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Engaging Teachers in Assessment of Their Students' Narrative Writing: Impact on Teachers' Knowledge and Practice

CSE Technical Report 377

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ENGAGING TEACHERS IN ASSESSMENT OF THEIR STUDENTS' NARRATIVE WRITING: IMPACT ON TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE

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This report documents the content and impact of an in-service program designed to enhance elementary teachers' competencies with narrative writing assessment. Representing a collaboration of researchers and teachers, our program, *Writing What You Read,* was designed to enhance the abilities of teachers and their young writers to construct substantive assessments of texts—whether a published author's, their own, or a peer's—that would inform and guide their growth in narrative criticism and composition. The need to support a classroom focus on assessment is widely recognized. In the past two decades, the ways in which teachers teach and assess writing have shifted dramatically, from a focus on final products to an emphasis on writing as a process, and from a view of writing as skill to an understanding of composition as the purposeful orchestration of literary devices within specific genres to make meaning. Viewing the social construction of meaning through writing as dependent on the writer's goals and particular genres, new frameworks in language arts stress the integration of reading with writing (Dyson & Freeman, 1991; Sulzby, 1991) and the need for explicit instruction in text structure (Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991; Pearson & Fielding, 1991). In this context, assessment plays the critical role of a reader's "analytic response to text" (Wolf, 1993; Wolf, Bixby, Glenn, & Gardner, 1991; Wolf & Gearhart, 1993a, 1993b). Guiding the growth of young writers within the rules and regularities of specific textual features and forms, teachers' commendations and recommendations provide students with a perspective that helps support their planning and revision.

An important secondary purpose of this project has been the enhancement of our own understandings of the processes of teacher change and the contexts that foster and constrain growth in understanding. Despite an increasing number of resources to guide teachers in new approaches to writing instruction and assessment (Calkins with Harwayne, 1991; Graves, 1983), there is evidence that changes in teachers' practices are neither widespread nor, where present, necessarily true to their sources (National Center for Research on Teacher Education, 1991). Explanations for the slow pace of change focus on teachers' prior experience and present understandings and practices. Thus, teachers' "apprenticeships of observation" (Lortie, 1975) during their own years as students are carried forward into their own teaching, compounded by years of what one might call the "apprenticeship of participation" in teaching.

> **What is increasingly clear is that whenever teachers set out to adopt a new curriculum or instructional technique, they learn about and use the innovation through the lenses of their existing knowledge, beliefs, and practices. . . . [T]eachers' . . . overarching conceptions of the subject and how it is best taught and learned may conflict with the assumptions underlying new instructional practices they are being asked to adopt. (Borko & Putnam, in press)**

In designing *Writing What You Read* (WWYR), we benefited from prior findings regarding teacher change, even as we continued to document the contexts that impeded and supported it. We began by quite purposefully upsetting the applecart of elementary teachers' common notions about writing assessment, where convention is more important than communication, and generalized praise takes precedence over critical evaluation. We challenged teachers in three domains we believed critical to competencies with interpretive writing assessment. First, teachers need considerable *understandings of text*—of genres, of technical vocabulary, and of ways of analyzing text through discussion and further reading. Second, they need understandings of *children's development of text*—of the unique ways that children approach the interpretation and composition of text (Daiute, 1993). Finally, teachers need guidance and experience in *classroom assessment practices*—in responding to a child's writing in helpful ways. Built closely on prior research on teacher knowledge and practice (Borko & Putnam, in press; Grossman, 1990; National Center for Research on Teacher Education, 1991;

Shulman, 1987), these three analytic categories reflect our greater attention to *subject-specific* analyses of teacher knowledge, children's competencies, and classroom pedagogies. Thus, within our focus on narrative assessment, we address teachers' understandings of literary devices and features of narrative genre, children's developing understandings of narrative, and specific classroom pedagogies that engage teachers and children in literary discussions about tradebooks and their own writing.

We documented the process of implementation and impact in the three domains just listed: teachers' understandings of narrative, teachers' understandings of children's development as writers, and teachers' practice in assessing narrative writing. To anticipate our findings, while all the teachers in our study were able to see productive possibilities for action and change in their methods of narrative assessment, there were differences among the teachers in the patterns of their changes in understanding and practice. With earnest effort to understand what we did and did not accomplish, we interpreted the patterns of our impact through the lenses of the teachers' "existing knowledge, beliefs, and practices" which created distortions as well as transformations of our intervention model. Our goal has been to characterize these differences in ways that contribute to more explicit understandings of teachers' competencies with writing assessment and the contexts that foster it.

This report begins with background information on the site, the project's history, and the background findings which provided the impetus for WWYR. Next we turn to the design and implementation of WWYR and to the research methods we used to gain insight into teachers' knowledge and practice. Our findings are reported in four sections on impact: teachers' knowledge of narrative, teachers' understandings of their children as writers, teachers' assessment practices, and a fourth section on teachers' responses to our methods of staff development. We conclude with critical reflection on both our initial WWYR model of narrative assessment and our methods of teacher enhancement.

THE CONTEXT FOR OUR WORK

Project Background

The site for our project has been one elementary school that served as a longitudinal research site for the national Apple Classrooms of Tomorrow℠ (ACOT℠) project from 1986 through 1993. Key components of the ACOT℠ project were the provision of high technology access, site freedom to develop technology-supported curriculum and pedagogy as appropriate to site goals, and the resulting study of what happens when technology support is readily available to students and teachers. ACOT℠ encouraged instructional innovation, emphasizing to participating teachers the potential of computers to support student initiative, long-term projects, access to multiple resources, cooperative learning, and instructional guidance rather than stand-up teaching. From 1987 to 1990, UCLA was responsible for a series of evaluation studies focused on technology impact at all five original ACOT℠ sites (Baker, Gearhart, & Herman, 1990, 1991; Baker, Herman, & Gearhart, 1988), and a major outcome of that effort was our confrontation with the inadequacies of existing measures of student learning. Thus, we shifted focus in the fall of 1990 to the design of alternative methods of assessment.

A shift to an R&D focus required close collaboration with one site. Located in an upper-middle-class suburban neighborhood in the Silicon Valley, the ACOT℠ classrooms at Suburban School[1] served the youngest ACOT℠ students within the national project. The availability of computer support became one of several contributors to the school's interest in students' writing and to the need for appropriate, well-motivated indices of students' writing growth. In 1989-90, in collaboration with Robert Tierney of Ohio State University, we initiated a pilot design for portfolio assessment to explore the potential of portfolios for both classroom and external assessment of student progress in writing (Baker, Gearhart, Herman, Tierney, & Whittaker, 1991).

Prior Findings: The Context for the Intervention

To support ACOT℠ teachers' emerging investment in technology-supported projects, we collaborated with the teachers in the design of portfolio

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[1] **"Suburban School" is a pseudonym, as are the names of all teachers and children.**

assessment practices that they could adapt to the goals of their writing instruction.[2] Students collected their writing in a "working" file, and teachers provided time for students to add to and organize their work. Included were all stages of the writing process—prewriting (lists, notes, diagrams), rough drafts, final drafts, published pieces. For their showcase portfolios, students periodically chose special pieces that they felt represented their best work. The showcase portfolios were to provide the context for an integrated set of assessment activities: student self-assessment (reflective writing prompted by sentence frames), teacher-student conferencing, informal parent-child conferencing, and parent assessment (responses to several open-ended questions).

Our findings regarding the evolution and impact of portfolio use on methods of writing assessment provided us with the evidence we needed that ACOT℠ teachers' subject matter knowledge required direct support. For example, in an attempt to instigate a community-wide model of assessment, one teacher brainstormed a set of criteria to guide student assessment (Figure 1). This list made no reference to genre, emphasizing mechanics and generalized features of writing content. The following year, one of us (Whittaker) led the teachers in the construction of a form that was more substantive, and the result was a mix of our ideas and theirs, ultimately representing neither (Figure 2).

We were not surprised to find that assessment practices tended to reflect the criteria outlined in the original teacher memo (Figure 1). During the composing of a piece of writing, students received feedback from teachers or peers focused largely on mechanics or local changes in content. The showcase portfolios were similarly contexts for reflection on mechanics or quite ambiguous issues: How did you decide what to include in your showcase? What are you good at now? In what areas would you like to improve? Showcase portfolio conferences rarely focused effectively on the content of students' work:

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[2] Andrea Whittaker was the on-site researcher and collaborator during this development phase.

WAYS TO MAKE BETTER WRITERS

HAVE STUDENTS MAKE A CHART SUCH AS:
(Teacher records students' responses)

What Makes Writing Good?	*What Makes Writing Poor?*
Clear, topic sentence	*Spelling errors*
Good, clear, details	*Disorganization*
Correct grammar	*Missing Punctuation*
Complete sentences	*Dull topic*
Correct punctuation	*Sentences too long or run-on*
Use of similes, alliteration, etc.	
Lively writing[a]	
Punchy dialogue	
Use of examples to explain or elaborate	
Portrays characters' feelings	

[a] **The last four suggestions in this list emerged in a meeting facilitated by Andrea Whittaker.**

Figure 1. **Suburban School teachers' suggestions for writing criteria.**

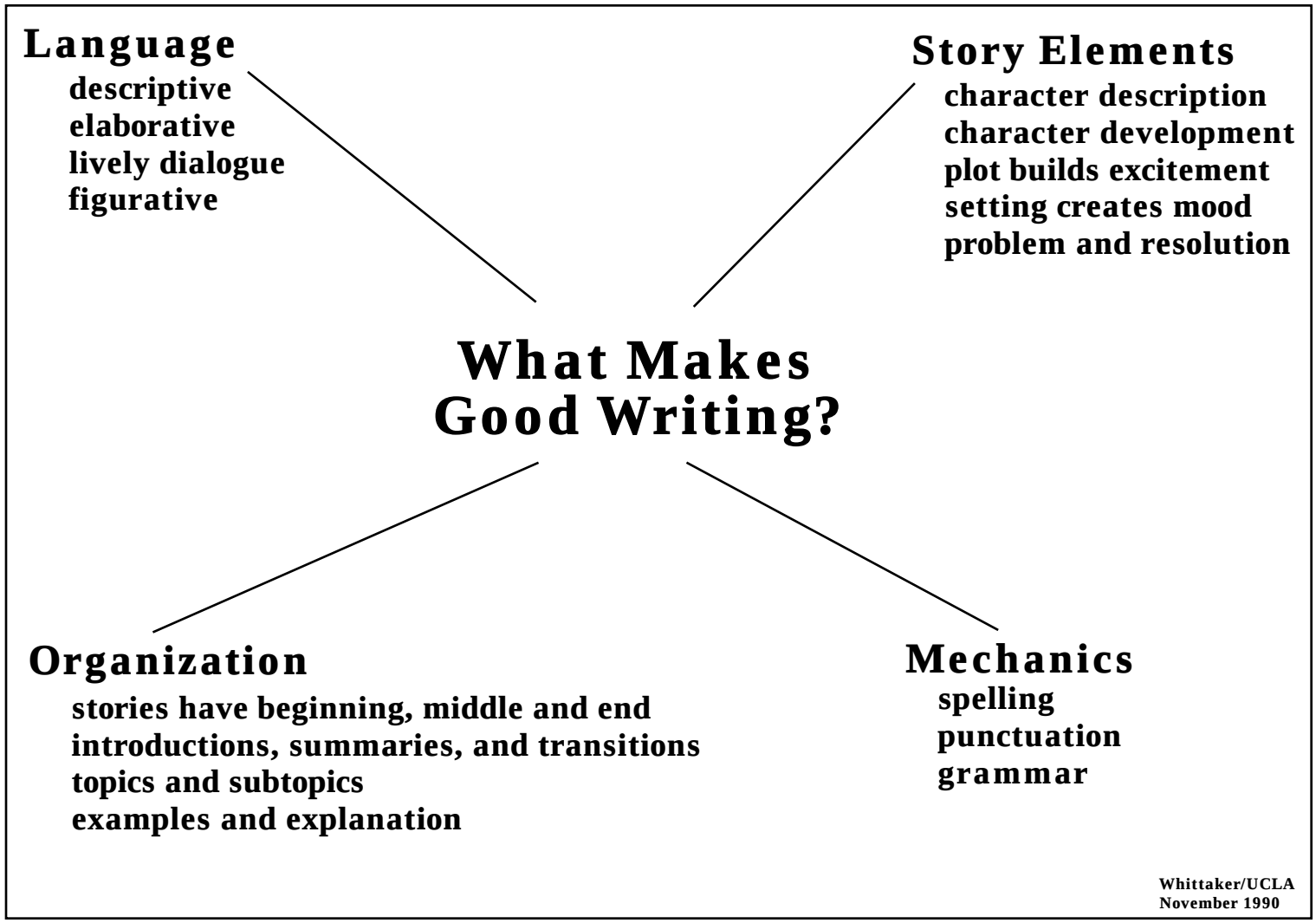

Figure 2. **Revised criteria to guide assessment.**

Lena asked Leonard to specify what kinds of words he had trouble spelling and what sort of details he wanted to include more of. He said, "Big words!" . . . Lena returned to a concrete example: "What details would you add to the zoo story?" No answer.

Dianne explained her conferencing approach: "I skimmed the . . . piece, looking for details, spelling, and punctuation . . . I tried to relate it to what we're doing in language arts now. For example, I asked [one girl] to come up with about five adjectives to enrich her description of a pillow."

When we asked teachers to discuss with us the impact of the new portfolio practices, we heard similarly general analyses of good writing and students' competencies: "I'm more aware of their progress." "I think more about the individual student and what s/he can produce." "Portfolio assessment increases students' understandings of 'what makes good writing'." "They self-evaluate, think about how they can improve, what their writing is like." But the criteria for "good writing" were limited to conventions or superficial features. Thus, one teacher commented, "Now I can give them more feedback—for example, are their sentences complete? Do you have one paragraph, with details?" Complete sentences and detailed paragraphs barely scratch the surface of what children need to understand in order to be make meaning through writing.

Teachers were conflicted about the purposes and potential of portfolio assessment. Student self-assessment? While teachers noted the pride that students experienced as they collected and reviewed their work ("They LOVE it; they can see it, it's like meeting an old friend"), some cautioned against overemphasizing the evaluation aspect to students, as "some students are hypercritical of themselves as it is." Formal student evaluation? Teachers realized that none of the portfolio practices in place—selection for the showcase, self-assessment, parent assessment, teacher-student conferencing —truly constituted *assessment*. Lena commented, "I want the portfolio to be an evaluation tool. Right now it is just a motivation tool." But teachers seemed daunted by portfolio assessment; they wanted to focus, but they were uncertain of the appropriate method: "It would help if you assessed in one area, [and] then you might be able to see progress." "If you grade holistically, it's too all

encompassing; you need to assess for specific things—organization, or whatever, focus on just that, and discuss that with the students."

The challenges facing the implementation of writing assessment at Suburban School were confirmed in both a parallel technical study of the "ratability" of the Suburban School portfolios (Gearhart, Herman, Baker, & Whittaker, 1992; Herman, Gearhart, & Baker, 1993) and documentation of teachers' writing assignments. In the rating study, a group of outside raters was unable to assign any score more differentiated than a single holistic judgment to the students' portfolios. The portfolio collections were an assemblage of many different kinds of writing, often more connected to a curriculum shaped from heroes and holidays ("Martin Luther King, Jr." and "The Easter Bunny Tale") than to a sound understanding of narrative or exposition or poetry.

When we asked teachers to describe the goals, resources, expectations, and methods for each of their writing assignments, their responses for those assignments we classified as "narrative" revealed little of the depth of understanding required for teaching and assessing narrative.[3] Teachers emphasized, for example, content that included a "beginning, middle, and end," "who, what, when, where format," and language that contained "use of details," "good usage of adjectives," "descriptive words," and "action words." Specific knowledge of narrative evident in some teachers' assignment descriptions was often vague ("exaggerate a familiar event in their lives into short tall tale," "story features similar to Amos and Boris"). Overall, the absence of substantial, *common* understandings of narrative in the Suburban School ACOT℠ community was limiting the potential of portfolio assessment. Although growth was demonstrated in teachers' emerging awareness that portfolio assessment required the construction of criteria or standards for good writing, the criteria were limited to global understandings of writing that went unchallenged in the school community and provided limited capacity for guiding the growth of young writers.

Teachers asked explicitly for guidance in the assessment of children's writing. To address teachers' tendencies to blur the distinctions among writing genres, we made the decision to focus not on the assessment of

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[3] Teachers' descriptions of their exposition and poetry assignments are not summarized in this report on narrative.

portfolio collections but on the assessment of specific genres. A focus on genre could build the teachers' capacities to assess writing and provide a framework for the building of assessable portfolios down the road.

WRITING WHAT YOU READ: INTERVENTION GOALS AND METHODS

Domains of Knowledge and Practice

Our workshop series addressed the three domains of teacher knowledge and practice outlined previously: knowledge of narrative, understandings of students' capabilities as writers, and competencies with methods of narrative assessment.

***Narrative knowledge* refers both to the content of the discipline and to the ways in which the content is used in analytic conversations about literary texts. For *narrative content*, *Writing What You Read* emphasized an understanding of the components of narrative: genre, theme, character, setting, plot, style, tone, and point of view. We placed particular emphasis on the role of genre in structuring plot, determining character, and shaping other components into a recognizable and predictable form (Fowler, 1982; Lukens, 1990; Wolf & Heath, 1992). We also emphasized the technical language that represents narrative content—the component names and the vocabulary associated with each. Technical vocabulary for "plot," for example, includes "climax," "episode," "flashback," "foreshadowing," and "denouement," just to name a few.**

For the ways that narrative content is used in *analytic conversations*, we engaged teachers in discussions designed to explore the very purposeful ways in which an author crafts his or her writing, how the background knowledge and personal life experience of the reader interact with the text to give it meaning (Rosenblatt, 1978), how readings of the text at hand are supported by other texts (other pieces of literature as well as literary criticism about the literature), and how the characteristics and functions of the narrative constructs can be examined as separate entities as well as interwoven within a piece of text. Thus, learning ways to discuss literature was a key feature of our work with teachers, and we viewed it as essential to teachers' development as "assessors" of children's narrative. Just as tradebook texts can be held up for discussion, so too can children's narratives be analyzed for accomplishments

and areas of needed improvement. Teachers' growing skill with literary conversation around professional texts can thus support their interpretations of their students' narratives.

Understandings of children's capabilities as writers **were grounded in numerous examples of young children writing their own stories as well as discussing narrative. Within the supportive framework of our developmental rubric, we discussed children's insights and written work in the same way as we discussed professional texts, stressing children's developing understandings of character revelation, the symbolic use of setting, the sequential nature of plot. We analyzed children's beginning and more accomplished uses of language to set a tone and to create their own voice or style. We evaluated children's awareness of audience, delineating what attempts children made to make their writing clear to others. We also stressed that indices of children's developments could not be readily equated to "grade-level expectations"—that very young writers were quite capable of more accomplished pieces than older students depending on their purpose and experience. We also emphasized that children *are* interested in criticism that would help them become better writers—encouraging the teachers to think of a developmental model that would scaffold children toward better writing through specific commendations and recommendations.**

Understandings of narrative and of children's capabilities as writers were the springboards for integrating assessment tools with curricular possibilities and instructional techniques. To build teachers' *competencies with methods of narrative assessment,* we engaged teachers in assessment of children's narrative writing in the same ways that they critically responded to literature. Equipped with the "tools of the literary trade"—an understanding of genre influences, the technical vocabulary, and the orchestration of the narrative components within a text—we encouraged teachers to reflect on and offer their students explicit guidance for their writing.

To provide teachers with guided practice in narrative assessment, we introduced a *narrative feedback form* for written commentary and a *narrative rubric* for judging the effectiveness of students' narratives, and we provided repeated opportunities for their use with narrative samples from the teachers' classes. At each session, teachers scored and commented independently and then shared their efforts with the group in extended discussions of their

interpretations of the writing and their views of the student's needs for guidance. These forms evolved over several sessions as we evolved as a community in our understandings of the goals of narrative assessment and the utility of the artifacts we were designing to support assessment.

The *narrative feedback form* and the *narrative rubric* are described in detail in earlier reports (Wolf & Gearhart, 1993a, 1993b).[4] The *narrative feedback form* (Figure 3) is designed to strengthen teacher-student conferences. It provides space for constructive and critical comments in the narrative areas of Theme, Character, Setting, Plot, and Communication, as well as two issues generic to all writing—Convention and Writing Process. In using the form, teachers limit themselves to only two comments—a commendation and a recommendation, which they can place in any of the seven categories. The object of the form is to choose specific points of criticism to be applied to the child's next draft or piece.

The *narrative rubric* (Figure 4) is a classroom tool that features the *Writing What You Read* analysis of the multileveled dimensions of narrative elements, and it differs from many other narrative rubrics in its focus on the interplay of genre with children's development in writing. First, it contains five evaluative scales that match the narrative components found on the feedback form. Second, each category is headed by horizontal dual dimensions, designed to summarize the complexity of the subgenres of narrative, with varied purposes and processes associated with each. The dual dimensions are not linear sequences, but continua whose definitions depend on subgenre choice; for example, Themes move between explicit and sometimes didactic statements to implicit revelations. In this way our rubric is sufficiently malleable to adjust to individual subgenres of narrative, for certain scale points are more applicable to particular subgenres than others. Third, each category contains a 6-level evaluative scale designed to match generalized understandings of children's writing development. We eliminated numerical scores at each level to discourage an unproductive focus on the meaning of a "4" or a "2." We wanted to avoid placing more emphasis on a child's rank than on his or her achievement within a particular context.

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[4] For an extended explanation of the rationale for the program see *Writing What You Read: Assessment as a Learning Event* by Wolf & Gearhart (1993a) and *Writing What You Read: A Guidebook for the Assessment of Children's Narratives* (1993b). Sections of this paper are closely adapted from these companion reports.

