Bel Air Elementary as well as try to come up with some helpful solutions to cope with everyday stressors. If you could please complete both of the following surveys, I would greatly appreciate it. One survey is extremely open-ended while the other uses the Likert Scale system. I encourage you to be honest on both surveys to help truly make the research I am conducting reliable. Thank you for your participation and help! I greatly appreciate it. Once I have finished my research, I plan to do a presentation to those who wish to attend to help you realize what some of the most prominent stressors in our “Bel Air Community” are as well as provide tips on how we can try to avoid and cope with stress to help become more effective educators. When you complete the surveys, please place them in my box. I hope to have all of the surveys back by Friday, August 24th.

Jessica Callan
4th grade teacher

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Running head: WRITER'S WORKSHOP

Writer's Workshop: Its Effect on First Grade Writers

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Introduction

Context of the Problem

Writing is power. Yet teachers in today's classrooms must face overwhelming and sometimes frustrating circumstances that render them less than powerful as they try to provide writing instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners with a wide range of ability levels. Historically, certain behaviors are associated with stages in writing development (Kieczykowski, 1996 and Spandel, 2004). Controversy about how best to provide instruction for students is well documented in the literacy research. Writing in the past consisted simply of handwriting skills being practiced in the primary grades (McLaughlin, 1995). More recently, students remained in their seats during writing time, completing isolated grammar worksheets or workbook pages that may or may not have improved their writing abilities (Franklin, 1992). Then a product approach gave way to a process oriented one. In classrooms today, more teachers are using a workshop approach that integrates reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Ray, 2006 and Avery, 1993). A workshop approach places responsibility for writing in the hands of the student who, assisted by the teacher and sometimes his or her peers, develops to become an independent writer.

Many writing teachers currently feel the pressure to teach students how to perform on standardized assessments even though the kinds of writing for state tests rarely matches authentic writing students do throughout their lives (Graves, 1994). Demands are equally great on those same teachers who also teach reading and mathematics. They feel the same kind of pressure due to the federally mandated No Child Left Behind Act and from State mandates that require

schools to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). One might question just how much pressure educators and their students can endure.

Teaching to assessments with the hope that students will perform well takes time, which is in short commodity when teacher practitioners must also teach rigorous content area standards. If students cannot meet standards, teachers are charged with the responsibility to remediate, and, at the same time, meet the needs of gifted and average learners. Dedicated educators will respond by taking staff development or college level courses so they can learn how to deal with all of these issues. The point remains: teaching writing, as well as any other subject, takes time. When the time runs out, it is often writing instruction that is omitted. Consequently, there seems to be a need for further study on the role of writing in the language arts, in general, and the use of Writer's Workshop in a first grade classroom, in particular.

Statement of the Problem

The importance of writing is evident in our everyday lives by the print media that exists for us to read, enjoy, learn from, and think about. Its multidimensional nature is complex, hence, the reason both teachers and students struggle with it in so many ways. Time plays a significant role in the teaching of writing. Research literature shows that a teacher can create a community of writers when students are allowed to write daily, and when the teacher uses the language of the writing craft in lessons that show what writers do, and how they think (Freeman, 2003).

An initiative for the 2007-2008 year in an appointed school was to increase writing opportunities in all content areas in each grade. There was tremendous interest in this initiative, as well as in the teaching of writing as a way of communicating and thinking. Others, however, do not share this feeling. Many students do not like to write. If they do like to write, many students do not know how to choose their own topics or give voice to the ideas they do have.

Many teachers do not know how to include writing instruction in an already full day. Some teachers do not feel comfortable modeling writing in front of their students. Finally, some teachers do not know how to teach writing using the best practices that would help them, and ultimately their students, succeed as lifelong writers. These are the problems that fueled the energy to conduct this study. A return to the academic arena gave this educator the opportunity to study how the effect of a workshop approach might influence first grade learners.

Significance of the Study

One of the most rewarding aspects of teaching is watching students grow as learners. As a first grade teacher, the opportunities to observe and delight in this growth are remarkable. A first grader's writing often consists of thoughts represented by a single illustration or a drawing and a few seemingly random letters. The teacher nurtures students by providing positive feedback, suggestions for improvement, questions to help writers think about the writing process, and conversations that nurture the students' needs. The writing evolves, sometimes in forms that require translation, until the majority of students in a class can write a thoughtful, well-organized paragraph that can be easily read.

The use of Writer's Workshop in a first grade classroom was the focus of this study. The researcher hopes to find out if the use of a workshop format, along with an extended block of time, use of mini-lessons, student selected topics the majority of the time, and the addition of peer conferences to the already-established teacher/student conferences can affect the writing of first grade students. If this study should find a significant difference in writing development for learners, then the use of Writer's Workshop should be considered as a viable instructional tool in the classroom.

Literature Review

A report from The National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges (April, 2003) stated, "Writing today is not a frill for the few, but an essential skill for the many." A result of the work by this group was that our nation's leaders must place writing at the center of their agendas and state and local policymakers must provide resources to improve writing. While these recommendations were being made schools were struggling with national mandates for additional assessment and testing centered around No Child Left Behind in an effort to make Adequate Yearly Progress based on Math and Reading scores (NCLB, 2002). Knowledge of writing process pedagogies has significantly effected how teachers think about instruction (Murphy and Dudley-Marling, 2001). These authors stress the need to continually study theories and considerations regarding writing in an effort to help our students learn the power writing can generate.

Theoretical Perspectives

Over the last two decades related perspectives have emerged about writing theories in the early years. Jean Piaget believed cognitive language development occurs in stages as a result of maturation (Reutzel and Cooler, 1996). As a person's language develops, oral and written communication improves. From birth to two years students are in the sensorimotor stage where the sole purpose of language is to communicate personal needs. Children begin to understand the use of language and make connections between symbols and words between the ages 2-7, the preoperational stage. Stage 3 of Piaget's theory is labeled concrete operations. At this stage children 7 to 11 years old begin to problem solve and reason deductively. In the last stage, formal operations, individuals aged 11 to adult think logically and abstractly.

Constructivist Lev Vygotsky's theory of social interaction encompassed the idea that what a child accomplishes today with teacher or peer assistance s/he will be able to accomplish tomorrow without assistance. It is in this zone of proximal development that learning occurs. Adult interaction serves as a scaffold to later writing by students. Vygotsky's theory, coupled with Piaget's, complement each other. Writing is both a personal activity and a social one.

Researchers think of the early childhood years, typically first grade, as when literacy development begins. Certain behaviors can be associated with developmental writing stages (Kieczykowski, 1996). The emergent writer draws, scribbles, and may use letters randomly. A developing writer uses invented spelling and is increasingly aware of how print works. A fluent writer writes freely with ease and confidence. Similarly Vicki Spandel recognizes that emerging writing takes many forms (2004). Children may scribble, play with letters on a page, create letter strings, draw, and later use text and art, label, list, and write a sentence or paragraph(s).

Primary grade writers gradually gain control of the writing processes as they draw on multiple sources of information (Calkins, 1994). Their repertoires increase based on knowledge and experiences. Students are able to focus finding meaning and making connections. They can speak to the teacher and others about their content as well as surface features. Revision skills can now be taught with student capability for understanding. Social engagement plays a role in the development of writing for these upper graders as well.

The Classroom Mosaic

The literature shows that children progress through a series of developmental stages constructing knowledge as they grow. Carol Avery likes the metaphor that Shirley Brice Heath used to describe American society in her speech at the English Coalition Conference in 1987 (1993). Avery sees the classroom as a mosaic. In this art form, every piece is visible and

beautiful as it stands alone, yet important for the mosaic to be complete. Classrooms consist of unique individuals with different characteristics, experiences, and developmental levels. Equally important, at each stage of development, is the role “socialness” plays in the classroom.

This is where we begin-with the belief that all children can write.

~Arlene Moore~

As early as fifteen years ago, writing instruction consisted of students learning to form letters correctly and to write legibly. The closest students came to actual writing was when they copied sentence frames with a blank to be filled in from a word bank. Penmanship, more than any other skill, was the focus (McLaughlin, 1995). Teachers and students composed language experience stories together, and then used them to practice reading and phonics skills. Instruction was teacher-centered, and students spent the majority of instructional time in their seats. Reading and writing were scheduled as two separate subjects. Grammar skills were evaluated through use of workbook pages and/or worksheets. Literacy practices focused on isolated skill work at the expense of writing and did not provide young children with the foundation or motivation to learn to write well (Franklin, 1992). McLaughlin iterates that traditions like this remain today, even though best practices are that listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities develop concurrently and interrelatedly (1995).

Today elementary educators are charged with establishing a community of writers in their classrooms. Students are encouraged to give and receive feedback from their classmates, become the audience for another classmate, and converse about their writing while teachers model and facilitate the process of writing (Bratcher, 1997). Sims points out that society will require virtually everyone to function beyond basic literacy skills in the future (2001). School districts will need to define what literacy for the information age means. The definition will need to

include traditional text literacies as well as visual, media information, and technology literacies. Evidence indicates the availability of interventions to improve writing skills that are both effective and appealing to students. The responsibility for choosing appropriate research-based programs lies with individual school districts and schools. Although the process of selecting intervention materials may seem to be time-consuming, the improvement of student writing is well worth the effort. In Sims' study the targeted group of 16 students made only moderate improvements in their expressive writing ability despite use of research-based interventions like teacher modeling of the writing process, writing conferences with the teacher, and peer collaboration.

During November of the 2004-2005 school year, Katie Wood Ray recorded more than 30 hours of videotape from the writing workshop of a first grade class in a small rural school in the western part of North Carolina (2006). She was amazed at the responsibility the students were able to take, as well as their insight into genre, craft, and writing process. Instead of teaching the students punctuation, the teacher, Lisa Cleveland, and her class looked at how writers used punctuation after one of her students was curious about use of the ellipsis. The students in this class worked 30-40 minutes each day on the writing projects they chose for themselves. They made all the decisions about their topics, genres, organization, drafting, and revisions. It was not only *what* these first graders learned that made the lesson significant, but also *how* they learned it. Cleveland gave up the role of all-knowing teacher and created a classroom of students who knew how to think and to do for themselves!

Carol Avery, renowned author and former teacher, chronicled in depth how she abandoned the basal reader in her classroom to teach reading through writing (1993). She did not use worksheets, prescriptive lessons, or a scope and sequenced program to facilitate students'

learning how to learn. As students wrote, her total language arts program developed. Avery, like Cleveland, became a learner in her own classroom. The teacher and students became partners in the search for understanding and knowledge. Avery established the norms and procedures of the class. Students wrote every day on topics that they chose for themselves. She had conferences with individuals and small groups and responded to their strengths, knowledge, and developmental levels. This predictable environment fostered responsible learning by her students. Much of Avery's time was spent helping children explore what they already knew. The high-quality teaching exhibited here encouraged individual differences rather than promoting uniformity. Use of the writing workshop in Avery's classroom brought a new approach to teaching and learning; one that responded to children individually, while at the same time creating a community of learners who responded to each other.

Robin Bayer studied 24 first graders to see if writer's workshop could help them become more confident and descriptive writers (1999). Children participated in the workshop two or three times a week. Each session began with a teacher-modeled mini-lesson on various writing topics, followed by students engaged in writing. The teacher also wrote at her desk before she helped individual students to show them that she, too, was a writer. Before Bayer began her study, she surveyed her students using questions such as: How do you feel when your teacher says it is writing time? Do you like to write? Why, or why not? Do you like the teacher to give you a topic, or do you like to decide on a topic yourself? Why? How would you describe yourself as a writer? During the final week of the study, Bayer surveyed her class a second time. The number of students who looked forward to writing time had doubled since the initial survey and the amount of those students who stated that they liked to write escalated from 25% to 71%.

