

# Structured Writing Instruction and Writing Checklist Aid Learners with Dyslexia in Writing: A Case Study

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DYSLEXIA ASSOCIATION  
OF SINGAPORE  
HELPING DYSLEXIC PEOPLE ACHIEVE

### Purpose of Research

A case study was conducted to explore whether the use of **structured writing instruction** and **student-friendly writing checklist** could lead to an improvement in narrative writing skills of learners with dyslexia.

### Aim of Research

To determine whether the use of **explicit instruction**, in the form of a **writing checklist**, will **improve learners' narrative writing skills** and **increase** their motivation.

### Participants

10 participants with Dyslexia from Grades 4 to 6 (10 to 12 years old)

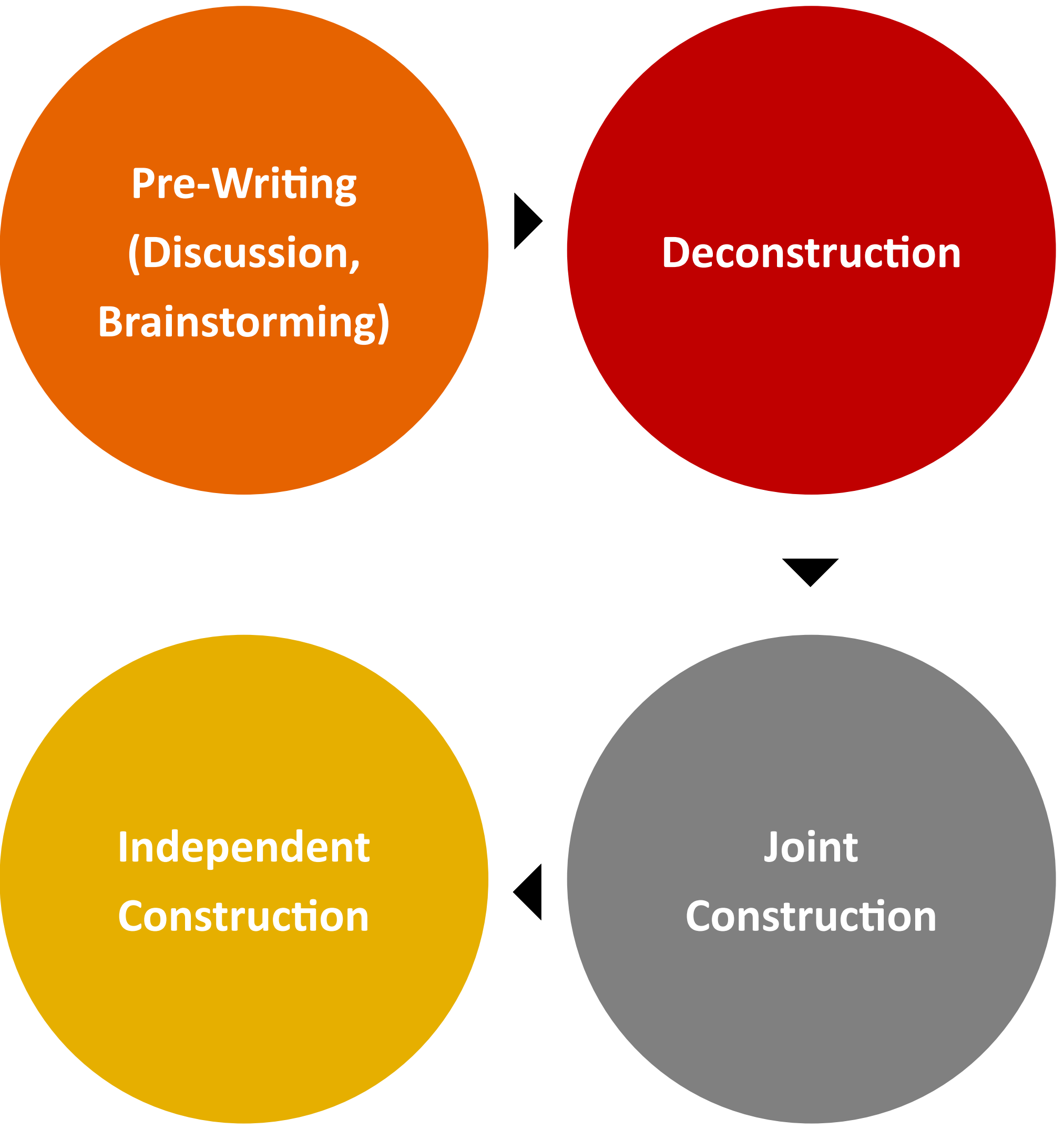
**Profiles:** Learners who are weak in both functional literacy skills (Reading, Spelling) and advanced literacy skills (Writing and Reading Comprehension). These learners need structured, sequential and cumulative instructions in order for them to follow and retain the skills/concepts taught. Thus, over-learning and reinforcement are central to aid them in their learning.

### Writing Methodology

The learners at the Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS) are taught writing based on the **process-genre approach** (Badger & White, 2000) to ensure that both the linguistic skills and knowledge essential in writing are emphasised in class.

Additionally, **an adaptation of the 6+1 Trait Writing®** (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2004) was added to the writing instruction to create a platform for structured feedback and to make writing more focused and meaningful for the learners.

### Writing Stages (Badger & White, 2000)



### Present Limitations

- May not always get 100% attendance rate
- Intervention was only for 2 hours per week
- The profiles of participants selected for the research may not be homogenous despite fitting the selection requirements
- Independence level, amount of guidance and scaffoldings

