

Running head: THE EFFECTS OF GOAL-SETTING ON STUDENT COMPOSITION

Where to Start Syndrome:

Can Goal-Setting Improve the Quality of Student Peer Review and Revision?

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Abstract

This study examined whether goal-setting could help 10—12th grade Composition students build efficacy, give effective peer feedback, and thus write stronger final revisions of essays. In order to measure the growth between essays, students were evaluated with a control essay (without specific goals) and evaluated under the same circumstances with a “goal” essay (with teacher-approved personal goals). With each essay, students learned how to give strong peer review comments, rated other peers, and completed confidence surveys. Numerical data shows little change in student grades or effectiveness of peer evaluation, but student reflections at the end of the goal essay indicate positive response to goals, growth as writers, and confidence in writing abilities.

Where to Start Syndrome:

Can Goal-Setting Improve the Quality of Student Peer Review and Revision?

When a student is given a writing assignment, he instinctually creates an image of the final product in his head. His teacher says *three-page paper, due in two weeks*, and he feels the weight of the final essay in his hands. He feels the white paper still warm from the printer, he feels the pain still behind his eyes after the all-nighter. He is careful not to smear the ink of his words.

He doesn't think of the process, one step at a time—he thinks of the total amount of time, the mess of work, the friends and extracurricular activities that will have to be sacrificed. Maybe the thought of this causes him to hyperventilate. So he dismisses the assignment from the get-go. Or maybe he is excited at first, potential paper topics spinning in his head, but then worries the reality of the task will weigh down and he will not find the motivation to stick it through. Maybe he did not even listen, checked-out at the mention of the assignment. Maybe *writing* is a swear word.

In academia, the eminent struggle of getting students to write and revise papers persists. In an effort to understand why many students have a Pavlov-like fearful response to writing, I worked with a group of writing students in a secondary setting and examined their work and reflections in a nine-week course.

Focus. The goal for this research was to determine whether goal-setting could improve student writing (especially the revision step of the writing process). Under the umbrella of goal-setting, I focused my research on peer review and self-efficacy: peer review is a strategy used in many writing classrooms and grounded in social-theory, and self-efficacy measures a student's motivation and can indicate why students accomplish tasks. To measure the success of goal-setting, I asked the following sub-questions:

- Does goal-setting lead to constructive peer review?
- Does goal-setting (and peer review) lead to better quality of student revision?

- Does goal-setting help students build self-efficacy (or confidence) in their writing skills?

Actions. In an effort to answer the aforementioned questions, I studied a group of writing students in a secondary Composition classroom. Already a couple of writing assignments into the school year, the students were given a control writing assignment. The writing process for this essay involved: prewriting, outlining, drafting, peer review, evaluation of peer review, in-class revision, and teacher-assessed final draft.

Under the experimental conditions the approach remained identical, save for the introduction of goal-setting and goal-setting strategies at the beginning of another writing assignment. Students were assigned a goal sheet wherein they identified a *specific* area of writing to focus on for the next assignment. The teacher approved the goals and gave students feedback. The students used these goals throughout the remaining writing process. Students submitted a final draft of the essay for assessment.

Rationale. Because there are such a variety of strategies to teach writing, I hope, with this research, to find an underlying factor to success. Research on goal-setting, peer review, and self-efficacy shows student success in writing. By finding a common thread among these elements, I strive to help students overcome what I've identified as *where to start syndrome*. Writing is a complicated, overwhelming, and exhaustive process. I believe students see writing as a *final* assignment. Unlike other types of student work—worksheets, math problems, reading assignments, quizzes, tests—writing does not have an *end*. Writing involves revision; it requires the student to take what they often see as a complete piece of work and put *more* time and effort into the task. Revision is daunting and frustrating. Students visualize the effort they have already put into the assignment and may become resentful toward the peer or teacher who tells them they must continue to revise.

Writing is cross-curricular and exists in education from K—12 and beyond. This research hopes to help professionals who fight the student/writing battle. More importantly, I hope to help students find a strategy that works with their current writing practices. Goal-setting is not a time-consuming process. If students are taught how, and why, to set goals, they can develop a skill that transfers academically and personally. If students are taught that writing is not an overwhelming final product but instead a process for development, they may change their attitudes about writing. Perhaps the small implementation of goal-setting will lead to big strides in constructive peer review, student revision, and student self-efficacy.

No matter what class I lead as an English teacher, writing will be a key element of my instruction. This research will help me improve my approach to teaching writing and help me design assignments that cater to student needs. This research—like I hope for the students—will help me set my own goals for effective instruction. Together, the students and I will grow. After that seemingly final growth, we will revise.

Literature Review

Background

Students are creatures of habit, and the habit for writing is to end the process early. With guided instruction and teacher requirements, students are often successful at completing early stages of the writing process; for example, a teacher may use class time for students to complete a brainstorming journal, and the next day the teacher may grade a student outline. However, because the final stage of the writing process—revision—is personal and mostly led by student motivation, students neglect the task. Besides, they already hold a product in their hands. Why do *more* work?

Oftentimes, writing instructors will use peer review to give students a starting point for revision. Peer review is a writing technique used in all stages of education—students will begin sharing and assessing each other's writing in elementary school, and the practice will continue into collegiate work. Peer review (and/or student guided workshops) will help students envision the final

stage of the writing process. Still, peer review often can be a struggle for students. Even guided workshops may leave students without a confident step toward revision or may leave them with so many peer suggestions they are unsure of where to start revising.

If the peer review process could be repaired, could it possibly lead to improvement in student writing? If goals were set to help focus peer review, could they help students find the motivation they will need to complete the writing process? In order to understand how this research may be effective, I will review the student habits in the writing process, set the foundation of goal-setting, explain why and how peer review is important to the writing process, and discuss how self-efficacy motivates students to write final drafts. In concert, these ideas may be a strong step in guiding students to the final stage of writing.

Student Writing Practices and Revision Methods

Of course, all students have different approaches and attitudes to writing. Some students will find pleasure in writing assignments, others will dread writing assignments. Nonetheless, there are common practices among secondary writing students.

Katstra, Tollefson, & Gilbert (2001) argued that “most students entering high school dislike writing” (pg. 168) and the reason for this dislike comes from years of writing papers with the knowledge they will be returned with corrections. This red pen, then, becomes a symbol reminding the student that he or she cannot write or has nothing to say. To overcome this habit, teachers should be sure to establish a strong relationship with the student and to highlight positive feedback. (And to ditch the red pen.)

As students became stronger writers, their approach to various tasks changed; writers of any age understood that prewriting, journaling, and outlining were a good start to an essay, but the difference between amateur writers and advanced writers was that the advanced writers were more proficient in preparation and goal-setting (Lavelle, Smith, & O’Ryan, 2002). As students developed, so did their writing abilities. At an early stage, students will write with a “literal, procedural focus,”

and then move on to “interpretation” in middle school, and then “to negotiating multiple viewpoints” in high school (Lavelle, Smith, & O’Ryan, 2002, pg. 402). If students take college courses, they will be expected to synthesize information and to further develop their analytical skills. They will also be expected to understand the process of writing.

What do students think when they are assigned big writing tasks? Researcher Ellen Lavelle developed an inventory called the Process in College Composition, which assessed students’ intentions and strategies in Composition (Lavelle, Smith, & O’Ryan, 2002). This research noted a number of student writing habits, and asked questions such as “I put a lot of myself in my writing” and “I often use analogy and metaphor in my writing.” Lavelle, Smith, & O’Ryan (2002) observed that compared to college students, secondary students were less concerned with “using writing as learning experience or as a tool of meaning” (Lavelle, Smith, & O’Ryan, 2002, pg.406). Secondary students were more inclined to tell stories within their guidelines, but as they advanced to the college-age, their writing skills became more intrinsic, more instinctive. The Process in College Composition inventory also noticed that some secondary students used what they called the “Achieving-Competitive Strategy,” which showed that many students found their purpose in writing to be a teacher-pleaser, or to get a good grade: “it was as though these students were competing with the teacher in a sort of game” (Lavelle, Smith, & O’Ryan, 2002, pg. 407). Thus, when students will play the “game” of school, they will be less likely to invest. Nothing will be at stake, other than a letter grade and an essay with teacher comments they will throw in the recycle bin when she isn’t looking.

The biggest difference between the work of high school and college students, however, was *reflection and revision*. Lavelle, Smith, & O’Ryan (2002) remarked, “both the deep, critical, analytic component involving a sophisticated understanding of the role of revision and the self-doubting, writing apprehensive factor are missing from the secondary population” (pg. 407). High school

students may not yet be at the stage where they can look at the writing critically, outside of the teaching-pleasing classroom. Perhaps they are not yet writing for themselves.

Research showed that of the 100% amount of time dedicated to the writing process, students “devoted less than 1 percent to editing and revising” (Christiansen, 1990, p. 70). However, revision would not only mean to teach the writing process to students: revision would be important because it would teach students skills that crossed into life. Education is meant to produce lifelong learning. If students did not revise, they did not learn to be self-critical; they did not learn how to become their own teachers or grow from their mistakes (Christiansen, 1990). Revision will force critical thinking and reflection from students and will help them discover the relationship between “achievement and self-respect” (Christiansen, 1990, p. 72).

Start Before the Beginning: The Case for Goal-Setting

Whether formal or informal, goals come in a variety of forms. Students can be motivated to set goals on their own, or they can be forced by their instructors to set goals. In any form, research supported goal-setting, and the support came from the groundwork of goal-theory, socio-cognitive theory, and self-efficacy.

To be effective, a goal must have been measurable. It was defined by a purpose (Schunk, 2000). Schunk (2000) noted that when his students set goals, they were identifying a plan to find that purpose. When a student was in the process of completing a goal, he was able to compare his current work to the visualization of his ultimate objectives (Schunk, 2000). This visualization helped the student find a path to his achievement.

While goals led to student success, they were useless unless the student was committed to achieving the goal. According to Schunk (2000), successful goals were: specific, proximal, and difficult. Poor standards led to poor goals. If a student gave a vague goal such as *I want to do well*, the goal would be difficult to measure. How would the student know when he had succeeded? What was defined as *well* according to the student or according to his teacher?

Proximity was another key goal property—if a goal was three years down the line, how would the student be able to track the progress of his goal? Could the big goal have been broken down into smaller, attainable goals?

Finally, the difficulty of a goal determined how much effort a student put into the goal. If a student set a goal that was too easy to attain, he would achieve the goal with little effort and receive minimal self-satisfaction. He would not learn much in the process. If the student set a goal that was too difficult and improbably achievable, he would get easily frustrated when he was not successful. This dissatisfaction would affect his self-efficacy, which would counteractively affect his goal-setting and likelihood of success.

Goal-setting helped students design their writing process—when students created a timeline, arranged personal work time, and thought about their work creatively, they were inclined for success (Lavelle, Smith, & O’Ryan, 2002). Although goal-setting could be difficult, it was important that the student set his goal own versus having a goal assigned to him. When he determined his ability and set his own objectives for growth, he was more likely to be successful (Schunk, 2000). It was important that he took ownership of his mental, social, and academic achievements.