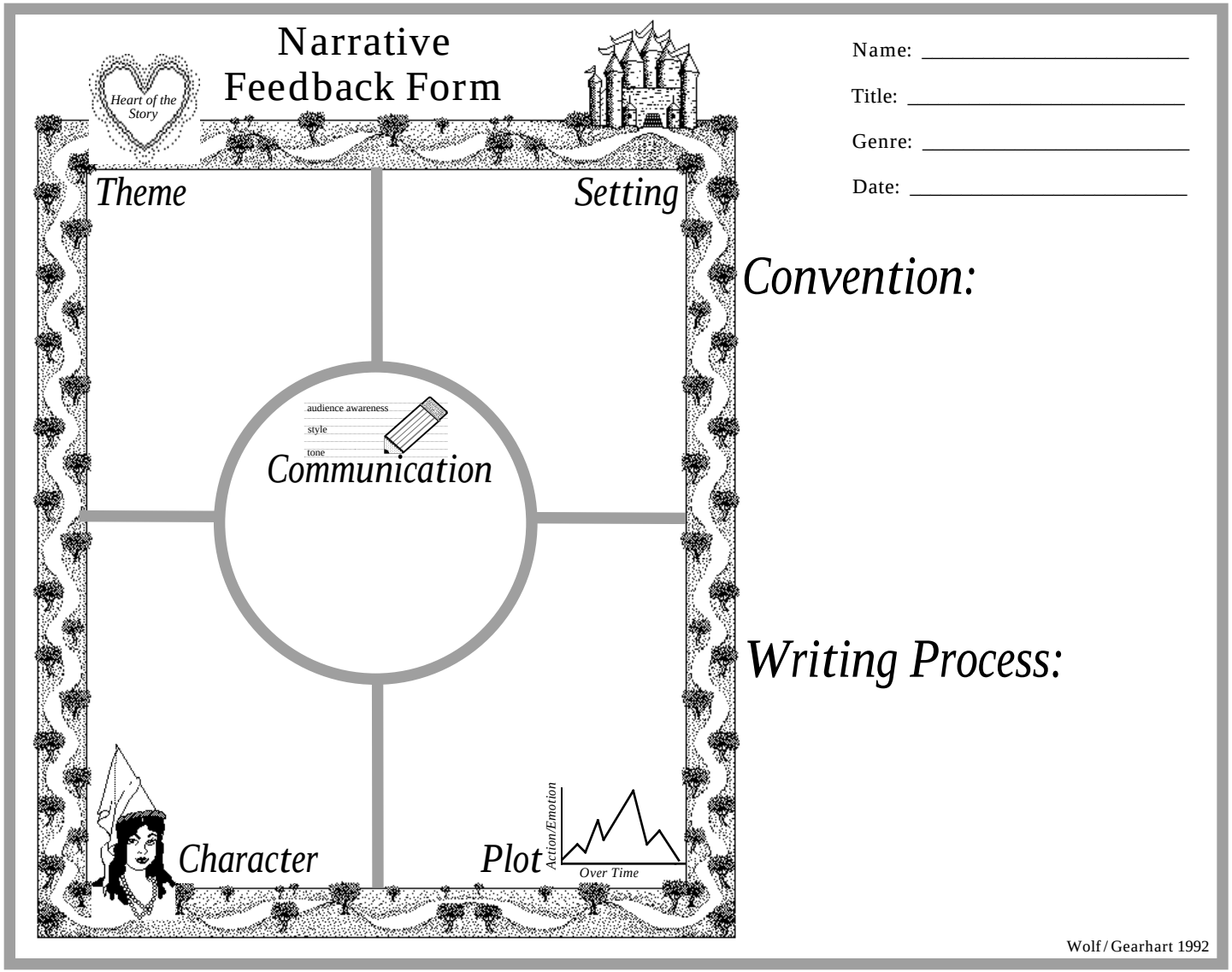


Figure 3. **Narrative feedback form.**

Narrative Rubric

Theme

explicit ◄——► implicit
didactic ◄——► revealing

- Not present or not developed through other narrative elements
- Meaning centered in a series of list-like statements ("I like my mom. And I like my dad. And I like my....") or in the coherence of the action itself ("He blew up the plane. Pow!")
- Beginning statement of theme—often explicit and didactic ("The mean witch chased the children and she shouldn't have done that."); occasionally the theme, though well stated, does not fit the story
- Beginning revelation of theme on both explicit and implicit levels through the more subtle things characters say and do ("He put his arm around the dog and held him close. 'You're my best pal,' he whispered.")
- Beginning use of secondary themes, often tied to overarching theme, but sometimes tangential; main theme increasingly revealed through discovery rather than delivery, though explicit thematic statements still predominate
- Overarching theme multi-layered and complex; secondary themes integrally related to primary theme or themes; both explicit and implicit revelations of theme work in harmony ("You can't do that to my sister!", Lou cried, moving to shield Tasha with her body.)

Character

flat ◄——► round
static ◄——► dynamic

- One or two flat, static characters with little relationship between characters; either objective (action speaks for itself) or first person (author as "I") point of view
- Some rounding, usually in physical description; relationship between characters is action-driven; objective point of view is common
- Continued rounding in physical description, particularly stereotypical features ("wart on the end of her nose"); beginning rounding in feeling, often through straightforward vocabulary ("She was sad, glad, mad.")
- Beginning insights into the motivation and intention that drives the feeling and the action of main characters often through limited omniscient point of view; beginning dynamic features (of change and growth)
- Further rounding (in feeling and motivation); dynamic features appear in the central characters and in the relationships between characters; move to omniscient point of view (getting into the minds of characters)
- Round, dynamic major characters through rich description of affect, intention, and motivation; growth occurs as a result of complex interactions between characters; most characters contribute to the development of the narrative; purposeful choice of point of view

Setting

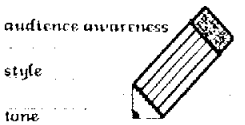
backdrop ◄——► essential
simple ◄——► multi-functional

- Backdrop setting with little or no indication of time and place ("There was a little girl. She liked candy.")
- Skeletal indication of time and place often held in past time ("once there was..."); little relationship to other narrative elements
- Beginning relationship between setting and other narrative elements (futuristic setting to accommodate aliens and spaceships); beginning symbolic functions of setting (often stereotypical images—forest as scary place)
- Setting becomes more essential to the development of the story in explicit ways: characters may remark on the setting or the time and place may be integral to the plot
- Setting may serve more than one function and the relationship between functions is more implicit and symbolic—for example, setting may be linked symbolically to character mood ("She hid in the grass, clutching the sharp, dry spikes, waiting.")
- Setting fully integrated with the characters, action, and theme of the story; role of setting is multifunctional—setting mood, revealing character and conflict, serving as metaphor

Plot

simple ◄——► complex
static ◄——► conflict

- One or two events with little or no conflict ("Once there was a cat. The cat liked milk.")
- Beginning sequence of events, but occasional out-of-sync occurrences; events without problem, problem without resolution, or little emotional response
- Single, linear episode with clear beginning, middle, and end; the episode contains four critical elements of problem, emotional response, action, and outcome
- Plot increases in complexity with more than one episode; each episode contains problem, emotional response, action, outcome; beginning relationship between episodes
- Stronger relationship between episodes (with the resolution in one leading to a problem in the next); beginning manipulation of the sequence through foreshadowing, and subplots
- Overarching problem and resolution supported by multiple, episodes; rich variety of techniques (building suspense, foreshadowing, flashbacks, denouement) to manipulate sequence



Communication

context-bound ◄——► reader-considerate
literal ◄——► symbolic

- Writing bound to context (You have to be there) and often dependent on drawing and talk to clarify the meaning; minimal style and tone
- Beginning awareness of reader considerations; straightforward style and tone focused on getting the information out; first attempts at dialogue begin
- Writer begins to make use of explanations and transitions ("because" and "so"); literal style centers on description ("sunny day"); tone explicit
- Increased information and explanation for the reader (linking ideas as well as episodes); words more carefully selected to suit the narrative's purpose (particularly through increased use of detail in imagery)
- Some experimentation with symbolism (particularly figurative language) which shows reader considerations on both explicit and implicit levels; style shows increasing variety (alliteration, word play, rhythm, etc.) and tone is more implicit
- Careful crafting of choices in story structure as well as vocabulary demonstrate considerate orchestration of all the available resources; judicious experimentation with variety of stylistic forms which are often symbolic in nature and illuminate the other narrative elements

Figure 4. Narrative rubric.

Wolf/Gearhart/Quellmalz/Whittaker, 1993

The 6-level scales work in tandem with the dimensions. For students' written fables, for example, analytic scale points in Character may shift between the second and fourth points, depending on the direct or more subtle hints the writer offers about character. Younger writers may focus more on the action between the characters, while older writers may provide initial insights into the intentions behind the action. Thus, while our analytic rubric contains scales for differentiated narrative elements, the *use* of the rubric is designed to highlight the critical nature of *orchestration* in the writing process. It is in the orchestration of narrative components and in the interplay of authorial choices that a text succeeds, not in isolated rules and regulations.

Workshop Content and Sequence

As shown in Table 1, early workshops in 1992 placed a greater emphasis on knowledge of narrative and on understanding children as writers, and, over time, the focus shifted toward the design, refinement, and practice of specific methods of narrative assessment. To enable the conduct of assessment, we found it necessary to work with the teachers midway in the design of an "assessable" narrative curriculum (May 1992 and January 1993)—careful selections of genres to be taught within and across grade levels, and the design of these narrative assignments (Table 2). We worked to build the teachers' knowledge of specific genres of narrative (e.g., myth, fairy tale, tall tale), and, to guide them in the establishment of criteria for assessment, we reshaped the narrative feedback form into a planning form entitled "Writing a good (genre) means:" (see Appendix E). (The impetus for this adaptation of our feedback form emerged from one teacher's—Lena's—adaptation as a form for her students to use in planning their narratives.) By 1993, teachers had organized themselves in grade-level teams, selected two narrative genres to teach, and made commitments to implement the WWYR assessment tools. Workshops focused exclusively on guided practice with scoring, written commentary, and teacher-student conferencing.

The structure of all the workshops was quite similar. Three half-day sessions were specifically designed for grade-level teams K-2, 3-4, and 5-6 teachers using literature and writing samples appropriate for these grade levels. Each workshop was supported by comprehensive handouts that reinforced key ideas through text and graphics and included recommended

Table 1

Key Ideas in *Writing What You Read* Workshops

Session	Key Ideas	Handouts
#1 Jan. 92	• communication comes before convention • writing is a process • help students evaluate and track their writing • you write what you read—literary conversations can aid children in their writing	Appendix A
#2 Jan. 92	• features of character, setting, plot, and theme • young children's extensive writing capabilities • students' tracking forms for writing • feedback form for teachers' evaluations—one commendation and one recommendation	Appendix B
#3 March 92	• features of genre, style, tone, and point of view • how criticism works in analytical conversations and writing conferences • beginning ideas for narrative rubric	Appendix C
#4 April 92	• introduce rubric with evaluative scales for character, setting, plot, theme, communication, convention, and writing process. Each evaluative scale contained 4 levels of children's development. • scoring and discussion using writing samples from the teachers' classes	Appendix D
#5 May 92	• rubric revision—evaluative scales for character, setting, plot, theme, and communication with 6 levels of children's development • score and discuss writing samples from the teachers' classes • emphasize genre and what is being currently taught at the school	
#6 Jan. 93	• minor revisions in feedback form and rubric • review the fairy tale and "fractured" fairy tale genres • score and write evaluative commentary on students' renderings of these fairy tale genres • decide what two genres will be taught at each grade level this year • introduce the "Writing a good __(genre)__ means:" form to help teachers organize their planning	Appendix E

Table 1 (continued)

Session	Key Ideas	Handouts
#7 March 93	• score and write evaluative commentary for primary (Mitten) story and upper-grade (high fantasy) story • analyze one primary and one upper-grade teacher present student conferencing practices • emphasize positive features of mini-conferencing	Appendix F
#8 June 93	• score and write evaluative commentary on one genre for each of the six grade levels • focus on "The Art of the Picture Book" with beginning insights into children's growth as illustrators	Appendix G

Table 2

An "Assessable" Narrative Curriculum: Suburban School's Decisions in 1993

Grade	Genre #1	Genre #2
1	Fantasy (Frog and Toad story)	Folktale (Mitten story)
2	Fantasy (Snowman story)	Fable
3	Fairy Tale	Tall Tale
4	Pourquoi Tale	Fantasy
5	Historical Fiction	Fairy Tale
6	Myth	High Fantasy

further readings. Any assignment negotiated during a workshop (e.g., the design of criteria for a narrative unit, or trial use of the rubric or the feedback form) was restated in a memo distributed to the teachers within a week after the workshop.

The fourth half-day session was reserved for a meeting with the teachers' Steering Committee to review key workshop points and plan for the next session. With eventual representation from each grade level, the Steering

Committee was responsible for disseminating final decisions made in the committee meetings. In the January 1993 meeting, for example, the Steering Committee helped to finalize plans for genres to be taught and then encouraged teachers to complete the "Writing a good __(genre)__ means:" form to help them organize their planning (Appendix E).

METHODS

Data Collection

Data collection required an orchestration of qualitative and quantitative methods. Certain methods provided us evidence of teachers' understandings and practices across all of our teachers: questionnaires, interviews, and workshop assignments. Other methods deepened our portraits of selected cases: classroom observation, analyses of classroom artifacts (e.g., teachers' comments on students' papers), and extended interviews with case study teachers. Table 3 contains the participation of each teacher at each "cross-teacher" data point; shaded areas represent occasions not applicable for a given teacher (changes in staffing, or maternity leave).

Data Coding

Most of our data are qualitative—codings of teachers' responses to questionnaires and interviews, codings of teachers' comments on children's writing. Many of our data sets are small, and represent few cases that fit any particular category. As a result, we found it necessary to discuss our efforts at analysis in great detail, revisiting key examples repeatedly in ways that ultimately made conventional methods of establishing rater agreement inapplicable. Our goal was to reach consensus on our understandings of the data, and we are confident that we did so.

Our confidence derives from several sources. First, whenever possible, we utilized the same schemes across data sets. For example, to document teachers' uses of the technical language appropriate to narrative analysis at several points during the workshop series, we applied a scheme that characterized the appropriateness of terms for narrative (Narrative Specific vs. Genre General vs. Genre Confused), and we applied this scheme to certain

Table 3

Teachers' Participation in Research

		ACOT[SM] Portfolio Project		Year One			Year Two			
Teacher	Grade level	Assignment descriptions 1990-91	Interview summer 1991	Pre-workshop survey	Narrative assignment descriptions	Post-workshop survey	Pre-workshop survey	Confer-encing survey	Narrative assignment descriptions	Post-workshop interview
A	K			Yes	No	Yes				
B	K			No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	?	Yes
C	1->K			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	?	Yes
Lena	1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bert	1 or 2			No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
F	2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
G	2			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
H	2	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
I	3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
J	3	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes				
K	3							Yes	Yes	No
L	4	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
M	4	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
O	5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No				
P	6							Yes	Yes	Yes
Christina	6			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R	6->4	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Peter	6							No	Yes	Yes

Note. **Gray-shaded areas indicate that the teacher was not available to complete that measure (on leave of absence or not on staff.)**

responses to questionnaires and interviews. Second, all data were entered *verbatim* in tables, to permit us to move text easily from one category to another and examine consistencies and inconsistencies in codings. These tables also facilitated selection of illustrative quotes. Third, most data were coded by two or three of the authors. Only data that emerged as quite uncontroversial were coded by one of us, then confirmed by a second. Finally, we opted in most cases to use teachers rather than comments as the unit of analysis: Agreement among us on the coding of any given statement (e.g., a teacher's description of the goals of a writing assignment, or a teacher's views of the benefits of our workshops) was more difficult than our agreement that a *given teacher* had ever expressed a particular view, or represented narrative with a particular construct. Thus, we report findings for teachers—how many teachers expressed this view? how many teachers represented narrative in this way?

Data Analyses

We confronted two problems in the design of our data analyses. First, beginning with our skeletal design for portfolio assessment introduced into four classrooms in 1990 and continuing through the completion of our schoolwide workshop series in June of 1993, our project represented a co-evolution of intervention and research methods. As our framework evolved, our questions changed, and the shifts in instrument content reflected these changes. Second, teachers' participation at each data point varied when teachers left or joined the school, or when teachers did not respond. In addition, the ACOT℠ portfolio project's initial restriction to ACOT℠ classrooms meant that we had no background understandings of non-ACOT℠ teachers prior to our first workshop. The resulting data, then, posed quite interesting challenges to analysis.

We have adopted three strategies for analysis. First, we consider a dataset from all of those responding to a given questionnaire or interview as evidence of the *school community*'s capacity to engage in narrative assessment at that time. Second, for those teachers responding to similar instruments on more than one occasion, we look for *evidence of individual growth* (or lack of growth, as the case may be). Third, we provide case studies that enrich and supplement findings from the entire staff.

The cases were purposefully chosen to reflect a variety of teacher characteristics. We selected two primary teachers (Lena and Bert) and two upper-grade teachers (Christina and Peter), pairs who worked in grade-level teams. The teachers were balanced for gender (two females and two males) as well as overall experience at Suburban (Christina came to the school the year we began WWYR, and Peter joined in the second year; Bert and Lena had been teaching at Suburban for years). The teachers also represent the range of WWYR impact—our "success stories" and those tales of lesser impact.

Lena, for example, was primed for success, a mentor teacher already eager to grow in her understandings before we arrived. She routinely attended and led language arts workshops. Highly invested in her own growth as a teacher and an invested member of the WWYR Steering Committee, she was able to take and make use of the discussions we had and the materials we developed to transform the materials to meet her own purposes. Her teaching partner, Bert, represented an opposite case. He was less knowledgeable about narrative and was consequently less able to make use of WWYR materials. He also had great respect for Lena, and, following her lead in grade-level planning, he was able to make some changes in his writing curriculum, instruction, and assessment. As he grew in his understanding of narrative in the workshops and began to incorporate some of the technical language and assessment strategies, we had opportunity to document ways that his appropriations of WWYR at times distorted our intent. A characteristic of Bert's participation was his passive resistance to several of our research requests, particularly the questionnaires and writing assignment descriptions.

A young woman new to teaching, Christina was a highly reflective upper-grade teacher committed to building her students' writing competencies. Assessment was already central in her beliefs about effective teaching, and prior to our arrival she had developed a number of her own assessment checklists and guides to help her students grow as writers. But her expertise was in exposition—report writing and persuasive letters. During the WWYR workshops, she took on the challenge of narrative, developing a particular fascination with the capacity of its technical language to give her students new ways to talk about their work. Her expertise was recognized in the staff's suggestion that she join the project Steering Committee.

Christina's grade-level colleague, Peter, joined the WWYR project in its second year. While Christina was characteristically eager to enter into highly analytical workshop conversations and grew animated when discussing new books and ideas, he was less comfortable, commenting that the WWYR workshops were the most "intellectual" experiences he had ever had concerning text. A recent convert to a particularly open-ended view of writers' workshop, he was resistant to the critical stance that we asked teachers to take towards their students' writing, believing that a teacher should not tamper with a child's personal writing process. New to the school and new to the project, he felt distanced from the journey that was already rolling before he boarded the train.

RESULTS

Our results are organized in four major sections: teachers' understandings of narrative, teachers' understandings of children as developing writers, assessment practices, and teachers' views of WWYR staff development.

Teachers' Understandings of Narrative

> **. . . I understand genre a lot more than I ever did. I understand how it fits into the whole scheme of things. I understand how the genre is specific for each specific character, setting, plot, and theme . . . Once you get it through *your* thick skull, then there are ways that you can pass that information on. (Lena, June 1993)**

In her final interview, Lena, a primary grade teacher, expressed her faith in her increasing understanding of narrative subject matter knowledge. The emphasis on what teachers know about their content has only recently come under the research lens (Borko & Putnam, in press; Shulman, 1987), but as we can see from Lena's comment, an understanding of content is a critical piece of what and how we teach our children. In our examination of teachers' growing understandings of narrative, we focused on two domains: *content knowledge*—understandings of the narrative components—and *understandings of the uses of that knowledge in literary conversations*.

At the Beginning

At the outset of our project, teachers rarely characterized narrative writing with a technical language that captured its heart or its complexity. Only 5 of 13 teachers responding to our preworkshop questionnaire (Appendix H) made use of narrative language, and only 2 of these 5 offered an analysis of the heart of narrative as a genre (e.g., "character with conflict [episode or incident] with some sort of resolution or conclusion"). The remaining 3 teachers simply mentioned an element ("builds on a theme" or "follows the plot"). In lieu of narrative-specific language, most teachers (12/13) included in their descriptions "genre-general" terms that applied rather globally to the characteristics of "good writing": Organization ("beginning, middle, and end," "fairly clear order"), Content ("lots of details," "related ideas"); and Style ("description words," "adjectives to make writing more colorful") (Table 4). Many of these terms were those listed on the initial memo of recommended criteria for good writing (Figure 1). There were even teachers (3) who included language appropriate only to a genre different from narrative—for example, a very good story "provides enough information for the given topic."

Mid Year One

With input from the Steering Committee, we revised the 1990-91 assignment description form to reflect the goals of *Writing What You Read* (Appendix I). Nine teachers completed these for a sample narrative

Table 4

Classification of Teachers by Their Descriptors for Narrative in January 1992

Level	*N*	Narrative specific	Genre general	Genre confused
Primary	5	1	4	1
Middle	5	1	5	2
Upper	3	3	1	0
Total	13	5	10	3

assignment in the spring of 1992; one of these teachers is not included in our analyses because her assignment was judged as exposition, not narrative. We examined the responses in two ways. First, the technical language used among the eight participating teachers was revealing of the school *community's* emerging capacity to describe narrative in explicit ways. Second, individual teachers' changes in technical language from the January 1992 questionnaire to May 1992 were revealing of changing patterns of technical language.

The group responses revealed a shift within the Suburban School community toward inclusion of narrative-specific language (Table 5). However, the continued use of genre-general terms and occasional juxtapositions of terms within an otherwise narrative-specific description suggested that some teachers were appropriating WWYR terms to prior understandings in ways that were superficially narrative specific, while inherently genre general: "Bunnies were tied into season themes of spring and Easter." "Communication lesson—it is important to plan your story before you begin." "Students were told to think about a time when something happened that they'll always remember, and to write about it in the first person . . . , telling it 'like a story' with a beginning, middle, and an end."

Comparisons of the responses of the 7 teachers who responded to both the May and January surveys showed some growth in understanding. Four teachers used narrative-specific language for the first time in May, although

Table 5

Classification of Teachers by Their Descriptors for Narrative in Narrative Assignment Descriptions (March 1992)

Level	*N*	Narrative specific	Genre general	Genre confused
Primary	4	3	2	0
Middle	1	1	1	0[a]
Upper	3	3	1	0
Total	8	7	4	0

[a] One teacher not represented in the table used the narrative form to describe an expository assignment.

one of these simply named narrative genre ("fantasy or realistic"), and another misaligned "theme" with seasons and "communication" with planning. Of the 3 teachers who used narrative language on both occasions, 2 provided far more detail. For example, Marilyn described a "good story" in her classroom in January as having "conflict, climax, resolution, character, and setting." In May, she shared a recent tall tale assignment in which students were to "use the elements of a tall tale to tell about a hero and how something came to be, describing an individual, a hero, bigger than life, using humor and exaggeration, with some geographical and historical basis."

End of Year One

When asked if they perceived change in their understandings of narrative, all teachers reported growth (Appendix J) (Table 6). Most teachers focused on their understandings of the narrative components. Others commented that they understood better how narrative differs from other genres (e.g., exposition), how narrative subgenres differ (e.g., folk tale vs. historical fiction), or how interpretation of narrative and composing of narrative are linked. The explicitness of most responses was evidence that most teachers were genuinely sharing their perceptions. Teachers mentioned specific elements ("I have a greater understanding of the difference between plot and theme"), described change ("I wasn't clear on the three types of writing—exposition, persuasive, narrative—so came to understand elements of a narrative story"), or demonstrated specific applications of their understandings ("I can divide it up more distinctly into [elements] and am able

Table 6

Classification of Teachers by Reported Growth in Their Understandings of Narrative

Level	*N*	Genre distinctions	Importance of narrative components	Literature-composing relationships	Narrative subgenre distinctions
Primary	7	0	5	0	0
Middle	5	2	5	0	0
Upper	4	0	2	3	2
Total	15	2	12	3	2

to explain it that way to students." "I feel more comfortable in guiding the students in their appreciation of the literature we read and helping them incorporate some of the literary devices in their own writing"). Some teachers also shared continued confusions: Plot and Theme appeared difficult for some primary teachers to explain to their students, Communication was difficult for one teacher to understand, and another teacher remained uncertain of genre distinctions ("What makes this a narrative?").

Prior to Year Two

We asked teachers to bring us up to date on their progress with implementation of *Writing What You Read* (Appendix K). Of the 13 teachers continuing participation, 9 completed our questionnaire. We examined the responses from the remaining 9 teachers in two ways—the school *community's* emerging capacity to describe narrative in explicit ways, and changes in technical language from the January 1992 questionnaire to January 1993 for the 8 teachers who responded each time.

Although most teachers included narrative-specific language (Table 7), there was a continued pattern of some unchallenged juxtapositions of narrative-specific and genre-general terms. For example, one teacher reported continued use of the "What Makes Good Writing" chart, an artifact that outlines genre-general features of content. Another teacher defined Plot as "a clear beginning/middle/conclusion"—a definition we regard as genre general. Two teachers included holidays and seasons as examples of Theme, showing that they had not yet recognized "Theme" as a narrative component.

Table 7

Classification of Teachers by Their Descriptors for Narrative in January 1993

Level	*N*	Narrative specific	Genre general	Genre confused
Primary	5	3	3	0
Middle	2	1	2	0
Upper	2	2	0	0
Total	9	6	5	0

Comparisons of the responses of the Pre Year Two and the Pre Year One questionnaires showed some growth in understanding. Of the four teachers who used narrative language on both occasions (Grades 1, 2, 5, 6), all discussed more elements as well as the link between interpretation of literature and writing. One teacher adopted narrative language in 1993: While she stressed clarity, "good words," and "beginning, middle, and end" in 1992, she outlined four of the narrative components and discussed the link between interpretation and composing of narrative in 1993. Three teachers did not use narrative-specific language on either occasion (Grades K, 1, 4): A kindergarten teacher regarded narrative to be outside the bounds of the kindergarten curriculum; a first-grade teacher near retirement acknowledged that he simply did not understand the WWYR material; and a fourth-grade teacher continued to use genre-general descriptors (e.g., "beginning, middle, end") showing no evidence of WWYR impact.

