Accurate Editing in Student Writing

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Abstract

The purpose of the action research was to investigate various strategies that would yield the most improvement in the editing practices of student writing. The researcher collected data through writing samples, direct observation and student surveys. Three editing strategies were implemented during the research: editing checklist, peer editing and computer word processing program. The research was conducted in the researcher’s fifth grade classroom. Results of the case study showed that more than one editing strategy was most effective and the use of a computer yielded the highest error correction rate.
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Imagine walking into a school that has a modern design, open and spacious layout, a wonderful staff, administrator of the year and respectful students. This is the type of elementary that the researcher is fortunate enough to work at daily.

The city in which the elementary is located is a suburb of Portland and is nearing 100,000 people in population. Of the 100,000 about 83% of the population is of white race. The remaining 17% is made up of mostly Hispanics, followed by Asian, African-American and American Indian and Alaskan races. In the city the average income per family is about $51,000.

The school district in which the elementary is a part of has had major shifts and changes over the last year. There are a total of 21 schools, which consists of 11 elementary schools, five middle schools, three high schools and two charter schools. In all there are 1,197 employees and 2,431 volunteers. The total enrollment for the district is around 12,150 in which several schools are over crowded and new construction of schools is being discussed. There are a total of 39 different languages spoken by the students. The top four languages that are spoken is Spanish (74%), Russian (6.5%), Romanian (2.7%) and all of the others combined equal to 16%. The district’s special education department has a total of 1430 students who are on I.E.P.’s. This is the equivalent of 11.8% of the total district enrollment. The disabilities of students identified by the district are learning disabilities (33.36%), communication disorder (29.98%), health impairment (12.96%), mental retardation (8.55%), emotional disturbance (6.55%), autism
spectrum disorder (5.86%), hearing impairment (less than 1%), vision impairment (less than 1%), orthopedic impairment (less than 1%) and traumatic brain injury (less than 1%).

As mentioned earlier the researcher’s elementary site is a building that was built six years ago. It is a kindergarten through 5th grade level school and has implemented the Positive Behavior Support model since it’s opening. Its layout is open with a large media center directly in the center of the building and four pods surrounding it. There are two pods downstairs and two pods upstairs. The building has an elevator to accommodate those with special needs. It also has a kindergarten wing off to one side of the media center. In all there are 23 classrooms inside the building with an addition of a portable unit that holds space for two more classrooms. As mentioned the media center is the heart of the building, which demonstrates the focus of literacy in the building. There is one computer lab and two mobile laptop labs. The gym, music room and cafeteria are on the opposite side of the building from the classrooms, which helps to create a quiet environment for learning. In addition to the playground a new running track was added last year, which has sparked a running club throughout the entire school. In the building there is one administrator, two secretaries, 26 teachers and 10 educational assistants. The average number of years of experience among the teachers is 13. Of the 26 teachers 55.8% of them have obtained a Master’s Degree or higher. There are 499 students enrolled at the elementary site. Of the total enrollment 16.2% of the students are ELL and 11.6% are in special education. There are also 33% of the students who receive free lunch and 12% who are reduced lunch.
The researcher’s classroom consists of 24 students. There are two students who are on an I.E.P., three ELL students who are on monitored status and three Title I students. This will be the researcher’s third year in the teaching profession and his third year teaching at the elementary site in 5th grade. The researcher is enrolled in a Master’s of Education program with a Reading endorsement and has one more year to complete the Master’s. The researcher is chair of the technology committee, which has allowed him to lead several workshops and trainings in the school. He attended a workshop last year on the Six Trait writing model and the 5th grade team is focusing on improving the writing skills of the students. The researcher has focused his research on the area of writing. The research question for this action research is, “How do different editing techniques improve the accuracy of editing in the student’s writing in the researcher’s 5th grade classroom?”
Reading student’s writing can be enjoyable when all of the proper steps have been taken to create a final version. However, it is getting to that final version that proves to be most difficult for many students. Editing and revising are two areas that the researcher has noticed are difficult processes for students or that receive the shortest amount of attention in the writing process. In the classroom students are so eager to get their ideas on paper, write a rough draft and then look toward the final piece that often editing and revising are overlooked or completed in a rushed manner.

This past year the researcher’s district focused on the area of writing. Teachers from each of the elementary schools were selected to attend four half-day sessions on the Six Traits of Writing taught by Penny Plavala. The researcher was chosen as one of the teachers to attend. During one of these trainings each teacher had to bring a writing sample to be scored. As the writing samples were being reviewed by the group of teachers, two of the most discussed topics during this time were the editing and revising processes of student writing. Comments and questions that were generated by other teachers all pertained to motivating students to improve the editing and revising in their writing.