Regarding composition, students set a number of goals—as a class, and personally. Generally, the teacher will assign the “goal,” or purpose, or objective, of the assignment (Graham & Perin, 2007). This assignment will become the goal of the entire class. Thereafter, each student will set his or her own subgoals to accomplish the task (Graham & Perin, 2007). In addition to these “planned” goals, however, students can set goals of their own regarding certain components of the composition or how they will like to grow as writers.

Strategies and Success: What Works for Peer Review

Much of this research was grounded in the fact that peer review was a successful and appropriate means of instruction in the writing classroom. (It is worth noting, however, that peer review is a controversial issue among some English instructors, who observe little results in the

process and find it to be a waste of time.) Peer review refers to small peer groups as well as whole-class student workshops. Peer review is meant to give students another perspective on their writing. The practice is student-focused and gives students a chance to play teacher. With peer review, students learned to observe and model, and peer review allowed students to measure whether they had “met the desired goal, and to scrutinize themselves and adjust their performance” (Sung, Chang, Chang, & Yu, 2010, p. 136).

Peer review may have helped self-efficacy in that groups could help students develop an optimistic view of writing; this positive viewpoint came from the trust and inclusion in a group of peers. Katstra, Tollefson, & Gilbert (2001) learned that students became part of a group, and their self-worth developed as they helped other students improve their writing. Moreover, teenager’s judgments were affected more by peers, rather than by adults (Katstra, Tollefson, & Gilbert, 2001). If a student knew a peer would read his or her essay, he or she may have wanted to make a positive impression on the peer and thus put more into the work. A study of “The Effects of Peer Evaluation on Attitude toward Writing and Writing Fluency in Ninth Grade Students” (Katstra, Tollefson, & Gilbert, 2001) found that an experimental group with peer review versus one without peer review showed increase in student optimism about writing. The authors concluded that peer review may have been the place to restore negative red-pen attitudes about composition. Students in peer review were “more likely to rewrite,” and “thought their writing was improving” (Katstra, Tollefson, & Gilbert, 2001, pg. 171). Part of the success was likely the ground rules set up for the groups, the trust in the classroom, and the selected students in each group.

Oftentimes, young writers have over-complimented or highlighted another student’s work, which may have helped him or her feel positive about what they have shared with their group. In essence, this has provided “healthy competition” for the student.

On the other hand, peer review may have hurt self-efficacy in that a student who noticed other students getting praise while he or she did not may have caused him or her to feel self-

conscious about the work. At the same time, he or she may have read another student's successful work and doubted whether his or her own had met the expectations of the teacher. Thus, the teacher should address these issues before a class workshop or peer review. Student attitudes during the peer review process will be important to its success; students will not want to be "talked down to" by their peers.

Writing is personal and independent, and peer review will welcome another student into the intimacy of the process. Because of this, peer review should be implemented in a cautious way—students may find difficulty expressing themselves if they worry they will offend a peer, so instead of offering insight they may close up and give artificial positive comments.

Teachers should be cautious of the artificial, ineffective peer review. With vague guidelines or expectations, students will not truly learn how to read others' papers, and a student who has received feedback will not know where to begin a revision.

Self-Efficacy and Motivation for Learning

Student self-efficacy, or belief in self, was associated with student writing strategies, according to research (Lavelle, Smith, & O'Ryan, 2002). Thus, student implementation of writing strategies were based on the belief they could be successful. If students did not believe they could be successful, they did not engage in any stages of the writing process, including revision.

In essence, students with high self-efficacy set better goals and were able to apply those goals to other academic fields. Self-efficacy helped students learn skills. However, goal-setting alone did not improve student writing. Students needed motivation to meet goals (Lavelle, Smith, & O'Ryan, 2002).

Research about self-efficacy and composition often linked the idea of "apprehension," or anxiety, associated with writing (Pajares & Johnson, 1996). In short, this was the student who immediately had a negative reaction to a writing assignment. Pajares & Johnson (1996) argued that the teacher must endeavor to stop students from forming pessimistic perceptions of writing and self.

Once a student reached high school and had those negative perceptions confirmed, however, the teacher faced an especially difficult task. Students were not automatically successful with each writing assignment; the student “must be able to face difficulties, or even fail, without losing the confidence to try again and improve” (Pajares & Johnson, 1996, p. 172). Ideally, once a student was able to accept failure as growth, his or her self-efficacy would increase.

But why is self-efficacy so important? First of all, student confidence helped to govern what students did with the knowledge and skills they possessed. If they had no confidence, the talent they had lay dormant. When students had confidence (which most often comes from prior achievements), they were more likely to succeed. Studies on self-efficacy suggested that self-efficacy was a strong predictor of academic performance (Bandura, 1986). Moreover, Bandura addressed the notion of anxiety as a detrimental factor to confidence. When students believed they had no power over an assignment or grade, they came to fear the results. This fear, in turn, affected their level of confidence (Pajares & Johnson, 1996). A 1996 study by Pajares & Johnson with incoming high school students determined that “self-efficacy perceptions were strong predictors of writing performance” and that “student self-confidence in their writing capability had a direct effect on their writing apprehension and essay-writing performance.” Students who had poor self-efficacy were more likely to give up on goals. Writing was equally as emotional as it is cognitive—students did not invest only what they *knew* into their writing assignments, but what and how they *felt*. It would be possible that increased self-efficacy would reach the emotional part of the writer and thus increase his or her writing proficiency (Pajares & Johnson, 1996).

Finally, students often underestimated their ability in writing, which may have reflected lack of confidence. Bandura (1986) argued, however, that *overestimation* in ability can be helpful to boost effort and dedication.

As noted above, student confidence often came from prior assignments, and without any success from a past assignment, it was difficult to help students build confidence. Throughout this

endeavor, I will measure self-efficacy. At the end of the term, I will assess whether student goals helped them to *build* self-efficacy. Since research suggests goal-setting and self-efficacy are correlated (in that students struggle to set and maintain goals without self-efficacy), I am interested to see whether these are linked. If my students grow in confidence, hopefully their future writing will be met with success.

Method

Subjects or Participants

The participants in this study were a class of 29 Composition students at a high school in the Midwest, about 20 miles from the metropolitan area. The class contained 11 males and 18 females in grades ten, eleven and twelve. The class was one of many selections that students may choose from to fulfill English credit requirements; the class was not required. Prerequisites to the class included the completion of Communications 9 and Communications 10, which were basic ninth and tenth grade courses in writing, speech, and literature. The class demographics were as follows: 27 Caucasian students, 1 Hispanic-American student, and 1 African-American student. I was the instructor of the students and implemented the action research throughout the third quarter, nine-week course. This action research goes toward the completion of an M.S. Education (K—12) degree. My prior accreditation includes a Master's of Fine Arts in Creative Writing and a Bachelor of Arts degree in English. This is my second year of teaching full time English at the secondary level, and I have three years prior experience of teaching Composition at the collegiate level.

Setting

Approximately 3,300 students attend this high school, which is located in a Midwest suburb. Approximately 89% of the students have plans post high school to attend a two- or four-year college. The students in my classroom were those who chose to enroll in the Composition course; most of them were enrolled in the course to improve their writing skills for college-level writing.

The daily schedule was block form. Students had four major classes per day at 90 minutes each. I had the Composition students during the fourth period of the day for nine weeks throughout the year.

The course was divided by writing assignments, which I scaffold to build writing foundations. Students began with a compare/contrast essay. A research-based essay called an ethnography (wherein students research a group they consider themselves to belong to) followed the compare/contrast. Following the ethnography, students completed a short narrative assignment; after the narrative, students wrote an advertisement analysis, and after the analysis, students wrote a short persuasive letter. This action research focused on two writing assignments that students completed in the middle of the semester; because I wanted to know the writing level and personality of each student, I did not want to begin the formal research at the beginning of the term, but rather after students had found comfort and safety in the classroom and had become familiar with the structure of the class. Nonetheless, as a participant-observer, I recorded any relevant information that arose before the formal research began, and I used a first-day questionnaire and the first formal essay to guide group-making decisions later in the term and to measure initial student confidence.

The classroom was traditional: a whiteboard in the front of the room, and thirty desks arranged in rows with some facing forward and some facing sideways to create a “stage” in the center of the room. I decorated with inspirational writing quotations and materials, literature posters, and student work.

Research Questions

The research question for this study was framed in goal theory, socio-cognitive theory, and self-efficacy. The matrix for the question, sub-questions, and data collection procedures is located in Table 1.

In the context of this action research, the word *constructive* was defined by on-task behavior that guided the group forward with new ideas and observations. A *constructive* peer review involved all

parties who contributed new ideas to the conversation, whereas an *unconstructive* peer review involved students keeping mostly quiet or giving artificial comments that did not guide the revision of a final paper.

Also in the context of this action research, the phrase *quality student revision* referred to the personal growth of the student. Quality was determined by student measurement of the time and effort put into a final assignment. Thus, a low-performing student could still have a *quality student revision* if there were vast improvements from a rough draft to a final draft. A top performing student could have a *quality student revision* if he or she made improvements from a rough to final draft, and if there were little improvements needed, he or she was at least reflective as to why the rough draft had met requirements and personal best.

Table 1

Data Triangulation Matrix

<i>Can goal-setting improve student writing?</i>			
	Data Source #1	Data Source #2	Data Source #3
<i>Can goal-setting lead to constructive peer review?</i>	Peer review rubric (student)	Peer review rubric (teacher)* *(this source was later discarded)	Audio tape of subgroup peer review conversation
<i>Does goal-setting (and peer review) lead to better quality of student revision?</i>	Post-draft questionnaire (given at control essay and goal essay)	Teacher journals and observations/Reports of subgroup growth	Teacher record keeping/gradebook
<i>Does goal-setting help students build self-efficacy (or confidence) in their writing skills?</i>	1 st day, post-control, and post-goal confidence survey	Teacher weekly journal/reports on class attitude and behavior	Reflective student assignment (subgroup responses will get focus)

Data collection procedures

I put the 29 students into groups based on a first-day writing assignment, based on essay success from the first assignment, and based on my observation of the first three weeks of class. I

organized groups with high, middle, and low students. (It is worth noting that as I structured groups, there was an imbalance of students with many of the students falling into the “middle” group.) Among those peer review groups, I chose one group to study as a subgroup. I chose this group based on my relationships with the students and the decipherable high, middle, and low quality of their writing.

With the entire class, the study measured: student attitudes and abilities of peer review with a peer comment rubric, student writing behaviors with a pre- and post-questionnaire, student grades with a record book, student confidence with pre- and post-writing surveys, and teacher observations about attitude with a personal journal.

Among the subgroup, I was able to narrow my observations to particular student growth. The section of the research measured: conversations during peer review (regarding constructive, vague, and on/off topic comments), personal growth on final drafts compared to rough drafts (via teacher observation), and personal reflection alongside transfer skills (with a paragraph-length personal response, evaluated by the teacher).

At the beginning of the school year, I administered a confidence writing survey to the students, which was intended to measure what they knew about writing and what their perceived performance levels were so far in their high school careers (see Appendix A). While no data was collected with this survey, it helped me to determine which students could work together in the high, middle, and low peer groups. This survey also allowed me to direct instruction throughout the semester. For the first essay, I allowed students to choose their own peer review groups. Thereafter, I put students into peer review groups that were meant to last during the researched essays of the course. The groups did not need adjustment, but some peer review sessions were weaker because of absences on peer review day or because some group members did not bring materials for peer review.

