

***WRITE SOURCE*[®] GRADE 3 STUDY**
SPRINGFIELD, MA
2005-2006



 A Division of Houghton Mifflin Company
www.greatsource.com • 800-289-4490

WRITE SOURCE® GRADE 3: SPRINGFIELD, MA EFFECTIVENESS STUDY

INTRODUCTION

Great Source® Education Group, a division of Houghton Mifflin Company, contracted with RMC Research Corporation to conduct an independent study on *Write Source* for grade 3 during the 2005-2006 school year to answer the following research question:

- Does *Write Source* produce significant differences in writing achievement of students in grade 3 classrooms?

RESEARCH DESIGN

Twenty-two (22) 3rd grade teachers from eight elementary schools volunteered to participate in the study. Teachers in each school were randomly assigned to either the *Write Source* or control group, resulting in eleven teachers in each group.

Teachers in the *Write Source* group received 2-3 training sessions (the third session was optional) and the complete *Write Source* program for grade three.

Several assessments were used to measure students' writing proficiency: Personal narrative writing prompts; the story subtest of TOWL-3; the district mid-year assessment; and student writing samples, which were collected to gauge students' polished writing with opportunities for revising and editing.

To more effectively examine treatment effect and better understand what happened in *Write Source* and control classrooms teacher level data was collected using teacher surveys at the beginning and end of the study, classroom observations, and an end-of-study focus group with the *Write Source* teachers.

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Variables	<i>Write Source</i> Students	Control Students
Number	169	162
ELL	2.4%	10.5%
Ethnicity		
African American	31.4%	17.9%
Asian	4.1%	3.7%
Caucasian	17.2%	19.1%
Hispanic	32.5%	39.5%
Mixed	14.8%	19.8%
Gender		
Female	53.8%	51.2%
Male	46.2%	48.8%
Special Education	1.8%	3.7%

Note: Because of rounding, percentages may not add up to 100.

TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS

The teachers in the *Write Source* and control groups were very similar in age, ethnicity, highest degree received, teaching credentials, and number of years teaching.

ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Personal Narrative Prompt. Consistent with the district 3rd grade writing curriculum, personal narrative prompts were administered in October 2005 in both *Write Source* and control classrooms. Student writing was scored using the MA state writing assessment rubric by an external scorer, yielding two scores – topic/idea (range 1-6) and conventions (range 1-4). A second personal narrative prompts was administered in May 2006. Using 2-Level HLM Analysis-Primary no significant difference was found between the *Write Source* and control groups.

