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Improving Writing with Barry Lane's *Reviser's Toolbox*

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Abstract

This study was designed to determine whether or not Barry Lane's *Reviser's Toolbox*, a writing program designed to teach and motivate students of all ages to become better writers, would increase N.H.* High School students' writing proficiency.

Forty-seven eleventh grade students from N.H. High School, in N.H., Michigan, participated in the study that spanned the 2005-2006 school year. A teacher survey and analysis of past MEAP (Michigan Educational Assessment Program) scores were used to determine if N.H. High School students are proficient writers. Teacher observations, student surveys, and the scoring and analysis of student writing samples before and after implementation of the writing program were used to determine if these students enjoyed and benefited from Barry Lane's *Reviser's Toolbox*.

Research findings indicated that N.H. High School students, as a whole, are not proficient writers. A solution was implemented in the form of Barry Lane's *Reviser's Toolbox*. Analysis of the data revealed that students enjoyed Lane's writing program and, most significantly, their writing improved after having completed the program over the course of three weeks.

N.H. High School and Middle School teachers as well as the Curriculum Director for the district will be presented with these findings and formally introduced to Lane's writing program. It is this researcher's hope that the district will adopt Barry Lane's *Reviser's Toolbox* as a core part of the writing curriculum at both the middle and high school levels. (*Name of school has been altered for privacy reasons)

--Abstract of Dayna Polehanki, "Improving Writing with Barry Lane's *Reviser's Toolbox*."

Improving Writing with Barry Lane's *Reviser's Toolbox*

Introduction

One elementary school (grades K-5), one middle school (grades 5-8), and one high school (grades 9-12) make up the N.H. School District in the working class village of N.H., in M.* County, Michigan. N.H. Schools serve students from the village of N.H. as well as Chesterfield, Lenox, M., and Ray Townships. The high school, where I teach, enrolled 333 students in 2005, with 18.2 students per teacher, a selling point for our district (Standard & Pools). Significant growth in the district is expected in the near future, however, due to a housing development boom in and around N.H.. N.H. is racially diverse considering it is currently largely rural. N.H. High School's student population in 2005 was: 73.3% White, 21.6% Black, 1.8% Hispanic, and 3.3% Asian/Pacific Islander (Standard & Pools). Thirty one percent of N.H. students were deemed economically disadvantaged. (Standard & Pools). N.H. also has a large special education population: 19.7% in 2006.

I teach 11th and 12th grade English at N.H. High School. In the 2006-2007 school year I will enter into my fifth year at N.H. and my sixth year teaching. Over the past five years, I have noticed that my students do not like to write and that the majority of them are not what I would deem "proficient" (proficient = skilled) writers.

Over the course of my teaching career, I have been introduced to a number of strategies designed to improve student writing, but none of which I have been compelled to use on a consistent basis. This all changed when this past fall (October, 2005), a literacy specialist, Dr. Elaine Weber, was brought in from the M. Intermediate School District to work with our English department (which consists of four teachers) on improving our students' writing and, hopefully, as a by-product, raising the high school MEAP (Michigan Educational Assessment Program) writing scores, which have been consistently low over the past few years. Dr. Weber suggested that we English teachers implement Barry Lane's *Reviser's Toolbox* into our class curriculum. I had heard positive things about Barry's Lane's writing program before, mostly that it was fun, effective, and that students seemed to like it, but had never been formally introduced to it. I decided to give it a try.

During the course of three weeks, I taught my two classes of 11th grade students (47 of 79 total 11th grade students) Barry's course, *Reviser's Toolbox*, which is a series of four videos featuring Barry Lane, accompanied by a workbook. I was surprised at how much my students liked the course and how much their writing seemed to blossom over the course of a few short weeks. It is my theory that my 11th grade students' enthusiasm for writing and their writing proficiency improved as a result of Barry Lane's *Reviser's Toolbox*. (*Name of county has been altered for privacy reasons)

Literature Review

With state-mandated tests like the MEAP and college entrance exams like the ACT placing an increased emphasis on writing, teachers must rise to the challenge of ensuring that all their students are proficient writers (Saddler & Andrade, 2004). In fact, in spring of 2006, the Michigan State Board of Education passed new high school graduation requirements, mandating four credits of English Language Arts (of eighteen total credits) in grades nine through twelve. Aside from Mathematics, which was also allocated four credits, no other content area was so heavily emphasized. Moreover, nearly half of the required English Language Arts courses under this mandate deal with writing (Ackley, 2005). On April 11, 2006, the State Board of Education also approved a new set of standards for ELA 9th through 12th grade, but until these standards are revealed to the public, there are no definitive guidelines by which to teach the writing process. Research of the scholarly opinion on the writing process, however, reveals a myriad of approaches.

