

The Impact of Self-Assessment on Writing Convention Usage of Second Grade Students

By Shannon Koehler

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Education

May 2019

Graduate Programs in Education

Goucher College

Table of Contents

List of Tables	i
Abstract	ii
I. Introduction	1
Overview	1
Statement of Problem	3
Hypothesis	3
Operational Definitions	3
II. Review of the Literature	5
Writing Instruction	5
Self-Assessment	9
Self-Assessing Writing	10
Summary	12
III. Methods	14
Design	14
Participants	15
Instruments	15
Procedure	16
IV. Results	20
CUPS Scores	20
Self-Assessment Survey	22
V. Discussion	25

Implications of Results	25
Threats to the Validity	26
Connections to Previous Studies/Existing Literature	28
Implications for Future Research	29
Conclusion	30
References	31
Appendix A Sample Pre-Test	34
Appendix B Sample Control Group Post-Test	35
Appendix C Sample Treatment Group Post-Test	36
Appendix D CUPS Rubric	37
Appendix E 2 nd Grade Word Wall	38
Appendix F Survey Example	39

List of Tables

1. Descriptive Statistics for Mean Pre-intervention and Post-intervention CUPS Scores (Disaggregated by Group)	21
2. Results of t-tests Comparing the Treatment and Comparison Groups' (means of two) Pre- and Post-Intervention CUPS Scores (Equal Variances Assumed)	22
3. Descriptive Statistics for Mean Pre-intervention and Post-intervention Survey Total Scores (Disaggregated by Group)	23
4. Results of t-tests Comparing the Treatment and Comparison Groups' (means of two) Pre- and Post-Intervention Total Survey Scores (Equal Variances Assumed)	24

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the use of a self-assessment rubric would increase students' proper use of writing conventions in a selected second grade classroom. Assessments, surveys, and writing rubrics with focus on capitalization, understanding, punctuation, and spelling, or "CUPS", were designed by the researcher and used to compare writing skills of students who did and did not use the CUPS rubric to assess writing. Pre-tests were used to determine that the two groups did not differ prior to the intervention. The intervention then took place over the course of four weeks. During the intervention, students in the treatment group used the CUPS rubric to assess their use of the CUPS conventions. After post-tests and surveys were completed, the treatment group's CUPS mean score was found to be statistically significantly higher than the comparison group mean; therefore, the null hypothesis suggesting the use of CUPS by the treatment and comparison groups would be the same was rejected. Mean survey scores did not differ significantly across the groups before or after the intervention; therefore, the null hypothesis that those scores would be the same was retained. Results may have been affected by a variety of factors, including elementary-aged students' overall capability of self-assessment. Given the positive results regarding use of the writing conventions, future research is recommended using different approaches to determine if the CUPS strategy is beneficial under different circumstances such as an extended time frame or in additional classes.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Students are required to write starting in kindergarten and continuing throughout their high school graduation, college, and future careers. According to the Common Core State Standards, kindergarten students already are expected to “demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing” which include needing to capitalize the first word in a sentence and the pronoun “I” and recognize end punctuation (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, para. 2). As students advance to higher grades, expectations for mastery of writing conventions increase. In second grade, students are expected to use their knowledge of language and conventions when writing by producing compound sentences, capitalizing various proper nouns, and consulting reference materials such as beginning dictionaries to check and correct spellings. When students enter third grade, they begin to take state assessments which assess students’ use of language and conventions. Given these increasing expectations, teaching students how to self-assess their writing and related language skills to meet these various standards is crucial.

According to the Maryland State Department of Education (2018-a), only 38.8% of third graders were proficient in the English Language Arts section in the 2018 testing session of the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program. That percentage includes students’ performance in reading comprehension and responding to fiction and nonfiction texts, as well as writing responses to prompts. Maryland State assessments include writing in every grade level that is tested. According to state guidelines, writing is “key to showing readiness for the next level of

academic work” (Maryland State Department of Education, 2018-b, para. 24). Research cited in this paper suggests that students who are able to self-assess their writing may perform better on written responses in their classwork and day to day writing tasks, so that could apply to state assessments as well (Martin & Thacker, 2009).

In a popular writing workshop series, authors Calkins, Geschwind, & DeSutter (2016) instruct teachers to have students use self-assessment to ensure their work has met various demands of writing such as including transitions, organization, overall craft, elaboration, and spelling. Students are encouraged to use checklists to edit and revise, but it is not expected that they set goals for themselves or self-assess in every writing area. However, according to state standards and test requirements, to be considered proficient, students are expected to demonstrate the ability to use particular conventions that a writing instruction program may not develop in depth. It is possible that students can improve their writing abilities if teachers encourage their students to self-assess in specific areas. As Van Loon and Roebers (2017) find, elementary aged students can self-assess to some degree, but may do so inaccurately without adult support or feedback. Many students have exposure to and engage in various forms of self-assessment, but more research is needed to determine what types of self-assessment are effective and appropriate for each grade level, especially in the area of writing.

This researcher became interested in learning more about the use of self-assessment in helping students gain proficiency in writing in her role as a second-grade teacher. She observed that her units of study in writing had minimal instructional time focused on writing conventions and, in turn, many of her students lacked the ability to consistently use those conventions. The researcher wished to see if direct instruction on writing conventions and the use of a concise self-assessment rubric would increase students’ application of the conventions in their writing.

Statement of Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the use of self-assessment with a writing rubric would affect the quality of writing conventions in second grade students' finished work.