During Year Two

During Year Two, the teachers agreed to work towards a schoolwide framework for narrative curriculum and assessment, initiating the process with the collaborative design of several narrative units at each grade level. Outright comparisons of their responses to this form with prior assignment descriptions would be inappropriate: The "Writing a good (genre) means" form (see Appendix E) set a frame for the teachers' planning, and, in that the components of narrative were plainly labeled, the form encouraged genre specificity.

While we acknowledge the explicit support that the form provided, we viewed the plans as evidence of growth in knowledge of some aspects of narrative. All of the 1993 planning showed appropriate genre-specific descriptions of the components of character, setting, plot, and theme, and revealed growing understandings of how these four narrative components connect and help shape one another. The fourth-grade teachers, for example, stressed the role of setting in fantasy: "Integral setting. Action, character, and theme are influenced by the time and place. Will tend to be realistic, then fantasy, then back again." Their comments reveal an understanding that fantasy stories are often bounded by realistic frames. In describing their plans for teaching a myth, the sixth-grade teachers wrote in regard to plot: "Follows

a logical sequence leading the reader to the answer of a universal question, or—helping them to see the theme." In planning their instruction for a unit on fairy tales, the third-grade teachers stressed the relationship between character and theme by showing how the rather stereotypical features of good and evil characters drive home the theme of how "good triumphs over evil." Communication, however, was more problematic. Both the first- and second-grade teams ignored the component—either leaving this circle blank or taking it off the form completely—and the plans for Communication of the intermediate and upper-grade teachers contained less genre-specific language. For example, in planning a fairy tale, the third-grade teachers wrote "explanations simple and clear, use of dialogue, use of details to help reader form images," comments applicable to almost any genre and not specific to the fairy tale.

Teachers also showed a selective pattern of growth in their engagement in literary conversation. Because the teachers planned in grade-level teams, they were using each other as resources, shifting the planning away from isolated exploration to collaborative conversation about text. All of the teachers listed and discussed some ways that trade books support the study of selected genres. For example, the first-grade teachers read many *Frog and Toad* (Lobel) stories (e.g., Lobel, 1979) to point out the patterns of friendship across texts. The third-grade teachers read many fairy tales and decided: "Students will listen to and read a variety of fairy tales. Class will compare 'Elements of a Good Fairy Tale' chart to each story." However, in exploring their selected genres, only two teachers referred to a recommended resource—Lukens' (1990) book *A Critical Handbook of Children's Literature,* which explores the distinctive features of the different subgenre of narrative. Most teachers were restricting their forays into narrative analysis to what they could garner on their own from the tradebooks.

Project End

Focused in detail on implementation of WWYR assessments, the final interview was not a direct probe of teachers' understandings of narrative (Appendix L). It was therefore particularly compelling when some teachers made reference to the ways that their knowledge of narrative was enabling or limiting the depth of WWYR implementation. Once again we heard

testimonials to the role of subject matter knowledge in effective practice: "I think I gave [narrative] a more in-depth treatment . . . talking about character, setting, plot, theme." "[WWYR] has given me a better understanding of narrative, and with that I'm able to explain to the students more effectively what I expect from them, . . . comment back to them as to how they can improve."

But a number of teachers both acknowledged and revealed continued weakness in their understandings of narrative. A fifth-grade teacher, for example, felt unable to guide the more competent students in her class:

> **[W]eaving a narrative, I don't know even if *I* could do a really good job, so I have a hard time evaluating work that's already pretty good and finding ways that it could even be better . . . because I don't maybe have self-confidence in myself. . . . I'm less assertive . . . about making any suggestions other than the mundane kinds of things that anybody could spot.**

Providing evidence for her own concern about her genre-general characterization of narrative, this teacher characterized her less able students' work as "a lot of the narrative style, beginning, middle, and end; they do a lot with the communication and the conventional things, the dialogue, the punctuation. [But] making it flow and . . . weave together is very difficult . . . it's just stuff that happens, not even in sequence." Her superficial characterization of her students' competencies differs markedly from the far more substantive analyses typical from Christina, another upper-grade teacher.

Consistent with findings from both years, the most commonly reported limitation was difficulty understanding Theme and Communication. This is quite understandable considering the more nebulous nature of these components. While characters can be named, settings described, and plots laid out in structures that note the sequential nature of episodes and the rising and falling action, theme is harder to categorize. Theme is at the heart of response, and its interpretation is often highly personalized and dependent on individual background knowledge and experience. Themes are also multiple and often very subtle, much harder to name, describe, or plot in graphs. Communication is equally hard to pin down. While certain devices (alliteration, consonance, and metaphor) can be named, how they work to

deliver the meaning is part of the magic of narrative. While communication is not above analysis, it is less obvious and again highly dependent on individual meanings. E. B. White's (1952) passage of children swinging through a barn in *Charlotte's Web*, for example, can be analyzed for the up and down sweep of words that matches the motion of the swing and the carefully crafted vocabulary that captures the thrill of the ride for the child, but much of the "magic" of this passage escapes analysis. The words create a sensation that takes the reader up and beyond the words.

Case Study Examples of Growth in Teacher Knowledge of Narrative

As a lead teacher for her school, Lena enthusiastically attended district-held workshops on reading and writing, but she would tell us later, after participation in WWYR workshops, that she knew she had "learned NOTHING!" Despite her flattery, our observations, interviews, and questionnaires show that Lena was in fact able to make quite knowledgeable comments on narrative prior to the first workshop. She had a good understanding of the essence of narrative (her goals for her students were "to develop a character with a conflict (episode or incident) with some sort of resolution or conclusion"), the components of character, setting, and plot, and the technical language associated with these three components, such as "antagonist" and "protagonist." More than most teachers in the school, Lena integrated reading with writing, and, in her conversations with children about books, she would point out the technical vocabulary associated with the story. She did not, however, understand theme, nor did she include it in her comments or instruction.

Once the work of WWYR began, Lena made some interesting shifts in her understanding of narrative, particularly theme. Midway through the workshops, she expressed some frustration about the concept of theme ("Need to reread 'theme' section of Lukens, we still have a problem with this in class"). She struggled to understand it and asked questions about whether it was an appropriate concept for young children if it was so hard for adults to understand ("Class discussion is hard and they get confused about it, 'cuz I'm still confused about it"). But by the end of our work, theme was a key component in her instruction, and one that she was able not only to share with her children, but also with her teaching colleagues. In a discussion in the

March 1993 workshop, a kindergarten teacher asked Lena about her goals for her "Frog and Toad" stories. "Weren't your expectations beginning, middle, and end in plot?" the teacher asked. "No," Lena replied. "It was to prove that Frog and Toad were friends." The links between her content knowledge of narrative and instruction and assessment of narrative were made clear in her final interview comments on the rubric:

> **[I use the rubric] when I'm figuring out what I'm going to do with the kids with the different genre. . . . I use it for educating myself. Because if I can look and say, "Okay, what are the characters going to look like this time?" that helps me zero in on what [their stories] should look like.**

The rubric and the workshops' interactions surrounding it enabled Lena to *educate herself* about the content she needed to grow as a teacher of narrative.

Bert, in contrast, expressed perplexity about the rubric and its connection to the components of narrative. His participation in the Year One workshops showed his lack of knowledge about trade book literature and the analysis of narrative. In fact, prior to WWYR, he used little literature in his classroom and was continually surprised by the other primary teachers' easy recognition of "classic" trade books. In some ways, the workshops served as a mini-course in children's literature and enabled Bert to increase his awareness of the wealth of literature available. Still, how to think about and what to do with these books was difficult for Bert to comprehend, and it is not surprising that narrative writing in his classroom during Year One consisted of rather arbitrary assignments of "story starters."

Over time, Bert became a more knowledgeable participant in the workshop discussions, and his questions were less exclamations of lack of knowledge than interesting contributions to the conversation. Although Bert was able to make use of some of the materials we distributed, commenting that "some, like the [guide]book . . . that's helpful," for the most part, the materials seemed overwhelming:

> **You just have to shuffle, 'cause there seems to be so much. I don't know if it's just our school, but there seems to be so much coming at you, you really have limited time to touch base with resource materials.**

Nevertheless, in his final interview, Bert explained that many of the WWYR concepts had now become "second nature" to him, particularly the role of character, setting, and plot. Still, like many teachers he struggled with the concept of theme, remarking that it was "ambiguous, [the] hardest thing, and in books it's very subtle," even as he was determined to work it out in his head and help his students to do so. Communication remained a mystery: "It's hard to plug that in. I have trouble in terms of using the communication, which is the center one, right? Yeah. I don't use that one a whole lot with them because I'm not exactly sure myself, exactly how it works."

Within the upper-grade team, Christina made great strides in her understanding of narrative, particularly in her acquisition and use of narrative language. Prior to WWYR she was teaching little narrative, and she worriedly professed a lack of knowledge about the subject. But by June of Year One, she was integrating literature across the curriculum, and she was assimilating the information provided as well as contributing her own substantial analysis. Much of her growth was reflected in her excitement in learning a new language—the language of stories:

> **You've given us so many *words*. There are so many things you can zero in on. There's a way of getting there. It's not just something magical. We have a . . . plan that's going to take these kids through there and we understand what steps they're supposed to be taking—or what the progression is. (June 1992 workshop)**

In line with her emphasis on language and motivated by her older and more sophisticated students, she moved rapidly to focus on communication, stressing that words serve a function within a complex narrative. In teaching point of view, for example, she stressed how specific words such as "I," "mine," and "ours" functioned in text. Christina consistently went far beyond the workshop conversations, and she stood out as a teacher who was willing to study trade books to analyze the author's craft, focusing her teaching "around a genre and the characteristics of that genre—literally the tools and devices authors use to convey their story within that genre" (January of Year Two).

Additionally, in her attempts to expand her newly acquired language, Christina made good use of the resources we provided. She worked towards fluency in use of technical language representative of deeper understandings of narrative. She carefully studied the Lukens volume and incorporated the

genre-specific information and technical vocabulary into her planning. She read our handouts and reports and made insightful comments in the workshops that demonstrated the care she had taken with these documents. She made consistent use of the rubric, explaining that it was "a great help in keeping [her] goals and instruction focused." In addition, she searched for resources outside of the ones we offered: In preparing for a unit on high fantasy, she researched *The Hobbit* (Tolkien), tracking down teacher's guides that offered instructional advice. However, she did not lose sight of WWYR in a swirl of "Hobbit" activities. Instead, as she explained, she used the ideas that "matched up [and] worked with the rubric." In a summary statement on WWYR she explained:

> **The whole way I think about writing and literature has taken a turn. And I feel that I'm not stabbing in the dark. I'm very clear. And it reflects in the children's work.**

The love of language for narrative instruction and assessment that Christina felt however, was not shared by her teaching colleague, Peter. New to Suburban School in Year Two, Peter did not begin working with WWYR until January of 1993. The analytical nature of the workshop discussions surprised him because, as he explained: "I had never really been exposed to a lot of the discussion around different genres and what that is. So that made it really hard for me." Both theme and communication particularly confused him. He interpreted communication as "grammatical things. Did [the students] change tenses? Did they jump around with first person to third person? Things like that." For the first two of the three workshops he attended, he expressed no understanding of the components of style and tone as being a part of the author's communication and made no mention of metaphor, imagery, alliteration, assonance, irony, or exaggeration and how these communication devices might work differently in different genres. In the final interview, Peter did acknowledge that WWYR with its emphasis on genre was "useful [to him] as a writing teacher," but, with only slight, and often contradictory information on his understanding of narrative, we had no clear evidence that this was the case.

Summary

Our findings revealed three patterns of change in teachers' *content knowledge*. First, all teachers demonstrated greater understandings of

narrative, evidenced in self-reported testimony as well as their increasing use of some narrative-appropriate terms. Second, some teachers reported confusion about some aspects of narrative, particularly Theme and Communication. Third, some teachers appropriated *Writing What You Read* concepts and terms to prior frameworks without demonstrating recognition of the coexistence of incompatible constructs. We found similar patterns for teachers' literary conversations—conversations held with adult colleagues in the context of our workshops. All teachers entered into collaborative planning of narrative units, demonstrating as a community greater investment in analyzing how the literary elements of tradebooks might help them analyze their students' writing. However, workshop interactions demonstrated varying interest among the teachers in literary analysis and continued uncertainties regarding how specific components work together within a literary text. Our findings confirm that those who remained on the outskirts of the adult literary conversations experienced more difficulty carrying these kind of conversations to their children.

Teachers' Understandings of Their Students as Writers

> **I quite frankly haven't found [the rubric] that terribly useful in evaluating the kids' papers. Simply because they're just starting. In fact, I sit there and as I look at using the rubric as we practice grading other papers, you know, I scratch my head and say, "I'm kinda glad I'm in the [primary] grade 'cause it's pretty basic and it's pretty simple . . . " So I keep it kinda simple and don't feel like I need to, you know, refer to the rubric so much. When I'm grading upper grades, I constantly refer to the rubric a lot more than I do grading [primary] grade. (Bert, final interview, 1993)**

When we reviewed our data at the end of our project, we became aware that teachers had been characterizing their roles as assessors in ways that revealed their underlying assumptions about children as writers. During our workshop series, teachers' understandings of their young writers mediated their interpretations of assessment methods, and our workshop activities engendered conflicts in teachers' beliefs about children's competencies and teachers' roles.

Beginning of Year One

Bert's comments are particularly typical of those primary teachers who equated writing assessment, curriculum, and instruction with the words "basic" and "simple." Prior to WWYR, the primary teachers worked from a readiness model (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1991; Sulzby, 1991) and a skills view of writing. Because kindergarten teachers thought their children were not ready for writing skills, they taught no writing, and the only writing was done at home as children dictated stories to their parents. The first-grade teachers did not give their children opportunities for "real writing" until after the first of the year, when they thought the children were "ready to write." There was initially no mention of young children needing to write for meaning; most writing projects were handled as exercises with prescribed story starters and fill-in-the-blank pattern books. In this context, assessment could not possibly have the function of enhancing children's efforts with meaning making.

Indeed, there was a common assumption—linked to the skills view—that children could not write and would not want to write without the teacher's warm, uncritical acceptance to ensure a child's interest. Engendering "imagination" was itself the teacher's responsibility. Prior to Year One, as shown in Table 8, primary teachers typically focused on the value of story writing for enhancing children's interest in writing, children's understandings of the relation between oral and written language, and children's imaginations. Their criteria for a good narrative at this level were not typically detailed or explicit: Primary teachers (mostly second-grade teachers) offered criteria in 0-3 of our genre-general subcategories (Organization, Content, Style). Viewing their role as one of praise and motivation, the primary teachers did not evaluate their children's writing: "Any attempts with the written word receive praise and encouragement." "I want the child to truly like to write."

With grade level, we found a juxtaposition between the teachers' concerns with voice and with skill. Teachers might assign narratives on specific topics (usually associated with heroes and holidays) guided by explicit criteria, or they might provide time for opportunities to "just write": "I want children to express themselves in a way that does justice to what they imagine and think, to find the words." "I want children to see relationships between their thoughts and words." Still, the teachers did not understand ways of helping

Table 8

Classification of Teachers by Their Methods of Evaluating Students' Narratives in January 1992

		Positive only				Neutral or ambiguous feedback				Inclusion of critique or suggestion		
Level	*N*	Praise	As, check +	Comment	Total	Grades	Comment	Share	Total	Comment & suggest	Class or peer critique	Total
Primary	(5)	3	1	1	3	1	2	2	4	1	1	1
Middle	(5)	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	4	5	5
Upper	(3)	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	2	1	2
Total	(13)	3	1	2	4	4	5	4	7	5	5	7

Note. Totals within each category (Positive, Neutral, and Critique) reflect the total number of teachers who reported any of the subcategories to the left of each Total column.

children see these relationships. They were not particularly explicit in their analyses of narrative, and, not wanting to stifle creativity, they tended to avoid comments on content, focusing mostly on convention or genre-general characteristics: Teachers provided criteria for a good story in two or three genre-general subcategories (Organization, Content, Style).

Upper-grade teachers represented a continued departure from a focus on the child's expressive imagination toward detailed, assignment-specific expectations, and expectations that were increasingly genre specific: Narrative assignment descriptions typically included both narrative-specific language (two to three criteria) and criteria in two to three of the genre-general subcategories (Organization, Content, Style). A good story had a "beginning, middle, and end/conclusion; stays to the point; lots of detail; at least two paragraphs; complete sentences; [no] run-on sentences; [no] rambling; proper punctuation; neat; completed all parts of the assignment." With criteria like these, upper-grade teachers conveyed a traditional view of students not as makers of meaning, but as compliant learners.

Changes Over Time

By the end of the first year, many teachers did report a shift in focus away from skill mastery toward the making of meaning through narrative ("I don't correct the convention. I have begun to ask questions to get them to think of ways to improve writing"). Kindergarten teachers expressed interest in facilitating more opportunities for "letting them tell stories." Teachers began really reading and listening to their children's stories ("I've enjoyed children's writing") and began to build instruction on children's spontaneous interests and understandings of literature ("I'm now beginning to have the students look for and share their favorite phrases from the literature we read and tell us why it appeals to them"). Many teachers were beginning to recognize students as authors, a change that had potential to support assessment as a reader's response. By the end of the second year, there were some teachers delighted with their students' writing ("I was just so impressed with what they had come with [portfolios from the prior year] and how much better their writing had gotten"), surprised by their students' positive attitudes toward writing ("We talked about what was our favorite part of the year, and . . . a great many students said *writing* was! . . . [I]t wasn't as much of a chore for them as I

thought it was!"), and aware that children can handle explicit feedback ("and then children want to fix it right away, and they go away happy and wanting to change, they're very eager to go back and write . . . "). Some teachers were actively confronting ways that their prior practices had emphasized incompetence, rather than competence: "I need to be able to see a lot more positive things from the students and not always think about the best student and evaluate from top down."

But a common pattern of WWYR impact on teachers' beliefs about their student writers was one of partial alignment. Both years there were teachers openly conflicted about the shift toward content rather than skill, a conflict engendered, we feel, by their maintenance of a skills view of writing. Differing only in the content of the "skills," a skills view of WWYR supported teachers' continued focus on children's incompetence. Thus, at the end of the first year, some teachers commented: "We still have a problem with [Theme] in class; they tend to think every theme is friendship." "Trying to explain Plot to my kids is often difficult." "Some miss the point completely." What to do when children fail? Teach them. The teacher whose goals for narrative growth at the beginning of the second year were "[the abilities] to identify and develop character, plot, setting, theme; [to] use . . . adjectives to give color to story; [to] discuss what makes good writing" was presenting rigid expectations that emphasized compliance rather than children's identities in authorship. At the end of the second year, we still heard: "Weaving a good story is beyond them." "They don't have a clue on what revision is all about." "There isn't that much that [third graders] accomplish in a year's time that you could measure." The response below was particularly painful:

> I think that [WWYR should have] some type of structure so that . . . in first grade . . . you would lay out what the narrative should contain—a simple plot, a simple scene, no more than two characters, and then, the next year, you would take one of those and develop it further, maybe the third year you'd put dialogue in, so you're following the sequence down the line.

It was evident that our strong emphasis on children as capable and developing composers was met with resistance by a number of teachers. When teachers desired to align WWYR with a "scope and sequence" analysis of writing growth, they experienced a tension between two conflicting views of children

as writers: emerging authors who need opportunities to give form and function to their voice versus learners who need opportunities to practice skills.

Case Study Examples of Teachers' Understandings of Their Students as Writers

Prior to WWYR, Lena did not see her primary grade children as either needing to write or as particularly skillful at writing. The writing assignments she designed for them were usually once-a-week story starters ("How did licorice get to be black?") or fill-in-the-blank writing that provided a list of set phases with opportunities to add descriptive words or nouns ("Pete the pencil went for a walk over the _____, under the _____ . . . "). Within the constraints of these set assignments, the children were not producing interesting texts. As Lena facetiously explained in her final interview, "And I couldn't understand why they couldn't come up with some wonderful way" of completing the story starter.

But in 1990, in the process of interviewing her students about their portfolios, she discovered that several of her children were writing at home. One child surprised Lena with her detailed description of the Woody Woodpecker stories she wrote for her mother's amusement. The portfolios were providing the children with a valued place for their writing and providing Lena with a context for understanding children's capabilities and interests. Lena decided to incorporate what she learned from the interviews into her lesson planning. She wanted them to "develop a character with a conflict (episode or incident) with some sort of resolution or conclusion," but she did not begin to implement this plan until after the first of the year, for she still felt that children were not ready for such goals during the first four months of school.

During the two years of our WWYR work, Lena did not alter this organization of the school year. She still began "real" writing after Christmas, but her perceptions of what the children could accomplish during the latter half of the year changed considerably. One key shift occurred in her instructional emphasis on theme, a topic that we had discussed extensively in WWYR workshops. She originally felt that the component of theme was too difficult for primary children to understand, but by the end of 1992, she had

made "comparing of theme and plot" an integral part of her discussion with children. A key reason for this shift was her intellectual growth during the course of the WWYR workshops, which she expressed at the end of the first year: "In-services are helpful. They are helping to educate us so I'm able to educate children." A part of this education was that young children were quite capable of grasping the concept of theme in published texts as well as developing themes in their own writing.

Lena's shift in her perceptions of children as writers was quite evident in how she talked to her students about writing. While her initial strong emphasis on skills led her to separate children's work from the accomplishments of professional authors, during the WWYR series, she treated her students as capable writers and held their work up for praise and criticism, just as she held up trade book literature for analysis. Thus she compared children's texts to tradebooks, to show children that they cannot simply stop without an appropriate conclusion to the tale; and she likened the oral folk tale tradition to the children's experiences telling their "Ruby" stories over and over again to parents and to one another. Her conviction that first-grade children could write became a source of pride. One day in the spring of 1993, she informed the class that they were going to have some important visitors, an assemblyman and his entourage. She explained that these people did not think primary children could write, a statement that made her students snicker. She told her students that she even had to tell teachers that students not only could write but needed to write, and her students nodded in agreement.

Bert's comments in early workshops led us to believe that he did not see children as capable authors ("I used to ask older kids things. But with the primary grade I don't"). However, once his grade-level collaboration began in early 1993, Bert shadowed some of Lena's progress in understanding the developmental nature of children's writing. He, too, learned that children were capable of handling theme, particularly if it was explicitly discussed in class. Thus, with regard to the Frog and Toad unit he and Lena designed, Bert said, "The kids understood the theme of friendship. It was something that they could easily write down and identify with."

Nevertheless, Bert showed little change in his emphasis on "simpler" and "basic" curriculum for the children he taught. His own struggles with

understanding the rubric and particularly the communication aspects of narrative writing directly impacted his perceptions of what his children were capable of understanding. After all, if *he* could not make meaning from these constructs, then how would a primary child be able to do so? Thus, when he followed Lena's lead by requiring his children to use the feedback form for planning, he veered from Lena by omitting the communication circle in the center of the form.

> **When I'm talking with first graders, and they're beginning to write for the first time in January or February . . . it just seemed to be a simpler approach, for what I was trying to do with kids who were writing for the first time.**

Comparing the remaining four components to the children's game of four-square, Bert felt that the communication circle in the form was too complex for his children.

From the beginning of the workshops, Christina saw the need for the upper-grade children in her class to write and assumed that her students were very capable. In Year One, she focused on only character and plot, yet her clear assignment expectations provided her students with connections to other components. For example, in one assignment she suggested that her "students [would] develop vocabulary that enhances insight to character's perspective," building on workshop discussions about how the language of the story (style and tone) reveals character motivation and intention. Her continued emphasis on communication in Year Two demonstrated confidence in her students' orchestration of complex purposes through word choice. As we discussed in workshops, upper-grade children were perfectly capable of sorting out hidden meanings, for that is how they live their lives: "What did my teacher mean by that? What do my parents want now?"

