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**A Study of the Effects of Explicit Story Structure Instruction on Narrative
Writing in the Upper Primary School**

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Abstract

Many New Zealand middle and upper primary students, struggle with writing. This is a challenge, as research shows a continuing downward trend in writing standards as children move across the grades. Therefore, it is helpful to know whether children can write better narratives after appropriate instruction so that writing achievement can be improved. Previous research has found that teaching story structure in a very explicit way improves narrative writing quality and quantity but few studies have been done in New Zealand classrooms. Hence the present study. Participants were initially 50 children from a country school and a city school. The study started with 50 children from two classrooms in schools, one in the country and one in the city. Of these, 41 children completed all the assessments, 18 in the country school and 23 children in the city school. Initial data from the schools about the children in terms of ethnicity, gender, and writing achievement enabled the researcher to assign children randomly either to an experimental group or control group. The experimental group received writing instruction that focused on aspects such as setting, characters, plot, and theme. The control group received writing instruction that focused less on structure and more on main ideas and using literary elements. Both groups received tuition in how to use a story planner as a guide when writing. The lessons ran daily, for an hour at a time, for three days. The classroom teacher taught the experimental group and the researcher taught the control group. Children wrote three stories across five days. The results showed that the story structure intervention did have an effect on children's writing of stories in the country school but the effect was smaller in the city school. The discussion focuses on possible reasons for this.

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