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis for this study is that the writing performance of second grade students who were instructed on how to use self-assessment rubrics in writing (and then use them independently) will not differ from that of students instructed in writing without the use of self-assessment rubrics.

ho1: Treatment group CUPS scores = Comparison group CUPS scores

ho2: Treatment group total Survey scores= Comparison group total Survey scores

Operational Definitions

Writing conventions quality is defined as correct grade-level appropriate capitalization, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, and grammar so that writing makes sense and is easy to read and understand. Sentence structure and grammar have been combined into one category of 'understanding' because both structure and grammar go together to ensure a reader can comprehend a sentence.

The *self-assessment rubric* is defined as a researcher-made rubric that includes four parts of writing conventions:

- capitalization of sentences, names, titles, and the letter I
- understanding, meaning that the sentences make sense with the order of the words and grammar
- correct punctuation at the end of each sentence
- spelling grade-level word wall words correctly.

These four parts of writing conventions, Capitalization, Understanding, Punctuation, and Spelling, are referred to as CUPS. Each section of the CUPS self-assessment rubric includes a rating scale from zero to three points. Each point value matches specific criteria, as explained on the rubric. Students are taught how to use this rubric, so they can transfer criteria in the rubric to their own writing habits.

The *writing conventions score* is defined as the sum of each students' categorical scores on the self-assessment rubric. Students receive points in each CUPS category, ranging from zero to three. A perfect score writing conventions score would be 12 points.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This literature review explores the importance of writing and the impact of self-assessment on writing. Section one provides an introduction and overview of these topics. Section two discusses the writing process and writing instruction in the classroom. Section three explores the importance of self-assessment and various methods of self-assessment. Section four explains the relationship between self-assessment and writing. In section five, a summary is provided.

Writing Instruction

In today's world, many people are writing constantly whether they are in school, writing stories, papers, and responses to test questions, or if they have graduated school and are writing for social interaction or their careers, composing important writing via emails, text messages, social media posts, and work reports, among much more. Not only is writing necessary for these daily reasons, but state assessments in schools also assess writing alongside reading and mathematics. When writing assessments are given, students generally must respond to a specific prompt and the "written work is later evaluated based on criteria established by the state education agency, taking into account grade-level curricular standards for writing and multiple features that are thought to reflect writing proficiency" (Hall-Mills & Apel, 2015, p. 243). Students need to be introduced to writing early in their schooling, while learning all the nuances of writing as they continue their education. "Students need to be able not only to write narratives, but also to write arguments and information texts. They need to not only record information and ideas but synthesize, analyze, compare, and contrast information and ideas" (Calkins, 2013, p.1).

Specifically, Common Core State Standards for elementary aged students include writing skills that involve composing specific types of writing such as opinion, informative, and narrative, organizing the content effectively, and revising and editing. Students need to be able to write for an audience in a way that clearly communicates the intent of the author. These writing skills continue to build throughout grade levels and into college and career readiness (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). “The information age of today makes it especially imperative that all students develop skills that are significantly higher than those that have been required of them in the past” (Calkins, 2013, p.1).

There are many elements of writing that need to come together for a writer to produce quality work, which means there is also room for many issues to arise while teaching it. Writing should focus on composition as well as the mechanics, as both are necessary to support the development of writers so they can make meaning (Auguste, 2018). It is found that while some students realize good writing opens the power to tell stories, most students define good writing as simply good mechanics. For instance, Auguste notes that in her time spent with Kindergarteners, most students said they were good writers because they did things like write neatly, put spaces between words, or started a sentence with a capital letter. One reason many students think that mechanics are the most significant part of writing could be due to their teachers’ own perceptions or constraints. The important aspects of writing are sometimes hard to teach equally, with teachers facing various pressures such as lack of instructional time, state testing requirements, or writing curriculum that does not include certain writing elements. In a study by Brindley and Schneider (2002), 68% of teachers surveyed felt that teaching drawing was an important first step in teaching students to write, but they did not incorporate it into their

instruction. Talking also was deemed important to students learning to write, but it also was not included in planning. Teachers struggle with what to include in their writing instructional time, and how best to include it to benefit students most effectively.

Additionally, students with disabilities often struggle with aspects of writing, whether using correct conventions such as grammar and spelling or being able to focus their thoughts on planning, monitoring, and evaluating their writing (Harris et al., 2017). With teachers often varying with regard to what writing elements they teach, these students of differing abilities may not get the instruction they need to become proficient writers. “Helping students develop knowledge about writing and how to plan thoughtfully, monitor progress toward their goals, evaluate their writing, and manage the writing process empowers them to write effective text that conveys ideas” (Harris et al., 2017, p. 263). All students, no matter their skill or ability level, need to be taught the tools and strategies to be able to become proficient writers, which sometimes can be problematic for instructors to implement.

The problems which arise while teaching writing occur, in part, because there are so many elements of writing to take into consideration. Writers of all ages must consider craft, voice, intent, structure, and writing conventions such as spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization. Research such as that reported by Lucy Calkins (2013) suggests that children need explicit instruction in how to write. Calkins says that writing “instruction matters- this includes not just instruction in spelling and conventions but also in the qualities and strategies of good writing” (p. 33). Children need to be taught phonemic awareness and phonics in their early years, be given the opportunity to cycle through the writing process through rehearsing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing, and set clear goals with frequent feedback (Calkins). It can be difficult and time-consuming to teach these skills and give students the proper opportunities to

practice them in their work. Many teachers or curricula approach writing instruction using a writing workshop structure, while others may advocate teaching some skills in isolation. Aspects of writing conventions, such as grammar and spelling, are two such skills.

