



Leveling the Playing Field: The Efficacy of Thinking Maps on English Language Learner Students' Writing

Many students, especially English language learners (ELLs), struggle with writing expository texts. This study examined the impact of several writing strategies on ELLs' writing skills, including prewriting strategies and scaffolding strategies inherent in the Thinking Maps (TM) program. The purpose of the study was to see if ELLs were able to use these strategies to express their ideas more effectively in compositions in a more organized way. The participants were 8 students in grades 3 through 5 in the South Bay School District. The students were participating in an after-school writing class 2 days a week for 6 months. As a result, the overall average of students' writing scores in the areas of "Ideas" and "Organization" increased. While the overall averages were below the proficiency level (3.0), these writing strategies can be seen as having a positive impact on ELLs' writing skills.

Introduction

As educators who focus on working with urban students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, we have tried to find ways to improve the teaching and learning of literacy skills, particularly because writing is a gatekeeper to academic success. One writing strategy that has been used in elementary schools is Thinking Maps (TM). The program was created by David Hyerle in 1990. He based Thinking Maps on the belief that people's ability to learn visually is greater than their other senses (Hyerle & Yeager, 2007). As with concept maps and graphic organizers, the nature of this program is constructivist in that students can make meaning of an abstract concept by reducing it to paper (Hyerle, 2004). Although there have been studies on using Thinking Maps (TMs) for standard English-speaking students (Brooks, 2005; Burden & Silver, 2006; Gallagher, 2011; Hyer-

le & Williams, 2009; Sunseri, 2011), there are few studies that examine their use for teaching English language learners (ELLs) (Holzman & Gallagher, 2006).

Hispanic students, especially those who are ELLs, appear to struggle with writing, as documented by their performance on standardized tests. According to the results published in 2003 by the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), there was a significant difference in fourth-grade writing scores between white and Hispanic students. While 10% of white students scored “Below Basic,” 23% of Hispanic students received that score. Also, 31% of white students scored “Proficient” while 16% of Hispanic students received that score. Further, the scores for eighth-grade white and Hispanic students mirrored those of the fourth graders (Grigg, Daane, Jin, & Campbell, 2003). In 2011, fourth-grade writing was not assessed but eighth-grade writing was. White students scored 13% in the “Below Basic” category and Hispanic students scored 31%. In the “Proficient” category, white students scored 30% and Hispanic students scored 13%, according to *The Nation’s Report Card: Writing 2011* (2012). These scores appear to indicate a gap in writing achievement between white and Hispanic students, including ELLs, that does not appear to be narrowing through time. ELLs have particular struggles with writing because they do not have native language literacy skills, as do their classmates whose first language is English (Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2006). Without oral and written proficiency in English, these students are at a disadvantage because they are not able to show what they know in content subjects such as mathematics and science (Banks et al., 2005).

A major concern in teaching ELLs is the reclassification process that moves these students from being limited English proficient (LEP) to fluent English proficient (FEP). Although students’ scores on the California Standards Test (CST) and the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) are generally high, these same students struggle when asked to write a paragraph that meets grade-level standards. The problem that frames this study is that ELLs have difficulty writing proficiently. The question is: What are the effects of using a TM and other prewriting strategies for ELLs on their writing achievement as evidenced by growth in the areas of “Organization” and “Ideas” on a writing rubric?

We, a professor at a California university and a former elementary school principal and writing consultant, worked with a group of ELL students to chart their writing improvement through a school year by teaching students how to deconstruct a writing prompt and to develop a TM writing outline that evolved from determining the key

ideas from the writing prompt. From there, we helped the students develop a composition that addressed the prompt's requirements and the ideas they laid out in the TM writing outlines. In this article, we describe the research we conducted to evaluate the efficacy of TMs in ELL student writing of compositions.

