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Editing and Revising With and Without Peers: Do Students Produce Better Writing Through

Peer Writing Conferences?

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Abstract

This mixed methods study will investigate the effects of peer-editing as compared to self-editing on a writing assignment. Collaborative practices such as peer-editing have been found in previous studies to improve student writing (Abadikhah & Yasami, 2014; Alfassi, 2009; Baleghizadeh, 2010; Orly-Louis & Soidet, 2008; Storch, 2005; Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2014; Woo, Chu, & Li, 2013). Although some studies have interviewed students who have engaged in collaborative writing practices like peer-editing, few have also interviewed students in the same study who were assigned to the independent writing condition. This study investigates both student perspectives from those who collaborated to those who did not collaborate during a writing workshop. There was no statistically significant difference between the quality of writing produced by the collaborative and independent condition. Students had a preference for working with a peer during the writing workshop. The study suggests further research in the conditions of editing and revising to find best pedagogical practices to aid student writing.

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Introduction

Reading and writing are fundamental to all aspects of learning and allow expressions of ideas creating communication among learners for examination of new thoughts, concepts, and perspectives. However, those who lack the ability or motivation to write are unable to communicate their ideas to their fellow learners. The National Institute For Literacy (NIFL) reported in 2007 that American students are underprepared for the writing demands that they will face as working adults in the 21st century.

Although there are probably many reasons as to why American students are underprepared for writing, writing is also a task that is difficult to do well. Troia, Harbaugh, Shankland, Wolbers, & Lawrence (2012) explain that writing "tasks often are inherently difficult for the writer because they tax numerous lower- and higher-order psycholinguistic processes that are situated within a dynamic motivational state" (p. 18). Writing is a cognitively demanding activity and the willingness or motivation to engage in such a cognitively demanding process can be difficult for students to find. Students who are not motivated in a task are less likely to engage in the task and learn from in it meaningful ways. So how do we begin to teach students how to write (and write well) if they are unwilling to write?

Many researchers and practitioners are using collaboration to entice their students to write. In theory writing collaboratively makes the task of writing less cognitively demanding as well as less intimidating to the student. Interventions that have successfully implemented collaborative writing fostered improvements in students' writing (Alfassi, 2009; Orly-Louis & Soidet, 2008). Collaborative writing practices can be easy to implement in most contexts as there is a range of flexibility in the level of collaboration allowed from students co-authoring a written piece to peer-editing in a writing conference. Co-authoring or co-constructing in writing is when

two or more students write collaboratively to complete a writing assignment. A writing conference is when a student either meets with the teacher (teacher-student writing conference) or with at least one other student (student-student or peer writing conference) to discuss the students writing as well as make suggestions for its' improvement. Other ways that have been effective ways to scaffold writing for students is giving students a choice in writing assignments and using direct instruction to teach writing strategies (Graham & Perrin, 2007).

Although collaborative writing can be easy to implement in most contexts, there are contexts where collaborative writing may not be appropriate or well suited for students. The research here will examine collaborative and independent writing through writing workshops and writing conferences. A writing workshop refers to the time or activity designated to facilitate improvement or revision of a writing assignment. Writing workshops and writing conferences can help students to revise their writing with global and local concerns. Global or higher-order concerns refer to issues in a student's writing that affect the piece overall (i.e. organization of ideas) whereas local or low-level concerns affect individual instances in the writing (i.e. misspelling of a word). The proposed research specifically will investigate the following question: how does peer-editing and self-editing of a writing assignment affect the quality of a student's finished product? The research hopes to make recommendations for collaborative and independent editing and revising context through the examination of the research question. To begin investigating this question, the conditions and features of collaborative writing interventions will be reviewed to see if similar features can be replicated and controlled in an independent writing activity.

Literature Review

Researchers have investigated writing interventions that can help reduce the cognitive load experienced by students as they write. A possible solution that has been investigated by a plethora of researchers is to allow student collaboration in various writing activities. This literature review focuses on the different conditions and contexts present in collaborative interventions for writing oriented activities across each element of the writing process. The review will investigate how collaboration is used in various classroom settings to determine recurring benefits or detriments to students' writing development and success. The design and implementation of collaborative activities and interventions in the literature reviewed will also be considered to inform how collaboration should be used in the proposed research.

The review contains various contexts ranging from the elementary level to the post-secondary level. Settings are not limited to language arts or English classrooms so as to include writing interventions that could be further investigated in the specific context of the proposed research. The ability for 21st century technology to facilitate writing collaboration is also reviewed to determine if technology is necessary to implement the proposed research.

Student Attitudes about Writing and Collaboration in the Classroom

A child's writing improves as they progress through their education, but as children enter adolescence they often report writing to be less enjoyable and perceive it to be more applicable to their future adult life (Troia, Harbaugh, Shankland, Wolbers, & Lawrence, 2012;Werderich & Armstrong, 2013). Although there are some adolescents that are exceptions to this trend, it appears that a key motivation for older adolescents to engage in writing activities is the anticipated need for writing in their future adult lives. Adolescents that report writing outside of school and for various purposes tend to write better and find writing more enjoyable than their

peers who only write in school (Troia et al., 2012). However, the adolescents who do not write outside of school may elect not to because of disinterest or struggles with writing.

One way that instructors can try to create classrooms that encourage students to work on and develop knowledge and skills they are lacking is through collaboration-oriented activities. When dialogic collaborative and shared activities are introduced to the language arts classroom, students' reading and writing improve (Alfassi, 2009; Orly-Louis & Soidet, 2008). Alfassi (2009) demonstrated this through instruction, whereas Orly-Louis and Soidet (2008) focused on specific assignments. Students that are allowed even partial collaboration in individual writing assignments make gains in writing achievement (Orly-Louis & Soidet, 2008). Alfassi (2009) and Orly-Louis and Soidet were able to prove these gains in writing through pre-tests and post-tests as well as examination of student writing samples. A meta-analysis of writing intervention research for grades 4 through 12 done by Graham and Perin (2007) concurs that allowing students to work with peers helps to improve student writing. Other strategies for instructors to use to improve students' writing also include instruction for planning, revising and editing, summarization of reading material, setting clear goals for student writing, and allowing students to use word processors (Graham & Perin, 2007).

Research has shown that the way educators structure collaboration and dialogue between and among students influences the level of depth and collaboration that students receive. Chinn, O'Donnell, and Jinks (2000) found that collaborative activities facilitating the debate of ideas lead to greater understanding of content knowledge. Specifically, Chinn, O'Donnell, and Jinks (2000) examined the ability of fifth grade students to write their own conclusions about a science experiment after they had evaluated assumptions they were given about the experiment. The students had to evaluate the assumptions under one of two conditions: the student had to denote

three given assumptions by saying it was "Ok" or "Not ok", or the student had to pick the best assumption of the three and defend his choice to his classmates. The condition where students had to pick the best assumptions led to more complex argumentative discussions among students. As students engage in more complex collaborative multi-faceted arguments, their ability to write their own summation of what happened in the experiment and what they learned improved (Chinn et al., 200). Similarly to Chinn et al.'s study, Orly-Louis and Soidet (2008) found that as collaboration between students was more concentrated and required more interaction and discourse, students' writing improved.

