

The Benefits of Incorporating Frequent Journaling into the Elementary Classroom

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ED 495

Entry #1: Introduction (February 9, 2015)

The Palmyra Area School District currently provides education to approximately 22,000 students. The school district is comprised of one high school, one middle school, and four elementary schools. The student population of the district is approximately 96 percent white, 2 percent Hispanic, 2 percent Asian, and less than 1 percent African American. One of Palmyra's four elementary schools, Lingle Avenue, has a student population that closely resembles that of the district. At Lingle, the student population is approximately 89 percent white, 4 percent Hispanic, 4 percent Asian, and less than 1 percent African American. As one of the first grade teachers at Lingle, I teach twenty students - eighteen that are white, one that is Hispanic, and one that is Asian. There are ten girls and ten boys in my class, five students with individualized education plans including learning support and speech services, and one student that is an English Language Learner (School Digger).

As a result of extensive research that I completed regarding students with emotional and behavioral disorders, I noticed that the use of journaling as a means of self-expression was a commonly recommended strategy for working with students that have EBD, display challenging behaviors, or experience symptoms of anxiety. As an avid writer, this concept instantly intrigued me. I began to wonder if there would be any benefit to encouraging students, even those who may not be diagnosed with emotional and behavioral disorders, to participate in the act of journaling. Furthermore, I began to wonder if there would be any difference in the writing styles of students in special education compared to general education classrooms. Most if not all students are required to write in school regardless of ability, but it is not a secret that many of them do not particularly enjoy it. In my classroom, students are expected to write frequently throughout the week in their writing binders on topics that are laid out in the school's writing

curriculum. While these pieces are not graded immediately, they are used for a writing grade at the end of each marking period based on skills such as conventions, sight word spelling, and grammar. For this reason, writing tends to be a source of stress for many of the students and is often described as boring. In fact, several of the students have informed me that writing is their least favorite subject of the day. To my knowledge, the students I work with have never before had experience with journaling, so I am curious to know if their feelings will change when given the opportunity to free write in response to an open-ended question. This topic makes me wonder, what if students did not have to worry about whether their writing would be graded, corrected, or judged? What if they were asked to simply write about their thoughts or feelings? This curiosity has inspired me to explore the following action research initiative: How does the act of journaling for the purpose of expressing individualized thoughts and feelings compare for students in general and special education settings?

Entry #2: Action Plan (February 22, 2015)

The goal of my action research is to determine what, if any, effect the act of journaling for the purpose of expressing individualized thoughts and feelings has on the behaviors of students of various abilities in general and special education settings. This research will be used to compare the ways in which students of general and special education placements respond to questions in their journals to see if any common themes emerge. It will also be used to determine the influence of journal writing on the behaviors of students during writing time. Specifically, does writing without any fear of being right or wrong and for the purpose of expressing their personal thoughts benefit students in regard to the subject of writing or does it have little to no effect? The data will be collected through a comparison of samples from journal

entries and binder writings. The following questions will be used to guide a comparison between journal entries and binder writings of students in general and special education settings:

- Does one group of students respond more literally to the questions than another?
- Does one group of students write from a first-person perspective while the other writes from the perspective of another person?
- Is one group more likely to write only about the prompt or about another topic that they were reminded of while reading the prompt?

In my current placement setting, I have targeted four students whose journal entries represent some commonly found writing concerns of the classroom including lack of focus, lack of motivation, and lack of English language skills. One of the students is also diagnosed with high-functioning autism and receives special education services for language arts and mathematics. My plan is to compare each of these students' journals to other writing samples from their writing binder, examine the ways in which the entries differ from week to week, and see if there are any changes in the way the students write when asked about themselves or their individualized feelings.

In order to do this, each of the students in the class was given a journal that was designated as their first grade journal. The idea of the first grade journal was introduced as something that the students could use to respond to a given question or prompt. The students were provided with a format to begin their first grade journal entries consisting of the date of the question, the question itself that is typed and pasted onto the page, and the header, "Dear First Grade Journal" (see Appendix A). Students were then given the opportunity to decorate the covers of their first grade journals by making collages that were determined to be representative of their personal interests with cutout pictures from magazines (see Appendix B). Since the

covers of the journals have been completed, students have been tasked with answering a question that is provided to them two times a week during morning work. At this time, students are expected to write from the time they come in until the time morning meeting starts. Students cannot be “done” until it is time for morning meeting. Although this situation may not exemplify realistic situations, I have observed that the students often rush through their morning work because they are more excited to do the preferred activities that are available to them after they are done. For this reason, I decided that having a required writing time would be most beneficial to start.

Once it is time for morning meeting to begin, three students are picked randomly per day to share their journal entry with the rest of the class. Students may choose to pass if they are called on and do not wish to share. Throughout the day, students are able to continue to work on their journal entries if they finish work early or have free time, but it is not a requirement. Each night after an entry, I read through the journals and respond to the students’ writing. My responses always encourage the students to keep up the great work, but also include thought-provoking questions to expand their thinking. When students get their journals back the next day, they are able to respond back to my writing if they wish to do so during their free time.

Journal entries will act as morning work for the students two days a week, Tuesday and Thursday, from approximately 8:50 to 9:10 AM for three weeks. All together, there will be about six journal entries. Because this research will be completed during a three-week span, there will not be much change in the procedure. This design is aimed to help make students feel comfortable with their writing as it becomes more routine over time. Eventually, prompts may be taken away to see what students can write without a prompt or topic, but for the purpose of this research, prompts will always be provided to the students to guide their writing.

The data from this action research will be collected in numerous ways. The primary method for data collection will be through the students' journals. Entries for each week will be scanned and saved so that they can be analyzed for emerging themes throughout the course of the research. Observation notes and reflective journals will also be used to record the students' opinions of the journal writings as evidenced by informal comments and conversations regarding the topic of the journals and to note any apparent or noticeable changes in students' writing each week according to the researcher, cooperating teacher, and an analysis of how the writing compares to the writing in the students' binders.