This article is organized into several sections. First is Relevant Literature, which presents the learning theories undergirding the benefits of using TMs with students. Another section discusses the training we received to present the Tree Map and other writing strategies to ELLs. The next section, Participants, details the demographic and academic backgrounds of these students. The Data Collection section presents how the data were collected to measure if students' paragraphs improved. The Procedures section details the research methods used to measure the efficacy of TMs in relation to ELLs' meeting proficiency standards and writing well-organized compositions. The Results section presents the rubric scores for "Organization" and "Ideas" based on scoring the students' compositions and determining the efficacy of using TMs as an instructional strategy with ELLs. The Discussion section presents the findings of the study. The Implications section discusses how the findings might affect writing instruction with students. Finally, the Conclusion section discusses how these results could be used to improve student writing, especially for ELLs.

Relevant Literature

According to Powell (as cited in Viruru, 2003), one way to define literacy is the ability of children to read and write at a competent level. In addition, several authors maintain that the ability to read and write are not only important goals within themselves but are linked to academic achievement (August et al., 2008). Hence, it is important to understand how children acquire literacy so they can achieve academic success. Sociocultural theory, also referred to as "cultural-historical" and "socio-historical," uses culture as a central point in the learning process (Wertsch, 1993; Wertsch, Del Rio, & Alvarez, 1995) and represents a way of explaining how students develop literacy. Under sociocultural theory, human thought emerges in the context of activities that are embedded in specific social and cultural settings and influence the learning process of an individual (Dixson-Krauss, 1996). Sociocultural theory focuses on specific mental functions rather than universalities (Wertsch, 1990). This approach targets familiar information from previous experiences and prior knowledge to determine learning as opposed to general set "standards" or "norms" of learning.

Another aspect of the learning process can be explained by the zone of proximal development (ZPD) theory (Dixson-Krauss, 1996;

Vygotsky, 1978), which is the distance between the actual developmental level of the novice as evaluated for independent problem-solving capabilities and the level of potential development the novice would experience under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978). The developmental level of the individual lags behind the potential learning level, resulting in the ZPD. In other words, learning can occur with the assistance of an adult mentor or the help of other individuals close in age or academic ability. Using the dynamic described by ZPD, teachers, adults, and peers can assist individual or novice literacy users to move past their point of development and closer to their potential abilities. The zone enables individuals to propose a new formula, namely that the “only learning” is that which is in advance of development.

Scaffolding theory is similar to ZPD in the way it explains how students learn. It maintains that a tutor helps to shape a tutee’s task by “imitating in idealized form, an attempted solution tried (assumed to be tried) by the tutee in the expectation that the learner can ‘imitate’ it back in a more appropriate form” (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976, p. 98). Many authors state that scaffolding is an important instructional strategy in helping ELLs develop literacy in English and manipulate higher-level concepts (August et al., 2008; Cobb, 2004; Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2006; Education Alliance, 2006; Novak & Canas, 2008; Rosenshine, 1997). Typically, scaffolding is an instructional strategy teachers use to help students comprehend reading material. However, scaffolding can also be used as a cognitive strategy. It can structure related concepts to make it easier for students to represent these ideas on paper. Scaffolding can also make it easier for students to add new information to these concepts. The use of scaffolding as an instructional strategy is supported by research that maintains the importance of teachers’ initiating activities that require students to process and apply new information (August et al., 2008). Scaffolding can be readily applied to TMs because concepts can be reproduced on paper. Teachers thus create a TM to connect related concepts and use scaffolding to help students form a writing outline from the map (see Appendix A). Appendix B contains an example of an outline created by a student. In this way, teachers help students process information by taking the concepts from the writing outline and fleshing them out in expository paragraphs.