There are the proponents of an organic, ‘you’ve either got it or you don’t’ approach to the writing process, like Sherwin B. Nuland (2001), a surgeon-writer who, in his article entitled *Writing* states that there is no real method to the writing process: he has never made an outline, never thought about the ending while writing the beginning, and never planned a theme for his writing; he simply has faith that his unconscious mind will ‘willy-nilly’ enable the writing to happen by itself. Along these same lines, writer Joseph Epstein (2004), in his article *Writing on the Brain*, states that despite all the programs and creative-writing classes, writing cannot really be taught. He quotes Paul Valeacutery in his

Dialogues on Art: ““There are products of the mind that cannot be reduced to neat formulas of expression or systematic methods and practices.”” Epstein adds, “Writing happens to be one of them” (¶ 28).

Somewhere in the middle is middle school teacher, Laura Harper (1998), who thinks of her writing classroom as a workshop and sets it up so that her students have the tools they need to get their jobs done—paper, markers, reference books, brainstorming lists, and writing logs.

There are also advocates for a more formal approach to the writing process. Larry Watson (2002), a Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, and award-winning creative writer, states that in his fiction writing class, for at least the first six weeks, he has his students do exercises that have to do with technique. When asked how his approach to teaching writing has changed over the years, he offers that he asks his students to do much more technical stuff—like exercises, more perspiration kind of work than he used to. He adds that he is much more likely to spend some time talking about technique before his students write.

There are even some researchers like Lindgren and Sullivan (2002), who, in their article entitled *The ls graph: A methodology for visualizing writing revision* propose that the ability to write is not inborn and is generally learned in a formal setting. They call for the quantification of the written word through the analysis of an LS graph, a graphic representation of a writing session that has taken place in a keystroke-logging environment.

This review of the scholarly literature on the writing process confirms my belief that there is no ‘one right way’ to create a good writer. There is, however, a common thread

running through the literature. No matter who the writer, or whether he or she believes writing is part unconscious, part serendipitous, part scientific, or part practice, each speaks of an enthusiasm for writing. Nuland (2001) reflects on the euphoric sense of freedom he feels when he writes. Epstein (2004) compares writing to “the delight of dancing faultlessly to one’s own choreography” (¶ 33). Harper (2001) revels in her students’ transformations after they’ve appeared to internalize what she’s taught them about writing. Watson (2002) says that sometimes, when he’s in his room writing alone, he chokes up, explaining that there’s something inexplicably visceral about the act of writing. Even the State of Michigan requires that students should be enthusiastic about writing (Michigan Department of Education, W.AT.07.01).

Dr. Elaine Weber, a literacy expert from the M. Intermediate School District, introduced me to a writing program by internationally known author and speaker, Barry Lane, entitled *Reviser’s Toolbox*. Dr. Weber was asked by my school’s curriculum director to help the English department to improve our MEAP writing scores. Dr. Weber called for a writing sample from our 11th grade students so that we could get some baseline data about where the level of writing was at our school. After we scored the samples using the MEAP rubric, Dr. Weber sighed and said, “It’s worse than I thought” (personal communication, October 12, 2005). She then handed me a plain white cardboard box, Barry Lane’s Toolbox, which consisted of four videotapes and a workbook. She told us to teach Lane’s techniques to our students and see if their writing improves. Lane’s program is grounded in enthusiasm for writing and employs writing revision techniques that are

easy and fun for students of all ages to use and internalize. It is my belief that my students' enthusiasm for writing and their writing proficiency will improve as a result of Barry Lane's *Reviser's Toolbox*.