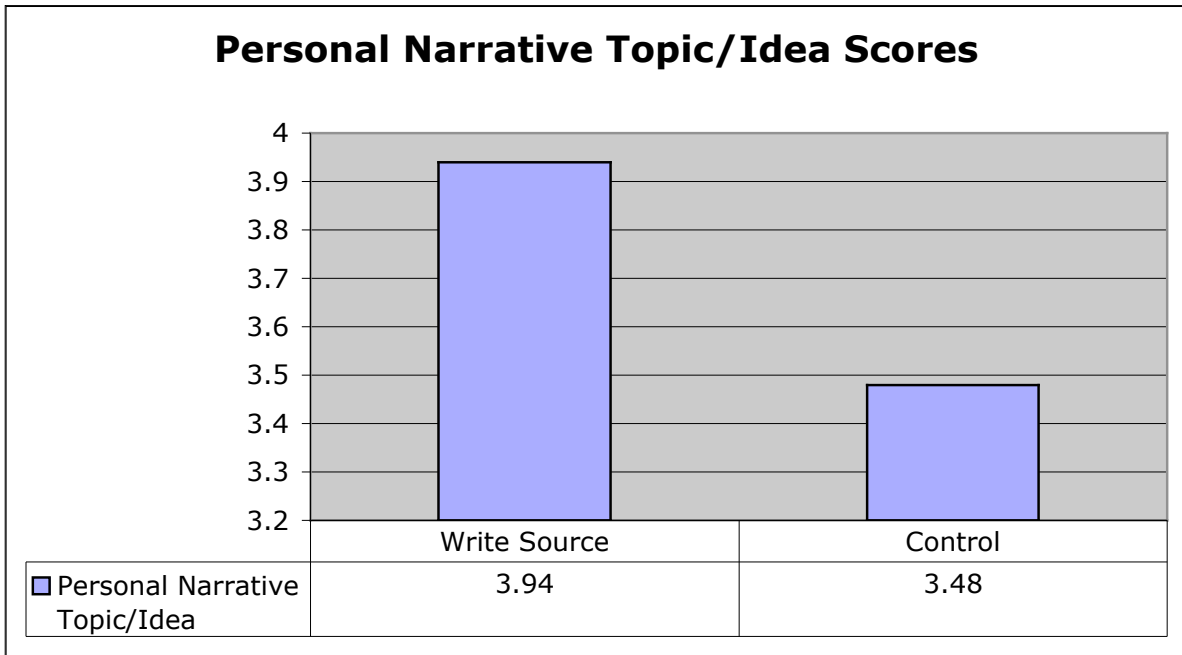
Test of Written Language (TOWL) – 3. Teachers in both the *Write Source* and control classroom administered the Story Subtest of TOWL-3 in October 2005. The quality of student writing was analyzed to obtain three scores for contextual conventions (Subtest 6), contextual language (Subtest 7) and story construction (Subtest 8). These tests were again both administered in *Write Source* and control conditions in 2006 as posttest. Using 2-Level HLM Analysis-Primary no significant difference was found between *Write Source* and control.

Student Writing Samples. At the beginning of the study teachers were asked to rank their students as high, middle, or low based on their reading and writing skills in relation to students in the same class. Three students, one high, one middle, and one low, were randomly selected from each class and student writing samples were collected from the 64 randomly selected students, with 32 from each condition. The writing samples were students' finished products with teacher feedbacks and revisions after the narrative and expository writing units were taught.

The writing samples were scored using the MA state assessment writing rubric to obtain two scores, topic/idea (maximum 6) and conventions (maximum 4) In addition, these two scores were added up to obtain a total writing score.

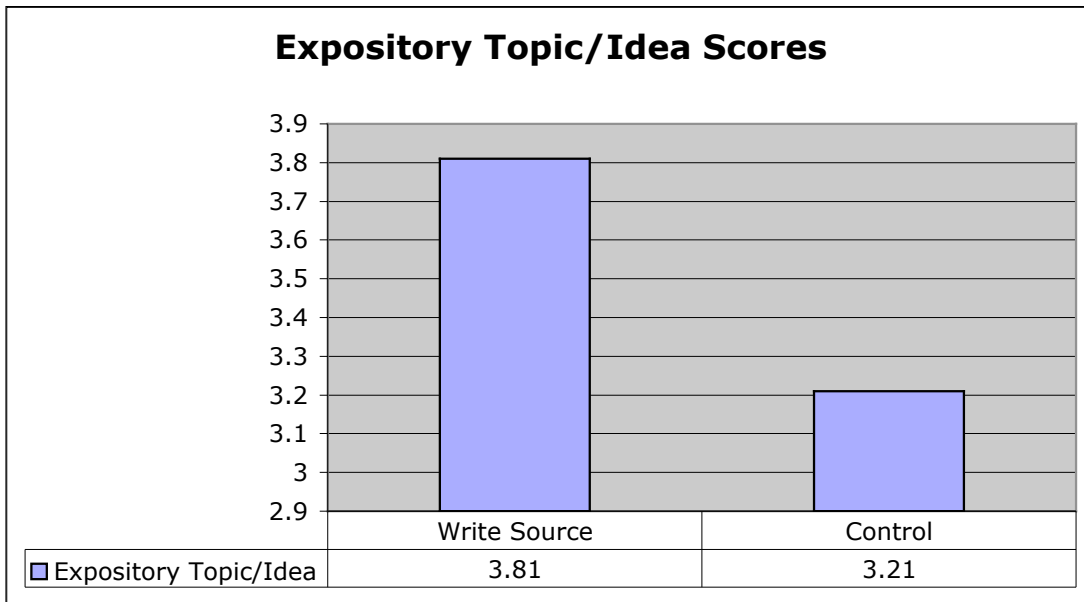
One way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted on the scores, with student pretest score on personal narrative as the covariate in order to determine if there was any difference on student posttest scores after controlling for pretesting differences. In addition, effect sizes (ES) were calculated to gauge the magnitude of difference between treatment and control conditions.