The editing and revising issue was further brought to the researcher’s attention during a parent conference. One of the samples of work being presented to the parents was a final, typed, published piece of writing that was bound and illustrated. The researcher began the writing portion of the conference by explaining the steps that the
students must take so they are able to publish their own writing. Followed by the explanation, the parent then read and looked through the published piece. As soon as the parent finished reading the story, a question was asked. The question asked was, “So, do spelling and punctuation somehow not get transferred over into the final copy?” Throughout the rest of the conferences two other sets of parents asked about the convention and punctuation errors in the published pieces of writing as well.

After observing this issue expressed at the district level, team grade level and by parents, the question to be researched is: “How can the editing and revising processes be enhanced to improve student’s writing in the researcher’s 5th grade classroom?”

**Literature Review**

The literature review on editing and revising in the classroom has shown that seeking improvement of these skills in writing have persisted over time. Lucy Calkins (1994) even states that “we need to find ways to interest students in spelling and grammatical rules, making it fun to explore, ponder, and wonder about our complex language” (quoted by Laura Michael, second paragraph under Editing section). No wonder there are so many ways that educators look for to help students understand the process and use it effectively.

It appeared that as the researcher explored the topic authors frequently confused editing and revising. When reviewing the literature several authors appeared to use these almost as synonyms. If educators are not sure of the process then it will be as difficult for the students. Some authors would be discussing revising and mentioning ideas about checking spelling and punctuation. This is something that occurs in the editing process.
The revision process is going back through the writing and looking at the sentences to see if there is anything that can be changed in the writing to enhance the message.

In the next section the researcher will show through the literature the importance of the editing and revising process. Next, the researcher will explore student motivation in the processes. Lastly, the researcher will communicate several types of techniques and methods of editing and revising that others suggest to be used in the classroom.

**Importance of Editing and Revising**

The importance of editing and revising was clear throughout the literature. Mark Christiansen states that by looking at research 25% of professional writers’ time is spent revising their own writing but in secondary students one sees that less than one percent goes into editing and revising their own work (1990). Although Christensen’s remarks are intended for professional writers, students may as well be a future professional writer and need these skills. In addition, teaching students to edit and revise their own work is more cognitively advanced. Christensen (1990) goes on to say that “by helping students see their own strengths and weaknesses, a teacher can help them form habits that will lead to a desire for personal achievement beyond the requirements of others” (p. 45). Not only do these skills apply directly into student’s writing but it also allows them to become aware of their own abilities.

Although many educators view the editing and revising process as important, the literature did reveal some variations in emphasis. Marion Bauer (1993) shares that revision is important but it is something that does not have to be done every time. The author’s view relates to the 25%. Students don’t need to revise every time so that they
can enjoy the writing process more. Only pieces that are to be published or part of a portfolio should go through these steps.

Recently New Zealand looked at its standards and wished to raise its standards in writing, especially in the area of revision. Dix (2006) conducted a study on young writers to record their revision practices and its relevance to New Zealand’s proposal. Nine students from three different schools and classrooms, ranging from grades four through six, who were fluent writers, were selected. The research looked at two main areas: surface and text-base changes in writing. Students were interviewed about their writing by the researcher. Two of the questions that the researcher asked concerned the misspelling of words and their punctuation. The writers stated that they made corrections based on the fact that it didn’t look right. There was also assistance in noticing the errors from the teacher. In the conclusion of the study Dix states, “These findings have implications for teaching revision practice as a means of helping writers develop an awareness of how they can improve their texts” (p. 9). Dix also goes on stating that the support the children received helped them in understanding the process of writing. It is for those reasons that the revision process is important in the students’ writing.
Motivation

While reviewing the literature the researcher found a common theme which led to motivating students to want to edit and revise. The researcher has had problems maintaining the motivation students put into editing and revising. After a lesson is taught students put it into practice and then slowly it fades away.

A study by Moran and Greenburg (2008) was conducted at Orange High School to determine how they could motivate students to want to peer revise. In the 2005 – 2006 school year they began by asking tenth grade honors students how they felt about peer revising. The results of the survey concluded that students were not into revision much because it was done at its most basic level. This would be the level in which they checked for grammar and punctuation. They began by teaching specific strategies of revision to enhance their skills and abilities. In the end the strategies assisted in their writing but still some students felt more motivated to peer revise than others. Some students indicated that they knew what to be aware of in their writing while another student shared that now they relied on the assistance of others.