Collaborative writing activities and second language learners. If writing in one's native language is cognitively demanding, it can be argued then that writing in a second language places more cognitive demand on the learner. The potential benefits and limitations of collaborative writing activities have been investigated extensively in L2 (second language learning) settings, primarily at the secondary and post-secondary school level. The primary goal of most of these studies is to determine techniques to help L2 students acquire the second language. However, there is the potential that the kinds of linguistic gains L2 students achieve through writing collaboratively could mirror similar gains that non-L2 students make in writing when working collaboratively.

Small group work and paired activities have been used in L2 classrooms as a way to facilitate constructivist approaches to learning a language (Storch, 2005). Although a majority of these activities are centered on oral practice, there are gains found in having collaborative writing activities for L2 students. L2 learners are more likely to practice self-revision when working with a partner rather than solely depending on teacher feedback because L2 students who only receive corrections from a teacher are more likely to believe "that corrections could

only be accurate when provided by their teacher" (Woo, Chu, & Li, 2013, p. 281). Perceiving the

teacher as an "all knowing authority" can be detrimental to a student's self-efficacy for both L2

and L1 students alike (Bayraktar, 2013; Gielen, Tops, Dochy, Onghena, & Smeets, 2010;

Ulichny & Watson-Gegeo, 1989; Woo et al., 2013).

Although L2 students produce better writing and editing corrections of a second language

text, the improvements are usually limited to local or low level concerns (i.e. grammar and

spelling) and do not show substantial gains in global or higher-order concerns (i.e. organization)

(Abadikhah & Yasami, 2014; Baleghizadeh, 2010). Baleghizadeh (2010) and Abadikhah and

Yasami (2014) both found participants who engaged in collaborative writing activities improved

primarily in grammar and word choice, but significant improvements were not found in higher-

order concerns. Baleghizadeh (2010) was also able to determine that more complex grammar

rules did not improve as much as lower level grammar rules. Abadikhah and Yasami (2014)

suggest that part of the reason for improvement in grammar and no change in higher-order

concerns can be attributed to the editing training participants received before engaging in peer-

editing as the training focused primarily on grammatical errors.

Storch (2005) similarly determined that when students worked in pairs they produce

writing with fewer errors than students who chose to work individually. However, Storch (2005)

found that paired writers also produced more complex writing whereas individual L2 writers

would restate information in unnecessary detail and avoid making complex structures or

generalizations. Storch (2005) was also able to investigate L2 learners' attitudes towards

working with a partner through interviews. Students who reported an overall positive experience

with collaborative writing supplied the reason that it gave "an opportunity to compare ideas and

to learn from each other different ways of expressing their ideas" (Storch, 2005, p. 166).

Primary L2 students can also benefit from collaborative editing. Woo et al. (2013) studied upper primary students collaborating and editing through the use of wikis. Participants were given a training on how to edit and comment on their peers' writing, but unlike the training in Abadikhah and Yasami (2014) study, the training was focused more on higher-order concerns than low level concerns (Woo et al., 2013). However, Woo et al. (2013) also found that, although more comments were made addressing higher-order concerns and meaning, comments that addressed low-level concerns in some instances sparked revisions that not only addressed the low-level concern but also translated to improved writing in regards to higher-order concerns (Woo et al., 2013).

Technology Facilitating Collaborative Writing

If we are to implement collaborative writing activities into the classroom, it is important that those activities do not further burden students by making collaboration arduous or difficult to achieve. The research done by Woo et al. (2013) used wikis as other studies have demonstrated that "the accessibility, simplicity, openness and unstructured nature of wiki pages help learners to share information and resources among their teams, and make it easier for students to work at their own pace" (Woo et al., 2013, p. 282). Many researchers like Woo et al. (2013) and practitioners are excited by the potential of technology to make collaboration easier for students. When designing collaborative activities it is important that the activities easily facilitate collaboration between the students. Technology's ability to provide accessible collaboration has led to the investigation of writing collaboration facilitated by technology.

It is important to note that it is not the technology itself but the learning environment it creates and the manner that students interact with technology that will determine whether or not it is effective in improving student writing (Acker & Halasek, 2008; Erkens, Jaspers, Prangsma,

Kanselaar, 2005; Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2014; Yang & Wu, 2011). Technology can assist student writing through two avenues of collaboration: co-construction with other students and peer or teacher feedback.

Acker and Halasek (2008) demonstrated that use of an ePortfolio with teacher feedback could assist high school students as they transition to college. The disconnect between high school and college writing expectations can negatively impact first year college students' academic self-concept as the writing they produced as high school student is no longer seen as high quality work (Acker & Halasek, 2008). Acker and Halasek (2008) proposed to solve this problem by allowing high school and college educators to comment on writing of high school students in their terminal year. Although Acker and Halasek (2008) could not isolate the type of feedback (as both low-level and high-order concerns were addressed by educators) or style of feedback that was most effective for students, it was surmised that the quantity and quality of feedback helped to significantly improve students' writing from initial to final draft.

Yang and Wu (2011) also investigated feedback and revision facilitated through technology, however, instead of having educators provide the feedback, students were allowed to comment and suggest revisions to their peers' writing. Only 6 of the 25 participants made higher-order revisions while the remaining participants focused only on low-level revisions (Yang & Wu, 2011). However, this trend seemed to reflect on the confidence and editing skills of the participants and not the usability of the online program. From the revisions that students made, Yang and Wu (2011) established that "students who made only local revisions had difficulties finding and correcting peer writers' errors. They only focused on grammatical errors without providing suggestions in terms of style, development, and organization of texts" (p.12).

When students collaborate to co-construct a final product, it is important to consider the process and the collaboration that actually took place between the students. Suwantarathip and Wichadee (2014) examined students who collaborated face-to-face in class as opposed to students who collaborated via Google Docs. Although the group using the Google Docs had significantly better scores on their final product than their counterparts who met in class (Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2014), it is likely that other conditions could have accounted for this difference. The Google Docs editing history could be monitored by the teacher which the researchers postulated could have enticed students who used the Google Docs to participate and collaborate more than they would have otherwise (Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2014). Students in the Google Doc group also did not have the same constraint on time as they could collaborate as much as they wanted to outside of class; a benefit the face-to-face group did not have (Suwantarathip & Wichadee). Erkens et al. (2005), while using a more structured collaboration program than Google Docs, found that the technology itself did not meaningfully impact the quality of student co-constructed papers unless the tools within the program to facilitate collaboration were used appropriately. Erkens et al. (2005), however, was able to identify specific tasks that influence the quality of the written product. More time spent on tasks centered on planning and coordinating of writing activities was pivotal to writing quality (Erkens et al., 2005).

The Writing Conference

Collaboration where a student receives editing and revising suggestions in person with either a peer or a teacher is often referred to as a writing conference. There are concerns over which type of writing conference (student to student or teacher to student) is more effective or more appropriate for a given context.