Entry #3: Reflections on Intervention, Part I (March 15, 2015)

To date, I have implemented my action plan in my first grade general education classroom. To introduce students to the journal, I had them join me on the carpet. At this point, I had already created labels and put them on everyone's journal so that they knew which one was theirs. The students and I discussed experiences that they had already had with journals and read examples of first grade journal entries from different Junie B. Jones books. The students were introduced to their first grade journals at that time. I then described the purpose of the first grade journal and explained that sometimes during morning work the students would be asked to respond to a question that could be found on a slip of paper on their desks. The students learned that they would be expected to respond to the prompt as best they could until the start of morning meeting. That would mean that instead of rushing to finish the question so that the students could chat with their friends or sit in the library, they would be asked to really think about the question and to write down all of their thoughts. The students had the opportunity to ask questions at that time and were assured that their thoughts could not be wrong. It was

explained that these journal entries would not be corrected for spelling or grammatical errors, but instead would act simply as a place for students to write down what they were thinking in a no-pressure situation. Students were interested to learn that I would be responding to their writing and some asked if they could write questions to me in their entries. They were really excited to hear that they could truly write whatever they wanted, including questions to me, as long as they were related to the given topic.

The next step with the journals was to decorate the covers by creating a collage of pictures that were indicative of each student's personal interests using magazine cutouts (see Appendix B). This project was greatly received by the students and they all did a really great job. As a result of this project, two students actually went home and made their own magazine collages on journals that they had. The next morning, students walked in to find their journals on their desks with a slip of paper that had the question, "What are your hopes and dreams for when you grow-up?" Projected on the board was an example of how the page should be set up with the date and question pasted onto the page. The introduction "Dear First Grade Journal," was also written (see Appendix A). Students used this example to set up their journal entries and were then able to write until it was time for morning meeting. During morning meeting, three students were randomly chosen with Popsicle sticks to share their entries with the rest of the class. Students who were picked did have the option to pass if they wished; however none of the students chose to pass. The students who shared had a wide range of responses to the first question including hopes of being a zookeeper, a superhero, and the President of the United States! The students that were chosen to share were then marked on a clipboard to ensure that everyone in the class would eventually have the opportunity to share.

During the course of this research, the students were given five journal questions to write about. In addition to the first one, they were also given the following questions:

- What does it mean to be a hero? Who is a hero to you?
- What does the word *friendship* mean to you?
- What would you do if you woke up one morning and you were invisible?
- What is one thing you really like about yourself and why?

After implementing the action plan, I noticed that the students really seemed to enjoy writing in their first grade journals. Students would always ask to work on their journals during free time and sometimes even during indoor recess to write more or to respond to the comments that I wrote to them. Some students would write questions to me during their journal entries to see what I thought and they would always be excited to get their journals back after I answered their questions. Through observations, my cooperating teacher and I noted that many of the students who usually took a long time to get unpacked and ready in the morning became much quicker on the days they had a journal entry waiting for them. In addition, students who would oftentimes write the bare minimum during other writing assignments would write pages and pages in response to the journal entry prompts. The students seemed to love the journals so much as evidenced by their comments and writing, that my cooperating teacher explained that she felt she really had no choice but to continue the journal entries after my departure. She expressed her excitement in this project and explained that she plans to continue to utilize first grade journals every year.

So far in my plan, I have had to make simple adjustments to accommodate students' needs. For example, every morning before the students arrive on a journal entry day, I provide a written model for how they should set up their journals. I also have to help some students begin

their sentences or organize their thoughts, particularly if they have difficulty forming the appropriate language to communicate their ideas. For this reason, it is necessary for me to walk around and support students during the entirety of their writing time. I feel that the accommodations I provide by assisting students with the format and formation of ideas during their writing is very beneficial and helps the students feel more comfortable and confident with the writing in their journal entries overall.

My next step for this research is to begin analyzing the data I have gathered in the journal entries and through informal observations. For the remainder of my data collection, I will also have to collect writing samples from the students' writing binders in order to analyze and compare the writing pieces with the journal entries in areas such as time spent writing, amount that is written, content of what is written, and the students' enthusiasm and/or opinions of writing.

Entry #4: Reflections on Intervention, Part II (March 29, 2015)

Since my last entry, I have started analyzing the data that I have collected and have changed the focus of my action research question from how students' writing compares in general and special education placements to a content analysis of how students' journal writings compare to other writing assignments. For the content analysis, the categories that I have focused on include the type and range of topics that the students write about, genre, length and structure of the writing assignments, and the students' awareness of audience as evidenced by clarity of writing and inclusion of explanations that would be beneficial for a reader. I have decided to analyze the writing of four students and consider my findings in relation to the additional feedback that I received during the implementation of the journal writing. Of the four students I have chosen, one is a student who is considered to be extremely intelligent and gifted in all academic areas,

but typically does the minimum assignment requirements in order to just get them done; another is a student that has an autism diagnosis and who receives learning support instruction in language arts and mathematics; the third is an English Language Learner that reportedly did not speak any English when she started the year in first grade; and the fourth is a student that is considered to be on-level who does not receive any additional supports, but who does display some challenging behaviors such as excessive chatting and not following directions. In order to complete the content analysis, I reviewed the four students' journal responses and compared them to writing samples that I collected from their writing binders. After analyzing the data, I have observed the following themes for each student:

Jacob

Jacob is a student that is well known for his incredible academic abilities. He is being evaluated for gifted services and is being considered as a candidate for skipping a grade. He also has a great imagination as observed by his teacher; however, when asked to complete a writing assignment, Jacob often provides the bare minimum. He tends to write only as many sentences as he believes are needed in order to address the prompt and rarely adds descriptive details to his pieces. He is very motivated by technology and is able to access it when he is finished his work. His teacher believes that while he is capable of doing much more, he does his work as quickly as possible so that he can play on the iPad when he is done.

In Jacob's binder writing, there is evidence supporting his teacher's concerns (see Appendix C). On January 20, Jacob was asked to write an informative writing piece on a topic of his choice. The requirements were that he include a topic sentence and at least three facts about the topic. Jacob chose the topic of Mario. He then wrote four sentences total – a topic sentence, and three supporting sentences that followed similar grammatical patterns such as,

“Mario says..., Mario jumps..., Mario says...,” or in other words, just enough so that he could be finished the assignment.