“Many decades of research in language arts have revealed practices that do improve writing, as well as deeply instilled traditional approaches that have little impact on writing” (Collins & Norris, 2017, p. 24). With research such as that cited above supporting the effectiveness of certain practices, many researchers suggest that teachers do not spend extra classroom time teaching concepts such as parts of speech. However, grammar skills are an important part of composing a complete sentence so that readers can understand what a writer is conveying. Collins and Norris find that teaching grammar in the context of writing produces student writing that includes greater sentence accuracy and complexity than that of students who are taught using a traditional worksheet method of instruction. Since use of writing conventions is an important component of effective writing, it is beneficial to know that they can be taught inclusively with other writing concepts without requiring additional, valuable instructional time.

Humphrey, Walton, and Davidson (2014) find that use of writing conventions is moderately correlated to writing expression or voice. Writing conventions scores are found to be the strongest predictors of academic performance based on teacher ratings, although according to peer judgement, the use of expression or authorial voice in writing seems to be more important. These findings reinforce that writing conventions rank high in importance even in elementary grades and are often the focus in schools and assessments, even though there are other integral parts of writing that teachers and even students deem equally important. While there are many aspects of writing that are necessary for a piece to be ‘good,’ writing conventions tend to be given greatest focus., whether for better or worse.

Self-Assessment

“Self-assessment is a practice grounded in several principles of learning theory” (Nielsen, 2012, p.3). Self-assessment stems from metacognition (the ability to think about one’s own thinking), learner autonomy (the learner being responsible for their own decisions regarding learning or work), and self-efficacy (belief in oneself). These skills are important not only for writing, but for all areas of life. Students who are intrinsically motivated to learn are likely to do their best. Students also need be able to think about their work and know that they are doing the best they can for themselves. “Numerous theoretical models support self-assessment’s benefits to writing, the development of critical thinking, and the fostering of positive learner behaviors” (p.13).

Self-assessment can be utilized in a variety of ways, as long as it encourages and enables students think about the work they have done. Self-assessment may seem like an evaluation where a person places a judgement on something by rating it in some way (Nielsen, 2012). It also may be self-reflection, which could be more general and less structured. A self-reflection exercise may ask someone to respond to an open-ended or general question about the content or strength of their work and abilities. Self-awareness or self-appraisal are similar to this but may simply require thought about one’s own work when compared to that of others instead of formally crafting a response about it (Panadero, Brown, & Strijbos, 2015). Other forms of self-assessment include using rubrics or scripts. Rubrics include criteria and standards with specific examples of a final product to which learners compare their own work. Scripts are similar but include questions the reader must answer for themselves about their own work.

While use of self-assessment as an instructional tool has become more popular in recent years, there is not yet adequate information about how effective it can be when used with

elementary aged students. Adults generally can self-assess work accurately, especially when given feedback and the chance to reassess afterward, and adolescents are beginning to learn those skills of self-regulation as well (Van Loon & Roebbers, 2017). However, the ability for elementary aged students to do this is uncertain. Students in primary grades are beginning to develop the ability to be metacognitive and think about their work. Present findings from Van Loon and Roebbers show that fourth and sixth graders tend to be overconfident when self-assessing their own test responses. If students in these grades struggle with objectively viewing their work, then younger students likely do as well. When both fourth and sixth grade students received feedback about their performance, the initial high confidence in themselves is reduced and they make more accurate reevaluations of themselves. This finding may suggest that for self-assessment to function well with elementary aged students, teachers need to give their students frequent feedback in relation to the work the students have analyzed in order to offer additional guidance to students regarding how to use the self-assessment process effectively. Overall, the usefulness of self-assessment with young children lacks thorough research and it would be beneficial to pursue the question of its effect on the quality of their writing.

Self-Assessing Writing

Self-assessment lends itself particularly well to writing because it encourages the writers to re-read their work and consider specific domains of writing, ensuring that all components of writing are acknowledged. “Self-assessment in writing signifies any teaching method that prompts writers to think about, evaluate, and/or respond to their own writing” (Nielson, 2012, p.1). There is not only a new emphasis on explicit writing instruction as previously mentioned, but also on the importance of goal setting and getting feedback, in which self-assessment plays a part. Students need a clear vision of what they want to achieve and how they are going to

achieve it, and “effective feedback is goal driven” (Calkins & Ehrenworth, 2016, p.10). There are a variety of ways to incorporate self-assessment and feedback within writing instruction. One way that students can self-assess their work in writing is to be able to compare it to a mentor text; that is, one that emulates what they want to write and seems attainable to them. Students often benefit from noticing how their own teacher writes, as well as the published works of authors they know and love. By noticing what those authors are including, they can reflect on their own work and set goals to try and achieve similar results.

In a different self-assessment example from Martin and Thacker (2009), students in one classroom periodically reflected on all their works in progress. To help students be accountable for their independent or peer editing, the teacher developed a checklist that included writing conventions already taught: punctuation, capitalization, and sounding out spelling. She doubted whether many students would reflect on their writing and complete important pieces, but found that she was incorrect in her guess, as students did evidence this type of reflection. Students were given the power to assess not only their own work, but also the work of their peers in order to revise and edit their work. Using checklists and rubrics such as this is a helpful way to show students the expectations of what their writing should look like when they publish it. These tools help students understand what they already have accomplished and what they may still need to improve as they continue to develop skill with the writing process. Students can assess their work using self-assessment tools which will give them feedback and ideas for goal setting. “Students have a great deal to share about who they are as writers and how they feel about the writing process. Letting them share with us in multiple forms allows them to tell us what is important.” (Zumbrunn, Ekholm, Stringer, McKnight, & DeBusk-Lane, 2017, p. 676). As discussed above, self-assessment also can be sharing thoughts about one’s work with others and

giving it a simple rating or comment. Therefore, combining various forms of self-assessment such as checklists, rubrics, self-reflection prompts, peer sharing or peer assessment, and student-led writing conferences with teacher feedback may help young writers become more confident and, in turn, produce better writing.