Because many of the strategies developed to help ELLs learn English involve visual presentations such as scaffolding reading selections, visual organizers are believed to help ELLs in two ways. First, visual organizers can help ELLs learn important concepts by showing their relationship on paper. Second, these organizers, particularly TMs,

can help ELLs transfer the conceptual relationship created on paper to textual outlines they can use to structure paragraphs that explain the relationship among the concepts (August et al., 2008; Cobb, 2004; Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2006; Jiang & Grabe, 2007; Novak & Canas, 2008). Thus, TMs are visual organizers that help students concretize their thinking into writing. Moreover, TMs can help ELLs organize their writing and thus practice academic English by explaining the relationship among the concepts. This study examines the effects of using TMs on the expository compositions of ELL students and measures the impact of TMs on students' organization and idea development in their compositions.

Training

In 2008, we participated in two days of TM staff development with a school's teachers. The staff development consisted of showing the participants how to use the program's eight Thinking Maps with students using the training manual *Thinking Maps: A Language for Learning* (Hyerle & Yeager, 2007). Specifically, we studied how to use the Tree Map (see Appendix A) by observing several teachers use this model as a writing outline with their students. We learned how to model prewriting strategies such as brainstorming when we attended writing in-services in 2012. From this information, we developed a writing program by adapting the Tree Map and using the writing strategies we learned to help the ELLs we were asked to teach.

Participants

The participants took the writing class because they were all trying to get reclassified from LEP to FEP. While the students were taking the writing class, they passed the writing section of the reclassification process by scoring "proficient" (3.0 on the district's writing rubric—see Appendix E) on "Ideas," "Organization," and "Elaboration" in a composition. As previously mentioned, two other measures indicated when a student was ready to be reclassified. One measure is the CST, in which a score of 400 on the Language Arts section is considered proficient. These students' scores ranged from 322 to 393, lower than the proficient score of 400. The other measure, the CELDT, measures oral proficiency in English. The students scored a 4 or 5, indicating that they were orally proficient. The students' individual scores on these two measures, their grade levels, and their ethnic backgrounds can be found in Appendix D.

The 8 ELLs ranged in grade level from third to fifth grades with ages between 8 and 10 years. They attended a suburban school in Northern California. The students' teachers viewed 3 of the 5 fourth

graders as being at grade level. The remaining 2 fourth graders, the 2 fifth graders, and the third grader were viewed as being slightly below grade level.

Students participated in a four-month after-school writing program that began in January and ended in May 2012. The writing class was offered two days a week for one hour each day. We, the authors, taught the writing class. The quantitative data for this study consisted of assessing students' compositions that were written between January and May.

Data Collection

The quantitative data consisted of 13 compositions written between January and May of 2012. These compositions were assessed using a district rubric (see Appendix E). A scale of 1 to 4 was used: 1=Below Standard; 2=Approaching Standard; 3=At Standard; and 4=Exceeds Standard. The rubric had five assessment categories: "Ideas," "Organization," "Elaboration," "Word Choice/Sentence Structure," and "Conventions." The source of the writing prompts is the Tennessee Writing Assessment Practice Prompts and Scoring Guide. The prompts can be found in Appendix C. We chose the writing genre of personal narrative because we believed it would be easier for students to write about their personal experiences because they had ample firsthand information.

The qualitative data consisted of asking the students to evaluate the writing program by responding to two questions. The first question asked the students what they liked about the class. The responses were varied. One student stated the program was "good for my grades." Another student remarked, "The best thing about the program was writing a paragraph." An additional response was that the students got help from the writing program. Finally, a student said, "I could improve my writing."

A second question asked students how the program could be improved. Three students said the program was good the way it was. Another student remarked, "Do more days and more writing." Another student recommended, "Do one [prompt] easy, one hard, and switch around and do interesting writing."