In his journal writing, Jacob appears to be another student entirely (see Appendix D). His responses are detailed and descriptive, he uses adjectives to describe his thoughts such as, “...I’ll run a carnival with lots of big, fun games!” Jacob uses transition words like *next* and *after that* to connect his ideas and elaborates on them to help the reader understand. There are several instances in which Jacob is able to relate the topic back to his passion of Mario, but instead of writing three to five words sentences like he did in his binder writing, he writes connective phrases with proper usage of commas such as, “I also want to be a video game maker because I want to make Mario games for the Wii, Wiiu, DS, and 3DS.” Jacob’s journal writing suggests that not only is he beyond capable of writing more than four sentences, but also that he has an imagination and ability to communicate that is advanced for his age. His journal writing is entertaining and interesting to read and demonstrates great awareness of audience. The length of his journal entries range anywhere from one to four pages and Jacob demonstrates understanding of the use of conventions in the English language. His writing is unique and easy to understand. His topics vary, but his passion for Mario and other video games remains evident. As the journal entries progress, Jacob’s entries grow longer and even more detailed. His use of exclamation and other emotions increases and his sentence structures grow more diverse and varied. Jacob also appears to create his own methods for demonstrating importance and excitement through his writing such as using larger font and multiple exclamation points.

Brandon

Brandon has a diagnosis of high functioning autism. He is fully included in the general education classroom, but experiences difficulty in areas of reading comprehension and math.

For those subjects, Brandon is pulled out for learning support services. He is a very literal student and sometimes becomes confused as a result of certain social scenarios and conversations. The way that Brandon interprets directions is very unique and his teacher believes that in order to best teach Brandon, it is necessary for her to be conscious of her choice of words and the way in which she gives directions so that he does not become confused.

Brandon's binder writing exemplifies his tendency to interpret directions literally (see Appendix E). For his informative writing pieces, Brandon chose the topics of Dairy Queen and a pencil. His three facts about each of the topics (ice cream, chocolate and vanilla for Dairy Queen and write, eraser, and lead for pencil) demonstrate literal interpretation of the topics and his writing reflects basic application of those facts such as "I use [pencils] to write." Also noted is Brandon's lack of completing the writing assignments. While he was supposed to write a topic sentence and three supporting sentences in his writing binder assignments, he did not complete all three of his supporting sentences in either of his pieces.

While there is evidence of literal interpretation of the questions prompting his journal writing, Brandon's journal entries indicate much more openness to straying from a purely literal interpretation of the prompt that is given and allows him to incorporate aspects of his imagination (see Appendix F). For example, in response to the question, "What is one thing that you really like about yourself and why," Brandon wrote about how he would like to become a super hero instead of just writing that he likes himself because he is nice. Brandon's journal entries also provide insight into the way that he interprets information. For the question, "What are your hopes and dreams for when you grow-up," Brandon wrote two sentences that were separated by a line as if suggesting that they were unconnected thoughts and/or paragraphs. His first sentence was about his *hope* (that he would be a zookeeper) and his second sentence was

about one of his *dreams* that he had had during the night (a black fish). Brandon literally interpreted the question as writing about both a hope that he has and a dream that he has had instead of writing about either a hope or a dream that he has for the future.

In Brandon's journal entries, there is much more length and substance to his writing and evidence to suggest that he is able to complete written assignments. Upon observation of Brandon during the journal writing time, he also appeared to be very focused and interested in what he was writing as evidenced by his eagerness to share his entries with the adults in the room (even raising his hand to see if any of the adults wanted to read what he had written so far) and the rest of his classmates during morning meeting. These behaviors also suggest that Brandon was very proud of his entries compared to the other writing pieces in his binder that he was admittedly nervous to have read by others.

Sabina

Sabina is an English language learner that moved to the district at the beginning of first grade. At the start of the year, Sabina neither communicated orally nor through writing. She would not participate in class or interact with others. Her background knowledge was undetermined because no baseline could be established; however, it was noted that she did not appear to know how to write her name. By the time the journal entries were introduced, Sabina was doing some basic attempts at writing, but her writing was oftentimes either not readable or completed enough to determine a main idea. Sabina is pulled out during the day for English as a second language services. During these services, it has been reported that she is very outgoing and talkative, but in the general education classroom, that side of Sabina has not been observed. In the general education classroom, Sabina never raises her hand, chooses to participate, or share her ideas. She pokes adults and points to things that she needs rather than use her voice to

communicate. During writing times, Sabina often pretends that she is doing something else such as tying her shoe, fixing her hair, or sharpening her pencil.

Sabina's binder writing is interesting to analyze in and of itself because of the sheer growth that can be seen from the first entry to the last (see Appendix G). Sabina's entries progressed from nothing but stating a topic, to stating a topic with one fact, to the beginning stages of a topic sentence with six facts, to an actual informative how-to writing piece with six sentences. For Sabina, writing six sentences is a huge accomplishment considering where she started in the beginning of the year.

The dates of the binder writing pieces that were collected are during the same time as the implementation of the journal writing prompts. Sabina's journal entries also demonstrate growth similar to that of her binder writing (see Appendix H). The process began with her leaving the first question blank and then progressively writing more until she was actually writing enough to complete her thoughts on paper. Sabina even volunteered to share her last journal entry with the rest of her classmates by reading it aloud. The structure of her writing showed evidence of improvement as she began to implement the use of punctuation and avoided ending her writing with unfinished words as she frequently did. She also demonstrated awareness of an audience as evidenced by her addition of important details such as her dog's name. It was also observed by her teacher that as she became more comfortable with the set-up of the journal entries, she was requesting less help and support from the adults in the room during all of her writing assignments.

Samarth

Samarth is a student that is on level in all areas of his academics. He is more advanced in mathematics than in reading and writing, but does not struggle with any of his assignments. This

student is known for displaying some challenging behaviors in the classroom that can be disruptive to other students, especially when he is bored. Samarth is a student that usually completes assignments quickly and then tends to act out as evidenced by excessive chattiness, distracting others by not staying in his seat, inattentiveness to directions, and other similar issues regarding attention.