Perceptions students have of themselves matter, including ones of themselves as a writer and their mastery of the writing process (Zumbrunn, et al., 2017). Students who can use checklists, rubrics, or other self-assessments appropriately are self-motivated to persist through the writing process. Self-assessment in writing helps students understand their responsibility to accomplish specific writing tasks, as Ratminingsih, Marhaeni, and Vigayanti (2018) found. Students who use a checklist and scoring rubric to help support them tend to write better, because they can evaluate their work. It also makes them aware of their grammatical mistakes. By using a checklist or rubric, they accept increased responsibility to improve their work habits and deepen the quality of their work. “Inclusion of self-assessment methods in the assessment of writing is likely to foster growth in student writing ability and transfer to future writing tasks” (Nielsen, 2012, p.13). Good writing and being able to attain specific writing goals can stem from the ability to self-assess.

Summary

In conclusion, it is apparent that writing is a critical skill of which students need a firm command. While writing essentials span across many categories such as expression, craft, and elaboration, conventions are an area that seem not only to be regarded as highly important among many teachers and assessments, but also quite crucial to comprehending one’s own writing. Self-assessment appears to be trending in current education, likely due to its flexible use in a variety of situations and the fact that it can be done in a range of ways. Self-assessment has been shown

to be more effective if used in conjunction with feedback (Van Loon & Roebbers, 2017) so that while students are held responsible for their own metacognition, they have guidance if needed. When given the proper time and instruction, students may become better writers by learning to actively self-assess their work in the primary grades. Thus, additional research related to these concepts appears to be warranted.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the use of self-assessment with a writing rubric would affect the quality of writing conventions in second grade students' finished work.

Design

This study used a quasi-experimental design, as there was no randomization in group assignments. Students participated in one of two groups selected for convenience. The independent variable in this study was instruction about and use of a self-assessment rubric for writing. This teacher-made self-assessment rubric included ratings of four parts of writing conventions--capitalization, understanding, punctuation, and spelling (CUPS), and its use was directly taught to the students. The dependent variable was the quality of students' writing conventions which was quantified by CUPS scores based on writings done in response to writing prompts administered to the participants. The CUPS scores were derived by applying the scoring rubric.

Both groups were given the same two pre-tests which were writing assignments that were scored by the researcher with the CUPS criteria found on the rubric in Appendix A. The scores on the two pre-tests were averaged for each student to determine their pre-intervention CUPS levels. The group means of these mean pre-test CUPS scores were compared using a t-test for independent samples to determine whether there were significant differences between the CUPS scores of the comparison and treatment groups prior to starting the intervention. Then, the treatment group was given the intervention and the control was not. Finally, each group was both groups were each given two post-tests, comprised of the same writing prompts, the scores of

which were again averaged for participants and then compared across the two groups to determine if there was a difference in CUPS scores between them after the treatment.

Participants

This study used convenience samples for both the control and treatment groups, but the control group was also purposively chosen to be as similar as possible to the treatment group in terms of writing skills. The participants included students in two second grade classes from a public elementary school in Harford County, Maryland. The control group consisted of 21 students, with 10 girls and 11 boys. The treatment group consisted of 22 students, with 11 girls and 11 boys. In each group, there were three students who received special education services in the areas of reading and writing, who were performing between kindergarten and first grade reading levels.

Instrument

The CUPS assessment was designed by the researcher based on her review of literature and familiarity with the writing conventions her students need to master. The pre and post tests were writing prompts which posed similar questions, with two pre-tests and two post-tests completed by all participants to improve reliability of the scores compared to having just one administration of each. The pre-tests asked, "In your opinion, what is the best fiction book you have ever read?" and "In your opinion what is the funniest book you have ever read?" Students in both groups were given the same pre-test paper that was printed with the directions "Answer the following question with 3 sentences" (see Appendix A). The post-tests asked, "In your opinion, what is the best nonfiction book you have ever read?" and "In your opinion, what is the saddest book you have ever read?" (see Appendix B). Students in the both the treatment and control group received the post-test papers printed with the directions "Answer the following question with three

sentences,” but the treatment group also had the CUPS rubric printed at the bottom of their post-test papers (see Appendix C).

The pre-tests and post-tests for both groups were graded by the researcher using the self-assessment rubric (see Appendix D) containing the four categories of CUPS: Capitalization (capital letters used at the beginning of sentences, names, titles, and the letter I), Understanding (each sentence was complete and made sense), Punctuation (each sentence had been given correct punctuation), and Spelling (second grade ‘word wall’ words were spelled correctly) (see Appendix E). As noted previously, each category was graded on a zero to three-point scale. The scores from each category were summed to create a Writing Conventions score with possible scores ranging from zero to 12.