Results from the personal narrative writing samples (writing sample 1) from November are approaching significance at .067 in the area of topic/idea, favoring *Write Source*, $F(2, 61)=3.48$, $p = .067$. Adjusted mean is 3.94 for *Write Source* and 3.48 for control. $ES = .38$. See page 4.



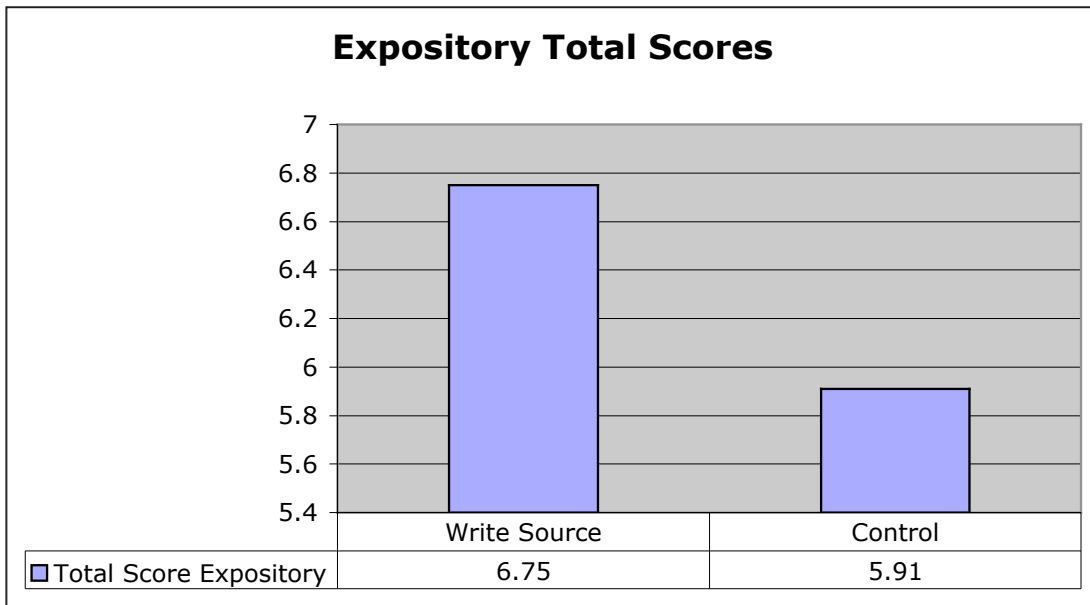
Scores for conventions and the combined scores for topic/idea and conventions on the personal narrative writing samples showed no difference between the *Write Source* and control group.

Results from the expository writing samples (writing sample 2) from January/ February show a significant treatment effect was found favoring *Write Source*, $F(2, 61)=6.66$, $p = .012$. Adjusted mean is 3.81 for *Write Source* and 3.21 for control. $ES= .61$.