The teacher-student writing conference. Practitioners who oppose using teacher-student writing conferences cite lack of time to give each student an effective writing conference as well as assert that teacher feedback is "often not understood or is misinterpreted by students as it is associated to discourse that is not directly accessible to students" (Gielen et al., 2010, p. 145). That is to say more simply that teacher feedback is more likely to lead to misunderstanding or miscommunication between the teacher and student. There is also the potential fear that lower achieving students may experience negative effects whether from misunderstanding the teacher or feeling embarrassed during the teacher writing conference (Gulley, 2012). This fear echoes the earlier concern with L2 perceiving the teacher as all knowing can inadvertently impact the student's perception of their ability and command of language (Bayraktar, 2013; Gielen et al., 2010; Ulichny & Watson-Gegeo, 1989; Woo et al., 2013)   A teacher-student writing conference also establishes the same social pattern as the teacher instructing the whole class: "writing conference demonstrated features similar to other instances of teacher-student classroom talk in which the teacher controls access to the speaking floor and monitors contributions to the content of discourse" (Ulichny & Watson-Gegeo, 1989, p. 311).

Bayraktar (2013) examined the nature of teacher-student writing conferences and whether there was any relationship to the students' self-efficacy beliefs. Bayraktar observed the writing conferences in a fifth grade classroom as well as interviewed students about their writing and self-efficacy beliefs. Students who were more confident were more likely to be proactive in seeking help from the teacher during a writing conference (Bayraktar, 2013). Bayraktar (2013) was also able to determine that finding something to praise in the writing of less confident students was important to fostering and developing the self-efficacy beliefs of less confident students. A noticeable drawback from the writing conferences in Bayraktar's (2013) study was

the limited time given to students. Writing conferences ranged from under a minute long to just above ten minutes (Bayraktar, 2013). A more troubling observation was "that there was in fact limited discussion about the content of the student's paper" (Bayraktar, 2013, p. 77). A majority of the writing conferences Bayraktar (2013) analyzed were considered focused because at least one writing concern was addressed. Although the student's motivation and development of the writing topic were briefly discussed in most conferences, neither the teacher nor the student initiated more in depth discussion about the content (Bayraktar, 2013). Writing conferences with this type of interaction did not fully allow for the realization of student ownership of their work or have a more student controlled writing conference agenda (Bayraktar, 2013).

The student-student writing conference. Practitioners who avoid student-student writing conferences fear that students will not receive adequate feedback or even feedback that could misdirect them (Gielen et al., 2010). There are benefits to peer writing conferences as students are more likely to perform better for fear of embarrassment for demonstrating incompetency in front of a peer, and students as equals might be more likely to establish trust in a writing conference (Gielen et al., 2010). Gielen et al. (2010) further demonstrated that seventh grade students who received feedback only from their teacher on writing assignment as opposed to students who only had peer feedback had no statistically significant differences between their writing. Gielen et al. (2010) gave students a writing pre-test and after six months of instruction and writing activities the students were given a writing post-test. Throughout the six months several writing assignments were given for which some students received teacher-feedback and others received peer-feedback. In the long term, no significant difference in writing gains was found between the students who received teacher-feedback as opposed to the students who received peer-feedback.

Conclusion and Gaps in the Literature

Allowing collaboration among students on writing activities has been demonstrated to allow students to improve their writing skills as well as help to scaffold the knowledge and skills of their fellow classmates. The positive effects that students experience from collaborating in writing activities extends not just to their course work in their native language but also for writing to learn their second language. Collaboration activities, however, must be designed so as to foster deep understanding and true collaboration among students. Although teachers can participate in collaborative efforts with their students through writing conferences, it is generally more practical if the teacher assumes the role of facilitator of collaboration rather than the role of collaborator. Students are also found to be more effective editors and collaborators if students are instructed or given protocols on how to edit or collaborate.

The research in peer and self-revision of a written text under review took place in an L2 context and more often in a post-secondary school context. It is difficult to determine if results found in L2 contexts could be replicated in an L1 context. Similarly, it is not feasible to extend the results of post-secondary contexts to secondary contexts. Few studies were done in a high school context specifically.

The research primarily depended on quasi-experimental designs using quantitative data to determine the effectiveness of an intervention. Some studies attempted a mixed-methods approach, but ultimately those studies relied heavily either on researcher observations or the quantitative data. Few of the mixed-methods studies gained substantial insight from participant interviews and would usually only provide anecdotal snippets from interviews rather than coded themes.

There is also a lack of literature that considers whether or not the individual can experience the same benefits as their peers who collaborate via editing and revising if the individual is given structure or protocols to edit that would induce the kind of reflection that is more easily accessible through collaboration. Student interviews that investigate how useful the students perceive peer editing and revising and self-editing and revising with guiding protocols would be interesting to obtain.

Methods

The objective of this research was to investigate the effects of collaborative peer revision and editing as compared to self-editing and revision on a writing assignment. As part of Virginia's (the location of the action research) state curriculum standards or the Standards of Learning (SOLS) English 11 students are required to write in various forms with an emphasis on persuasion. Students engaged in editing and revising with a peer or individually editing and revising their own writing. The writing from students who collaborated and those who did not were evaluated and compared to each other to determine if there was any significant difference in the writing produced by the students. Students' attitudes towards the collaboration process and its perceived effect on their writing were also investigated.

Location and Participants

The action research was conducted at a suburban high school in central Virginia. The school approximately serves 1,300 to 1,400 students. The population of the school is racially diverse. About one third of the school's population qualifies for free lunch and or reduced lunch.

The research occurred in two 11th grade advanced English classes with students ages 16 to 17. A total of 18 students participated in the study with 8 in the independent condition and 10 in the collaborative condition. The sample was 83% female and 17% male. The racial makeup of the sample was 56% Caucasian, 22% African American, 17% Hispanic, and 5% Asian. The racial makeup of the sample closely reflected the racial makeup of the high school where the research took place.

Data Collection

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected for the research. The quantitative data was derived from the rubric scores of the students' argumentative essays (Appendix A).

Qualitative data was collected after the students had turned in their final draft of the argumentative essay. Seven students were interviewed individually (for interview questions refer to Appendix C) about their experience editing and revising the essay. Students were selected for interviews based on how well their essay scored on the rubric so as to have a sample of students whose essays scored above the class average, at the class average, and below the class average. The goal of the interview was to provide qualitative data from the student's perspective so as to better understand how the students interacted with the treatment and how that interaction may have influenced their essay score.

Procedure

A five paragraph argumentative essay was assigned to the students. The students chose a topic from three writing prompts given by the researcher. In about a week, the students completed a first draft. Students brought their draft to class to participate in a writing workshop. One of the classes revised their essays under the condition of working collaboratively during the workshop whereas the other class worked independently to revise their essays. Before each class began its writing workshop, the researcher instructed the students on how they should edit or revise the paper. Both the students who work individually as well as the students who work collaboratively used a guiding worksheet (Appendix B) to revise the essay. The worksheet required students to review specific components of the essay and rate them as *Good as Is, Developing,* or *Needs Improvement*. Students wrote suggestions for improvement on the worksheet as well as marked specific instances of local or global problems in the essay. Students in the collaborative condition, however, were instructed to not correct mistakes by providing the correct spelling, subject-verb agreement, rewriting the sentence etc. Students did not provide exact corrections for their partner because it would not accurately reflect on whether or not the

author of the essay was more likely to improve their writing based the condition of working individually or collaboratively during the writing workshop. Giving exact corrections to partners would mean that the author of the essay is no longer the individual editing and revising their essay. The partner should help students to identify where mistakes exist in their essay, but the participant is responsible for evaluating if a revision should be made and how it should be made. Preforming comprehensive editing and revising for another student is also considered as a form of plagiarism.