Procedure

When the study was introduced, two pre-tests were administered to both the treatment and control groups of students to strengthen the reliability of the pre-intervention results. The first day’s pre-test posed the following question to both groups: “In your opinion, what is the best fiction book you have ever read?” Both the treatment and control classes were working in an opinion writing unit within writing workshop. The researcher administered the test to the treatment group, and the control group’s teacher administered the test in that classroom at the same time. Both groups were given the verbal direction “Answer the following question with three sentences.” This question also was printed as the directions on the prompts students received. Students were given a maximum time of 15 minutes to complete this first pre-test with access to a spelling word wall within the classroom (see Appendix E). If a student submitted his or her paper without all three sentences completed, the test was returned to the student who was asked to add another sentence or two. The next day, the second pre-test posed the question, “In

your opinion, what is the funniest book you have ever read?” and the same procedure was followed as had been use the prior day. All tests were scored according to the CUPS criteria in the self-assessment rubric to produce a Writing Conventions score. Both scores for each student were averaged to create one pre-intervention score for each. Additionally, a pre-survey was given to all students directly after the second pre-test to gain insight into their beliefs about their writing (see Appendix F).

Next, the self-assessment rubric training was provided to the treatment class. In this class, each student received a small, laminated CUPS rubric which remained in their writing folders to be used through the duration of the study. Students were able to use a dry-erase marker on their copy of the rubric, so that they could change their scores and reuse it. The CUPS method had not been introduced to the class prior to the study although occasionally during the school year there had been editing lessons taught within the scheduled writing workshop sessions. The teacher, who also was the researcher, modeled for students how to use the self-assessment rubric to edit their work after they had completed an assignment that had been given by teacher.

The researcher used modeling twice a week within a 15-minute, total group mini-lesson to show students how to use the rubric. To accomplish these mini-lessons, on the first day each week, the researcher used a document camera to display an example of the researcher’s opinion writing about a book, which contained purposeful errors in capitalization, understanding, punctuation, and spelling. The researcher went through each category of the rubric, re-reading and tracking the sample work each time, stopping when an error was found for a specific category, and editing it to be correct. For example, “Bob is a name and needs a capital letter, but I forgot to use one! Let me change that to be a capital ‘B’, I want to get a three instead of a two on my CUPS rubric!” When each category was finished being reviewed aloud, the researcher

read the rubric scoring for that section aloud and modeled deciding where and what rating (zero to three) to circle on the rubric. Students then were told to study their own piece of writing and use the rubric to evaluate their work, using a dry-erase marker on the rubric. The researcher circulated among the students, redirecting them to notice any errors detected. On the second day each week, the mini-lesson was similar, but students were invited to help the researcher find the mistakes as they reviewed each category. This step in the process was designed to give students both experience and guidance in finding errors.

The study was administered over the course of four weeks between February 19th and March 15th for a total of 19 days. Each week, two mini-lessons occurred, and students were prompted to check their own work with the rubric at least two times as well. On days when the writing mini-lessons did not focus on the self-assessment rubric, students were reminded, “Don’t forget to use your CUPS rubric if you are ready to edit!” before going to work independently. At the end of the intervention period, both classes were administered two post-tests, which were conducted and scored in the same way as the pre-tests had been conducted and scored.

Subsequently, in the course of two days, students in both groups were given the following prompts. “In your opinion, what is the best nonfiction book you have ever read?” and “In your opinion, what is the saddest book you have ever read?” The treatment group’s writing paper had the self-assessment rubric included at the bottom of the page. Otherwise, students in the treatment group were not given any directions that differed from those given to the control group. A post-survey with the same questions as those included on the pre-survey also was given to both groups on the second day of post-intervention assessment.

Scores for all participants on both post-tests then were averaged and the group means were compared to test the hypothesis and determine if the post test scores differed between the

treatment and control/comparison groups. Results follow in Chapter IV and are discussed in Chapter V.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the use of self-assessment with a writing rubric would affect the use of writing conventions (CUPS) in second grade students' finished work.

CUPS Scores

In order to determine whether the treatment and comparison groups' mean pre and post CUPS scores differed significantly, t-tests for independent samples were run to compare them. Descriptive statistics follow in Table 1 and the results of the t-tests follow in Table 2.

In terms of the sample, five students were omitted from the analyses as they were missing either one CUPS test and a survey (two students) or all data (three students). Five students who were only missing one CUPS test (all were post-intervention scores; four of the students were in the control group and one was in the treatment group) were still included, and their one obtained CUPS score was used as their mean score.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for mean Pre-intervention and Post-intervention CUPS scores, disaggregated by group

Score	Group	n	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error of the Mean (SEM)
Pre -Intervention CUPS	Treatment	19	8.421	2.009	.461
	Control	19	7.237	2.653	.609
Post-Intervention CUPS	Treatment	19	9.237	2.037	.467
	Control	19	7.842	1.993	.457

These results revealed that the mean scores for the treatment group were slightly higher on both administrations. To learn if these differences were statistically significant, t-tests were run.

Table 2

Results of t-tests comparing the Treatment and Comparison Groups' (means of two) pre- and post-intervention CUPS scores (equal variances assumed)

Mean CUPS Scores	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed) (p)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Pre-Intervention	1.551	36	.13	1.184	.763	-.364	2.372
Post-intervention	2.133	36	.04	1.395	.636	.069	2.721

These results indicated that the two groups' pre-intervention CUPS scores did not differ statistically significantly ($t=1.551$, $p<.13$). However, after the intervention, the treatment group's CUPS mean of 9.237 was found to be statistically significantly higher than the comparison group mean of 7.842 ($t=2.133$, $p<.04$). Thus, the null hypothesis that the post-intervention CUPS means would be the same for the treatment and control groups was rejected.

