

Progress Report Submitted to the Professional Development Committee  
Area 2d Faculty Development Grant Project  
“Developing Writing Teachers and Student Writers in the Elementary Classroom”  
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The research project in Cynthia Nelson’s fifth-grade classroom at Hayward Elementary School is going very well. Since the beginning of the school year, the class has completed a series of mini-units on descriptive writing and narrative writing. These units will be expanded during the second semester but will inform a major instructional unit, which began this week and will continue through January, on expository writing. Supportive data (e.g., student writing products, student interviews, audiotaped instructional and collaborative dialogue) has been collected and analyzed during the description and narration mini-units. The primary data of the study, however, will focus on the expository writing unit.

Cindy Nelson and Mark Hallenbeck conducted most of the long-range planning for this study last summer; Annmarie Kowalczyk was involved via e-mail throughout the summer. During the summer Kowalczyk also studied several journal articles and book chapters summarizing the methodology to be used during the expository writing unit and the research base that supports the methodology.

Since the beginning of the school year, Kowalczyk has attended all of the Monday sessions (8:00-9:00 a.m.) of writing instruction in Cindy Nelson’s class; she also attended class at Hayward during Augustana’s fall break. While in attendance, Kowalczyk takes fieldnotes that supplement the fieldnotes taken by Hallenbeck and Nelson. She also circulates the class, offering assistance to students as needed. Nelson, Hallenbeck, and Kowalczyk periodically review the fieldnotes in search of emerging themes. Kowalczyk also regularly takes digital photos and digital video that will support future reports and presentations on the research. Her fieldnotes are detailed and insightful, and she works very well with the students. Since Nelson and Hallenbeck are busy with primary instruction and observation, Kowalczyk’s assistance with photography and videography is very helpful.

Kowalczyk transcribed nearly all of the 24 student interviews that Hallenbeck conducted during the first several weeks of school; her transcriptions were detailed and accurate. Hallenbeck and Nelson consult with Kowalczyk on a weekly basis to keep her informed of upcoming instructional sequences and student writing assignments.

Kowalczyk has been instrumental in the inter-rater reliability study that will facilitate scoring of student writings for the duration of the study. This study will enable her to assist in the scoring of future student writing products.

Kowalczyk confers regularly with Hallenbeck and Nelson regarding her reflections on classroom events and research data. She also writes detailed reflective notes that will assist her in preparing future presentations, including a presentation at the Augustana Symposium in April.

Kowalczyk, as indicated above, has been a very active participant in the research study. In the future she will continue to take weekly fieldnotes, take photos and video, and score student writings. In addition, she will assist Hallenbeck in transcribing audiotaped instructional and collaborative dialogue. She also will assist Hallenbeck and Nelson in developing themes and analytical assertions from student writings, classroom dialogue, interview data, and fieldnotes. As noted above, she will prepare a presentation for the Augustana Symposium and hopefully will join Hallenbeck and Nelson in authoring journal article submissions and conference presentations on the findings of the study.

All participants in this study are extremely grateful for Kowalczyk's participation and insights. We also thank the Faculty Development Committee for its support of her work.

Submitted by Mark J. Hallenbeck, Associate Professor of Education.