Procedures

We used the following procedures in presenting the writing prompts to students when they responded to the prompts using the adapted Tree Map writing outline format from the TM program. Each student received a paper copy of the prompt and a visual copy was projected on the overhead screen. Students took turns reading

the prompt out loud. As a group, the students would identify the key words in the prompt that they would then underline on their copies of the prompt. We wrote the key words on the whiteboard. Students were given a minute of think time to generate ideas about their prompt. Students pair-shared their ideas with a student sitting next to them. Students would then share their ideas with the class. Using the whiteboard, students would brainstorm the major ideas they could use in their outlines. For example, if students were writing about their favorite activity, the major ideas might be telling what the activity is, where students do it, and with whom. We would hand students white copy paper and a copy of the Tree Map from the TM program. Using a document reader we projected our sample outline on the whiteboard to show students how to complete the outline. That is, we showed them where to put their topic or main idea. We showed them where to put the three supporting ideas. We told them how to write three specific details under each of the three supporting ideas. We told them that the specific details told the reader more information about each supporting idea. Then we showed students a copy of a student outline that appears in Appendix B. We went over the details of the student's outline. The students then completed an individual outline. When students were finished and their outlines checked, students would get a copy of our outline and paragraph. Our paragraph was projected on the screen, and students would take turns reading the composition aloud. We showed the students how we took each detail on the outline and made it into a sentence. The students and we composed sample beginning and ending sentences that we wrote on the whiteboard. The students could use these sentences when they began writing their compositions. We handed out lined paper for students to write their compositions. Before students began writing, we reminded them to capitalize their titles and indent the first word of their paragraphs. Finally, we reminded students to check off the details in their outlines as they wrote them in their compositions.

Results

The students completed 13 compositions when we worked with them. The first composition was considered a pretest, and the students received no instruction in writing it. In the subsequent compositions, the students received the instruction that we described in the previous section. The students' compositions were assessed using the district's writing rubric (see Appendix E). The pretest, and each of the 12 compositions from the 8 ELL students, were assessed to yield scores for "Ideas" and "Organization." All student scores for "Ideas" were averaged and appear in Table 1.

Table 1
Rubric Scores for Ideas

<i>Students</i>	<i>Pretest 1</i>	<i>Assts. 2-5</i>	<i>Assts. 6-9</i>	<i>Assts. 10-13</i>
Student 1	2.0	2.87	2.93	3.0
Student 2	2.0	2.37	2.68	2.8
Student 3	2.5	2.75	2.62	3.0
Student 4	2.5	2.5	2.87	3.06
Student 5	2.5	2.5	2.75	2.81
Student 6	---	2.83	3.0	2.93
Student 7	2.5	2.62	2.81	2.81
Student 8	2.0	2.58	3.0	2.83
Average of all scores	2.28	2.62	2.58	2.83

Note. 1.0=Below Basic; 2=Basic; 3=Proficient; 4=Advanced

As Table 1 shows, the data showed a definite increase in the rubric scores for “Ideas.” Students’ scores increased, especially if one compares the scores of the 8 students on Pretest 1 with the scores of Assignments 10-13. The differences in these two categories for the individual students ranged from .31 to 1.1. In Table 2, the scores of “Organization” for each of the 8 students were averaged.

Table 2
Rubric Scores for Organization

<i>Students</i>	<i>Pretest 1</i>	<i>Assts. 2-5</i>	<i>Assts. 6-9</i>	<i>Assts. 10-13</i>
Student 1	1.0	2.68	2.87	3.0
Student 2	2.0	2.37	2.68	2.75
Student 3	2.5	2.75	2.75	2.87
Student 4	2.0	2.25	2.68	2.87
Student 5	2.5	2.62	2.75	2.93
Student 6	---	3.08	2.93	2.93
Student 7	2.5	2.62	2.5	2.81
Student 8	2.5	2.58	3.0	3.0
Average of all scores	2.14	2.61	2.76	2.89

Note. 1=Below Basic; 2=Basic; 3=Proficient; 4=Advanced

Looking at Table 2, the rubric results for “Organization,” one can observe a greater increase in students’ scores between these scores and the ones for “Ideas.” If one compares the 8 student scores on Pretest 1 in “Organization” with the average scores for Assignments 10-13, the differences in the rubric scores ranged from .31 to 2.0. As mentioned previously, the differences in the rubric scores for “Ideas” were .31 to 1.1. Thus, the “Organization” scores increased by almost 1.0 (.90) compared to those of “Ideas.”