Marcia S. Freeman wrote her book, *Teaching the Youngest Writers: A Practical Guide*, under the assumption that need drives the acquisition of skills (2003). She points out that teachers do not have wait to teach students the concepts behind writing until students know all the letters, all the sound-symbol relationships, how to spell, or how to read. As soon as children can draw or put a symbol on a piece of paper, and tell us what it says, they are writers and should be called and treated like writers. Freeman stresses the importance of not only believing in the students, but also giving them ownership of the process. This is done by giving them the responsibility to choose their own topics, allowing them the proper amount of time, establishing a safe and supportive environment where they are free to take risks, and providing all of the other necessary resources that will help them become independent writers. Teachers can create a successful community of writers by setting aside a daily block of time for writing, modeling what it is like to be a writer, using the content vocabulary associated with the writer's craft, and modeling how to "thinks aloud". Freeman mentions several techniques that can motivate a diverse group of children who function at different ability levels, some of whom might be in the concrete operational stage of development. These techniques include using manipulatives, such as puppets, to reinforce a target skill, using a tongue depressor with a fingernail drawn on it to remind students to finger space between words, and placing a stick on a line to show where writing should begin.

There are potential problems that exist in teaching the writing process using a workshop approach. The issue involves time. Literature suggests students should write everyday for extended periods. Curriculum mandates, however, make this difficult (Sudol, D. and Sudol, P., 1991). Their research asserts that other subjects must be taught, as well. In addition, they point out that not every student responds to the workshop approach and may complete little, if any,

work during the extended time. In some instances, those students who are not interested in writing will disrupt instruction, and thus disrupt the process for those who are on task.

Former teacher and writer-researcher Lola M. Schaefer remembers the fear she felt when she began to teach writing (2001). There was not a college class in existence that taught her how to teach writing and as a result, she felt unqualified. When she looked for resources, she could find few. Schaefer noted that teachers who have been teaching for years now feel a great deal of pressure from administrators, the public, and their peers to transform students into “proficient writers”. Likewise, today’s standardized assessments rarely resemble the types of writing tasks students practice in school, or do in life (Graves, 1994). Furthermore, Graves mentions that we spend more time checking students’ educational progress through outside measures than we actually spend teaching them. Graves points out that students today, even those in primary grades, can learn to write and maintain their own writing portfolios when they have been shown how, and because they are expected to write each day for a variety of purposes and audiences. Graves admits that every study of young writers he has done over the last twenty years has underestimated what they can do. Accordingly, there is much to be learned about the human potential for writing. As a part of their action research to advance written skills in the primary grades Benischek, Vejr, and Wetzel questioned why students viewed writing as painful, if emphasis on conventions was inhibiting the writing process, and if students could find enjoyment in writing, could that change their feelings, and as a result make their writing better (2001). Their review of literature led them to conclude that an underlying cause of poor writing skills might be a result of too much emphasis on isolated grammar skills. In an interview, the principal at their school stated that the school needed a curriculum that would show students how to be good

writers no matter what evaluation measure was used. The researchers felt the key element in the success of their project was the implementation of a Writer's Workshop.

Andrew P. Johnson examined the relationship between learning to teach and students learning to write, as he observed three beginning teachers who were implementing writer's workshop in a school that used traditional skills-based instruction (2001). Interestingly, peer teachers advised the new teachers to abandon the "whole language approach" they wanted to try in their classrooms. As the researcher collected data, he reported that talking is an integral part of both learning to teach and learning to write. Veteran teachers no longer talked to the beginning teachers when they did not adopt the skills-based approach to teaching writing. The new teachers found they could teach skills in an authentic setting, within the realm of the writer's workshop and still have time to teach the process of writing to their students. They allowed their students to choose their own topics, and though each new teacher's style of teaching was different, during the workshop time, there were few classroom management problems in any of the classes. The teachers might have used the traditional approach to writing in order to have meaningful dialogue with co-workers, but they took a risk, as writers also must do. They grew and developed along with their students by creating a risk free environment where teachers and students engaged in reflective conversations with each other. This led Johnson to conclude that within a workshop atmosphere there lies the potential for reflection, feedback, revision, and refinement of skills. At the same time, safe and predictable practices, both within the classroom community and within the school community, have the potential to hinder change in a complex and changing society like ours.

No matter what we teach, in order to help our students be successful we must show them what effective, strong performance looks like.

R.J. Stiggins

In the Foreword to *Creating Young Writers: Using the Six Traits to Enrich Writing Process in Primary Classrooms*, author Barry Lane provides the meaning of the word *assessment* (Spandel, 2004). It comes from the Latin word *assidere*, to “sit beside.” Lane reminds readers that by using the language of the traits, such as ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation we have a language we can share with our students to talk about the words that appear on a page. When done correctly, writing assessments provide insightful information that celebrates students’ writing so they will repeat successes. Regie Routman emphasizes that the learners in the assessment process are both the students and the teachers (2001).

State tests are not authentic means of assessment warns Lori Garcia, Jodi Meyer, and Leah Walsh (2002). Teachers must remember the goal of writing instruction is to create independent writers who reflect on what they have written. In fact, State assessments seem to test students on their inabilities rather than their strengths. Some teachers use authentic means of assessment from their classrooms. These include portfolios, student checklists, rubrics, and conferences with the teacher. Often times this collected evidence becomes pieces of paper in a folder, rather than valuable information that will drive instruction; and teachers are instructing to their grade level rather than to the needs of their students. This particular study used rubrics, checklists, and conferences to determine what needed to be taught. The researchers, Garcia, Meyer, and Walsh, saw improvement in their first and second graders writing, but did note that it

was difficult to find a consistent block of time due to specials, acclimation of new students to the use of the workshop approach, and a high mobility rate within their school.

Bruce Sandler and Heidi Andrade present a case for the use of rubrics (2004). Rubrics provided scaffolding for a student in their study who could not self-regulate her writing, while at the same time, reinforcing and guiding those students who could self regulate. Sandler and Andrade noted that some teachers avoid the use of rubrics for peer or self-assessment because of misconceptions. They fear students will give their friends A's or will not use the rubrics to revise their own writing. Teachers must model and teach expectations if this happens.

Many teachers change the literacy curricula in order to prepare students to take high-stakes tests. Because test results can greatly impact what happens to some students, retention or lesser diplomas in some states, Higgins, Miller, and Wegmann report many schools are preparing students to take the high stakes assessments by giving them test-like activities (2006). It is indicated that teaching genre writing, providing time for writing and revising, allowing for student self-selection of topics, encouraging creativity, and incorporating the use of conventions into instruction are best practices, and that emphasizing elements in teaching process writing through a workshop approach will allow students to score better on State writing tests. Assessment should inform schools about a student's strengths rather than how well he or she can take a test. The goal of learning, after all, is to produce lifelong learners. Studies conducted and reported on by researchers reinforce the importance of teaching using best practices. Use of writing workshop and the 6+1 Traits not only helped students meet State standards, but also helped them become better writers.

I am not a teacher but an awakener.

Robert Frost

In summary, the teaching of writing is a complex, multidimensional task. Whereas literacy research in the past has been comprised of quantitative measures of teacher directed lessons, today's instruction is learner centered and based on interaction between teacher and students, as well as between students and their peers in a workshop environment that encourages movement, talk, reflection, and thinking. In the art of teaching, the teacher, too, is a learner, perhaps the most important one (Graves, 1994). When Schaefer (2001) and Avery (1993) "awakened" to focus on the children rather than the practice in their teaching, they discovered the young writers in a literate community teach themselves, each other, and the teacher. Thus, there is a need to examine the use of the writer's workshop in a first grade classroom to discover if an extended block of time, use of mini-lessons, student selected topics the majority of the time, and the addition of peer conferences to the already-established teacher/student conference can make a difference in how young students write.

Planning and Conducting the Study

It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge.

Albert Einstein

Description of the Study

Each teacher in the appointed school was charged with working collaboratively with their grade level on school initiatives, one of which was to improve writing instruction across the curriculum for the 2007-2008 school year. During preplanning, first grade teachers met and planned writing assignments for the year that coincided with the reading textbook selections and another curriculum area, usually science or social studies, and, at times, mathematics. The instructors felt very comfortable initiating the writing process early in the week and finishing by the end of the week. Student-created work, when displayed in the halls, looks very much the

same. As a result, many teachers felt that such an approach was limiting. Many students did not know what to write about the topics they were given. Teachers modeled the writing process, only to have students copy their ideas in their own writing. Conferences between teachers and the students helped them complete their assignments, but did not result in student enjoyment of writing. Writing is not a linear process. The current study, then, was conceived as a result of this teacher's interest in teaching writing using best practices discovered in the review of the literature. As a practitioner, this teacher was curious to see if an extended block of time for writing, use of mini-lessons, student selected topics the majority of the time, and the addition of peer conferences to the already-established teacher/student conferences could affect how young students write.

School Population

The students in the researcher's school live in a primarily affluent suburb in the Coastal Plain Region. The school system consists of a rapidly growing population that now exceeds 20,000 students. The average yearly income of parents who live in this area is \$66,000. The county is primarily a manufacturing community, but the number of retail businesses is increasing. At the end of the 2006-2007 school year 762 students were enrolled. The free and reduced lunch population was 4.5%. Ethnicity percentages included: Caucasian, 78.50%; African American, 14.73 %; Asian, 3.09%; and Other, 3.68%. The general population was comprised of 52.26% males and 47.74% females. The needs of this diverse population vary. Special education services are provided to 13% of the students in the areas of speech, learning disabilities, emotional disabilities, autism, and mild intellectual disabilities. Gifted students are bussed to a neighboring school one day each week. The school partners with the local university, and lab students and apprentices work in the school setting with thirty-nine regular education teachers,

five special education teachers, a speech language pathologist, and two ABA teachers. One full-time and one half-time guidance counselor, two full-time and one half-time physical education teachers, one music teacher, one art teacher, a media specialist, two Early Intervention Program teachers, twenty-one highly qualified paraprofessionals in grades K-2, one full-time and one half-time clerical aides for grades 3-5, nine special education paraprofessionals who work in the ABA program and two who work as inclusion support in grades K-5 serve the school, as well. Other staff include a technology support specialist, two secretaries, one nurse, five custodians, and seven nutrition workers. The administrative staff consists of one principal and one assistant principal. An instructional technology specialist visits each month to provide in-house technology training. A before and after school daycare program is also provided, and serves 58 students. The school community receives additional support from an active PTO, many parent volunteers, and a mentoring program.

Participants

The eighteen first graders who participated in this study represent a diverse group. Of the males 64% are Caucasian, 18% are African American, 9% are Biracial, and 9% are Asian. Of the females 50% are Caucasian, 25% are African American, 12.5% are Biracial, and 12.5% are Asian. All are from two parent homes with the exception of one boy whose grandparents are his legal guardians. One male student attends Speech class two days per week, and one male attends private speech therapy outside the school. One girl is repeating the first grade this year. All students are of average or above average intelligence.

Methodology

Tell me and I'll forget. Show me, and I may not remember. Involve me, and I'll understand.