After the in class writing workshop, students had approximately another week to revise and edit their essay before they turned in the final draft. The essays were then scored based on a rubric for items like grammar and spelling, strength of argument, organization, and fluency. The overall scores from the rubric as well as scores from specific components of the rubric will be compared between the two groups.

After the final draft was turned in, students from both experiment conditions were selected for interviews. The interviews were semi-structured with the purpose of finding student attitudes towards the writing workshop they engaged in for the essay. Students were interviewed individually and recorded. The interviews were transcribed and coded.

Data Analysis

The overall scores from the rubrics for both groups were compared via a t-test to determine if the scores were significantly different. Scores from specific components of the rubric were also compared by t-test to determine if there was a specific component of the essay that one treatment group did better on than the other treatment group.

The interviews were used to determine the students' thoughts and opinions on working collaboratively and their ability to edit and revise a piece of writing. The interviews were also

used to gain a fuller understanding of the students' perspective during the editing and revising process and what impact they believed it had on their essay. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions were coded to determine any patterns or themes from the interviews. Specifically, students' reactions to the writing workshop were coded as negative or positive as well as their preference to work with a partner or not during the workshop. Recurring reasons or justifications for students' answers were also coded to reflect their specific justification (i.e. *preference for working with a partner* was further coded for things like *having feedback from another person/source*).

Results

The action research sought to answer the question of whether or not collaborative editing and revising significantly improves writing quality. Through the collection of quantitative data the research was able to determine that in the context of this action research study, no significant difference was found between students who received peer feedback as opposed to those who did not. From qualitative data, the action research was able to determine participants' reactions to the intervention as well as their general thoughts on revising and editing so as to have a better understanding of what occurred in the action research.

Quantitative Results

Using numerical scores derived from the rubric, the essays from participants were compared to determine if there was a significant difference in the writing quality produced in each condition. The mean overall student score in the independent writing workshop condition was 10.75 with a standard deviation (SD) of 2.38. The mean overall student score in the collaborative writing workshop condition was 11.1 with a SD of 2.13. Figure 1 shows the raw scores of each essay from both conditions.
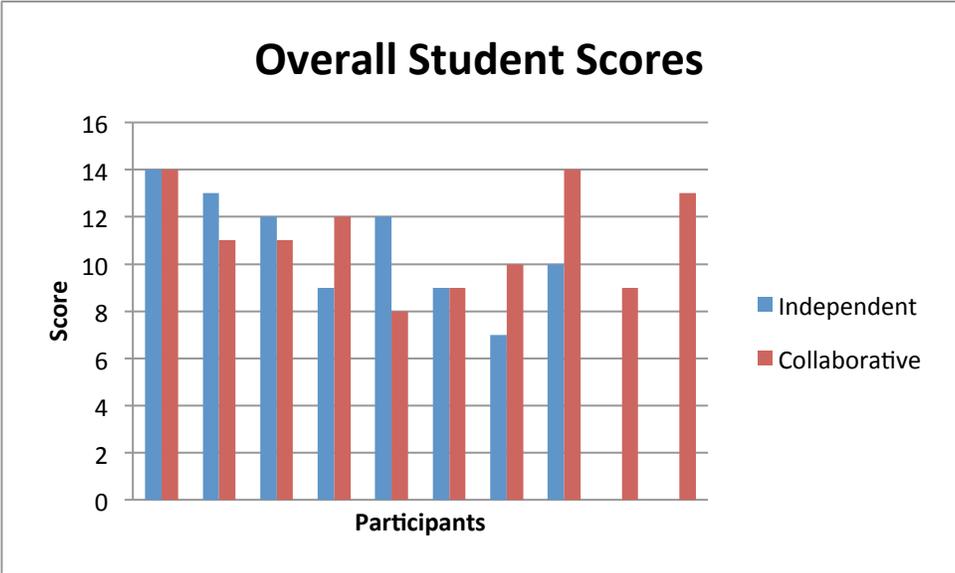
Figure 1

A two tailed t-test was performed on the overall scores to determine if there was any statistically significant difference between the essays produced under the two conditions. The test assumed unequal variance and established a p-value of p≤0.05 for significance. The quality of the writing from both conditions did not have statistical significance as the p-value returned from the test was 0.75. Figure 2 demonstrates the results from the t-test for the overall essay scores between the two conditions.

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances

p<.05	Overall	
	Independent	*Collaborative*
Mean	10.75	11.1
Variance	5.642857143	4.544444444
Observations	8	10
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	14	
t Stat	-0.324994637	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.374995402	
t Critical one-tail	1.761310136	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.749990803	
t Critical two-tail	2.144786688	

Figure 2

Component scores. The scores from the four components of the rubric (Spelling/Grammar, Organization, Strength of Argument, and Fluency) were also tabulated and then compared via t-tests to determine any significant difference between the two groups. None of the component scores yielded significance. Detailed analyses of each component category are described below.

Spelling and grammar. The mean spelling and grammar score for students in the independent condition was 2.6 with a SD of 0.9. The mean spelling and grammar score for students in the collaborative condition was 2.8 with a SD of 1. Using a p-value of $p \leq 0.05$ for significance, a t-test assuming unequal variance was performed. The t-test returned a p-value of 0.7 determining that there was no significant difference between the spelling and grammar scores for the two treatment groups. Figure 3 shows the raw spelling and grammar scores for each treatment group. Figure 4 shows the t-test results for the spelling and grammar scores for each treatment group.
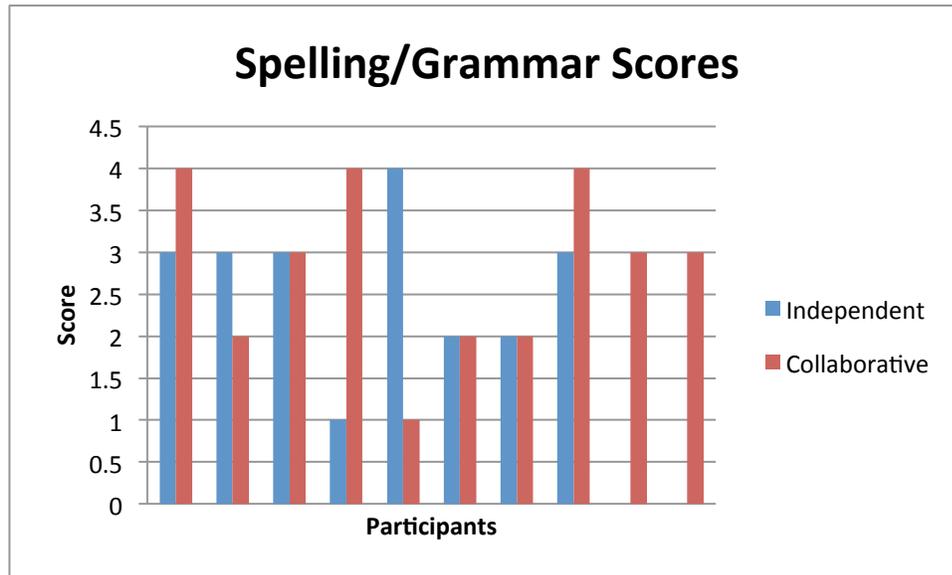
Figure 3

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances

p<.05	Spelling/Grammar	
	Independent	*Collaborative*
Mean	2.625	2.8
Variance	0.839285714	1.066666667
Observations	8	10
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	16	
t Stat	-0.380455118	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.354305574	
t Critical one-tail	1.745883676	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.708611147	
t Critical two-tail	2.119905299	

Figure 4

Organization. The next component that was compared was the organization of the essay.