The results of the study revealed three findings:

1. Students’ compositions were more organized if they used a Tree Map writing outline;
2. Students’ compositions improved in the way their ideas were elaborated; and
3. There was a positive relationship between “Organization” and “Ideas” in that rubric results increased in both categories with each succeeding composition the students wrote.

For example, if one looks at the average of all scores for Pretest 1 for “Organization” in Table 2, the results show that students’ pretest scores in “Organization” were 2.14, well below the “Proficient” score of 3.0. However, the average of all scores for Assignments 10-13 was much closer to 3.0 (2.89), a gain of .71. Similarly, in Table 1, the average of all scores in “Ideas” for the pretest was 2.28, which went up to 2.83 for Assignments 10-13, an increase of .63.

Discussion

In completing the compositions, the students used the same format that was presented in the Procedures section. That is, we gave them a writing prompt, and they used a TM outline, the Tree Map, in mapping their ideas before they wrote their compositions.

The findings mentioned in the Results section appear to indicate that students’ compositions became more organized if they used a TM writing outline every time they wrote. This finding is important because students’ compositions are considered well written if their written work is well organized. Organization is the foundation for expressing ideas effectively. The TM writing outlines helped students develop their ideas and scaffold them so the supporting details elaborated the main idea. Presenting ideas in a systemized way is the key to writing effective compositions.

Also, the data show the students’ compositions improved in the way ideas were elaborated. Using a TM writing outline helped students flesh out the specific details for each of their main ideas. As a

result, students enriched their compositions by writing more precise representations of their details.

In addition, the results demonstrate a positive relationship between “Organization” and “Ideas.” From looking at the results, one sees that “Organization” appeared to affect “Ideas” because students’ ideas were effectively presented in their writing when their compositions were well organized. Thus, the posttest rubric scores in both categories showed that students’ scores rose at a similar pace, especially if one looks at the averages for each cluster.

Three writing strategies helped students write more organized compositions. In the prewriting phase, visual aids such as prompts, Thinking Map writing outlines, and sample paragraphs for each composition were displayed on a screen. Also, students had these pieces on their desks so they could refer to them while they were writing. Oral strategies, such as having students read the material from the board aloud, may have helped them comprehend the material. The students also talked about their prompt ideas before they began writing the outlines. In the drafting phase, students were monitored while they were working on their outlines. These outlines were checked before students began writing. Also, students checked off details in their outlines as they used them in their compositions. Checking off details ensured the paragraphs were complete.

Implications

The results of this study demonstrated that students’ writing improved when they used TMs that resulted in outlines and organized their essays according to the outline. This finding has important policy implications. One of the Common Core State Standards is the students’ ability to write expository compositions in all curricular areas. The Anchor Standard for Writing #2 states: “Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content” (California Association for the Gifted, 2013, p. 17). If educators want students to succeed in writing nonfiction texts to meet this standard, ELL students must be able to write well-organized compositions. Thus, teachers must prepare students to use writing outlines that will help them structure their essays. This instruction should begin in the primary grades and extend to senior high school. This ongoing preparation will help students refine their outlining and writing skills as they advance through the grades. From this instruction, students should learn that their ideas are better elaborated when they are organized because content and form are not separate but build on each other in a synergistic relationship.

Conclusion

Working with the ELL participants in this study was significant for us because we could see for ourselves, as their teachers, how the writing strategies we used improved their writing. That is, we learned that when we used these strategies consistently, students knew what to do when they began the writing process. The students learned that they needed to know how they were expected to respond to the writing prompt. Then the students needed to create TM writing outlines based on the writing prompt's requirements. Also, we learned that some writing prompts were harder for students to respond to than others. Therefore, we adjusted our teaching to give students more support when they worked with the harder prompts. Finally, as a result of doing this research, we learned that standardization was important, particularly in using a rubric in evaluating their work so the writing scores were more reliable.