Research Process

The data collection plan (see Appendix A) that I have developed ensures both validity and reliability, and there is a triangulation among sources of data for each of my three research questions:

- Are N.H. High School students, as a whole, proficient writers?
- Will my students enjoy Barry Lane's *Reviser's Toolbox* writing program?
- Will my students' writing improve as a result of instruction using Barry Lane's *Reviser's Toolbox*?

Are N.H. High School students, as a whole, proficient writers?

The first level of data collected was a one-question teacher survey (see Appendix B), conducted in April, 2006, to determine if there is a general consensus among the high school teaching staff as to whether or not they believe our students are proficient writers.

The second level of data, collected from the state of Michigan, was the previous three years' MEAP writing scores (see Appendix C), analyzed to determine whether or not our students' writing scores in the recent past have exceeded, met, or fallen below state

proficiency levels. The third level of data, collected in October, 2005, was my 11th grade English students' writing samples, hereafter referred to as "pre-treatment data" ("treatment" being Barry Lane's *Reviser's Toolbox*). These MEAP-style essays (see Appendix D) were scored by two members of the English department using the MEAP writing rubric (see Appendix E) and analyzed to determine the level of writing proficiency among students

before treatment was implemented.

Will my students enjoy Barry Lane's *Reviser's Toolbox* writing program?

The first level of data collected was a student survey (see Appendix F), given after implementation of the writing program, designed to develop a consensus on student opinion as to whether or not they enjoyed the writing program. The second level of data collected was my own observations of my students' enjoyment of the writing program during implementation.

Will my students' writing improve as a result of instruction using Barry Lane's *Reviser's Toolbox*?

The first level of data collected was a student survey (see Appendix F), given after implementation of the writing program, designed to develop a consensus on student opinion as to whether or not their writing has improved as a result of the writing program.

The second level of data, collected in February, 2006, was my 11th grade English students' post-treatment writing samples. These MEAP-style essays (see Appendix G) were scored by two members of the English department using the MEAP writing rubric (see Appendix E) and analyzed to determine the level of writing proficiency among students after treatment was implemented. The third level of data, which will be collected in the summer/fall of 2006, is the results from this year's MEAP scores. My 11th grade students took the MEAP in March of 2006, after implementation of the writing program. When the scores

arrive, I will compare them to previous year's writing scores to determine if improvement has taken place.

The various levels of collected data from several sources allowed me to make generalizations about whether or not N.H. students are proficient writers (Do they even need help with their writing?), about whether or not my 11th grade English students enjoyed Lane's writing program or found it boring, and about whether or not their writing improved after the program.

Data Analysis

After careful analysis of the data, it is apparent that N.H. High School students, as a whole, are not proficient writers. The word “proficient,” as defined in Webster’s New World Pocket Dictionary: 4th Edition, means “skilled.” A one-question survey (see Appendix B), administered to 20 (of 20) N.H. High School teachers, validates this statement. Eighteen teachers responded to the survey (including myself). Teachers were asked to strongly disagree, disagree, respond neutrally, agree, or strongly agree with the following statement: *I think N.H. High School students, as a whole, are proficient writers.* What is most notable about the results of the survey is that 72% of teachers either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement, while only 11% of teachers agreed; in fact, no teachers strongly agreed with the statement. 17% of teachers responded neutrally to the statement. So, the vast majority, nearly three quarters of the teaching staff at N.H. High School, believes that our students are not proficient writers. Figure 1 displays the data.

Figure 1
Teacher Survey: “N.H. High School students are proficient writers”

Analysis of previous years’ MEAP writing scores also supports the fact that N.H. High School students are not, as a whole, proficient writers (see Appendix C). The percentage of 11th grade N.H. High School students who have met or exceeded state writing standards has been in the mid to lower 50% range over the past three years. As

compared to the other 20 school districts in M. County, N.H. has ranked in the bottom half of all the districts over this three-year period. For the class of 2003, the percent of 11th grade students who met or exceeded state standards on the MEAP Writing was 55%, ranking N.H. 13th of 21 school districts in M. County. For the class of 2004, the percent of 11th grade students who met or exceeded state standards on the MEAP Writing was 52%, ranking N.H. 12th of 21 school districts in M. County. For the class of 2005, the percent of 11th grade students who met or exceeded state standards on the MEAP Writing was 51%, ranking N.H. 11th of 21 school districts in M. County. Figure 2 displays the data.