Foltz (2007), a first grade teacher, also looked at ways to motivate her students to want to write but at the same time use correct grammar, structure, organization and creativity. Through this own personal study of hers in her classroom she took notes and made journal entries of the students writing behaviors. Through research of her own Foltz concluded that clear expectations and choices needed to be in place to motivate her students. Eldridge (2008) also mentions that setting clear and specific goals is an intervention strategy that assists students in writing better. Foltz mentions that Lucy Calkins (2003) states that at times students do not feel motivated because they feel the
teacher’s expectations are far beyond their reach. She then had students create editing and revising rubrics that included their language and they continued to develop after more was taught and learned so that it was scaffold for them. Then she began to provide them with the choice to decide what they wanted to write about. Through her observations she noticed that as they worked through the process of writing, draft, revise, edit and rewriting, the students got even more involved in their writing and began to work on it during any free time that they would get.

It appears, then, that the key to motivating students to is to provide direct instruction in specific strategies as well as providing clear expectations and choices.

**Editing and Revising Techniques**

The literature review revealed that revision is a problem for many teachers. There were many techniques mentioned on how to teach revision and a wide variety of ways to implement revision techniques in the classroom.

Jeff Anderson (2008) gathered his useful techniques for editing based on the familiar concept of the grocery express lane. When going to the grocery store one usually has a specific list of what he or she is looking for and this is how he incorporated that idea into writing. The students choose some points such as apostrophes, run on sentences or spelling as a focus. These points can be written on one side of a sheet of paper and on the other is the receipt. After one purchases his or her items he or she receives a receipt to show what was purchased. The idea with the receipt side is that the students then look specifically at the points they selected and find examples in their writing as to how they
used it correctly or incorrectly. Using this method they are able to quickly “get in and get out” during the editing process.

The literature also displayed some common techniques that already may take place in classroom. Jim Meyer (2008) suggests that editing can be done at two levels. The first level would entail of typing the text onto word processing software in a computer. This strategy is on that is also mentioned by Eldridge (2008). On the computer the student could then use the spell check function to correct words that are misspelled or sentences that are incomplete. The individual can do this type of editing and revising. The problem with relying on the spell check function from the computer is that it may not detect the usage of words. This is where Meyer addresses level two. A peer editing checklist can be made so that someone else checks the writing as well. The checklist can be adapted as the year and mini lessons in writing progress.

Along with the technology technique discussed above, Perry and Smithmier (2005) combined the idea of peer editing using Microsoft Word. Incorporated into Microsoft Word is a tool called the Reviewing Toolbar. Perry created a six step “how to” guide on using the toolbar. This toolbar allowed other students to post comments onto another students writing. Not only could one use the spell check function but also others could review it as well and make suggestions or comments about the writing. The original writer could then review the comments made and determine if they would like to make changes or not.

Besides using technology and checklists as tools for editing and revising, daSilva (2001) incorporated the use of art to assist in revising writing. This is especially useful when being descriptive or attempting to create an image in the readers mind. DaSilva
suggests that students paint or draw the sentence that they wrote. This will allow students to elaborate and reconnect with the writing they had in mind. She also states that revision is more than just rewriting what was already there but changing words around, the meaning or even the idea. She states “making a picture can help you do all of that and can take you to more descriptive, beautiful, thoughtful writing” (2001, p. 33)

As shown through the literature there are several other teachers and authors who are also faced with the difficulty of getting their students to edit and revise their writing. Many offer strategies and techniques while others are searching for how to motivate students to want to edit and revise and not just because their teacher asks them to do it. This further shows the importance of these two parts, editing and revising, in the writing process.
The goal of the action research is to enhance the editing and revising process in the researcher’s 5th grade classroom in order to improve the student’s writing. The literature review of this action research addressed the various techniques of editing and revising, the factors as to the student’s own ability to edit and revise and the lack of student motivation to edit and revise. The researcher’s goal is to attempt different editing and revising techniques to answer the following question: “How can the editing and revising processes be enhanced to improve student’s writing in the researcher’s 5th grade classroom?”

During the action research the researcher will use a variety of methods to collect data. The first method used will be through the use of a classroom survey. The survey will be used as a means to collect students’ thoughts and feelings about editing and revising throughout the action research. The researcher will use the same survey throughout the process to record the progress of their thoughts and feelings. The survey will gather information about the following:

- How often the students edit and revise?
- Do they feel comfortable editing and revising?
- How difficult is editing and revising?

Another survey will be conducted at the very end of the research. This survey will gather information about the following:

- Which technique seemed to be more useful?
• Which technique was easiest to use?

• Have they noticed a difference in their writing due to the techniques that they applied to their writing?