### Future Research

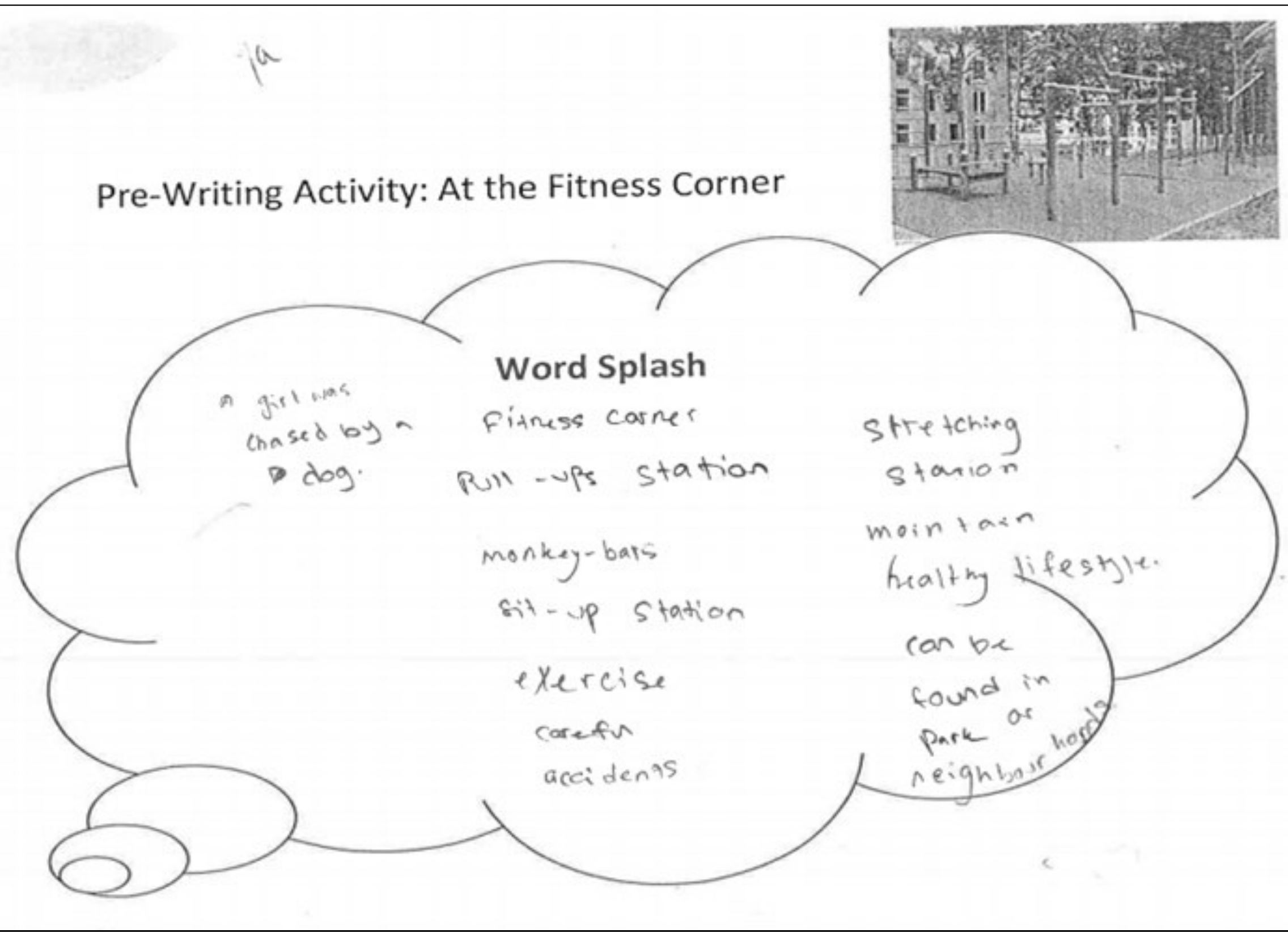
**Overall Aim:** To encourage participants to work without the checklist and to make them more independent, confident and aware of what to look out for in their writing.

The research will continue for another 3 school terms. Participants will be required to take a mid-year writing test (end Term 2). A post writing test will be conducted towards the end of the research.

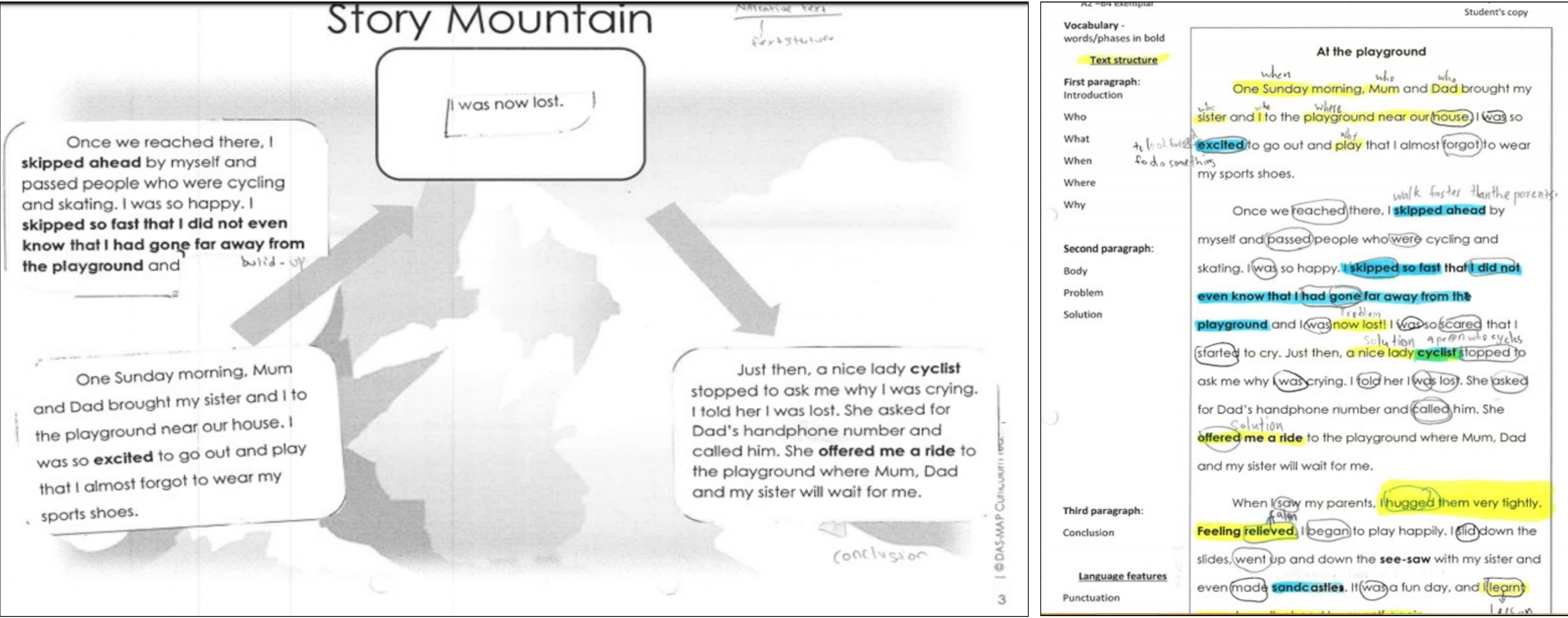
Interviews with the participants and their parents will be conducted to collect richer data. Information from the motivation surveys will be further analysed to determine if there has been an increase in the participants' motivation levels.