Author Unknown

The study was conducted in a first grade classroom. Phase 1 of the implementation process occurred from September 24-October 26. During this time writing instruction took place in a traditional manner. Students were directly instructed on the writing process. All topics were assigned with specific guidelines as to what students would be expected to include in their writing. All first grade classrooms were doing the same writing assignments since it is a county policy for schools to show that teachers collaborate. Writing time occurred when it could be fitted in to an already busy schedule, but all student products were to be finished on Fridays and placed on display in the hallways the following week. Teacher/student conferences took place as soon as students finished their rough drafts. The researcher's paraprofessional helped with these conferences. One writing assignment during this phase of the study was scored using a rubric created by this practitioner's grade level. It is similar to one designed by the State to assess third grade writers. This particular rubric was used to assess a Literature Response writing assignment. The conferences between the teacher or paraprofessional and the students focused mostly on correcting spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors before students prepared a final copy.

Phase 2 of the study was to have taken place from October 29-November 30, but during this time, the paraprofessional became ill, and was not able to return to school. There were many days when the teacher researcher was on her own trying to meet the needs of all of the writers in the class in the way the administration felt the writing needed to be taught. Substitutes came and went, but few had an interest, or did not feel qualified to help student writers. This practitioner extended the time period for implementation because of this setback. A new paraprofessional was hired and began work on January 22. When she knew the routines, this new member of the team, began helping with student conferences. Phase 2 continued until the end of February, during which time students missed four days of Writer's Workshop due to Early Release and

Winter Break. In Phase 2 extended time was devoted to writing each day. Instead of the “fit it in when you can” approach of Phase 1, one hour of every day was allotted to Writer’s Workshop. This time was not compromised. During this phase the teacher and students worked together to plan what the workshop would be like in their classroom. Students helped determine the rules and procedures for Writer’s Workshop. Each day students had time to write on topics they, for the most part, selected for themselves. If a student had writer’s block, there were charts around the room with possible ideas to help inspire and develop thoughts. All writing was housed in one place, and students had access if they wished to return to a previous writing. Charts based on mini-lessons that had been previously taught were hung around the room for students to use as resources when necessary. The mini-lessons were not preplanned; rather, they were based on the observed needs in the classroom or noted during conferences. In addition, mini-lessons were about the craft of writing rather than skill lessons. Procedures were put into place so that students could conference with their peers. To document frequency of these conferences, a tally sheet was placed in each peer conference corner. Each conference conducted by the teacher or her paraprofessional was to be documented using abbreviated notes about what was discussed. This information was to be kept in a binder.

During the course of the study, the teacher compiled two surveys, one to find out how her students felt about writing, and one given to every teacher of writing in this practitioner’s school, to determine attitudes and feelings about teaching writing in general, and about use of the Writer’s Workshop, in particular. The survey given to the students before implementing the workshop, was also given to them at the end of the study. The teacher interviewed students and recorded their answers both times. In addition, a letter was composed and sent home to the parents granting permission for this researcher to use the results of the data collected. One

Literature Response writing was evaluated for each student during Phase 2, using the same rubric mentioned earlier.

Data Analysis

This action research study was conducted to determine the effect of Writer’s Workshop on first grade writers. Before beginning the study, a survey was devised for all writing teachers at the school. Questions were designed to find out how teachers perceived their writing instruction and how their students’ reacted to that instruction. Results were compared based on grades K-2 and 3-5. Each set of questions contained a response that could be associated with a workshop approach, and a response associated with a traditional approach. The following table shows data that relate to this particular study.

1. How do your students feel about writing? * = Workshop Approach		
	Grades K-2	Grades 3-5
Favorable *	39%	64%
Unfavorable	54%	36%
No Response	7%	0%
3. How are topics assigned to students most of the time?		
Teacher assigned prompts	85%	37%
Students select own topics *	15%	63%
4. How long do students write each day?		
30-45 minutes or longer *	8%	0%
20-30 minutes	58%	79%
Less than 20 minutes	34%	21%

5. How do you feel about peer conferences?		
Enrich student writing *	75%	93%
I don't know how to use them	25%	7%
	Grades K-2	Grades 3-5
6. How do you teach grammar skills?		
Workbook pages or worksheets	58%	75%
Lessons based on mistakes made *	42%	25%

Results show that Grade 3-5 teachers use a workshop approach more often than do the Grade K-2 teachers. This may be because Kindergarten teachers do not spend much time teaching writing until later in the year. Surprisingly, grammar skills appeared to be taught in isolation by most teachers. It was speculated that if students in the lower grades had been allowed to choose their own writing topics, they might have enjoyed writing more. Interestingly, neither group spent a large block of time on writing each day, one of the signature characteristics of the Writer's Workshop approach. At the end of the survey, teachers were provided space to write about the biggest challenges they faced as teachers of writing. Finding the time to teach writing, learning how to teach it well, and a lack of student motivation were the challenges noted by each group of teachers. Based on these results, it is clear that there is a great deal of confusion concerning how best to teach writing.

Each child in the first grade classroom was interviewed at the beginning and the end of the study. Survey questions included: Do you like to write? Do you prefer teacher-selected or self-selected topics? How do you describe yourself as a writer?

Do you like to write?

	Before Writer’s Workshop	After Writer’s Workshop
Yes	61%	83%
No	0%	0%
Sometimes	39%	17%
Do you prefer teacher-selected or self-selected topics?		
	Before Writer’s Workshop	After Writer’s Workshop
Teacher-selected	46%	16%
Self-selected	54%	84%
How do you describe yourself as a writer?		
Great	25%	67%
Good	22%	22%
Ok	44%	11%
Not good	6%	0%

All of the students in the class liked to write before and after the implementation of the workshop approach. Those who sometimes liked to write decreased. The increase in the number of students who liked to write at the end of the study is significant. When this teacher asked why students who had answered “sometimes” before the project began, now chose “yes,” responses were: “I like to choose what I’m going to write about.” It’s fun to write now.” “ I write better now.” Also significant was the number of students who liked selecting their own topics following the set up of a workshop in the classroom. Even though some students (22%) still only felt “good” about themselves as writers, the number of students who described themselves as “ok” decreased, and there were no longer any students who did not feel good about him/herself

as a writer. The student who did not feel good about himself as a writer before the Writer’s Workshop changed how he felt to “great” at the end of the study. One day after a mini-lesson on onomatopoeias, this particular student said, “I sound just like my favorite author, Eric Carle when I wrote today.” What a discovery! This student realized he was an author.

At the beginning and the end of this study, each student completed a Response to Literature writing assignment. The assignment was scored using a rubric developed by this teacher practitioner and other first grade teachers at her school. The results follow.

Level of Development	Pretest Results	Posttest Results
Beginning	44%	0%
Developing	50%	44%
Strong	6%	56%

As this table shows, the results were very positive. Each student’s writing level improved or remained the same from the pretest to the posttest. Before the pretest was administered, students had been instructed using a traditional approach. The stages in the writing process were taught in a whole group setting. Worksheets had been used to teach capitalization, punctuation, and complete sentence recognition. The Phase 1 assignment, a Literature Response activity based on a story whose main character got a new pair of boots for her birthday, was motivating because students had been given a boot pattern to decorate with the help of family members at home. Once all the boots were completed and returned to school, the teacher modeled the writing process and used a boot pattern she had created. The teacher’s writing had a well-developed idea, was organized, and had voice, sentence fluency, and excellent word choice, but none of these traits were mentioned during Phase 1. The focus was on the traditional skills students had

been practicing in class and talking about in conferences with the teacher or paraprofessional. In Phase 2 the teacher modeled how ideas can be developed, the different ways to organize writing with use of specific nouns and verbs, ways to begin and end writing, the importance of letting the writer’s voice be heard, and how to use sentences that begin different ways and are different lengths. Students’ writing began to show these qualities as demonstrated in the chart below. Examples from student work were used as often as possible in mini-lessons. At times, the class went back to previous writing examples and discussed ways to improve a particular piece. Following a nonfiction reading selection about kinds of houses around the world, students drew a picture of their ideal dream house. By this time, students had their own ideas about how to develop their writing, and the teacher did not model. The following chart shows a breakdown of the domains that were evaluated during each phase of the project and the percentage of the class who performed at each level.

DOMAIN: IDEAS		
	Pretest	Posttest
Beginning Level	50%	0%
Developing Level	44%	17%
Strong Level	6%	83%
DOMAIN: ORGANIZATION		
Beginning Level	28%	0%
Developing Level	50%	50%
Strong Level	22%	50%
DOMAIN: STYLE		
Beginning Level	39%	0%

Developing Level	61%	39%
Strong Level	0%	61%
DOMAIN: CONVENTIONS		
Beginning Level	27%	0%
Developing Level	56%	44%
Strong Level	17%	56%

When the results were compiled for the Ideas Domain, it was found that at the beginning of the study 50% of the class created a piece of writing that conveyed little meaning. When the teacher and student conferred, the student would often have to orally read what had been written because the teacher could not understand it, or the writer provided insufficient information to develop a point of view. This 50% of the class were Beginning Writers. Following implementation of Writer's Workshop 83% of the class were Strong Writers in the Ideas Domain. This meant ideas were developed and elaborated upon with a definite point of view. Varied sentence length and different kinds of sentences helped the writing flow. Of the 28% of the students who scored at the Beginning Level of development for Organization (no coordination of written elements is evident), by the end of the study writers were either at the Developing Level meaning either a beginning, middle, or end was not present though an order was evident, or the Strong Level which meant there was a clear beginning, middle, and end with transitions that connected ideas. 50% of the students, as opposed to 22%, were now scoring at the Strong Level of the Organization Domain. The Style Domain varies from no awareness of an audience with no distinguishing factors that make it the writer's own (Beginning Level) to touches of originality and moments of audience awareness that fade (Developing Level) to the

writer actually “owning” the topic because he or she is aware of an audience and is willing to take risks to create a clear picture in the reader’s mind (Strong Level). It did not come as a surprise to this educator that a total of 73% of the class was at the Developing or Strong Level of the Conventions Domain because so much emphasis is placed on correct capitalization, punctuation, and sentence completeness in the traditional approach of Phase 1. Even a Developing Level writer may use conventions inconsistently. The Strong Level writer is beginning to make use of resources such as Word Walls, dictionaries, etc. It is significant that more than half the class (56%) scored at the Strong Level even though mini-lessons were more about craft than conventions in Phase 2.

The teacher thought that the implementation of peer conferences could benefit first grade writers. Despite mini-lessons, posted rules, and encouragement to use peers as a resource to talk about ideas or ask another classmate his or her opinion about their writing, first graders either were all peer conferencing at the same time (we ran out of corners), or they would move to a peer conferencing area where each student continued to work on his or her own writing without any conversation. It became impossible to use the tally system because it did not provide the teacher with the kind of information that was useful for analysis in this study. Students preferred conferences with the teacher or paraprofessional. Upon reflection, the teacher thinks that students did not see each other as people who could mutually help each other with writing. What could a child teach a child? So, the class began large group peer conferences. The teacher first role played the part of a student who needed help, and then the role of a student who had something to offer a peer, for example: a question that would make meaning clearer for someone reading the writing, a better word for one that was used by a writer, encouragement about an idea, etc. During most of Phase 2, then, we used large groups rather than partnered peer conferences to talk

about writing. More time was needed for students to develop the confidence in knowing that they could help others.

Reflections and Future Applications

You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him find it within himself.

