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# "It takes a lot out of you": ethnography of secondary English teachers' writing pedagogy

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“IT TAKES A LOT OUT OF YOU”: ETHNOGRAPHY OF SECONDARY ENGLISH  
TEACHERS’ WRITING PEDAGOGY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Educational Theory, Policy, and Practice

by

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## **Dedication**

To *la familia* who have taken this journey with me. Thank You. To my Father in Heaven and my children: Melissa, Mandi, Jodi, Jill, Kris, and Morgan for your love and patience.

I love you.

## **Acknowledgements**

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## Table of Contents

Dedication.....	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iii
Abstract.....	vi
Chapter I: Introduction.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	3
Purpose of the Study.....	7
The Setting.....	11
Theoretical Framework.....	13
Significance of the Study.....	14
Research Questions.....	15
Conclusion.....	16
Chapter II: Review of the Literature.....	18
1960s English Focus: Literature.....	19
1970s-80s Research in Writing: Winds of Change.....	21
1990s The Pendulum Swings.....	33
Writing for the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century.....	38
Conclusion.....	46
Chapter III: Methodology.....	48
Research Design.....	48
Survey Instrument: Plans and Procedures.....	49
Survey Instrument: Development.....	50
Selection of Case-Study Participants.....	52
Data Collection and Analysis.....	57
Pilot Study.....	65
Conclusion.....	68
Chapter IV: Results and Discussion.....	70
Case-Study Teachers A and B.....	71
Research Questions.....	78
Discussion.....	116
Conclusion.....	119
Chapter V: Conclusion.....	120
Implications for the Classroom.....	125
Limitations.....	128
Suggestions for Further Research.....	131
Conclusion.....	132

References.....	138
Appendix A: Survey Results.....	145
Appendix B: Interview Questions.....	146
Appendix C: Sample Letter to District Supervisors.....	147
Vita.....	148

## Abstract

This study was conducted in two case-study teachers' public middle school classrooms in south Louisiana and a survey in three public school districts. A qualitative research focus with the research design taken from work of Michael Patton's (2002) *Qualitative Research Evaluation Methods* and James Spradley and David McCurdy's (1975) *Anthropology: The Cultural Perspective*. The survey was developed from the work of Tourangeau, Rips, and Rasinski's (2002) *The Psychology of Survey Responses*. The researcher assumed the role of participant observer for three months which resulted in two themes: first, traditional teaching methods in the teaching of writing, and secondly, teacher perceptions influence writing (composing) choices. Findings include the teachers' modification of the Writing Process (Emig, 1971) omitting social learning aspects, pervasiveness of formula writing, teachers' desire for professional development in the teaching of writing, and finally, teachers' may interpret the Writing Process as writing instruction.

## Chapter I: Introduction

The teaching of writing in school settings has remained an area of interest to educators, policy makers, parents, and all stakeholders who understand the value of literacy to an individual student and to a nation. Teachers who are strong proponents of *writing literacy*, which encompasses all of the knowledge about writing that enables students to garner the use of language for their desired ends, are caught in a tension between accountability mandates and personal convictions for what they believe to be best for students. In an age of accountability, the spotlight on the teaching of writing persists amidst dismal test scores. Olson (2001) laments, “an embarrassing fact that despite a half century of research” the case has not been made for the transformation that can occur in thinking and learning with the acquisition of our “best-recognized cultural (and intellectual) tool, namely, writing” (p. 107). If this were not true then writing instruction would reside in its proper place in the curriculum, with disciplinary status or time allocated to teach it properly. As teachers incorporate writing instruction within classroom pedagogy, they face seemingly irreconcilable dilemmas.

This study takes a close look at how two case-study teachers interpret writing instruction and reconcile the many demands inherent within a too-tight curriculum. The Writing Process (WP) (Emig, 1971), as a movement and a method, has been an instrument to rescue the teaching of writing from a “skills mastery discourse” prevalent in a “standardized curriculum”(Wohlwend, 2009, p.343). The WP methodology surfaced in schools in the English curriculum in the late eighties through efforts of the *National Writing Project* (NWP). Also labeled a “process-approach” to teach writing, part of the reason for the WP’s endurance in the classroom, is that it “stimulate[s] students to think about their writing and reflect on their ideas” (*NAEPfacts*, 1996). Over time, the WP’s five stages of pre-writing, drafting, editing, revising, and publication (not a

stage model but is meant to be recursive) (Emig, 1971) became strongly associated with writing instruction.

The case-study teachers in this study attempt to balance many *discourses* within their English classrooms as discourses are “way[s] of using words and actions that indexes a set of beliefs and an affiliation with a particular social group” (Gee, 1996, p.5). The classroom is a site of many and varied discourses with much overlap for teachers to mediate. These complex discourses are composed of many goals: “teaching standards” (Guskey, 2005; Williams, 2005), personal goals for teaching writing, students’ writing goals, and multiple other “goals which interact with each other” (Hayes, 2001). As the case-study teachers play a dominant role in controlling the many variables in the writing classroom, the teaching of writing is shaped by their beliefs and attitudes. In turn, how teachers value writing shapes students’ writing experiences. To bring in other voices beside the two case-study teachers, English teachers (n=115) from three school districts were surveyed (Tourangeau et al, 2002) to serve as juxtaposition to the case-study teachers’ responses. The survey was conducted in order to better understand the macro-culture of English teachers’ teaching of writing versus the practices in the micro-culture of the two case-study teachers.

