

Joyce Stavick

jestavick@northgeorgia.edu

English Department

**Language Lessons: A Study of Teaching Methods
in Georgia Middle-School Grammar Curricula**

End date for proposed activities: August 15, 2012

Description of proposed research project: Since the beginning of the “grammar wars” in the 1960s – when composition studies collided with both traditional (structural) grammar and emerging theories in linguistics – the teaching of grammar has been overshadowed, and even obliterated, by “whole language” advocates who claim that grammar instruction is not effective in teaching writing, and that it is even harmful. Casualties of this lengthy conflict have included teachers who earned Language Arts certification without formal preparation in grammar or other linguistics, and, most importantly, generations of students who have had little or no exposure to the structure and conventions of their own language. Many teachers have assessed student writing without considering sentence structure and attention to Standard English usage: the result has been that the United States education system has largely produced weak writers for over forty years. But in the nation’s growing dependence on standardized testing to satisfy assessment requirements of all kinds, educators have realized the need to bring grammar back to the American classroom, though not necessarily in the context of writing instruction.

Of particular interest to this study is a program popular in Georgia middle schools: DGP, or Daily Grammar Practice, a curriculum that is administered without benefit of any significant research. The program is simple, brief, and usually isolated: students analyze the same sentence each day of the week for approximately five minutes. For example, a sixth-grade class might study a sentence like this:

travis and heather read the last volume of the harry potter series before they saw the film version

If you need tha

The sentence lacks capitalization and punctuation: students add these graphological features on Monday. On Tuesday, they will name the parts of speech of each word in the sentence, and Wednesday they will name the function of each word (Travis and Heather, for instance, serves as a compound subject of the sentence). On Thursday they will name the structures in the sentence (the sample sentence here contains one independent clause and one dependent). Finally, the students diagram the sentence on Friday. On Monday

and prepare the conference presentation and article submission with my guidance. The undergraduate researchers are Hannah Bridgeman and Christopher Shull.

Budget: The project's financial needs are primarily limited to gasoline mileage for traveling to participating middle schools, copying and postage expenses, and purchase of DGP and other grammar texts. The following expenses are based on identifying 25 middle schools (within 75 miles of Dahlonega) that agree to participate in the project.

Gasoline mileage: \$1250

Copying and postage expenses: \$250

DGP and other texts: \$258.67 + shipping: \$300

Timeline:

October 1: Completion of Review of Literature November 1: Identification of participating middle schools November 22: Submission of empirical research instruments to IRB December 1: Distribution of questionnaires to participating middle schools January– March: On-site interviews at participating middle schools April– May: Analysis of data June 1: Conference abstract submission to ATEG August 15: Report to participating schools, CURCA, North Georgia faculty and students

Appendix A: Estimated Expense Report

The Beginners' Drill-Book of English Grammar – Adapted for Middle-Class and Elementary School

James Burton

\$26.95

Grammar and Composition Handbook – Middle School

Glencoe Publishing Staff

\$40.30

Grammar in 15 Minutes a Day

LearningExpress Editors

\$10.40

Catching Up On Conventions: Grammar Lessons for Middle School Writers

Chantal Francois

\$12.25

Giggles in the Middle: Caught 'Ya! Grammar with a Giggle for Middle School

Jane Bell Kiester

\$16.72

Image Grammar – Middle School

Harry Noden

\$113.71

Total book expenses: \$258.67 + shipping = \$300

Copying Expenses:

Purchase of North Georgia letterhead and 'second page' stationery

Copying expenses for questionnaires and interviews

Postage

An estimate of \$250 is our conservative projection of copying and mailing expenses.

Gasoline Expenses:

Our projection for gas

District name

City

County

Cartersville School System	Cartersville	Bartow
Clarke County Public Schools	Athens	Clarke
Commerce City Public Schools	Commerce	Jackson

Gilmer County Public Schools	Ellijay	Gilmer

Gwinnett

Lumpkin County Public Schools	Dahlonega	Lumpkin
Oconee County Public Schools	Watkinsville	Oconee

Towns County Public Schools	Hiawassee	Towns

Union County Public Schools

White County Public Schools	Cleveland	White

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