His binder writing suggests that Samarth has a solid understanding of writing conventions and the English language, but like Jacob, it appears as if Samarth does the bare minimum of what is expected of him (see Appendix I). Instead of adding descriptive details, Samarth tends to list his facts. In two of his binder writings, he does a decent job of mixing up his sentence starters, but in one of his binder writings, he lists his facts by writing, “I have..., I have..., I have...”

In Samarth’ journal writing, there is strong evidence to suggest that he is very aware of his audience (see Appendix J). Samarth responded to the comments that were written in his journal, saying “Thank you for the comments” or “Thank you for saying those things” and took his time to explain his thinking in his entries. For example, instead of simply stating that he was good at soccer, Samarth described that because he always scores a goal and his team cheers for him, he is good at soccer.

Samarth had one of the most positive reactions to the journals that was observed. He would ask every morning if there was going to be a journal question for the day and would always ask if he could work on his journal during his free time to respond to the comments that were written to him. On mornings when there was a journal question on his desk, he would sprint over to it and read it aloud before he quickly started writing. Samarth was also known for always wanting to share his entries with anyone that would listen. For as many disruptive behaviors as he tended to display throughout the day, Samarth’s challenging behaviors were very

limited, if existent at all, during journal time. He stayed on-task and would choose to draw pictures that were relevant to his writing if he finished early. It was noted that the length of Samarth's writing increased during this time and that his writing was very focused. He did not go off-topic or ramble about irrelevant details and he wrote much more than the bare minimum. Samarth's journal entries depict a knowledgeable, talented, and dedicated writer that knows how to effectively get his point across to a known audience.

After analyzing the writing pieces of each of the four students, the final action of my plan that needs to be implemented is finding the emerging themes from my data to determine the overall findings of my research. My preliminary findings seem to suggest that there are benefits to incorporating the frequent act of journaling in an elementary school classroom, but I would like to determine in which ways this is the case according to the patterns that emerged from analyzing the writing samples and the feedback that I received from the students and my cooperating teacher.

Entry #5: Conclusions and Final Reflection (April 13, 2015)

The purpose of this action research was to examine the effects of frequent journaling on the behaviors of elementary school students in terms of time spent writing, enthusiasm for writing, amount that is written, and the content of what is written in journal entries compared to other writings. The initial question that guided this research was how does the act of journaling for the purpose of expressing individualized thoughts and feelings compare for students in general and special education settings; however, over time, the question adapted into how do journal entries implemented for the purpose of expressing individualized thoughts and feelings compare to students' other writing samples in the elementary school classroom?

In order to investigate this question in a first grade classroom, I implemented journal questions into morning work that were shared during morning meetings. Students were asked to respond to the questions and to write for a given amount of time so that they could have the opportunity to share and so that I could respond to the journal entries to support and encourage their development of writing. From this plan, I found an overwhelming amount of evidence to suggest that the benefits of incorporating frequent journaling into an elementary classroom are great as it builds both literacy and a sense of community in the classroom environment. After analyzing the writings of four diverse students in the classroom, it appears as if frequent journal writing increases students' enthusiasm for writing, as evidenced by their comments of starting journals in their homes, questions of when upcoming journal entries will be and when their entries will be responded to, and observations of students' increased time on-task and willingness to share written journal entries. Implementing journaling also appears to have increased the quality of students' writing as evidenced by comparison of the details of journal entries compared to other writings.

The patterns in the data are undeniable – all four students whose entries were compared to additional writing samples showed evidence of increased engagement, enthusiasm, awareness of audience, details, creativity, and more in their journal entries. Journaling provided an outlet for the students to write without having to worry about whether they were “doing it right.” It gave students a chance to show what they had learned and how they think and proved to them in a hands-on way that writing is an effective method for communicating ideas.

Based on my data analysis, I can conclude that there are many benefits to incorporating frequent journaling into the elementary school classroom in terms of literacy development, particularly in the areas of writing and reading entries aloud, as well as in community building

through the sharing of entries and the process of learning more about every student in the class. Through my plan, I was not able to determine how journaling compares for students in general and special education classrooms due to the set-up of my special education placement; however, I was able to analyze the data of a student that receives learning support services and English as a second language services. I am excited to note that the results for these two students followed the pattern of the students who did not receive additional services, which suggests that the act of journaling would most likely be beneficial to students of any ability and placement.

After evaluating my action plan, I think that all areas went well. I was able to accurately collect and analyze data in response to my research question and was successfully able to compare several types of writing samples to determine emerging themes and patterns. My plan did require some changes during the process such as changing from a comparison between general and special education placements to a comparison between students' writing samples in a general education setting, but the changes were easily implemented and helped determine a more specific focus for my research. I believe that the research I collected could easily be applied to students across various settings because of the diverse nature of the students whose writings were analyzed during this plan. If I were to implement this plan again, I would like to do more journal entries and to slowly scaffold the students to a point at which they would not have a writing prompt at all. I think this would help students become even more independent writers and would encourage them to transfer the skills and enthusiasm they acquired through the journal entries to other types of writing as well.

As a result of this action research project, I learned not only about the benefits of incorporating journaling into an elementary classroom, but also the importance of developing community to create a positive learning environment. Through the implementation of this

research, I observed students writing their individualized ideas and sharing their writing with their peers in a way that provided opportunities for them to learn and grow with one another. There were multiple instances during which the students and I were able to relate something we were learning in class to something another student had once shared from their journal. This was really useful for connection making and for activating students' prior knowledge.

The amount of connections that I could make to the students while teaching as a result of reading their journals was just another benefit from a teacher's perspective. From this plan, I found that I was able to really understand my students on a personal level and was able to communicate with them about topics that were more than just academic. The students and I were able to establish a great rapport through the back and forth writing in which we participated and the students were able to learn more about me by asking questions about my own opinion on the prompts that were provided to them.