Christina's colleague, Peter, did not see children in the same light. He felt that the subtle devices of motivation and intention were unavailable to his children.

> **These stories that I'm reading [to the students] are not just telling of events, but there is a plot to it, and there is a theme to it, and I think kids don't really do that, at least not the ones that I have worked with.**

His kids, he felt, saw writing as an assignment to finish rather than a meaning to be communicated: "They didn't quite grasp theme." "They just wanted to write it and finish it and turn it in and get it graded and be done."

Consistent with his emphasis on his students' incompetence, Peter was most concerned with enhancing their creativity. He labeled himself a "writing process" teacher, and felt that a major part of the process was "allowing [children] to write whatever they feel like writing, and then guiding each individual child along, in terms of where they are with their writing." But Peter's guidance was limited by both his lack of knowledge about narrative and his strong aversion to giving any feedback at all. He believed that many children cannot handle specific feedback.

> **Last year, I had this one girl. She just—the blood would just drain out of her face. It was really painful for me, 'cause she was one of the most rambling writers I ever encountered and she needed a lot of help. But she couldn't handle...the criticism. So, for me, it was more of an issue of helping her with that issue alone, rather than even with the writing.**

Because Peter saw the negative aspect of criticism, he could not see the role of constructive criticism in helping to build that confidence.

Summary

Beliefs about children's capacities to write were closely tied to teachers' understandings of writing. When writing was viewed as the transcription of "thoughts" or "talk," children could be viewed as having competency with the composing of content and the making of meaning, even if conventions were otherwise unconventional. This stance also permitted teachers to be surprised and delighted with their children's work. When writing was viewed as a set of skills in relative isolation from discourse, children's *in*competencies were emphasized. While the latter view was not more prevalent, its existence in the Suburban community made us aware of the difficulties teachers may have in conceptualizing what their students *can* do and understand, and building opportunities for growth upon an available base of competency.

Teacher Practice: Assessing Children's Narratives

> At the end of writing, [the students and I] discuss what the focus was, reflect on whole process. I do four per assignment. The student and I take turns reading their piece and commenting. Going through the piece is mostly limited to instructional goals . . . genre characteristics, literary tools. I learn how they feel about it and I get more insight because I find out their thinking process—how they thought of things, how they worked through descriptions, etc. I also can ask them questions that help them think about clarifying items for the reader. (Christina, March 1993)

The focus of our work was assessment—to help teachers use what they had learned through literary discussion to help their children grow in their writing. Christina's comment reflects the kind of classroom practice we advocated. In her conferences, she engaged in literary conversations with student authors, listening to their reasoning and offering advice to help them meet their own purposes. Her advice focused on specific genre characteristics and literary tools that linked her instruction to her assessment. Christina's approach to written feedback was similar—offering her children an articulate analysis of their writing by pointing out their accomplishments and asking specific questions to guide improvement of their piece.

But such assessment practices are not easy to achieve. As we report below, after Year One, while most teachers expressed an increased expertise with literary conversations about trade books with their children, they felt less comfortable holding similar conversations about their students' writing, and they found the crafting of a helpful written comment perhaps the most difficult of all. Therefore, to help teachers gain understandings and competencies with narrative assessment, we spent the Year Two workshops scoring student samples with the rubric, writing hypothetical commentary on the feedback form, and discussing conferencing possibilities. This section traces teachers' growth as assessors during both Years One and Two.

Implementing Assessment Practices

At the beginning. Prior to our first workshop, as we have discussed, teachers' assessment practices reflected their knowledge of writing, their

understandings of their children as writers, and their views of their roles as teachers. In response to our first questionnaire, primary teachers emphasized the role of motivating praise and positive comments. Despite some interest in mastering methods of teacher-student conferencing, only one of five had provided or encouraged face-to-face response to students' story writing (Tables 9 and 10). Middle teachers, more focused on completion of assignments, were more likely to provide critique or encourage their students to critique one another's work, but they were not confident that their feedback was effective. Most middle teachers wanted to understand how to make "my conferencing more useful in a concrete way" and "how to teach the kids to be more helpful in giving feedback to each other." Since the content of their feedback was most often focused on genre-general characteristics of "good writing" or on mechanics, we interpreted statements like these as possible evidence of teachers' awareness that their understandings of writing were impacting the effectiveness of their assessment practices. Upper teachers did not respond to some of these items.

Implementation, Year One. Our focus in Year One was on collaborative assessment design, and we therefore chose not to pressure the teachers with formal observations or interviews. However, teachers' involvement with WWYR was evident in their responses to our June 1992 questionnaire. The greatest impact appeared to be in the teachers' growing capability to engage their students in literary conversations—whether analyses of literature or responses to student writing: "I can bring in more detail—the story elements

Table 9

Classification of Primary and Middle Teachers by Reported Use of Types of Positive and Critical Feedback

		Positive only					Inclusion of critique			
Level	*N*	Praise	Com-ment	Grade	Share with class	Total	Com-ment	Grade	Share with class	Total
Primary	5	2	1	1	2	5	1	0[a]	1	1
Middle	5	0	0	0	0	0	5	2	5	5

Note. Only one of the upper teachers completed this portion of the questionnaire.

[a] One primary teacher entered grades in her gradebook but did not share them with child.

Table 10

Classification of Teachers by Desired Changes in Their Methods of Feedback

	N	Dictation	Conferencing	Peer feedback
Primary	5	1	2	0
Middle	5	0	4	1
Upper[a]	3	[a]	2[a]	[a]
Total	13	1[a]	8[a]	1[a]

[a] One of the upper teachers did not complete these questions.

—when discussing a piece of literature, and I'm more focused on what to look for in literature and the student writing." "I feel more comfortable in guiding the students in their appreciation of the literature we read and helping them incorporate some of the literary devices in their own writing." "I am able to better critique and give more meaningful comments." Teachers benefited from acquisition of a technical vocabulary to represent children's insights: "I give things names—'foreshadowing,' etc.: 'How did you know the wolf was mean? What words gave you a clue?' " Balanced by reports of frustration and confusion ("I still need to reread Theme section of Lukens—we still have problems with this in class" or "Trying to explain plot to my kids is often difficult"), teachers' characterizations of their accomplishments and growth in literary interpretation appeared quite genuine.

Although implementation of specific WWYR assessment artifacts and methods was not widespread in Year One, we viewed the teachers' engagement in literary discourse as critical progress toward developing methods of teacher-student conferencing or written commentary. Certainly teachers were aware that our focus was on assessment, and many reported a shift away from a mechanics focus toward responses to narrative content ("a lot less redlining"), an effort to provide narrative-specific comments (whether oral, or in the margins of the students' papers, or on the form), and an appreciation for the value of the clarity of the narrative elements and for technical language that could capture an analysis of narrative (Table 11). A number of teachers had experimented with the narrative feedback form and found its structure very useful ("help focus on one or two things"). Some

Table 11

Classification of Teachers by Their Reports of Positive Impact of WWYR on Methods of Assessment

Level	*N*	Inclusion of both Commendation & Recommendation	Shift toward comments on content	Shift toward genre-specific comments	Value of technical vocabulary & component distinctions
Primary	7	2	3	3	2
Middle	4	0	3	2	4
Upper	4	1	4	4	3
Total	15	3	10	9	9

teachers shared examples of their new methods of commentary: "Pre example—'Great Story!' 'Super Writing!' Post example—'I like the name of your character. Can you tell me more about him—where does he live, how does he feel?' "

Nevertheless, teachers were quite aware that they were challenged and in need of further guidance. Some teachers, particularly primary teachers, shared their uncertain understandings of some aspects of the WWYR rubric and the feedback form—particularly Theme ("They tend to think every theme is friendship") (Table 12). Some teachers were uncertain how WWYR assessments could assist their efforts to establish grade-level expectations, share these expectations with students ("How to present a rubric without overwhelming?"), or report student evaluations. We received requests for explicit modeling of written commentary ("I need a better understanding of the process of assisting students through specific comments"), conferencing, and guiding peers in critical response ("how to use student work to convey their ideas?") (Table 13). Finally, confronted with our interest in teacher-student conferencing, many teachers asked for assistance with management of time and classroom organization. The number of teachers making these requests was small, but we suspected that requests for help would increase as teachers adopted WWYR practices more widely. Clearly, there was work ahead of us in Year Two.

Table 12

Classification of Teachers by Their Concerns About Understandings of WWYR Assessments

Level	*N*	Rubric	Feedback form/Written commentary	Usefulness for setting grade-level expectations	Usefulness for student evaluation
Primary	7	5	2	3	2
Middle	5	0	1	0	3
Upper	4	0	2	0	0
Total	15	5	5	3	5

Table 13

Classification of Teachers by Their Requests for Additional Guidance in Assessment Methods

Level	*N*	Written commentary	Conferencing	Guiding peers in critical response	Time management, classroom organization
Primary	7	0	0	0	2
Middle	5	0	1	1	1
Upper	4	2	1	0	1
Total	15	2	2	1	4

Prior to Year Two. With a gap of seven months in between the June 1992 and the January 1993 workshop, we distributed a "catch-up" questionnaire and visited classrooms in December 1992 and January 1993. We were quite disappointed with evidence from the students' portfolios. There were virtually no narratives in the kindergarten and first-grade portfolios, little use of the WWYR feedback form for teachers' commentary, and continued tendencies to mark papers for mechanics ("trouble with sentence structure") or fairly surface level content (repetitious text crossed out). Substantive comments were typically genre general: "Good, with beginning/middle/end." "Good flow." Among the few teachers who were experimenting with the feedback form, two entered some comments in the narrative component boxes that were essentially genre general (Character: "You told me a lot about your characters." Setting: "Tell me what it looks like." Setting: "Good descriptions."

Plot: "What happened after ____?" Plot: "Did they ____?" Theme: "Good descriptive words"). In two second-grade classes, the feedback form had been used by the students for planning a narrative. Observations of teachers' analytic interactions with students in five rooms revealed similarly uneven WWYR implementation. For example, one teacher (who was soon to go on maternity leave) was warmly guiding her students in responses to one another's tall tales: "You could have expanded just a bit—it wasn't clear when ____." "Sometimes we know about a character just from his actions." "In what ways did we learn about her character?" She later explained that she was not grading these pieces, but giving them feedback on "character description, including what was thought and felt." In contrast, another teacher was walking about the room checking her students' progress on their tall tales, issuing quick commands ("You need a conclusion." "Where is the exaggeration?") or ineffectively reading brief excerpts of more effective pieces ("What a unique ending" or "Very interesting exaggeration") to inattentive students attempting to write.

Findings from our Pre Year Two survey were consistent with our classroom visits. Of the 13 teachers continuing participation in WWYR, 9 completed the questionnaire. Mentioned uses (planned or implemented) of the narrative feedback form were patchy and inconsistent, demonstrating little evidence of a staff commitment to WWYR implementation during our absence: written commentary (mentioned by 3 teachers), a "handy reference for separating the parts of narrative writing" (1 teacher), "beneficial for conferencing" (2 teachers), peer conferencing (1 teacher), whole class story planning (1 teacher). The rubric, however, was little used. No teacher was using it to score students' narratives; three teachers reported use as a guide to the design of instruction and assessment for specific narrative assignments.

Mid Year Two: Conferencing. Following our first session in Year Two on scoring and commentary, teachers requested specific guidance in methods of conferencing. To provide us with background prior to the workshop, we distributed a survey (Appendix M), videotaped examples of two teachers' conferences (Lena's and Christina's), and observed conferences in several classrooms. In their responses to our survey, teachers reported several approaches to teacher-student conferencing along with uncertainty that some of these truly constituted what is meant by "conference." Most teachers

reported roaming during student writing—"stamping" the prewrite before permitting the student to continue, responding to a draft, editing the close-to-final copy. Some teachers met with students more formally either to review the progress of a piece to some designated point (most often the prewrite) or, in just a few classrooms, to share the final draft. Some teachers continued the practice of focusing a conference around the students' showcase portfolios, although the WWYR project appeared to be impacting classroom time for portfolio preparation and portfolio conferencing.[5]

Although teachers viewed conferencing as an opportunity for assessment, the content of some survey responses emphasized conferencing as a context for one-to-one *instruction*, a finding which made evident these teachers' disinclination to assume the roles either of interpretive reader or investigator of the writer's purpose (Table 14): "I read sloppy copy and talk about what is good and what could be corrected, enlarged upon, added, redone. I zero in better on skills and helping students to improve." "[We] discuss and clarify the elements needed in a story." "[I] encourage and discuss parts [components] of a story." Observations of conferences confirmed this pattern.[6]

Table 14

Purpose for Conferencing: Teachers Expressing Key Views

Level	*N*	Instruction	Praise, reinforcement	Build students' identities as writers	Assessment
Primary	4	4	4	4	3
Middle	5	5	0	1	4
Upper	3	3	0	1	3
Total	12	12	4	6	10

[5] Indeed, we raised questions in workshops about the need to revisit the portfolio assessment practices and integrate them with WWYR, rather than simply add WWYR assessment practices on to the current classroom workload. Certainly there was some recognition that revision might be wise, but more resistance to rethinking practices that had been tough to implement and were at least in place in some form in most classrooms. The message from us that we would not attend to portfolio assessment until we had laid the groundwork for genre assessment did give teachers permission to focus less intensively on showcase selection and conferencing.

[6] We observed most often in the classrooms of our case study teachers. Mentioned here are observations of additional teachers.

For example, a fifth-grade teacher asked a student, "Do you have a plan, or are you making it up as you go along?" However, some teachers were demonstrating the capacity to balance the instructional tone with feedback relevant in some way to the child's purpose. Thus, from the survey we heard (emphasis ours): "We are all trying to make good writing even better by giving suggestions and *asking [for] more student ideas.*" "I tell them they have a good start, but some parts may be missing or *some parts I don't understand*, suggestions to make it better." "[The] focus is . . . specific, a particular aspect [such as] character, setting, plot. How can we more fully develop the character? *What does he look like? What does he do? Does he have conversation?* Did you use describing words?" "I use final copy of a particular piece, this time chosen by me. Very informal. *They read piece and I try to ask a question.* Then I give them a commendation." An April observation illustrates one second-grade teacher's efforts at reader response:

> **" 'IQ of zero'—does that mean he's not very smart? I like that. I liked your use of language." Dianne then explained that she was confused by a sudden reference to the hunter's pain— "That pain wasn't there before." Bernard explains, "He was shocked." Dianne writes on his piece, "because he was shocked," asking, "That makes more sense to me; does it make sense to you?"**

We heard quite diverse views about the benefits of conferencing. Some views reflected closely the current state of teachers' views about children as writers. Thus, one teacher was delighted that she "learned how involved [students] really were in their work and how much they feel connection and ownership of their own writing," while others felt that "understanding feedback was over their heads" and that "the students don't know enough about their writing to tell me much." Other views of conferencing reflected beliefs regarding their role in students' work: an inherent part of the writing process, an opportunity to enhance children's investment in their writing, a WWYR requirement of uncertain benefit. Perhaps the most consistent complaint across teachers, including those committed to the benefits of conferencing, was their concern with scheduling and classroom management, and we did make time in the second session to discuss management options. Teachers felt that they had too little time overall and that they spent too much time with those children having most difficulty.

End of Year Two. The final interview focused on classroom practice, engaging teachers in a summative analysis of the benefits and drawbacks of WWYR methods of assessment. We discussed implementation of the narrative feedback form, the narrative rubric, and methods of conferencing. Although the findings were consistent with previous results, our understandings of the pattern of impact were deepened as we attended closely to teachers' views and anecdotes of their efforts at implementation.

The *narrative feedback form* was in wide use for planning (Table 15), and the contents of the plans were often drawn from the rubric (Table 16) ("I steal

Table 15

Classification of Teachers by Their Uses of the Narrative Feedback Form: End of Year Two

Level	*N*	Assignment planning	Communicate expectations	Student planning	Written commentary[a]
Primary	7	7	2	5	4
Middle	4	4	4	1	4
Upper	4	4	4	2	4
Total	15	15	10	8	12

[a] These numbers show those teachers who ever attempted to use the form. Few teachers utilized it on a regular basis.

Table 16

Classification of Teachers by Their Uses of the Narrative Rubric: End of Year Two

Level	*N*	Resource for assignment planning	Assessment resource	Assessing students' narratives
Primary	7	7	4	2
Middle	4	4	3	
Upper	4	4	3	1
Total	15	15	10	3

vocabulary" [from the rubric]). Indeed, the greatest impact of this form was upon establishment of clearer and more narrative-specific expectations. Thus teachers expressed appreciation of its support for their own planning ("The form keeps me focused." "It's to the point, very specific." "I refer to it to plan a story assignment"). Figure 5 illustrates plans designed on the form by two different grade-level teams. Teachers valued its support for communicating assignment expectations: A few teachers shared copies of their own assignment plans ("I would use it on the overhead, pre-writing, setting the criteria: 'These are the five things, this is what I'm looking for'." "We would discuss the . . . legend, what would the characters be like, and so on . . . how it would fit under each of those different headings"). Some teachers simply used the empty form to help focus children on one or two components of their narratives ("We would talk about these words, and I'd say, 'Now let's talk about the setting . . .' "). Some teachers had children use the form for their own planning ("the form gives them some way to organize their thoughts"). Figure 6 contains examples from children at two grade levels.

Demonstrating the contributions of clear assignment expectations to assessment focus, guidance for the content of both comments made in the margins of the students' papers and oral comments was often drawn from the assignment plan. Nevertheless, the form was used infrequently as the context for these comments. Although most teachers attempted to comply with our request to try its use, most teachers eventually devised adaptations, and a few teachers dropped it altogether. Adaptations included responding to a sampling of children each day ("I would select two kids randomly and do a narrative feedback on paper"), responding as a written reminder of the points to raise in a later conference ("I would use it as my comment sheet and then go over it with them"), modeling commentary ("I would use it on an overhead to show them the types of comments and what I was looking for"), peer commentary ("they filled it out for each other's stories, which was interesting"), responding to the student's plan (Figure 6) ("so it kind of becomes an ongoing communication sheet"), writing on the child's draft rather than the form, and oral feedback during writing. Teachers' perceptions that the form placed too great an emphasis on written commentary were mixed with their confusion about the effectiveness of written commentary. Would students read the comments? Some said yes: "They read them definitely, because

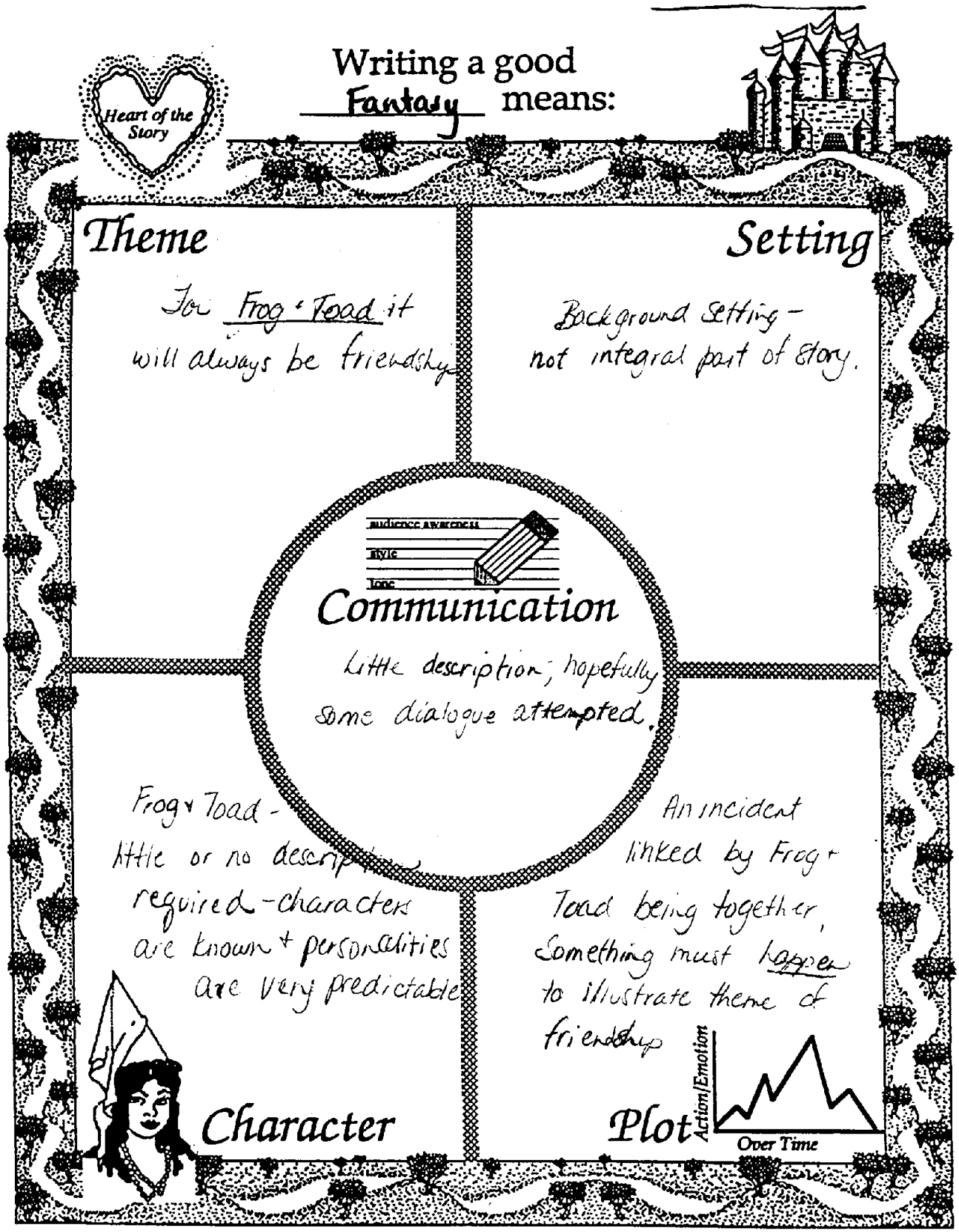


Figure 5.

Wolf, 1993

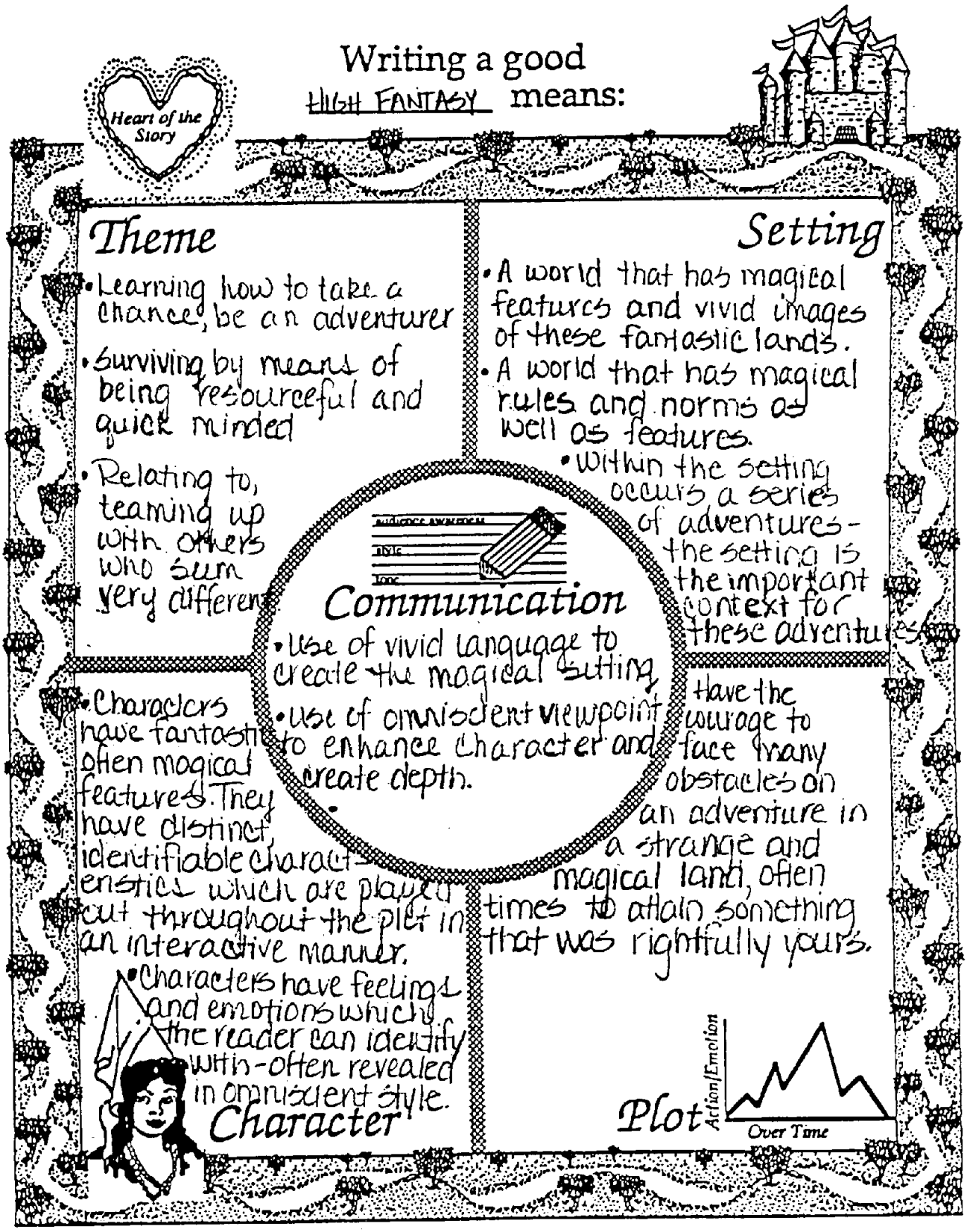


Figure 5 (continued).