The scores for organization in the individual condition had a mean of 2.5 and a SD of 0.9. The

collaborative condition had a mean of 2.6 and an SD of 0.7. Figure 5 shows a representation of

the raw organization scores for both the individual and collaborative condition. The t-test yielded

a p-value of 0.8 with the p-value set at $p \leq 0.05$ for significance, thus no significant difference was

found between the two conditions for organization. Figure 6 demonstrates the results from the t-test.
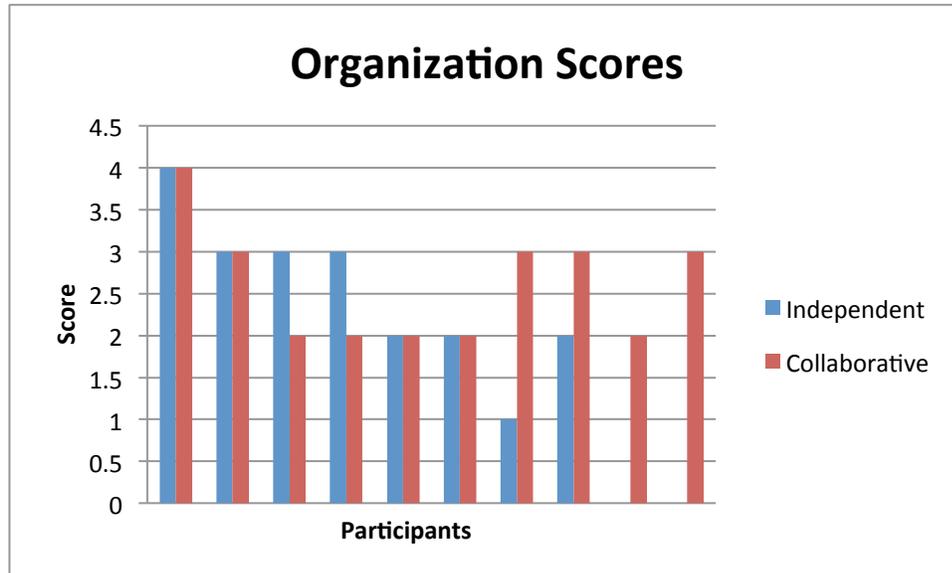
Organization Scores

Figure 5

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances

p<.05	Organization	
	Independent	*Collaborative*
Mean	2.5	2.6
Variance	0.857142857	0.488888889
Observations	8	10
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	13	
t Stat	-0.253159084	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.402052274	
t Critical one-tail	1.770933396	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.804104548	
t Critical two-tail	2.160368656	

Figure 6

Strength of argument. The raw score comparison for strength of argument is graphically represented in figure 7. The mean score for strength of argument was 3.1 for both the individual condition and the collaborative condition. The SD for the individual condition and the collaborative condition was 0.6. Significant difference was not found between the independent

and collaborative conditions for strength of argument. A t-test assuming unequal variances returned a p-value of 0.9. As the p-value was established at $p \leq 0.05$ for significance, a significant difference between the two treatment groups could not be established. Figure 8 shows the results of the t-test.
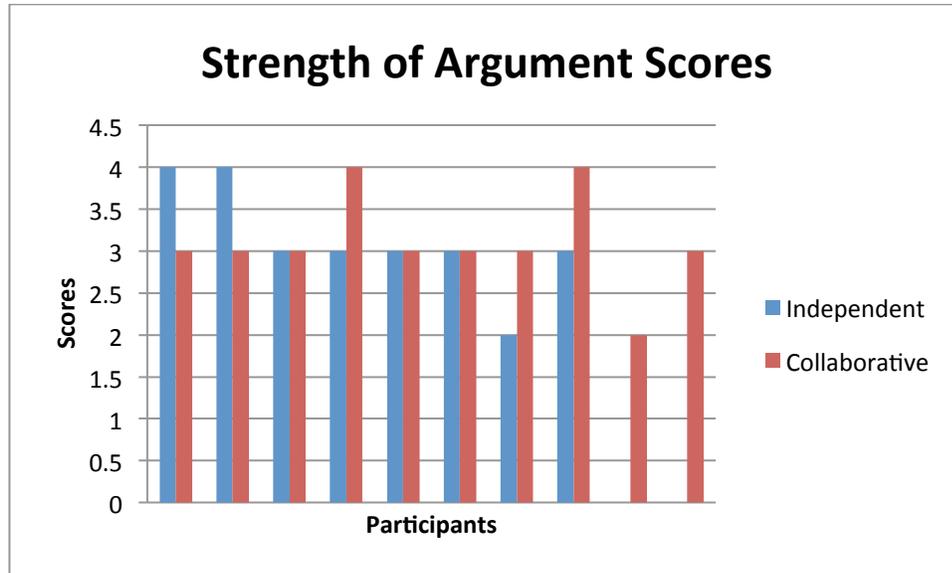
Figure 7

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances

p<.05	Strength of Argument	
	Independent	*Collaborative*
Mean	3.125	3.1
Variance	0.410714286	0.322222222
Observations	8	10
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	14	
t Stat	0.08648422	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.466153125	
t Critical one-tail	1.761310136	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.932306249	
t Critical two-tail	2.144786688	