From this experience, I learned that teaching is much more than reading, writing, and arithmetic - it is also about relationships, understanding the background of students, and creating a classroom environment that is safe and supportive for everyone. Students need to be encouraged to explore their imaginations and to integrate their creative abilities in every way that they can. Journaling is just one of many ways that provides frequent opportunities for students to do just that. In order to be the most effective teacher I can, I know that I will need to continue to do research like this to find ways to ensure that I meet the needs, interests, and passions of my students. While teacher research may seem like a daunting task at first, I have found that it is actually not only interesting, but also fun. Action research provided me with a way to connect to my students and learn more about them as individuals. I was able to utilize the data that I collected to implement a plan that was beneficial to the students' development in more ways than

one and that helped me develop my own teaching practice as well. As a result of my action research, I am proud to say that I know I will continue to conduct research initiatives in my own classroom to best understand my students and to continue to grow so that I can be the most effective educator I can for years to come.

Appendix A: First Grade Journal Format

2-12-15

What are your hopes and dreams for when you grow-up?

Dear First Grade Journal,

Appendix C: Jacob's Binder Writing

Date 1-20-15

T! Mario

F1

lets a go

F2

jumps

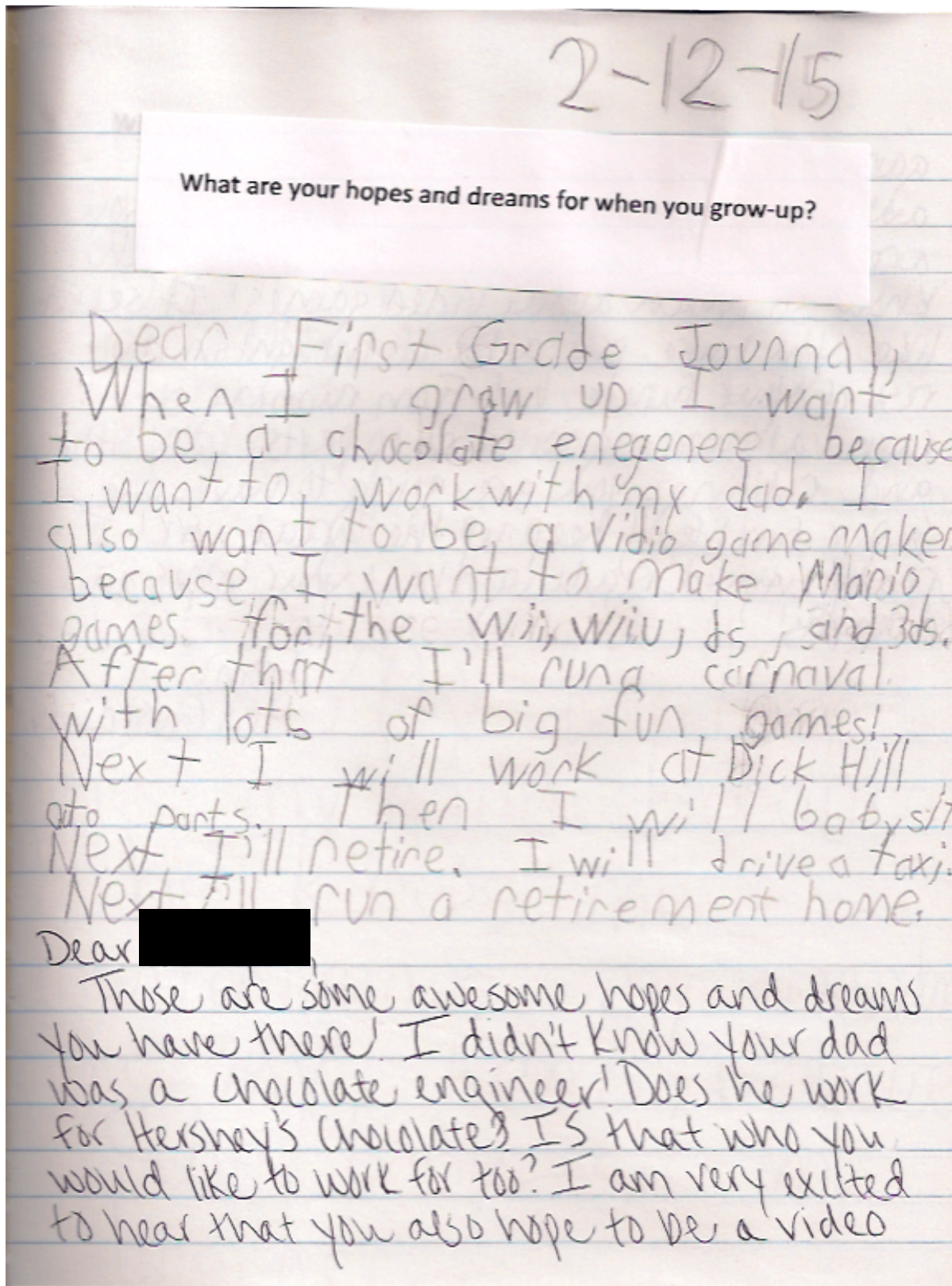
on gombas

F3

Mamamia!

I know alot about
 Mario. Mario says
 lets a go. Mario
 jumps on gombas.
 Mario says mamamia!

Appendix D: Jacob's Journal Writing



game maker someday! You would be awesome at that, especially because you are really good at using technology and know so much about video games! It seems like you have put a lot of thought in the rest of your future too! From running a carnival, working with auto parts, baby-sitting, and retiring, you are going to have one super fun life!! Keep up the great work! I really enjoyed reading about your hopes and dreams!

From
Miss Gustaitis

What does it mean to be a hero? Who is a hero to you?

Dear first grade
journal, A hero can be a
regular person for a
example a fire fighter, a
police, and a person. My hero
is my dad because he keeps me
safe. My hero is my mom
because she keeps me
safe. My brother
is my hero because
he keeps me entertained
my grandma
is my hero because
she baby-sits my
brother

My grandpa is
my hero because
he plays with me.

My nanay is my hero
because she is nice
to me. My great grand

He was my hero because he
had two houses. One was close
to me and one was in
Florida!!!! But he already
passed out. I still love
him even though he

passed out. He was
great!