Wolf, 1993

frog and Toad Name _____

Character

frog and Toad

Setting

outside in the park

Plot

Toad had candy in his pack he eat it all at the pack he gets sick. Frog helps him.

Theme

friendship

Figure 6.

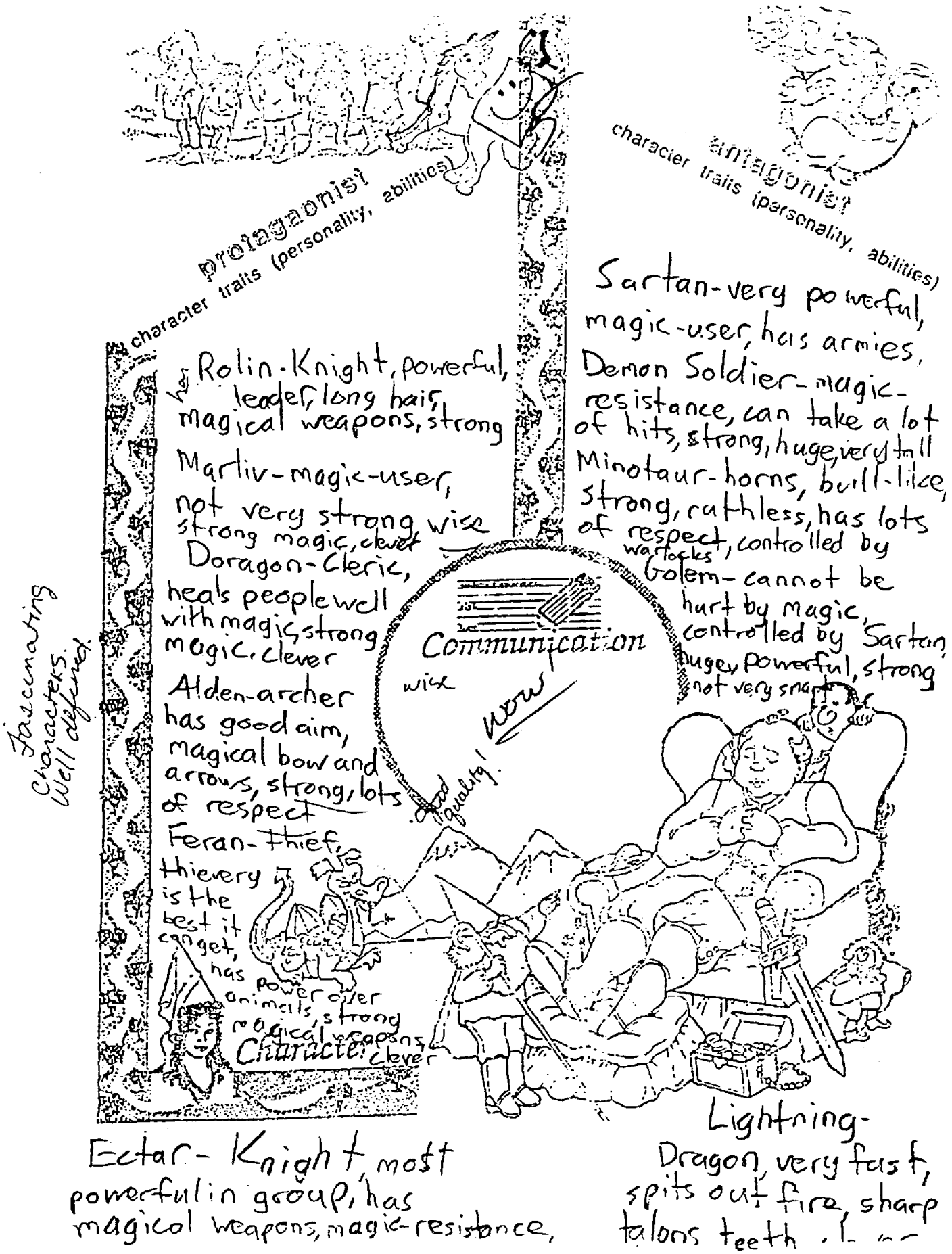


Figure 6 (continued).

they'll ask me about it if they don't understand what I meant." Others said no: "I don't know what they do with [my comments], they eat them." Would students utilize the comments? Some said yes: "They say, 'You said I could do this on my [paper], could I go do that now?' " Others said no: "They like the good things, they don't want to read the bad things." In the context of uncertainties about written feedback, the difficulty of formulating a good comment seemed a good reason to minimize effort.

> **[W]hat was hard for me was trying to narrow down my comment so that the children could understand what I was really trying to get across to them. I always found it easier . . . to write a single comment . . . but then I would have to sit down and discuss it with them, so they could better understand what I was trying to get across to them.**

But resistance to the use of the feedback form for written commentary was *not* tantamount to resistance to commentary, nor evidence of lack of growth in the narrative-specific content of commentary. Consistent with earlier findings, teachers continued to feel strongly that the content of their feedback had changed markedly, from a focus on mechanics to a focus on content, from vaguaries to greater specificity ("[Now] I prefer the comments that we write: 'Your characters show a lot of depth,' and so on. Being very, very specific"). All 15 teachers testified to their growth in understandings of children's stories.

The *narrative rubric* was almost never used for assessment of students' competence with narrative (Tables 16 and 17): "The narrative rubric wasn't for

Table 17

Classification of Teachers by Their Explanations for Not Using the Rubric: End of Year Two

Level	*N*	No time	Inappropriate to grade level	Too broad	Uncertain understanding
Primary	7	1	3	2	2
Middle	4	2	1	2	3
Upper	4	0	0	3	2
Total	15	3	4	7	7

the faint of heart." However, the rubric was in use as a resource for the design of developmentally-appropriate assignments. The lists within each component box served as resources for designing content criteria for children's narratives. The developmental continuum underlying the discrete points on each scale served as a representation of growth and change ("it's really cemented in my mind—the continuum"). For many teachers, the rubric represented the heart of *Writing What You Read*, even if it did not fit their goals for narrative assessment.

Teachers' discussions of *conferencing methods* mirrored findings from our survey distributed three months before. Teachers reported marked change in their comfort with literary discussion of literature and some greater comfort with analytic discussion of a child's narrative. But, despite professed commitment to conferencing, teachers complained about lack of time and expressed some continued worries about their competence with it.

Learning to Assess: Scoring

The introduction of the WWYR rubric in Year One was cast as exploration and refinement—teachers scored collaboratively in the context of rich discussion of the children's writing and the features of the rubric. Beginning with the first workshop in Year Two, we began systematic scoring practice, and we collected each teacher's independent scores (prior to group discussion) as a record of teacher agreement. Given the prior experience of many teachers with Year One pilot scoring, the results across Year Two sessions revealed considerable consensus even from the outset (Tables 18 and 19) and the benefits of collegial discussions of student work. While the range of scores decreased over time toward an acceptable range of plus or minus one, even the early discrepancies were typically the result of divergent ratings by just one teacher. Two exceptions to this pattern were the primary teachers' difficulties with Theme and the upper teachers' difficulties with Communication. These exceptions reflect patterns in teachers' content knowledge and, as we discuss in our conclusions, possible weaknesses in these dimensions of the rubric.

Table 18

Range of Teachers' Ratings by Story and Session (Year Two)

Story	Session	Teachers		*Writing What You Read* Scales				
		Number	Grades	Theme	Character	Setting	Plot	Commun.
Dragon Fight	1	9[a]	K-3	1-4	2-5	2-4	2-3[a]	2.5-4
True Three Little Pigs	1	6[b]	4-6	3-5	1-3.5[b]	2-4[b]	3-4.5[b]	3-6[b]
Mitten	2	8[a]	K-3	2-4[a]	1-1.5[a]	1.5-3	3	1-2[a]
Quest	2	7	3-6	3-5	2-4	3-5	4-5	4-6
Frog and Toad	3	4	K-1	2.5-4	2	2-3	3	2
Owl and Eagle	3	3[a]	1-2	2-3[a]	2	2	2-3	2-3[a]
Tattercoat Keller	3	2	3	2-3	1-2	2	2.5-3.5	2
Humorous Horrors	3	2	4	2-3	1-2	4	3-4	4-4.5
British Attack	3	2	5	3-4	3-4	4	4	2-4
Five-headed Snake	3	2	6	3-4	3-4	2	4-4.5	3-5

[a] One first-grade teacher close to retirement often omitted certain ratings.

[b] A fourth-grade teacher rated only Theme and omitted all other ratings for this story.

Table 19

Outliers: Number of Teachers Whose Ratings Differed From a Central Range of 1.0

Story	Session	Teachers		*Writing What You Read* Scales					Consistent Outliers
		Number	Grades	Theme	Character	Setting	Plot	Commun.	
Dragon Fight	1	9[a]	K-3	No consensus	1	1	0	1[a]	Close to retirement[a]
True Three Little Pigs	1	6[b]	4-6	1	1[b]	1[b]	1[b]	2[b]	Scored higher[c]
Mitten	2	8[a]	K-3	1[a]	0[a]	1	0	0[a]	Scored lower[d]
Quest	2	7	3-6	1	1	1	0	1	New staff
Frog and Toad	3	4	K-1	1	0	0	0	0	Kindergarten
Owl and Eagle	3	3[a]	1-2	0[a]	0	0	0	0[a]	Close to retirement[a]
Tattercoat Keller	3	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	
Humorous Horrors	3	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	
British Attack	3	2	5	0	0	0	0	2	
Five-headed Snake	3	2	6	0	0	0	0	2	New staff

[a] One first-grade teacher close to retirement often omitted certain ratings.

[b] A fourth-grade teacher rated only Theme and omitted all other ratings for this story.

[c] This teacher was impressed by a quality of writing she did not typically find in her own classroom.

[d] This teacher revealed beliefs about children's *in*capabilities in interviews and questionnaires.

Learning to Assess: Commentary

In each of our Year Two workshops, teachers practiced responding to children's narratives on the narrative feedback form. The scheme for coding these comments can be found in Appendix N.

Focusing and organizing comments. The feedback form did appear to provide a helpful organizer for the teachers' comments: The comments of 12 teachers were placed in the appropriate component box from the outset, and only 2 of 16 teachers concluded the workshop series with any confusion about the appropriate component for a comment. (For example, one teacher wrote about an insignificant Plot detail in the box designated for Writing Process: "It was confusing when you described what was written on the back of the spray can." The comment had no bearing on the child's ability to draft, revise, get help from peers, or any of the other topics associated with Process.) Achieving brevity and focus was another matter. In a context where teachers' marginal comments on students' papers had been typically brief and global, we were surprised that teachers did not find it easy to limit their workshop comments. Learning to select two components and craft two helpful comments seemed to require—particularly for some middle and upper elementary teachers—an initial experience with commentary in most or all sections of the feedback form (Tables 20 and 21). One fifth-grade teacher, for example, filled in comments in four of the available component places in a child's fractured fairy tale of *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* (Scieszka, 1989):

Table 20

Classification of Teachers by Mean Number of Comments Across Sessions

	Number of components		
Level	2	Greater than 2[a]	Greater than 3
Primary	4	3	0
Middle	0	4	1
Upper	0	2	2
Total	4	9	3

[a] 2<Number of components ≤3.

Table 21

Classification of Teachers by Number of Comments, Last Session

	Number of components		
Level	**2**	**Greater than 2[a]**	**Greater than 3**
Primary	**6**	**0**	**1**
Middle	**3**	**2**	**0**
Upper	**1**	**1**	**2**
Total	**9**	**3**	**3**

[a] 2<Number of components ≤3.

Theme: **You were very clear on the reasons why the wolf ate the 3 pigs. The story needed to include how the pigs defend themselves or their reaction.**

Characters: More physical/mental descriptions needed for the characters.

Setting: More details on where the pigs are from.

Plot: **You included more than one episode in your story and tied it all together (Good transition). Outcome (conclusion) needs to be expanded further.**

Rather than concentrating her analysis on just two comments, the teacher ends up writing more but delivering less helpful material. Many of her recommendations end up being calls for "more" or "expand further," which does not give the child any insight into how to accomplish this. Her generalized call for "more" also diverges from the constraints of the genre. In her Setting remark, for example, it would have been more helpful to have more information on the wolf's background than the pigs'. In fact, any more focus on the pigs might serve to distract the reader from the author's main purpose, which is to stimulate sympathy for the wolf and thus to create an effective fractured fairy tale.

There was evident improvement by the third session: Only three teachers diverged markedly from the requested pattern—a new staff member, a long-term substitute, and the first-grade teacher close to retirement. Most teachers composed briefer and more helpful comments like these:

Tell what the risk was. There was excitement but what led to it? Add more or change moral. (second-grade teacher)

What was the risk for Fredowl walking the branch? Moral does not fit story. (third-grade teacher)

How did she get to the ball? This is a very important part of the story and needs more explanation! (third-grade teacher)

". . . the hot sand blowing against their face and they could see nothing for miles" gives the reader a very vivid image of the desert of no return. A similar description should be used on Death Mountain. (fifth-grade teacher)

Making comments relevant to the child's purpose. We asked three questions regarding the relation of a teacher's comment to the child's text. First, was the comment *appropriate to narrative,* rather than "genre general" in content? Second, was the comment *linked to the child's text,* either through a quote or a close summary? Third, was the comment focused on a *significant aspect of the subgenre* or child's story versus an insignificant detail in the text?

All teachers demonstrated the capacity in at least one workshop to provide a comment that addressed a particular aspect of the child's narrative, and most teachers (12 of 16) provided such a comment in every workshop. An example of such a Commendation was: "Wonderful descriptions of the dragon's cave. You made it easy to picture where the prince was." A Recommendation was: "In order to strengthen the theme, I would have liked to see Nicky notice that his mitten was gone and worry about finding it." The teachers who differed from this pattern were the two kindergarten teachers (who did not teach narrative), the long-term substitute, and a new staff member.

All teachers showed capacity to link their comments to the child's text through a quote or a close summary, and most teachers (13 of 16) provided at least one such link in all three Year Two workshops. For example, one teacher commented, " 'Just before he was going to cast the spell, Foran threw his golden dagger across the scorching desert at Rectar by reflex.' Was a good way to show the reader how quick-minded your characters are." Exceptions were a kindergarten teacher, a long-term substitute, and a fourth-grade

teacher who acknowledged difficulty understanding WWYR in our interviews. There were no evident patterns of change.

Growth was most apparent in the significance of teachers' comments. Nine (of 16) teachers shifted over time from use of insignificant comments focusing on a minor detail to commentary addressing central aspects of narrative or the child's growth as a narrative writer. Only two teachers concluded the workshop series using only comments judged insignificant.

Case Study Examples of Growth in Teacher Practice

Lena. Before the onset of WWYR, Lena's assessment practices amounted to unequivocal praise. To our January 1992 pre-workshop questionnaire, Lena responded, "*Anything* the children write, I consider a 'very good' one. Any first attempts children make with the written word receive praise and positive reinforcement." When we asked, "What makes the story a weak one?" Lena responded, "N/A." Her vision of assessment was linked to motivation. She wanted her children to write, so she viewed her role as an uncritical advocate. In the context of WWYR emphasis on the positive ways that "criticism" can provide young children guidance in their writing, Lena began to shift in her assessment practices. In her instructional planning in March of the first year, for example, she began to address specific goals: "I expect the class to write a class story of *Frog and Toad* and then write their own stories. I expect the stories to have two or more characters, one adventure with some sort of resolution." In the classroom, she pointed out how professional authors accomplished their goals and reminded the children that they were quite capable of reaching these goals as well. Lena was the first to suggest that the narrative feedback form could be used for children's planning, and she distributed these forms to aid the children in their prewrites.

Making no mention of theme at first, by the end of the first year (and perhaps led by its continual presence on the feedback form), Lena spoke of how her instruction had shifted: "Yes, how I analyze story [in] group discussion, comparing theme and plot, the way characters are developed—the works!" Still, Theme was hard for Lena to grasp and in the beginning of the following year, her comments reflect her continued hesitancy of how to handle this component: "We are heading toward narrative writing! I have been reading at least two stories a day—discussing characters, plots, and themes (sort of)

and settings." The "sort of" quality of her class discussion on Theme would shift during the second year. In designing her unit on "Mitten" stories, she read her children a variety of tradebook "Mitten" tales and then asked her students to write their own. When her students worriedly exclaimed, "It's hard!" Lena reminded them that the theme was "what the story is going to be about" and gave several possible themes including "mittens stretch," "there isn't always enough room," "don't have white mittens," and "animals can get along."

In the workshops, Lena's practice efforts at commentary made consistent links to the child's writing ("You really worked at descriptive phrases and using symbolism—'hot cave . . . more and more bones'! ") as well as provided a balance between one specific commendation and one recommendation. Her commendations and guidance were also consistently significant—only in the first Year Two workshop did she make an insignificant comment. In analyzing a child's fairy tale she wrote, "What happened to Mom? Eliminate unnecessary characters. Story could use some physical description of characters—only one you describe is the dragon." This recommendation gave somewhat mixed advice—eliminate some characters and enhance others, and it did not take into account that, in fairy tales, mothers often disappear with little explanation. By the end of the year, consistent with her new classroom focus, she commented in the workshop for the first time on theme ("You really showed Frog and Toad were friends when Toad helped Frog after he fell down the mountain").

Lena was committed to grow in her methods of conferencing with children and willingly permitted us to videotape sample conferences to stimulate discussion in the second Year Two workshop. The conferences demonstrated Lena's integration of her prior focus on motivation with her new emphasis on specific guidance. In her conference with Ben, for example, she addressed his tendency to write too much, reams of disconnected episodes. To show him the importance of staying with "the story line," she pointed out his "first adventure, where he was just getting into it and said, 'This is a story . . . This right here is enough.' " While she saved Ben's entire story on disk so he could draw from it as needed, she demonstrated the author's responsibility to make his words clear and available to the reader.

Thus Lena's growth in her capacity to engage children in writing assessment was generally consistent with our goals. Nevertheless, certain aspects of her conferencing practices seemed to distort our focus on authorship, revealing her prior focus on writing skills. Lena had a tendency to treat the children's prewrites on the feedback forms as "contracts," a direction that we found too rigid. As she explained, "While the writing was going on, we did a lot of discussion about sticking to the plan they developed." When the children veered from their original plans, she wanted them to change the plan or realign the final story with the plan. Was this a distortion of our methods, or a reasonable adaptation to first-grade writers? For Lena, the "contractual" nature of her assessment practices made sense for her young children. Stories that aligned with original plans demonstrated closure in a way others did not, trailing off into a Neverland of disjointed prose. Indeed, for children like Ben, who had a tendency to write too much, Lena felt that the use of the feedback form for planning had "allowed him to develop. It's allowed him to plan. He understands what goes together to make a story." While we still worried about the rigidity of such assessment, fearing that it would take away from the emergent quality of writing, Lena felt strongly that young children needed more structure in order for their written meaning to make sense.

And Lena's intuitions about children's instructional needs were built on a firm foundation. A mentor, a consummate professional, Lena was inspiring to observe. By the end of our project, Lena was actively integrating assessment with instruction and creating a classroom culture around response to text. Prior to WWYR, she held trade books up for inspection and discussion, but after the workshops began she held children's writing up for similar analysis. In her final interview she explained:

> **Mini-lessons can come at any time. At some point I can just stand up in the middle of the class and say, "Everybody take your hands off the keyboards. Put your pencil down and listen. We've got this situation here. I've [got] something just great and I want you to hear it." Or, "There's a problem here, and . . . I can't figure out how to solve it. What are we going to do? Help us figure this out." . . . And it's not necessarily just one. It may be a couple that I may be talking about. So it's kind of just a little, you know, chat. Fireside chat that we'll have about writing.**

Children's writing was given equal status to professional tradebooks. Both were worthy of extended conversation, and the conversation included not only praise but critical appraisal.

Bert. Bert, on the other hand, found even a discussion of professional tradebooks to be a difficult task. Prior to WWYR he did little discussion of books—they were read, put away, and the class moved on to other topics. Even after the five workshops of Year One, Bert found little time for literary conversations about books: "When I'm reading I don't discuss. Even when I'm done, I don't. I've gotta get into something else. There are days I don't even read a story. My kids are going from art, to P.E. to—book fairs. Field trips . . ." The press of the school day leaned heavily on Bert, eliminating any time for extended discussions about narrative. Because he did not engage his children in literary conversations about published work, he found it difficult to carry on these kinds of discussions about children's own writing. He offered little in the way of feedback, other than comments on conventions suggesting that "It's okay to write without being analytical about it."

Bert grew in his capacity to analyze in the second year. In his grade-level team work with Lena, the two teachers worked together to design the instruction and assessment of two genres. One of their units was on the fantasy stories of Frog and Toad by Arnold Lobel (e.g., Lobel, 1971). The two teachers used "Writing a good __(genre)__ means:" form in their planning, suggesting that Frog and Toad stories deal with the theme of "friendship." They wanted the children to create original plots in which "something must happen to illustrate the theme of friendship." Their plans included reading a "number of books" and "model[ing] use of the feedback form for children's planning." Because the units were planned together, Bert was able to participate in literary conversations with Lena beyond the workshop opportunities, and Lena's analytical stance helped to shape Bert's growing capacity to critique texts.

Lena's influence on Bert was evident in his use of the feedback form for children's planning:

> **Well, I use it as a pre-write . . . it kind of becomes an ongoing communication sheet. They turn it in to me. I make some comments, turn it back to them. Then they go ahead and start writing their story . . . I find it the most useful. I find it**

really gives them focus and direction in terms of writing their paper. When they start to write their story, they're not just sitting down and aimlessly wandering through a story. They have a sense of direction. And we talk about referring to it as a road map, 'cause there's a direction and a way to get to the end of the story, rather than just sitting there and writing and writing and writing until you get to the end of the first piece of paper or whatever. . . . You're constantly referring back to it. Just as if you're going on vacation and you're using a road map, you're constantly unfolding it, and folding it up, to the point where after a while, it begins to get ragged and torn and starts falling apart. Well, this is a sheet to constantly go back to and touch bases and make sure that you referred to this.

Like Lena, Bert had a fairly "contractual" image of the planning form. Still, now he had a "map"—a guide to help children in their writing, whereas prior to WWYR there was no map, and consequently no direction.

However, in creating this map, Bert appropriated WWYR concepts to prior understandings of genre, illustrating a partial alignment that distorted WWYR constructs. In his analytic conversations with children, he equated the components of narrative with the 5 Ws (Who, What, Where, When, Why), confusing stories with informative journalism. The equation reflected both the limitations in his understandings of narrative, his views that first graders can handle only a limited number of concepts, and his interpretation of writing as "skill."