### A Sample of a Participant's Work - Writing Stages (Cycle 1)

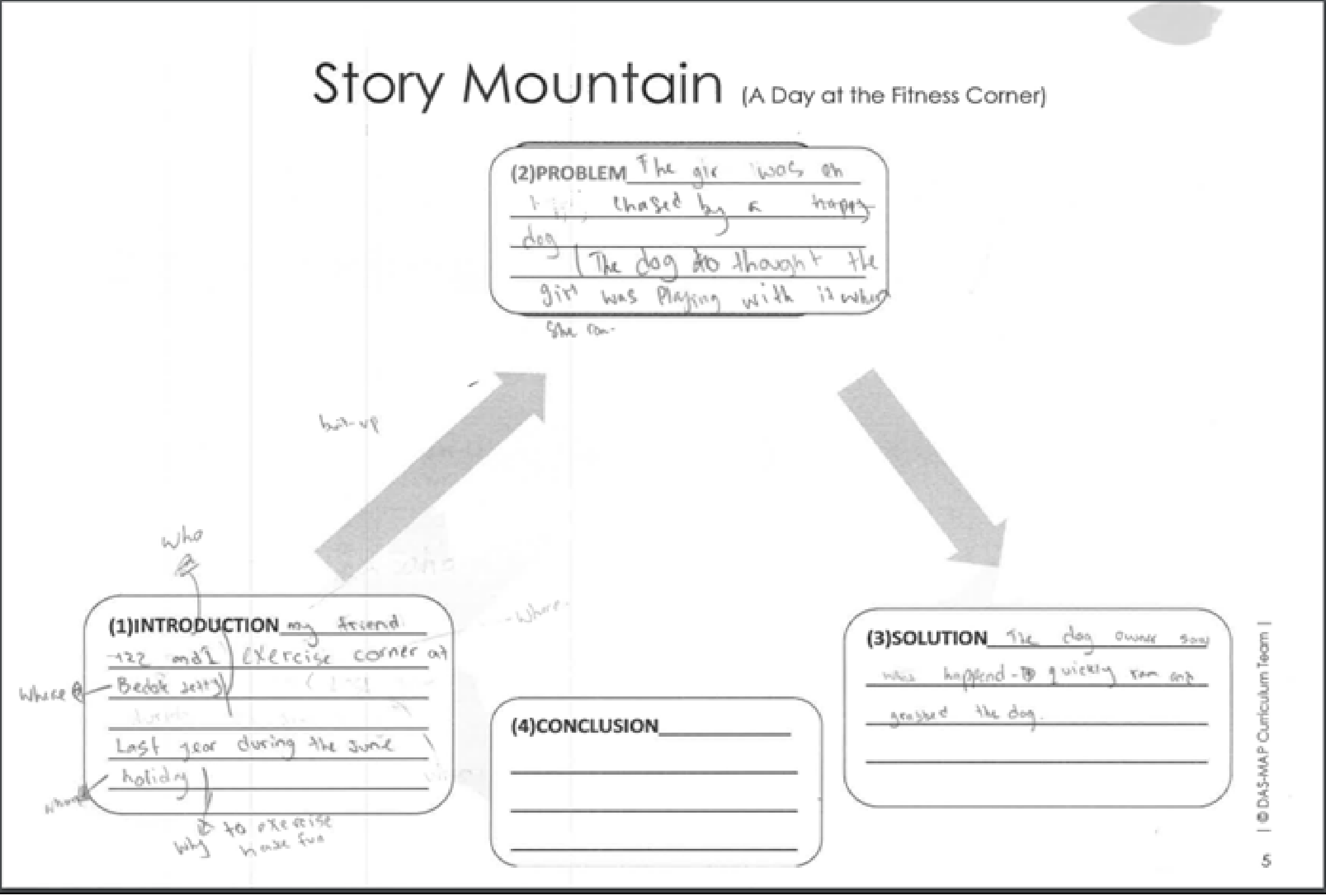
#### Pre-writing Activity



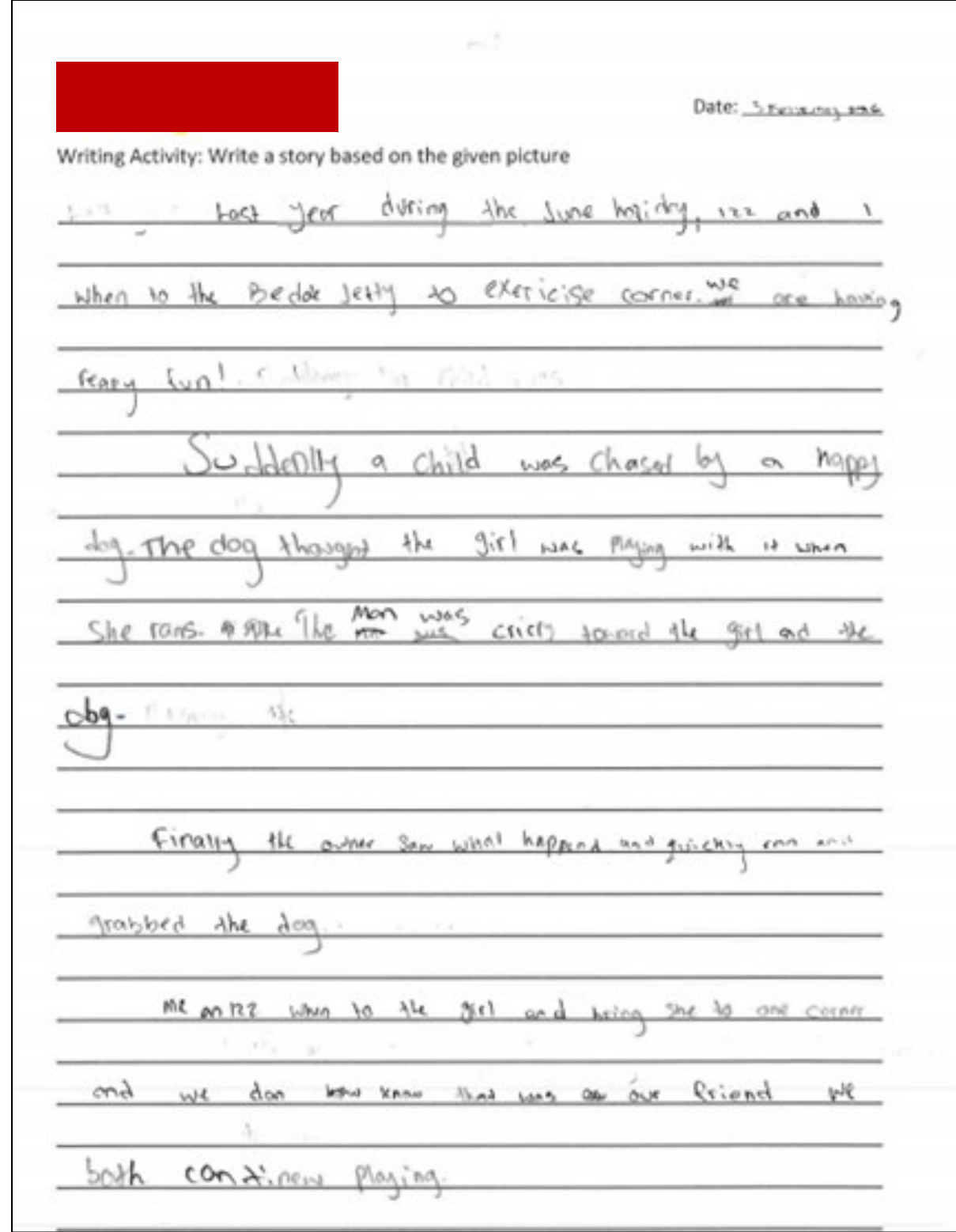
#### Deconstruction Stage - Writing exemplar



