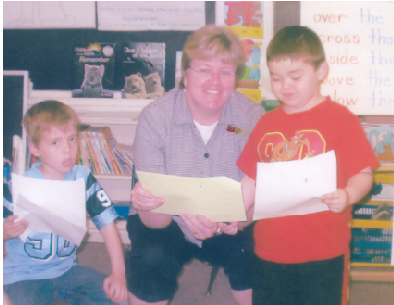


Action Research Writing Team Simcoe Family of Schools' Primary Teachers

An Introduction by Deb Opersko



Prior to beginning my position as the Primary Consultant for the Simcoe Family of Schools two years ago, I completed my first action research project. It was such a positive learning experience and had such a profound effect not only on my professional learning but also on how I now look at teaching, that when I was given an opportunity to lead a group of researchers, I couldn't wait to get started.

During my first year as a consultant, I spent a lot of time in classrooms modelling lessons. I had many conversations with teachers about the writing process and ideas for motivating students to be excited about putting their ideas on paper. Modelling writing, however, is not something that can be done effectively in brief classroom visits. At the end of the year I invited five teachers to join an action research group with a focus on writing. The group members included:

- Kelly Pulham ~ Kindergarten teacher at Boston Public School
- Brenda Follington ~ Grade 1 teacher at Queens Ward Public School
- Jennifer Savage ~ Grade 1 teacher at Teeterville Public School
- Julie McIntyre ~ Grade 2 teacher at Burford Elementary School
- Maureen Murray ~ Grade 3 teacher at Paris Central Public School

I also invited Diane Morgan, who has previously worked with many Grand Erie District School Board (GEDSB) action researchers to help me lead the group. Diane was key in sharing her expertise and in taking the teachers, step by step, through the research process during our meetings. My focus for assistance included providing professional development on how to teach writing based on sound pedagogy and providing mentorship and classroom support.

We had our first meeting in August before the 2003-2004 school year began. At this initial meeting, I shared a variety of teaching aids for use in the classroom that included:

- bulletin board materials (the writing process, editing checklist)
- personal dictionaries
- tracking pages for assessment
- professional reading materials to borrow about writing from my office
- grade specific materials

Each teacher also received a copy of Donald Graves' A Fresh Look at Writing. Grades Kindergarten-2 teachers received a copy of Fountas and Pinnell's Interactive Writing and I gave the Grade 3 teacher a copy of Fountas and Pinnell's Guiding Readers and Writers Grades 3 -6. These books were theirs to keep to support their professional learning.

After that initial meeting, we met on six other afternoons throughout the school year. The meetings were divided into three sections including learning about the research process, learning how to teach writing more

effectively and time for sharing and discussion. I made it a goal to visit each teacher's classroom during the first term to meet her students and get to know her teaching style and beliefs about teaching writing. Initially, I just observed in the classrooms and later kept notes about all the great things I was seeing in my journal. I offered to come into each classroom and model lessons. I took digital photos to support data collection. I led discussion with students to discover how they felt about writing and their teacher being involved in research in their classrooms.

Being an observer allowed me to witness learning that a teacher might not have been aware of because she was concentrating on teaching the lesson. I shared this information through individual discussion with each teacher and by e-mail. If a teacher felt comfortable, I made suggestions for teaching strategies to try. I challenged the teachers to reflect on their practices and to consider what they wanted to improve, extend or change. It was inspiring to see how enthusiastic the teachers were about their research and how engaged their students were.

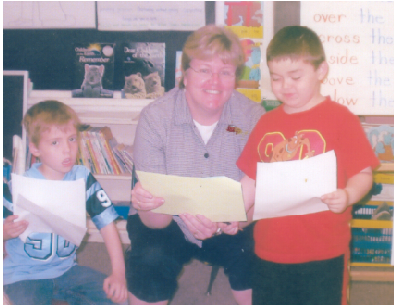
The teachers were invited to attend the Ontario Action Research Conference in Brantford, Ontario. Having an opportunity to meet other researchers and listen to people present their research further helped the members of the group to continue their research journey. I continued to provide additional resources including First Steps writing materials. As a First Steps instructor, I am a strong supporter of these teaching strategies.