The second method to collect data will be through writing samples. Several writing samples will be collected and scored using the Oregon Department of Education’s writing scoring guide. To ensure that the samples are scored fairly the researcher will have the other 5th grade team members score the samples as well. This data will be used to track the progress in the student’s writing over time. Also to ensure fairness the samples will be finished products of their choice and not writing prompts. The researcher will have the students include all drafts of their writing to observe the changes in their writing as well.

The last form of data collection the researcher will use is the use of observations. During the observations the researcher will be able note the behaviors of students when they are editing and revising. This will allow the researcher to capture students in their natural writing and not work on an assessment piece. The researcher will be able note some of the following behaviors:

• The ease of the editing and revising techniques.

• The understandability of the techniques.

• If certain students are editing and revising more than others.

All of these forms of data collection will aid the researcher to understand how the various techniques of editing and revising will enhance the students’ writing. The data will demonstrate their thoughts and feelings toward the techniques observe their writing behaviors and show their progress in their writing over time.
The issue to be researched is the enhancement of student’s writing through editing and revising. The researcher will be attempting various editing and revising techniques so that the students become more aware of their own writing.

This issue is significant to the researcher at various levels. First the school district offered workshops to train teachers in the improvement of their student’s writing. The workshops consisted of many teachers from various grade levels attending four separate days of training. A major focus at these district trainings was the editing and revising process. Parents of students in the researcher’s class also asked about the errors in students writing which should have been corrected during the editing and revising process. The researcher wants the students to be able to edit and revise their own writing in a manner that is easy for the students, allows them to be more aware of their writing and motivates them to want to edit and revise their writing. This chapter will explore different possible solutions and provide an explanation of the expected steps for the research.

Possible Solutions

Laura Harper suggests a revision method in her article “The Writer’s Toolbox: Five Tools for Active Revision Instruction” (1997). In this method she presents five techniques that the students could use in the revision process of their writing. The first tool is “Questions.” In “Questions” students pair up and one student reads aloud their
writing. The other student listens and writes down questions they may have about the writing. The rule about the questions is that they cannot be answered as simply yes or no. The next tool is called “Snapshots.” The writers are to create a drawing of what they are trying to write. This aids in showing the audience what is occurring and not just telling. The third tool is “Thoughtshots.” This tool assists the writers to get into their character and explain what is occurring in their minds. Three ideas taught are the use of flashbacks, flash forwards and brain arguments which is simply dialogue within the characters mind. The fourth tool is “Exploding the Moment.” This tool allows students to think about what they are conveying in slow motion so that they can capture and add all of the important little details. It creates a more descriptive and suspenseful piece of writing. The last tool is “Making a Scene.” This tool focuses on four components in narrative writing, which are action, dialogue, Snapshots and Thoughtshots. Each component is designated a color and the writer reviews their writing marking their paper with the designated color for each component. This allows the writer to see what kind of balance they have in their writing.

This article suggested ideas that are useful in isolation but not as a variety for 5th grade students. The researcher is trying to identify a technique that will allow students to be more aware of the revision process and easily completed. The Writer’s Toolbox seems that it would make the revision process more time consuming thus discouraging the students to revise their writing. Therefore the researcher rejects the Writer’s Toolbox.

The next suggestion to the solution comes from Jill Fitzgerald in her article “Helping Young Writers to Revise: A Brief Review for Teachers” (1988). Jill offers the suggestion of naturalistic classroom support. This means that the revision process
happens naturally through activities. One of the activities suggested is peer conferencing. The model suggested is that once a student finishes writing a story, report or poem a small group is formed to share their work. The student reads the writing out loud to the small group. The teacher could have student’s retell the story and give compliments. Next, the group would begin to make comments about the writing, asking questions for clarification and making suggests to the writing. The student would then return to their writing to have the opportunity to revise the work.

The researcher accepts this possible solution to the problem. This would allow the students to receive immediate feedback from their own peers. It would also enable them to be more aware of an audience in their writing. The researcher feels that some changes would need to occur in the suggested model such as the peer revision process suggested in the article by Don Killgallon “Word Processing with Computers: Demystifying the Revision Process” (1994). The author suggests a technique based on computer terminology. The words are keep, add, delete, change and move which as Killgallon states in the second paragraph, the words specify “what revision is and how it works.” The author created a sheet in which another student must use one of the words listed above and make a suggestion for the writer. This is done is two rounds. The first round focuses on the understandability of the writing and the second is dedicated to spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Donna Smith offers a simple way to address the revision in her article “Stripping for Revision” (1996). First she begins by having the students write a 150-word paragraph about something that they do best. She collects that and then passes out a five-line poem that she made into 17 lines. The task of the students is to eliminate and combine
sentences to get it back into its original five lines. After reducing it to five lines they looked at the nouns and determined how they could add to them to sound more descriptive. They also looked at the verbs and added to them to create more action and suspense. Then they took the five lines and added even more to create a story, which contained a beginning, middle and an end. She then returns their 150-word writing they completed before hand and has them do the same as homework. This strategy allows the students to look at their word choices, be more descriptive, add more action and cut down on the repetitiveness in their writing.