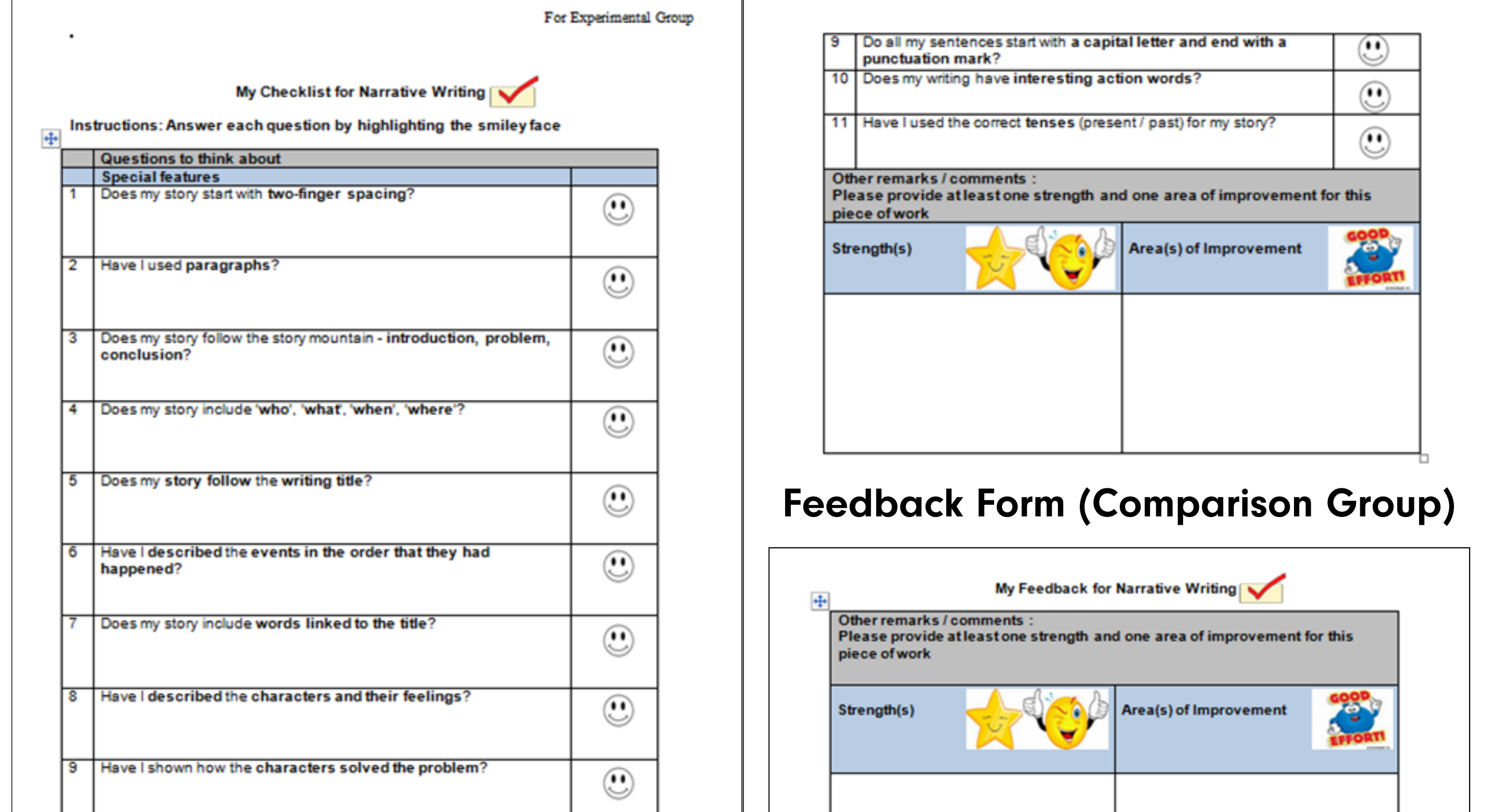
#### Joint Construction Stage



#### Independent Writing



#### Student-friendly Writing Checklist (Experimental Group)



### Motivation Survey

<b>Section A: ATTITUDE TOWARDS WRITING</b> Circle your answers. Here is an example:	<b>Section B: WRITING PROCESS</b> For each question, tick one of the boxes. Here is an example:	<b>Section C: HABITS/ANSWER QUESTIONS/OPEN ENDS</b> Write your answers on the lines provided.
1. I like to write using a pencil like a pen.	5. All the time I can come up with ideas fast and independently.	16. I can able to spot my errors (spelling, tense, etc) on my own after checking through my work.
2. I like to show my writing through drawings.	6. I like to know the writing topic. I am able to come up with ideas fast and independently.	17. I know what to look out for (spelling, tense, punctuation etc) whenever I check through my work.
3. I enjoy writing compositions.	7. I like to know the writing topic. I am able to come up with the vocabulary words to use fast and independently.	18. I can able to correct my sentences/paragraphs to make sure they make sense.
4. Writing is hard.	8. I like to know the writing topic. I am able to come up with the vocabulary words to use fast and independently.	19. I can able to correct my sentences/paragraphs to make sure they make sense.
5. I enjoy writing in my spare time.	9. I like to know the writing topic. I am able to come up with the vocabulary words to use fast and independently.	20. I can able to correct my sentences/paragraphs to make sure they make sense.
6. I wish I have more time to do my writing tasks in school.	10. I like to know the writing topic. I am able to come up with the vocabulary words to use fast and independently.	21. I can able to correct my sentences/paragraphs to make sure they make sense.
7. I enjoy my writing lessons at the DAS.	11. I like to know the writing topic. I am able to come up with the vocabulary words to use fast and independently.	22. I can able to correct my sentences/paragraphs to make sure they make sense.
8. I enjoy my writing compositions.	12. I like to know the writing topic. I am able to come up with the vocabulary words to use fast and independently.	23. I can able to correct my sentences/paragraphs to make sure they make sense.
9. I am good at writing compositions.	13. I like to know the writing topic. I am able to come up with the vocabulary words to use fast and independently.	24. I can able to correct my sentences/paragraphs to make sure they make sense.