As I continued to visit and teach in action research classrooms in the new year, I saw dramatic growth in the writing achievement of the students. Both the teachers and the students were proud of the progress. I was delighted with the variety of teaching strategies and lesson ideas I saw being put into action.

Throughout the following pages the teachers will share with you the questions they chose to explore and the learning that occurred for them and their students. Action research is a very personal journey. I have great admiration for how hard Maureen, Julie, Kelly, Brenda and Jenn worked and I appreciate their willingness to invite me into their wonderful classrooms.

Action Research Writing Team Simcoe Family of Schools' Primary Teachers

An Introduction by Deb Opersko



Prior to beginning my position as the Primary Consultant for the Simcoe Family of Schools two years ago, I completed my first action research project. It was such a positive learning experience and had such a profound effect not only on my professional learning but also on how I now look at teaching, that when I was given an opportunity to lead a group of researchers, I couldn't wait to get started.

During my first year as a consultant, I spent a lot of time in classrooms modelling lessons. I had many conversations with teachers about the writing process and ideas for motivating students to be excited about putting their ideas on paper. Modelling writing, however, is not something that can be done effectively in brief classroom visits. At the end of the year I invited five teachers to join an action research group with a focus on writing. The group members included:

- Kelly Pulham ~ Kindergarten teacher at Boston Public School
- Brenda Follington ~ Grade 1 teacher at Queens Ward Public School
- Jennifer Savage ~ Grade 1 teacher at Teeterville Public School
- Julie McIntyre ~ Grade 2 teacher at Burford Elementary School
- Maureen Murray ~ Grade 3 teacher at Paris Central Public School

I also invited Diane Morgan, who has previously worked with many Grand Erie District School Board (GEDSB) action researchers to help me lead the group. Diane was key in sharing her expertise and in taking the teachers, step by step, through the research process during our meetings. My focus for assistance included providing professional development on how to teach writing based on sound pedagogy and providing mentorship and classroom support.

We had our first meeting in August before the 2003-2004 school year began. At this initial meeting, I shared a variety of teaching aids for use in the classroom that included:

- bulletin board materials (the writing process, editing checklist)
- personal dictionaries
- tracking pages for assessment
- professional reading materials to borrow about writing from my office
- grade specific materials

Each teacher also received a copy of Donald Graves' A Fresh Look at Writing. Grades Kindergarten-2 teachers received a copy of Fountas and Pinnell's Interactive Writing and I gave the Grade 3 teacher a copy of Fountas and Pinnell's Guiding Readers and Writers Grades 3 -6. These books were theirs to keep to support their professional learning.

After that initial meeting, we met on six other afternoons throughout the school year. The meetings were divided into three sections including learning about the research process, learning how to teach writing more

effectively and time for sharing and discussion. I made it a goal to visit each teacher's classroom during the first term to meet her students and get to know her teaching style and beliefs about teaching writing. Initially, I just observed in the classrooms and later kept notes about all the great things I was seeing in my journal. I offered to come into each classroom and model lessons. I took digital photos to support data collection. I led discussion with students to discover how they felt about writing and their teacher being involved in research in their classrooms.

Being an observer allowed me to witness learning that a teacher might not have been aware of because she was concentrating on teaching the lesson. I shared this information through individual discussion with each teacher and by e-mail. If a teacher felt comfortable, I made suggestions for teaching strategies to try. I challenged the teachers to reflect on their practices and to consider what they wanted to improve, extend or change. It was inspiring to see how enthusiastic the teachers were about their research and how engaged their students were.

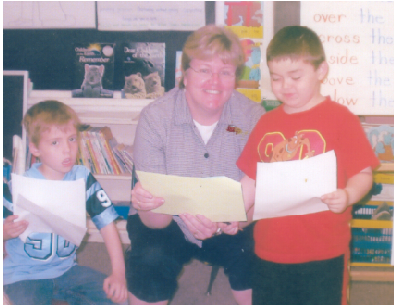
The teachers were invited to attend the Ontario Action Research Conference in Brantford, Ontario. Having an opportunity to meet other researchers and listen to people present their research further helped the members of the group to continue their research journey. I continued to provide additional resources including First Steps writing materials. As a First Steps instructor, I am a strong supporter of these teaching strategies.