Dear [REDACTED]

I am loving the details you have!
Awesome! But can you tell me any more?
You said a hero can be a regular
person and I agree! But is a hero
every regular person? Is there something
that all of the people you mentioned
have in common that makes them
heroes, but not other people? I'm
curious to know what you think!
Keep up the great work!

From
Miss Gustaitis

2-20-15
What would you do if you woke up one morning and you were invisible

Dear first grade journal

If I woke up
one morning and
I was invisible I would
jump out of bed and
call for my mom and dad
because that wouldn't
work. I would life my
way around the house.
Finally someone would
find me and say it's just
my imageration, But it
isn't.

I would like it
 because nobody
 could see me. I
 would be fun.
 I would scare
 my grandma. It would
 be funny. She would
 say where are you
 mister. You're not here where?
 You're invisible! Come here
 mister, I would say I am
 invisible.

Dear [REDACTED]

What a great story! Thank you for
 sharing it with the rest of the class!
 Sounds like you would have a very exciting
 day if you were invisible. Keep up the
 great work!

From
 Miss Gustaitis

What does the word *friendship* mean to you?

2-24-1

Dear First grade
Journal, Friendship
means to be friends
forever. Like Alex
and I and Rachael.
We are good
friends. We all like
Mario. I am Yoshi.
Ice cat, R a chael's
Queen Ice cat
and Alex is Shy guy

or regular Yoshi.
I'm good at speaking
Yoshi Language.
We can all speak Yoshi
Language. It's really
hard to do it. I can
Speak it
Really well.
It's fun to

Speak Yoshi
do it. also

and Luigi
fun. But Yoshi's

language. I Like to
Shy guy and Mario
Language. They're all
the best.

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for sharing what friendship means to you! It's pretty cool that you and your friends can speak to each other in another language! I don't think I would be able to understand Yoshi, Mario and Luigi language, maybe you can teach me!

From
Miss Gustaitis

What is one thing that you really like about yourself and why?

Dear first grade
journal, I like that
I am a computer
wizz because if
I wasn't I wouldn't
be able to play with
because I wouldn't
know how to control
it.

Dear [REDACTED]

Thanks! for sharing what you like about yourself! Being a computer whizz is an awesome skill that will be very useful for you! Maybe you can give some of your super computer skills to me? 😊

