

Morehead Writing Project  
2012 Summer Institute Fellows  
Research Showcase

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Morehead State University



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*For nearly 40 years, the National Writing Project has been focused on improving the teaching of writing, and that work begins with the Summer Institute. Founded in 1986, the Morehead Writing Project is one of nearly 200 local sites and one of eight in Kentucky. Today, the MWP's 2012 Summer Institute Cohort completes its fellowship year. Join us as we welcome this select group of Eastern Kentucky teachers to the vast network of the National Writing Project – the most powerful professional development model in existence.*

# **The Positive Impact of Visual Images and Audio on Creative Writing**

**Christi Billings**

**Powell County Middle School**

## **BACKGROUND**

I am currently in my second year of teaching seventh grade Language Arts at Powell County Middle School. I had the fortunate experience of being selected to participate in the 2012 Morehead Writing Project Summer Institute early in my teaching career. This experience has impacted my teaching of writing in a profound way. I have found the ability to inspire a love of writing within my students that has been very rewarding and humbling to me as a teacher. My students have found confidence and joy in their writing that I never thought possible. Further, what has been most rewarding to me is the fact that I now have students who bring writing pieces to me for my input that they have created on their time for no other reason than the personal joy that writing brings to them.

Prior to attending the summer institute, my instruction of writing was to simply provide writing prompts or assignments that focused more on technical ability than on creativity. While technical elements play an important role, creativity must be inspired first. Last year my students often groaned at the thought of having to write stories or poetry. I now have students who look forward to writing creatively because of the self-confidence that I have worked hard to instill within them as writers. I have had the opportunity to watch my students as they have blossomed into very talented writers who are not embarrassed or afraid to express their thoughts and feelings through writing. As a result my students have found their writing to hold personal value and meaning. They have come to view themselves as “writers”.

The research inquiry that I chose to address throughout this year was to monitor effective ways to build creativity in student writing. Often students choose to write minimally to satisfy assignment requirements with little thought to the important creative aspect of writing. As seventh grade students, they often find it somewhat difficult to express themselves creatively in their writing. The question I focused on with regard to this inquiry was as follows:

How does the incorporation of visual images and audio into writing instruction impact student creativity and achievement in their writing.

## **METHOD/PROCESS**

The method for monitoring increase in student creativity and improvement in writing was quite simplistic in nature. I created 6 separate writing assignments which were assigned throughout the school year. Three of the writing assignments incorporated the use of visual images and/or audio during the pre-writing/brainstorming step in the writing process. Alternatively, three writing assignments were assigned to students through mere verbal and written instruction. I assessed student creativity and achievement on each of the writing pieces with the aid of scoring rubrics which incorporated specifics such as use of figurative language, sensory images, and vivid/descriptive language.

## **FINDINGS**

The results of my inquiry project indicate that there is a positive impact on student creativity and achievement in writing when the use of visual images and audio in are incorporated as part of the writing process. Overall, the scores associated with the three writing assignments in which visual images and audio were incorporated as part of the pre-writing process were higher than the writing assignments which did not incorporate these tools. The table below outlines the average scores of students in each of my 3 language arts classes on the six writing assignments administered based on grading scale of 0 to 100%:

	<b>Assignment 1</b>	Assignment 2	<b>Assignment 3</b>	Assignment 4	<b>Assignment 5</b>	Assignment 6
Class 1 Average	89%	82%	93%	89%	94%	89%
Class 2 Average	84%	80%	87%	83%	92%	88%
Class 3 Average	86%	83%	88%	84%	91%	86%

\*Bold lettering indicates writing assignments in which visual images and/or audio incorporated.

As can be seen from the class averages above, the writing assignments in which students were provided visual images and/or audio as part of their writing process resulted in consistently higher class averages as a whole than those that did not. Additionally, the class averages often showed improvement which resulted in a full letter grade difference in their scores. Lastly, I found that as the year progressed each class improved their average as a whole on subsequent writing assignments.

# Writing Historical Fiction: A Cognitive Study

## Wesley R. Cooper, Jr., MA, ABD ~ Fleming County High School

### Background:

Traditionally, research-based writing in secondary-level history classes has taken the form of either explanatory or argumentative essays. The teaching of creative writing, as a result, has almost invariably been the domain of English composition classes. Of course, analytical writing in comparison to creative writing calls upon different mental skill-sets from the writer. While it is no longer believed to be strictly a function of left-brain, right-brain operations, the thought processes that go into logical versus creative thinking do activate different neurological connections which, in turn, foster their own distinct, though connected, cognitive development.