Official data collection began at the onset of the second essay in the class. Students had writing practice and were familiar with my instruction at this time. My instruction included: introduction to the assignment, terms, and concepts, examples of essays, prewriting, outlining, peer review, and two in-class days of revision (an activity I called “Big, Fat Revision”) (see Appendix B), alongside student/teacher conferences.

The first essay, the ethnography, hereafter referred to as the “control essay” involved a typical instruction process similar to that of the prior essay. The difference was the introduction of a peer review assessment rubric, an audio recording, and other reflective materials. In between the control essay and goal essays, the students wrote a narrative essay that was not included in the research, but students kept their peer review groups to discuss this essay. Thus, they worked with their groups a total of three times. The essay following the control and narrative, the advertisement analysis, hereafter referred to as the “goal essay,” involved a goal-setting process at the beginning of the essay. All other instruction was the same as delivered in the control essay, save for references to the students’ self-set goals, peer review that acknowledged student goals, and the teacher’s response to those goals.

Data Collection For Sub-Question #1: Can Goal-Setting Lead to Constructive Peer Review?

In order to answer the first sub-question, *Does goal-setting lead to constructive peer review?*, I gave students a handout that modeled what constructive versus ineffective peer review comments looked like (see Appendix C). Following that instruction, I gave students a peer review rubric (see Appendix D). The rubric was developed considering the six traits of writing, and the specificity of the rubric was intended to make student grading of their peers less subjective. Students learned how to use the rubric in order to assess their peers’ comments. While students had conducted peer review before, the control essay was the first time the peer review groups had assessed their reviewers’ comments. In addition to the student assessment of their peers’ comments, I also intended to complete the peer review rubric. However, after collecting the data and listening to the subgroup’s analysis, I

determined that collecting this data would be nearly impossible. Students rated their peers based on what they *said* as well as what they had written on the essay, and because I had not been present in each peer review group, my personal analysis would be invalid. Thus, the second source of data collection for question one as indicated on the triangulation matrix was discarded.

My final assessment for determining the quality of peer review was the audio recording of the subgroup during a peer review exercise. All groups in the class were recorded, but I only kept data from the subgroup's conversation (see Appendix E). The purpose of this audio-recording was to measure whether student conversation matched the effectiveness of their remarks; whether a group on-task was able to give effective peer review comments. The information from this recording could help me restructure the time used for peer review or whether students were able to effectively use time on their own for peer review.

Data Collection for Sub-Question #2: Does Goal-Setting (and Peer Review) Lead to Better Quality Student Revision?

After the completion of each the control and goal essays, I gave students a questionnaire intended to measure the amount and quality of revision with their essays (see Appendix F). The purpose of this data collection was for students to self-reflect on their work and to think about work alongside the final grade of the project; the prompts on this questionnaire were developed to measure the amount of revision and what students thought of the revision. The questionnaire also served to measure the amount of growth and revision between essays and whether the goal-setting essay improved quality of revision.

The second piece of data collection was the teacher journal and observation of the subgroups rough and final drafts of the control and goal essays (see Appendix G). While it is improbable to keep personal data on the specific growth and change of each student in the class, the subgroup served as a small sample and it was possible to measure the specific revisions of these

students. The observation of the subgroup also allowed me to determine whether students were able to reach the goals they had previously set.

The final data tool for the measurement of student revision was my personal grade book. Considering the grades of all students in the class, I compared the differences in final grades of the control and goal essays.

Data Collection for Sub-Question #3: Does goal-Setting Help Students Build Self-Efficacy (or Confidence) in Their Writing Skills?

Because much research determined that students' belief-in-self led to better quality work, I found it imperative to measure student success alongside belief in this action research. These data collection tools served to help me determine whether goal-setting could help students find confidence in their work or whether reaching goals improved their writing. The first data collection tool to answer this sub-question was a pre- and post-confidence survey (see Appendix A). When I designed this survey, I considered the six traits of writing and intended for students to respond to the traits separately rather than writing as an entire product. This survey was given on the first day of school, solely for the purpose of teacher interests. The survey was given again after the control essay (to measure if students had grown in confidence during the first assignments in the writing class), and again after the goal essay to reflect and measure self-confidence.

The second tool for sub-question three was a teacher reflective journal (see Appendix H) intended to report the student confidence in the class (based on teacher perception). Were there days where students had more confidence? Did the goal-setting essay aura of the classroom feel more positive than the control essay aura? I kept these journals weekly, and the qualitative data was intended to work alongside the quantitative data to see whether students behaved in the same way they marked their behavior.

The final method of data collection for sub-question three was a reflective student assessment that students completed in open-ended, paragraph form (see Appendix I). While each

student in the class completed the self-reflection, I specifically analyzed the responses of the subgroup and compared their personal reflection and perceived performance to their final grades and my thoughts on the quality of their improvement. The self-reflection also measured whether students would transfer goal-setting skills to other areas of academia, particularly other writing assignments and courses. While it is difficult to measure confidence, these tools (especially with the balance of qualitative and quantitative data collection) aided my understanding of student self-efficacy.

In order to ensure my data was organized, I created a number of organizational aids and charts to keep track of the information. I kept copies of all necessary student documents and made back-up copies of those documents. This data was intended to measure the impact of goal-setting on peer review, success in revision, and student attitudes about writing; these aspects of writing may be correlated and connect to goal-setting, or they may work independently.

Instruction

The classroom application of the action research included the following steps:

1. First day of classroom instruction: I made copies of the Student Confidence Writing Survey (see Appendix A) and administered the survey to each of the students and invited them to complete the survey honestly; they would not be graded on responses. I used the results of the survey to guide instruction during the first essays of the Composition course.

2. The action research did not officially begin until the second essay of the course, which is when I assigned peer review base groups. These groups were based on high, middle, and low students, as determined by the first day questionnaire and the performance on the first essay of the course. Also, during the essay before the official control essay, I used guided peer review sheets and instructed students on the importance of revising final drafts.

3. To begin the control essay: first, I assigned the essay in the same manner I had done the previous essay; by this point, students were familiar with my teaching and the structure of the

course. At this time, I had identified my subgroup; a decision I based on previous student work, and group camaraderie. Beginning with this essay, I recorded weekly observations regarding student attitudes in the class (see Appendix H).

When the students had rough drafts, we discussed constructive peer feedback, and I gave them a guide regarding effective and ineffective peer review (see Appendix C). Each student received two copies of the peer review rubric (one to complete for each group member), and the students and I then reviewed the peer review rubric and discussed how to evaluate comments (see Appendix D). As was done with the first essay, I gave students a “guided peer review sheet” that explained the steps toward completing an effective peer review, such as reading an essay aloud and sitting quietly while others discuss your work. I told the students that for this essay and the following we would record their peer review conversations, and I gave each group a recorder. I instructed the students how to operate the audio-recorders, we tested them, and they completed peer review in their high, middle, and low groups.

Once finished with peer review, students completed the peer review rubric for each group member, and I collected the rubrics. I entered the peer review responses into a chart and averaged the scores (see Appendix I).

I told students to make corrections to their rough drafts given their own judgment and the comments from their peers. They had the night to make these changes, and they were to bring a fresh copy of the essay to class the following day. During the two days between the workshop and final draft of the essay, I held student/teacher conferences with each student as I had done with the first class assignment. While students were not meeting with me, they completed the Big, Fat Revision assignment (see Appendix B). During our five-minute conversations, I asked students what feedback their peers had given them, and we discussed further revision strategies for their essays.

4. After the peer review, I collected the recordings. (The recorders were microphones and ipods; after the conversations, I was able to upload the discussions into an itunes folder, which I was

able to access on my computer and through a compact disc I burned of the conversation.) I played the recording of the subgroup and recorded my reflections on the Audio Reflection sheet (see Appendix E).

5. When the final papers for the control essay were completed, I collected student rough drafts and final drafts. On the day the final drafts were completed, students were assigned two reflective sheets: the Student Final Draft Reflection (see Appendix F), and another copy of the Student Confidence Reflection Survey (see Appendix A). I collected these forms and recorded the information for later comparison with the responses after the goal essay.

6. I graded the final drafts of the student essays and entered the final scores into my grade book. I did not return the reflection sheets, but I asked students for comments or criticisms regarding those sheets.

7. After evaluating the essays of the subgroup, I entered my observations into the Subgroup Progress sheet (see Appendix G).

8. When the course timeline allowed for the next essay, the students and I discussed the qualities of goal setting; they were given the goal-setting guide sheet and completed goals for the following essay (see Appendix J). I collected those goal sheets and made sure students set goals that were attainable and measurable for the essay, and I gave the students feedback and suggestions for those goals. Once students received a sticker on this assignment, they knew their goal was approved.

9. With the rough draft of the goal essay, the students and I completed the exact procedure of steps 1—8; however, throughout these steps, we referred to the goal sheets and discussed whether their work with peer review and self-revision reflected the goals they had set. The guided peer review asked students to share their goals with their peer review group and for the group to specifically comment on the student's goal. The Big, Fat, Revision asked students to once again record their goal and to revise for the goal.

10. After completing steps 1—8 and returning final drafts, students completed the Student Self-Reflective Assignment (see Appendix K). I read the reflections from each student, but particularly noted the reflections of the subgroup in comparison to their performance on the control and goal essays.

Results

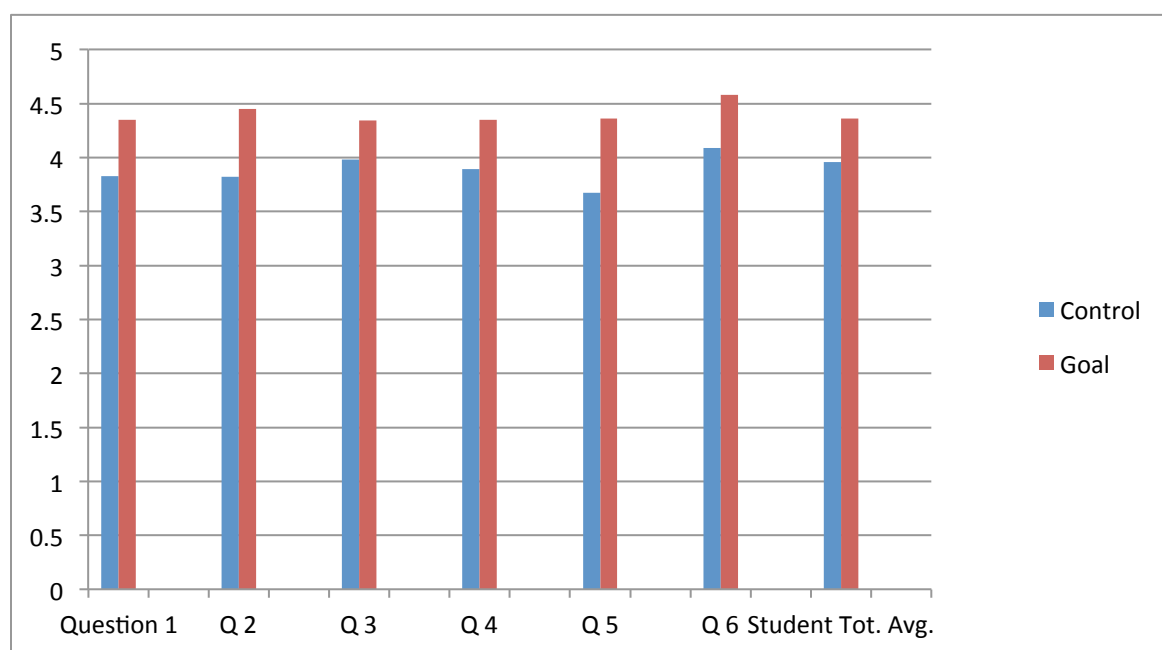
The results of the action research generally showed that peer review effectiveness, student revision, and student success (regarding grades), had minimal change with the introduction of goal-setting into the writing process. Self-assessed levels of confidence (self-efficacy) in writing also showed minimal change; however, when students completed reflections about goal-setting, they remarked that the goals had helped them with their writing, as though the reflection served as a metacognitive trigger. Their work did not show improvement, but perhaps their attitude and approach to writing because of the goals helped them to understand more about *how* they write.

