

“Publication is important for all children. It is not the privilege of the classroom elite, the future literary scholars. Rather, it is an important mode of literary enfranchisement for each child in the classroom.” —*Donald Graves*

## **Research Conclusions on Student Publishing**

*The following information is condensed from teacher and author Chris Weber’s website at [www.publishingstudents.com/researchbenefits.html](http://www.publishingstudents.com/researchbenefits.html) by [PenandPublish.com](http://PenandPublish.com).*

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### **What Student Publishing Does to the World**

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### **What Student Publishing Does to the World**

Writing authority Donald Graves (1978) says, “In writing, kids find themselves,” and through their words, we discover both them and us. Calkins (1991) adds, “Sending writing out into the world is important for what it does to the writers. But it is equally important for what it does to the world” and for readers whether a mile or an ocean away.

*Pen & Publish believes publishing has the power to re-form education – the perfect tool to engage our students, and families – quickly!*

### **Published Work Inspires their Classmates and Peers**

When students write, their peers will want to read what they have to say. When they read out loud or share a personal moment, their peers will listen. Published student authors and artists inspire others to write and draw in a far more powerful and telling way than teachers can.

### **Publication Motivates a Vast Majority of the Students**

Publication is a great motivational tool for many students, involving even those who don’t consider themselves to be writers (Lange, 1992) and makes them feel proud of themselves and what they have accomplished (King & Stovall, 1992). The most striking part of this activity [publishing project] is how virtually all student writers are motivated to do their very best writing and revising (Graff, 1992).

As Ensio & Boxeth (2000), explain: Publication often serves as a motivational tool for those who are not interested in writing at all. ... “When they saw the publication, even the two most jaded teenagers for whom ‘school ain’t cool’ were openly pleased to see their names in print and realized that their work would be useful to someone else.”

These students discovered the value of writing and were rewarded for their efforts. Publishing prompted them to take pride in their work. ... Students set higher expectations and goals when given the incentive of publication. (Dollieslager, 1993).

Solomon (1993) and Putnam (2001) reinforce this idea: “However they celebrated, they had one thing in common—the pride of publishing. Even the students who had complained incessantly about the project didn’t have a negative word to say about their finished product.

In an e-mail to Chris Weber, Elinore Kaplan, a high school teacher in Queens, New York describes the impact publishing has in motivating most of her students, increasing their self-esteem, and filling them with pride: “When they know it’s for publication, most students will take greater care and more time with their work. They are so much more willing to do another draft, and still another because eyes other than theirs and mine will read it.

...the opportunity to publish motivates the poorer students to work. Again, when I make editorial suggestions, they are eager to rework their poems and essays. The process erases the teacher/student barrier and makes us collaborators for a higher purpose. Without a doubt, publishing enhances these students’ self-esteem.

...one can virtually see the students whose work is published grow inches before one’s eyes. They stand taller and walk prouder. A different light gleams in their eyes. ...Publication is vital to students, to having them believe that their thoughts and words have value, to having them see themselves as individuals whose contribution to society matters.”

### **Publishing is a Powerful Means of Motivating Revision**

As Donald Murray (1982) says, writing is rewriting, and revision is the crucial process of making changes throughout the writing of drafts of a piece to make the final draft congruent with a writer’s changing intentions (Sommers, 1982; Thomas, 2000). Simply telling students that they are required to revise will not necessarily produce improved writing (Adams, 1991). Nowhere is the motivation stronger to revise than when student writers write to publish.

Publishing causes students to see their work as valuable, and as a result, they will invest themselves more in their writing when they know it is going to be published (Swartout & Densteadt, 2002; Graff, 1992). Chris Weber has worked with more than a thousand students and has observed that their revision efforts were the strongest when they were writing to be published and read by a wider audience.

With increased time and energy spent on revising, students’ revising skills improve, and along with it, their writing.

The literature clearly shows that student publications have an impact on increasing students’ interest and efforts in editing and revising (Conner & Moulton, 2000; Putnam, 2001). Bromley & Mannix (1993) describe publishing’s motivational value: “Publishing makes the reading-writing connection real as it engages students in the writing process and the communication of meaning to a wider audience. The opportunity to publish one’s work for others to see, touch, read, and reread has special appeal and provides many students with the incentive to write.”

Publishing their work gives worth to their words, a forum for their voices, and instills in them pride and a sense of accomplishment (Holmes & Moulton, 1994; Lehr, 1995; Ensio & Boxeth, 2000; Putnam, 2001; Weber, 2002), which provides a strong incentive to produce their best work (Wilhelm, 2000; King & Stovall, 1992).