Equally important, this study was significant because it demonstrated how important it is for these students to write well-organized compositions if they are going to succeed academically. This study showed these students could progress satisfactorily if they could be shown how to use Thinking Map writing outlines in organizing their writing. Another factor that may have helped their writing was using the same procedures every time they wrote. This consistency of treatment may have engendered a cognitive pattern that caused students to outline their details in an organized way. As a result, their compositions reflected this standardized procedure. Equally important, these students were shown the rubric scores for each composition they wrote and learned what these scores meant. We told students that they needed to write complete sentences and provide specific details in elaborating their ideas if their compositions were to be evaluated as being on grade level. This knowledge helped students ascertain the quality of work they needed to produce that would meet grade-level standards.

Several schools hold academies during the summer to give ELLs additional academic support. We think this writing program could be used in these academies to jump-start students' writing. It can be continued during the regular school year. In fact, we have been asked to provide professional development to in-service teachers so they can use the TM writing outline model with their ELLs in their two-week summer academy. Whatever we can do to help ELLs realize their academic potential is absolutely worth doing and writing well is definitely an essential part of that potential.

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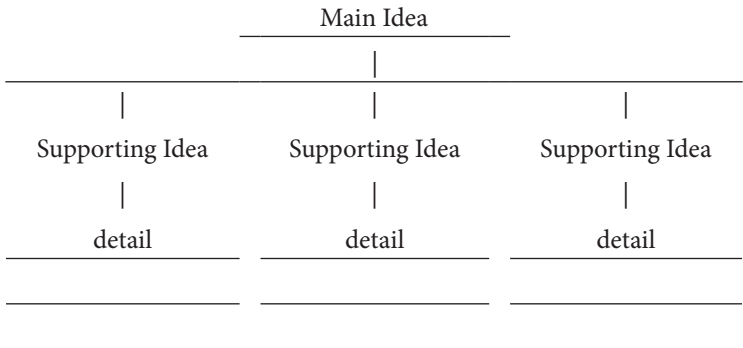
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Appendix A
The Tree Map

Source: D. Hyerle & C. Yeager. (2007). *Thinking maps: A language for learning*. Cary, NC: Thinking Maps.



Appendix B Student-Created Outline

This outline is third-grade student's response to the writing prompt "My Favorite Activity."

	Flag Football	
Supporting Idea	Supporting Idea	Supporting Idea
Nice Park	Getting the ball	Playing Q.B.
Playground	Throwing	You get to throw the ball
Lots of Shade	Catching it	Run with the ball
School	Tackling people	Doing plays
Black top	Getting touch downs	Being different positions

Three Reasons Why I Like to Play Football

Reason 1	Reason 2	Reason 3
Get to take a shower afterwards	Fun to play	Getting lots of energy out
Hot water from shower relaxes me	Like playing football With my friends	Makes me feel fit

Appendix C Writing Prompts

Source: Jefferson County Schools, Tennessee

Assignment #1 Pretest: Future Career

Everyone has an idea of what they would like to do when they "grow up."

Think about the career you would like to have when you finish school. Think about why you would like to have this career.

Write a paper explaining what career you would like to have when you "grow up." Explain at least three reasons why this is what you would like to do. Use specific details to explain and support your reasons. Use adjectives and descriptive words to make your paper interesting to read.

Assignment #2: Favorite Activity

Everyone has a favorite activity they enjoy doing. It might be playing an instrument, or a sport.

Think about what you like to do the most.

Write a composition telling what you most enjoy doing and at least three reasons why you like this activity so well. Be sure to use specific details to support each of your reasons. Use descriptive verbs and adjectives to make your paper interesting to read.

Writing Assignment #3: Best Friend

Best friends are special people in our lives.

Think about your best friend and reasons that you like him or her.