Self-Assessment Survey

The same analyses were conducted in order to determine whether the treatment or comparison group's mean pre- and post-intervention total survey scores differed significantly. (Total survey scores were derived by summing the responses for each of the seven survey items, each of which could range from 1= yes, I used this skill to 3= no, I did not use this skill. Note that lower scores reflected more use of the CUPS conventions.) Descriptive statistics follow in Table 3 and the results of the t-tests follow in Table 4.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for mean Pre-intervention and Post-intervention Survey total scores, disaggregated by group

Interval	Group	n	Mean Total Survey Score	Mean Item score (total/7) Response legend: 1=yes, 2=kind of, 3=no)	Standard Deviation	Standard Error of the Mean (SEM)
Pre- Intervention	Treatment	19	10.737	1.53	3.034	.696
	Control	19	9.895	1.41	2.492	.572
Post- Intervention	Treatment	19	8.790	1.26	1.437	.330
	Control	19	9.053	1.29	2.297	.527

The means in Table 3 indicate that CUPS usage increased for both groups from pre- to post-intervention. Further t-tests were run to learn if the groups' mean differences in CUPS use were significantly different upon either the pre- or post-assessment.

Table 4

Results of t-tests comparing the Treatment and Comparison Groups' (means of two) pre- and post-intervention total Survey scores (equal variances assumed)

Score	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed) (p)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Pre-Survey	.935	36	.36	.842	.901	-.985	2.669
Post Survey	-.423	36	.68	-.263	.622	-1.524	.997

These results indicated that neither the pre- nor the post-intervention total survey scores differed significantly across the groups ($t=.935$, $p<.36$ and $t=-.423$, $p<.68$, respectively). Thus, null hypothesis two, that the pre and post-intervention survey totals would be the same for the treatment and control groups, was retained.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the use of self-assessment with a writing rubric would affect the use of writing conventions (CUPS) in second grade students' finished work. The results of the study did not support the null hypothesis that the post-intervention CUPS means would be the same for the treatment and control groups. The second null hypothesis was retained, as the pre and post-intervention survey totals, which reflected self-ratings of how often the participants used the CUPS conventions, were not statistically significantly different for the treatment and control groups. Overall, the results suggested that the intervention of a self-assessment rubric did increase students' proper use of conventions. Students' self-ratings on the post survey may not have accurately reflected their increased use of them for a variety of reasons.

Implications

As the results suggested using self-assessment with a writing rubric was associated with higher CUPS scores, this or similar interventions may be useful ways to improve convention use in primary students' written work. Observations also indicated the intervention was generally well-received and used independently by participants. During the intervention lessons, the researcher noted that the majority of students were assessing the sample sentences correctly by noting the researchers' 'mistakes' and scoring the work on the rubric accurately. Students were observed to react positively and seem proud of themselves when their assessments of sample work modeled for them matched the researchers' self-assessments. Additionally, the researcher observed an increase in the use of the CUPS rubric in the day-to-day writing work of many students both during and after the intervention. For example, students were seen with rubrics

displayed while they published letters to classmates and when the researcher sent students to work on their writing independently, multiple students asked, “Can we use our CUPS?” even on days the intervention lessons were not taught. These observations implied that routine practice of editing conventions can transfer to automaticity with the skill.

While students were observed editing their work and applying convention rules more frequently, the survey results found that the students in this second-grade sample were not necessarily able to describe their own work with complete accuracy or in accord with teacher observations. The researcher noted that most students gave themselves a rating of “yes, I used this skill” on the survey in most CUPS areas, even when they did not use the skill. It is possible that students at this age can objectively assess others’ work better than their own, that the survey needed revision to yield more accurate reports from participants of this age, or that the items simply were not sensitive enough to detect variation in convention use across tasks or groups.

Threats to the Validity

Many factors could have impacted the validity of the study’s results negatively. One concern is that the treatment and control group had different teachers. Since the researcher was not in the control group’s room during the pretests or posttests, it is possible that those students had a slightly different experience taking their tests, such as the teacher reading the directions differently or not checking students’ work for sentence completion, which could have affected their scores. Another related concern is that while the treatment and control groups were comprised of students with similar levels of writing ability, the teacher of the students in the control group said that many of her students generally lack writing motivation, whereas the researcher felt her class enjoyed writing. The control group’s population also included more students who were likely to be off-task with their behaviors, which may have affected their focus

on the assessments and been a distraction to the other students in the room. Differences in teaching styles, classroom routines and culture, and differences in the editing lessons previously taught to each class could also have impacted the effects of the intervention on either group.

The design of the pretests, posttests, and surveys may also have affected the validity of the study. The content of the questions posed in the pre and post tests may have been irrelevant to or impacted responses of some students. For example, the question, “In your opinion, what is the saddest book you ever read?” caused some students to look distressed, tell the researcher they did not know what to write, or to write three sentences which were unrelated to the writing prompt. The surveys were aligned with the CUPS rubric goals but did not look the same. Survey responses were indicated as faces with varying degrees of happiness while the CUPS rubric responses were indicated as numerical point ratings. While no one expressed confusion, this variation in rating criteria and appearance and the fact that the ratings were numbered in reversed order on the CUPS rubric and surveys may have caused some confusion in completing the surveys. If the survey had focused only on the four CUPS components and had been more similar in terms of its item composition, appearance and rating scale to the CUPS rubric, with which students in the intervention group were familiar, it may have yielded clearer results.

Potential bias may also be a factor in the validity of this study. The researcher scored all pretests, posttests, and surveys. The researcher may have had a bias towards her own students because she knew their abilities and could discern handwriting differences, such as knowing what a particular student’s capital letters looked like. The researcher also knew the intentions of the study and unintentionally may have scored the tests differently than an unbiased scorer may have.