From,
Miss Gustaitis

Appendix E: Brandon's Binder Writing

Date 1-22-15

Pencil

F1 write	F2 eraser	F3 lead
-------------	--------------	------------

I know a lot
about pencils.
I use pencils
to write

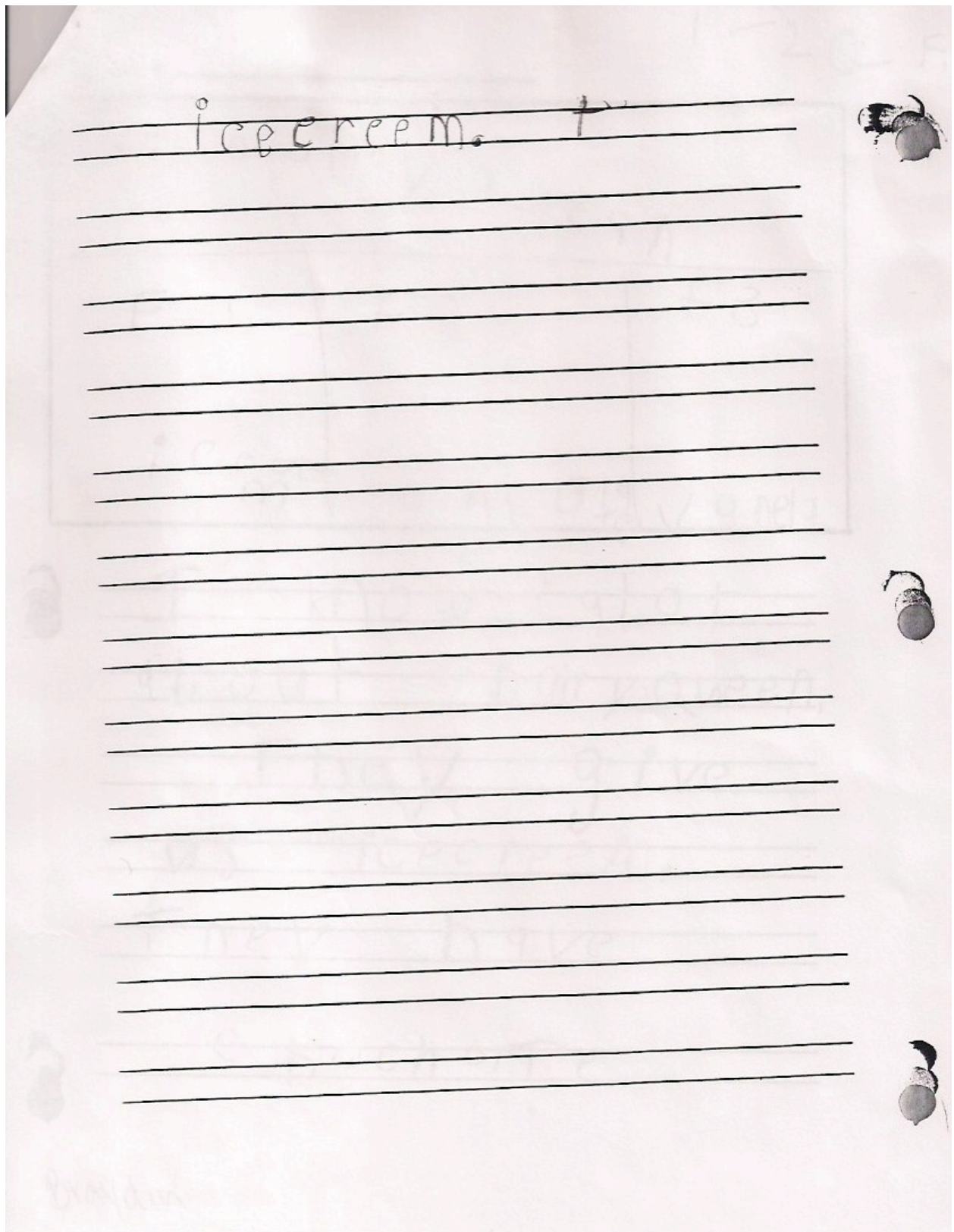
Date _____

1-20-F

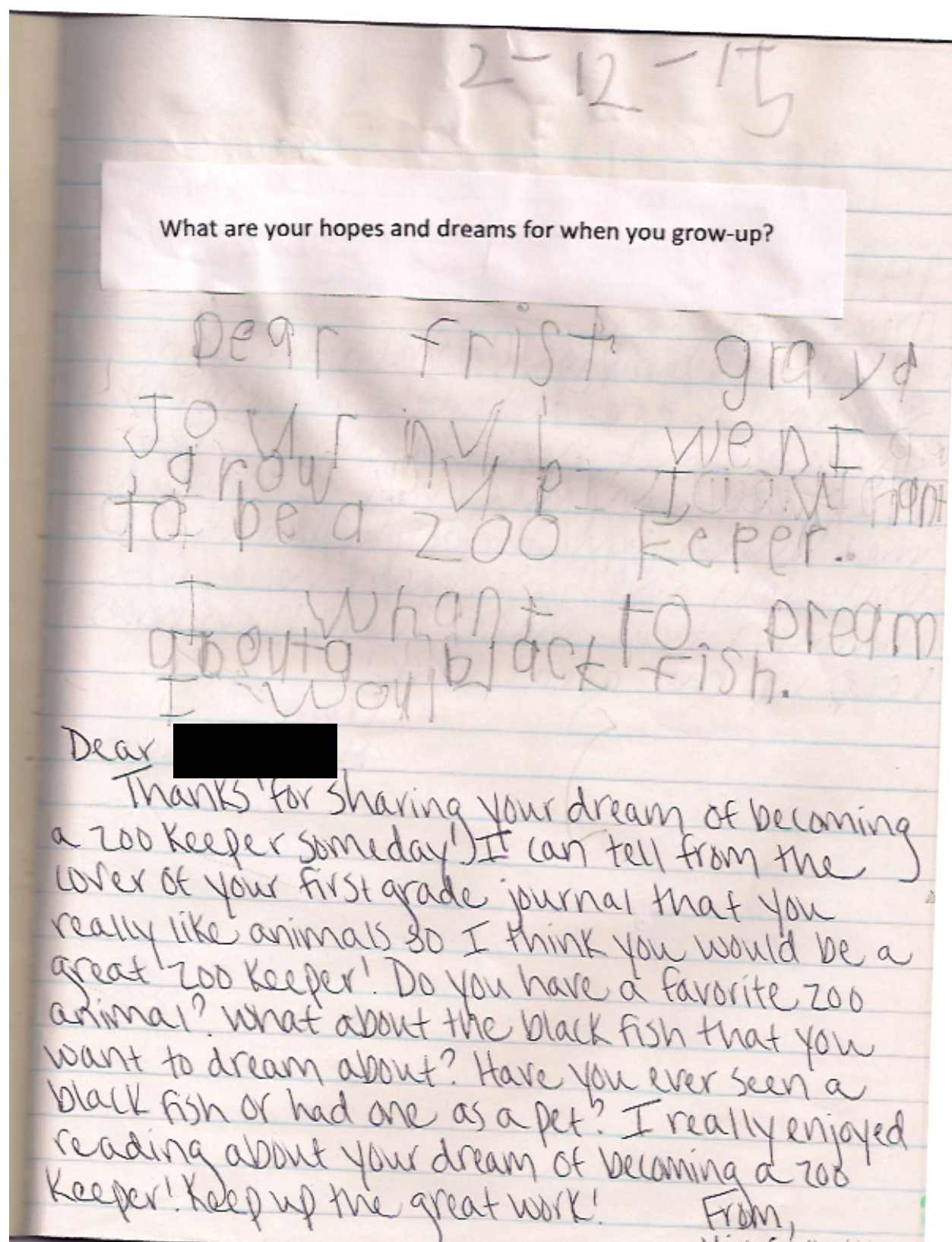
The Dairy Queen		
F1	F2	F3
ice cream	chocolate	vanilla

I know a lot
about Dairy Queen.
They give
us ice cream.
They have

chocolate



Appendix F: Brandon's Journal Writing



2-12-17

What does it mean to be a hero? Who is a hero to you?

Dear [REDACTED]

Great examples!!!! Batman and Superman are definitely heroes! Have you ever met them before? I bet they are very nice, but I have never met them. What do you think Batman and Superman have in common that make them both heroes? Keep up the great work!

From
Miss Gustaitis

I would want
 to meet a softer
 hero Batman and
 Super man. They are
 nice to me and
 and my friends.

What does the word *friendship* mean to you?

Dear friend
joy day some
people like the
some people don't
like that.

Dear [redacted]

Great journal entry! You shared what friendship means to you, wrote some of your friends, and drew an awesome picture. I feel like I have a great idea of what friendship means to you now, especially the part about feeling differently about it. You're right, everyone does think differently about friendship! Thanks for sharing!

From,
Miss Gustaitis



What is one thing that you really like about yourself?

Dear first
grade Jung

I like that I'm
nice to my self.
And I don't punch
my self. And I'm
a super hero.

I would like
to be a super hero.

Dear [REDACTED],

I am so happy to hear that you like being nice to yourself! I hope you continue to do that every single day! You would also be an amazing Super Hero, I think. What kind of Super Hero are you? Thanks for sharing your favorite thing about yourself!

From,
Miss Gustaitis

Appendix G: Sabrina's Binder Writing

Date 1-22-75

T. Ghanmo	
ALS	
F1	F2
h. 2	F3



Date

~~12-2-15~~

F1 brown	F2 white	F3 Aho
F4 Sho	F5 girl	F6 tab

no of cv
my b

Date

- 15

I put on I put on my mitts	I put on I put on my shirt	I put on I put on my shirt
A I put on my pants	S5 I put on my shirt	S6 I go in the snow

I put on my mitts.