Does goal-setting lead to constructive peer review?

Students were given the Peer Review Assessment Rubric (see Appendix D) to measure whether their peer review partners gave effective feedback during their workshop. The assessment was broken down into six questions, such as “my peer reviewer gave me an effective end comment” and “this reviewer wrote positive comments on my essay.” I assessed student scores based on the control essay and the goal essay (see Figure 1).

The average score on a five-point scale (0 low, 5 high) for peer review was 3.9 for the control essay. For the goal essay, the average score on the five-point scale was 4.3, which showed a 0.4 increase in peer effectiveness. Each of the six rubric questions showed growth between the control and goal essay, and the biggest change was with question five, which asked “this reviewer gave me a strong end comment.” The change from the goal essay to the control essay regarding the “end comment” was 0.7 on the five-point scale.

Figure 1

Peer Review Evaluation Between Control and Goal Essays

Although the data triangulation matrix suggested that the second data collection source be from a teacher evaluation of the peer review, this source was eliminated because the students measured effectiveness on peer review discussion as well as peer review comments; because I did not have access to the verbal discussion, the data would not be accurate.

Regarding the subgroup success of peer review, I noticed little change in the format of discussion or the constructive versus under-developed or off-task comments between the control and goal essay (see Appendix E) The constructive comments of the group for both essays included phrases or comments where students used *because* in their response to the essay, such as, “I like the introduction *because* I feel it addresses the male perspective and the female perspective.” Students made strong comments when they used “I” statements as well, even when they were pointing out areas of needed change in the paper, such as, “I feel confused when I read this sentence,” rather than “this sentence is confusing.” Comments were strong when students related them to the context of the overall assignment, which they were better able to do with the goal essay.

The under-developed comments remained the same between the control and goal essays. Comments were underdeveloped when students did not qualify or elaborate their reasons for change, such as, “some little grammar errors,” and simply, “I thought it was good,” or, “change this.” The balance between constructive and under-developed comments stayed the same between the control and goal essay.

Worth noting, regarding the peer review is that students did not address the goals during the peer review discussion of the goal essay, even though they were instructed to do so. Also, when the essay was weaker, students gave more under-developed comments; thus, the weaker essays from the beginning had less guidance for the revision. These students more likely had difficulty understanding where to start their revision. The “high” student in the subgroup gave the most constructive feedback verbally and in writing, and the high student more often connected the essay back to the parameters of the assignment. (She used this to justify her comments.) The feedback verbally between the “middle” and “low” students was similar, and the middle and low students more often gave personal reactions with the “I” statements rather comments from the high student such as, “the teacher, I think, wants us to do this.”

The group had no off-task comments, but the rapport between them with the goal essay was stronger than the control.

Does goal-setting (and peer review) lead to better quality of student revision?

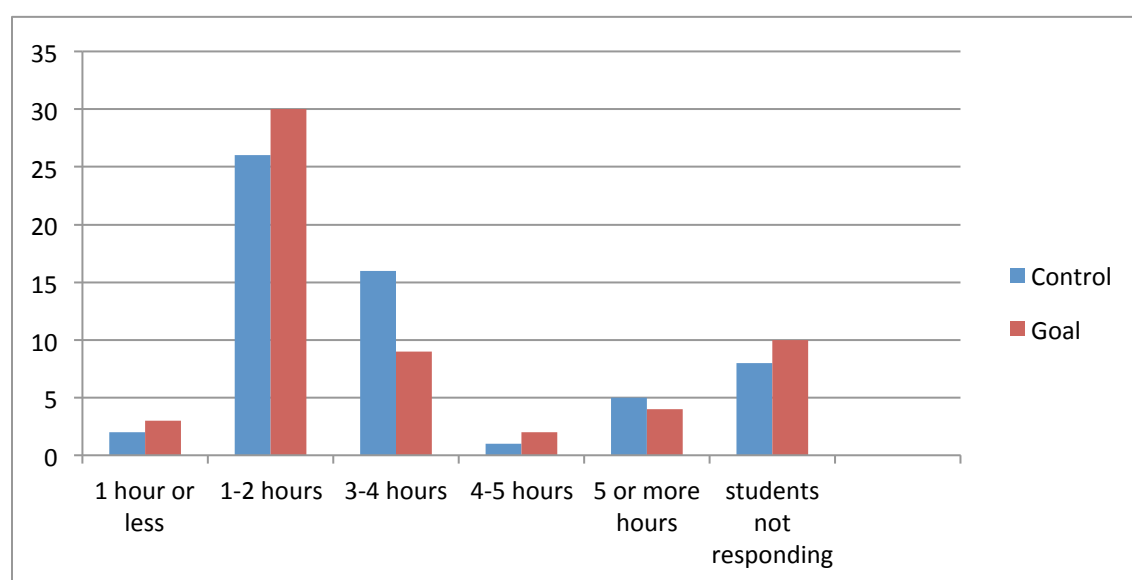
To measure whether students had stronger revisions, I considered their reflections on the revision process, the literal changes of the subgroup, and the overall scores of the class (with the assumption that stronger revisions led to stronger final essay grades).

When students filled out the Reflection (see Appendix F), they were asked to explain how much physical time they had spent on the essay (see Figure 2), how much they’d revised for certain components of the essay (see Table 2 and Figure 3), and what they estimated their grades to be on the essay. These grades were then compared to their actual essay grades (see Figure 4).

Figure 2 averages total time writing and revising. When students answered the question about time spent on the essay, they broke time down into “writing the essay” and “revising the essay” (this included in-class time). There was little difference in the time they spent revising the control and goal essays. Most students spent 1—2 hours writing the essay and 1—2 hours revising thereafter.

Figure 2

Time Spent Writing & Revising Control & Goal Essays



After the control and goal essays, students were asked to indicate how much time they had spent revising for different components of the essay (see Table 2). The results in Figure 3 show that students varied regarding revision between control and goal essays.

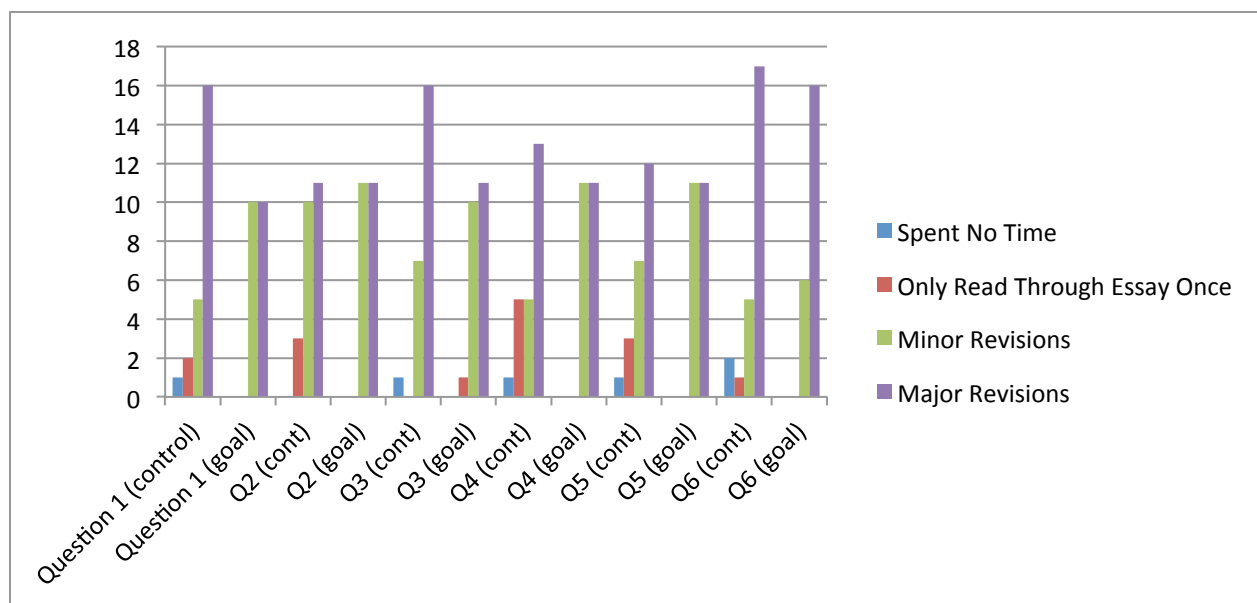
“Major revisions” decreased with each question between control and goal essays, suggesting that either less time was spent looking for the individual components with the goal essay, or that students did not need to make larger revisions because of success on a first draft. For most questions, students selected either “minor” or “major” revisions rather than having spent no time or just “one-glance” regarding the component of writing, which suggests that they did, at least, revise.

Table 2

Questions about Amount of Revision

Question 1	Explain the effort you put into proofreading your essay (fixing grammatical errors such as commas, subject-verb agreement, tense, and sentence fragments).
Question 2	Explain the effort you put into reading for sentence fluency or word choice in your essay (using effective verbs, varying sentence lengths and structures).
Question 3	Explain the effort you put into reading for voice in your essay (passive voice, audience, and the way you write as an honest, relatable reader).
Question 4	Explain your approach for revising your thesis and topic sentences in this essay.
Question 5	Explain the effort you put into the organization and transitions in this essay.
Question 6	Explain the effort you put into fixing content, ideas, and development in your essay (clarifying and expanding on details).

Figure 3

Student Amount of Revision Given Components of Writing

Based on my observations of the change in essays with the subgroup (see Appendix G) I noticed slight change in the amount of revision with the “middle” student, but changes in the amount of revision with the “high” and the “low” student.

With the control essay, the “high” student made significant revisions that involved almost an entire rewrite of the information; however, when this student completed peer review, her rough draft was significantly incomplete and would need these changes to meet the parameters of the assignment. She also took significant advantage of the student/teacher conferences to aid this revision. For the goal essay, the high student did not make as many revisions, but the essay she brought into her workshop group was nearly complete. Her goal was: “I learned a lot of new knowledge in this essay, and I want to bring it accurately into my paper.” Her goal essay met this goal with her rough draft. The changes she made were based off peer suggestions, our teacher/student conference, and her own proofreading. On the control essay, the high student earned a 142/150, or 94.6 percent. On the goal essay, she earned a 190/200, or 95 percent.