It is interesting, therefore, to wonder how a greater infusion of creative, fiction writing in secondary-level history classes might affect students' comprehension and mastery over complex, higher-order history-based concepts. Would the research, creative thinking, and artistic expression inherent in historical-fiction writing lead to an increase in content knowledge? Does creative writing rooted in historical fact necessitate deeper research and critical thinking? Would the writing of such narration better enable students to synthesize varying lines of historical inquiry over those students taking a more analytical approach found in explanatory or argumentative writing?

### Hypothesis:

"Writing Historical Fiction: A Cognitive Study" attempts to answer these very questions. It is speculated that through a rigorous integration of historical fiction writing into the World Civilizations curriculum there will be a corresponding increase in end-of-course post-assessment scores.

### Experiment:

#### I. Student Sample

- The experiment will be conducted over the course of two trimesters of study, equaling twenty-four weeks of instruction.
- The sample will be those students enrolled in Fleming County High School's World Civilization classes.
- As with any experiment there must be a control and test group in order to test the hypothesis.
- Trimester One: The **control group** will be Period One (World Civilizations Part A), consisting of 16 students – 11 males, 5 females.
- Trimester One: The **test group** will be Period Five (World Civilizations Part A), consisting of 20 students – 11 males, 9 females.
- So as to minimize other possible variables that may have an impact on the results of this experiment, both the control and test group are "Non-Honors" sections with similar Lexile reading ranges.
- Trimester Two: The **control group** will be Period Five (Honors World Civilization Part B), consisting of 15 students – 7 males, 8 females.
- Trimester Two: The **test group** will be Period One (Honors World Civilization Part B), consisting of 17 students, 8 males and 9 females.
- Again, so as to minimize other possible variables that may have an impact on the results of this experiment, both the control and test group are "Honors" sections with similar Lexile reading ranges.
- For both Trimester One and Trimester Two, the **independent variable** is the historical-fiction LDC module; the **dependent variable** is end-of-course post-assessment scores.

## Conclusions:

### Trimester One, Changes in grades on Post-assessments comparing Control and Test Group:

- 10% more students earned “A’s” in Test Group than Control Group
- 18.75% more students earned “B’s” in Test Group than Control Group
- 7.5% fewer students earned “C’s” in Test Group than Control Group
- 2.5% fewer students earned “D’s” in Test Group than Control Group
- 18.75 % fewer students earned “F’s” in Test Group than Control Group

### Trimester Two, Changes in grades on Post-assessments comparing Control and Test Group:

- 7.84% more students earned “A’s” in Test Group than Control Group
- 5.09% more students earned “B’s” in Test Group than Control Group
- 16.86% fewer students earned “C’s” in Test Group than Control Group
- 1.57% more students earned “D’s” in Test Group than Control Group
- 2.36% more students earned “F’s” in Test Group than Control Group

### Overall:

On the whole, several things can be concluded. First, in Trimester One (those “Non-Honor” classes) there appears to be a positive correlation between the test group (which completed one historical-fiction LDC module) and a desirable move in test scores on the end-of-course assessment, which is to say more students by percentage earning “A’s” and “B’s” and fewer students earning “D’s” and “F’s”. Second, there is a curious pattern that emerged in Trimester Two (those “Honor” classes) when comparing the results of the test and control groups. While, once again, there was a positive correlation between increased “A’s” and “B’s” for those students in the test group, there was also a positive correlation (though of a lesser degree) between increased “D’s” and “F’s” of the same group of students within the test group. This was unexpected and, of course, an undesirable outcome. It is not known at present if this inverse expectation represents an anomaly or part of some larger, potential norm.

