

## Measuring Creative Writing

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As I walked through the poster sessions at the October 1996 Precision Teaching conference in Seattle, I approached the poster of Albertson and Billingsley. A chill of excitement ran through me, and I felt as if I were three feet off the floor: There before me was data on student creative writing! This summer I tutored Zack, a fifteen-year-old sophomore, who wanted to improve his grammar knowledge and writing skills. He has just been put on the high school newspaper staff to fill in for one of the regular reporters who will be abroad for part of the year. One of his goals for his sophomore year is to do well enough to be a regular reporter.

Other than Albrecht's (1981) article on teaching creative writing to sixth graders, Lovitt's Charts (1984) on his writing a book, and my own common sense and Chart Knowledge, I had no frequencies or celerations to guide me in teaching writing. Zack's Charts were...well, I wasn't sure...but I did not think they were spectacular.

I worked with Zach for eight sessions. He wrote and/or edited during six of those. When charting the data for this article, I put the think/write ideas on the left half of the Chart and the think/write paragraphs on the right half of the Chart. The aim for think/write ideas was 20; Zack had a middle frequency of ten on the three days he did the one minute timing on ideas.

During think/write words in a story's first draft, Zack's frequencies ranged between nine and 33 words written per minute. The middle two frequencies were 18 and 19 per minute. His highest frequency of 33 per minute he wrote when at camp, watching a game as he wrote. All other situations were contrived for practice. He hand-wrote all his first drafts.

The purpose for sharing this Chart now is to let people compare the writing frequencies that Albrecht (1981), Lovitt (1984), Albertson and Billingsley (1996), and I found. Al-

brecht (teaching sixth graders) found middle frequencies on the one minute timings of think/write words or short phrases were six to 17, and for words written in sentences and paragraphs, the range was from nine to 20. Lovitt counted not words but tactics written per day. Albertson and Billingsley found the two middle schoolers, using a word processing program, wrote 16 words per minute during outlining and 12 to 15 words per minute for one student and 14 to 26 for the other student in paragraph writing. Thus, we have some information about the number of words 11- to 15-year-olds write during creative writing assignments.

I did a ten-minute timing while writing this article: my words per minute, first draft, were 19. When writing for an hour, my frequency on a first draft was 14 words per minute or one page per 20 minutes. As usual, I used the computer when writing. Given that handwriting is slower than using a word processor, Zack's frequencies compare very nicely to Albertson's & Billingsley's students and to mine.

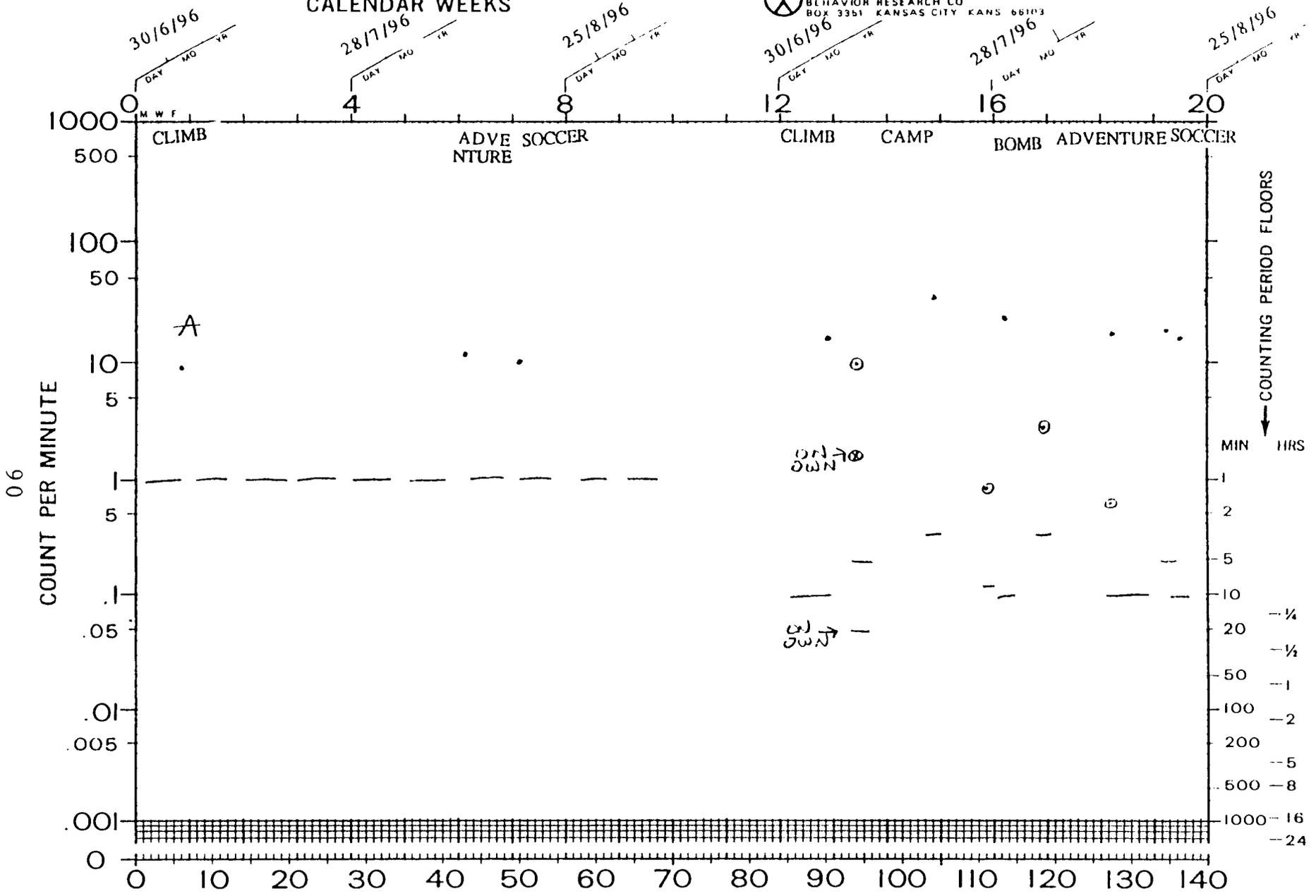
### Ideas for the Future

- Much more data on students and adults would be most helpful in looking at creative writing.
- One thought to increase ideas in the one minute timing would be to do several timings before the paragraph writing.
- In the close of Lovitt's (1984) article, he has some interesting quotations and estimates from professional writers on their output. This gives me an idea for another Chart share, since, for years, I have counted pages written per year.

### References

- Albertson, L. R., & Billingsley, F. F. (1966). Improving children's story writing: A direct instruction approach. Seattle: Precision Teaching Conference Poster Session.
- Albrecht, P. (1981) Using Precision Teaching techniques to encourage creative writing. *Journal of Precision Teaching*, 2(1), 18-21.
- Lovitt, T. C. On writing a book. (1984) On writing a book. *Journal of Precision Teaching*, 2(1), 3-8.

CALENDAR WEEKS



A.B. CALKIN	A.B. CALKIN	SUCCESSIVE CALENDAR DAYS	ZACK	15	10th	Think/ Write Ideas
SUPERVISOR	ADVISER	MANAGER	BEHAVIOR	AGE	LABEL	COUNTED
CALKIN LEARNING CENTER		CALKIN & ZACK	CALKIN			• Think/Write
		ZACK				○ Think/Change