Galileo

In classrooms where students are taught in a traditional manner, and in classrooms where students use Writer's Workshop, writing is taught as a process with five stages. Students write for many purposes in all genres. Conferences occur in both approaches. Differences abound, however. In the traditional approach, teachers assign both the topics and what to do. Writing is fit into the schedule only when possible. Isolated skills are taught explicitly in a predetermined manner, usually the next page in the textbook or the next workbook page or skill sheet. Teaching writing is predictable. The traditional approach is teacher-centered. Little growth takes place in the writer as learner and thinker. In the workshop approach students choose their own topics most of the time. Topics are often based on students' interests. Skills are taught as needed, and only to students who need those skills. Mini-lessons are about the craft of writing. Work is reflective and differentiated. Students take risks and experiment with their writing. Most importantly, Writer's Workshop is student-centered. Students grow in their abilities and confidence as this study has demonstrated.

Teachers are often afraid to give up control of their classrooms. Research, contemplation, taking a risk...all of these are proof that a Writer's Workshop approach is doable as well as rewarding, not only for the students, but also the teacher.

In the future, pre-service teachers should have a course in writing. Teachers should not be afraid to model, even make mistakes in front of their students. Writing instruction can be

implemented across the curriculum. All the language arts: reading, writing, listening, and speaking have their place in a Writer's Workshop. This approach offers teachers the opportunity to change and improve classroom practice. When teachers can give up some of the control, give students freedom to write for extended periods of time, allow students to choose their own topics most of the time, teach the craft of writing in short mini-lessons, and permit student conversations about that craft (peer conferences) excitement will result. When we give students time, materials, and encouragement to write, students use whatever they do know in amazing ways (Calkins, 1994).

The quotations interspersed throughout this study illustrate that writing is an art form. Authors of these quotes served as mentors to this educator as she tried to enact change in her classroom. Teachers, too, can bring the joy, the beauty, the art of writing into their own classrooms because it is within each of us and within in our students. Give students extended amounts of time to write and think. Let them have the opportunity to choose their own topics. Talk about what is working, and what is not. Show them what other authors, including yourself, do to communicate thoughts. We are all learners. The use of a Writer's Workshop can be effective.

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Appendix

WRITING SURVEY

Circle the choice that best describes your classroom.

1. My students are excited about writing.
My students generally do not like to write.
2. I am a K-2 teacher.
I am a 3-5 teacher.
3. Students most often write to teacher-assigned prompts or topics.
Students select their own writing topics most of the time though I may specify a genre or theme.
4. Students have a 30-45 minute or longer block of writing each day.
Students write 20-30 minutes each day.
Students write less than 20 minutes each day.
5. Peer conferences are used to enrich student writing.
I'm not sure how to use peer conferences.
6. I teach grammar from the English series adopted by my County.
Worksheets or pages from the text are used.
I teach grammar through mini-lessons based on mistakes students have made in the writing process.students.

OPTIONAL

What are your biggest challenges as a teacher of writing?

Writer's Workshop Questionnaire**Pretest Posttest**

Name _____

Date _____

1. Do you like to write?**YES NO SOMETIMES****2. Do you like your teacher to give you a topic or do you like to decide on
your own topic to write about?****TEACHER GIVES TOPIC****I DECIDE ON TOPIC****3. How would you describe yourself as a writer?****GREAT GOOD OK NOT GOOD**

RESPONSE TO LITERATURE RUBRIC

FIRST GRADE

DOMAIN: IDEAS	
BEGINNING (DOES NOT MEET)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piece conveys little meaning • Real life objects show up in drawings • Drawings may not be completely recognizable • An oral reading by the writer is needed to understand the message • Writer does not formulate a position in response to the text • Insufficient information to develop a point of view, or piece may be limited to retelling • Words, if present, stand alone • It's hard to figure how sentences, if present, go together
DEVELOPING (MEETS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illustrations work to enhance the main idea • Text contains real words • Text and picture are understandable to the reader • Writer begins to formulate a position and connect the text to self • A point of view is developed • All sentences begin the same way and are the same length • Longer sentences go on and on • The piece is easy to read aloud even though it may contain repetitive or awkward sentence patterns
STRONG (EXCEEDS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The idea is clear and coherent • Elaboration through interesting details creates meaning for the reader • Writer shows personal understanding of the topic • Picture, if present, enhances key ideas, but isn't necessary for understanding • Writer formulates a position in response to the text and connects it to self • Point of view is developed • Different kinds of sentences, sentence lengths, and varied beginnings help sentences flow
DOMAIN: ORGANIZATION	
BEGINNING (DOES NOT MEET)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no title • Letters, if present, are scattered across the page • No coordination of written elements is evident • Lines, pictures, or letters are randomly placed on the page • There is no sense of order
DEVELOPING (MEETS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The simple title, if present, states the topic • The piece may contain a beginning and middle, but not an ending • There is a basic order • Letters or words are used as captions • Left to right, top to bottom orientation is evident • No transitions are indicated
STRONG (EXCEEDS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title, if present, is thoughtful and effective • There is a clear beginning, middle, and ending • Transitions may be used to connect one sentence to the next • Everything fits together nicely

DOMAIN: STYLE	
<p>BEGINNING (DOES NOT MEET)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No awareness of audience is evident • The piece contains very simple drawings or lines • Nothing distinguishes the work to make it the writer's own • Scribbling and random lines mark the page • May have random strings of letters • Few, if any, recognizable words are present 	
<p>DEVELOPING (MEETS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Touches of originality are found in the text and pictures • May have moments of audience awareness that fade • BIG letters, exclamation points, underlining, repetition, and pictures are used for emphasis • Illustrations may begin to reveal the individual • Some words make sense • Misuse of words may confuse the reader 	
<p>STRONG (EXCEEDS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer "owns" the topic • The writer is aware of the audience and connects with the reader • The writer takes real risks, creating an individual piece • The writer begins to show how s/he thinks and feels about the topic • The words paint a clear picture in the reader's mind • Figurative language may be used 	
DOMAIN: CONVENTIONS	
<p>BEGINNING (DOES NOT MEET)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letters are written in strings (pre-phonetic spelling) • Letters are formed irregularly with no intentional use of upper and lower case • Spacing is uneven between letters and words • Piece does not use standard conventions 	
<p>DEVELOPING (MEETS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spelling is inconsistent • Upper and lower case letters are mostly used correctly • Spacing between letters and words is present but may be inconsistent • Use of conventions is present but may be inconsistent 	
<p>STRONG (EXCEEDS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spelling is mostly correct • Spacing between words and sentences is appropriate • Use of Word Walls, dictionaries, books, and other resources is evident • Conventions are applied consistently and accurately 	

Running Head: EFFECTS OF TECHNOLOGY IN MUSIC

Effects of Technology within the Music Classroom:

A Sweet Sound or Sour Notes?

Danielle N. Callan

Augusta State University

Project Proposal

The technological world is growing and continues to encompass all walks of life. As educators have quickly jumped on this bandwagon, many have questioned its validity and effectiveness within the classroom. My project will focus on using two teaching strategies within an elementary music classroom. The study will compare the levels of learning from two groups of fifth grade classes. One group will have a technology enhanced curriculum while the second group will be taught the same curriculum without the benefits of technology use.

During the 07-08 school year, the following actions will occur to administer this study:

- Pre and Post testing of specific fifth grade music units for all fifth graders
- Presentation of the fifth grade music curriculum in two forms to two different groups: 1) with technology 2) without technology
- Three forms of units presented within the class time: Music Element Exploration, Composer Research & Presentation, and Project-Based Performance
- Students will be given surveys to share their accomplishments and frustrations while working with technology and their attitudes towards the technology instruction

By conducting the research and surveys mentioned above, this study should reveal the effects of technology in the music classroom as well as exposing the students' attitudes towards working with technology in the classroom.

Abstract

The following literature review will discuss technology use within education and the cost. Exploring the teacher and student attitudes towards technology use, ways of integrating technology, and music technology resources will encourage the benefits of using technology within the music classroom. Some of the pitfalls of technology integration will also be identified to note possible hazards of using technology in the classroom.

Literature Review

Introduction

Over the past few years, the public school systems have continuously spent more money to further the development of technology. Goals 2000: Educate America Act is an example of one of the many steps made by legislation to make technology a protected position within the educational system. With the tremendous monies invested in technology, the question of the validity and effectiveness of the technology within the curriculum has become a major concern for educators.

Technology in Today's Society

Before addressing the emphasis on technology in the classroom, it is important to note the use of prominent technology in today's society. Over the past few decades, technology has changed many facets of American's everyday experience. ATMs are a perfect example of a job that was once occupied by a human, but can now be completed by a computer. In general, citizens today are just as comfortable using computers and video games as they are using a toaster. Labeling today's children as the "Net Generation," Don Tapscott claims that watching television can be considered old-fashioned in comparison to being on the internet. He continues by stating that two-thirds of today's kids have a personal computer at home or at school. This number is continually rising from year to year (Tapscott, 1998).

Technology is used widely throughout the world in almost all walks of life and careers. From the business world to center stage on Broadway, technology has become a way of life, and something that most people depend on day in order to effectively do their job. There is a heavy dependence on technology in today's society that "warrants continued efforts on the part of educators to prepare students for participation in a technological world" (Kimble, 1999).

Technology and Education

As technology has been poured into the classroom, there have been many studies and opinions shared of the benefits that it brings into schools. First and foremost, many claim the inclusion of technology promotes learning within the classrooms on many different levels. As students are more prominent to learn when actively engaged, technology offers an interactive learning experience that encourages higher level thinking and problem solving skills (Cradler & Bridgforth, 2007). Within the classroom, students can improve their collaboration techniques as they work with groups on projects using the internet or computer. If administered correctly, teachers can use technology as a way of improving writing skills as the students work with different telecommunications skills (Cradler & Bridgforth, 2007).

Other learning skills are growing through the use of technology. Whether teachers use software purchased for learning or students simply work on the computer independently through the learning process, students are naturally challenged to use their problem solving skills throughout the learning session (Reasons, 2007). Technology is also credited with providing great opportunities for differentiating instruction and assessment. Using the different programs and software in the classroom, students are able to work at their own pace and provide the teacher with the ability to progress monitor their students' performance. Advanced students will be able to work faster and not get frustrated with the slower rate that teachers must sometimes take in order accommodate those students that are having difficult time learning a concept (Pang, 2007).

While working with technology, students are given opportunities otherwise not available. For example, students can begin to get prepared for most careers and vocations while technology increases the mastery of the skills needed in these professions. Approaching technology with a

glance towards the students' future is the angle all educators should take. The objective is to prepare the student for the future ahead and establish them as independent learners.

Other studies have shown the increase in test scores for students after the addition of computers within the classroom. CNN reported in 1998 that math scores among the fourth and eighth graders went up as a result of computers in the classroom (Lee, 1998). Other studies claim that simply using a computer builds confidence within the student and therefore has a positive result on their test scores and academic achievements (Mini-computers, 2007).

While placing the computers within the classroom is the first step towards inclusion of technology in education, there are many other features of effective learning environments for the technology classroom. First, the students and teachers must feel at ease with the hardware as well as the software they are working with throughout their lessons. Frustrations with the technology will take the emphasis off of the learning and more on the problems they are facing with the technology (Cradler & Bridgforth, 2007). Secondly, students must have a sincere interest in the use of the technology. If not, the students will see the assignment as a task that needs to be completed and not reap the learning benefits from the experience. Furthermore, if there is a chance for immediate feedback or necessary adjustments, the success level will increase as students will be encouraged to continue with the program as they share their frustrations or feel successful at completing the task at hand. Emphasizing the curriculum needed to be taught, the programs or lessons on the computer must be aligned with the curriculum frameworks while there must also be built-in assessments matched with the technology resources provided for the student and teacher. Finally, the more opportunities available for multiple technologies used in the classroom will increase student involvement and

effectiveness of the learning strategies presented in the technological classroom (Cradler & Bridgforth, 2007).