I put on my pants.

I put on my shirt.

I put on my pants.

I put on my coat.

I go in the snow.

Appendix H: Sabina's Journal Writing

2-12-15

What are your hopes and dreams for when you grow-up?

Dear [REDACTED]

I wish I could have read about your hopes and dreams! It looks like you really like animals and the colors red, purple, and pink from the pictures on the cover of your first grade journal. Is there something you want to do with any of that someday?

From,
Miss Gustaitis

Dear Journal, First I made
my hero my mom
cos for me my
mom is my mom
the me to the
prc

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for sharing that your mom
is your hero! Sorry you did not have
enough time to finish, I am curious to
hear more about all of the great things
your mom does! Have you ever told her
she ~~was~~ your hero? I'm sure that would
make her happy.

From
Miss Gustaitis

What does it mean to be a hero? Who is a hero to you?

What does the word *friendship* mean to you?

bean First Grade
 Joanna's Friend
 Lilly's Friend
 Ean's Friend
 Jasi's Friend

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you! for sharing some of your friends! That's a great connection you made to the word, "friendship". Keep up the great work!

From,
 Miss Gustaitis

What would you do if you woke up one morning and you were invisible?

If I were invisible
I'd be I cos would be
scared I won

Dear [REDACTED]

I agree that I might be sad too!
Great point. Why would you be sad? I
think I would be scared that I might be
invisible forever! Great job, keep up the
good work!

From
Miss Gustaitis

What is one thing that you really like about yourself and why?

Dear
I like
to play
ball
with
my
friends
and
my
dog
Sparky
is
my
best
friend

Dear

Thanks for sharing what you like about yourself and for reading it to the whole class!! I loved learning about Sparky and I learning that you like to play ball! Great job.

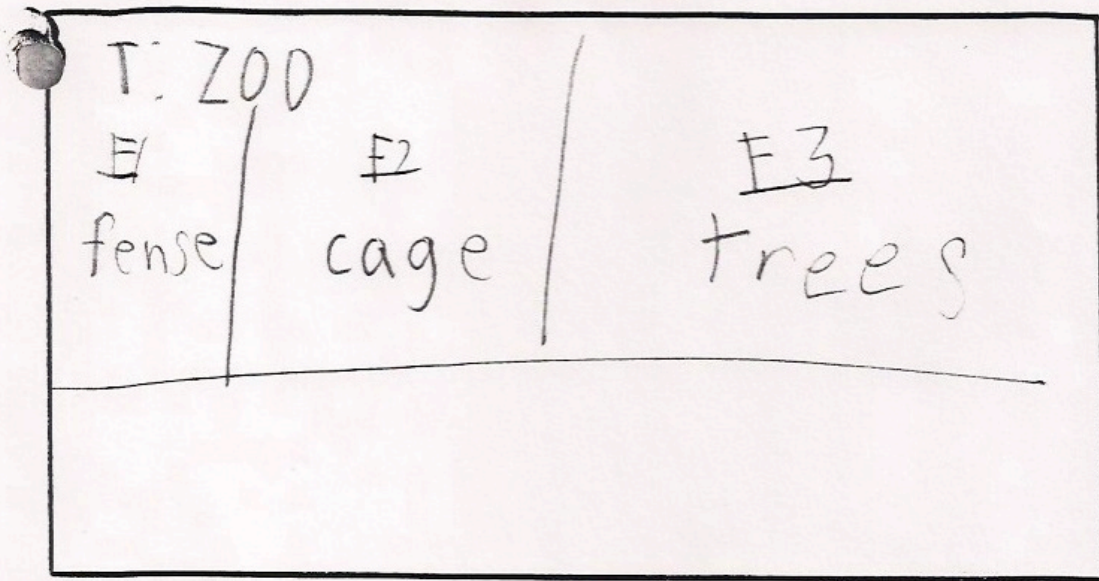
From
Miss Gustaitis

Appendix I: Samarth's Binder Writing

Date 1-22-15 Time 1: me

E1 brown eyes	E2 brown skin	E3 black hair
---------------------	---------------------	---------------------

I know a lot about
me. I have brown
eyes. I have brown
skin. I have black
hair.

Date 1-21-15

I know a lot about
zoos. A zoo has a
fense. The zoo has cages
for the animals. Zoos
have trees.



Date 1-20-15

T: chta		
E1	E2	E3
roun	75 minuts	tail

I know a lot about
 chtas. A chta roun.
 Chtas go 75 minuts' par hour.
 A chta has a Tail.

Appendix J: Samarth's Journal Writing

What are your hopes and dreams for when you grow-up?

Dear First Grade
Journal, When I
Grow up I want
to be a doctor
a police man a
teacher and a soccer
player and I want to be
Presadint of the U.S.A.



Dear [REDACTED]

Wow! Those are some pretty awesome dreams you have! Do you want to be all of those things at once or are you going to be one thing at a time? If you run for President some day, I will vote for you!! Do you play soccer now? Or is that something that you hope to play someday? Keep up the great work! I really enjoyed reading about your dreams of becoming a doctor, police officer, teacher, soccer player, and President some day!

Dear Miss Gustaitis

all that you for saying
 all those thing when I
 grow up. [REDACTED]

From [REDACTED]

2-18-15

What does it mean to be a hero? Who is a hero to you?

Dear first grade
Journal, A hero is
some one that helps
pepole. My MoM
is a hero to me
becaue she helps
me when I
am hart and
one time when I
was four 4 years old

Dear [REDACTED],

You are very lucky to have a hero like your mom! I like how you described what a hero is, talked about your mom, and gave a perfect example! Awesome. I know why your mom is your hero after reading about that crazy story and I definitely agree with you. Keep up the great work.

From,
Miss Gustaitis
Gustaitis

Dear Miss

Thank you for the
amazing I Love
hearing them.

What is one thing that you really like about yourself and why?

Dear first grade
Journal, I like
about my self
is that I am
a good
soccer because
I always score
a goal and
my team cheers
for me.

References:

SchoolDigger.com. (2006). The easy way to evaluate K-12 performance. Retrieved from
<http://www.schooldigger.com>