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Peer-to-Peer Practice Submission Form

Demographics

Institution: Jefferson County Board of Education

Public/Non-public	Public	# Elementary Schools	7
Beginning Grade	PK	# Middle Schools	2
Ending Grade	12	# High Schools	1
Enrollment	7566	# Unit Schools	0
		# Other	0

Practice

Practice ID: 2863

1. Name of Peer-to-Peer Practice* Write Away
2. Primary Contact Name* Dr. Archie Bone
3. District Name* Jefferson County Board of Education
4. Submission Date

5. Description of this practice: Briefly describe what you were trying to accomplish; how it was implemented; and what evidence you have that it worked.*

What we were trying to accomplish:

Write Away is a professional development project whose goal is to improve composition skills for grades 9-12 through a school-wide writing initiative based on the Four Square Writing Graphic Organizer developed by Judith S. and Evan Gould.

How it was implemented:

The identification of this goal was based on the district's performance on the state writing assessment. The project was designed to increase student composition skills and to train all content area educators in the use of a graphic organizer, the writing process, and holistic scoring.

The project goal was to instruct learners to conceptualize, understand, and structure a piece of written discourse. The aim of the professional development that was a part of the project was to provide educators in content areas beyond language arts, the expertise and confidence in their skills as instructors of writing, so that it becomes an integral part of their instruction. The professional development sessions were held throughout the school year and were organized to address specific composition instructional areas:

- An Introduction to Four Square Graphic Organizer
- Holistic Scoring, Anchor Paper Scoring
- The Persuasive Essay
- Improving Composition Skills,
- The Hook and Transition Words
- Writing Across the Curriculum
- Vocabulary Development, Figurative Language, Building Your Vocabulary,
- Tennessee's Academic Vocabulary
- Evaluation and Improvement Strategies

The students participated in monthly writing practices based on universal prompts which were scored holistically by classroom teachers. Through professional development the teachers were trained in conferencing with students about their compositions and tracking of student progress was conducted by counselors and reported to the principals.

Evidence of Success:

Prior to teacher training and implementation, our high school had only 2% of the eleventh graders perform at the highest level (a score of 6)

on the state's writing assessment. After the first year of the project implementation, that number increased to 6%. Students performing at the next highest level (a score of 5) prior to the project was 15%, however that number doubled to 30% after the first year. The success of this project was also evident at the low end of the spectrum. Students who performed at the lowest level (a score of 1) was 2% prior to the project, but decreased in half to 1% after one year of implementation. Students who scored a 2 on the state test decreased from 7% to 2% after the first year. Most impressive was the improvement of students who scored a 3, decreasing from 25% to 9% in a one year period of time.

6. Reason for practice: Describe the problem(s) or need(s) you addressed with this practice.*

Problem or Need:

Although performance at the elementary level was acceptable, the secondary level outcome was poor. To address this need, the Write Away program was implemented. The Four Square graphic organizer had already been successfully implemented in the elementary classrooms, so the inclusion of it in secondary instruction was the next step. Secondary students are on block scheduling. Some students have a year's time pass between English classes and were not being provided consistent instruction in the writing process. Educators who were not English teachers were wary of writing and avoided including composition in their classroom assignments because they did not feel confident in the instruction or the amount of time they felt would be required to mark errors in the scoring of compositions. As students move to the high school from elementary and middle school they were already familiar with the Four Square graphic organizer model so including it at the high school level would require little transition on the part of students.

Through this project, students were provided consistent opportunity to write, teachers were provided the skills required instructing and scoring compositions and as a result student composition skills improved.

7. Subject Area(s): *

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Studies/History |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interdisciplinary | <input type="checkbox"/> Health/Physical Education |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Schoolwide | <input type="checkbox"/> World/Foreign Languages |
| <input type="checkbox"/> English/Language Arts | <input type="checkbox"/> Career/Technical Education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics | <input type="checkbox"/> Fine Arts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Science | <input type="checkbox"/> Extracurricular |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please Specify): | |

8. Grade level(s) of the students targeted for this practice.

Choose all the grade levels that apply.*

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 9 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> All Students | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 10 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PreK | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 11 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> K | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 6 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7 | <input type="checkbox"/> 13 or higher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 8 | |