Technology and Teachers

Research has shown the successful use of computer use in the classroom is deeply dependent on the positive teacher attitude and student perception of technology use within the classroom (Christensen, 2002). Normally, the student perception is dictated by teachers' attitudes towards technology. Furthermore, the teachers' attitudes are a reflection of the personal experience they have had with computers and technology. "The amount of confidence a teacher possesses in using computers and related information technologies may greatly influence his/her effective implementation of technology methods in the classroom" (Christensen, 2002).

In order to provide the needed confidence and positive attitude towards computers, there are a few necessary elements that must be offered to an educator in order to for him/her to effectively use technology within the classroom. First, the teacher must have the support of his/her administration. Without this support, the funding for technology will be limited or cease to exist. Secondly, a teacher needs time; time for training and time to become personally familiar with the software he/she will be working with during the course of the day (Koszalka, 2001). It is vital for teachers to possess computer literacy skills to effectively include technological instruction in the classroom. Studies have also shown that "appropriate teacher training in classroom computers can be associated with higher student achievement" (Pierce, 1998). Even though many teachers experience some form of beginning training, they also feel abandoned once they enter their classroom. Without peer support, some teachers feel that incorporating technology into their lessons is more of a frustration than a benefit (Koszalka, 2001). These frustrations and negative attitudes towards technology can severely impact a students learning potential.

However, provided the correct support and service, the effectiveness of technology inclusion can be accurately calculated (Christensen, 2002).

Technology in Music

As technology works its way into the regular classroom, it is no surprise that the music room has began to include technology within its curriculum also. Music tends to lend itself to technology as most classrooms have at least a CD player if not an MP3 player to play the music. Having these devices make it easy for students to explore the different styles of music at the touch of their fingertips. Most music rooms have a keyboard or piano which helps with pitch matching, melodic direction, and learning the melody of songs. There is no question of the need to have technological innovations such as a CD player or keyboard, but now there is more research that is indicative of the benefits of utilizing computers and internet resources in the music classroom.

The technology within the music classroom does not serve as the curriculum, but rather a “tool for enhancing education” (Frankel, 2007). Research has shown that the multi-sensory stimuli that technology provides paves the way for aural learning that is supported by “both visual and psychomotor domains” (Kersten, 2006). Dr. Rudolph states in his book titled *Teaching Music with Technology* that technology in the music room can be used “as a creative, performance, and learning tool for students (Rudolph, 2004). Incorporating technology within the music classroom can influence the curiosity of the learners as they explore with different musical sounds, experience different musical opportunities, and are exposed to high-quality music repertoire.

Using the internet in the music classroom opens a door to a world full of different sites and software that allows multiple reinforcement modes of learning. Various sites provide

students with visual stimuli to represent the melodic movement of a song while other programs take it a step further to let the students compose their own music and then view the same visual stimuli to reinforce melodic direction, texture, or any other musical element (Frankel, 2007).

Cost of Technology

To effectively use technology, there are many components and gadgets that must be purchased. Over the years, different school systems have spent a tremendous amount of money to equip their classrooms with the most up-to-date technology resources. In Wisconsin, the federal government funded nearly \$8 million for technology and wiring in the schools. In 2001, voters in the Waukesha School district agreed to a tax increase where the money would be spent on technology integration in the classroom totaling over \$2.5 million (Hetzner, 2005). The US government has even gone as far as creating the E-Rate program, a subsidy for Internet and communications, which subsidizes spending by 20%-90% in California public schools to provide internet availability to all students (Goolsbee & Guryan, 2006). Another finding shows that between the fiscal years 1997 and 2000, the Technology Literacy Challenge Fund was given over \$1.25 billion in federal money. This fund provides new computers and software for schools as well as training for teachers to keep them up to date on the ever-changing software (Johnson, 2000). With the tremendous investment the government and school systems have placed to provide technology within the classrooms, it is important to examine technology use within the classroom, the benefits of its inclusion, the teachers' perspective of its presence, and the optimal environment for learning with technology (Hetzner, 2005).

Technology Complaints

Despite the studies for the promotion of technology in schools, there are still some that feel the "approach to technology in homes and schools has been flawed, emphasizing ephemeral

vocational skills and the razzle-dazzle of educational software” (Mendels, 1999) rather than focusing on building appropriate problem-solving and critical thinking skills in students. Still others dispute that the push for computers is pushing students into a “toxic cultural environment” (Mendels, 1999) that leads to a decline in their personal welfare and a rise in certain health problems such as depression. The organization titled Alliance for Childhood hopes to bring to light the stress that the push for technology places on the student. The stress has led to academic pressures, lack of interaction with caring adults and peers, as well as an emersion of negative media that glorifies violence, sex, and commercialism (Mendels, 1999). The desire for the Alliance for Childhood is that elementary students should be surrounded with nurturing activities that involve real people and real objects (Mendels, 1999).

The Alliance for Childhood is not the only group concerned. Some teachers fear other possible problems with incorporating technology into the educational system. One fear is that although some computer software is fun, it might not be educationally valuable for students to use (Chaika, 2005). Others fear that students begin to expect everything to be entertaining and will not branch out on their own to use their own senses or become active learners. Sitting in front of a computer instead of being actively involved with peers and teachers can highly affect motor and social skills (Chaika, 2005).

Conclusion

Under the correct circumstances, the benefits of technology within a classroom should prevail. With the different perspectives of technology inclusion, it is important for continued studies to show the effectiveness of its inclusion. Venturing into a music room with technology is not a new study, but one that has barely scraped the surface of possibilities. Regardless of the type of classroom, teacher preparation and positive attitude, student interest and assessment, and

curriculum based projects and lessons, are critical in creating a successful technology community within a classroom. Effective use of technology in a classroom can be complicated and detailed; however, by following the guidelines and making adequate planning, technology use will benefit the all of those with the privilege to work with it.

Methodology

Research Design

The research on student achievement using technology within the music classroom will compare the levels of learning from two groups of fifth grade classes. One group (two classes of 5th grade) will be exposed to the curriculum using technology resources and enrichment activities while the control group (3 classes of 5th grade) will be taught the same curriculum without the use of technology. The study will utilize the mixed methodology approach to conclude its findings. Students will be given a pre and post test to show student growth in subject knowledge and comprehension (See Appendix I). Both student groups will also be assigned a project-based learning activity and scored with a teacher-created rubric (See Appendix II). At the end of the testing period, the students participating in the technology group will complete a survey to describe their music education with technology enhancements as well as their attitude and behavior in class (See Appendix III). The survey will utilize a Likert Scale so that students can share their attitudes towards the technology instruction. From the data gathered, the students' achievement with or without technology will be revealed and the students' attitude towards technology will be exposed.

Data Collection

My research questions are:

1. Does technology integration within the music classroom make a significant academic difference?
2. What positive effects does technology integration have within a music classroom?
3. What effect does incorporating technology have on students' attitude towards learning music?

4. Are students comfortable learning music with a technological focused curriculum?

The results from the pre and post test, will serve as conclusive research for question number one. The pre and post tests are found on Appendix I. The general analysis will include all student tests from the fifth grade which includes six classes. The results will be compared between the two classes who were taught implementing the technology curriculum and the three classes who did not receive the technology focused curriculum.

Data Collection

Student Test Results

Pre and Post Test Results

Students were given the pretest at the beginning of the year to measure the information they were already comfortable with as well as analyze what areas of study were needed to make improvement within the first semester of the school year. The test that the control group received was, in its entirety, administered orally and the students expressed frustration as they could not read the question as they were answering. Pictures were held up from a book if the students needed to identify any object. The variable group was given the pretest through a power point presentation and had no obvious test anxiety other than not knowing particular answers. The post test was given at the end of the semester. The format of the test was identical to the format of the pretest.

Graph 1: Pre/Post Test Comparison

After administering the pre-test, it became apparent that the students had a strong foundation in many sections of the testing areas. Many students were very confident of the names of the notes as well as distinguishing the form of the song. After this evaluation, the lesson plans were adjusted to meet the needs of the students, which indicated a want for learning about the instruments and identifying major and minor keys. As shown below, the post tests confirmed growth in every classroom regardless of the absence or presence of technology. The control group is from the homeroom classes 5A, 5B, and 5C. The variable group is from the homeroom classes 5D and 5E.

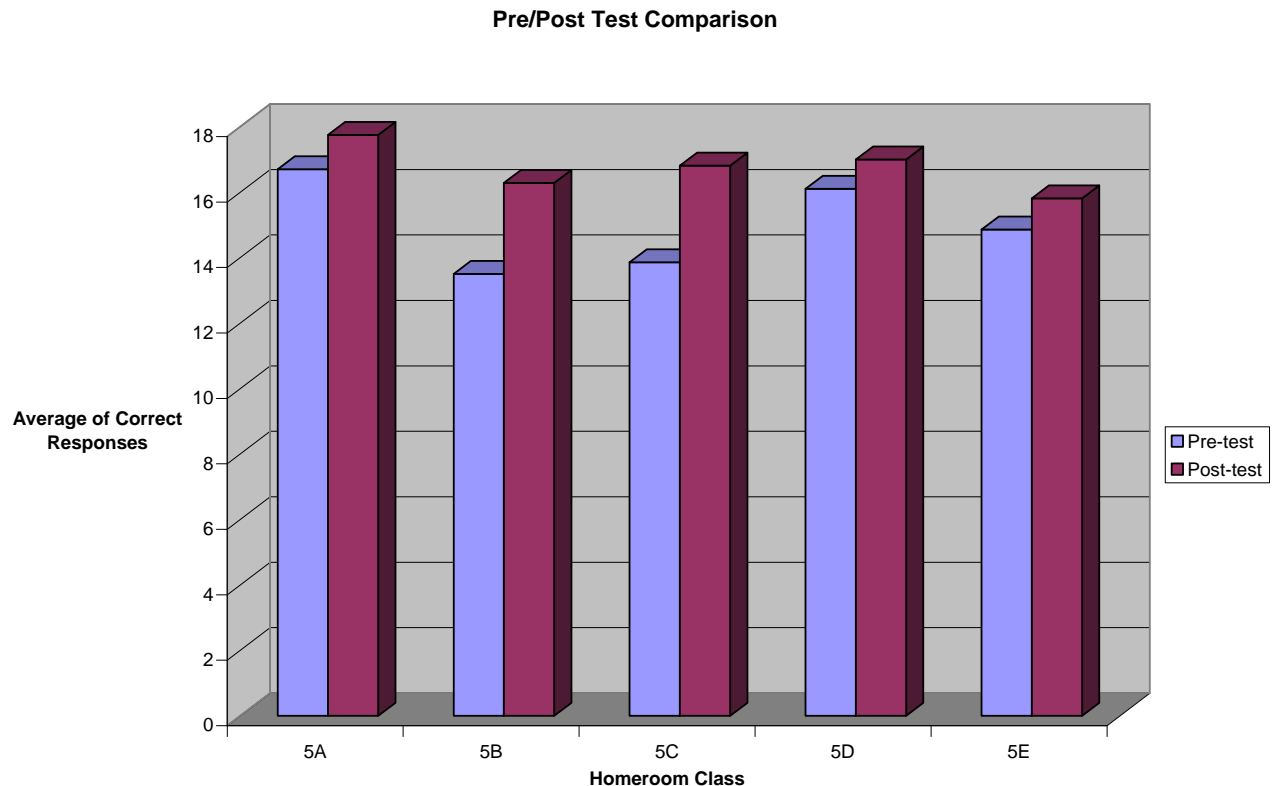


Figure 1.1

Graph 2: Average Academic Growth Comparison of Control and Variable Group

Surprisingly, the control group who received instruction without the assistance of technology showed a considerable advantage to academic growth. Even though the variable group (those students who learned with the assistance of technology) did show some improvement in their scores, the control group had almost a ten percent growth advantage.