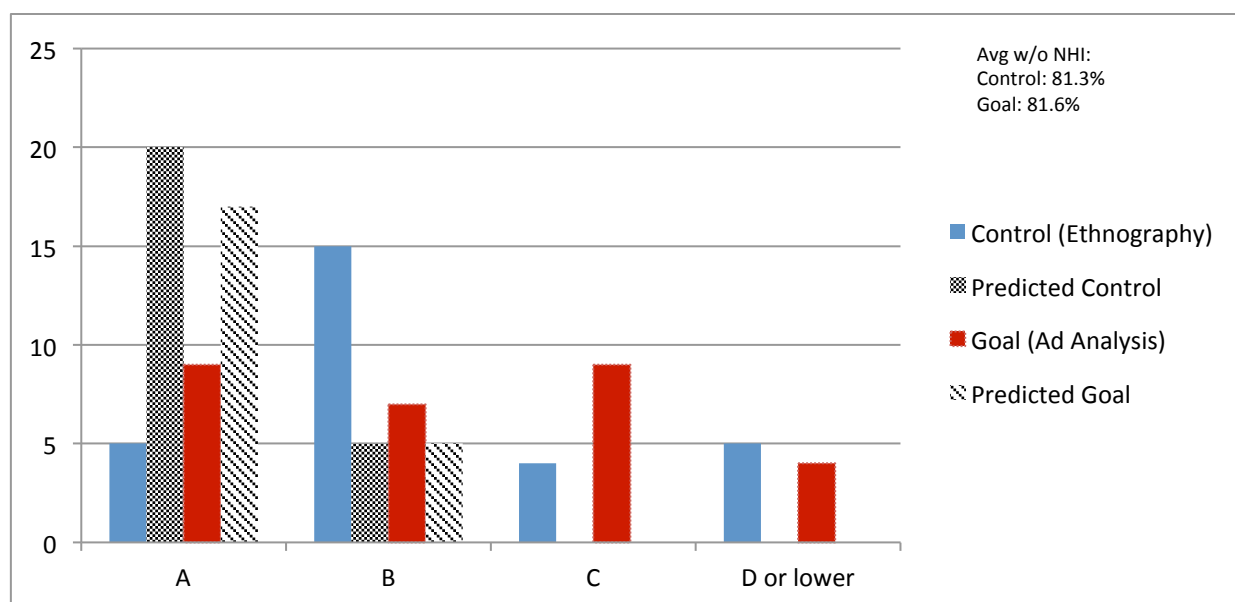
The “middle” student maintained the same revision habits with both essays. Although his peers gave him concise feedback (both oral and written) on his essay, he did not make any changes between the rough and final draft of the control essay. Even when the high student corrected grammatical mistakes on his essay, he did not make those changes to his final essay. His goal for the goal essay was: “not to stick with the first word I come up with...the ‘juicy’ word instead will make it a more detailed paper.” When the middle student revised his goal essay, there were some changes between the rough and final. Mostly, he again neglected the surface-level corrections from the high student. However, the rough draft he brought into workshop was largely disorganized, and he shifted some information from one paragraph to another to add cohesion. This was the only change to the essay, and I did not see any specific revision regarding his goal. (However, regarding “word choice” there were not significant problems in the essay.) On the control essay, the middle student earned a 117/150, or 78 percent. He earned 165/200, or 82.5 percent on the goal essay.

Finally, the “low” student showed significant changes in the amount of revision between the control and goal essays. She listened, mostly, to the surface-level comments of the peer review group when she revised her control essays, and she changed the small comments regarding grammar and fluency that the high student wrote on her rough draft. Her control essay rough draft showed significant problems regarding fluency, organization, structure, and ideas, and she seemed to struggle with the parameters of the assignment. When she revised, it was only for the surface-level issues, and the essay remained largely disorganized and the ideas were difficult to follow. Moreover, she neglected to include any of the research components for the essay, which were a large part of the grade. Her goal for the goal essay was: “I want to give really specific examples and compare and contrast.” The revisions to her goal essay were vastly different than the effort she put into the control essay, and I even remarked in my final comments, “this is the strongest writing and revising I’ve seen from you so far!” The essay she brought into workshop was largely weak and would require a substantial overhaul (much like for the control essay). However, she made the large changes to this essay that both her group (during workshop) and I (during conference) suggested. The entire introduction was rewritten to include a hook and a specific example (such as suggested by her goal) and a thesis was established. Ideas were added and restructured. Her grade on the control essay was initially an F because she was missing the research information, but she later revised the sources to earn 120/150, 80 percent. (Note that this was a generous score given a low grade at the end of the term that needed a boost for graduation). Her score for the goal essay was 165/200, 82.5 percent.

Lastly, the entire class’s overall scores between the control and goal essays increased slightly (see Figure 4). Between the control essay and the goal essay, the class average increased by 0.3 percent. The average score for both essays (not including the “0” scores from essays that were not handed in, or NHI) was a B- at around 81 percent.

Figure 4

Students Grade Predictions and Actual Grades, Control & Goal Essays



Most often, students predicted their grades to be much higher than they earned. For example, with the control essay, 20 students predicted they would earn A grades, but only 5 students actually earned As. It is uncertain whether this prediction was because of self-efficacy, or because a student is unwilling to report to a teacher that he believes he has “earned a C.” Less students (17) predicted A grades for the goal essay, but more students (9) actually earned an A.

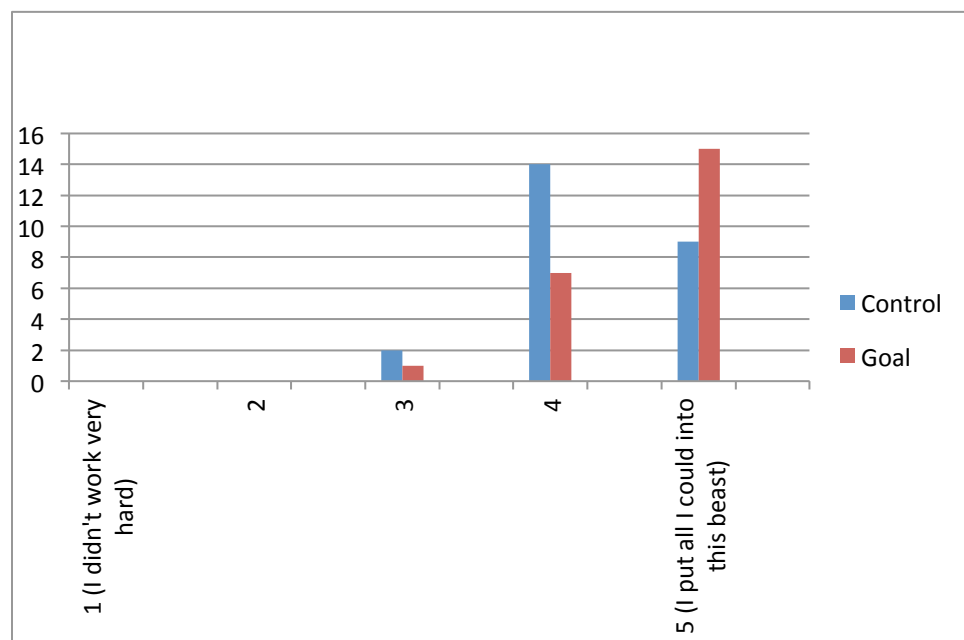
Does goal-setting help students build self-efficacy (or confidence) in their writing skills?

The data collection tools I used to measure self-efficacy included a confidence survey given to students after the control and goal essays (see Appendix A), a teacher journal throughout the research (see Appendix H), and a reflective student assignment regarding their perspective of goals and success (see Appendix K). I also considered a reflective assignment that I gave students at the end of the term, wherein they wrote a 1—2 page journal about their progress in the class. This final reflection was not part of the data triangulation matrix; however, I will discuss those results here as they reflect self-efficacy.

On the confidence survey, students were asked to rank their level of work on the essay on a scale from one to five, with the value of one as “I didn’t work very hard” and the value of five as “I put all I could into this beast.” The results are explained in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Student “Work Level” with Control and Goal Essays



Most students reported that they had put a level of four or five of hard work into each essay, but the “five” level of work increased with the goal essay and thus the “four” level of work decreased. Thus, students reported more hard work with the “goal” essay. This could be a result of more motivation, more interest, or the stronger grade weight of the essay in the class.

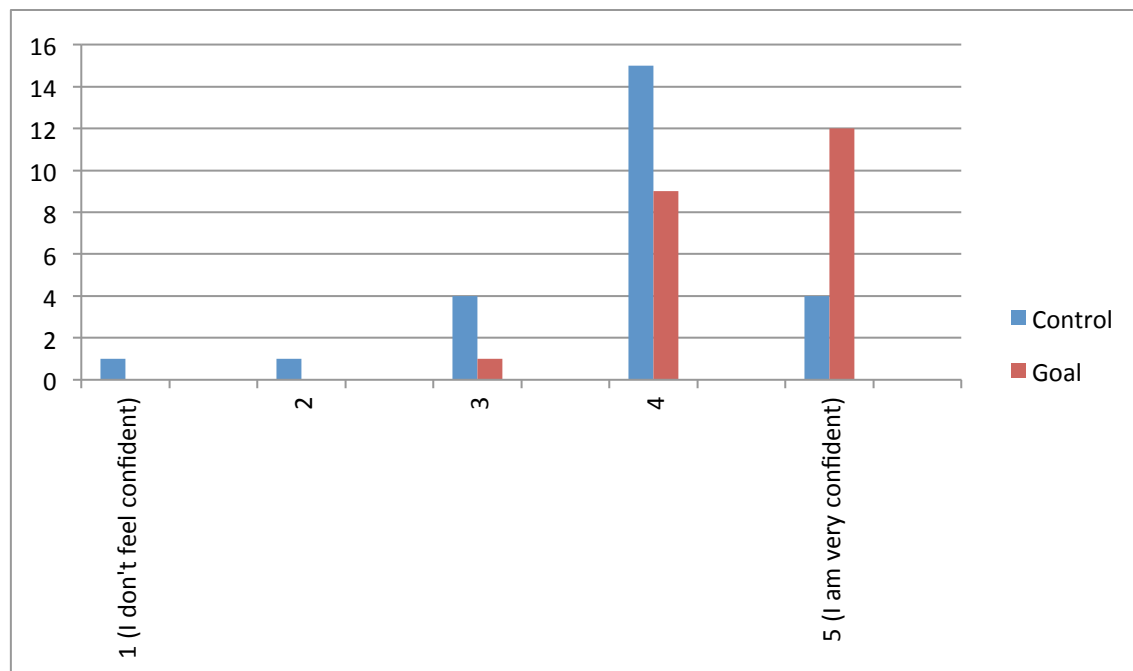
Students also reported their level of confidence on a one to five scale, with the one rating as “I don’t feel confident” and the five level as “I am very confident” (see Figure 6).

The largest shift between the control and goal essays is with the “five” confidence rating, where four students reported a “five” level confidence with the control essay and 12 students reported “five” level confidence for the goal essay. Also noteworthy is the change in the lower ratings between the control and goal essays; six students reported confidence levels of three or lower

with the control essay, and only one student showed a confidence level of three or lower with the goal essay.