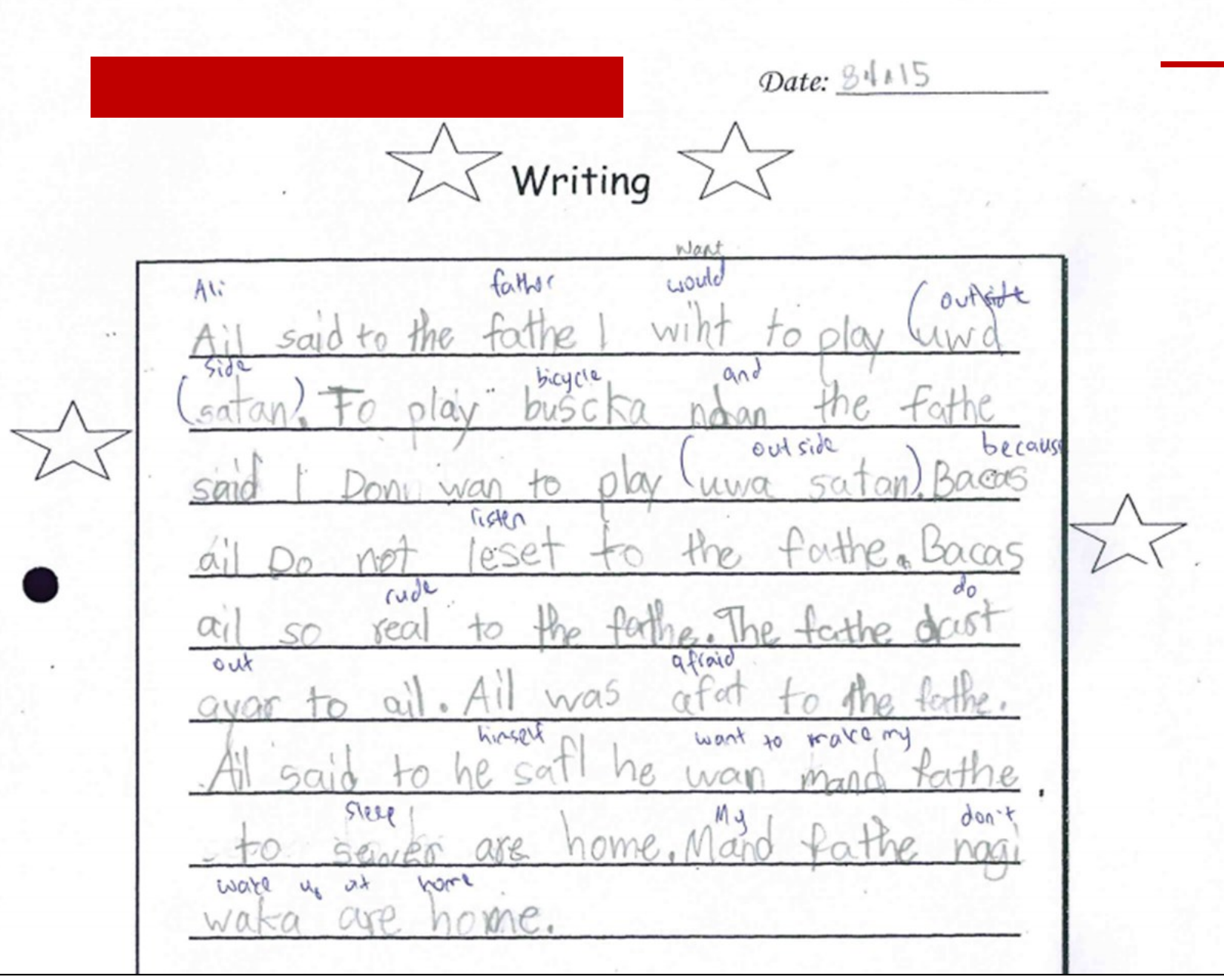
### Research Material

#### Writing Rubrics (An adaptation of the 6+1 Trait Writing®)

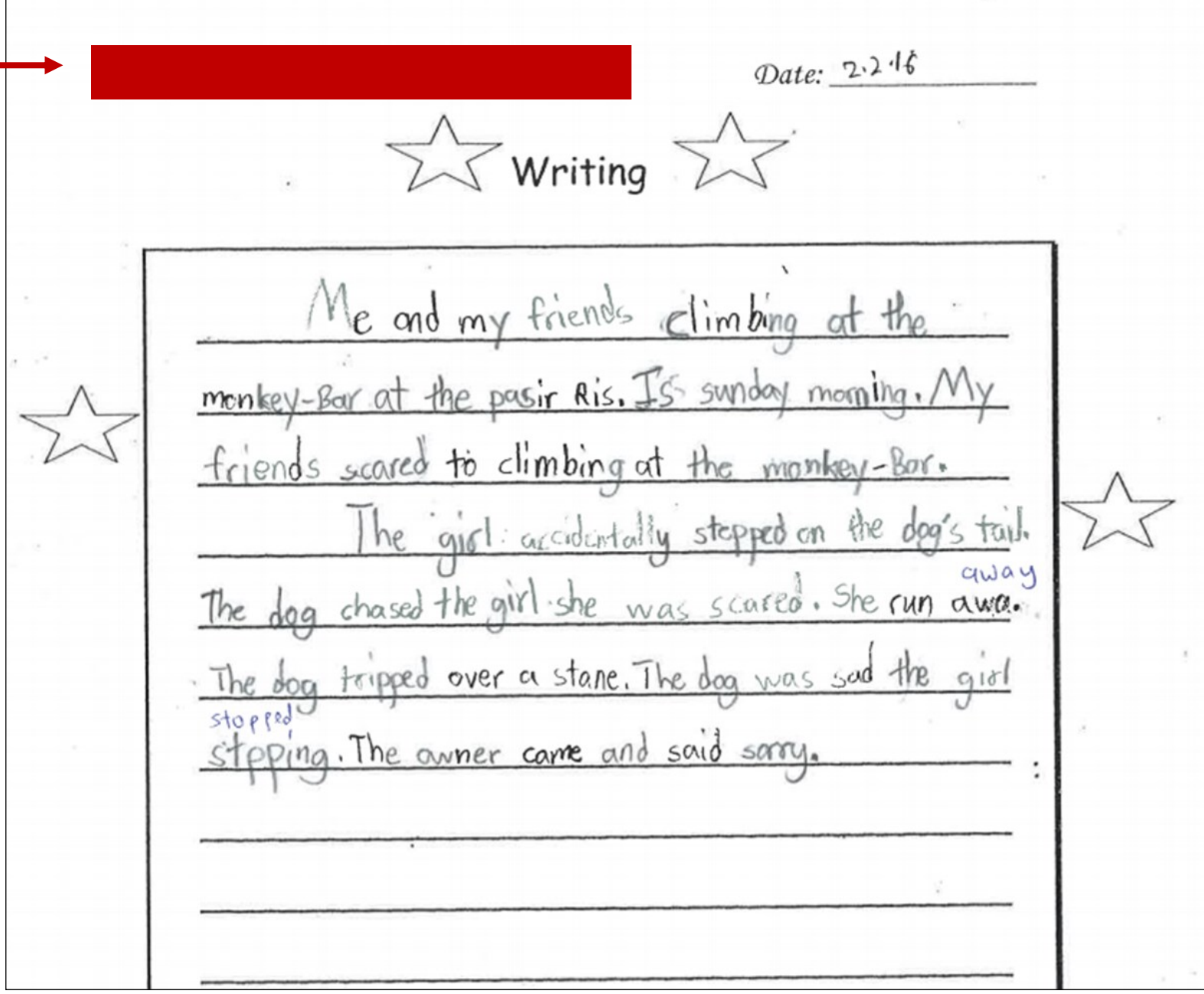
Criteria		Rubrics for Narrative Writing				
		4	3	2	1	0
Ideas	Introduction	Setting, characters and time are clearly stated. All ideas are relevant to the story. Evidence of HJ is seen and expanded sufficiently. Reader's attention is effectively captured.	Setting, characters and time are clearly stated. 75% of the ideas are relevant to the story. Evidence of HJ is seen but not sufficiently expanded.	Most of the following: setting, characters, time. 50% of the ideas are relevant to the story. An attempt to include a problem.	Only one of the following: setting, characters, time. 25% of the ideas are relevant to the story. Absence of a problem.	Absence of setting, characters, and time. Ideas are not relevant to the story. Absence of a problem.
	Problem	All ideas are relevant to the story. Characters and settings are well expanded. 75% of the ideas are relevant to the story. The presence of a problem is evidently seen but not well-developed.	Problem is resolved, but not well-developed. 75% of the ideas are relevant to the story. Conclusion provides a feeling of satisfied closure.	An attempt to resolve the problem. 50% of the ideas are relevant to the story. Conclusion is rather abrupt.	Absence of a problem. 25% of the ideas are relevant to the story. Conclusion is rather abrupt.	Ideas are not relevant to the story. Absence of a problem and conclusion.
	Conclusion	All ideas are relevant to the story. Problem is resolved and well-developed. Conclusion provides a feeling of satisfied closure.	Problem is resolved, but not well-developed. 75% of the ideas are relevant to the story. Conclusion provides a feeling of satisfied closure.	An attempt to resolve the problem. 50% of the ideas are relevant to the story. Conclusion is rather abrupt.	Absence of a problem. 25% of the ideas are relevant to the story. Conclusion is rather abrupt.	Ideas are not relevant to the story. Absence of a problem and conclusion.