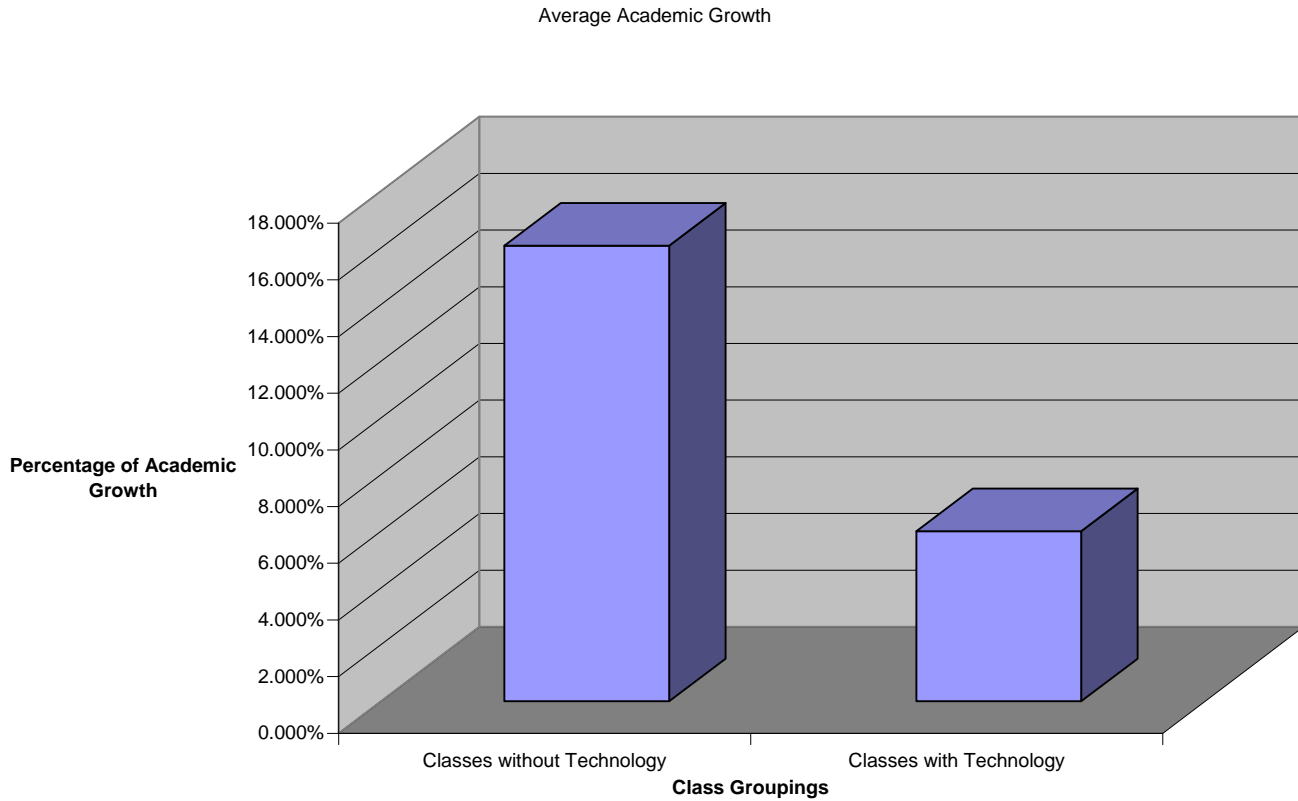


Figure 1.2

Analyzing Survey (Close-Ended Survey)

Students were given a survey to measure their attitude and appreciation for technology within the music classroom. The survey was a Likert Scale with four options for the students to choose from. The answer sheet was formatted with four smiley faces. Each smiley face represented one of the following levels of agreement: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The majority of students filled out the survey without hesitation, while some skipped the questions where they did not feel committed to their answers. There were a total of six statements, each one exploring an avenue of technology in the classroom. Both the variable as well as the control group of students took the survey to compare the results.

Statement 1: I enjoyed learning about the instruments of the orchestra.

The project learning based activity for the unit focused on researching an assigned instrument and then creating a poster to share different facts about the designated instrument. Each group had at least a day and a half to research, one day to prepare and create their poster, and a final day to explore other groups' creations. Fortunately, the majority of the students enjoyed the project. The variable group had a larger percentage of students who agreed with the statement.

Students Surveyed without Technology Instruction- Statement 1: I enjoyed learning about the instruments of the orchestra

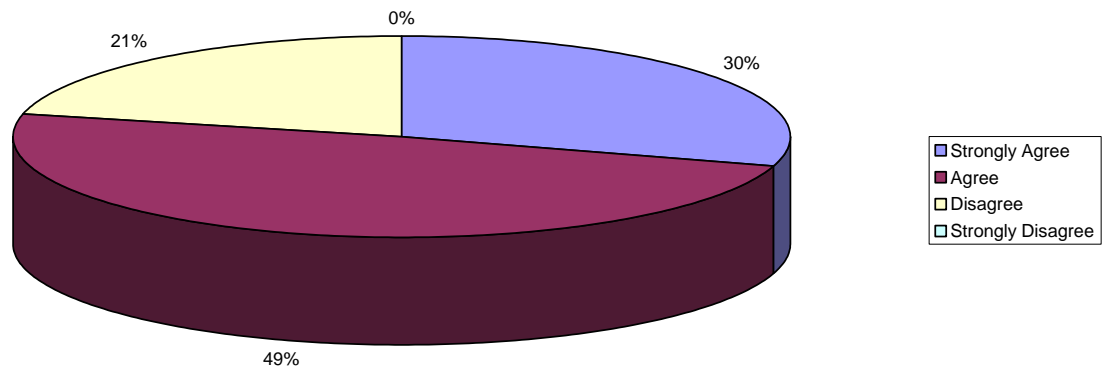


Figure 2.1

Students Surveyed with Technology Instruction- Statement 1: I enjoyed learning about the instruments of the orchestra

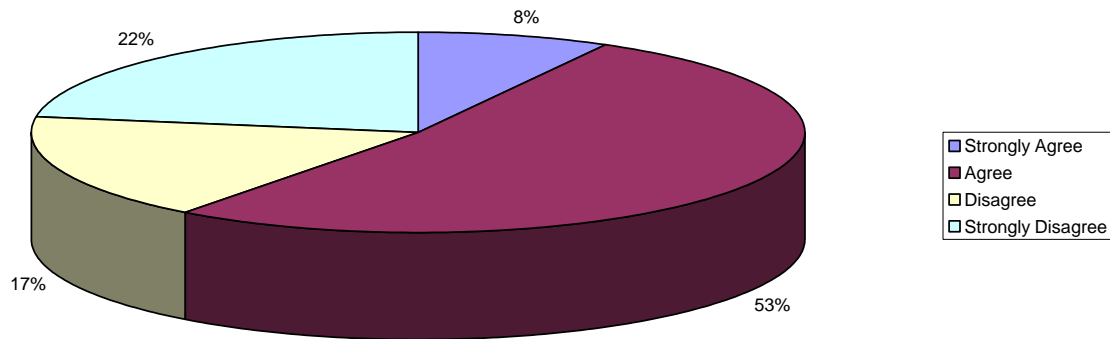


Figure 2.2

Statement 2: Finding facts about my instrument was an easy process.

Each group had to collect data for their project in different ways. The control group used books from the school library as well as the limited library within the music room. The variable group had access to the wireless lab within the music room and was directed by a web quest page designed by their instructor. While researching, the control group was obviously frustrated at the lack of material available to their research process. Once the members of the variable group got the computers up and running, the students seemed to enjoy the process and worked diligently. The observations are reflected in the student survey.

Students Surveyed without Technology Instruction-Finding Facts about my instrument was an easy process.

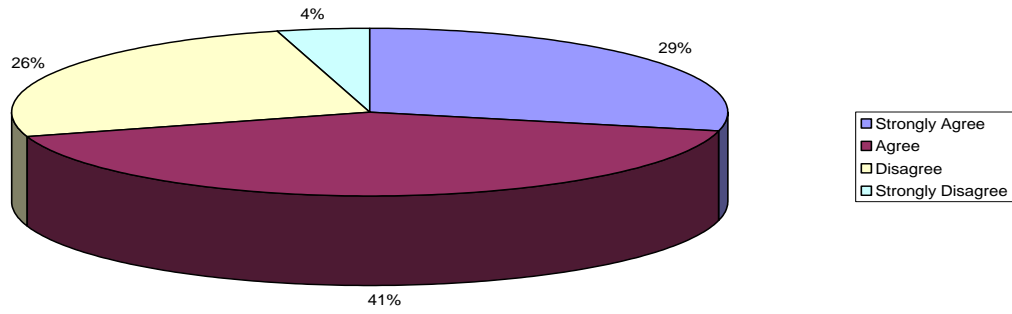


Figure 2.3

Students Surveyed with Technology Instruction- Statement 2: Finding Facts about my instrument was an easy process.

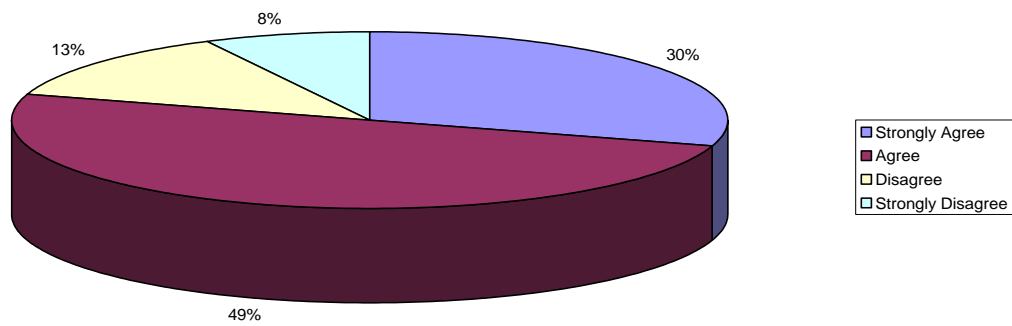


Figure 2.4

Statement 3: Learning about the form of a song was an easy process.

Students were presented with one of the elements of music and form in a single day lesson. Both groups listened to the same song, but the students in the control group used hands-on cut outs to display different form while the control group used a program created on the classroom "Interwrite" program. Students in the control group had a harder time grasping the idea of repeating groups while the variable groups were able to experience it through an animated listening map provided by the county music curriculum. The comprehension from each group is apparent in their attitude when answering the survey.

Students Surveyed without Technology Instruction- Statement 3: Learning the form of a song was easy.