Figure 6

Student Level of Confidence in Control and Goal Essays

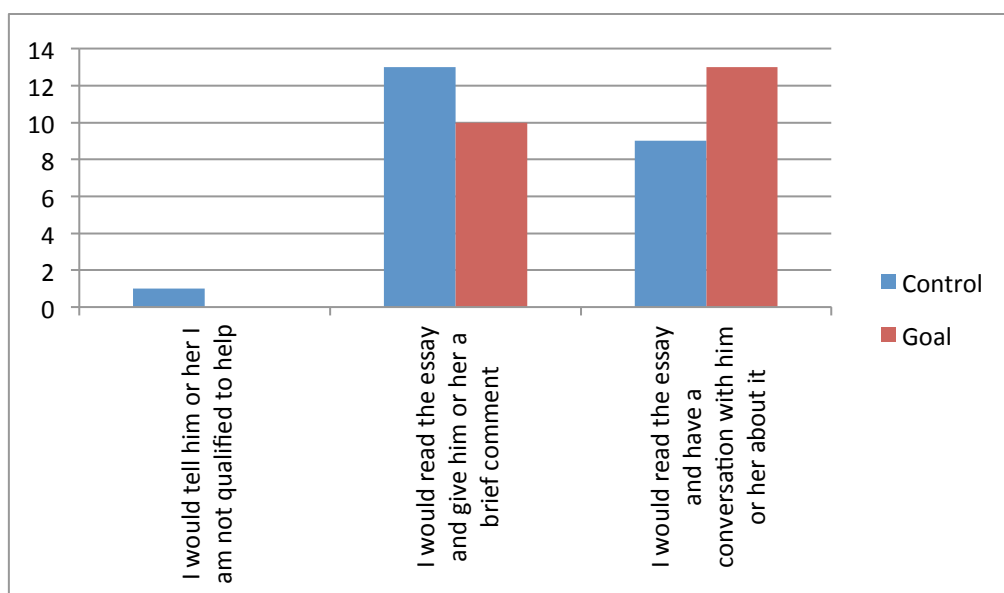


The confidence survey also asked students to answer the question “Imagine another student has asked you for help with an essay he or she has in another class. How would you respond?” (See Figure 7).

Student “level of help” increased slightly after the goal essay, with 13 students reporting they would have a conversation with another student about writing versus only nine students reporting they would have a conversation with a student after the control essay.

Finally, the confidence survey asked students to report on the feelings they associated with a given writing assignment. Figure 8 shows the most common associations students have “when given a large writing assignment.” Students were instructed to circle all of the words that reflected their feelings.

Figure 7

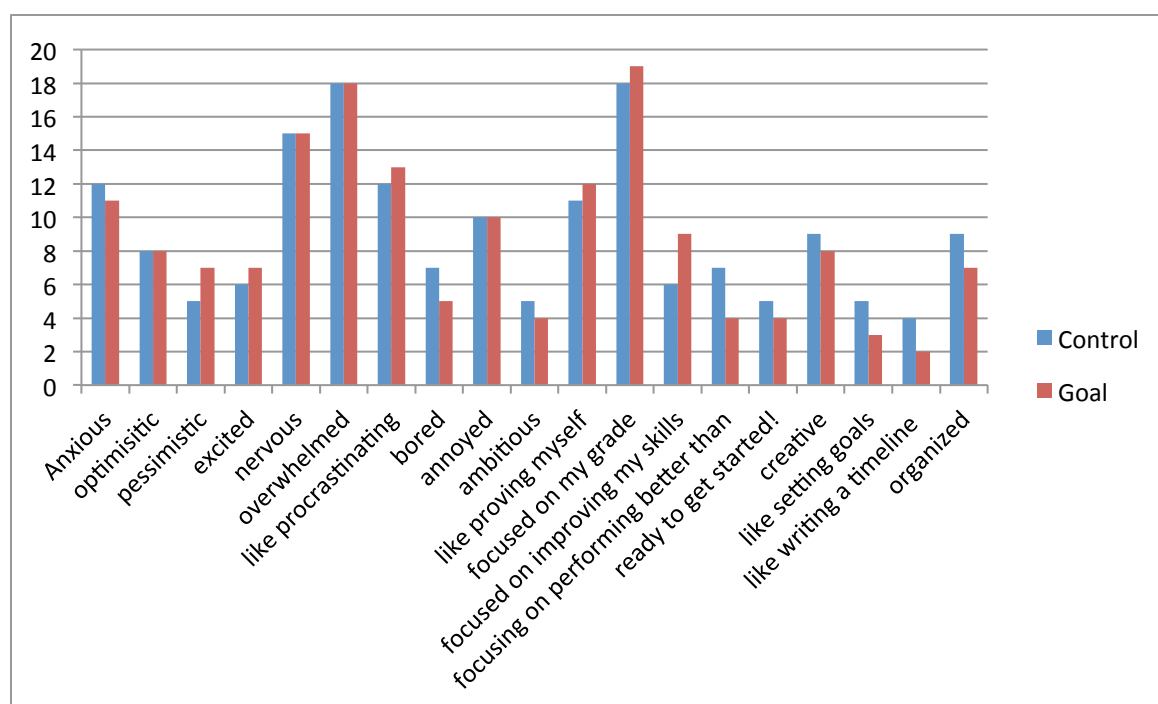
Student Responses to Helping a Peer with an Essay

Finally, the confidence survey asked students to report on the feelings they associated with a given writing assignment. Figure 8 shows the most common associations students have “when given a large writing assignment.” Students were instructed to circle all of the words that reflected their feelings.

Students reported little change in the terms associated with writing between the control and goal essays, with the most common terms as “anxious, nervous, overwhelmed, like procrastinating, like proving myself,” and “focused on my grade.” The least reported terms were “ambitious, ready to get started!, like setting goals,” and “like writing a timeline.” The similarity in overall grades for these essays may be reflected in the similarity of these chosen terms before each essay.

While students worked on the control and goal essays, I kept journals of their behavior during class activities and during workshop (see Appendix H). These journals reflected little change in attitude or class behavior as they worked on each essay. With each essay, most students were excited about an aspect of the work early on; also with both essays students rushed through some of the prewriting activities that were meant to help them outline or prepare for the biggest task.

Figure 8

Words Students Associate with Large Writing Assignments

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As an entire class, students were mixed in their feelings of goals. On the goal reflection (see Appendix K) some students reported that they were glad I had them set goals in their essays because it forced them to focus on specific parts of their writing that they wouldn’t have otherwise

considered. One student reported that she knew her grade went up because of the goals she set. Other students reported that the goals did not help their writing because they were not dedicated to the goal (this reflects the goal-setting literature); one student remarked that his goal of “increased sentence fluency” hindered him because he then neglected other parts of the essay. Most students were able to connect goal-setting to other parts of their lives. Few students reported enough confidence to publish their writing, and about half of the students reported that they would set goals for their writing in the future.

Within the subgroup, the “high” student successfully connected goal-setting to areas of her life outside writing, but she reported that unless the teacher assigned goal setting she would not use it in the writing future. She would feel confident in publishing her writing. The “middle” student connected goal-setting to his life outside of school, but reported that he would “honestly not use it [goal-setting] in the future because I need that urge to do it.” He would consider publishing some essays, but not all. The “low” student connected goal-setting to life, and explained that she “will use goal-setting in the future...it helps me personally have more drive...if I don’t have a certain thing to accomplish, then I usually don’t do well.” She reported that she would be too shy to publish her writing, but noted that her biggest advice for future writers is to “revise, revise, revise!”

On the final course reflections, all but one student reported that they had grown as a writer because of the class. Some students reported on this growth as confidence rather than ability, and many students reported that the number one thing they had learned in the class was to “revise, revise, revise!” (I must use this phrase often; I also refer to revision and workshop to students as “killing their babies,” a phrase that also recurs in student’s final reflections.) In the subgroup, the “high” student missed the final day and did not write a class reflection. The “middle” student reported that the “goal-setting” will stick with him in the future (although his goal reflection reported that he would not use it in writing). He reported that he had not been confident before the class began, but that as he went on that confidence and ability grew. The “low” student reported

that her motivation came from poor scores on the first two essays of the class. After the class, she was most proud of how her writing skills had improved.

Discussion

Based on the results, one could conclude that goal-setting has a slight effect on the effectiveness of peer review, amount of student revision, and level of student confidence in writing. However, because writing is so often subjective and because the nature of the assignments differed, it is nearly impossible to consider these results without many outlying factors.

First of all, the nature of the assignments could strongly affect the confidence students had with the control and goal essays. The control essay, ethnography, was a research-based essay where students reported on a group of people they belonged to and why. On the final course reflections, many students reported that of the five essays in the class, the ethnography was their least favorite assignment; they did not enjoy using MLA citations, nor reporting factual information in the first half of the essay. If a student does not enjoy the task at hand, he is less motivated to complete the work; many students report research as a daunting task and do not look forward to completing research.

On the other hand, many students reported that the goal essay, an advertisement analysis, was their favorite of the term. When I taught this essay, students reported that they enjoyed the information they learned about media literacy and the nature of advertisements because it was “new” to them and “they hadn’t thought of it that way before!” They seemed more ambitious to apply this information to their selected ad and to write about a new idea rather than a report of others’ ideas (through research). Moreover, the ethnography essay was worth 150 points, whereas the advertisement analysis was a weightier 200 points.

We spent less time preparing background knowledge for the control essay rather than the goal essay. We prepared for the control for one week before drafting, including research time. The control essay instruction was primarily instruction in how to research and how to organize; the

instruction for the goal essay was in how advertisements are sexist, how to interpret color and symbolism in advertising, and how to structure an essay that calls for analysis. Before composing the goal essay, we had two weeks of instruction about media literacy. It is worth noting, too, that the “level” of writing with the ad analysis was more difficult than the ethnography. While the ethnography reported facts, the analysis involved higher order thinking as well as writing skills.

Moreover, the nature of the course and of writing in itself seems to call for results similar to those portrayed. The composition course curriculum builds essays off one another with the anticipation that information acquired with one essay prepares the student for the next. For example, the low-level research-driven organization of the ethnography is a stepping stone to the complicated student-driven organization of the advertisement analysis (students organize by what they find for the former, and students chose organizational structure and criteria for the latter). I consider the composition class as a boot camp of sorts. Students write five essays in nine weeks, and at any point in the course, students are in the process of drafting, composing, reviewing, or revising. With such a saturation of writing in such a short amount of time, it seems impossible for students not to experience some growth (unless they neglect to complete any of the work); this would be the equivalent of sending a soldier to boot camp and having him report the same endurance for physical activity when he returned.

Regarding the peer review results, it is possible that students reported stronger scores for their peer review groups because they were more comfortable with their groups (at the time of the goal essay, they had been meeting with the group for the third time) or because they were familiar with the nature of the rubric. Also possible is that the specific goals they had set for themselves *did* help their peers to give stronger comments and *did* leave them with advice that better aided their revision process. This would reflect the strongest increase in the “end” comment category; as I predicted with the research, a goal would give them a stronger starting point of “where to start” with

their revision. Because the subgroup did not address “goals” during their goal peer revision, however, it is difficult to make this assumption for the class.