Organization	Structure	The structure shows the main idea. Ideas are presented logically and sequentially. Transitions are smooth and varied. An ending lead and a developed ending are present. Formal reader's attention.	Structure is clear, clearly present and complete in a predictable manner. Transitions are varied. Ideas are presented logically and sequentially. A beginning, middle, and concluding sentence are present. Formal is accurate.	Structure is clearly present in a predictable manner. Transitions are simple and repetitive (and, then, and). A beginning, middle, and concluding sentence are present. Formal is accurate.	Ideas are written logically, but not sequentially. Transitions are simple and accurate (and, then, and). A beginning and middle are present - no end. Formal is generally accurate.	Structure not evident or in random order. Writing shows attempt to order and sequence. Absence of transitions and sequencing. A beginning is attempted - but no ending. Formatting is emerging (left-right orientation, text alignment, spacing).
	Voice	The character's feelings are well conveyed. Usage of words/phrases makes the story original. Engages the audience.	The character's feelings are well conveyed. Usage of words/phrases makes the story original. Engages the audience.	Headings are present in the writing with words/phrases. Attempts to engage the audience.	A general feeling is expressed in a few words/phrases. Attempts to engage the audience.	No feeling is expressed in words and/or pictures. No awareness of the audience.
Word Choice	Word selection	Word selection is effective in creating an image in the reader's mind through <b>active</b> use of words. Uses <b>accurate</b> verbs, precise nouns, appropriate adjectives and phrases.	Word selection is <b>appropriate</b> in creating an image in the reader's mind. Uses <b>simple</b> verbs, nouns, adjectives and phrases.	Word selection is <b>adequate</b> in creating an image in the reader's mind. Uses <b>simple</b> verbs, nouns, adjectives and phrases. May repeat use of common words / phrases.	Written words/phrases convey topic. Some simple words/phrases. Uses <b>simple</b> verbs, nouns, adjectives and phrases. May repeat use of common words / phrases.	Written words are of the emergent level. Words are difficult to decode. Used simple verbs, nouns, adjectives and phrases which not all are relevant. Repeats common words/phrases.