Again, while there does seem to be a positive correlation (both desirable and undesirable) it is impossible to conclude if this also represents a cause and effect relationship. Further, more exhaustive research is needed before it can be definitively claimed that an increase of historical-fiction, narrative writing above mere analytical/explanatory or argumentative compositions actually “causes” an improvement in test scores, or inversely “causes” a **decrease** in test scores. It should be mentioned that every attempt has been made during the course of this experiment to isolate variables that may have influenced the outcome of the tested hypothesis. Yet, such factors as class-meeting times between the test and control groups, the ratio of males and females, as well as the psychology and disposition of individual students along with differing class dynamics and group cohesion might also have an impact on cognitive growth, learning, and test scores. Moreover, it is possible that the fact that the “Non-Honors” classes completed only one narrative writing, and the “Honors” classes, two narrative compositions, may, in themselves, be too few assignments to dramatically alter cognition or test scores.

Still, the emergence of the reported correlation is, in itself, a curiosity, and invites future research into the infusion of narrative writing in secondary-level history courses.

# Kindergarten Writing Workshop

## Melissa Fickey and Tiffanie Helterbrand

### Tilden Hogge Elementary School

**Context/Background:** Our goal this year is to engage students through strategies implemented in our writing workshops and give them opportunities to publish/share their work since this has been proven to be a shortfall in our schools writing program. We are both on the Program Review Writing Committee and have talked with other teachers at our school to help get this started school wide.

**Guiding Question:** What are the most effective ways to engage Kindergarten students in writing workshop?

**Method/Process:** From the first day of school to around October we began setting our expectations and procedures for Writing Workshop in our classrooms. When Tiffanie returned from Maternity Leave our plan went into action. Our implementation spanned across three months where we focused on two strategies a month resulting in six strategies implemented.

**Results/Findings:**

The following chart is a summary of three of the techniques we tried.

<b><u>Writing Technique Name and Number</u></b>	<b><u>Reflection of Technique</u></b>
Using scenes to Capture the Passage of Time #6	This was a very helpful technique. We used this technique when we were studying the seasons. We shared picture books like “An Egg Is Quiet” and “How to Heal a Broken Wing”.
Keeping Static Details Consistent #23	We read several Franklin books when introducing this technique because the characters and illustrations are consistent throughout. We felt that this was an important technique to focus on because before the introduction of this technique students would create stories where it started with a boy and his dog and throughout the pet would change to a dinosaur. With guidance and a lot of practice they became more aware of the details. They struggled with keeping colors consistent of clothing, animals, etc. the most.
Crafting Tone with Color #32	This was one of the more difficult techniques because the students were not all convinced about how certain colors make you feel. We read the Dr. Seuss story “Many Different Colors” to introduce how colors make you feel different ways. Most kids agreed on how certain colors set the tone but some of the kids just didn’t agree. We talked about how everyone is unique and different and that’s okay and they should use color in their stories based upon how they feel it sets the tone. For example, one student associated anger with the color red because they thought of the devil and fire. Then another associated red with love because it made them think of hearts and roses.

**Conclusions/Implications:** Through this experience we have learned lots of strategies that worked and some that didn’t work. Through our work during the Morehead Writing Project and our collaboration on this project we both feel more adept as teachers of writing.

# Using Pictures to Increase Detail in Writing

## Megen Gearhart

### Reading Recovery: Olive Hill Elementary School

**Context:** This study was performed using four Reading Recovery students that the researcher works with on a daily basis for 30 minutes. The researcher took advantage of the time know as ‘Roaming Around the Known’ in her Reading Recovery format. This is a period of 10 lessons where the Reading Recovery teacher has more freedom to select the activities she uses with each child. The only stipulation is the teacher has to work with things the student knows to build confidence and morale and cannot teach anything knew. I have noticed that in my Reading Recovery lessons my students lack details in their writings and very rarely put them in without me prompting for them.

**Question:** Can drawing pictures before writing help increase detail in writing?

**Method/Process:** Time Line: 3 Weeks (15 Lessons)

Week 1: Roaming Around the Known

*First two days* of have all 4 students write a story without drawing a picture first.

*Next two days* have all 4 students draw a picture before they write a story.

Week 2: Roaming Around the Known

*Next five days* have students create a book illustrating their pages before writing. The teacher will prompt for details in drawing and writing.

Week 3: Lessons

*Next five days* have students write a sentence in their daily journals without pictures.

Compare the number of words and details used in each of the writing sections over the three week period and come to a conclusion about the project.