Writing research literature reveals the conflicted notions teachers hold on the teaching of writing. As a personal belief, the teaching of writing is problematic for secondary English teachers due to time constraints and the ever-increasing mandated curriculum. To provide the quality of instruction, especially in writing, requires advanced planning for large chunks of class time. Teachers of writing should minimally be knowledgeable in linguistics, composition theory, literacy, language, technology, cognition, and pedagogy. In addition to experience with these disciplines, new teachers of writing should be mentored by an experienced writing teacher to

learn how to plan for writing with meaningful activities and assessments that provide timely, focused feedback to students' writing. As I read various articles on classroom teachers and their experiences with teaching writing, I began to question how teachers are managing writing instruction within their classrooms amidst distractions, standardized testing pressures, and competing discourses, which became the focus of this inquiry. In addition, two other areas were of concern, mainly, the teachers' attitudes toward teaching writing and its effect on instruction; and secondly, concerns about the support for the continued training of teachers in writing instruction. The following section details the formalizing of these concerns into research questions and the purpose of this study.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Since the 1975 *Newsweek* article, "Why Johnny Can't Write" put the blame on public schools, and inherently, teachers, there has been increasingly a spotlight on the teaching of writing. Perhaps being a classroom teacher, I may be more alert to the discussions that center upon students' poor writing abilities. The *National Association of Educational Progress* (NAEP) report, whose function is to inform our nation's leaders on the status of education, confirms an alarming situation—America's secondary students are not proficient writers, on a national or state level. "Proficiency" level denotes that a student can demonstrate "competency over challenging subject matter and is well prepared for the next level of schooling"; on a grading scale, "proficiency means a student captures 70-84% of available credit" (Picard, 2003, p.4). Consequently, students are garnering less than 70% of available credit on writing assessments; writing proficiency that is important to a student's future.

Carl Nagin (2004), writing in *Because Writing Matters: Improving Student Writing in Our Schools*, believes through the effort of the *National Writing Project* (NWP), successful

teaching strategies have been identified and innovative programs implemented with demonstrable impact on student learning. However, their broad dissemination remains the critical challenge for serious school reform (p.5). For over thirty years, the NWP has been helping teachers learn about the teaching of writing through “exemplary classroom practices”; yet Nagin contends, writing “remains the ‘silent R’ in the traditional triad [reading, writing, arithmetic] of what students need to learn” (2004, x-ix).

According to Cathy Fleischer (2004), content leader for the writing program, *CoLearn*, affiliated with the NCTE responds to this dilemma, “Some teachers are uncomfortable in their knowledge base in teaching writing and find writing a bit frightening” (p.26). The insurmountable amount of teaching pamphlets and brochures in writing instruction covering teachers’ desks just leaves them confused. The ability to teach writing well remains a challenge facing our teachers and administrators today.

These observations lead to the question, “Why is there such a gap in teacher knowledge in how to teach students to write?” After nearly forty years of research on writing, our students should be benefiting from what has been learned about writing. The fruit from the hard work researchers have spent trying to understand the complexities of writing instruction should be evident. In addition, through teacher observations in a fifteen week study in 2002, which was an assignment for a senior level anthropology course, I found little writing instruction going on, agreeing with Van DeWeghe’s (2007) assessment that “writing is more often assigned and assessed than actually taught (p. 94). These experiences have led to the formulation of this study as well as Nagin’s (2004) observation, “A survey on the state of writing in a school or district can lay the groundwork for a collective vision of what needs to be changed” (p. 90). This study includes the lessons learned from the study conducted in 2002 where there was a need to

formalize a study to observe more than one English classroom teacher and these observations should be evaluated against a larger community of English teachers; hence, the development of a survey that will provide this collective voice and attempt to answer Nagin's (2002) call.

There are only a handful of (whole) classroom studies in the teaching of writing at the secondary level from which to establish a knowledge base on how writing is being taught in English classrooms in the United States: Applebee (1984); Atwell (1986); Hillocks (1986); Sadoski et al (1997); and Scherff & Piazza (2005). Unger and Fleischman (2004) confirm, "Future research focused on the contextual and social variables that influence how students acquire writing skills, combined with more rigorous evaluation of instructional approaches, will build the evidence base that educators need to teach the 'write stuff'" (pp. 90-91).

Movitz and Holmes (2007) discuss the complexities of allowing students the freedom and "time" to write, what many teachers struggle with, and calls for new approaches to teaching writing and muses, "I remember seeing elementary classrooms full of enticing materials organized into learning centers. Why did the fun, excitement, and meaningful learning have to end when students reached high school?" (p. 68). He then creates learning centers for his high school English classes. A writing workshop can be compared to "centers." The use of centers could be an alternative for teachers who are not quite ready to relinquish the control that is one principle of the workshop approach.