The researcher believes that this suggestion will not aid in the solution. Once again this solution would be too time consuming and discourage students from writing. The researcher feels that the students will not be open to basically deconstructing their entire writing to end up with a completely new work. The researcher feels that it is important to analyze the writing in a detailed manner but in a way that students can accomplish it on their own. Therefore the researcher rejects the stripping for revision technique.

One last suggestion comes from Elaine Razzano from Lyndon State College. She suggests using lipograms to look at word choice in revision. The definition of a lipogram is “missing a letter”. This means that in a passage certain words could not be used that contained a particular letter. This would make students look at other words they could use to convey the same message. She states that this activity would also lend to students using a thesaurus and dictionary, which often get neglected during the process.

The researcher declines this suggestion to the solution. This activity would be one that could be used every once in a while but not every time. It also focuses on one aspect
of the revision process as she states which is word choice. As noted this is for middle school students and beyond but the researcher works with 5th grade students who are transitioning to become middle school students. The level of difficulty could be adapted to the grade but as she mentions it is more difficult with students who have limited vocabulary. This would affect the ELL and IEP students in the researcher’s classroom and even more difficulty in its use.

**Action Plan**

The proposed start date for the research is in August and will continue through the end of February. The following explains the steps in the action research:

- **August**: The researcher will obtain consent to conduct the proposed research from the elementary site’s principal and school district.

- **September**: During the first month the researcher will begin to introduce the writer’s workshop time. The survey to collect data about the students’ attitudes and feelings towards editing and revising will be prepared and conducted.

- **September 29th – October 24th**: The first editing and revising technique will be introduced and applied. The technique presented and applied will be an editing and revising checklist. A writing sample will also be collected and scored during this time. The same survey taken at the beginning of research will be given and collected at the end of this time.

- **October 27th – November 21st**: The second editing and revising technique will be introduced and applied. This technique will consist of editing and
revising with a peer. A writing sample will be collected and scored as well. The survey will be issued again at the end of the time period to monitor the progress of their attitudes and feelings toward editing and revising.

- December 1st – January 16th (winter break included): The third and final technique will be introduced and applied. This technique will consist of using a word processing program to edit and revise their writing. A writing sample will be collected and scores as well. The attitudes and feelings survey will be conducted at the end of this time again to monitor their progress.

- End of January – A survey will be given that will be given to gather information as to which technique was the easiest, most useful and provided the most results in their writing.

- September – January: Throughout this time observations on student’s editing and revising will be ongoing.

- February: The researcher will analyze the data collected throughout the time period of research. The Action Research will be completed and turned into the researcher’s advisor by February 27th.

The researcher is curious as to what the data will represent and which technique will be best for the students. The researcher is aware of the time commitment and work to be invested in the research but the outcome will be rewarding. It will provide a better understanding as to how to motivate students in his classroom to place more importance on editing and revising to further enhance their writing.
The purpose of this Action Research was for the researcher to provide instructional strategies that will improve the editing practices in the classroom. The following are the changes that occurred in the research, and the results of the three implemented editing strategies in the researcher’s fifth grade class.

Research Changes

As the researcher initiated the project, different factors caused changes to the research project. The changes dealt with the researcher’s proposed question, methods of collecting data and timeline.

Initially the researcher looked at how editing and revising could be enhanced to improve the writing of the students in the classroom. In reality the researcher was looking at two components of the writing process and really wanted to maintain a focus on one. This resulted in eliminating the revision process and concentrating on the editing process in the students’ writing. The three proposed instructional strategies remained the same but only editing was observed. The effect resulted in the researcher trying to answer, “What effect will the instructional strategies have on the editing process in the students’ writing?”

Since the focus shifted in the research, the method of collecting data for the project changed as well. For each of the strategies a baseline was conducted before each strategy was taught. After the baseline was conducted the researcher then made a copy of
the baseline and scored the writing in the areas of spelling, punctuation, capitalization and lowercase corrections. The strategy was first taught then followed by guided and independent practice. At the end of four to five weeks the original baseline was returned to the students for them to edit. A beginning survey was not conducted but a survey was conducted following each of the strategies that were implemented.

Another component that was changed in collecting data was in the method of reporting the data. The researcher felt that for the sake of time a sample would be collected from three students at three different writing levels. The method of selecting the students was based on a baseline-writing piece conducted the first week of school. This baseline-writing was scored according to the state standards and three students were selected from each of the following areas: did not meet, met and exceeds. The “did not meet” students will be referred to throughout the research as students A, B and C, “met” students as D, E and F and “exceeds” students G, H and I.