There is increased concern and attention (both by the public and educators) for ensuring that our young people develop mastery of all writing traits, especially conventions (e.g., spelling, grammar and usage, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing). Andrasick (1993) realizes publication encourages students to edit more carefully: “. . . [As] students begin to publish and get feedback from others, they learn to give even single words the same grooming they give themselves: they comb their prose for the smallest confusions caused by unconventional punctuation.”

### **Student Publication Raises the Bar for Teachers, too**

The previous cited literature documents how publishing encourages students to do their very best. With publication, their standards are higher. Like adult writers, students want to display and share their best work for others for years to come. Swope (2002) explains the impact that publishing had on his teaching efforts: “But the stories in my students’ chapbooks were pretty polished, and that’s because chapbooks upped the ante not just for the children, but for me. I wanted my students to look back on these books years from now and be proud, and that meant extra drafts, extra editing, extra cajoling, extra nagging. I found the effort well worth it, though, and unlike the stapled anthologies in my filing cabinet, my students’ chapbooks sit on the bookshelf, proud memories of my time with those children.”

### **Writing and Publishing for a Wider Audience**

Despite all of the benefits of publishing previously mentioned, in many cases students write only to complete assignments in school (Ensio & Boxeth, 2000). They continue explaining the impact of graded assignments on student writers: “Finished compositions are handed in, graded, and returned to the student. Grades recorded in the grade book encompass student ability and measure how successful students are at following directions and mastering expected skills. Students who fear that they may receive low grades, are hesitant and rarely take risks or experiment with new ways of expressing themselves. Grades become signs of approval or disapproval and influence the way children perceive themselves as writers. They also send messages to students, telling them that they are either good or bad writers. Students’ self-esteem is affected by their performance, and those with lower self-esteem are less likely to take risks, write on their own, or develop a love for writing (Bright 1995).”

College Professor, Robert C. Wess (1980) writes “(To wean) students away from writing merely to please the teacher, (it) create in them a growing awareness of what makes writing work in larger contexts”. This indicates that when students begin writing in the primary grades, they are taught that the teacher is the main and only audience. They learn to write for his or her benefit alone. To prevent this from happening, it is necessary to generate a new goal, one that teaches young children a new definition of “audience”. Audience ranges from a single reader (i.e. the teacher) to a community full of diverse individuals. Teaching children that people in the community around them take pleasure in reading their work is extremely valuable. This can change both their perception of worth and understanding of what makes writing “good”.

Certain trends and results from past studies demonstrate that publishing is a concrete way to de-emphasize grades and initiate change. The literature strongly supports positive changes in student perceptions and increases in motivation to write. Students stop performing for the teacher and start writing for pleasure, personal expression, and reflection.

### **Publications Help Develop Student Writers’ Sense of Audience**

...the reason we write is to communicate (NEAP Framework, 1998), and our expanded audience gives us the purpose for writing. Students come to realize that writing is a serious and worthy endeavor through sharing their work with a wider audience. King & Stovall (1992) write, “Publishing, like performing a play, is a tangible form of communication,” and students understand this.

Beginning in kindergarten, children can understand that they can use writing to communicate with a reader and then write in a manner and tone appropriate to their audience (Strange, 1988).

As Ensio & Boxeth (2000) explain, young writers are more willing to work through each stage of the writing process when they know they are writing for an expanded audience: “Great care is given to prewriting, revising, and editing (Kellaher, 1999). Maryfrancis Wagner reported an increase in student enthusiasm when handed the opportunity to communicate to a wider

audience. Students set higher expectations for themselves and stated that they needed to revise their papers more. Both of these facts are evidence of positive outcomes generated through changes in perspectives about audience (Wagner, 1985).”

### **Bringing Students into the World of Authorship**

When they see their name in print, read their text aloud, or see others reading their words, only then do students know and feel what it is like being an author. Calkins (1994) discusses ways in which publication affects students as authors: “The moment of publication makes each author feel like an insider in the world of authorship. What an important lesson this is for those of us who work with young people! Publication matters, and it matters because it inducts us into the writerly life. Publication, then, is the beginning, not the culmination of the writing process. Publication does not mean that the process is over, that children can now gaze at their monuments. Instead, publication inducts us as insiders into the world of authorship.” Our children will see themselves in a dramatically new light if they are published authors. Because publication can provide such perspective and tap such energy, I believe it is one of the first priorities in our classrooms.