	Sentence Fluency	75% of sentences are complete. Sentence types show variation. <b>Complexity</b> of sentence complexity is demonstrated. Connectives are varied and helps the development of the story.	75% of sentences are complete. Sentence types show variation. <b>Complexity</b> of sentence complexity is demonstrated. Connectives are varied.	50% of sentences are complete. Sentence types show <b>minimal</b> variation. Sentences are <b>simple</b> .	25% of sentences are complete. Sentences are <b>simple</b> and repetitive in structure. Connective transitions like 'and' and 'then' are present and repetitive.	Sentences are <b>incomplete</b> or <b>incoherent</b> .
Conventions	Capitalization	75% accuracy in the use of punctuation. 75% accuracy in the use of capital letters. Clear paragraphing. 75% accuracy in tenses. 75% grade level words spell correctly. Consistent indentation.	75% accuracy in the use of punctuation. 75% accuracy in the use of capital letters. Clear paragraphing. 75% accuracy in tenses. 75% grade level words spell correctly. Indentation.	50% accuracy in the use of punctuation. 50% accuracy in the use of capital letters. <b>Some attempt</b> at paragraphing but lacks coherence. 50% accuracy in tenses. 50% grade level words spell mostly correctly.	25% accuracy in the use of punctuation. 25% accuracy in the use of capital letters. <b>No attempt</b> at paragraphing and lacks coherence. 25% accuracy in tenses. 25% grade level words spell correctly. Phonetic spelling acceptable.	10% accuracy in the use of punctuation. 10% accuracy in the use of capital letters. <b>No attempt</b> at paragraphing. 10% accuracy in tenses. 10% grade level words spell correctly. Phonetic spelling.
	Spelling	75% accuracy in the use of punctuation. 75% accuracy in the use of capital letters. Clear paragraphing. 75% accuracy in tenses. 75% grade level words spell correctly. Consistent indentation.	75% accuracy in the use of punctuation. 75% accuracy in the use of capital letters. Clear paragraphing. 75% accuracy in tenses. 75% grade level words spell correctly. Indentation.	50% accuracy in the use of punctuation. 50% accuracy in the use of capital letters. <b>Some attempt</b> at paragraphing but lacks coherence. 50% accuracy in tenses. 50% grade level words spell mostly correctly.	25% accuracy in the use of punctuation. 25% accuracy in the use of capital letters. <b>No attempt</b> at paragraphing and lacks coherence. 25% accuracy in tenses. 25% grade level words spell correctly. Phonetic spelling acceptable.	10% accuracy in the use of punctuation. 10% accuracy in the use of capital letters. <b>No attempt</b> at paragraphing. 10% accuracy in tenses. 10% grade level words spell correctly. Phonetic spelling.