The last component that the researcher needed to adjust was the timeline of the project. The timeline needed to be adjusted due to new programs being implemented in the researcher’s classroom, weather and state testing. The following action plan reflects the changes in dates for the research timeline.

- August: The researcher will obtain consent to conduct the proposed research from the elementary site’s principal and school district.
- September and October: The researcher will begin to introduce and instruct the students in the writer’s workshop time. The researcher implemented the Daily 5 program.
• December 1 – January 16th: The first editing and revising technique will be introduced and applied. The technique presented and applied will be an editing and revising checklist. A baseline will be conducted and then edited at the end and a survey will be given to gather more information from the students.

• January 20th – February 13th: The second editing and revising technique will be introduced and applied. This technique will consist of editing and revising with a peer. A baseline will be collected and scored as well. The survey will be issued again at the end of the time period to monitor the progress of their attitudes and feelings towards this technique of editing.

• February 17th – March 20th: The third and final technique will be introduced and applied. This technique will consist of using a word processing program to edit and revise their writing. A baseline will be collected and scores as well. The attitudes and feelings survey will be conducted at the end of this time again to monitor their progress.

• September – March: Throughout this time observations on student’s editing will be ongoing.

• May: The researcher will analyze the data collected throughout the time period of research. The Action Research will be completed and turned into the researcher’s advisor by June.
Research Results

The researcher conducted a 12-week study on three instructional strategies to improve editing practices in the students writing. The instructional strategies implemented were:

- Editing checklist
- Peer editing
- Word processing on the computer

The 12 weeks were broken into three four-week sessions for each of the three editing strategies. On the first day for each of the strategies a baseline-writing sample was conducted and collected. The researcher then scored the baseline for the following areas: spelling, punctuation, capitalization and lowercase corrections. During the first week of the strategy implementation the strategy was taught directly by the teacher. The following week the students and the researcher practiced the strategy together. The last two weeks were independent practice by the students and applying it to their own writing during Daily 5 time. On the last day of the session the original baseline was returned to the students. They were to apply the strategy being taught to edit their paper. The survey (Appendix A) was also conducted to gather information on the ease of use, their feelings about the technique, accuracy, using the technique on their own and opinions about the strategy being implemented.

Editing Checklist

The first instructional strategy implemented was an editing checklist taken from Trait-Based Mini Lessons for Teaching Writing by Megan S. Sloan (Appendix B). The
checklist provided basic editing marks that the students would continue to use throughout the rest of the year. The chart below displays the differences in spelling, punctuation, capitalization and lowercase corrections from the baseline writing piece to the final four weeks later.

**Editing Checklist Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Baseline Errors</th>
<th>Final Errors</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
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<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In group A, B, C the total number of errors in the baseline writing was 72. At the end the errors were reduced down to 60 errors, which results in 17% improvement. In each individual category spelling was reduced by seven errors, punctuation by three errors, capitalization by one error and lowercase corrections by one error.

In group D, E, F the total number of errors was 17 with the final reduced to 14 resulting in a 17% improvement in editing errors. In each of the categories spelling was
reduced by two errors, punctuation remained the same, capitalization was reduced by one error and lowercase correction remained the same as well.

Group G, H, I’s baseline errors totaled to 13 errors and were reduced to 12 which results in a .08% improvement. The only category that had a difference in errors was spelling which reduced by one error.

In all, there were a total of 102 errors and they were reduced to 86, approximately a 16% improvement, while using the editing checklist. Spelling correction had the highest in total error corrections, followed by punctuation, then capitalizations and last was lowercase corrections.

Following the research strategy a survey was conducted to gather information about the students’ ease of use, feelings about the strategy, accuracy of errors, their own use of the strategy and their opinions. The results appear in the graph below:
The survey resulted in 17 of the students stating that the editing checklist was easy to use. In regard to how the students felt about using the technique, 19 felt that sometimes it was good and other times it was bad. Almost half, 12, of the students stated that it somewhat corrected their errors in their writing. Only 12 stated that they would possibly use this strategy again on their own if not asked to. In the last question about their opinion, there were two main ideas that the students expressed that they liked about the strategy. These two ideas were that it was simple and they knew exactly what to do and it aided them in checking their spelling. There were also two main complaints about the strategy. The students expressed that this method took too much time and it made their papers look messy.