Researcher/Observer: So do you see an exact match—for example, setting is . . . "where," characters are "who?"

Bert: Mm-hm. Generally, it's pretty exact. It depends on the story. I'm trying to think back to when we were doing a Robin James book. One was pretty exact, and the other was a little more general. . . . And one we just kind of went through it and couldn't find some of the five W's. It just wasn't there.

Reflecting a skills view of writing development, Bert also had a tendency to talk about narrative in more general terms and with a more instructional tone than Lena, making fewer links to specific texts and responding less to the content of the child's story. Rather than holding up a specific child's story for analysis, he looked for more generalized patterns across the class:

> **I talked to them in a general sense as a whole group about "A lot of you wrote this in there, but forgot the when or the where did the story take place." So I discussed it with them in general, because it was something that a lot of them were doing. And we did some examples of how can we cover this on our own opening sentence or two.**

And then he picked those children whose writing was weakest for a brief conference.

> **I'll have a list and I'll write on their pre-write paper . . . that I need to have a conference with them. . . . [O]n the last one . . . it had to be about a third of the class that I wanted to talk to, basically about the same thing, which was going back to where and when did the story take place. Just those stories I need to get back to. . . . Sometimes I use a parent to sit back there with the student and have them read the other sloppy copy or their final copy and say, "Do you have everything in it that you need? I would suggest that you put it there."**

Conferencing "kinda moved away from" Bert, and, by the end of the year, he was doing little conferencing at all.

The scoring and feedback opportunities offered in the 1993 workshops showed Bert's increasing ability to analyze *if* given a supportive context in which to do it. Although he wavered in the effectiveness of his hypothetical comments, he was able to make some specific and significant comments linked to the child's text in each workshop. When he did not, Bert showed confusion about the specificity of narrative. In each of the sessions he had a genre-general commendation, such as "Good organization!" or "Nice, straight-forward delivery," comments that could hardly be characterized as specific to narrative. Although he sometimes offered specific recommendations in the form of questions for the child to answer ("Why were the characters going into the mitten?" and "How could you end it so Toad and Frog show how they feel about what happened? 'Thank you,' etc."), what was the child to make of brief and nebulous comments like "Beginning? Middle? End?" or "Use of the word 'bump' and 'flew'? "

Thus, although Bert grew in his understanding of narrative, his knowledge base was too superficial to communicate effectively with children. Through the WWYR forms and his conversations with Lena, he was able to plan more effectively as well as guide his students into better planning, but

once into production, Bert felt more distanced from what to say, when to say it, and most important, *why* he needed to say things to children about their writing: "I'm not sure the way I'm doing it is the right way, but you try to work with what you have in the time that you have available to you."

Christina. Christina was very clear from the outset about the need to engage children in analytic discussions of their writing. Gaining increasing fluency in her newfound narrative language, she was eager to speak it in the classroom. And speak it she did! Her remarks to her upper-grade children about their developing stories were extensive, whether in her instruction, her feedback comments, or her conferences.

In the beginning of WWYR and in her first narrative writing assignment of 1992, Christina depended on canned ditto sheets that listed the components and asked children to make sure everything was included:

1. **Does the story have a plot?**
2. **Are there interesting characters?**
3. **Is there a setting? . . .**

This checklist extended to 20 questions including "Are apostrophes/hyphens used correctly?" and "Are adverbs correctly used?" The worksheet predominately focused on conventions and correctness, and the few questions related to content typically made no mention of Theme.

As Christina began to take more ownership of her narrative assessments, her comments revealed a more thoughtful and integrative analysis of narrative. Rather than separating and simply listing the components, Christina tried to show her children how the components of narrative worked together. In an interview at the end of the first year, she wrote: "I have more clarity in purpose and focus for each lesson and writing assignment. [One assignment focused on] perception of setting from narrator's perspective . . . The goals of this assignment were (1) development of character's perceptions, inside feelings and (2) description of setting that is character based." The continual integration of the components had been a major topic in our workshop conversations; settings affected and were affected by the characters that lived inside their boundaries, and authors carefully craft their settings and characters to show the relationships.

By the end of the second year, Christina's commitment to the role of assessment in writing instruction was deep.

> **I feel very strongly. And to be honest, I think there are a few people on staff who really don't. But I look at it like kids need to know the tools of their craft. By seeing people doing it and reading it and looking at it, and what makes it great, and why do you like this fantasy, what makes a good fantasy, how do the authors create a fantasy? Then, they can write one. But to just say "Write a fantasy," that's *mean*. [laughter] "Write it and then critique it." It's not right. They need to know *what it is.* You don't hand someone a paintbrush and say "Paint." They learn. Anyway, the form and the rubric have given me a frame . . . just defining what each genre really is, has been helpful. Then all my lessons are designed off of that.**

Not only were her lessons designed from the rubric, but so too were her assessment comments. More important, Christina was not dependent on the rubric as she had been on her worksheets. She thought for herself, using the language of the rubric, and crafting it to meet the goals of her assignments and the needs of individual students.

Christina's independence in appropriating and adapting WWYR materials was thus one of our success stories. But Christina's challenge was learning to focus her feedback. Entranced with students' writing and immersed in learning about narrative, Christina's comments were too long and too complex. For example, in responding to one student's high fantasy story, she wrote:

> **Your flow from one event and setting to the next is beautifully crafted through the use of transitions; this makes the story flow and the reader is not distracted by "choppiness." Because you included so many characters and so much action, it was at times difficult to keep track of which character was who and what their special magic was; I feel that you did an excellent job in describing the events and characters; however, you bit off a big bite having so many characters and so much action . . . not to worry, Tolkien has received similar comments about his works!**

While the comment demonstrates Christina's adept use of narrative language, it is overly complex. Revealing her eagerness to incorporate all that she has learned about Tolkien and his works, she also lets the student off the hook by

suggesting that, since Tolkien had trouble with the complexity of his tale, the student should not worry about the complexity of his. In one of our workshops, we offered this comment as an alternative:

> **It was difficult to keep track of which character was which. Tolkien has received similar comments about his works, so I know it's a difficult thing to do. But I want you to try. You could either eliminate some of the less important characters or try to specifically identify each according to his/her special magic.**

Although Christina had a tendency to overcomment in workshops, typically offering four or five comments, what she said was consistently linked to the child's text and often to the genre (e.g., "What is the difference between the way the prince sees the kingdom and the way Cinderella has seen it in other stories you've read?"). Her recommendations were the most consistently specific ("Who is telling the story? I like the story best when it's the prince"). Although her commendations were more general, she was able to make at least one commendation specific in each session ("Beautiful use of language, metaphors, descriptions. I like the symbolism of good and evil—snake eating 5 daughters"). Christina also showed no difficulties in placing her comments in the appropriate component boxes, and all of her comments dealt with significant issues for the child to consider.

Christina had high expectations for her students' ability to handle extensive technical vocabulary and complicated feedback. In 1993, she began to hold conferences with her students stating that the purpose of the conferences was to provide "more insight on their thinking. So, knowledge always is good. With ignorance there's a lot of misunderstandings. So I can understand their individual process and then I can assess based on that." Christina assumed that her students had important things to tell her about their writing that could justify their choices. She saw her conferences as possibilities for constructing feedback with her students, again validating the role of her students in assessment.

However, because of the length and complexity of her comments, Christina was only able to conference with or make written comments to four students per assignment. Although Christina's comments reveal her orientation toward her students as writers, the stretch of time between comments reveals some lack of understanding that her students needed more

frequent and, perhaps, less dense commentary. Christina had a tendency to try to remark on every aspect of the story—holding conferences up to 30 minutes long. When we discussed this after showing a videotape of Christina's conferencing techniques in WWYR workshop, Christina was relieved to hear that conferencing did not have to be so lengthy.

One of the reasons for her original orientation came from children who were highly interested in improving their writing. In speaking about one of her students, Christina remarked:

> **Mike, he really wants to always improve, improve, improve. And sometimes I just say, "Mike, go with your own instincts." Everything, he wants me to read and check! Every single step of the way, and I would love to because he was the one who . . . You can see all his stuff, he has everything. He's really into it. So he really wants a lot of in-depth feedback, and when I'm filtering through the room, five minutes or less frustrates him. He wants a lot of time with me.**

This was not the case, however, with less capable students. Christina felt that she tended to be "very kind" with students who had more had a tendency to "slip through and slip through and slip through" without completing assignments. With one student in particular, she commented:

> **Just getting Fred to follow through with a project is hard because he starts out with a ka-bang and then anything that goes on over time is difficult . . . It's because he's not involved in the process. So the honing and the depth that comes—This is a great idea to start with, but what I wrote is "Well done, a bit abrupt. It could use more transitions in between different ideas and descriptions. It's really neat to see you turning stuff in. Your writing reflects your creativity. Super ideas and neat imagination." But to make his imagination gel and have the depth, he needs to work and be involved, yeah, and craft it.**

Teaching more mature writers how to craft their stories came easily to Christina. She knew what she wanted to say. But when faced with students who were struggling, she reverted to overgeneralized comments and praise.

Peter. Peter, on the other hand, was not sure what to say to his students, other than offer positive motivational statements. He held a negative view of assessment conferences, arguing that his students were not ready for such criticism. As he explained in the final interview:

> **I was just trying to connect with them with the story, that I was interested in their writing. And just from a person-to-person, that I wasn't there to tell them anything. 'Cause I noticed when I'd come out and tell the kids, "You should do this. You should do that." And I'm really violating the creativity that the child had in it. And they just turned off to it. It wasn't a real exchange.**

Peter's stance that he "wasn't there to tell them anything" and his picture of criticism as coercion prevented him from giving children substantive guidance. Assessment in his eyes was not the "learning event" we tried to describe in the WWYR workshops, but undue pressure.

Much of Peter's stance came from his struggle with the concepts of narrative. He suggested that his involvement in the workshops was "more intellectual than I had ever been before." He wrestled with the concept of theme ("I found I had a really hard time with theme") and forgot about communication ("[The feedback form] was divided into four sections. The center was for . . . I forget . . ."). He did not use the feedback form to offer commendations and recommendations for his students, nor did he advocate its use by students as a planning form. He explained, "No, I never did. I'd just use pretty much traditional webbing. You know, where they would web their ideas and try and cover the narrative." The students' webbed coverage of narrative focused on character, setting, and plot with no mention of the two elements with which Peter struggled.

In the contexts of the workshops, however, Peter was given opportunities to experiment with giving children specific feedback, and though there is no evidence that Peter carried these techniques into his own classroom, his comments across the three scoring and feedback sessions do show some progress.

Peter's comments unfortunately show an increase in the number of comments he offers. We had advocated that teachers only write two comments for children's stories throughout the workshops. Peter was consistent in Time 1 and Time 2—limiting his comments to one commendation and one recommendation. But by Time 3 he was offering a total of five comments. Still, perhaps we can take this as a positive sign—a signal that Peter is more willing to comment.

Throughout the sessions, Peter wavered between significant and insignificant comments, for he still had a tendency to focus on genre-general comments ("Good flow of action from beginning—end") and exhortations for "more" ("Develop setting more"). His comments in the first two session showed some confusion about where to place his comments (e.g., one Setting comment asked, "What caused the wolf to be so hungry?"). But by the final session all five of his comments were appropriately placed.

Peter also showed growth in understanding individual components, even the component with which he showed the most difficulty—Communication. For example, in writing hypothetical comments to a student writing sample in the second session, he wrote, "I like the style where event is written and then next sentence explains details." His comment reveals the very tentative nature of his understanding of narrative which is more a generalized statement of plot than communication. However, by the third session his hypothetical comments showed more insight into the component. In writing a response to a myth written by a sixth-grade girl, Peter wrote: "Mythical flavor characters, good language metaphors." This comment was far more accurate in capturing the features of the component as well as the specific accomplishments of the child's writing.

Although Peter was never fully convinced of the efficacy of *Writing What You Read* in focusing children to write about specific genres, he saw advantages for the children's reading:

> **Yeah, I think so. Definitely. I think I got more out of [WWYR] as a reading teacher, than as a writing teacher, though. Because I had never really been exposed to a lot of the discussion around different genres and what that is. So that made it really hard for me. But I feel it being useful as a writing teacher as well, either moving certain kids along in certain areas. We're all gonna do the myth again this [coming] year, and I thought it went really well, actually. I thought the kids did a good job with it.**

Summary

In this section, we have provided evidence of a complex pattern of impact. *Writing What You Read* assessments were not typically implemented as we had recommended. In their classrooms, teachers rarely used the narrative

feedback form for written commentary or the narrative rubric for scoring. Instead, our greatest impact in the classroom was on (a) the use of both of these artifacts for the design of assignments and assignment-specific criteria for assessment, and (b) a shift in the content of teachers' feedback, whether written or oral, from a focus on mechanics to a focus on narrative content. In the workshops, most teachers demonstrated a capacity to understand and utilize both artifacts effectively. Patterns in the data underscored the role of subject matter knowledge: Teachers new to the school and teachers unenthusiastic about the "intellectual" nature of our enterprise had greater difficulty. Conversely, those teachers who were eager to explore the features of narrative were able to view WWYR as an assessment resource.

The discrepancy between workshop and classroom cannot be readily explained from the data reported just in this section. One factor must have been readiness: Our findings of growth in teachers' workshop commentary along with evidence of teachers' continued difficulties understanding narrative indicate that teachers were simply not ready to implement our assessments during Year Two. But there were other factors that we develop in our final results section. To anticpate that discussion: Our view of the WWYR program as collaborative was not shared by all teachers. Resistance to full implementation was a symptom of a feeling of lack of ownership.

Teachers' Views of WWYR Staff Development

> **As far as developing a rubric, I would like to see the teachers themselves come up with it. You know, have ownership of a rubric. 'Cause then everybody's found some level of their own understanding in it. And that's where I felt that was kind of missing. It was kind of a top-down. (Peter, final interview)**

Staff development projects often represent a conflict of interests, a plethora of purposes depending on individuals and institutions. This was certainly the case with *Writing What You Read*, a project undertaken in the context of national, state, and local efforts at assessment reform. Feeling pressed personally and professionally to deliver new methods of assessment that were deeply informed by the most current understandings of writing development, we did not consistently accomplish our goals to talk *with* rather

than *at* teachers about possibilities for narrative assessment. As Peter's quote illustrates, we were not always effective in eliminating the "us-them" quality of researcher-teacher "collaborations."

Peter's comments, of course, could be explained by his status as a newcomer to Suburban and to WWYR in the second year, after the joint teacher and researcher conversations in Year One had established the rubric direction. From the onset of school until January when the workshops began again, Peter received little, if any, help in understanding the assessments that we had built together the year before. But Peter was not alone in expressing dissatisfaction about the complexity of the tasks we were trying to accomplish, the source of the expertise, and the relevance of WWYR assessments to existing classroom practice.

Year One

When we asked teachers for their reactions to our staff development methods and recommendations for Year Two workshops, we received very diverse opinions. Some comments focused on workload; we heard our share of complaints about the assigned readings and suggested preparation for each workshop ("Keep It Simple, Sweetie!"), a source of frustration to academic folks like us. Most comments focused on teachers' concerns with implementation—the relevance of WWYR to their current curriculum, and methods for organizing a class for interaction and conferencing. Thus, appreciation for the focus on narrative ("by focusing on narrative, you were most helpful to every grade level") was balanced by some uncertainty of the full relevance of the workshop material ("I need to jump in and get my own meaningful program"). Primary teachers were the most apt to address WWYR content: WWYR may be "too sophisticated," even though "I considered the workshops to have provided an excellent foundation set for future clarification"; the kindergarten teachers wished for a kindergarten focus. Appreciation for the opportunity for interaction with teachers of similar grade levels ("good!") became a request for more, with a greater focus on implementation ("I wish we could discuss our efforts to implement, share, review, revise, try again"). Feeling uncertain that they understood the recommended WWYR assessment practices, some teachers asked for modeling of and more practice with scoring, commentary, and conferencing.

Year Two

Our capacity to address the teachers' concerns was hampered by funding limits in Year Two. We were able to meet with teachers only three times, with the first meeting not until January. Within the context of these constraints, we addressed teachers' concerns about implementation in four ways. First, we authored a guidebook to WWYR narrative assessment (Wolf & Gearhart, 1993b) and shared a draft with the teachers early in Year Two. Based on the Suburban School teachers' Year One efforts to master scoring and commentary, the guidebook provided samples of children's narratives, the teachers' scores and comments, critical discussion of their assessment efforts, and our own scores and comments as models. Second, we incorporated practice in scoring and commentary at each Year Two session. Third, we engaged the teachers in collaborative design of narrative units—specifying expectations on the narrative feedback form—and secured their commitment to implement written commentary on the form, teacher-student conferencing, and scoring with the rubric in between sessions so that we could discuss their implementation efforts when we met. Fourth, we videotaped two teachers' approaches (Lena and Christina) to teacher-student conferencing, and used those tapes in the second session as material for discussion of conferencing methods. We were not able to address fully two of the issues raised in Year One—the perception of some primary teachers that WWYR was not a good fit to their students' capabilities and the goals of primary curricula, and the teachers' desires that we model assessment practices directly with their children.

At the end of Year Two, teachers' views on the WWYR in-service program were mixed (Table 22), a shift in climate that challenged us to understand the factors that contributed to resistance. First, there was frequent criticism of the classroom workload, despite our view that the number and nature of the narrative assignments had been negotiated: To explore the utility and feasibility of following progress over time within genre, teachers had agreed in January to design and implement four narrative units, two each in two genres, to be completed by mid-June. Teachers' complaints reflected two issues. For one, many teachers had not yet integrated writing in their classrooms. Thus implementing any student writing was a challenge. For

Table 22

Classification of Teachers by Their Concerns About WWYR: End of Year Two

		Workload		Insufficient emphases	
Level	*N*	Narrative units	Assessment	Writer's choice	Writing skills
Primary	7	2	4	1	5
Middle	4	2	2	2	2
Upper	4	2	2	1	1
Total	15	6	8	4	8

any teacher committed to daily time for student writing, our four narrative assignments would not have seemed a burden.

Second, there was criticism of the instructional nature of the narrative assignments. We did not intend the units to be the writing program; rather, we intended the units to represent ways that children can develop competencies and garner resources for their writing at any and other times. But the distinction between resource and program was misunderstood, leading to resistance and confusion. Some teachers felt that WWYR's analytic emphasis violated their understandings of whole language, writing process approaches. Our focus on narrative content was viewed as inconsistent with a child-centered classroom. When some teachers planned a narrative assignment or had specific criticisms of children's writing, they felt guilty about restraining the freedom of the child. Coleen expresses how confused she felt about her role:

> When I read Graves and Atwood [sic] . . . they say . . . when we assign a topic to the children, we're still making them dependent upon as writers. . . . I really do have that mixed feeling . . . : you cannot draw from an empty well. If you don't give the child something to draw from, then all they do is pull from their own limited experience. And yet, there has to be time when what's important to them is what they're writing about rather than the assigned topic. . . . Do we have two *different* writing [methods]? . . . It is overwhelming.

But criticism need not be viewed as a way of silencing children; rather, it is a way of expanding children's voices and helping them to find new genres and styles in which to express themselves.

Third, several primary and middle teachers felt that WWYR was limited in its relevance for their program. A teacher might comply with WWYR requests and then complain that WWYR narrative units took time away from her writing program.

> **Spending so much time and attention to the rubric and the feedback form . . . I actually did less writing than I normally would have done.**

An analysis of this teacher's complete response, however, revealed that her use of the first person in the excerpt above is very telling of her concern for the time that *she* had lost to teach writing skills ("they don't even know how to write a sentence"). We had not understood that our focus on narrative required a foundation of investment in student composing, a foundation that was particularly shaky in the primary levels at Suburban school.

Fourth, there was a sense among some staff members that the lack of local leadership at the school would limit implementation of WWYR. The principal, although encouraged to attend WWYR workshops, did not do so. Busy with other administrative tasks (visitors to the school, meeting with parents, etc.), she was able to drop in on Steering Committee meetings only briefly. Of the eight workshop sessions, she attended only the final session. Her absence diminished her opportunities for instructional leadership. As one teacher remarked, "I do worry the project won't move forward. [The principal] has a way of undoing things, things go backwards. She takes tiny cuts, mends these, there's never a real direction." Our argument all along was that teachers needed knowledge of narrative and knowledge of children's development in narrative processes if they were to create effective instruction and assessment. If the principal assumed the least knowledgeable position by not participating in over two years of conversations, how could she lead her teachers forward?

Case Study Examples of Teachers' Reactions to Staff Development

Interpreting her position of mentor teacher and member of the WWYR Steering Committee as opportunities for learning, Lena displayed high enthusiasm for WWYR workshops. She repeatedly used the term "educating myself" to indicate her continued stance as a learner. The learning of the entire school was equally critical:

> **I think we really can produce some quality writers if we all do our homework. But we've all got to be involved and we all have to have similar curriculums so that there are no holes.**

The pronoun shift from "I" to "we" is critical to how Lena perceived her goals, which included involving everyone in the process. Although the general mood of the Suburban staff seemed to swing back and forth from "upbeat and can do" to "Oh, my god, not something else!", Lena continued to be an advocate for the school, arguing, "You know, this is a big resource for the district, and if we're not all doing it, it's not going to be a big resource."

Perhaps because she was a mentor, Lena took on a particular relationship with Bert, meeting to discuss and plan their instructional units. In discussing Bert's conversational contributions in a small group of primary teachers working in the final workshop, she was thrilled with the results.

> **Bert's gotten into it. He has just . . . It was so animated. . . . Once he started, he did the whole thing. It was wonderful. . . . Playing off the way we got the kids writing, he explained all the pre-write activities. He was absolutely into it. He just loved it. . . . I do see a big change in Bert.**

Bert, too, praised Lena and their newly established working relationship: "Certainly being a [primary] grade teacher, I felt comfortable going to Lena. She seems to be as good as anyone in this. She's been a big help." Bert was also able to make use of some of the materials we distributed, such as "the [guide]book . . . that's helpful." But for the most part, the materials seemed overwhelming: "There seems to be so much coming at you, you really have limited time to touch base with resource materials." Bert was not willing to do much beyond the bounds of the workshops themselves.

Like Lena, Christina was a member of the Steering Committee that met after each session to plan for upcoming workshops. The conversations centered on what was going well in the work and what needed more attention. Both Lena and Christina stood out as most willing to gather and disseminate information and to serve as leaders with greater knowledge of narrative curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Christina was indeed a willing WWYR participant, intrigued with the research aspect of our work. She viewed the teacher/researcher relationship as a true collaboration:

> **. . . discussing and coming up with a rubric together was really good. I felt like that was a cool collaborative effort between us all. And then going to "What makes a Good whatever" [referring to the sheet used to help teachers plan their instructional units around particular genres] was the icing on the cake that really worked. It tied everything together.**

In contrast, Peter felt that the WWYR workshops were less than collaborative. Perhaps because he joined the project mid-stream as well as his status as a non-member of the Steering Committee ("I actually volunteered to be on it, but I didn't get very far. I don't know. I had a really hard year last year"), he felt distanced from us and from the Suburban teachers more involved in the process. His grade-level relationship with Christina was strained. As Christina explained,

> **It's been *way* frustrating. And I think because he wants just total open-ended kind of writing. "OK, write an adventure story." And that was fine, but I said, "OK, well what would you call an adventure story," and he couldn't really define it. I think they need to see examples of an adventure story, they need to talk about what makes a good adventure story, they need to look at the language that was used in the adventure story. And if you're not into all the pre-write stuff, at least be doing the pre-reading. Otherwise, it's just another vague writing assignment that kids are stabbing at. It's a real difference in philosophy, and he's fighting it.**

Even through the strain of their working relationship, Peter felt that the collaborative unit he planned with Christina was effective:

> **We're all gonna do the myth again this year, and I thought it went really well, actually. I thought the kids did a good job with it.**

Ultimately Peter felt that the workshops were more helpful to him as a reading teacher than as a writing teacher—the WWYR workshop focus on analysis and criticism, scoring and offering specific feedback ran in high contrast to his own philosophy of teaching writing:

> **I'm trained in writer's workshop, so when I came in, that was my whole thrust was doing writer's workshop, and then I got involved with [the WWYR] workshop, which is a little different. So I kind of got pulled in two directions with it.**

The polarity of direction was never solved for Peter, either in the workshop discussions or in the minimal support offered outside the workshops. For Peter, the WWYR focus on teaching two genres was not seen as only one part of a writing program rich in multiple opportunities for children's personal writing, but rather as the only writing assignments of the year—an outcome which Peter resisted and which we would resist as well. We saw the genre writing opportunities as a jump-start into more writing, while Peter worried that it was an endpoint.