Figure 8

Fluency. The mean score for fluency for the independent condition was 2.5 whereas the collaborative condition had a mean score of 2.6. The independent condition had an SD of 0.5 and the collaborative condition had an SD of 0.7. The raw scores for each condition are shown in figure 9. Figure 10 displays the results of the t-test conducted on the fluency scores. With $p \leq 0.05$ for significance, the test returned a p-value of 0.7 proving no significant difference between the two conditions.
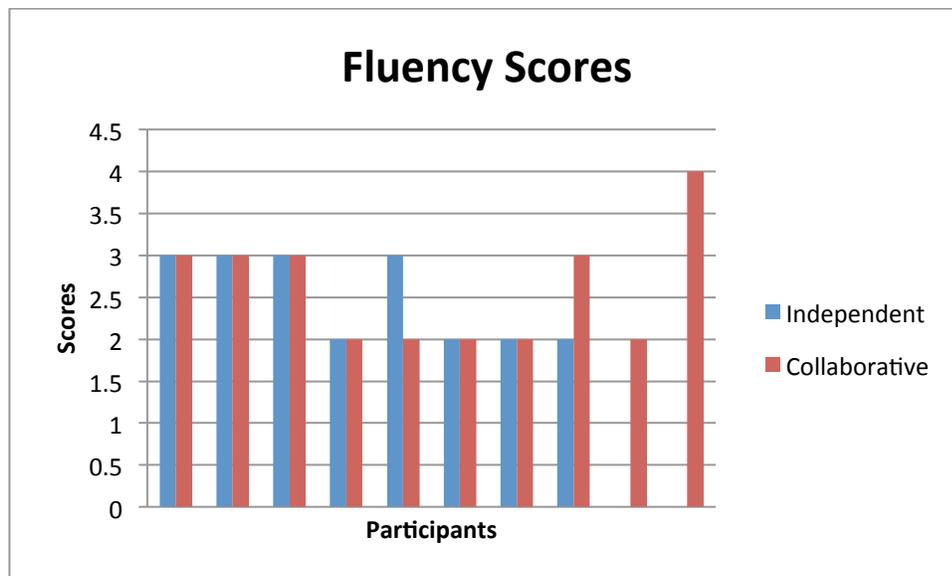
Figure 9

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances
p<.05   Fluency

	Independent	*Collaborative*
Mean	2.5	2.6
Variance	0.285714286	0.488888889
Observations	8	10
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	16	
t Stat	-0.343800632	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.367736368	
t Critical one-tail	1.745883676	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.735472736	
t Critical two-tail	2.119905299	

Figure 10

Qualitative Results

In total seven participants were interviewed with four participants from the independent condition and three participants from the collaborative condition. Of the participants interviewed, two were male, five were female, three were African American, and four were Caucasian. The interviews revealed some common themes revolving around students' ideas of revision and their preference to work with others or to work alone.

Reaction to the writing workshop. When students were asked whether or not they found the actual in class writing workshop to be beneficial, most students indicated that they felt it had a positive impact on their editing and revising of their essay. One student could not comment on the workshop as they could not recall it specifically. Several students commented that having the rubric with specific requirements helped them to know what to look for in their essays: "Yeah, cause it's like the rubric had the guidelines and told us exactly what to look for and gave us instructions on what to do." Another student commented that the workshop was helpful, although it emulated activities that the student had used habitually to review and revise their writing assignments: "I thought it was good practice, but it [writing workshop activity] was the same thing I have been doing for years."

Although most students indicated that the writing workshop was helpful, when asked if they found the editing workshop worksheet (Appendix B) helpful, students could not recall specific features or aspect of the worksheet that were helpful: "I know we used the worksheet and it helped but I don't remember one part or specific question that helped." Students from the collaborative condition indicated that they used most of their partner's feedback, but for some

specific edits and revisions they thought their partner's suggestion was not necessary and did not incorporate it into the final draft.

Understanding of revision. When students were asked about their editing and revising habits, most said that they usually revised and edited for all writing assignments. One student said that he would try to revise all assignments but usually focused on larger writing assignments. Some students would explain that their motivation to revise and edit was to try and make the writing as good as possible so as to obtain the best possible grade.

"Yes, because I want it [writing assignment] to be perfect and usually it's not perfect."

"I do [revise writing assignments] because I don't want to get a bad grade."

Although most students said that they would revise their writing assignments, when asked about how they would revise their essay, most participants focused on local issues such as spelling and grammar rather than global issues.

"Usually I go through and look for spelling mistakes first, and then I check for grammar mistakes by circling and highlighting, then I type up the paper or rewrite in black ink."

"Yes, because when I write a rough draft, it has a lot of spelling errors and I hate to turn in a paper with those errors."

"Yes, to check for any small mistakes or stuff like that…just look for spelling and grammar mistakes and see if a sentence makes sense."

Only two of the seven students mentioned attempting to fix global writing issues. It was clear from the responses that most students' conceptualization of editing and revising was limited to editing and revising local errors rather than global ones.

Collaborative preference. Students from both the collaborative and independent conditions were asked if they would have rather worked alone or with a partner during the writing workshop and all indicated that they would have preferred to work with a partner. One

student responded that they would like to work with a partner if the partner was a person in the class who would actually work with her: "um, depends on the student and if they'd actually work with me."

Although all students interviewed wanted a partner to work with, few of the students felt completely confident giving feedback to their peers. From the interviews, a gendered divide was found over the reason why the student felt less comfortable reviewing a peer's essay. The two male participants interviewed generally felt comfortable giving feedback, but they did provide the caveat that they were uncomfortable giving feedback on grammar rules that they were uncertain of. All of the female participants felt uncomfortable giving feedback to a partner for fear that their partner would be upset because of their criticism.

"I don't feel comfortable giving feedback because I don't want them to be upset… Basically, I just don't want them to have a bunch of mistakes and if they stay up all night working on it [a writing assignment]…I don't want them to be upset."

"I do not feel comfortable giving feedback to someone on their writing assignment because I don't like letting people down, but I feel more comfortable editing and revising my own paper because I don't mind that self-criticism."

The majority of female students' responses to how comfortable reviewing a peers' essay were negative, fearing that they would upset someone with their criticism or be perceived negatively by their partner for giving feedback. Male students responded that giving feedback would be helpful so they felt comfortable giving feedback: "It's like helping them out so if I know it [how to edit or revise the essay] I wouldn't see why not…it helps them."

Although female students said they were uncomfortable giving feedback, when asked if they wanted to work with a paper most responded that they did want a partner.

"I thought it would be helpful to hear somebody else give feedback"

" I think it's good to work with someone else to hear their ideas...working alone you just hear yourself and you won't think your word is wrong."

"No but also yes [answering if they would want to work with a partner]. No because I wouldn't want to get the criticism from someone else…or…but I do kind of want that criticism on mine to make the paper better."

Although the female students did have an aversion to giving feedback, most indicated that they would have liked to have a partner during the writing workshop to have the benefit of another perspective on their paper.

Discussion

The quantitative data from the study found that neither the collaborative nor independent conditions had an advantage in producing better writing from students. Although other researchers have determined collaboration as a beneficial condition for editing and producing writing products (Alfassi, 2009; Gielen et al., 2010; Graham & Perrin, 2007; Orly-Louis & Soidet, 2008), the results of this study could not substantiate a finding for the benefit of collaboration. This research did find, as other studies have, that students' editing and revising habits were typically limited to local errors rather than global ones (Abadikhah & Yasami, 2014; Baleghizadeh, 2010; Yang & Wu, 2011). As the researcher in this study only gave brief instruction on how to edit and revise a paper, it is natural that students relied on lower level edits rather than revising higher order concerns. More instruction on editing and revision could have helped students in this context improve their writing as researchers Graham and Perrin (2007) suggest direct instruction on editing and revising practices to improve students' writing.

Both conditions were given the approximately the same amount of time to complete the final draft of the essay; however, school closings for inclement weather may have given the students in the independent conditions an advantage in having more time to complete the essay. It also could be possible that students from either group may have procrastinated in revising their essay and did not have time to improve their writing beyond lower level concerns.