**Results/Findings:**

- Students 1, 2, and 3 increased their number of words and details from Day 1 and 2 when compared to Days 10-14.
- Student 4 is the only student who put details in the story on Days 1 and 2.
- All Students put more detail in their writing when creating their book (Days 5-9), than Days 1-2 and Days 10-14.
- All Students used more words when creating their book (Days 5-9) than Days 1-2 when they didn’t use any pictures.

**Conclusions:** Letting students draw pictures before they write is a beneficial scaffolding tool to increase details in stories the students write. I can also conclude that letting students create books is a beneficial way to increase details in their stories. I will continue to use this method during ‘Roaming Around the Known’ to scaffold students into using details in their stories.



# **The 3 C's of the Morehead Writing Project**

## **Diana Goodpaster**

### **Owingsville Elementary School**

#### **Context/Background:**

Previously, I taught 3<sup>rd</sup> grade for 5 years at Owingsville Elementary School. This year I looped with my students to 4<sup>th</sup> grade. This looping experience provided a great opportunity for evaluation of the Writing Projects impact on my writing instruction from last year to this year.

Prior to the Writing Project my classroom writing instruction consisted of a few writing prompts from random books I had purchased and prompts from the Reading core program we use in our school. The students would respond to the prompt in their writing notebooks. I will admit, with all the pressure in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade to improve student performance in the tested areas (math & reading) I rarely had time to read or evaluate the student responses, therefore; teacher feedback was minimum at the most.

#### **Problem:**

The problem I have chosen to address over this year is my concern of the inadequacy of my classroom writing instruction. The question I chose to focus on is as follows: How has the Morehead Writing Project Summer Institute experience impacted my writing instruction and my students writing progress from last year to this year?

#### **Method/Process:**

My method/process for answering this question is quite simple. As we were introduced to the many different writing instructional methods over the summer, I would mark the lessons that I felt would benefit my 4<sup>th</sup> graders in the upcoming school year with plans to implement each lesson in my classroom. Once, I along with the other 4<sup>th</sup> grade teachers created the daily instructional schedule, I realized I had to minimize the chosen MWP lesson ideas to accommodate the time frame and the common core requirements of the grade level.

After school began and the students and I became comfortable with our daily schedule, I began incorporating ideas from the Morehead Writing Project. Some of these activities were daily, while other activities were implemented when appropriate based on the skill and content being covered.

One activity that I used to begin the day, regardless of skill and content being covered was, "Start the Day off Write". This activity consisted of a picture prompt on the Smart Board, students would write in their journals for 10 minutes and I would also write with the students. The pictures prompts contain no words, and varied in content such as animals, objects, and/or landscapes. The only instruction given to the students was to WRITE for 10 minutes without stopping. Then students are given an opportunity to share their work with the class in the Author's Chair.

#### **Results/Findings:**

The student samples provided to you clearly show an increase in the student's creativity. Many students began writing only 4 to 5 sentences and now those students are writing one to two pages. Granted, the grammar and structure may or may not need improvement but the creativity in each sample has improved by leaps and bounds. This activity has taken the most reluctant writer in my classroom, and transformed this

student into one who is writing at home for pleasure. I have also found for myself as a writer by sitting and writing with my students, my own writing abilities have improved as well.

**Conclusions/Implications:**

In conclusion, when I compare my writing instructional strategies from last year with this group to this year, I find an overall improvement. The following chart provides a brief before and after look at my writing instruction.

Instructional Strategy	Before MWPSI			After MWPSI		
	Occurrences per Week			Occurrences per Week		
	1 to 3	Daily	Never	1 to 3	Daily	Never
Writing Instruction	X				X	
Student Writing Opportunities	X				X	
Picture Prompts			X		X	
Opportunities for creative writing			X		X	
Opportunities for students to share their writing	X				X	
Teacher/Student Conferencing	X				X	

I chose the title for this presentation, “The 3 C’s of the Morehead Writing Project for this reason. My writing instruction now contains clarity, creativeness, and celebration on a daily basis. The MWPSI cleared up the misconceptions I had regarding writing instruction and provided me with the tools needed to implement this instruction correctly and completely in my classroom. In addition to a new clearer view of writing instruction, the MWPSI taught me the importance of providing opportunities for my students to practice and improve their individual creativeness through writing. Finally, MWPSI showed me how to celebrate this creativeness in the classroom and make each one of my students feel special and successful in their writing abilities.