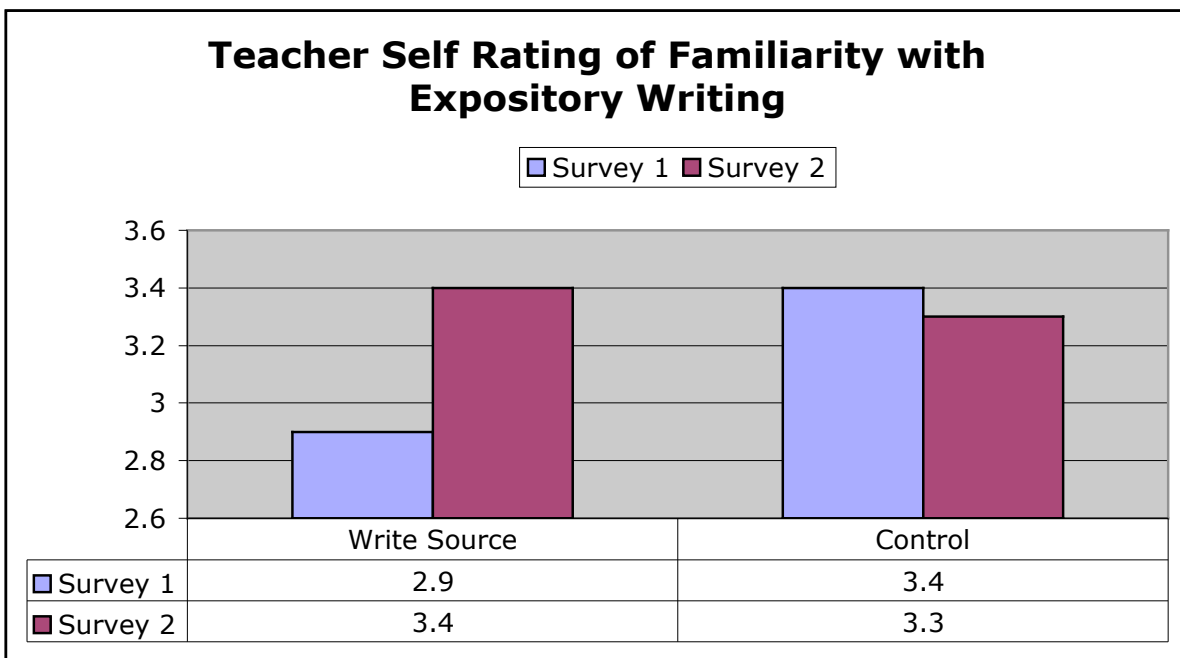


There was no significant difference between *Write Source* and control scores for conventions on the expository writing sample.

Total scores on the expository writing sample show a significant treatment effect favoring *Write Source*, $F(2, 61)=6.13$, $p = .016$. Adjusted mean is 6.75 for *Write Source* and 5.91 for control. $ES= .53$.



The results from the writing samples suggest that students using *Write Source* were stronger writers than control students after receiving a unit of instruction on expository writing, but with personal narrative writing, they were not necessarily so. This may be explained by the teachers having more time with the *Write Source* program when they taught the expository writing unit as well as a correlation with increased teacher familiarity with expository writing as indicated by the teacher survey results. (See page 8 for more information on teacher self rating of familiarity.)



District Writing Assessment Writing Samples. At the end of January 2006 (three months after the implementation of the *Write Source* program), the Springfield School District administered its district wide assessment. The student writing assessment samples were collected and scored using the MA state assessment writing. No significant difference was found between the *Write Source* and control scores.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION RESULTS

Results show that observers consistently rated *Write Source* teachers more favorably than control teachers in terms of strategy use (10 out of 10 items, 4 of them statistically significant), classroom climate (7 out of 7 items), instruction quality (9 out of 9 items), and resource use (2 out of 2 items).

TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS

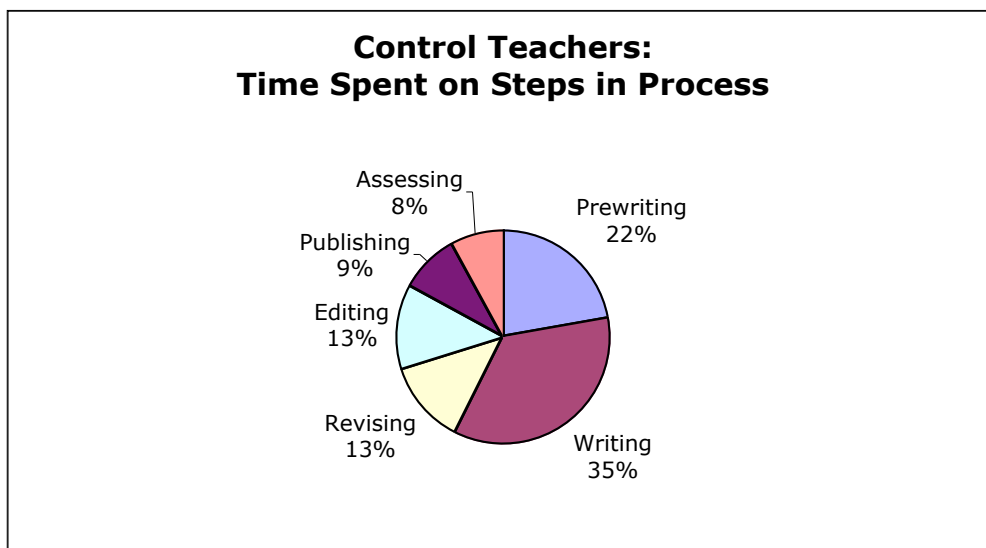
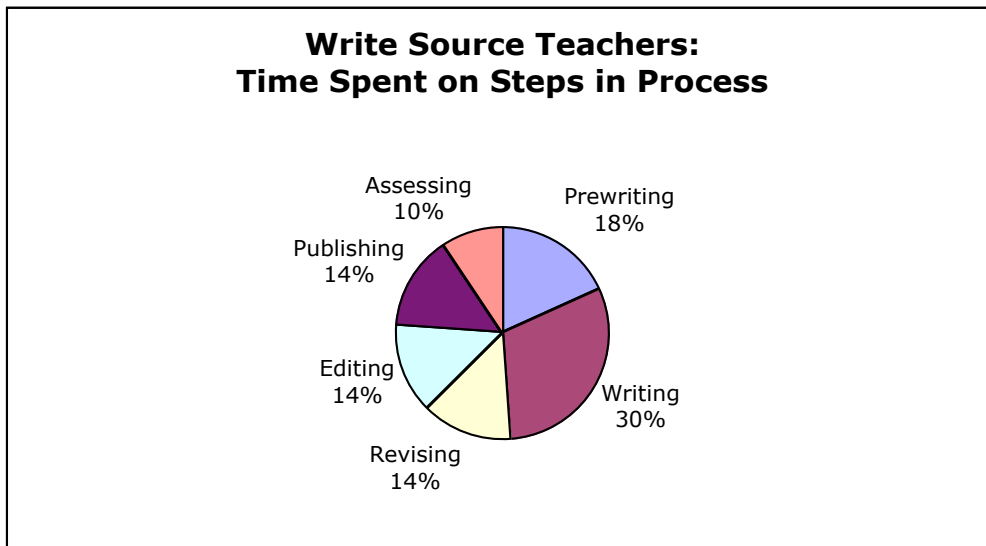
Teacher surveys asked questions about professional development teachers received during the course of the year, total time for a typical writing lesson, and how much time teachers spent using *Write Source* or the control writing materials. It also asked teachers to rate how familiar they were with various aspects of writing instruction.

Teachers in *Write Source* and control groups were very similar in the number of hours of professional development they received, total time for a typical writing lesson, and time spent using their respective writing programs (*Write Source* or control).

Table 1. Comparison of Descriptive Data between *Write Source* and Control Teachers

	<i>Write Source</i>		Control	
	Mean	Range	Mean	Range
Hours in Reading Professional Development	7.9	0-20	7.3	0-16
Hours in Writing Professional Development	5.6	2-10	3.6	0-15
Total time for writing lesson	36.5	30-45	42.5	30-90
Time on writing program	21.7	10-45	17.0	5-30

Results show that *Write Source* teachers spent slightly more time (52% vs. 43%) on the post-writing activities such as revising, editing, publishing, assessment aspects of the writing process than control teachers who spent 57% of lesson time on prewriting and writing.