*Best and Worst % in County data is not available for 2005.

Figure 2

% of N.H. Students Who Met or Exceeded State Standards on MEAP Writing

Finally, the results of a pre-treatment scoring of student writing samples further supports the fact that N.H. High School students, as a whole, are not proficient writers. On October 11, 2005, at the request of our curriculum director, all four English teachers in the building, including myself, administered the same sample MEAP writing prompt to the students in our English classes, grades 9 through 11. I told my two classes of 11th grade

students that a literacy specialist, Dr. Elaine Weber, from the M. Intermediate School District was coming in the next day to help the English department staff members score their essays to determine their level of writing proficiency. Students were given approximately 45 minutes in which to write their essays. They were given a writing prompt on a handout taken from a previous year's MEAP writing test: Writing from Knowledge and Experience. The theme about which they were to write was "Facing a Challenge" (see Appendix D). Members of the English department gathered with Dr. Weber the next day to look over the essays so that Dr. Weber could gauge the level of our students' writing before she could make suggestions about how to help. We were given the MEAP six point *Writing from Knowledge and Experience* rubric (see Appendix E) from which to base our scores. We piled the papers in the middle of the desk and read and scored them until each essay was given a score. After an informal analysis of the scored papers, as mentioned previously, Dr. Weber stated that the collective state of our students' writing was worse than she had expected. So, at the recommendation of Dr. Weber, I decided to try Barry Lane's *Reviser's Toolbox*.

The essays from the meeting with Dr. Weber were preserved, but the scores were not. I decided to replicate that scoring process with my colleague from the English Department, Lynn Sossi, so that I could record and more carefully analyze the pre-treatment scores from my forty-seven 11th grade English students (roughly two-thirds of the entire junior class). Sossi and I independently scored both the pre-treatment and post-treatment essays on May 6, 2006, using the same MEAP writing rubric and procedure as we had

with Dr. Weber back in October (see Appendix E). Each student's essay was read and scored independently by both Sossi and myself. The results that follow reflect 40 composite scores gathered as a result of averaging both Sossi's and my scores for each student, like they do on the real MEAP (Note: Seven students were absent on the day pre-treatment essays were administered). On a six-point scale ("6" being best, "3" being average," and "1" being worst) 55% of students scored below a "4." Therefore, over half of my students received only average or below average scores. (Two students received scores of "not ratable/off topic" as they did not write about the topic provided). Figure 3 displays the data.

Figure 3

Pre-treatment Composite Scores

Analysis of the data confirms my second research question; my students enjoyed Barry Lane's *Reviser's* Toolbox writing program. After my forty-seven 11th grade students finished Lane's program, I asked them to complete a survey (see Appendix F). Students were instructed not to put their names on the surveys and that no one would see their individual surveys but me. I relayed that these surveys would not be graded and that they were designed to assist me in my Master's degree program as I'm doing a study on

Barry Lane's writing program. Directions for the survey state: "For each statement, please circle only ONE of the bolded responses."

Student responses were overwhelmingly favorable in response to the statement: "Barry teaches with enthusiasm." Seventy percent of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 26% were neutral, and 4% disagreed. No student strongly disagreed with the statement. Figure 4 displays the data.

Figure 4

"Barry teaches with enthusiasm"

The majority of students believe that Lane's program is more fun than a variety of other ways they have been taught writing in the past. Just over half (51%) of all students surveyed thought Lane's program was more fun than the ways writing was taught to them in years past, 32% thought it was equal in terms of fun, and 11% thought it was less fun than in the past. Six percent of students did not respond to this statement. Figure 5 displays the data.

Figure 5

**"Compared to other ways my English teachers have taught me in the past (i.e. lectures, notes, group work, worksheets, other) Barry's lessons are: (circle one):
less same more fun"**

The majority of students also liked Lane's teaching methods. In response to the statement: "I like Barry's way of teaching me about writing," over half (55%) of the students surveyed either agreed (40%) or strongly agreed (15%) with the statement.

Thirty-two percent were neutral, 11% disagreed, and 2% strongly disagreed. Figure 6 displays the data.