I cannot express the growing confidence I have observed over this past year in my students and their writing. Previously, the students were so consumed with the structure and form that they didn’t allow themselves to enjoy the act of just writing. Now, my students are writing in their journals daily and wanting to finish the picture prompts during their free time and at home. Many parents have shared that their child is writing more frequently at home and sharing their creation with those at home. Thus, a life long writer is emerging as a result of my learning from MWPSI 2012.

**GrammEr 101**  
**Lindsay Ellis Johnson**  
**Rowan County High School**

**Problem**

As an English major in college, I had absolutely no confidence in my understanding of Grammar. How had this happened? I took AP English. I read and took color-coded notes on all the grammar rules. I completed all the grammar worksheets. I scored well on all the grammar tests. What had I done wrong?

My research study topic stems from a personal dilemma I faced entering college. But, this predicament still plagues me as an educator. Are the instructional strategies we are currently using for grammar helping students understand their language?

**Question**

Will the “old eyes” approach or the “example” approach yield higher scores on a summative assessment over subject/verb agreement?

**Method**

I taught English IV Transitions (A) during the second trimester. Most students were placed in this class because their score fell below benchmark in English and/or Reading on the ACT. Some students did meet benchmark, but their GPA below the requirement for the dual-credit English 100 course being offered at our school. To prepare students for the English portion of the COMPASS test, I gave them a practice test. We discussed each answer and students kept track of the items they missed. After discussing the patterns they found, I decided a mini-unit on Pronoun and Antecedent Agreement would be our starting point.

I taught students in my second period class the traditional “teaching grammar with old eyes” style as discussed by Amy Benjamin and Joan Berger. This is introducing the concept, showing examples, and then completing practice worksheets on that concept. I taught the students in my fourth period class through examples. Instead of reviewing my rules PowerPoint, we just jumped into example sentences. The more troubling sentences required a brief explanation, but I kept my explanation based on the words in the sentence, not the fancy grammar vocabulary or rule that matched.

I gave these two classes the same summative assessment on pronoun and antecedent agreement and compared their results.

**Results**

There were 30 students in my second period that completed this exam. Their class average on this test was a 77.2%. My fourth period was a much smaller class. Only 16 students completed this exam, and their average was an 82.8%.

**Conclusions**

Shockingly, test scores do not tell the whole story. Yes, the class average in my fourth period was a little higher. But, teaching the students of that class through examples made a much bigger difference than a few percentage points. Students were more willing to participate by trying to try “fix” the sentences. They were discussing the sentences, not the rules.

These students take their COMPASS scores in two weeks. I am interested to compare the results of the students in my second period to those in my fourth.

# **Personal Writing, Digital Storytelling and Content Literacy**

## **Mandy Lawson**

### **Sheldon Clark High School**

#### **Context/Background:**

Content literacy was a needed focus at Sheldon Clark. A review of ACT data revealed that SCHS students struggled in content reading. Scores on science and social studies passages are lower than scores on literature passages at SCHS. Also, there is an increasing state and federal focus on reading and writing in the content area. College Career Readiness Standards and the Common Core place an emphasis on the importance of reading, writing, speaking and listening in content classes. Yet, these types of activities are not always within the “comfort zone” of content teachers. In addition, content literacy is an integral part of the current writing/communication plan at SCHS. Therefore, it is vital that our content teachers have effective and authentic ways to engage the students in literacy activities that will lead to a deeper understanding of content.

#### **Guiding Question:**

Will literacy activities such as digital storytelling and personal writing lead students to a deeper understanding of content?

#### **Method/Process:**

I focused on the students in my creative writing class for this inquiry project. I chose these students because they are sophomores and are currently enrolled in American history and biology. I decided to only focus on history. I made this decision because I have a good working relationship with the history teacher. Also, the classroom and content are more accessible to me. I wanted to compare my writing students, who would be taught literacy activities such as digital storytelling and personal writing, with the performance of the other students on summative content tests. I taught my writing class how to use personal writing to explore content. I taught them strategies such as quick writes and associations to help activate prior knowledge and create a connection with the content. We practiced writing using personal experience and personal understanding of the content. We also spent time making connections with the specific content through our writing. I also taught my writing class to create a digital story using a piece of their own writing. My students learned how to use music, voice and text to portray a specific mood and a tone; skills that could be transferred to understanding content in a more meaningful, authentic experience.