*Peer Editing*

The second strategy implemented was peer editing. The peer-editing sheet (Appendix C) consisted of the students using the same editing marks learned in the first strategy to edit their own paper using a set of questions and then asking a classmate to do the same using a guided set of instructions. These instructions were on a half sheet of paper with one side designated for the student to self-edit and the other side designated for a peer to edit. After both student and peer had the opportunity to look over the writing, they were then able to take time to discuss and correct the errors. The results of this strategy are as follows:
### Peer Editing Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Final</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Broken down by groups, group A, B, C had a total of 29 errors in the baseline and was reduced to 26 errors resulting in a 10% improvement in correcting their errors. The only category where the errors were improved was in spelling in which three errors were corrected. The other three categories of punctuation, capitalization and lowercase correction remained the same before and after.

Group D, E, F had a total of nine errors in the baseline and resulted in a total of seven after the strategy was taught. This is a 22% improvement in error correction. Once again the only category that noted improvement was spelling, which resulted in two less errors, while the other categories remained the same.
The last group, G, H, I, had an improvement of .08% in improving from 13 total errors to 12 after the strategy. Once again only the spelling category improved by one less error.

In total the baseline errors amounted to 51 and after the strategy there were six less errors, which resulted in a 12% improvement in error correction. As noted above, all six error corrections occurred in the spelling category.

After the four weeks of implementing the strategy, all of the students took the same survey as described in the previous strategy. The graphed results are as follows:

![Peer Editing Survey](image)

As displayed in the graph, the majority of the students, 17, stated that the peer editing strategy was easy to use. Over half of the students, 14, felt that they liked using the strategy. The results were close in the accuracy of correcting their errors. Twelve students stated that they felt that their error correction somewhat improved while 10
stated that their error correction did improve. Over half of the students stated that they would maybe use this technique on their own. In their free response about what was good and bad there were two main areas that students mentioned. In what students thought was good about the strategy, they mentioned having a partner to help and being able to talk to someone about the writing. The two main complaints about the strategy were that not everyone was able to identify the errors in each other’s writing and that while peer editing another classmate’s paper, it was difficult to read their handwriting.

Computer Editing

The last strategy implemented was using the computer to edit their writing. In this strategy students typed their writing on an AlphaSmart, which is basically a student typewriter. On this machine they are able to type their writing and transfer it to the computer. On the computer the students used the “Spelling and Grammar” tool to make corrections in their writing. The chart below displays the results of this strategy:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Baseline Errors</th>
<th>Final Errors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In group A, B, C there was a total of 17% error correction in which there were 35 total errors and then six less errors after the strategy. The biggest error correction improvement was in the spelling category, which decreased by five. The only other category that resulted in change was capitalization, which showed a decrease of one error.

Group D, E, F displayed no change at all in the use of this strategy. In the baseline and after the implemented strategy there were seven errors. In this group spelling, punctuation and lowercase correction resulted in two or fewer errors. Capitalization had the most errors with four.

Group G, H, I had a 45% error correction improvement with a baseline of 11 errors and resulting in five less errors. Spelling noted the most improvement in which there were three errors in the baseline and all errors were corrected. Punctuation and lowercase correction remained the same with two errors each. Capitalization decreased from four to two errors.

In total, all of the groups had 53 errors in their baseline writings and after the implemented strategy there were nine less resulting in a 21% error correction improvement. The most notable category that displayed the most improvement was spelling. There was a 57% error correction improvement in which the baseline total errors were 14 and after the strategy there were eight fewer errors.
Following the strategy all of the students took the same strategy as the previous two strategies. The graph below displays the results:

![Computer Editing Survey Graph](image)

Of all of the surveys, this strategy had the most positive results. The majority of the students, 21, stated that this strategy was easy to use. Once again, the majority, 17 students, stated that they liked the technique. Nineteen of the students stated that they felt their errors were corrected in the writing. When surveyed about if they would use it on their own in their writing, 12 stated they would and nine replied maybe. In their opinion response there were three main topics. In the good category the response that students referred to the most was that the strategy was easy and simple to use. They also stated that they felt it was most useful in helping them correct their spelling. They also enjoyed the different options of words to choose from when being assisted in spelling. With the options choice in mind, this was also one of the highest complaints because several
students felt that it did not show the correct word they were trying to spell. Another complaint was the amount of time it took to type their writing.

Summary and Further Study

Out of all three strategies the computer editing strategy resulted in the highest error correction at 21%. It was also the strategy that was most liked by the students according to the surveys. The researcher feels that this could also be contributed to the higher technology skills that his students possess.

Although the peer editing strategy was also well liked by students, according to the survey, it resulted in the lowest error correction at 12%. The researcher felt that this strategy was liked by the students because of the immediate feedback received by their peer. At the same time the researcher also felt, as was well expressed by one of the students in they survey, that many students used this strategy as time to visit with a classmate.