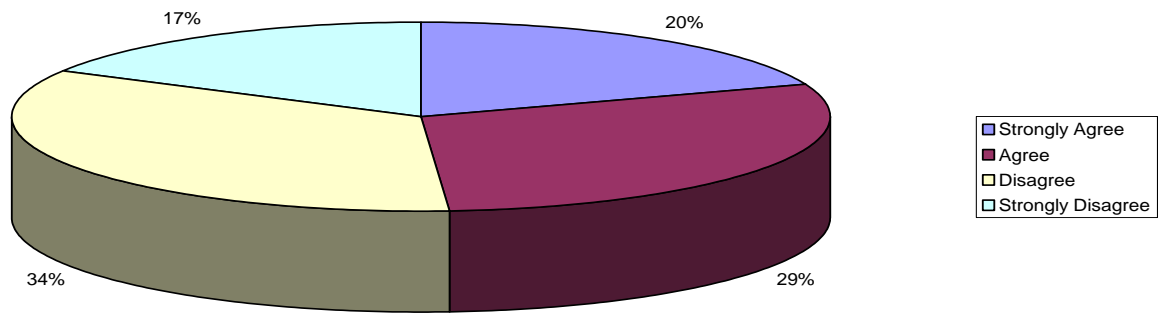


Figure 2.5

Students Surveyed with Technology Instruction- Statement 3: Learning the form of a song was easy.

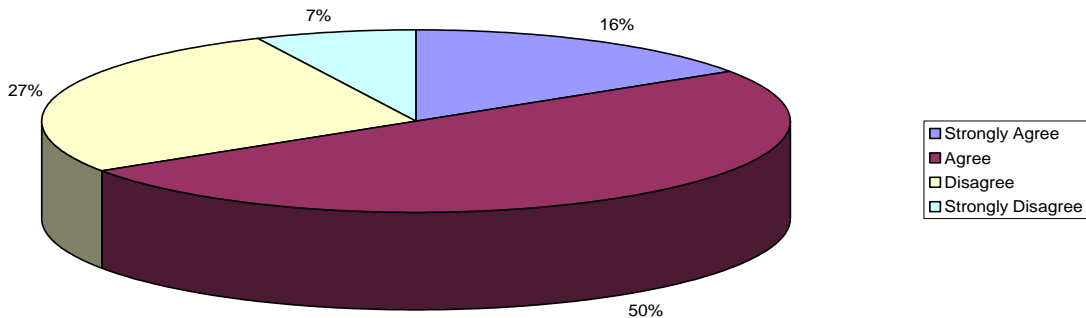


Figure 2.6

Statement 4: I would prefer to use technology in the music classroom.

When administering the survey, it was also worded as “I get excited when we use technology in the music room.” The graphs below shows a possible negative side to an overabundance of technology use as the variable group does not seem as excited as the control group.

Students Surveyed without Technology Instruction- Statement 4: I would prefer to use technology in the music room.

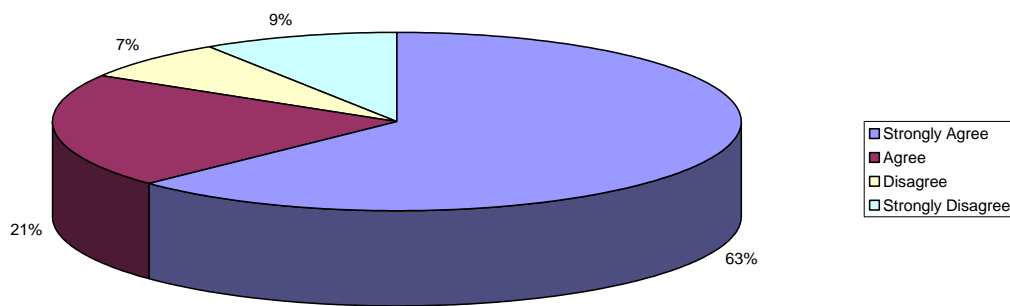


Figure 2.7

Students Surveyed with Technology Instruction- Statement 4: I would prefer to use technology in the music room.

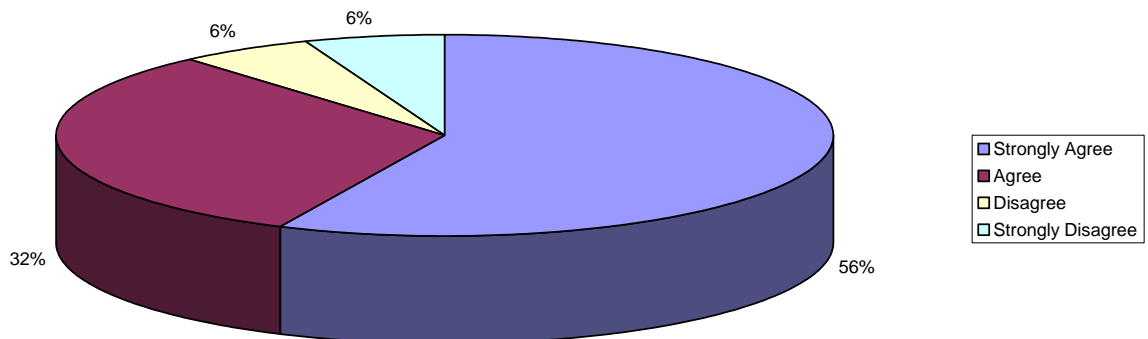


Figure 2.8

Statement 5: It is easier to pay attention when the teacher does not use technology.

This survey question requires the students to evaluate their own attention span within the music classroom. Their answers not only reveal their attention given to the lesson in class, but also the potential interest that might not be there if technology were not present. It seems that the students who were exposed to technology within the music classroom (the variable group) had a better appreciation and interest for technology in the classroom.

Students Surveyed without Technology Instruction- Statement 5: It is easier to pay attention when the teacher does not use technology.

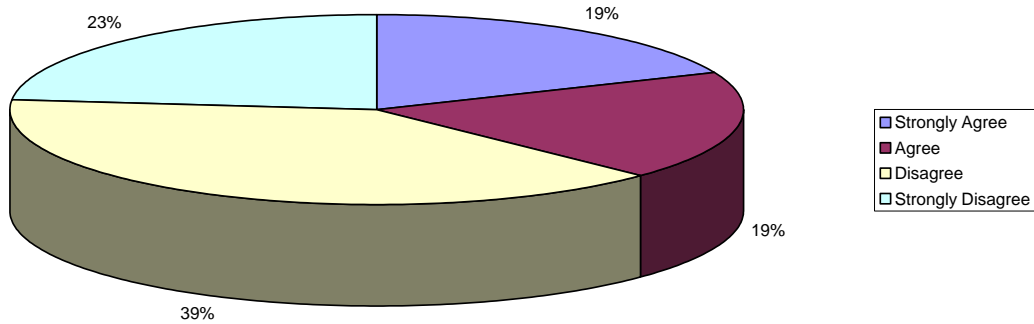


Figure 2.9

Students Surveyed with Technology Instruction- Statement 5: It is easier to pay attention when the teacher does not use technology.

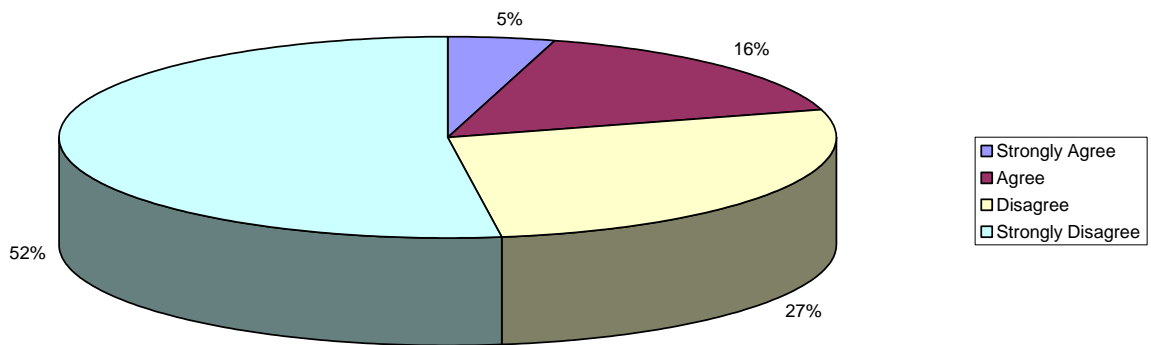


Figure 2.10

Statement 6: I relate to the material better when it is presented through technology.

The survey presents the idea that students are more comfortable and confident in the lessons that are presented through technology. The majority of students, both from the variable and control group, agree to strongly agree that when material is presented through technology it is easier for them to understand.

Students Surveyed without Technology Instruction- Statement 6: I relate to the material of the class better when it is presented through technology.

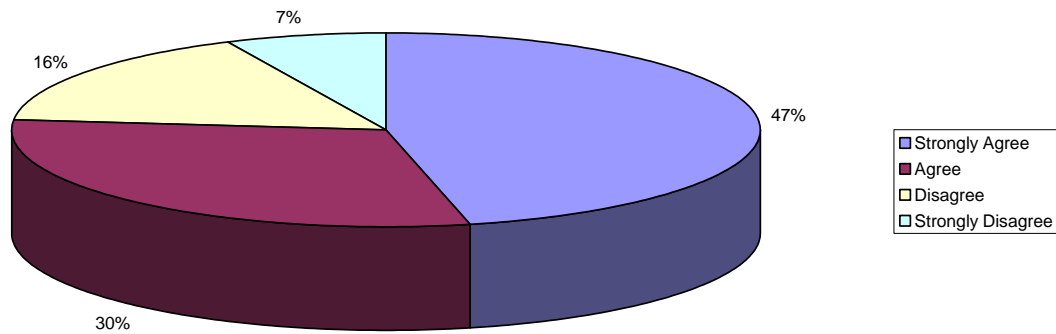


Figure 2.11

Students Surveyed with Technology Instruction- Statement 6: I relate better to the material of the class better when it is presented through technology.

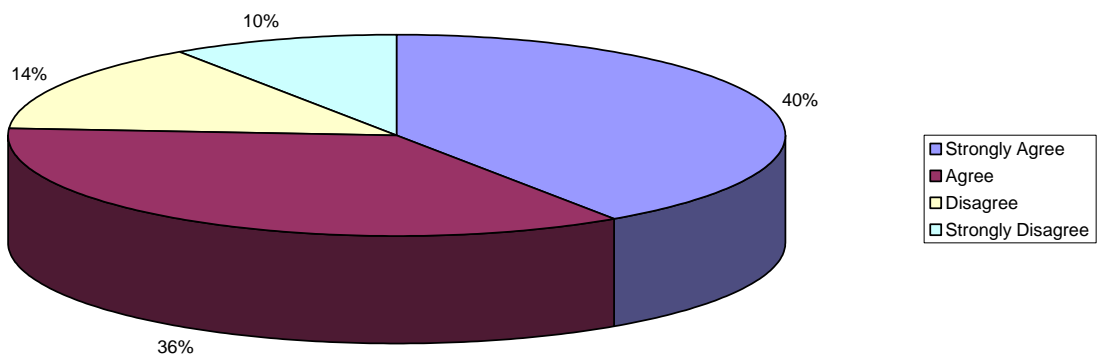


Figure 2.12

Results and Findings

This study used two forms of data collection: pre/post tests and a behavior/motivational survey. Each form of data collection showed the advantages as well as the disadvantages of using technology within the music classroom. Looking over the results of the pre/post tests, both groups of students gained academic growth. While the control groups seemed to experience the most academic growth, there are many facets that play into that result, including the lack of prior knowledge of the control group compared to the previous knowledge the students from the variable group had. When comparing the pre and post tests, one might note that the classes with the most academic growth were also classes with the lowest pre-test score. All students tested seemed to earn an average of 18 on the post test regardless of their pre-test scores. Therefore, these pre and post test findings cannot entirely confirm or reject the idea that technology within the music classroom can be beneficial for the student learning.

