

## **“Jacky, the Reluctant Writer”**

*By Ted Wills*

During my student teaching with a third grade class, I came to know "Jacky." She is a lively girl who was nearly always the first student to arrive in class. Although the statistics might classify Jacky as an "average student," there was nothing average in her enthusiasm, determination, leadership, and strong opinions. She loves group work, kinesthetic activities, competition, and self-expression. I came to learn almost immediately that Jacky did not like writing.

One day, my astute cooperating teacher helped me to prepare two interactive classes for a “Show, Don’t Tell” writing assignment. Following an introduction in the first class about how to describe an emotion, heterogenous student groups were invited to play “Charades.” I was the mime acting out five emotions for the groups to identify by name(s) and action(s) on their worksheets. After presenting each emotion, I observed and facilitated each group’s learning. The students happily captured the energy of the presentation and group work, especially Jacky and her group. In conclusion, I reviewed a hand-out with a sample paragraph showing a description of an emotion.

For the second class, following a review, the students were invited to individually draft a paragraph according to their choice of emotion(s) and situation(s). In her first draft, Jacky wrote about getting frustrated at a park when it rained. During our review, I encouraged her to avoid stating the emotion explicitly. Reluctantly, Jacky went back to work on her second draft that represented a major improvement. She then went on with the rest of the class to illustrate her work on a piece of construction paper that included her pasted paragraph. It was at this juncture that Jacky said, “I didn’t like writing before, but now I do like it.” What wonderful words to hear from a not-so “average” student!

Upon reflection, I have come to realize that Jacky had discovered writing as a form of self-expression in a welcoming format.