The scope of the study is another limitation to this study. The researcher implemented the

intervention for a total of only 19 days instead of the intended 24 days due to inclement weather which resulted in school cancellations. Three of those 19 days were on a delayed school schedule, which minimized students' writing time and practice editing on those days. Students in both the intervention and control groups made growth despite these changes but the study's results may have had differed had it been conducted over a longer period.

Connections to Previous Studies/Existing Literature

There is a limited amount of research related specifically to elementary students' self-assessment and writing, especially in the area of writing conventions. Van Loon and Roebers (2017) found that fourth and sixth grade students were overconfident in their self-assessments of their work. Their results were similar to the results of the current study because the control and treatment groups did not have significant differences between their self-assessment means, perhaps due to inaccuracy in self-rating on the surveys used. Van Loon and Roebers found that providing direct feedback and giving students time to reevaluate their work resulted in increased self-assessment scores. Calkins and Ehrenworth (2016) also state that students need frequent feedback during writing instruction and should get individualized conferences with the teacher to set specific goals. In the present study, one-on-one feedback was not given to each student, and student-teacher writing conferences usually did not focus on writing conventions. Based on these previous publications, and the results of the survey component to this study, it appears feedback may be a key factor in students' being able to assess themselves correctly. Finally, both Martin and Thacker (2009) and the current study observed students utilizing writing rubrics to assess both others' work and their own. Martin and Thacker had students utilize writing checklists to monitor their work, but they did not collect specific, measurable data using a writing rubric completed by students as did this current study. Such expansions can increase understanding of

what interventions and data help improve writing.

Implications for Future Research

This study reveals implications for future research that could alter the results and ideas about elementary students' writing conventions and self-assessment. Future research might replicate this study with a larger sample, to determine if the results are the same for larger and more diverse populations. In addition, future research might extend the duration of the intervention. For example, a year-long study would give students longer exposure to and practice with the skills included in the intervention, such as looking critically at their work. Additional time for the study would also reduce the negative impact of schedule changes, absences, and so forth, as limitations would not have as much influence on results as they may have in this brief study. Ideally, the researcher would be impartial to both groups, so the scores for pretests and posttests could be as objective as possible without potential bias.

In addition to changing some administrative aspects of the study, adjustments to the procedure could be made for future research. For example, the pre- and post-tests could have more general prompts, such as "What is a book you like and why?" or prompts that are not related to books or opinions. This adjustment might result in less frustration for students over trying to find a "correct" answer and result in participants spending more time working on their writing conventions than deliberating about what to write.

The survey also could be modified to parallel the CUPS rubric and ratings and could include a somewhat increased range of responses to show discrepancies in responses and across groups more clearly. Ratings also could be organized in the same order from low to high on both scales to minimize potential confusion. These modifications might enable students in the intervention group to feel more comfortable assessing themselves using a rubric with which they are familiar

and students in the control group might find the scales easier to understand and use.

Conclusions

This study examined the effectiveness of a self-assessment rubric for improving second grade students' use of writing conventions. The mean scores of students who received the CUPS intervention were found to be statistically significantly higher than those of students in the control group. Some students in the intervention group were observed to refer to the rubric independently on their own time, which suggests that if students were given more time to experience the intervention and other changes such as those suggested above were made to improve the study, students may increase their use of both self-assessment skills and proper writing conventions.

While the surveys' results did not reveal statistically significant differences between the two groups, findings in previous studies, such as that conducted by Van Loon and Roebbers (2017), suggest that primary-aged students are developing the capability of objectively assessing themselves. Therefore, more studies are warranted to identify ways to improve students' use of writing conventions and future research might also focus on the extent to which students of varied developmental levels can self-assess their writing and at what point this is a necessary or beneficial skill to supplement writing instruction.

References

- Auguste, E. (2018). The balancing act of kindergarten writing instruction: Teachers must focus on both mechanics and meaning to develop young writers' identities as authors. *Educational Leadership*, 75(7), 61-64. Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org/goucher.idm.oclc.org/>
- Brindley, R., & Schneider, J. J. (2002). Writing instruction or destruction: Lessons to be learned from fourth-grade teachers' perspectives on teaching writing. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(4), 328-41. Retrieved from <https://goucher.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ667194&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Calkins, L. (2013). *A guide to the common core writing workshop*. Portsmouth, NH. Heinemann.
- Calkins, L., Geschwind, V. & DeSutter, J. (2016). *The how-to guide for nonfiction writing*. Portsmouth, NH. Heinemann.
- Calkins, L., & Ehrenworth, M. (2016). Growing extraordinary writers: Leadership decisions to raise the level of writing across a school and a district. *Reading Teacher*, 70(1), 7-18. doi:10.1002/trtr.1499
- Collins, G., & Norris, J. (2017). Written language performance following embedded grammar instruction. *Reading Horizons (Online)*, 56(3), 16-30. Retrieved from <https://goucher.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search-proquestcom.goucher.idm.oclc.org/docview/1947428666?accountid=11164>
- Hall-Mills, S., & Apel, K. (2015). Linguistic feature development across grades and genre in elementary writing. *Language, Speech & Hearing Services in Schools*, 46(3), 242-255. doi:10.1044/2015_LSHSS-14-0043