The close-ended survey explored the students' attitude towards the use of technology in the music room. As many teachers know, the attitude of the student can often determine the amount of success the lesson or lessons will have within the classroom. Each question examined a different area of the study as well as the overall opinion of the students. The first statement, I enjoyed learning about the instruments of the orchestra, examined the attitude towards the completed project. Each group finished the project in various ways as they had to use different resources to collect their data on the assigned instrument. While the majority of the variable group agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, there were a considerable number of students who disagreed or strongly disagreed. Since this project was a group project, this survey statement might have reflected some of the students' frustration with group projects.

The control group enjoyed the project with a small handful of students who disagreed with the statement.

Statement two on the survey revealed the frustration the students from the control group faced as they had to use the limited resources to find information about their instrument. The second statement, it was easy to find information about my instrument, showed that the students from the variable group had an easier time collecting data about their instruments. Using the web, the students had many “kid-friendly” sites that made it easy to explore the website and gather valuable facts as well as print authentic pictures for their poster projects.

For the third statement, learning the form of a song was easy, each class had a single day lesson to explore the element of form. The pre and post test revealed the students had a clear comprehension of the concept. However, the survey results show the students are skeptical of their personal knowledge of the material. Many students in the control group were so uncomfortable with the material, that they chose not to answer this question in the survey. Of the control group students who answered this question, most students disagreed that learning the form was easy. From the variable group, the majority of the students answered the survey and felt it was easy to learn the form of the pieces of music explored in class.

Statement four investigated the students’ preference for the use of technology in the classroom. When comparing the two groups of students, both groups had a majority of students that agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. The control group (the group without technology instruction) had a higher percentage of students who strongly agreed that having technology in the music room would be their preference. Perhaps the absence of technology increased the students’ desire to have technology within the music classroom. Only a small percentage of each group disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

The focus of the students' attention was the area of exploration for statement 5. Most students from the control group disagreed with the statement that it is easier to pay attention when the teacher does not use technology, and the vast majority of the variable group strongly disagreed. The control group also had a notable percentage that strongly agreed with the statement that the absence of technology makes it easier to pay attention, while the variable group had a small margin that agreed or strongly agreed.

The final statement examined the students' comfort level of learning with the use of technology. It is obvious that the students tested are familiar with technology and have an appreciation for the use in the classroom. Both groups of students agreed to strongly agreed that they feel comfortable and can relate to the class material when it is presented through technology. There was a very small percentage of each group that disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

Conclusion

Effects of Technology within the Music Classroom: A Sweet Sound or Sour Notes? Had four clear objectives to explore and determine. The first objective was to determine whether or not technology integration within the music classroom makes a significant academic difference. According to the data collected from this group of students, technology within the music classroom does not have a considerable amount of difference concerning academic gain. This study shows that the actual percentage of growth was stronger when the students did not have the technology inclusion. With these academic results, however, there are many facets one must consider. For example, the background knowledge that some students possessed prior to the study made it harder to show academic growth if they performed very well on the pretest. Secondly, as a music class in an elementary setting, most students only go to music class once a week. In this study, students only came to the music room once every six days. Therefore, the likeliness of lower scores and an incorrect measure of the effects of music due to a student missing a class was higher.

The second objective of this study was to examine and observe the positive effects of technology in the music classroom. A common disadvantage for the instructor that is remedied by having technology is the lack of set-up time between classes. As a music teacher, the classes are regularly back to back which leaves very little time for set-up. With technology present, the lesson was stored in the computer from earlier preparation and ready at the touch of a fingertip. When using technology, the instructor also noted a positive change in the students' behavior that was also reflected in their responses to the individual surveys.

The third objective was to determine if the presence of technology had an effect on the students' attitude towards learning music. Looking over the surveys, it is apparent that most

students seemed to enjoy the music class regardless of the presence of technology. The excitement did, however, rise when the possibility of technology was mentioned in the survey. Many students enjoyed the project-based learning activity due to the freedom that researching on the web provided them. Other students had a better comprehension of the material presented and enjoyed the class at a higher level once they felt successful. The presence of the technology seemed to excite the students as well as give them a boost of confidence in areas of music they might otherwise shy away from.

Finally, the study was conducted to see if students were comfortable with a technologically focused curriculum. Gathering from the survey as well as the pre/post test results, it is apparent students are comfortable with the learning environment that technology provides. To many students, working with technology is second nature. Therefore, as long as the teacher knows how to appropriately use it, the students will succeed.

In conclusion, from the material collected in this study there is no clear link to student academic achievement to the use of technology within the music room. Both the control group and the variable group showed growth within the study. Even though the control group seemed to have a higher percentage of growth, there were many outside factors that could have played a part in the outcome. Some factors include lower post test scores offered more room for growth, higher attendance rate in control group classes, and limited class time on a weekly basis. Despite the unclear academic effect, the attitude and behavioral changes in the students are evident with the presence of technology. Students proved to be very comfortable with the use of the technology presented in class and appreciated when the teacher incorporated it into the lesson.

Recommendation for Further Studies

As our world of technology continues to grow, the study of the effects within any classroom is vital. It is apparent that students respond better to the use of technology within the classroom. Therefore, in order to avoid spending money on ineffective items and gadgets, studies should be done to find the most efficient and effective methods of technology use in the classroom. Further studies should be conducted on a daily basis in a general education classroom as they have the potential to see the long term use and academic gain. Students participating in the study should also have the same knowledge and comprehension level of the material prior to the study to avoid later complications in the test results.

Appendix I

Pre and Post Test (The same test was used for both.)

Fifth Grade Pre-Test

2007-2008

1. What orchestra family does an oboe belong to?

- A. String
- B. Woodwind
- C. Percussion
- D. Brass

2. What family does the cello belong to?


- A. String
- B. Woodwind
- C. Percussion
- D. Brass

3. What family does the trumpet belong to?

- A. String
- B. Woodwind
- C. Percussion
- D. Brass


4. What family does this instrument belong to?

- A. String
- B. Woodwind
- C. Percussion
- D. Brass




5. What family does this instrument belong to?

- A. String
- B. Woodwind
- C. Percussion
- D. Brass




6. What instrument do you hear?

A. Trombone
 B. Trumpet
 C. Violin
 D. French Horn



7. What instrument do you hear playing the melody?

A. Trombone
 B. Trumpet
 C. Violin
 D. French Horn




8. _____ refers to a section of a song that is sung before the refrain.


A. Verse
 B. Coda
 C. Rondo
 D. Rest


9. _____ is where two or more pitches are sounding at the same time.


A. Harmony
 B. Coda
 C. Unison
 D. Rest

10. Which picture below depicts an ABA form?

A. 


B. 

C. 

D. 


11. What note is pictured below?

A. Eighth note
 B. Half note
 C. Whole note
 D. Quarter note




12. What note is pictured below?

- A. Eighth note
- B. Half note
- C. Whole note
- D. Quarter note




13. What rest is pictured below?

- A. Eighth rest
- B. Half rest
- C. Whole rest
- D. Quarter rest

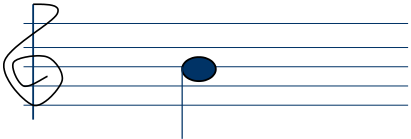


14. What rest is pictured below?

- A. Eighth rest
- B. Half rest
- C. Whole rest
- D. Quarter rest

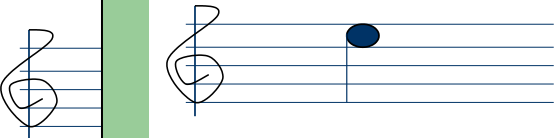


15. Name the note below.




16.

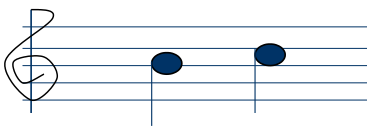
17. Name the note below.



18. What direction does the note move? (upward, downward, stays the same)



19. What direction does the note move? (upward, downward, stays the same)



20. What direction does the note move? (upward, downward, stays the same)



21. Is this song in a major or minor key?



22. Is this song in a major or minor key?



23. Is this song in a major or minor key?



24. Is this song in a major or minor key?



Appendix II

Grade: 5 th	Date: September 7- September 17
Objectives:	ELEMENT FOCUS: Melody
<i>Instrument Inspectors</i>	<p>Essential Question: How can one distinguish different instruments of the orchestra?</p> <p>Knowledge:</p> <p>18. Identifies orchestra families and their members by sight and sound</p> <p>20. Demonstrates growth in knowledge of music vocabulary appropriate to the level</p> <p>24. Uses print and nonprint media to locate information about music and musicians</p>
NOTES:	PROCEDURES:
<p>✓ Students will work in music pairs</p>	<p><u>Day One</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask students if they have ever been to an orchestra concert. Explain how the orchestra is made of different instruments and allow students to discuss different ones they are familiar with. • Introduce the students to the idea of becoming “Instrument Inspectors” and assign each pair an instrument to investigate • Review the expectations of the project using the rubric on the back of the Instrument Fact Sheet • Have students use books/wireless lab (depending on class) to research the assigned instrument. Students will use Instrument Fact Sheet as guide. <p><u>Day Two</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher reviews expectations of project • Students have class period to create poster and finish finding facts <p><u>Day Three</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students have first few minutes to complete poster • Once poster is completed, students hang the poster in the hall next to the picture poster of their assigned instrument • Teacher explains the Scavenger Hunt sheet and asks for students to not complete the boxes with their assigned instruments information • Students begin the investigation in the hall using peers’ posters to fill in their worksheet <p><u>Day Four</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students complete Scavenger Hunt Worksheet • With time remaining, class reviews the characteristics of each instrument family
VOCABULARY:	MATERIALS:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Strings ❖ Woodwind ❖ Brass ❖ Percussion ❖ Orchestra 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Wireless Lab (day 1) ❑ Different books about Instruments (day 1 & 2) ❑ White poster board (day 2) ❑ Instrument Fact Sheet with project requirements (day 1,2, &3) ❑ Instrument Scavenger Hunt (day 3 & 4)

Instrument Scavenger Hunt Rubric

	4	3	2	1
Use of class time	Used time well. Focused on completing the scavenger hunt	Usually focused but had minor distractions and completed only four blocks.	Focused some of class and completed only three blocks. Distracted others.	Not focused and completed only two blocks. Distracted others.
Neatness	The worksheet was completed using excellent handwriting techniques.	The worksheet was completed using average handwriting techniques.	The worksheet was completed using below average handwriting techniques.	The worksheet was sloppy and very hard to read
Accuracy	Students matched instruments correctly throughout the poster to their families.	Students matched all but one instrument correctly throughout the poster to their families.	Students matched only two instruments correctly throughout the poster to their families.	Students matched only one instrument correctly throughout the poster to their families.

Appendix III

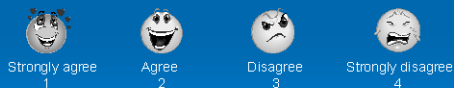
Technology in Music

Danielle Callan
River Ridge Elementary
2007-2008

Answering Survey

- There will be four choices for each statement
- Please select the choice that is most appropriate to you
- Make sure it is your answer and not your partner or friend's

Choices



Statement 1:

- I enjoyed learning about different instruments of the orchestra.

Statement 2:

- Finding facts about my instrument was an easy process.

Statement 3:

- Learning about the form of a song was easy.

Statement 4:

- I would prefer to use technology to learn in the music room. (I get excited when we use technology.)

Statement 5:

- It is easier to pay attention when the teacher does not use technology.

Statement 6:

- I relate to the material of class better when it is presented through technology.

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