### Sample of Participants' Work - Writing Progress (Cycle 1)

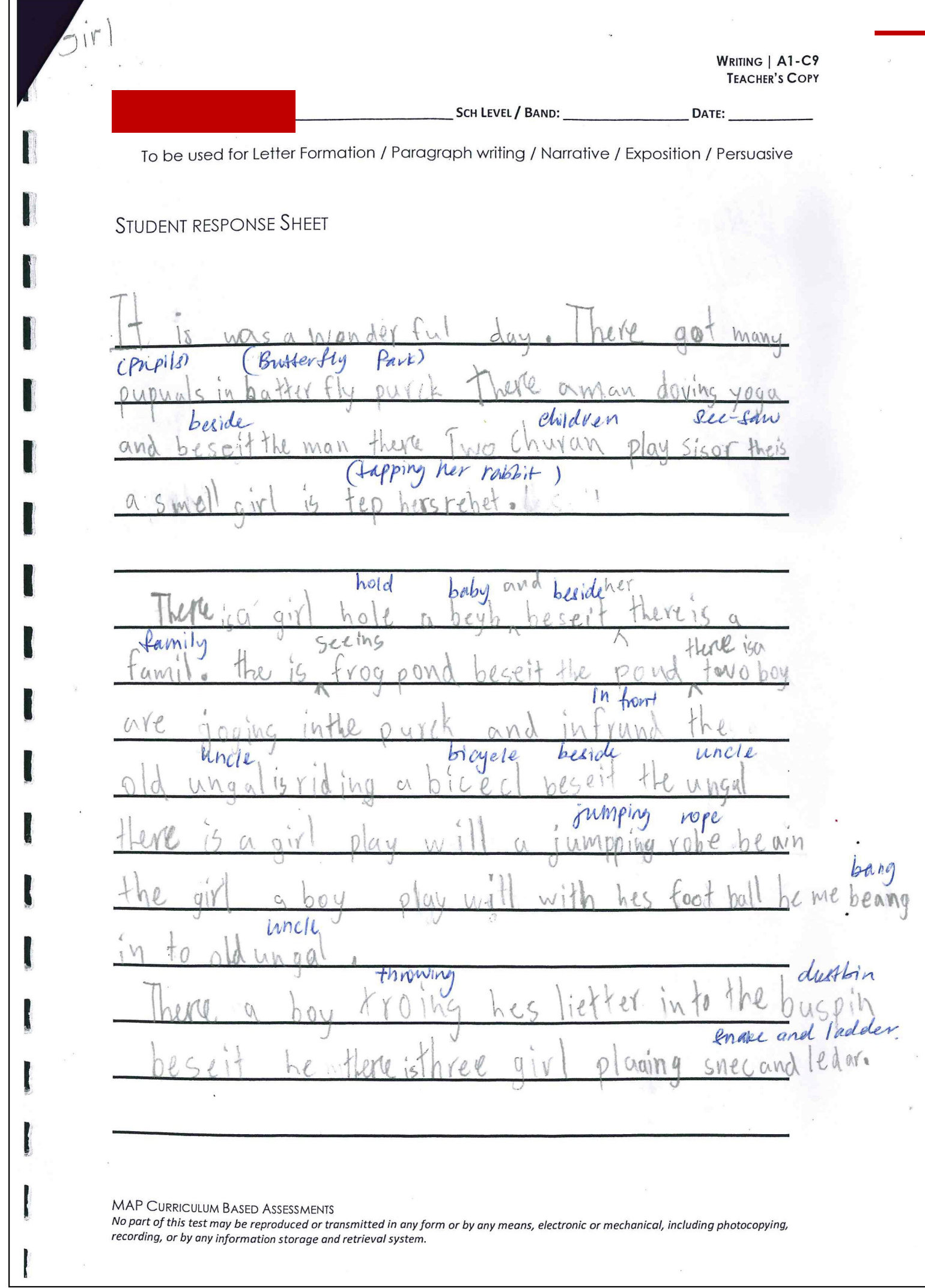
#### Pre-test (Student 1)



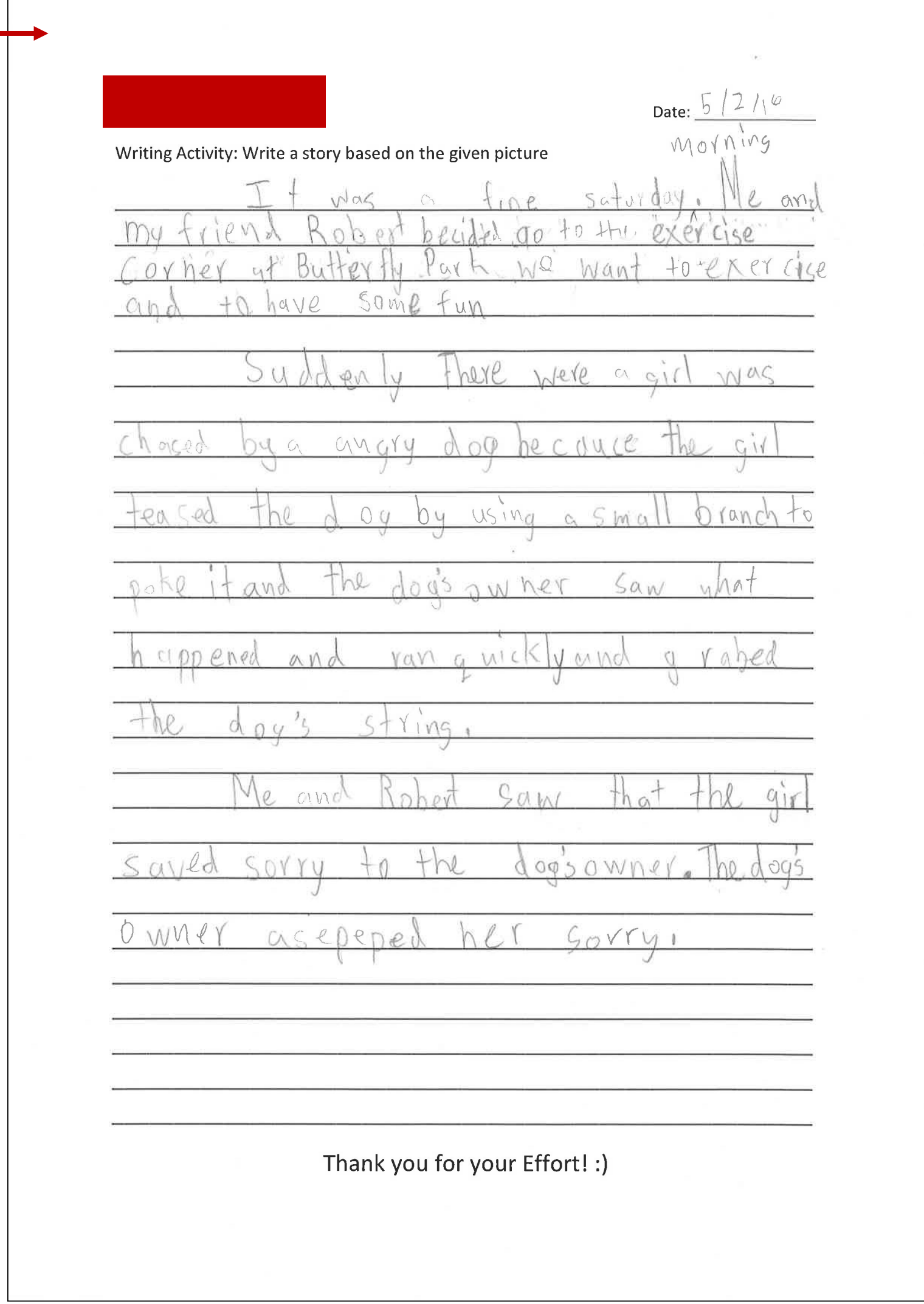
#### Mini Post-test (Student 1)



#### Pre-test (Student 2)



#### Mini Post-test (Student 2)



### References

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