Figure 6

“I like Barry’s way of teaching me about writing”

Finally, during the administration of the writing program, I observed my students laughing, writing intently, and volunteering to read their work.

Lane’s program consists of four videos starring Barry Lane himself. He is dressed in t-shirt and jeans. He speaks informally and apparently without script. Sometimes he dons silly hats or acts in funny vignettes. In every video, he sings an original (and often humorous) folk song that sums up each video’s message. More than once, my students asked me to play the song again. One time, the dismissal bell rang during one of his songs, and several students stayed to watch the end of his song.

During each video, students are asked to do writing exercises in response to something he has just taught them. These are creative writing exercises that don’t require that students adhere to a specific topic. I witnessed my students writing feverishly, often

asking for more time to finish, despite knowing that these writing exercises would not be graded. I witnessed more than the usual number of hands raise when I asked students to read aloud what they had written. I also noticed students raise their hands who were typically reluctant to share.

These observations confirmed my belief that my students enjoyed Barry Lane's *Reviser's Toolbox*.

Finally, analysis of the data confirms that my students' writing improved after taking part in the writing program: Barry Lane's *Reviser's Toolbox*. The student survey responses (see Appendix F) pertaining to writing improvement help to confirm that my students have seen an improvement in their writing after participating in Lane's program.

An overwhelming majority of students stated that their writing had, indeed, improved. Eighty-one percent of students surveyed agreed (66%) or strongly agreed (15%) that their writing had improved. Fifteen percent were neutral, 4% disagreed, and no student strongly disagreed. Figure 7 displays the data.

Figure 7

“My writing has improved as a result of Barry Lane's lessons (i.e. tapes and writing exercises)”

More students agreed than disagreed that they have become more confident writers after taking part in Lane's writing program. Nine percent strongly agreed and 36% agreed that they have become more confident writers. Fifty-one percent were neutral, while only 2% disagreed and 2% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Figure 8 displays the data.

Figure 8

“I feel like a more confident writer as a result of Barry’s lessons”

Many more students agreed than disagreed that they felt more confident going into the MEAP after working Lane’s program. Thirty-nine percent agreed (30%) or strongly agreed (9%) with the statement, while 50% were neutral and 11% disagreed. No student strongly disagreed. Figure 9 displays the data.

Figure 9

“I feel more confident going into the MEAP after Barry’s lessons”

A large majority, 62%, of students agreed that they plan to use Lane’s techniques in their future writing endeavors. Seventeen percent strongly agreed, 21% were neutral, and, significantly, no student disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. Figure 10 displays the data.

Figure 10

“I will use Barry’s techniques in the future when I write (i.e. binoculars, snapshots, thoughtshots, etc.)”

Well over half of students surveyed (63%) would advise teachers to use Lane’s

program with their students. Twenty-three percent strongly agreed that teachers should use the *Toolbox* and 40% agreed. Thirty-one percent were neutral, while only 4% and 2% disagreed and strongly disagreed, respectively. Figure 11 displays the data.

Figure 11

“I would recommend that teachers use Barry Lane’s lessons with their students”

Sixty-one percent of students surveyed wish that they would have been exposed to Lane’s program in middle school. Twenty-three percent strongly agreed, 38% agreed, 22% were neutral, while only 15% disagreed and 2% strongly disagreed with the statement that follows. Figure 12 displays the data.

Figure 12

“I wish I would have had Barry’s lessons as early as middle school”

Student opinion about the improvement of their writing is not the only data that positively correlates Lane’s writing program with an improvement in student writing. Careful analysis of the post-treatment writing samples also shows that student writing did improve after students partook in Lane’s writing program.

Post-treatment writing samples were collected in February, 2006 from the same group of 11th grade students who provided the pre-treatment samples in October, 2005. Students were asked to help me in my Master’s study about improving writing using Barry Lane’s techniques. Students were given approximately 45 minutes in which to write their

essays. They were given a writing prompt on a handout taken from a previous year's MEAP writing test: Writing from Knowledge and Experience. The theme about which they were to write was "My Dream for My Life" (see Appendix G). These MEAP-style essays were scored on the same day and time (May 6, 2006) as the pre-treatment samples, by my colleague from the English department, Lynn Sossi, and myself. We used the MEAP writing rubric (see Appendix E). These students had not written any MEAP style essays in my class since they provided the pre-treatment samples in October.

