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STRATEGIC WRITING AND ASSESSMENT OF THIRD GRADE STUDENTS IN AN INCLUSION CLASSROOM (231 PP.)

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The purpose of this research was to find answers to three guiding questions that pertain to the teaching of writing. This study looked at how 18 third grade students responded to writing prompts used in demonstration lessons for the National Writing Project at Kent State University and the kinds of scaffolded learning experiences they would need in order to be successful. Assessments grounded in state standards were designed to be both useful and manageable and to document student growth and development as writers.

A qualitative approach was best suited to this study because it allowed for observations and descriptions, which focused on the writers in my third grade classroom during the 2002-2003 school year. For the purpose of this study, I assumed the role of teacher as researcher in my classroom similarly to Nancie Atwell (1998) and Sharon Taberski (2000). I studied my own teaching and the assignments I gave. Data was gathered in a number of ways. Written statements and a written interview were taken from students reflecting on themselves as writers. Work samples, writer's notebooks, anecdotal records, as well as my own reflections were studied for evidence of student growth and development. Additionally, two students were selected for case studies that served as exemplars of the larger sample of students in my class.

The results of this study show that students can be successful in learning strategies for writing and in fact need to be challenged so that their writing does not become formulaic by writing in the same genre or topic over and over. Further, this study showed that current means of testing and assessing competency in writing are not reflective of student growth and development. The tests' focus on product is foreign to the way I teach, what experts recommend and the very standards the competency tests are thought to assess.