The editing checklist resulted in the second highest error correction at 16%. According to the survey the students’ felt most neutral about this strategy. Although their interest was lower for this strategy, this strategy laid the foundation for the editing marks. The researcher found it interesting that this was the first strategy and it contained the most errors in the baseline and final but as the other strategies were implemented the errors were almost reduced by half.

The researcher concludes that instead of only using one strategy or technique to assist in improving students writing, it is beneficial for the students to have a variety of strategies that they can use. In the past the researcher has relied only on the editing
checklist strategy. As displayed by the research, the researcher believes that this is a great strategy to begin with as a foundation to editing. The researcher feels strongly in introducing and implementing the strategies in the same manner as the research project. It would be most beneficial for students to begin with the basic editing marks and checklist, then the peer editing to gather the instant feedback and then use the computer edit as a final strategy for publishing writing pieces in the classroom.

An area of future study would be looking at editing strategies to target a higher error correction percentage in the area of punctuation. Throughout the research the category that received the highest correction percentage in each of the strategies was spelling. This could be that the students are more focused on correcting their spelling and not recognizing correct punctuation marks. In two out of the three strategies punctuation received a zero percent error correction and out of all three the highest percent it reached was .08. It would be the researcher’s hope that the students would develop a more all around complete awareness of editing in their writing.
References


Appendix A

Editing Technique Survey

Now that you have used the editing technique, circle the answer that best fits your opinion.

1. Was the technique easy to use?
   
   Easy       Needed Some Help       Difficult

2. How did you feel about using the technique?
   
   Liked it   Sometimes Good, Sometimes Bad   Hated it

3. Do you feel that the technique helped you correct your errors in your writing?
   
   Yes       Somewhat       No

4. If not asked to, would you ever use this technique on your own writing?
   
   Yes       Maybe       No

5. Use the lines below to write about one thing that you thought was GOOD about the survey and one thing that you thought was BAD.

   Good: ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

   Bad: ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
# A Starter List of Copy Editor’s Symbols

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Instruction</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Symbol" /></td>
<td>Take it out.</td>
<td>I’m a good writer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Symbol" /></td>
<td>Put something in.</td>
<td>good I’m a writer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Symbol" /></td>
<td>Put in space.</td>
<td>I’m a good writer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Symbol" /></td>
<td>Add a period.</td>
<td>I’m a good writer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image5" alt="Symbol" /></td>
<td>Make this a capital letter.</td>
<td>I’m a good writer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image6" alt="Symbol" /></td>
<td>Make this capital letter lowercase.</td>
<td>I’m a good writer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image7" alt="Symbol" /></td>
<td>Correct this spelling error.</td>
<td>I’m a good writer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*From 6+1 Traits of Writing: The Complete Guide, Grades 3 and Up by Ruth Culham (Scholastic, 2003).*

Traits-Based Mini-Lessons for Teaching Writing in Grades 3–4
Scholastic Teaching Resources
Appendix C
Appendix C

Name ____________________________

Date ______  Title __________________

**Peer Editing**

Use the checklist to check your own writing carefully.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I read the paper for meaning.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I checked the paper for complete</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sentences.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I used correct grammar principles.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I used a dictionary to check spelling.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I double-checked for correct spelling.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All sentences start with a capital</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>letter.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proper nouns are capitalized.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each sentence ends with proper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>punctuation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commas and quotation marks are used</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>correctly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I reread the paper carefully for all</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>errors.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If anything is marked "No", go back and correct the errors.

Then find another student to peer edit your paper using the checklist on the back.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I read the paper for meaning.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I checked the paper for complete</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sentences.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I double-checked for correct spelling.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All sentences start with a capital</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>letter.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each sentence ends with proper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>punctuation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commas and quotation marks are used</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>correctly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I reread the paper carefully for all</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>errors.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If anything is marked "No", go back and correct the errors.

Then find another student to peer edit your paper using the checklist on the back.
Peer Editing

Use the checklist to check your classmates writing carefully.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I read the work for meaning. It makes sense.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I checked the work for clear and complete sentences.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I checked the spelling using a dictionary.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I read the work for correct word usage that often gets mistaken (to, too, two, they’re, their, etc.) and grammar principles.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The first word in all sentences starts with a capital letter.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proper nouns that name a specific person, place, or thing have been capitalized.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each sentence ends with the punctuation mark.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commas are used in any series of three or more things (apples, oranges, and pears).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quotation marks begin and end words that someone says.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I reread the document carefully for all errors.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If anything is marked “No”, please discuss and show the writer where errors need to be corrected.

Editor’s Signature ____________________________