Summary

Our summary of teachers' responses to our staff development program is integrated within the final section of our report.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Our discussion of findings is divided into two sections. First, we summarize and interpret patterns of change in teachers' knowledge and assessment practice, noting the conditions that appeared to foster and impede growth in assessment expertise. Second, we reflect on our methods of staff development in light of our impact findings, and outline recommendations for refinement of in-service assessment programs.

Learning to Assess Students' Writing: Patterns of Change

While teachers grew demonstrably in their competencies with narrative assessment, their growth was most typically marked by only partial alignment with the assumptions and practices of the *Writing What You Read* framework. We focus here on our three targeted outcomes: the fundamental belief that children are eager to "make meaning" through narrative and will make use of the insights of a thoughtful reader, the central importance of narrative-specific commentary, and the value of the rubric in summarizing the overall effectiveness of a child's narrative.

First, only a minority of teachers were ready and able to embrace a developmental approach. These teachers were charmed by their students' writing, excited by their students' growth, and eager for more involvement and opportunities for response to children's work. But most teachers seemed daunted. Even as they commented on growth and shared with pride examples of their students' stories, they complained about what their students could not understand and accomplish. We regard this attitude of complaint and negativity as a failing of our in-service methods. Teachers held beliefs that we did not attempt to unsettle directly—that writing is a set of skills that can be charted hierarchically, that children cannot and should not attempt writing as complex as narrative until they have mastered lower level skills or a certain (nebulously defined) level of maturity. Teachers engaged in practices that we did not challenge—such as designating home as the context for kindergarteners' dictated stories and reserving the classroom for the teaching of skills. In our efforts to be diplomatic, we failed to be direct, and we allowed certain practices to remain the *status quo.*

Second, teachers were committed to a focus on writing content and were making efforts to de-emphasize redlining. Many teachers reported feeling markedly greater confidence in their capacity to provide narrative-specific commentary orally, but only a minority of teachers made substantial changes in the content of their written feedback. The recipient of many compliments for its clarity and widely used as a planning tool, the narrative feedback form was nevertheless resisted as a tool for written comments. Believing that students would not read the comments, fueled by the persistent belief among some that children cannot handle critical response, most teachers focused only on face-to-face interaction, a decision which—given Suburban's large class sizes—then limited students' opportunities for guidance. Whether oral or written, comments were also limited by teachers' knowledge. Theme and Communication were considered difficult to understand by some teachers, and consequently even more difficult for their students.

Third, the rubric was rarely used for assessment of students' writing outside of our workshops. Instead, it was in widespread use as a guide for planning assignments and as a resource for establishing assignment-specific criteria (e.g., checklists, reminder lists). Resistance to rubric scoring was justified in a myriad of ways—its perceived inappropriateness for the primary

level (by some primary teachers), the time required for a complete scoring, a preference for checklists or other forms of assignment criteria, the difficulty of understanding it (particularly Theme and Communication), the disbelief that children could understand or compose narrative with those characteristics, and the absence of grade-level-specific criteria for narrative complexity. Thus implicated in rubric resistance were teachers' subject matter knowledge, teachers' understandings of their student writers, and time pressures. Still, we regarded many of these findings as evidence of very positive impact. The majority of teachers found the rubric invaluable as a resource for designing assignments, establishing criteria, and assessing students' narratives, even if the assessments were simplifications of the rubric's components or scale definitions. *Appropriation of the WWYR rubric* to the integrated planning of assignments and assessments emerged as a very positive outcome.

Conditions That Fostered and Impeded WWYR Impact

Our research efforts focused exclusively on the impact of WWYR on teacher knowledge and practice. In coming to terms with the complex pattern of impact, we have reflected on factors external to the classroom and workshops, the face validity of the WWYR narrative assessments, and our staff development methods.

Institutional and Organizational Conditions

There were external conditions that mediated our efforts to enhance teachers' capacities with writing assessment. We discuss three conditions: the district's literature-based curriculum, the climate of support for teacher professionalism, and the school's history as a development site for a major computer firm.

First, both the district and the school were committed to implementation of a *literature-based, "whole language," language arts curriculum*. While that was translated principally as adoption of a new textbook series containing excerpts from literature selections, at least the teachers' guides and workbooks contained attention to literature and recommended a process of narrative writing informed by literature. In this context, several teachers had attended outside workshops in "whole language" to build their expertise. Indeed it was

the commitment to writing process that set the context for our initial portfolio project.

However, in the context of a district with limited expertise and resources for staff development, teachers' understandings of new language arts frameworks were often superficial or even misguided. Supplying teachers with new books does not ensure that they teach in new ways, just as supplying children with lovely tradebooks does not ensure that they read or write in meaningful ways. Without careful guidance in the uses of these texts, Suburban teachers' misunderstandings of *au courant* approaches to the teaching and assessment of writing contributed to resistance to WWYR. On the one hand, teachers were simply inexperienced with writing. Writing in many classrooms consisted of once-a-week story starters on teacher-selected topics, rather than writing daily for personal expression. Our intervention, then, was the target for teachers' frustration with organizing classrooms for writing and coping with the increased workload and mastery of new pedagogies. On the other hand, the emphases on writer's workshop, on author's voice versus writing skill, and on process versus product all seemed to stress a more hands-off role for the teacher, while we stressed supportive engagement. Some teachers saw change as a polar swing from teacher as didact to teacher as silent facilitator in a way that diminished the complexity of teaching and interfered with their understanding of WWYR. A good teacher is leader and follower, speaker and listener, teacher and learner, and her positioning in these roles is highly dependent on where her students are. To characterize her role as being one thing only is to diminish the complexity of teaching.

Second, like many schools and districts across the nation, the district supported the *professionalization of teachers* and the creation of effective collegial relationships. Thus it was the principal who suggested the formation of a WWYR Steering Committee to facilitate project movement and to represent the school's commitment to alternative assessment. But, unaccustomed to decision making and lacking knowledge of alternative assessment, the Steering Committee tended to interpret its role as giving feedback to our ideas or monitoring staff compliance with our requests. The committee was also pressed by conflicts between WWYR and the assessment alternatives under consideration by the principal and the district—alternatives that had a decided

emphasis on products and outcomes, such as grade-level benchmarks which would identify and in many ways determine what children were capable of accomplishing at what age. Commitment to teacher professionalization and competence to *enable* it turned out to be two very different things at Suburban. The administration's approach to teacher professionalization was one of assignment of tasks, rather than collaborative engagement in school change. The principal's absence in decision making—indeed, her physical absence at most workshops and Steering Committee meetings—reflected her choice to yield ownership of the project to us and to the teachers. Her general lack of knowledge about the project also ensured that she would be little prepared to lead the project after our departure.

Third, Suburban School had served for several years as a development site for a longitudinal research effort on the impact of technology on educational practice. In exchange for extensive contributions of hardware and software as well as opportunities for in-service programs, volunteer teachers agreed to participate in longitudinal studies of their practice. This partnership was a stressful one for many and contributed to a perception of conflicting and multiple accountabilities and some loss of autonomy and ownership. Teachers were ready to perceive outsiders as pressure rather than as opportunity.

The Face Validity of WWYR Assessments

It was not the purpose of our assessment intervention to determine the technical quality of the rubric. Indeed, we are currently conducting a parallel study of the WWYR rubric's reliability and validity (Gearhart, Herman, & Wolf, in progress). But two patterns in teachers' responses suggested that certain aspects of the rubric's "face" may have represented narrative in ways that reduced positive impact on teacher knowledge and practice. One concern was that the rubric's strength in supporting analysis was not balanced with a way to capture the integration of components within a narrative. Although integration was repeatedly stressed and assessment *of* integration was repeatedly modeled (e.g., Wolf & Gearhart, 1993b), we now see the benefit of including a holistic rubric.

The most prevalent complaint, however, was that the rubric did not adequately capture the range of capabilities in the primary grades. Some—not all—primary teachers felt the rubric was too complex for their students'

writing, that most writing fell into one or two levels on each scale and therefore failed to capture aspects of their students' growth. We resisted the creation of a primary rubric for fear that it would reinforce the already limited view that some teachers held of their children's writing. The rubric was complex, but much of the writing that the primary children were accomplishing was complex as well, and we wanted the rubric to show teachers how to guide their children into new areas. The rubric was purposefully designed to help teachers see the full range of writing rather than just a limited section, and Lena, recognizing the strength in her children's writing, viewed the upper levels as guides to her own instruction, which she sought to expand rather than constrict. Lena's willingness to accept complexity where others sought simplicity held her apart from the patterns found in most primary teachers.

WWYR In-service

We believe that certain aspects of our staff development methods contributed to positive impact on teachers' growth in narrative assessment. The *interchange of adaptability* between the teachers and us was a key feature; we were responsive to teachers' revampings of our artifacts and methods and made efforts to design workshop content around teachers' concerns. Nevertheless, we now feel we were overly focused on soliciting teachers' responses to *our* content and insufficiently concerned with responding to their content—to their goals and practices. We do understand how this happened: With limited funds and working long-distance from the site (and from one another), we were unable to meet frequently, flexibly, or over a long enough period of time.

But the narrowness of our own vision coupled with the limited time available resulted in insufficient attention to teachers' own efforts at assessment design, and, therefore, to a perception of impact that did not credit us for what we had in fact accomplished: Teachers did not necessarily utilize all that we developed, but what they did utilize was typically of benefit to their students. Our rubric had been transformed by many teachers into clearer assignment expectations that motivated corresponding methods of assessment.

Recommended Revisions of In-service Methods

Our findings lead us to the following recommendations in each component of our framework.

Teachers' Knowledge of Narrative

While teachers grew markedly in their understandings of narrative, Theme and Communication remained problematic for many. Teachers could have benefited from more opportunities for literary analysis of children's literature and from composition of their *own* narratives. Theme and Communication are difficult to analyze and to integrate successfully within a narrative. Themes are often multiple and subtle, revealed through the narrative but often not directly stated. Communication devices can be named (alliteration, consonance, and metaphor), but how they work to deliver the meaning is part of the magic of narrative. All too often that "magic" eluded teachers who persisted in a view of narrative as a set of differentiable writing skills.

Teachers' Understandings of Their Children as Writers

A number of teachers had difficulties recognizing and describing their students' competencies. These teachers viewed skills as discrete and dichotomous in nature—a child either had mastered them (e.g., writing a complete sentence) or not, and, if not, it was the teacher's job to ensure mastery. Our emphasis on guided support for the child's emerging voice was a source of conflict and rejection. To counter this focus on lack of skill, we would make at least two changes. First, we would provide a greater a focus on the child as writer. For example, teachers could share their students' writing and tell stories about their students as young authors. Videotapes of children's engagement with their work, with peers, with parents, and with teachers could provide memorable images of children's eagerness to compose and to share their work with others. Second, we would create a primary focus to allow us to share what is known about the development of very young writers and to address squarely the tendencies of primary teachers to see WWYR as irrelevant to their students.

Implementation of Assessment in the Classroom

Some teachers perceived our in-service program as imposed, rather than collaboratively designed. To increase teachers' engagement and commitment to implementation, we would make several changes. First, we would put limits on our responsibilities. The Steering Committee would no longer function only to respond to our initiatives or to implement our requests; they would be responsible for working with the staff and with us to assess needs and define goals. The principal would assume a similarly central and collaborative role. Second, we would engage in more active research in and out of the classroom throughout the intervention; as we developed understandings of the misalignments and potential incoherence of teachers' practices, we would address these in workshops—engaging in active dialogue about the benefits of and the relations between old and new frameworks and practices. Based on the findings we have reported here, these dialogues would address conflicts among language arts frameworks (as teachers understand these), the balance needed in contexts and purposes for writing (e.g., instructional units vs. author's choice). Third, we would actively support the teachers' inventive appropriation and adaptations of our assessments, focusing our dialogue on the goals of assessment. These efforts would be validated in discussions that made clear that our methods represent an approach to assessment, not a recipe. Fourth, we would take management issues even more seriously. We would encourage collaborative design of practices that integrate assessment without overwhelming the teacher or student.

Much like writing narrative, working with teachers to create authentic and useful assessment tools is a complex process. The characters can see eye to eye or have less successful interactions; the setting can be enhanced or constrained by time, place, and situation; the plot can evolve smoothly or erupt in conflict; the themes can align or be at cross-purposes; and communication can flow in original language and even rhythm, or clash in clichés and missing transitions. Actually, good narratives involve more conflict than consensus, for without rich and complex multilayering of issues and themes and different ways of making meaning, there is hardly a story worth telling. Thus, our story is not a happily-ever-after tale, but a tale of real research with classroom teachers, where the idea is not to reach some final perfect

resolution, but to learn much along the way. A central point in *Writing What You Read* is to take what you learn from literature and carry it in to your own writing. As teachers and researchers, we will take what we have learned from this experience and carry it into our future classrooms and projects, reshaping and learning along the way.

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Guidelines for Narrative Feedback Form

- **Be specific — tie your remark explicitly to the child's story.**
- **Be clear and considerate — write in language the child can understand.**
- **Limit your comments to one commendation and one recommendation — avoid a jumbled list. You can use the rubric to guide your choice for a commendation and recommendation.**
- **Tie your remarks to what you have tried to accomplish in your instruction — if you are working on a particular genre, what features do you expect to find in the child's writing? Use key examples from the professional literature you used in your instruction to provide background and models.**
- **Keep the developmental perspective in mind — where has this child been and where do you want to guide him/her next?**

Wolf & Gearhart, 1993
CRESST

The teachers' comments on The Dragon Fight are located on the left of each of the following tables, with our metacommentary offered on the right.

Character

Recommendations & Commendations	Metacommentary
• Perhaps you could develop your characters a bit more—more description, feelings, etc. • Tell me more about Allison. She is your heroine and I would like a clearer picture of what she is like.	Here the teachers want more character information. Although the first comment is a bit too general, the next comment asks for more specific details for Allison. Because Allison is the protagonist, this comment is particularly justified, for fairy tale heroines are often stereotypically described as kind hearted as well as beautiful. The details of their costumes are usually supplied, as is their close relationship to small animals.
• I liked the description of the knight you were seeking—strongest, bravest knight in the kingdom. He also had a tender side (cute dragon). • Good description. Knight is brave and believably courageous just as knights should be.	The teachers are generally quite satisfied with the knight's description and their commendations are genre appropriate. The knight doesn't flinch in the face of such a task, but stoically agrees and takes off immediately for the cave, come what may.
• Good physical description of the knight—need to know how the knight feels about the problem.	Still, this teacher encourages some emotional response for the knight and this is a good recommendation. Even storybook knights have their moments when fear sweeps over them, though of course they bravely push on.
• What happened to Mom? Eliminate unnecessary characters. Story could use some physical description of characters—only one you describe is the dragon.	This comment gives somewhat mixed advice—eliminate some characters and enhance others. If the teacher gave more specific direction it would help the author: "Give more information on the major characters—the King, Allison, and the Prince—tell what they look like and how they feel about what's happening to them."

Criticism: I'm a little confused, both as a teacher and as a potential student writer, about the degree of emotional development these comments are encouraging. Didn't we (the teacher and, I would hope, the student) agree that these characters should be relatively flat? I know the operative word here is "relatively," but where does flat end and round begin? If a student responded to the comments that call for more emotional response with in-depth descriptions of appearances and feelings, would she then be told such elaboration was inappropriate for the genre?

I'm left wondering how the teachers chose to write the comments they did. How can I as a teacher decide which category to focus on given an actual piece of writing (which offers innumerable temptations for correction and improvement and, yes, praise? How can I suppress my desire to take the whole piece and mold it into a masterpiece? I know I'm supposed to choose one or two important categories to focus on, but do you really expect me to ignore everything else? (I'm being a troublesome teacher, "in case you haven't noticed," to quote Princess Allison.) It seems to me they might need to think about how it feels to select their comments carefully so as to maximize the comments' instructional impact.

The teachers' comments on The True Story are located on the left of each of the following tables, with our metacommentary offered on the right.

Character

Recommendations & Commendations	Metacommentary
• You set the characters out nicely. It might help develop sympathy for the wolf's character if you gave a short sentence of why you were "dying of hunger" to develop a little more. • Flat character development for pigs is good. Need to develop character of Wolf to solicit reader's empathy.	The teachers' comments are quite appropriate here. Even though fairy tales are usually noted for their stereotypical characters (we don't really need to know more about the wolf other than he's "big and bad"), the genre of the fractured fairy tale is different. Because the story is turned around and told from the wolf's point of view, we really need to know about the motivation behind his intentions in order to justify his actions (which is something we don't need for the pigs). While further physical description might help, it is more critical that the author develop the wolf in terms of feeling and motivation in order to engage the reader in some sympathy. The second teacher's advice to "solicit reader's empathy" has too much jargon and could be rewritten: "Develop the character of the Wolf so that the reader is on his side. Your sentences 'But it wasn't my fault. I had to eat.' are a good way to pull the reader into your point of view, so add more of this kind of explanation."
• Could you develop the wolf even more? • Could you describe the wolf with more adjectives? • More physical / mental descriptions needed for the characters.	These comments are rather vague in nature—for there are many ways to develop the wolf. He could be rounded in terms of physical description, of emotional reaction, of motivation and intention, and so on. It is not enough to say "add more"—teachers need to suggest a specific direction. Our suggested comment above tries to show the author where his justification worked, and why he needs to provide further explanation.

Criticism: Should all teachers rate their students' papers for all categories of the rubric before commenting? If teachers refer to the rubric to rate where the student is, they can then refer to the rubric to craft the comments they write, helping students move into levels that are appropriate for the genre. The last comment seems to offer a great opportunity to trace out the possible results of the comments we as teachers write. If the student were to follow up on this advice, what would the fractured fairy tale possibly sound like? What comments might the student get on her final draft? Her tale would pull our sympathy away from the wolf and, frankly, implode. Teachers need to know that the rubric can keep them—and their students—on track because it's easy to write comments that may get students way off the track of a particular genre.... I'm left wondering how the teachers chose to write the comments they did. How can I as a teacher decide which category to focus on given an actual piece of writing (which offers innumerable temptations for correction and improvement and, yes, praise? How can I suppress my desire to take the whole piece and mold it into a masterpiece? I know I'm supposed to choose one or two important categories to focus on, but do you really expect me to ignore everything else? (I'm being a troublesome teacher, "in case you haven't noticed," to quote Princess Allison.) It seems to me they might need to think about how it feels to select their comments carefully so as to maximize the comments' instructional impact.

Appendix G

Selected Materials From Workshop #3, Year Two

CRESST Meeting

June 1, 1993 Agenda

8:30 - 10:0 **Scoring 3 stories**

- **2nd grade fable**
- **3rd grade fairy tale**
- **6th grade myth**

10:00 - 10:15 **Break**

10:15 - 11:15 **Grade level scoring of 3 more stories**

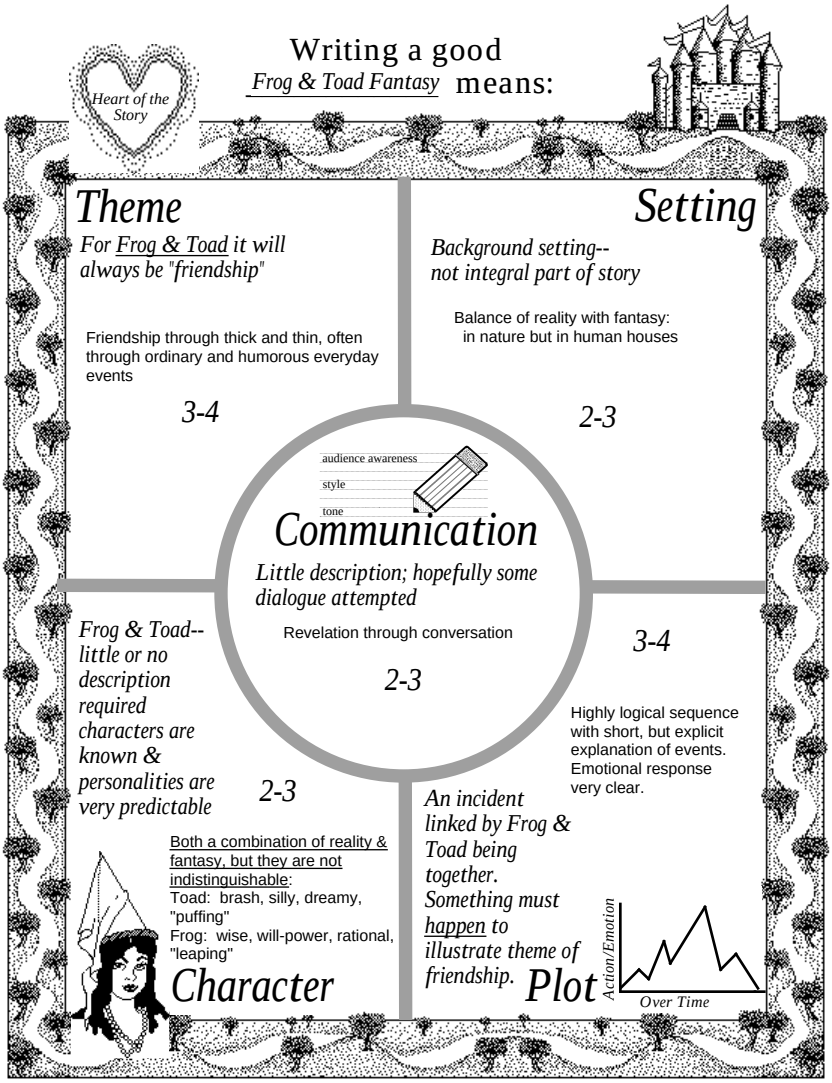
- **K-2 - 1st grade Frog & Toad**
- **3-4 - 4th grade fantasy**
- **5-6 - 5th grade historical fiction**

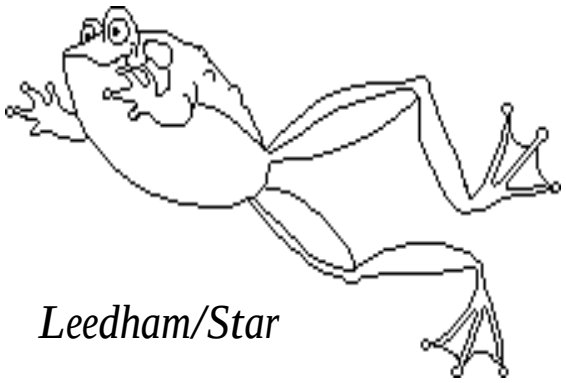
11:15 **Questionnaire**

12:00 **Lunch**

12:45 **The Art of the Picture Book**

1:40 **Closing**





Leedham/Star

- Emphasis was on how they were able to convey the theme of friendship
- Books read: Frog & Toad All Year, Frog & Toad are Friends, Days with Frog and Toad, Frog and Toad Together all by Arnold Lobel. Also read Grasshopper on the Road by Arnold Lobel & Tuesday.
- Filled out the "Prewrite Form" on several Frog & Toad stories. Brainstormed ideas for a possible Frog & Toad story. (Toad gets into trouble and Frog helps him out.) We wrote the story, as a class with group consensus.
- Emphasized that the characters are friends and they must do things that show they are friends.

Frog and Toad
by Steph

Once upon a time Frog and Toad decided to go to the mountains. Frog and Toad climbed many mountains. Frog yelled AAAAAAAAAH and fell down the mountains. Toad helped him. He got a rope out of his fanny pack. He tied it around a tree and pulled frog up.

The End

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The End

Theme: 2
Character: 2
Setting: 2
Plot: 2
Communication: 2

Plot commendation:
I liked how you described the rescue in detail.

Plot recommendation:
I want to know more about how Frog & Toad felt about what happened.