Students in the collaborative condition may not have had the full benefit from the writing workshop if they were paired with a partner who was unwilling to work with them. Although only one interviewee expressed concern that a partner may not want to work with her, Christianakis (2010) found that peer feedback is also filtered by social preferences and relationship among peers in the classroom. Students in the collaborative condition could have

decided to not take their partner's feedback because of their partner's social standing or perceived social worth from the perspective of student (Christianakis, 2010). Students also may not have given feedback if they felt that their feedback could affect the way that their partner thought of them. This study found that female students were particularly concerned that their feedback would upset their partner. This finding is supported by previous research that demonstrates that females as opposed to males are more concerned with being negatively perceived for giving critical feedback (Christianakis, 2010; Miller & Karakowsky, 2005; Pajares, Johnson, & Usher, 2007). Knowing that feedback is given in the context of how it may impact the student's relationship with the person they are critiquing, it is possible that some feedback was withheld or not emphasized as much for fear of negatively affected the peer relationship.

Limitations

The results from the research should be understood in the context of the several limitations that were present. The sample size was small and the number of participants for each condition was unequal. Although the high school where the research took place is racially diverse, the sample provided did not have the same racial diversity. The sample also was predominantly female, with only two males participating in the study. The research also did not have a control condition to compare the data from either treatment group.

The original research plan was designed to control the amount of time each treatment group had to complete the essay; however, several school closings due to inclement weather affected the timeline of the research. Factoring in the school closings, the participants in the independent condition had approximately three extra days to complete their final version of the essay. It cannot be determined if the participants benefited from the extra time or used the days off from school to work on their essay, but it could have affected the results.

The students did not have extensive instruction on how to revise or edit before they participated in the writing workshop. The instruction they received was fairly brief and occurred immediately before the participants engaged in the writing workshop. This could explain why the participants primarily focused on only revising grammar and spelling issues instead of expanding their revision to more global issues within their essay. Participants in the collaborative condition were allowed to choose their partners during the writing workshop. This also could have affected the kind of feedback that participants in the collaborative condition received. If students chose to work with a friend, it may have influenced whether or not they felt comfortable pointing out weaknesses in their partner's essay.

During the interviews, some students could have said what they expected the researcher to hear. All students answered that they revised their essays, even if some of their essays had mistakes that should have been corrected through revision. Another limitation to the interviews was that they took place two to three weeks after the writing workshop. This would explain why some students had difficulty recalling specifics about the writing workshop and only commented that they generally felt it was helpful.

Another limitation to this action research is that it only focuses on a short time and uses one writing assignment to investigate differences between independent and collaborative writing workshops. If the research was extended for a greater length of time and included more writing assignments, differences could have developed between the two treatment groups or more evidence could be obtained to support the results of this action research.

Implications

The results from the research imply that collaboration and peer feedback alone does not provide significant support to improve writing. The analysis of the results imply supports that could help students to improve their writing through editing and revision.

Instruction on editing and revision. It was clear from the interviews that students understand editing and revising to pertain only to local errors. Unless modeled differently for students, students will focus only on finding and fixing spelling and grammar issues within their writing. Higher order concerns like organization and developing an argument should model for students before they are given writing assignments. Giving students examples and non-examples of organization could help students to understand what is expected of them as well as how to recognize good writing in regards to higher order concerns.

As some students reported anxiety over giving feedback to peers, it could be beneficial to explain to students that editing and revising helps the author to write a better paper. Educators should also emphasize that feedback is not always negative or corrective. Educators using peer-editing in their classroom should also model how students can communicate the strengths that they find in a peer's writing product.

Intentional grouping. To help students get the most benefit from peer-editing in a writing workshop, students should be intentionally paired. This would prevent students from choosing friends or others to whom they might feel conflicted giving criticism. Students could be grouped based on skill level so as to help pair students who have complementary skills to help improve each other weaknesses. As the research demonstrated a difference in how the genders feel about giving feedback, pairs or groups of students could be formed on the basis of gender. If fear of being perceive negatively for giving feedback persists, the educator could arrange to have

the students only provide written feedback to peers without knowing the identity of the peer they are reviewing.

Independent revision. The conditions that could improve collaborative settings could also students' ability to independently and edit and revise their own work. The action research conducted demonstrated no statistically significant difference between students in the collaborative and independent condition. Further research should be done to investigate practices that could help students' reflect and revise their own writing. Having students rate their own writing may have given them the opportunity to identify their writing's strengths and weaknesses as well as help inform them on how to improve.

Conclusion

This study investigated the effectiveness of collaborative and independent writing workshops. Although the quality of writing produced from both conditions had no statistically significant difference, all student interviewees revealed a preference for collaborative writing workshops over independent writing workshops. This study could not substantiate the claims found by previous research for collaborative practices having significant effects on students' writing. Collaboration alone was not a sufficient strategy to greatly improve students' writing. It is possible, however, if given the appropriate scaffolding and support that collaborative writing workshops could be beneficial. Further research in collaborative writing workshops should be conducted to determine what factors (i.e. intentional grouping, modeled instruction for editing and revising) are pivotal in gaining the most benefit from collaborative writing workshops.

Further research should also be done in independent writing workshops and independent editing and revising practices. As there was no difference in the quality of writing between the two treatment groups, it would be interesting to determine what aspect or characteristic of the independent writing workshop in this study that aided students the most. Optimizing independent editing and revising practices could help students who prefer to work alone or feel that they do not have the social standing in their class to get as much help or assistance from their peers. Further research should be done to understand the conditions that need to be present for independent editing and revising to be as beneficial as collaborative editing and revising.

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Appendix A

Essay Rubric

	Poor (1)	Below Average (2)	Acceptable (3)	Proficient (4)
Spelling and Grammar	There is no sign of proof-reading and there are more than 8 errors. Errors make it difficult to understand what the writer is communicating	Proof-reading is minimal and there is at least 6 to 8 errors. Some of the errors make it difficult to understand the given sentence or thought.	It's clear the essay has had some proof-reading but there are at least 3 to 5 errors that should have been accounted for.	The essay has been carefully proofread and has maybe 1 or 2 errors in spelling and grammar
Organization	Elements such as the introduction or conclusion are extremely minimal or nonexistent. Thoughts and ideas appear to follow no sense of logic. Does not have five paragraphs	Has five paragraphs but are not all consistently well developed. Introduction and conclusion may be unclear and could be developed further. There are no clear transitions between ideas.	Has five well developed paragraphs with a clear introduction and conclusions. Ideas are presented in a logical way but transitions and connections between ideas are not always present.	Has five strong paragraphs with a clear introduction and strong conclusion. Ideas are presented in a logical way with strong transitions and connections established between ideas
Strength of Argument	Does not answer prompt fully. Thesis is not clear or not present. Reasons provided are not explained or not based in logic.	Answers prompt fully but does not take a clear position or only has 2 reasons to support the thesis or argument. Reasons in argument are not fully developed	Answers the prompt fully and takes a clear position. Has a clear thesis with 3 developed reasons for their position but does not anticipate counter arguments or address them	Answers prompt fully and takes a clear position. Has a clear thesis with 3 or more fully developed reasons for their position. Anticipates counter arguments and addresses them
Fluency	There is little to no sentence variety and several instances of awkward phrasing. There are more than two run on sentences.	There is very little variety in sentence structure and a few instances of awkward phrasing and repetition. There may be a run on sentence or two.	There may be 1 to 2 instances of awkward phrasing or unnecessary repetition in the essay. There is an occasional use of a more complex sentence structure	There are a variety of sentence structures and no awkward phrasing in the essay. Unnecessary repetition is not found in the essay/

Appendix B

Editing Workshop Guiding Worksheet

The spelling and grammar in this essay are……

Good as Is   Developing   Needs Improvement

Suggestions for improvement:

The organization of the essay is…..