Think about things that you enjoy doing together.

Write a paper telling about your best friend. Include at least three reasons why s/he is your best friend. Remember to use specific details to explain and support your reasons. Use interesting adjectives and descriptive words to make your paper interesting to read. Include a short personal story about your best friend to help explain one of your reasons.

Appendix D Reclassification Indicators

<i>Student/Ethnicity</i>	<i>Grade Level</i>	<i>CST Language</i>	<i>CELDT Score</i>
Stu #1 White	4	385	4
Stu #2 Asian	4	326	4
Stu #3 Hispanic	4	339	4
Stu #4 Asian	4	385	5
Stu #5 Black	4	322	4
Stu #6 Hispanic	5	332	4
Stu #7 Hispanic	5	393 (CMA)	4
Stu #8 White	3	333	4

Note: CMA is an alternative state assessment test in Spanish for Spanish-speaking students.

Appendix E Writing Rubric

Source: San Jose Unified School District, Curriculum Department.
(2003). *Narrative writing scoring guide grade 4: (Personal/fictional)*.

Elements of Writing (Parts of the writing task)	4 Above Standard	3 At Standard	2 Approaching Standard	1 Below Standard
IDEAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These essays: Present a central idea in a perceptive and/or thoughtful way. Have a clear understanding of purpose. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These essays: Show adequate ideas that may be predictable. Demonstrate a general idea of purpose. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These essays: Show simplistic ideas or repetitive ideas. May be an undeveloped list. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These essays: Show ideas that may be a simple restatement of topic with no development. May be written in a language other than the one being assessed.
ORGANIZATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a thoroughly developed sequence of significant events to relate ideas, observations, and/or memories. Have clear coherence-ideas flow naturally and are understandable. Maintain a consistent point of view, focus, and organizational structure including paragraphing when appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide an adequately developed sequence of events to relate ideas, observations, and/or memories. Have overall coherence and are generally understandable. Maintain a mostly consistent point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including paragraphing when appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a minimally developed sequence of events to relate ideas, observations, and/or memories. Show a sense of coherence but may ramble or have a jumping around quality. Maintain an inconsistent point of view, focus, and/or organizational structure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack a sequence of events to relate ideas, observations, and/or memories. Demonstrate little evidence of coherence: may be brief, general, unfocused. Lack a clear point of view, focus, and/or organizational structure.
ELABORATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include vivid descriptive language that enables the reader to visualize the people, places, things, or experiences. Elaborate using mostly relevant details, facts, and/or explanations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include some descriptive language that enables the reader to create an image of the people, places, things or experiences. Elaborate using mostly relevant details, facts, and/or explanations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have limited descriptive language. Elaborate in generalities; topic sparsely developed or thin; may contain limited facts, details, and/or explanations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack descriptive language. Lack elaboration with little or no development but may contain marginally related facts, details, and/or explanations.
WORD CHOICE/ SENTENCE STRUCTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Word choice is lively and precise. Include a variety of sentence types. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Word choice is adequate and appropriate. Include some variety of sentence types. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Common and limited word choice. Include little variety of sentence types. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Word choice does not make sense or is inappropriate. Include no sentence variety.
CONVENTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contain few if any errors. Demonstrate appropriate English usage: parts of speech, subject/verb agreement & verb tense. Have correct capitalization and end of sentence punctuation. Have spelling that is mostly correct. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contain some errors. Demonstrate mostly appropriate English usage: part of speech, subject/verb agreement & verb tense. Have correct capitalization and end of sentence punctuation. Have spelling that is usually correct. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contain several errors. Have errors in grammar and usage that may interfere with readability and meaning. Have errors in basic punctuation skills and capitalization. Have common words misspelled. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contain serious errors. Have errors in grammar and usage that interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing. Have punctuation omitted, misplaced, or incorrect and capitalization is inconsistent, incorrect, or hap hazard. Frequently misspells common words.