Publishing students...gives a young person the feeling that he or she is a “published author” (Kellaher, 1999; Calkins, 1994), and the teacher also sees them as student authors. Such new perspectives can lead to greater involvement, ownership, and valuing of writing and the writing process, especially when their product is something valued and recognized by their community (Schmidt, 1992).

Nancie Atwell (1998) further explains why having a sense of audience is vital: “A sense of audience—the knowledge that someone will read what they have written—is crucial to young writers. Kids write with purpose and passion when they know that people they care about reaching will read what they have to say...”

Perhaps, Beers (2000), best describes the power of publication and audience. One of her students ran screaming with excitement into her classroom...Ms. Beers writes: “Suddenly I understood something about writing that I’ll admit I really hadn’t fully understood before: Writing must be for something, for someone. There must be an audience—not the contrived, make-believe audience that accompanies what we hope are well-designed writing assignments, but a real audience that wants to read the words, agree or disagree with the thoughts, learn from the ideas the author sets forth. With that audience come a power; a confidence within the writer that perhaps is never found in any other way. While middle schoolers are often filled with bravado, they more often lack self-assurance; publishing their words offer them one more way to gain confidence, one more way to be heard in a world they often believe never hears them, one more way to have a voice that is not silenced with mean stares, shrugged shoulders, unapproachable cliques, or perceived intolerance. Indeed, publishing can become an important first step in helping students find their voice.”

### **Publication Helps Develop the Element of Voice**

Elbow (2002) comments on the value of publication in helping young writers develop voice in their writing: “. . . Let me say a word about how the publication of student writing helps me to teach students about something I’ve long explored and cared about—but which is slippery and complex: voice in writing. When all the students have copies...in their hands, it’s much easier to explore the mysterious fact that silent words can “have a voice”—and, in addition, to learn how the voice in a piece of writing tends to have a powerful effect on whether readers like it or resist and see faults in it. . . .”

## **FROM The Interdisciplinary Impact of Writing Instruction**

Research conducted by the Center for Performance Assessment, which is described in Douglas B. Reeves' book, *Accountability in Action: A Blueprint for Learning Organizations* (2000) compiled four years of data from a large number of schools in various settings with a wide spectrum of student demographics.

The most startling finding dealt with what the researchers labeled "90/90/90 Schools." These are schools in which more than 90% of students are eligible for free and reduced lunch, more than 90% are from an ethnic minority, and more than 90% meet high academic standards, as confirmed by independently conducted, academic achievement tests. Here are some observations from Reeves' book.

"We sought to identify the extent to which there was a common set of behaviors exhibited by the leaders and teachers in schools with high achievement, high minority enrollment, and high poverty levels. As a result, we found five characteristics that were common..." (pg. 188) **One of the five is an emphasis on writing.**

"Another example of synergy is the cross-disciplinary impact of writing. In a number of districts we have studied, the consistent pattern that emerges is this: when students and teachers increase the frequency of their informative writing assessments, student scores increase not only on state and district writing assessments, but also in mathematics, science, social studies, and reading. In this way, the improvement on a single school-based indicator, 'percentage of students who are proficient or better in informative writing' or 'number of interdisciplinary writing assessments; can have a positive impact on several system-wide variables.'" (pg. 148)

"The benefits of...an emphasis on writing appear to be twofold. First, students process information in a much clearer way when they are required to write and answer. They 'write to think' and thus gain the opportunity to clarify their own thought processes. Second, teachers have the opportunity to gain rich and complex diagnostic information about why students respond to an academic challenge the way that they do." (pg. 190)

"Writing has a mobilizing effect upon one's thinking." (Tierney et al, 1989)

"...students who write about their readings in a relevant and authentic manner become more engaged with the text and comprehend more fully the presented content." (Tierney et al, 1989)

"Awareness of an author's choices is central to effective critical reading, but this information is well hidden in text, and children become aware of it rather late in their development. Writing, because it affords one an insider's view of this aspect of text, provides a powerful, complementary way of thinking about reading that would not be available if reading and writing were identical. Similarly, reading a text and writing about it can provide alternative perspectives that deepen one's understanding of the text." (Shanahan, 1997)

Shanahan, Timothy (1997). Reading-writing relationships, thematic units, inquiry learning...In pursuit of effective integrated literacy instruction. *Reading Teacher* 51:1 12-19.

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