Of my forty-seven 11th grade students, 13 did not provide one of the two writing samples due to absences on the days they were administered; therefore, their pre and post-treatment scores could not be compared. These students' scores are not included in the analysis. Thirty-four students (or 72% of all my 11th grade students) provided both scores and are included in the data that follows.

On a six-point scale ("6" being best, "3" being average," and "1" being worst), in comparison to the 55% of students who scored below a "4" on the pre-treatment sample, on the post-treatment sample, only 44% scored below a "4." Perhaps the most significant finding of this study is that of the 34 students who are included in this analysis, 62% of their scores went up by an average of 1.5 points. Eighteen percent of student scores stayed the same, and 20% of student scores went down, but only by an average of .8 points. So, although 38% of student scores stayed the same or went down, 62% of student scores went up. Figure 13 displays the data.

Figure 13

Post-treatment analysis of writing samples

The final source of data that I will collect in the 2006-2007 school year is the MEAP writing scores from the 11th grade students who took part in the study. These students took the MEAP in late-March of 2006, after implementation of the writing program. When the test results come back, I will do an informal follow-up, comparing last year's writing scores to this year's scores to see if there was improvement.

Action Plan

Overall, my research has solidified my belief that Barry Lane's *Reviser's Toolbox* is not only fun for students but also improves their writing.

This study has proven that N.H. High School students, as a whole, are not proficient writers. This must change. We are doing a disservice to our students and to the N.H. community if we teachers do not explore alternative ways to teach writing. The MEAP data alone, over the past three years, illustrates that what we have been doing in the

past has been consistently ineffective.

It is my contention that our students don't write enough and when they do—it isn't fun for them. How often I have heard groaning and moaning from my students at the prospect of picking up a pen to write. My literature review makes clear that although there is no one correct way to teach writing, enthusiasm for writing is the common denominator among lifelong writers, and that is what we should hope our students become. My study has proven that high school students, as a whole, enjoyed Lane's program. This is a boon, as getting high school students to admit that they like anything to do with writing has, in the past, been monumentally difficult.

Most importantly, my study proves that Barry Lane's *Reviser's Toolbox* works—an overwhelming majority of my students agree, and the post-treatment data supports this fact. Moreover, the majority of these students recommend that we teachers implement this program—in fact, most of them wish they had been exposed to Lane's program as early as middle school.

The students have spoken. My next goal is to get the English teachers in my building on board. My first course of action, therefore, will be to share the results of this collaborative action research paper with my colleagues in the English department (see Appendix H). I am fortunate in that this group of educators is quick to embrace new instructional programs and implement them into their curriculums, provided they see a need for them, and provided they believe that the program will actually work. My study has confirmed both the need and the efficacy of Lane's program, so I anticipate that these teachers will be eager to implement it as early as next school year. However, had Dr.

Weber not taken the time to show me video clips and the workbook from Lane's program, I might not have used it—despite her recommendation. Therefore, I plan to ask our curriculum director for some time, during one of our staff professional development days, to formally introduce the *Toolbox* to my colleagues in the English department. At this meeting, I will show clips from the videos, explain some of the workbook activities, and provide them with a variety of examples of student writing (from both high and low-achieving students) generated from my students' use of Lane's course. This will make the program real for them and hopefully generate excitement about using it.

Barry Lane's *Reviser's Toolbox* is designed for students of all ages—including primary grades. After using it in my classroom, I believe that this program is best suited for middle school students, who, I believe, would be even more receptive than high school students to Lane's personality, teaching style, and techniques. Recall that my 11th grade students overwhelmingly agreed that they wish they had been introduced to Lane's program in middle school.

As a teacher of upperclassmen, I have been frustrated in years past about the quality of student writing when they reach me in the 11th and 12th grades. I have been forced to do a game of “catch up” in this regard: teaching my students about how to write engaging leads and endings, about using sensory imagery, about writing in detail—techniques that Lane's program successfully incorporates.