- Harris, K. R., Graham, S., Aitken, A. A., Barkel, A., Houston, J., & Ray, A. (2017). Teaching spelling, writing, and reading for writing. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 49*(4), 262-272. doi:10.1177/0040059917697250
- Humphrey, R. C., Walton, M. D., & Davidson, A. J. (2014). "I'm gonna tell you all about it": Authorial voice and conventional skills in writing assessment and educational practice. *Journal of Educational Research, 107*(2), 111-122. doi:10.1080/00220671.2013.788990
- Martin, L. E., & Thacker, S. (2009). Teaching the writing process in primary grades: One teacher's approach. *Young Children, 64*(4), 30-35. Retrieved from <https://goucher.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.goucher.idm.oclc.org/docview/197627260?accountid=11164>
- Maryland State Department of Education (2018-a). Retrieved from <http://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/Graphs/#/Assessments/ElaPerformance/1EL/3/6/3/3/3/3/3/3/99/XXXX>
- Maryland State Department of Education (2018-b). Retrieved from reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/Definitions/Index
- National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers. (2010). Retrieved from www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/K
- Nielsen, K. (2012). Self-assessment methods in writing instruction: A conceptual framework, successful practices and essential strategies. *Journal of Research in Reading, 37*(1), 1-16. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9817.2012.01533.x
- Panadero, E., Brown, G., & Strijbos, J. (2016). The future of student self-assessment: A review of known unknowns and potential directions. *Educational Psychology Review, 28*(4), 803-830. doi:10.1007/s10648-015-9350-2
- Ratminingsih, N. M., Marhaeni, A. A. I. N., & Vigayanti, L. P. D. (2018). Self-assessment: The

effect on students' independence and writing competence. *International Journal of Instruction*, 11(3), 277-290. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1183438>

Van Loon, M. H., & Roebbers, C. M. (2017). Effects of feedback on self-evaluations and self-regulation in elementary school. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 31(5), 508-519.
doi:10.1002/acp.3347

Zumbrunn, S., Ekholm, E., Stringer, J. K., McKnight, K., & DeBusk-Lane, M. (2017). Student experiences with writing: Taking the temperature of the classroom. *Reading Teacher*, 70(6), 667-677. doi:10.1002/trtr.1574

Appendix A: Sample pre-test, given to both groups

Pretest 1

Name:

Answer the following question with 3 sentences.

In your opinion, what is the best fiction book you have ever read?

Handwriting practice lines consisting of solid top and bottom lines with a dashed midline. There are 12 sets of these lines provided for writing the answer.

Appendix D: Self-assessment CUPS rubric

CUPS	3 points	2 points	1 point	0 points
<p><u>Capitalization</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do all my sentences have a capital letter at the <u>beginning</u>, for <u>names</u>, for <u>titles</u>, and the letter <u>I</u>? 	All 3 of my sentences have correct "C"s.	2 of my sentences have correct "C"s.	Only 1 of my sentences has correct "C"s.	None of my sentences have correct "C"s.
<p><u>Understanding</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do I have complete sentences? Do all the words make sense together in each one? 	All 3 of my sentences have correct "U"s.	2 of my sentences have correct "U"s.	Only 1 of my sentences has correct "U"s.	None of my sentences have correct "U"s.
<p><u>Punctuation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do all my sentences have punctuation? Are they all correct punctuation marks? 	All 3 of my sentences have correct "P"s.	2 of my sentences have correct "P"s.	Only 1 of my sentences has correct "P"s.	None of my sentences have correct "P"s.
<p><u>Spelling</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are all 2nd grade 'word wall' words spelled correctly? 	All 3 of my sentences have correct "S"s.	2 of my sentences have correct "S"s.	Only 1 of my sentences has correct "S"s.	None of my sentences have correct "S"s.

Appendix E: 2nd grade word wall

<p>Aa about above after again answer another around are also always along</p>	<p>Bb because beautiful before best been book both began better bring</p>	<p>Cc can't children city could crash carry clear clean certain color</p>	<p>Dd drink don't do does didn't door draw</p>	<p>Ee earth every enough early</p>	<p>Ff favorite from found friend first food</p>
<p>Gg give gave great girl goes</p>	<p>Hh house hold how here have heard happy hurt</p>	<p>Ii is idea it's idea interesting instead</p>	<p>Jj jump just joke</p>	<p>Kk kick know knew kind keep</p>	<p>Ll listen little laugh learn large long love light look</p>
<p>Mm maybe mine many might more myself middle morning</p>	<p>Nn name new nice night near never</p>	<p>Oo once our other only one often off order own</p>	<p>Pp pretty piece people phone pair pull pick</p>	<p>Qq question quiet</p>	<p>Rr right really rain room road ready</p>
<p>Ss saw said some small since show song sure seen sing sometimes several special</p>	<p>Tt thank these talk them thing thought through turn team together teacher true</p>	<p>Uu use usually until upon</p>	<p>Vv very</p>	<p>Ww went was were where want wish why walk with wash wait</p>	<p>Xx</p>
<p>Yy young your you year</p>	<p>Zz</p>	<p>Days Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday</p>	<p>Months January February March April May June July August September October November December</p>	<p>Colors red orange yellow green blue purple black white brown gray</p>	<p>Names brother sister father mother cousin aunt uncle grandparent</p>

Appendix F: Survey example (pre-survey shown, but post-survey was identical in content)

Pre-Survey

Name:

1. I like to write.



Yes



Kind of



No

1. I am a good writer.



Yes



Kind of



No

3. I know how to edit my work.



Yes



Kind of



No

4. In my writing, I used correct capitalization



Yes



Kind of



No

5. In my writing, my sentences made sense (showed understanding).



Yes



Kind of



No

6. In my writing, I used correct punctuation.



Yes



Kind of



No

7. In my writing, I spelled all 'word wall' words correctly.



Yes



Kind of



No