#### **Results/Findings:**

Students who use literacy strategies and activities will perform better on content driven summative tests than students who do not use literacy strategies and activities.

#### **Conclusions/Implications:**

Literacy strategies such as digital storytelling and personal writing can help students make authentic connections with content. These and other types of literacy strategies should be part of all content classes. Literacy teachers should take an active role in providing content teachers support in strategic planning for literacy within the content curriculum.

# Writing as a means of assessment vs. simple fact recall

Terry C. Lewis

Rowan County Senior High School

## Research question/issue:

Literacy is important to all parts of education. Everything stems out of our ability to read and write. The value of literacy has been on an up and down roller coaster ride easily for the past 23 years of KERA and No Child Left Behind. The idea of literacy seems to have always been valued, b Having spent the majority of my career as an English teacher, and a big chunk of that time as a Senior English teacher in the days of the writing portfolio, I have seen the increase of writing for the sake of writing (Do students know form? Can students create varied sentences to illustrate a point? Can students run spellcheck?) But there seemed to be little opportunity to demonstrate learning content through writing, with the exception of the on demand or open response question, which morphed from a tool to check for understanding and demonstrating knowledge to another opportunity to demonstrate to Frankfort that students can, in fact, follow the form or mode of writing correctly. While there have been many good things to come from the KERA writing portfolio, an increase in the awareness of writing's importance for example, there seemed to be little opportunity for writing with a truly authentic purpose and to truly demonstrate student knowledge of particular concepts.

The 2012-13 school year brought an interesting opportunity for me in my classroom: half of my schedule would be teaching English, but the other half would be teaching social studies, government classes in particular. With this change in my schedule, I had the opportunity to use writing as a means of assessment of content rather than just as a means to teach how to write. I suppose there were always opportunities to do this in my English classroom, but there is always that heavy state accountability cloud that blocks out the sunshine of common sense and teaching for learning rather than teaching for assessing.

So, to the issue researched: Does writing as a means of assessment and demonstrating knowledge allow for more students to successfully complete with a higher score content knowledge of a freshman level government course than more traditional multiple choice assessments? To find the answer, I used six different sections of the government class over a two trimester period.

Method: Trimester 1, I taught two sections of the government class. On our first assessment, multiple choice was the dominate type of question with 25 test items, five short answer items, and two essay response items. This assessment covered the concepts of basic terminology for government and the Declaration of Independence (content and situations and events that led to its creation). The MC questions were all typically recall of facts. The short answer and the essay were analytical in nature. Students also had to infer in their responses based on the knowledge they had. The writing questions were an extension more or less of the MC questions. There were a total of 50 students. First period had 23 (10 males and 13 females) and second period had 27 (15 males and 12 females). The average number of correct MC questions answered correctly by both classes was 16. The average number of students earning 80% of the points for the short answer and essay was 32.

In Trimester 2, the testing was changed somewhat. Instead of using the first test of the class for the research, I used the second assessment over the United States Constitution. I selected one morning class and one afternoon class. Forty eight students would take their Constitution assessment as a complete MC assessment. The other two classes with their 55 students would take the total writing assessment of short answers and essays. The over all grades for the students taking the writing assessment who scored a grade of C or higher was 34. The total number of students who scored a grade of C or higher on the MC assessment was 27.

The instruction for the material over the Constitution was the same for all classes. Neither class knew

ahead of time how the assessments would appear. Since their first assessment was a mix, they expected that to be the format for the next assessment. Students who had the written assessment were able to clearly write responses that demonstrated their level of knowledge and understanding. The MC assessment students had a one in four shot of getting the answer correctly.

There is one important thing to note. Our school has the test-retest policy, which says any student can retake a failed assessment. For all of the retests in this class, the retest was a written assessment. Students rarely raised their initial grade. These are students who typically did not focus in class and did little to no prep outside of class for either assessment.

Overall findings supported my belief that students can more accurately express their knowledge through writing. Writing provides more opportunity for a student to express their full knowledge. It was very important to have a detailed rubric as to what would achieve a different level of score on each essay response.