My hope, therefore, is that N.H. students will become proficient in Lane's writing techniques in middle school, so that once they reach me in the high school, I can introduce

them to more advanced writing techniques and formats. I envision a time when I can walk into my 11th grade English class on the first day of school and ask each student to write something using their “binoculars” (a Lane technique), and they will not only know what I mean, but they will use the technique effectively and produce something of quality.

It is necessary, therefore, to also get the curriculum director on board (see Appendix H). I will invite him to my formal introduction of Lane’s program at the staff professional development day I spoke of earlier. It is my hope that he will allow me introduce Lane’s program to the middle school English staff in much the same way.

If everyone gets on board with the *Toolbox*, it will be necessary to purchase a kit for the middle school staff. Each kit, called “Barry in a Box,” contains four videotapes and a workbook from which to make copies of writing exercises. Ideally, each member of the English department would have her/his own kit, but that may not be possible due to budget constraints. If each teacher cannot have her/his own kit, then teachers can share the kit for their building among them and simply teach Lane’s course at different times during the school year.

There is a better way, and it’s called Barry Lane’s *Reviser’s Toolbox*. Our students need it, they will enjoy it, and their writing will improve as a result of using it.

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Appendix A

Data Collection Plan

<u>Research Questions</u>	<u>Source 1</u>	<u>Source 2</u>	<u>Source 3</u>
Are N.H. High School students, as a whole, proficient writers?	Teacher survey	MEAP scores- past 3 years	Student work- pre-treatment data
Will my students enjoy Barry Lane's <i>Reviser's Toolbox</i> writing program?	Student survey	Teacher observation	
Will my students' writing improve after instruction using Barry Lane's <i>Reviser's Toolbox</i> ?	Student survey	Student work- post-treatment data	MEAP scores- longitudinal data

Appendix B

Teacher Survey

To: Teachers

From: Dayna Polehanki

Can you help me with my Master's paper about improving writing by responding to this survey statement and then returning it to my mailbox? Please do not put your name on it.

I think N.H. High School students, as a whole, are proficient writers.

Circle one:

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Appendix C

MEAP Writing Scores: 2003, 2004, and 2005

High School	% who met	% who met	% who met
MEAP	or exceeded	or exceeded	or exceeded
	state standards	state standards	state standards
	in Writing	in Writing	in Writing
	Class of 2003	Class of 2004	Class of 2005
N.H. Schools	55%	52%	51%
	13 th of 21 districts	12 th of 21 districts	11 th of 21 districts
	in M. County	in M. County	in M. County

(Source: The State of Michigan via The M. Daily)

Appendix D

MEAP Writing Prompt: Pre-Treatment

N.H. School District Writing Prompt

Directions:

Facing a challenge means facing difficult problems in life, like facing things we're afraid of. Challenges might include: overcoming fear of lightning storms, heights, etc., preparing to win a competition, making an important but difficult decision, or solving an important problem.

Write about the theme: facing a challenge

Do **one** of the following:

- Write about a time when you successfully faced something you were afraid to do.

OR

- Tell about a time when you successfully used your brains, determination, and/or physical ability to accomplish an important goal.

OR

- Describe how you or a person you admire has faced a challenge or solved an important problem.

OR

- Write about the theme in your own way.

You may use examples from real life, from what you read or watch, or from your imagination. Your writing will be read by interested adults.

Use the paper provided for notes, freewriting, outlining, clustering, or writing your rough draft, but only your "final copy" will be scored. If you need to make a correction, cross out the error and write the correction above or next to it.

You should give careful thought to revision (rethinking ideas) and proofreading (correcting spelling, capitalization, and punctuation). Use the rubric and the checklist provided to help improve your writing.

You may use a dictionary, thesaurus, spelling book and/or grammar book.