Good as Is   Developing   Needs Improvement

Suggestions for improvement:

The argument in the essay is….

Good as Is   Developing   Needs Improvement

Suggestions for improvement:

The fluency (or how easy the writing is to understand) in the essay is…..

Good as Is   Developing   Needs Improvement

Suggestions for improvement:

Appendix C

Student Interview Questions

For students who worked in pairs

1. Do you often edit or revise a writing assignment before turning it in? Why or why not?
2. If you do elect to revise or edit a writing assignment, how do you go about revising and editing your paper?
3. How comfortable do you feel giving feedback to someone on their writing assignment? Do you feel more or less comfortable when you edit or revise your own paper? Why or why not?
4. Think back to the editing workshop we did in class, do you believe the activity helped or did not help you to revise your paper? Why or why not?
5. How did you and your partner use the guiding editing workshop worksheet? Were there parts of the worksheet that were more helpful than others? If so which ones and why?
6. Would you have rather worked alone during editing workshop? Why or Why not?
7. How much of your partner's feedback did you use in your final draft?
8. Are there other activities that you think could have helped you to revise your paper?

For students who worked independently

1. Do you often edit or revise a writing assignment before turning it in? Why or why not?
2. If you do elect to revise or edit a writing assignment, how do you go about revising and editing your paper?
3. How comfortable do you feel giving feedback to someone on their writing assignment? Do you feel more or less comfortable when you edit or revise your own paper? Why or why not?
4. Think back to the editing workshop we did in class, do you believe the activity helped or did not help you to revise your paper? Why or why not?
5. How did you use the guiding editing workshop worksheet? Were there parts of the worksheet that were more helpful than others? If so which ones and why?
6. Would you have rather worked with another student during editing workshop? Why or Why not?
7. After the editing workshop, how much did you use the editing workshop worksheet or any marks you made on your paper to make changes to your final draft?
8. Are there other activities that you think could have helped you to revise your paper?

Appendix D

Student Assent Letter

Dear Student,

As you may know, I am currently working towards a Masters of Education at the University of Mary Washington. This semester I am required as part of my Masters program to conduct an action research study. My action research is focused on writing workshops.

During the semester I will assign a persuasive essay to your class. You will be given a week to complete a draft of the essay. In class we will have a writing workshop to edit and revise your essay drafts. After the writing workshop, you will be given another week to edit and revise your essay before turning it in. If you choose to participate in the study, I will use the data from your final essay in my action research. I may also ask to interview you about the writing workshop and the essay. Interviews will be audio-recorded. **If you do not choose to be in the study, you will still have to write an essay and participate in the writing workshop. You are not taking on any extra work to be in the study.**

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may opt out of the study at any time. You will not be graded for participating in this study, given extra points, or impacted negatively in any way.

Your parents were given a letter about taking part in this study. If your parents did not sign that letter or do not want you to participate in the study, then you will not be able to participate.

If you decide to be in the study, I will keep your information confidential. This means that I will not use your names or the name of the school in anything I write and I will not reveal any personal, identifying information about you.

Signing this form means that you have read and that you are willing to be in this study. If at any point you have any questions, please ask me!

The research described above has been approved by the University of Mary Washington IRB which is a committee responsible for ensuring that research is being conducted safely and that risks to participants are minimized. For information about the review of this research, contact the IRB chair, Dr. Jo Tyler at jtyler@umw.edu.

Thanks,

Ms. Busch

I have read the above letter, all my questions have been answered, and I agree to participate in the project.

_____

(Print Student Name)

_____   _____
(Student Signature)   (Date)

I agree to be interviewed and audio recorded.

_____   _____
(Student Signature)   (Date)

I, _____ will keep your names confidential.

_____   _____
(Student Teacher/Researcher Signature)   (Date)

Appendix E

Consent Letter

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Hello, my name is Ms. Busch, and I am a student teacher in your child's English class. I am currently a graduate student at the University of Mary Washington working towards my Masters in Education. A requirement of our program is to conduct an action research study in an area related to our studies. *I am inviting your child to participate in a research study I am doing. Involvement in the study is voluntary, so you may choose to have your child participate or not. I am now going to explain the study to you.*

I am interested in learning about the effectiveness of peer-editing as compared to self-editing on a writing assignment. In a peer-editing writing conference students exchange papers and comment on each other's mistakes as well as make suggestions for improvements. In a self-editing writing workshop students review their own writing for mistakes and reflect on ways to improve. For two weeks, your child's class will be working on a persuasive essay. The first week students will write a draft and bring it to class for a writing workshop. Students will work with a peer to edit and revise their essay or will revise and edit their essay individually during the workshop. Students will be given another week to revise and finalize their draft before handing it in. *I am requesting permission to use the scores your child receives on the essay as part of my action research data. I am also requesting to interview and audio record your child answering questions about the essay and the writing workshop.* **This essay will be part of your child's work for class. It will in no way require extra work for him or her.**

Your child's work will be kept confidential. His or her name will not appear in any publication of the research. All names will be changed to protect his or her privacy. Following the project, all samples I collect will be destroyed. Participation in this project will not affect your child's grade in any way. His or her participation in the study is voluntary, and you have the right to keep your child out of the study. Also, your child is free to stop participating in the study at any time. Your child will still write an essay and participate in a writing workshop, but data for the research study would not be collected from him or her.

The benefit of this research is that you will be helping me understand the influence of peer-editing and self-editing on a writing assignment. The only potential risk is that your child may be uncomfortable being interviewed. This risk will be minimized by interviewing your child during times that all students are working individually.

If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact my university supervisor, Dr. Janine Davis (jdavis@umw.edu) or myself (kbusch@mail.umw.edu) I look forward to working with you and your student.

The research described above has been approved by the University of Mary Washington IRB, which is a committee responsible for ensuring that research is being conducted safely and that

risks to participants are minimized. For information about the review of this research, contact the IRB chair, Dr. Jo Tyler at jtyler@umw.edu.

<div align="right">

Thank you,

Ms. Busch

</div>

I have read the above letter and give my child, _____, permission to participate in this project.

_____
(Parent/Guardian Signature)

I give my child permission to be audio-recorded during interviews.

_____
(Parent/Guardian Signature)

I, _____ agree to keep all information and data collected during this research project confidential.

_____
(Researcher Signature)