Regarding amount of revision, the results of the subgroup led me to conclude that the goal-setting was most successful for the “low” level student, but that all students showed some growth with the goal essay (again this may be the nature of the assignments). Also worth noting regarding revision is my strong emphasis on the importance of revision as the instructor. Without the student/teacher conferences and the allotted class time for the “Big, Fat Revision,” I am confident that student revisions would be much less significant. From the beginning of the course, I tell students that revisions are part of their final grades, that it is important they learn to cut their writing whenever necessary, and that they must learn to “kill their babies,” even though writing, as something they create, is difficult to revise for emotional reasons. The revisions for the control essay and the goal essay relied on my comments as well as the guided revision sheet; stronger research would rely solely on peer review and then a revision to measure how effective the peer review had been to aid student revisions. Most students gave their group members high scores, however. Thus, the peer review has some value, if only for the reasons mentioned in the literature to build student confidence, to allow healthy competition between students, and to rely on student need for affirmation among peers. That confidence and competition established from peer review, then, may contribute to stronger final drafts.

Finally, regarding self-efficacy, students’ levels of confidence and effort changed slightly between essays, but it is difficult to determine whether this growth is because of the nature of the assignment, because of the level of experience with the essays (the control essay was written by students when they had three weeks of experience in the course; the goal essay was written by students when they had eight weeks of experience in the course), or because of the student-set goals. Nonetheless, most students were able to relate to the importance of goal-setting and some indicated they would use it as a strategy. It seems as though the reflection on the goals thereafter served as a

metacognitive trigger for students as they wrote, as in *oh yes, I suppose those goals did help me. I didn't realize until now*. The reports on goal-setting and the grades indicate what the literature says about goals: it seems that students who took their goals seriously were the ones who benefitted from them. When students reported that they didn't care about their goals, they also reported that the goals did not help them write.

Should peer review be used in the future? While I mentioned in the research that many teachers find limitations with peer review, I will continue to use this practice. Certainly, some students waste time with peer review, and the recordings of the peer review were especially frustrating given the amount of time students spent discussing versus just reading their essays; however, the students who take advantage of peer review or gain confidence because of peer review strongly benefit. Most definitely, the peer review process warrants further research. Because of what I observed during peer reviews during this essay, I will continue to train students in “good versus bad” comments and in *how* to discuss the work of others. Teachers should not expect students to know how to discuss writing without training them, and the results of this research conclude that that training must be extensive. My class ran through one practice workshop, but more time is needed. Implications are to keep peer review in my classroom, but to add further direction to the practice, and to caution students about efficacy with peer review.

Regarding goal-setting, I can find no reasons based on this research *not* to set goals. While some students reported that goals did not help them improve their writing, some students reported that they did help. Goal-setting takes little time; the reinforcement of those goals takes just a little more class time. Given the likelihood of an increase in confidence and scores (even if it is small), it seems like good practice to encourage students to set goals in class and to write goals that are attainable. I find nothing to lose with goal-setting, and if the “low” student in this research indicates the success of goal-setting, it is worth the classroom time to give every student that opportunity. Further research might determine how to get students to care about goals; because I “forced”

students to set them, it became an assignment for some rather than a means for improving their writing. Even in an unrequired course that students took for the purpose of college preparation, some still struggled to find motivation. In a first day writing assignment, many students wrote that their goal was to “become a better writer” but struggled to break this down into smaller, attainable goals.

It is the nature of writers to grow, and oftentimes in class, I borrow a classic metaphor and tell students that writing is not unlike training for a race. You knot your laces and run every day, even if your pillow is the softest it has ever been. Little sprints, little sweats, can still help you prepare for the long races. The long races are when you feel enduring movements, when you go so long you don’t feel your legs, when you feel as though your body is an engine and your breaths are puffs of steam. Every time you practice, your muscles gain meat. It gets easier as you truck along, and soon you find that you’re training for yourself, just to see how much farther you can run. Practice. Gain confidence. Tape your nipples with tiny Band-Aids. Change your socks. Find a way to look forward to sunrise.

While this research focused on goal-setting and peer revision, I feel the real call for further use in the classroom is simply more writing *practice*. In that, I feel the success I had with these students was mostly due to the intense structure of the composition course. My students were forced to train. Couldn’t more high schools adopt—and require—such writing intensive courses? What could be the implications of students writing this many essays in their high school careers (other than teacher burnout from grading them)? Students need to write more—and not just in the English classroom, and not just literature analysis essays. Students need to read more of their peers’ compositions, students need to revise more. It is in this practice that we will find students with higher workshop skills, stronger self-motivation and revision skills, and—the seemingly most important factor—increased confidence. In this sense, “where to start” is with excessive practice, with an intense training schedule.

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Appendix A *Student Confidence Writing Survey*

Name: _____

Writing Reflection—What You Know and Where You Can Go

1. Explain the experience you've had with academic and creative writing. Be sure to include the various types of writing assignments you've had in the last couple of years.

2. What is the highest grade you've received on a high school writing assignment (in any class)?

3. Do you enjoy academic writing (such as literature or persuasive papers)?
 - a. I do not enjoy academic writing
 - b. I sometimes enjoy academic writing
 - c. I mostly enjoy academic writing

4. Do you enjoy creative writing (such as fiction, creative nonfiction or narrative, or poetry)?
 - a. I do not enjoy creative writing
 - b. I sometimes enjoy creative writing
 - c. I mostly enjoy creative writing

5. Imagine I have just assigned you a 5-paragraph essay where you are to answer *who is your hero and why?* Identify your confidence in completing this essay regarding the following:
 - A. Grammar and Mechanics:
 - a. not confident
 - b. somewhat confident
 - c. very confident

 - B. Sentence Fluency and Word Choice:
 - a. not confident
 - b. somewhat confident
 - c. very confident

 - C. Voice:
 - a. not confident
 - b. somewhat confident
 - c. very confident

D. Organization and Transitions:

- a. not confident
- b. somewhat confident
- c. very confident

E. Content, Ideas, and Development

- a. not confident
- b. somewhat confident
- c. very confident

6. Imagine another student has asked for your help with an essay he or she has in another class.

How would you respond?

- a. I would tell him or her I am not qualified to help
- b. I would read the essay and give him or her a brief comment
- c. I would read the essay and have a conversation with him or her about it

7. How do you feel when you are given a large writing assignment? Circle all that apply:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| a. anxious | i. annoyed | o. ready to get started! |
| b. optimistic | j. ambitious | p. creative |
| c. pessimistic | k. like proving myself | q. like setting goals |
| d. excited | l. focused on my grade | r. like writing a timeline my |
| e. nervous | m. focused on improving
my writing skills | work |
| f. overwhelmed | n. focused on performing
better than others | s. organized |
| g. like procrastinating | | |
| h. bored | | |

8. Overall, how do you feel about your writing skills? Do you have faith in yourself as a writer? Do you believe you can be successful on any given writing assignment? Explain.

Appendix B *Big, Fat Revision, Ethnography and Advertisement Analysis Essays*

Big, Fat Ethnography Revision

You should use today to bring your essay to the next level—you revised last night based on what your group said, and today you should revise that copy even further. Keep in mind that I will collect three versions of your essay; each draft will show significant improvement from the previous. **By the time you're done with this, if you do it right, you'll have read your paper about 3000 times.**

For today and tomorrow, please complete the list below. I will collect 1, 2, and 3 alongside your final draft and expect to see marks on your draft regarding the remaining items:

1. List three possible attention getters. The first sentence tells your reader *hey get excited about this, I'm engaging!* Or it says *well, here's another boring academic essay.* Decide what you want yours to be. (HINT: it should be the former.)
2. You should rewrite your intro. When you wrote it last weekend, you were scared, staring at that blank computer screen, and it was probably the equivalent to lobbing a grapefruit on your keyboard. Use the introduction to take your paper out of the realm of *ethnography paper for English class.* Use it to engage the everyday reader. Imagine your essay amongst the 29 I will read—if I gave a prize for best introduction, would yours win?
3. Please circle the transitions you use in your essay. You should find them between paragraphs and between individual sentences. Look at the “transitions” handout and compare each transition. If it does what it is supposed to do, put a check by it. If it doesn't, circle it and change it. **Rewrite the transition between parts one and two. (It may be a sentence, a couple of sentences, a paragraph—whatever made sense for your paper.)**
4. Double-check that you stay in **3rd person & present tense** (he, she, they) for part one. Double-check that you stay in **1st person & present tense** (I, me, my) for part two.
5. **CROSS OUT THE WORD “YOU” EVERY SINGLE TIME YOU USE IT IN YOUR PAPER.** I hate “you.”
6. **Direct Quotations:** Every time you use a quotation in your paper, you must have a **signal phrase**, or a **lead-in**. This means that you introduce the quotation for your reader. (When you just plop it in, the writing becomes choppy and the reader becomes confused.)

In section one, underline all of the direct quotations that you use. These should be minimal and one quotation should not exceed three full lines of text.

Double underline all of the signal phrases. For each, ask the following:

- If I mention the author (such as “according to”) is it logical? Does the author have enough importance to be mentioned, or should I find a stronger way to introduce the quotation?
- Does the signal phrase/quotation add to my discussion, or did I just pick it to fill space?

- Is there a reason I used a quotation here instead of a paraphrase? Would a paraphrase be more efficient?
7. Compare your paraphrases to the highlighted material in your sources. Double-check that you do not use more than three direct words in a row (which is plagiarism).
 8. Put a rectangle around each of your in-text citations. Double-check they follow the proper format.
 9. Review your Works Cited page. Most of you had at least three errors on the MLA assignment, make sure there are none here.
 10. Review your sources—remember that you must site three sources within your paper and that your Works Cited must include *only* the sources you site (with summary, paraphrase, and quotation).
 11. Give me five dollars. I do not accept checks or money orders.
 12. Put a rhombus around any contractions that you use. Most likely you'll take those out, since this is a formal essay. Even in part two.
 13. Put a squiggle line under all of the **specific examples** that you use in part two that further explain why you define your group as you. For example, your paper should often say *for example*. For example:
 - *Although it is cliché, I believe in the dogma of Catholicism. For example, if I drop a Bible, I kiss it. And I'm certain that in Mejaorie, my Grandmother's rosary really did turn to gold.*
 14. Please review your conclusion. Here you will make profound statements that tie the reader back to the great language and ideas in your introduction.
 - Make sure you restate your thesis/style statement, but most certainly not verbatim.
 - Make sure you recap your discussion, both of the research and of your reflection.
 - Bring the paper 'round back to the introduction.
 15. Pick one paragraph of your paper and read it backwards, starting with the last sentence moving up to the topic sentence. Consider each sentence on its own merit, and then determine if it needs revising. If you find this especially successful, do it for other paragraphs.
 16. Don't forget to proofread! While looking over your paper remember that unclear sentences and fancy words for the sake of being fancy don't offer anything to your reader. You will look pretentious and confusing. Find the balance between academic and creative. (Say smart things, but do it in an accessible, exciting way.)

Nicely done. Now use this information—this power—and go revise for Monday.

Missing information from the Big, Fat Revision will result in 10 points off the final score of your essay. This includes highlighting the changes on the first draft of your essay.