Results from the survey at the beginning of the study (survey I) show that *Write Source* teachers consistently rated themselves less positively than control teachers with regards to teaching writing or their knowledge in teaching writing (10 out of 13). The results from the end of study survey (survey II) show that the *Write Source* teachers had increased their familiarity with all of the items on the familiarity survey and while of the control teachers still rated themselves more positively than *Write Source* teachers, the differences were much less pronounced than on survey I. *Write Source* teacher seemed to have gained considerable amount of confidence by the end of the study (see Table 2).

Table 2. Comparison of Teacher Self Rating of Familiarity at Survey I and Survey II

	<i>Write Source</i> (Mean)		Control (Mean)	
	Survey 1	Survey II	Survey 1	Survey II
Narrative Writing	3.1	3.3	3.3	3.5
Descriptive Writing	3.0	3.4	3.3	3.5
Expository Writing	2.9	3.4	3.4	3.3
Persuasive Writing	2.9	3.1	3.3	3.3
Creative Writing	2.9	3.3	3.2	3.3
Response to Literature	2.9	3.2	3.2	3.3
Research Report Writing	2.8	3.2	3.0	3.4
Assessing Writing	3.0	3.2	3.3	3.3
Traits of Good Writing	2.2	3.4	2.3	3.4
Conducting Conferences	2.2	3.1	2.2	3.1
Strategies for Revision	2.6	2.9	2.3	3.1
Writing Conventions	2.6	3.3	2.5	3.4

On a scale 1-4, 1 least familiar, 4 most familiar.

Teachers rated the *Write Source* teacher's edition, student book, and *Interactive Writing Skills CD-ROM* as the most effective components of the *Write Source* program.

Table 3. Effectiveness of the *Write Source* Materials as Rated by Teachers

	Mean	Range
Teacher's Edition (n=11)	3.5	2-4
Student Book (n=10)	3.5	3-4
Daily Language Workouts (n=7)	2.9	2-4
Skills Book (n=8)	2.8	2-4
Overhead Transparencies (n=6)	3.2	3-4
Assessment Booklet (n=4)	3.3	3-4
Interactive Writing Skills CD-ROM (n=2)	3.5	3-4

On a scale 1-4, 1 least effective, 4 most effective.

TEACHER FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

Teachers' focus group comments indicate that most *Write Source* teachers had positive experiences overall using the *Write Source* program.

- *Write Source* met the teachers' expectations. It was a guide on how to teach different sorts of writing. It gave a vision of "how to teach" writing— Step-by-step at their grade level, not above their heads.
- Many teachers liked the six-traits rubric and used them as a class.
- *Write Source* has good presentation materials. Teacher liked the overheads. It showed the children the different examples for writing and kept the students interest.
- Students used the books independently. They could go back to the book when they got stuck. It provides "the formula" for writing.
- Teachers saw their students develop as writers. They felt students chose more options/ideas and used more detail.

Challenges for the *Write Source* teachers included:

- Finding the time for writing. Teachers had a 2-hour English/ language arts block. They tried to do writing for 30 minutes. Some teachers tried to use 40 minutes daily.
- There was a great deal of testing at the end of the year: MCAS (Massachusetts state assessment), city benchmark testing, and Great Source. Teachers felt that students experienced test fatigue.

CONCLUSIONS

Results indicate that *Write Source* students outperformed control students on expository writing when they were allowed to utilize the steps in the writing process with opportunities to work with a teacher and polish their writing. This may be related to the additional time that *Write Source* teachers allocated to post-writing activities such as revising, publishing, and assessing as well as the increased confidence that the *Write Source* teachers developed during the course of the study.