9. Group(s) of students targeted for this practice. Choose all groups that apply.*

- Not Applicable
- All Students
- Specific Ethnic Group
- Free or Reduced Lunch
- IEP or Special Education
- LEP or Limited English

Advanced Other (Please Specify)

10. Group(s) of adults targeted for this practice. Choose all groups that apply.*

- Not Applicable Custodial and Maintenance Staff
- Administrators and Supervisors Food Services Staff
- Classroom Teachers Security Staff
- Professional Support Staff Parents
- Aides Community Members
- Secretarial and Clerical Staff

11. Choose the length of time this practice was implemented.*

- Less than 1 school year
- 1 - 3 school years
- 4 - 6 school years
- More than 6 school years

12. Resources: Briefly describe the essential human, material, and financial resources needed to implement this practice.*

The main resource needed to implement this practice is time for professional development. The key to the success of the professional development is involvement by all educators.

The Reading Specialist in collaboration with the secondary curriculum supervisor provided training for the middle and secondary teachers and administrators. The Reading Specialist and Literacy Coaches trained the elementary teachers and administrators. Initial training was delivered in several half-day sessions. Instruction for teachers regarding prompt-writing was also provided in the latter phase of this project. Currently, in the fourth year of implementation, teacher-created prompts are customized to the appropriate content area of instruction in order to provide authentic writing experiences for students.

Ongoing instructional support was made available through literacy personnel and the resources posted at the Literacy Lane and Literacy Off Ramp links (See Quicklinks) on the Jefferson County Schools website (<http://jc-schools.net/>) The professional development sessions and all resources required to implement this project are available on our website and can be downloaded freely (<http://jc-schools.net/writeaway>).

No tangible materials were required for this project. Since this project was implemented by system-level personnel, no additional financial resources were required.

Optional: Indicate any specific material resources or tools that support this practice.

Content Id	Name	Submission Date	Status
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13. Research: Identify any research you are aware of that supports this practice.

Hillocks (1986; 1995) meta-analysis of writing instructional research gives four findings that support the type of writing instruction that we are doing in our schools. Research finding #1 tells us that we need to focus on teaching students how to write, not just about writing. A focus on inquiry, writing scales, and utilization of a model are aspects of how our Four Square Writing graphic organizer helps to teach students how to write in an acceptable and conventional form.

Research finding #2 tells us that students learn how to write better when they are actively engaged in writing activities, rather than just listening to the teacher explain the writing process. Using the Four Square Model and a prompt creates a highly engaging writing activity for students.

Research finding #3 tells us that students learn how to write better when their writing activities are designed and supervised by the teacher rather than being presented by the teacher. The Four Square Model provides for the balance between teacher-centered and student-centered instruction.

Finally, Research finding #4 tells us that students must learn how to read and evaluate their own papers for specific criteria. Our instructional model incorporates a 1-6 scoring rubric on which both teachers and students rely to evaluate their writing. All four research findings by Hillocks are well represented in the Four Square Model.

14. Conclusion: Describe your next steps in implementing this practice.*

The second year of the project we did not provide as much professional development and there was a not as much emphasis on composition. As a result there was a slight slippage in achievement, specifically in the top range of scores. This is the third year of the project. The high school faculty and administrators have strived to provide teachers more freedom in selecting writing prompts related to their specific content area. There was also an interest in obtaining a more specific scoring device. As a result, the English department developed a rubric, which was basically a grading guide. It was very detailed and after using it, many teachers have decided to go back to the state rubric. Another area of concern in the third year of implementation is addressing students with disabilities. A grant was written and an incentive project that would provide before and after school tutoring was

developed. Unfortunately very few students have taken advantage of this opportunity. The principal is monitoring student progress and will work with the faculty and central office supervisors to determine how to adjust the program for the upcoming school year.

15. Contact Information: Please provide primary and secondary contact information so that other practitioners may contact you:

District Name: Jefferson County Board of Education **District Web Address:** <http://jc-schools.net>

Primary Contact Information

Name* Dr. Archie Bone
Phone Number* 865-397-3194
E-mail Address* finchums@k12tn.net

Secondary Contact Information

Name* Connie Campbell
Phone Number* 865.397.3194
E-mail Address* campbelc@k12tn.net