Big Fat Ad Analysis Revision

You should use today and tomorrow to bring your essay to the *next level*. While we will conference to discuss means of improvement, it is your responsibility to take our short discussions and to apply them to your entire paper. You worked hard, but what you have in front of you is simply draft two. There is still quite a bit of work to do. **By the time you're done with this, if you do it right, you'll have read your paper about 3000 times.**

Please complete the list below. Write the responses on your rough draft. Missing any results in a lower overall grade.

1. List three possible attention getters. The first sentence tells your reader *hey get excited about this, I'm engaging!* Or it says *well, here's another boring academic essay*. Your attention getter should be equally as interesting as your ad itself. Imagine it in a *magazine* of papers. What makes me buy yours?
2. When you wrote your intro last weekend, you were scared, staring at that blank computer screen, and it was probably the equivalent to lobbing a grapefruit on your keyboard. Use the introduction to take your paper out of the realm of *paper for English class*. Use it to engage the everyday reader. **Underline the sentence in your intro where you link the "larger idea" of the paper to the "smaller idea" of the product/ad.** Does it flow, logically? Or does the topic of your product/ad jump out of nowhere?
3. Put a square around your thesis statement. Is it "ad specific"? Yes / No Does it address what you will discuss in all sections of your essay, including how your ad is persuasive *as well as* how advertising can have an effect on society? Yes / No
4. Please underline the transitions you use in your essay. You should find them between paragraphs and between individual sentences. Look at the "transitions" handout and compare each transition. If it does what it is supposed to do, put a check by it. If it doesn't, circle it and change it.
5. Double-check your essay for phrases like *does a really good job*. You are not critiquing the ad, but rather analyzing.
6. Circle all of your verbs. *All of them*. Make sure they are consistently in present tense, and if they are not, change them. (Because the ad "exists" in the moment, the essay should be in present tense.)
7. Review your paper for point of view. Cross out any slips into first person, such as "I." Stay in third person.
8. **CROSS OUT THE WORD "YOU" EVERY SINGLE TIME YOU USE IT IN YOUR PAPER. I hate "you." Cross out any uses of "we," or "our," too.**
9. Write your Work Cited page. You should have one source on that page, your ad. Here is the format, generally:

Advertisement: Name the product or company being advertised, followed by the word "Advertisement." Give publication information for the source in which the advertisement appears.

Truth by Calvin Klein. Advertisement. *Vogue* Dec. 2000: 95–98. Print.

Arbella Insurance. Advertisement. *Boston.com*. NY Times, n.d. Web. 3 June 2009.

For more information, visit: <http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/> *Note: No need for in-text citations in this essay.

10. Compliment the person sitting next to you on their shirt.
11. Fix the pronoun agreement error in the above sentence.
12. Put a rhombus around any contractions that you use. Most likely you'll take those out, since this is a formal essay.
13. Put a squiggle line under all of the **ANALYSIS** that you use in your body paragraphs. Squiggle marks should constitute a large portion of these paragraphs.
 - Is anything under a squiggle mark *actually* a summary?
 - If so, change it.
 - Does this analysis tie back to the main idea of my thesis statement?
14. Please review your conclusion. Here you will make profound statements that tie the reader back to the great language and ideas in your introduction.
 - a. Make sure you restate your thesis statement, but most certainly not verbatim.
 - b. Make sure you recap your argument about the ad and the greater meaning of your argument.
 - c. Bring the paper 'round back to the introduction.
15. Pick one paragraph of your paper and read it backwards, starting with the last sentence moving up to the topic sentence. Consider each sentence on its own merit, and then determine if it needs revising. If you find this especially successful, do it for other paragraphs.
16. Don't forget to proofread! While looking over your paper remember that unclear sentences and fancy words for the sake of being fancy don't offer anything to your reader. You will look pretentious and confusing. Find the balance between academic and creative.
17. Write your goal here:
18. Now, review your paper just based on what you set as your goal. Below, tell me *how* you reviewed to check for your goal, and what, in general, you changed in your paper so you could *meet* your goal.

Appendix C *Effective and Ineffective Peer Review Comments*

Appendix D *Peer Review Assessment Rubric*

Peer Responses	Low (0—1)	Middle (2—3)	High (4—5)	Total
1. This reviewer helped me correct grammatical problems in my essay. (Examples can include: subject-verb agreement, comma correction, fragments, etc.)	There were little to no comments about what to fix grammatically, or there were <i>incorrect</i> comments about what to fix grammatically.	There were a fair amount of comments about how to fix my paper grammatically, and some of those comments went beyond just circling errors and included ideas about how to specifically fix or rewrite sentences.	There were a number of marks on my paper about what should be fixed grammatically. Most of those comments were beyond just circling errors and included ideas about how to specifically fix or rewrite sentences. Possibly, the peer told me <i>why</i> the mistakes were made so I could avoid them in the future.	___/5
2. This reviewer wrote positive comments on my essay.	The review had no positive marks or had positive marks such as <i>good job</i> or <i>I like this</i> or 😊 that seemed artificial or didn't explain <i>why</i> the comment was made.	The review had a fair amount of positive comments, and some of those comments went beyond artificial positive remarks and explained specifically what was working in my essay.	Most of the positive comments written on my essay were beyond artificial remarks, and the reviewer explained specifically what was working in my essay. The comments were genuine and meant to help revision instead of merely flatter. The comments will help me get started in revision of my essay.	___/5
3. This reviewer wrote constructive comments on my essay.	The review had no constructive marks or had constructive marks such as <i>doesn't make sense</i> but didn't explain <i>why</i> the comment was made.	The review had a fair amount of constructive comments, and some of those comments went beyond marks or circles and explained <i>specifically</i> about my essay should be considered during revision.	Most of the constructive comments written on my essay were beyond simple remarks and the reviewer explained specifically what and how I should consider revising in my essay. I understand the reviewer's perception because he or she explained it well.	___/5
4. This reviewer had specific comments that helped me narrow the focus of revision on my essay.	The review had no comments or the comments were across the board—it was difficult to understand what the reviewer thought needed revision.	The review had focused, specific comments that reflected areas of my writing that needed work. It was somewhat clear what the reviewer thought needed revision.	The review had a number of well-explained comments, and those comments helped me understand what aspects of my writing needed the most work. The reviewer remarked on which of the 6+1 traits needed work, and I feel confident that these comments will be a starting point for my revision.	___/5
5. This reviewer gave me a strong end comment.	There was no end comment, or the end comment was artificial and gave a phrase like <i>good job!</i>	The comment was a couple of sentences long and gave me somewhat of an idea to start my revision; the comment helped me start to think about my essay on a global level. I have somewhat an idea of where to start my revision.	The end comment was a small paragraph that said what was working in the essay and what needed work; the suggestions for revision were specific and clear. The comment had a narrow focus. I feel confident I will write a stronger essay because of the specificity of this comment, and I know exactly where to start my revision.	___/5
6. This reviewer seemed to have knowledge when revising my essay.	I don't feel that this reviewer put any thought or time into helping me revise.	This reviewer had some helpful comments, and he or she put a fair amount of time into helping me start the revision of my essay.	This reviewer went above and beyond a review of my essay, and it is obvious he or she put a significant amount of time and thought into my work. It is obvious he or she is knowledgeable about writing and cares about our work.	___/5
Notes or comments:				Total: ___/30

Appendix E *Audio Observations*

Constructive Comments:

Reflection:

Under-Developed Comments:

Reflection:

Off-Task Comments:

Reflection:

8. Rate you feel about your confidence in your writing on this essay:

I don't feel confident in my work 1 2 3 4 5 **I am very confident in my work**

Complete the table below by place an X in the correct box. Please choose only one answer.

Review Questions	A I spent no time considering it	B I read through my essay at least once checking for it	C I read through my essay at least once for it and made <i>minor</i> revisions	D I read through my essay at least once for it and made <i>major</i> revisions
9. Explain the effort you put into proofreading your essay (<i>fixing grammatical errors such as commas, subject-verb agreement, tense, and sentence fragments</i>).				
10. Explain the effort you put in to reading for sentence fluency or word choice in your essay (using effective verbs, varying sentence lengths and structures).				
11. Explain the effort you put into reading for voice in your essay (passive voice, audience, and the way you write this essay as an honest, relatable writer).				
12. Explain your approach for revising your thesis and topic sentences in this essay.				
13. Explain the effort you put into the organization and transitions of your essay.				
14. Explain the effort you put into fixing content, ideas, and development in your essay (clarifying and expanding on details)?				

15. What grade do you think you deserved on this essay *before* your revision?

- a. A
- b. B
- c. C
- d. D or lower

16. What grade do you think you deserved on this essay *after* your revision?

- a. A
- b. B
- c. C
- d. D or lower

17. What are your suggestions for the teacher when she teaches your next essay?

Thanks for your work!

Appendix G *Subgroup Progress***Notes on student progress and writing during control essay:**

	Notes on Student Revision (Amount of revision, strengths, and weaknesses)
Student #1 (High)	
Student #2 (Mod)	
Student #3 (Low)	

Notes on student progress and writing during goal essay:

	Notes on Student Revision (Amount of revision, strengths, and weaknesses)
Student #1 (High)	Student-identified Goals:
	Did student meet goals/how does revision compare to control?
Student #2 (Mod)	Student-identified Goals:
	Did student meet goals/how does revision compare to control?
Student #3 (Low)	Student-Identified Goals:
	Did student meet goals/how does revision compare to control?

Appendix H *Class Attitudes during Writing Assignments***Journal, Attitudes in Class, Updated Weekly Before and After Control Essay**

Noted Positive Behaviors:	Noted Negative Behaviors:
Reflections on Positive Behavior:	Reflections on Negative Behavior:

Journal, Attitudes in Class, Updated Weekly During and After Goal Essay

Noted Positive Behaviors:	Noted Negative Behaviors:
Reflections on Positive Behavior:	Reflections on Negative Behavior:

Appendix J *Student Goal Sheets*

Composition Goal-Setting Sheet

1. List the strengths of your first couple of essays in the class. If it helps, you may identify those strengths with the 6 traits of writing. Be specific; write more than just “organization.” (E.g. *what about* organization was a strength?)

2. List the areas of needed improvement in your first couple of essays in the class. If it helps, you may identify those areas with the 6 traits of writing. Be specific; write more than just “organization.” (E.g. *what about* organization needs work?)

3. Research shows that goal-setting can be an effective tool in improving writing. Because it is a multifaceted task that at times is overwhelming, identifying a specific goal will allow you to hone in on one aspect of your writing and to measure growth in that area.

Given your responses to questions #1 and #2, what *specific* goal would you like to set for the Ad Analysis essay?

Your goal should have the following traits:

- it should be specific;
- it should be about a component of your writing, something that your peer review group will be able to respond to;
- it should *not* be a letter grade, i.e., my goal is to get an *A*;
- it should be reachable.

My goal for the next essay is to:

I plan to achieve this goal by doing the following:

Appendix K *Student Self-Reflective Assignment*

Reflective Student-Assessment and Goal Transfer Skills (The responses of the subgroup will be discussed)

Name: _____

Goal Reflection

Please respond in a full paragraph:

- How will goal setting translate into your life beyond writing?
- If the teacher doesn't assign goal-setting, will you use it in future writing?
- If someone asked you for advice as a writer, what would you say?
- Would you ever feel comfortable publishing your writing?
- Any final thoughts on your progress (or lack thereof) regarding your writing goals?