Appendix E

MEAP Writing Rubric

**Michigan Educational Assessment Program
Integrated English Language Arts
Part 1a Rubric
Writing from Knowledge and Experience**

- 6** The writing is exceptionally engaging, clear, and focused. Ideas and content are extensively developed and supported by concepts, examples, and details where appropriate. The writer's control over organization and transitions seems natural and moves the reader smoothly through the text. The voice and tone are authentic and compelling. Tight control over language use and mastery of writing conventions contribute to the effect of the presentation.
- 5** The writing is engaging, clear, and focused. Ideas and content are well developed and supported by concepts, examples, and details where appropriate. The writer's control over organization and transitions effectively moves the writer through the text. The voice and tone are authentic. The language is well controlled, and occasional lapses in writing conventions are hardly noticeable.
- 4** The writing is generally clear and focused. Ideas and content are developed and supported by concepts, examples, and details where appropriate. The presentation is generally coherent, and its organization is functional. Voice, tone, and language use support meaning. Lapses in the conventions of written texts are not distracting.
- 3** The writing is somewhat clear and focused. Ideas and content are developed with limited or partially successful use of concepts, examples, and details. The presentation shows some evidence of structure, but it may be artificial or ineffective. Voice and tone may be uneven or inappropriate. Language use is correct but limited. Incomplete mastery over writing conventions may interfere with meaning some of the time.
- 2** The writing is only occasionally clear and focused. Ideas and content are underdeveloped. The presentation shows little evidence of structure. Voice and tone may be uneven or inappropriate. Language use is sometimes erroneous. Limited mastery over writing conventions makes the writing difficult to read.
- 1** The writing is generally unclear and unfocused. Ideas and content are not developed. The presentation lacks noticeable structure. There are errors in language use. Lack of mastery over writing conventions makes the writing difficult to read.

Not ratable if:

- A Off topic
- B Illegible
- C Written in a language other than English
- D Blank/refused to respond

Appendix F
EDU 690: Collaborative Action Research
Student Survey
Polehanki

For each statement, please circle only ONE of the bolded responses:

My writing has improved as a result of Barry Lane's lessons (i.e. tapes and writing exercises).

strongly disagree **disagree** **neutral** **agree** **strongly agree**

I feel like a more confident writer as a result of Barry's lessons.

strongly disagree **disagree** **neutral** **agree** **strongly agree**

Barry teaches with enthusiasm.

strongly disagree **disagree** **neutral** **agree** **strongly agree**

I feel more confident going into the MEAP after Barry's lessons.

strongly disagree **disagree** **neutral** **agree** **strongly agree**

I will use Barry's techniques in the future when I write (i.e. binoculars, snapshots, thoughtshots, etc.)

strongly disagree **disagree** **neutral** **agree** **strongly agree**

The technique I will probably use most often is: **(circle one)**

- binoculars (using sensory imagery)
- leads (like big potato)
- snapshots
- thoughtshots
- explode a moment
- shrink a century
- endings

Compared to other ways my English teachers have taught me in the past (i.e. lectures, notes, group work, worksheets, other) Barry's lessons are: **(circle one)**

less **same** **more** fun.

I would recommend that teachers use Barry Lane's lessons with their students.

strongly disagree **disagree** **neutral** **agree** **strongly agree**

I wish I would have had Barry's lessons as early as middle school.

strongly disagree **disagree** **neutral** **agree** **strongly agree**

I liked Barry's way of teaching me about writing.

strongly disagree **disagree** **neutral** **agree** **strongly agree**

The aspect of my writing that has improved the most is: **(fill in the blank)**

Appendix G

MEAP Writing Prompt: Post-Treatment

Directions

Dreams are important in people's lives. Walt Disney said that if you can dream it you can do it. Dreams can be like beacons—leading a person on the journey of life. Dreams can give people a reason to live. Dreams can be about relationships, a future occupation, and/or future life goals.

Write about the theme: My Dream for My Life

Do **one** of the following:

- Describe your dream for your life and tell how you plan to realize your dream

OR

- Tell how a person you admire has worked to realize his/her dream.

OR

- Persuade the reader that having a dream and working toward that dream is important in life

OR

- Write about the theme in your own way.

Use examples from real life, from what you have read or watched, or from your imagination. Your writing will be read by interested adults.

Use the paper provided for notes, freewriting, outlining, clustering, or writing your rough draft. If you need to make a correction, cross out the error and write the correction above or next to it.

You should give careful thought to revision (rethinking ideas) and proofreading (correcting spelling, capitalization, and punctuation). Use the checklist and rubric to help improve your writing.

(Optional: You may use a dictionary, thesaurus, spelling book and/or grammar book.)