# Exploring the Connection Between Personal Technology and Learning

## Misty Litton

### Rowan County Senior High School

**Abstract:** The purpose of this research study was to test the effects of student access to and use of personal technology in the classroom setting during instructional time. Students were sampled from the same content area and taught using the same methods at the same pace. Their access to personal technology was dictated by the teacher, and varied from one class section to the next. The independent variable in this study is student access to and use of personal technology (e.g., cellular telephones, iPads, digital readers, etc.) in the classroom during instructional time. The dependent variable in this study is student classroom performance, both behavioral and academic.

Research Design	Subjects and Sampling	Instrumentation	Procedure
<p>This research study was conducted by comparing data from four classes of the Spanish 2-B, taught by the same teacher during the same semester. Each of these four classes had slightly different rules and procedures regarding the use of cellular phones or other personal mobile devices in the classroom, although over the course of the day, these differences amounted to a large discrepancy in access to personal technology.</p>	<p>This study made use of four classes of students, all pertaining to the same age groups and academic standards. These four classes of students are comprised of typical numbers with regard to class size, typical student ethnic diversity and student ability levels.</p>	<p>Instruments used to gather data were content-specific assessments. These assessments were administered in a variety of formats: written open response, oral presentation, written presentation, and computer-administered multiple-choice. All students took the same assessments in the same format. Any technology used to administer assessments was provided to students by the teacher.</p>	<p>My participants were chosen as a convenience sample from the students who were enrolled in my classes. I was careful to choose both one relatively large class and one relatively small class within each data group. I assigned two classes to an extremely limited use of personal technology, and two classes to a more liberal amount of access to personal technology. The first class had no access to or permission to use personal technology in any way for any reason during class time. These students were not allowed to even have their devices visibly present in the classroom.</p> <p>The second group of students followed similarly strict rules about personal technological device most of the time. On occasion, however, I directed the students to use their devices specifically or a class-related purpose (e.g., respond to a question online to demonstrate understanding of a key concept), then put the devices away again.</p> <p>The third class of students were allowed to have their devices visibly present in the room, but were not allowed to use them for personal reasons unless given specific permission to do so on a case-by-case basis. Students were not allowed to use their devices to communicate with others during class time. They also were not allowed to use their devices to access the internet during class time unless specifically directed to do so for academic purposes.</p> <p>The final group of students was allowed to use personal technology at their own discretion, as long as their use of technology did not compromise the learning environment for others.</p>

# Literary Circles

## Brittany Moore

### Lewis County Middle School

**Guiding Question:** How does group placement affects student achievement in literary circles?

Rationale: As teachers we strive to educate our students at the highest level possible, however sometimes students have way more going on than we can know. Middle School is known for students of all shapes, sizes, and attitudes. It's a proven fact that Middle School students go through a huge change, both physically and emotionally. These years are known as the Puberty Years. There are all sorts of distractions at this age, one of the most distracting-the opposite sex. So how does learning take place when students' minds are elsewhere? What could be changed so distractions are minimal?

**Process:** Students were introduced to literacy circles at the beginning of the year. Each student received explicit instruction about the process of completing each job within a literacy circle. Before measuring, I allowed students to work in literacy circles for four rounds. Each round consisted of students reading longer passages (The Lottery, The Tell-Tell Heart, etc). Each student received their grade based on a rubric that measured their achievement (all jobs combined). Student groups could be rated as a 1,2, or 3. After students were very familiar, I began my real experiment; over the next 8 rounds of literacy circles students were grouped 4 different ways. We first started with students picking friends; this made students excited to get started. Next, Students worked in all boy and all girl groups, teacher chosen groups, and lastly heterogeneous groups.

**Achievement:** After scoring two rounds of each group interchangeably (among 3 different classes), it was found that **Teacher chosen groups work best**. Why?

- When students worked with friends, they often could not stay on task or drifted off to another conversation.
- Homogenous groups were much like friend groups because all girls hung out and all boys hung out.
- Boy groups lacked leadership and direction.
- Teacher led groups were more focused because often students stayed on task because they weren't as "comfortable" with their group.

Average scores among 3 classrooms for each type of group:

- Student chosen groups: 2.0
- Homogenous groups: 2.26
- Heterogeneous groups: 2.36
- Teacher chosen groups: 2.66