Mini-Lesson

Since emphasis is on something <u>happening</u> to illustrate friendship, we need to emphasize the emotional response that's linked to "happenings." This can be done through dialogue (another instructional emphasis). Put Steph's work on an overhead and show how careful she was to show the logical sequence of the rescue events. Then discuss the missing element of emotional response. Elicit from the class the dialogue that might occur after Toad pulls Frog up.

S.A. Wolf/CRESST 1993

Writing a good *Fairy Tale* means:

Heart of the Story

Theme

Good triumphs over evil. Hard work is rewarded.

Setting

Once upon a time...
Once...
Long ago...
Place, castle, etc. not specific

3-6

2-5

audience awareness
style
tone

Communication

Explanation is simple and clear
--use of dialogue
--use details to help reader form images

Images of wonder

3-6

Relationships between characters are clear. Good description of physical/personal characteristics. Differences of good and evil are clear cut.

2-5

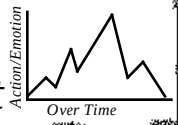
"There is little gray in the world of the folk tale: characters are either good or evil (Wolf & Gearhart, Tech Report 358, 1992)

The "grey" appears in more recent "fractured" or "liberated" tales.

Character

Short and fast moving. Smallest/youngest character wins over larger or older character. Wishes come true after task or hardship. Ends happily.

4-5



Plot

Riddle

- Retell a familiar fairy tale
- Students will listen to and read a variety of fairy tales. Class will compare "Elements of a good fairy tale" chart to each story.
- Students will complete the "Writing a good fairy tale means" and use as a guide for writing their stories.

Katie's plan

Characters: Tattercoat, father, mother, king, step-mom

Setting: Long ago in a faraway land

Plot: At birth becomes blind and deaf. Servants treat her mean. Finds magic tattercoat, slippers, and she is queen.

Theme: Don't give up.

"It is a world of wonder, a world where young girls are as beautiful as the day, young men willing to give anything for love, and stepmothers yellow and green with envy. Goodness has power over death, treasures that would not be traded for riches are given as gifts, and evil is rewarded with a dance in red-hot shoe" (Wolf & Heath, The Braid of Literature, 1992, p. 31).

Tattercoat Keller

by Katie

Long ago in a far away land lived a poor family with only one child. Her name was Tattercoat. But at age one she got a great sickness that left her blind and deaf.

One day Tattercoat's mom said, "Henry, come here right now and bring Tattercoat too."

"What dear?" said Tattercoat's father.

"I think I found who has been eating our crops," said her mother. "Henry!" she yelled, because she just got bitten (by the cobra who was eating all of the corn)! "And get a doctor!" she yelled. That night she died.

Soon her father married another lady. She was dreadful! Poor Tattercoat had to work night and day without any rest.

One day the King was coming to the village! A note was sent for a royal ball! That day the lady said, "Tattercoat, you get over here." She made her do so many things! She went to the royal ball! She was lovely! But then suddenly she lost her slipper. But the King found it! And he said, "Who does this belong to?" But when Tattercoat lost her slipper she fled!

Then the King ordered that every maiden in the country try the tiny slipper. The more he tried, the more he was determined to find the maiden who fit the tiny slipper.

Then one day the King came to Tattercoat's house! He said, "Let the oldest of the maidens try the slipper." So Tattercoat's step-mom, being selfish, said, "I am the oldest so let me try the slipper." But did she try! But no matter how hard she tried she could not get that slipper to fit her!

Tattercoat was wondering where everyone was so she went upstairs. When she got up there the King fell madly in love with her. "Let her try the slipper," said the King. When she did that she could see and hear! They married and lived happily ever after!

S.A. Wolf/CRESST 1993

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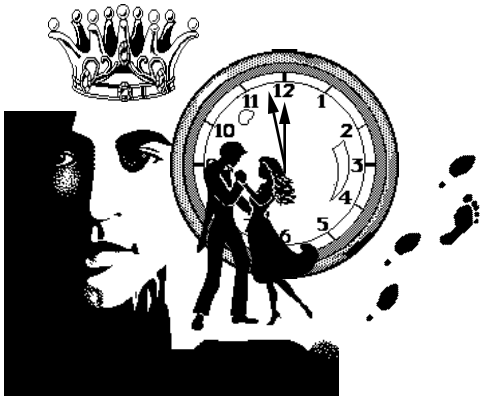
by Katie



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Theme: 3
Character: 2
Setting: 2
Plot: 3 (w/elements of both 2 & 4)
Communication: 3

Character commendation:

The blend of Cinderella and Helen Keller was very clever.

Communication recommendation:

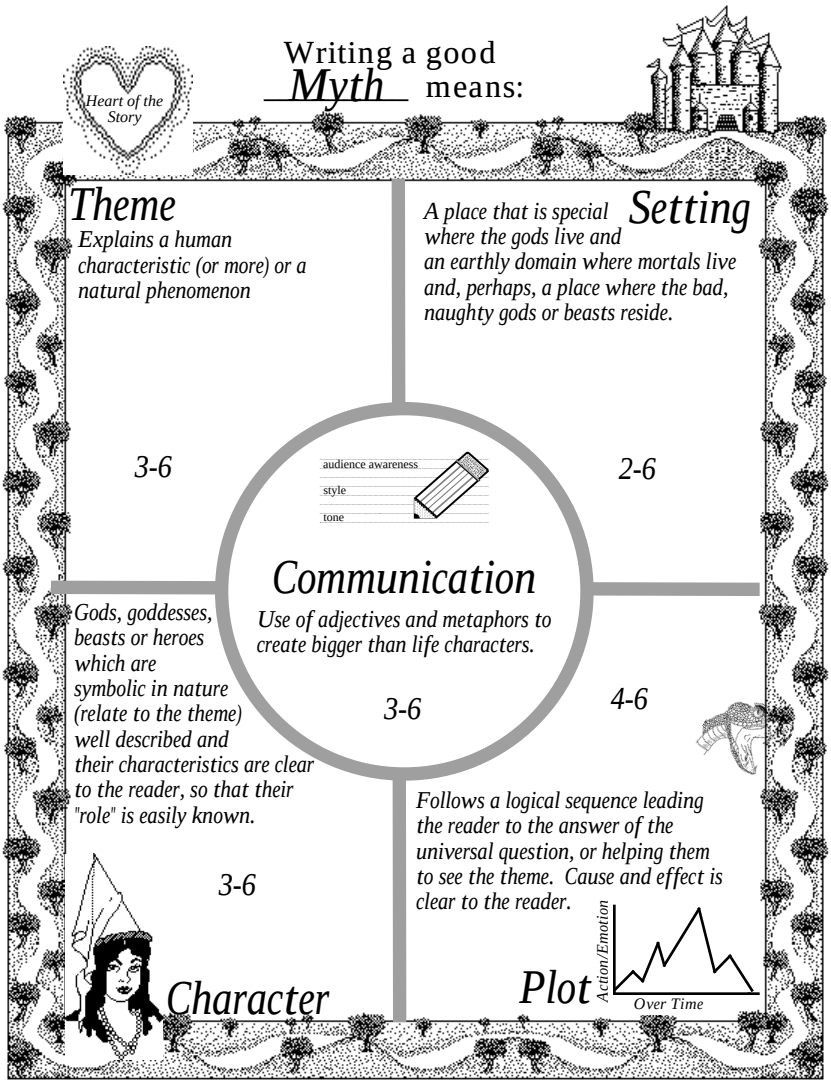
I wish you had used your plan to explain where she got the tattercoat and slippers and how she got to the ball--without an explanation there is no sense of "wonder" or magic.

Mini lesson

Katie's blend of characters is a clever idea, but not throughly executed. She does not incorporate the theme of "Don't give up" into the plight of this blind and deaf figure and thus the reader tends to forget about these disabilities until they are miraculously resolved in the end by the prince's love.

The mini-lesson for the class would be on the need to follow-through on clever ideas, for the unique quality of an idea is not enough to sustain it in a narrative. Brainstorming on the part of the class could cover: how the disability affected Tattercoat, how did she find the wondrous clothing and make her way to the ball (in many Cinderella stories these are gifts from the dead mother/fairy godmother), and did the use of these gifts transform the disability in any way or was the transformation caused only by the prince's love?

S.A. Wolf/CRESST 1993



Embrey

- Man's need to have an order to the universe and a belief in higher power.
- Students will become familiar with the characteristics of a myth "What Makes A Good myth"...explains natural phenomena, explains human characteristics, uses characters such as gods, goddesses, beasts to tell the story and explain. Students will recognize such characteristics in literature and then incorporate these into their own myth.
- Sequencing/timeline activity, assignment of "Zeus and His Family", Greek gods adjective chart/picture, myth notesheet, myth prewrite, final draft.
- Video myth "The Cyclops," D'Aulaire's Book of Greek Myths (read from, color pictures, fill out adjectives for).
- We took many opportunities to examine mythology, its purpose, what it tells us about the values of the culture. We did the same mini-lesson in a variety of contexts (s.s.) over a period of time. It was slow in coming for them to understand, but I think the numerous short doses, using the same forms was helpful.

The Five-Headed Snake
by Janice Yee

One day in old Japan lived a man named Kazuhiko. He was a peaceful soul who triumphed over the evil and tumultous souls. He represented the good in every person. Kazuhiko by now a peaceful soul, came upon an old man and woman kneeling by a young and pretty girl. Sutoru, the father of the girl, said that his five other daughters were killed by the 5-headed snake. Hiromi, the girl's mother, was wiping her eyes looking at her last daughter. For the past five years one of Sutoru and Hiromi's daughters were eaten each year.

As Kazuhiko knelt down beside the girl he saw that she was as beautiful as silk. Her long jet black hair shined in the daylight. Her skin was smooth and creamy and her black almond-shaped eyes glittered as her blue and white gown blew in the cool breeze. Beyond the beauty however, fear filled Fumiko's eyes. Kazuhiko was so taken in by her beauty that he wanted to take Fumiko as his wife. He convinced Fumiko's parents to give him their daughter.

So he thought of a trick to fool the 5-headed snake and save Fumiko. Magically he turned Fumiko into a pin and put it in his hair. Then he filled 5 bowls with rice wine. The snake sniffed his way to the bowls and drank and drank and drank until there was no more left. The snake became drunk and lazy. Slowly the heads began to droop and rest. When this happened Kazuhiko chopped off their heads. Then he pulled out five other sisters and returned them to Sutoru and Hiromi. With a smile on his face he took Fumiko as his wife. The two went to Kazuhiko's palace and lived happily ever after.

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Theme: 4
Character: 4
Setting: 3
Plot: 4
Communication: 4

Communication commendation: Your lovely metaphors ("beautiful as silk" & "almond-shaped eyes") bring out the beauty of the character as well as her time and culture.

Character recommendation: I found the character of Kazuhiko somewhat confusing. You first described him as a peaceful soul, so I was unprepared for his violent solution to the 5-headed snake. It might help to foreshadow his warrior status.

Conference Conversation:

One of the most stunning features of Janice's myth is her communicative effort. She seems very aware of her audience and provides sufficient and image-making information, particularly in her successful depiction of her characters. Still, there are some inconsistencies in her protagonist which might give the reader pause. Kazuhiko is described as a "peaceful soul" who "represented the good in every person," yet he strikes a warrior's blow not once but five times in order to defeat his enemy. Although we are told that he often "triumphed over evil and tumultous souls," we're not sure how he does it. Janice could either foreshadow the dual nature of Kazuhiko or alter the ending to make it more congruent with her original character description. The criticism here, however, could easily be culturally biased--for expectations for consistencies or for explanations of inconsistencies may represent a mainstream orientation.

Appendix H

Year One Preworkshop Questionnaire (January, 1992)

Suburban School Portfolio Project
Pre-Workshop Questionnaire
January, 1992

Please bring to your first workshop with Shelby Wolf. Thanks very much!

Name _____

Grade level _____

Please answer all questions *for your particular grade level.*

Primary teachers: You may adapt the questions to focus on either children's oral/dictated compositions or on their written compositions; feel free to discuss both. Just make clear in your answers which medium you are discussing.

Please note that there are separate questions for children's stories and for children's reports. If either type of writing does not apply to your curriculum, indicate 'N/A' (not applicable). If you engage your students in other types of writing, you don't need to comment on this questionnaire. (There are enough questions as it is!)

Your ideas about good writing

1a. In your classroom, what makes a child's story a 'Very Good!' one?

1b. What makes a child's story a weak one?

2a. In your classroom, what makes a child's report a 'Very Good!' one?

1b. What makes a child's report a weak one?

Your goals for your students each year

1. What are your goals for your students' development as story writers by the end of the school year?

2. What are your goals for your students' development as report writers by the end of the school year?

Your approaches to writing assessment

1. Please describe briefly all ways in which your students provide feedback about their writing. If you provide different kinds of feedback for stories vs. reports, could you explain?

Your approaches to writing assessment, contÕd

2. Grading:

2a. Do you grade your students' stories?
If so / when you do grade stories, what is your grading system?

How do you decide which grade to give a particular story?

When / if you don't grade stories, why not?

2b. Do you grade your students' reports?
If so / when you do grade reports, what is your grading system?

How do you decide which grade to give a particular report?

When / if you don't grade reports, why not?

Your approaches to writing assessment, contÕd

3. Portfolios:
   3a. Are you using portfolios to assess your students' writing at this time? If so, how?

   3b. ***(Choose the question that applies to you.)***
   If you have been using portfolios, do you feel that they have been supporting your approach to writing and language arts? interfering with your approach? Please comment.

   If you have not yet begun using portfolios, do you feel at this time that they will support your approach to writing and language arts? interfere with your approach? Please comment.

4. Would you like to make any changes in the ways that you provide students with feedback about their writing? If yes, how and why? If no, why not?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

Appendix I

Year One Writing Assignment Description Form

Writing Assignment Description Form

Teacher's Name _____ Grade _____

Date Assignment was Completed: _____

1. Assignment Topic or Theme . Here describe the topic under discussion (birds, winter, teddy bears, etc.) or theme (friendship, brains vs brawn, conflict).

2. Assignment Genre . Give the genre (narrative, poem, exposition to inform, etc.).

3. Assignment Expectations . Provide a brief synopsis of your expectations for this particular assignment (e.g. How many pages? Use references? Must include an introduction and a conclusion? etc.).

4. Assessment of the StudentÕs Work Explain how you will assess the student's work -- what will you assess? by what criteria? will you assess the final product differently from the work-in-progress?

5. Motivation & Curriculum Context. Here provide background on the unit of instruction. Also note the motivation for this particular assignment: Did the class go on a fieldtrip? Did you bring in a variety of books to introduce an idea? Did you have a guest speaker?

6. Prewriting. Describe the prewriting that you went through with the class. Did you put vocab on the board? If so, what? Did you chunk the information in any way? How? Did you do library research? Did kids partner together to discuss possible ideas? Did the kids draw a picture? What? (If applicable, please attach a photograph or copy of the work that went on the board such as your brainstorming webs, matrices, etc.)

7. Communication. What, if any, mini-lessons on communication (strong lead in a story, character development, chunking information, etc.) did you do connected to this particular assignment (a la Atwell)? Plus, can you add any particular anecdotes about the class reaction to the assignment in general--how are they growing in their writing? (You may want to add individual examples after you print off the general comments.)

8. Convention: Same as above but with the stress on punctuation, grammar, spelling, etc.

9. Recopy/Illustrate/Publish: Brief comments / anecdotes on what happened with the class here.

10. Celebrate & Share: Anecdotes on the kids sharing their work.

Writing Assignment Description Form

Teacher's Name _____ Grade _____

Date Assignment was Completed: _____

1. Assignment Topic or Theme : _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
2. Assignment Genre : _____
   _____
3. Assignment Expectations : _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
4. Assessment of the StudentÕs Work: _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
5. Motivation & Curriculum Context: _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

6. Prewriting: _____

7. Communication: _____

8. Convention: _____

9. Recopy/Illustrate/Publish: _____

10. Celebrate & Share: _____

Appendix J

Year One Postworkshop Questionnaire (June, 1992)

Suburban School Portfolio Project
End-of-workshop reflection, June 1992

Because our workshops have focused on narrative writing your reflections on the impact of the workshops will focus just on narrative.

Think about where you were as a narrative instructor at the beginning of the year (Fall 1991) and where you are now (Spring 1992). For each of the questions below, write down the first 3 responses that come to mind.

1. What changes, if any, do you see in your understanding of narrative?

2. As a result of the workshops, have you changed at all in your methods of teaching narrative? How?

   Think of a key anecdote that illustrates how you may have changed; jot down a few words so you'll remember it to share it with the group.

3. As a result of the workshops, have you changed at all in the kinds of verbal and written comments you make to students regarding their writing? What kinds of commendations and recommendations are you making now?

   Think of a key anecdote that illustrates how you may have changed; jot down a few words so you'll remember it to share it with the group.

4. With regard to narrative writing instruction, I am still confused by ...

   and therefore I wish I knew more about ...

5. With regard to assessing students' progress in narrative writing, I am still confused by ...

   and therefore I wish I knew more about ...

6. Please share with us any critique you may have of the workshop content and format. If we conduct similar workshops with other teachers, should we make any changes in content?

   format?

   other?

Appendix K

Year Two Preworkshop Questionnaire (January, 1993)

Suburban School Response Sheet

January 4, 1993

1. Please describe your narrative instruction. What narrative goals do you have for your children? Is your instruction tied to the teaching of specific genres? If so, how?

2. Are you using the "feedback" form? If so, how?

3. Are you using the rubric? If so, how?

4. What questions do you have regarding narrative curriculum, instruction, and assessment that we should address in our next meeting?

Appendix L

Year Two Postworkshop Questionnaire (June, 1993)

Name _____ June, 1993
Grade _____ Portfolio Project

Focus on Assessment

Over the past year and a half we've explored a variety of *Writing What You Read* approaches to assessment of narrative. Please share with us your views on what has worked well for you and what has not been productive.

(1) (a) In working with the narrative feedback form , what has been the easiest to understand and utilize?

(b) What has been the hardest?

(2) You may have used the feedback form in several ways. Below you have a 'pattern questionnaire' of repeating questions, so that you can describe each use separately.

Use #1--I have used the feedback form for:

How has this use of the feedback form helped you improve narrative assessment (describe):

How do you share your assessment with the student?

How has this use of the feedback form not helped you improve narrative assessment (describe):

Other comments about this use:

Use #2--I have also used the feedback form for:

How has this use of the feedback form helped you improve narrative assessment (describe):

How do you share your assessment with the student?

How has this use of the feedback form not helped you improve narrative assessment (describe):

Other comments about this use:

(3) (a) In working with the narrative rubric , what has been the easiest to understand and utilize?

(b) What has been the hardest?

(4) You may have used the narrative rubric in several ways. Therefore, below you have a 'pattern questionnaire' of repeating questions for each use:

Use #1--I have used the rubric for:

How has this use of the rubric helped you improve narrative assessment (describe):

How has this use of the rubric not helped you improve narrative assessment (describe):

Use #2--I have used the rubric for:

How has this use of the rubric helped you improve narrative assessment (describe):

How has this use of the rubric not helped you improve narrative assessment (describe):

(5) In your classroom this year, what have been the purposes of conferencing with students? (Please list all.)

In what ways do you feel you are able to accomplish this purpose/these purposes when you conference?

In what ways do you feel you are not able to accomplish this purpose/these purposes when you conference?

In what ways has conferencing improved your assessment of students' narratives?

In what ways has conferencing improved students' understandings of your assessment?

What changes to you plan to make in your conferencing next year?

(6) What do you think of the idea of benchmarks?

In what ways might benchmarks be helpful to the design of a school-wide model of narrative assessment?

In what ways might benchmarks not be helpful to the design of a school-wide model of narrative assessment?

What do you think these benchmarks should look like -- a range of rubric scores? sample narratives? something else?

(7) Resources: Where can you get help if you don't understand an aspect of narrative or narrative assessment?

(8) Goals for next year: What are your goals for narrative instruction and assessment next year? (Please include your plans for both instruction and assessment.)

(9) List 3 ways in which you have changed as a teacher of narrative as a result of your participation in these workshops:

(10) List 3 ways in which you have changed as an assessor of narrative as a result of your participation in these workshops:

Appendix M

Year Two Conferencing Questionnaire (March, 1993)

Suburban School Prewrite: Focus on Conferencing

Your Ticket to the March 22 Workshop

Conferencing with students poses challenges -- both substantive ("what should I focus on? how can I be helpful?") and management ("how will I keep the other students busy?"). I can be MUCH more helpful to you if you will take the time now to clarify your current approaches to conferencing and the challenges you are facing.

This prewrite MUST BE TURNED IN BY WEDNESDAY, MARCH 17. Please, everyone must respond! The responses will be mailed to me and to Maryl, to help us tailor the workshop to your interests and needs.

The form may not give you the space you need, so of course take additional paper as needed.

Thanks! See you soon.

Shelby

Gearhart / Wolf
December 15, 1993

Name _____

(1) Conference purpose(s):
How are you using conferences? What purpose(s) do they serve? *(If you use more than one type of conference -- e.g., showcase portfolio, mini-conferencing during particular assignments -- please explain for each. Take a second form, if that's easiest.)*

How do you explain the purpose(s) to students?

(2) Conference focus:
How do you focus the conference? (*Please explain for each type of conference -- e.g., showcase portfolio, mini-conferencing during particular assignments, etc.)* Examples of your current conferences for the narrative unit would be helpful.

(3) Assessment:
What do you learn about your students' writing and their understandings of writing from conferences? What do you not learn? Please try to be as specific as you can about the ways that conferences can / cannot benefit your assessment of students.

Gearhart / Wolf
December 15, 1993

(4) Management / Frequency:
How often are you able to conference with each student?

How often would you like to conference with each student?

What hurdles are you facing in scheduling the conferences?

Any ideas for possible strategies to increase the frequency of conferencing?

(5) Management / Activities:
How are you handling the management challenge? What are other students doing while you conference?

Are you satisfied with your approach? What is working? What is not working?

(6) Wrap-up / Benefits
Please explain here any views on the benefits of teacher-student conferencing that you did not explain above.

(7) Wrap-up / Drawback, challenges, difficulties
Please explain here any views on the difficulties of teacher-student conferencing that you did not explain above.

Appendix N

Scheme for Coding Teachers' Workshop Comments (March, 1993)

Scheme for Coding TeachersÕ Comments on ChildrenÕs Narratives

Commendations

ValSpec: Praise that pinpoints a particular aspect of the child's story

Wonderful description of the dragon's cave. You made it easy to picture where the prince was.

ValGen: Praise that is global in nature

This is nicely developed.

None: No commendation

Recommendations

GuiSpec: Guidance that offers a particular direction regarding what the child is to think about or to do

In order to strengthen the theme, I would have liked to see Nicky notice that his mitten was gone and worry about finding it.

GuiGen: Guidance that is global in nature, often a generalized request to simply "add more."

I would like you to be more specific about being an adventurer.

None: No recommendation

Significance of the Comment

Sig: Comment that is significant to the component, genre, particular story, or child's development (either in this particular narrative or in the overall context of where this child is as an author of narrative.

Why did Kazihiko change the daughter into a pin? How did this event add to the story?

Insig: Comment that focuses on a minor detail or is relatively subgenre inappropriate. For example, congratulating a child on a happy ending may be appropriate for a fairy tale, but not for a fable.

Links to the Child's Text

Link: Comment could only be applied to this story (summary or direct quote)

> *Just before he was going to cast the spell Foran threw his golden dagger across the scorching desert at Rectar by reflex. Was a good way to show the reader how quick-minded your characters are.*

NLink: Comment could be applied to ANY story

> *You included more than one episode in your story and tied it altogether (Good transition). Outcome (conclusion) need to be expanded further*

Placement of Comment

NCC: Comment is located in the right component box.

> *Setting: I like the way the setting played a part in your story. You made it very clear that it was snowy and you used the tree to help Nicky find the mitten.*

CC: Comment is in the wrong component box.

> *Setting: Why was he so hungry?*
> (This is a comment about character motivation, not setting. It could be a setting comment, concerning something in the setting--such as famine in the land--which would result in a character's hunger, but without further information, it is not clear.)