As I continued to visit and teach in action research classrooms in the new year, I saw dramatic growth in the writing achievement of the students. Both the teachers and the students were proud of the progress. I was delighted with the variety of teaching strategies and lesson ideas I saw being put into action.

Throughout the following pages the teachers will share with you the questions they chose to explore and the learning that occurred for them and their students. Action research is a very personal journey. I have great admiration for how hard Maureen, Julie, Kelly, Brenda and Jenn worked and I appreciate their willingness to invite me into their wonderful classrooms.

Action Research Writing Team Simcoe Family of Schools' Primary Teachers

An Introduction by Deb Opersko



Prior to beginning my position as the Primary Consultant for the Simcoe Family of Schools two years ago, I completed my first action research project. It was such a positive learning experience and had such a profound effect not only on my professional learning but also on how I now look at teaching, that when I was given an opportunity to lead a group of researchers, I couldn't wait to get started.

During my first year as a consultant, I spent a lot of time in classrooms modelling lessons. I had many conversations with teachers about the writing process and ideas for motivating students to be excited about putting their ideas on paper. Modelling writing, however, is not something that can be done effectively in brief classroom visits. At the end of the year I invited five teachers to join an action research group with a focus on writing. The group members included:

- Kelly Pulham ~ Kindergarten teacher at Boston Public School
- Brenda Follington ~ Grade 1 teacher at Queens Ward Public School
- Jennifer Savage ~ Grade 1 teacher at Teeterville Public School
- Julie McIntyre ~ Grade 2 teacher at Burford Elementary School
- Maureen Murray ~ Grade 3 teacher at Paris Central Public School

I also invited Diane Morgan, who has previously worked with many Grand Erie District School Board (GEDSB) action researchers to help me lead the group. Diane was key in sharing her expertise and in taking the teachers, step by step, through the research process during our meetings. My focus for assistance included providing professional development on how to teach writing based on sound pedagogy and providing mentorship and classroom support.

We had our first meeting in August before the 2003-2004 school year began. At this initial meeting, I shared a variety of teaching aids for use in the classroom that included:

- bulletin board materials (the writing process, editing checklist)
- personal dictionaries
- tracking pages for assessment
- professional reading materials to borrow about writing from my office
- grade specific materials

Each teacher also received a copy of Donald Graves' A Fresh Look at Writing. Grades Kindergarten-2 teachers received a copy of Fountas and Pinnell's Interactive Writing and I gave the Grade 3 teacher a copy of Fountas and Pinnell's Guiding Readers and Writers Grades 3 -6. These books were theirs to keep to support their professional learning.

After that initial meeting, we met on six other afternoons throughout the school year. The meetings were divided into three sections including learning about the research process, learning how to teach writing more

effectively and time for sharing and discussion. I made it a goal to visit each teacher's classroom during the first term to meet her students and get to know her teaching style and beliefs about teaching writing. Initially, I just observed in the classrooms and later kept notes about all the great things I was seeing in my journal. I offered to come into each classroom and model lessons. I took digital photos to support data collection. I led discussion with students to discover how they felt about writing and their teacher being involved in research in their classrooms.

Being an observer allowed me to witness learning that a teacher might not have been aware of because she was concentrating on teaching the lesson. I shared this information through individual discussion with each teacher and by e-mail. If a teacher felt comfortable, I made suggestions for teaching strategies to try. I challenged the teachers to reflect on their practices and to consider what they wanted to improve, extend or change. It was inspiring to see how enthusiastic the teachers were about their research and how engaged their students were.

The teachers were invited to attend the Ontario Action Research Conference in Brantford, Ontario. Having an opportunity to meet other researchers and listen to people present their research further helped the members of the group to continue their research journey. I continued to provide additional resources including First Steps writing materials. As a First Steps instructor, I am a strong supporter of these teaching strategies.

As I continued to visit and teach in action research classrooms in the new year, I saw dramatic growth in the writing achievement of the students. Both the teachers and the students were proud of the progress. I was delighted with the variety of teaching strategies and lesson ideas I saw being put into action.

Throughout the following pages the teachers will share with you the questions they chose to explore and the learning that occurred for them and their students. Action research is a very personal journey. I have great admiration for how hard Maureen, Julie, Kelly, Brenda and Jenn worked and I appreciate their willingness to invite me into their wonderful classrooms.