Teachers need to begin asking questions about writing instruction since the state's k-12 mandated curriculum (*Louisiana's Grade Level Expectations*) has embraced instruction in writing, and more specifically, the *Writing Process* (WP) (Emig, 1971). The evidence of teachers' writers' knowledge is through how they approach the teaching of writing. It is only

through such knowledge that teachers' can articulate their needs to meet the state's writing expectations.

As a school teacher in English for many years, I was quite familiar with the *Louisiana Grade Level Expectations* (GLE) (2007) that provide teachers with content requirements according to subject and grade level. The *Comprehensive Curriculum* (CC) (2007) puts these disciplinary requirements into time-bound units that originally teachers heard would be required to follow in lock-step fashion; yet such delivery depends upon each school district. In my experience and in the case-study teachers' district, the CC is used as a guide or resource for teachers.

There may be a renewed interest in research in the teaching of writing since the position paper for writing, *NCTE Beliefs about the Teaching of Writing* (2004), calls for schools to create a culture of writing. Through foundational research by Hillocks (1986) and built upon by Sadoski et al, (1997), there is a small research base of best practices in the teaching of writing, and it is time to build up writing research at the secondary level. Educators can then train teachers to effectively teach writing in the classroom.

This current study gathered evidence on the complexities involved in teachers' writing knowledge and how they acted upon that knowledge. Over the last forty years, research in the field of composition had promoted a process approach to writing instruction, yet published research has questioned whether a process approach was still the predominate mode of instruction. Hence, there is a need for studies in teachers' writing pedagogy, especially at the secondary level. Ethnographic research on teachers' writing pedagogy can make plain teachers' experiences with writing and illuminate ways to effectively work with any obstacles that keep writing instruction from being what it could be. Students will benefit the most from such

inquiries, for as teachers gain competence in writing pedagogy, students will gain expertise in composing textual products.

### **The Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate how teachers incorporate writing instruction into their classroom pedagogy. The ethnographic methods (Patton, 2002; Spradley and McCurdy, 1975) of case studies, observations, formal interviews, and reviewing of teacher documents were used for data analysis. In addition, a survey of English teachers from three school districts was conducted, analyzed, and their responses compared to the case-study teachers' responses. In order to improve accuracy of the survey results, Tourangeau et al., (2002) suggest checking "survey results against another source" (p. 163). Built into the study is this checking measure as the survey results are evaluated alongside the case-studies teachers' responses. This study describes the impact teachers' attitudes and belief systems have toward writing instruction on pedagogy and the decisions made to afford students' writing literacy in a tightened curriculum.

The fieldwork data revealed *traditional* teaching methods used overall by the case-study teachers. Cuban (1993) describes traditional teaching methods, or teacher-centered, as lecture mode used by the teacher delivering instruction while students remain seated in their desks in neatly formed rows (p.276). However, it was noted that directly linked to the composing assignments, the classroom culture displayed a modicum of student-centered characteristics exhibited by a conversational style of instructional discourse. In some instances, students actually altered the teacher's instructional plans through questioning with the aim of enhancing their own meaning-making. The combining of teaching pedagogies, traditional and student-centered, resulted in a *hybrid* form of teaching (Sadosky et al, 1997).

How writing is taught in the secondary classroom continues to be a subject of much interest; *The National Council of Teachers of English* (NCTE) issued policy statements that support the call for more research in an article entitled, “NCTE Beliefs about the Teaching of Writing (2004).” This effort is in conjunction with other influential documents, one from the *National Commission on Writing in America’s Schools and Colleges*, “The Neglected ‘R’: The Need for a Writing Revolution” (2003); and more recently, “Writing and School Reform” (2006) (qtd. in VanDeWeghe, 2007).

Early on, and continuing to this date, much of the writing research has been with very young children (K-5) in elementary classrooms and the body of work is extensive; some examples of the range of inquiry are as follows: How a print-rich environment affects children’s writing (Baghban, 1984; Bissex, 1980; Schickedanz, 1990); writing toddlers and ‘mark making’ (Schickedanz & Casbergue, 2004); meaning-making (Dyson, 2001; Roskos, Tabors, & Lenhart, 2004); intuitive sense of story grammar (Casbergue & Plauche, 2003; Duke & Kays, 1998; Kamerelis, 1998, 1999); linkages between form and function (McGee & Richgels, 2000; Pappas, 1991; Snow & Ninio, 1986). While there are many reasons for the large repertory of writing research at the elementary school level, at least one of the reasons is access. A researcher at the elementary level can be in touch with a lot of teachers and children in one location, for writing research is time consuming in human resources.

Secondary research on writing instruction, on the other hand, has grown over the last two decades but falls behind the voluminous amount of research at the post-secondary level. A secondary school teacher could easily become overwhelmed when searching for current research in writing instruction. Consequently, classroom teachers rely on professional development from their respective school districts to provide the gleanings of the best methods for teaching writing.

In this study, current teaching practices in writing were analyzed in order to see how teachers deliver writing instruction to students, and if the *Writing Process* (WP) (Emig, 1971) is instilled as part of writing pedagogy. It was revealed from the analysis of the two case-study teachers' documents that the WP is part of *Louisiana's Grade Level Expectations* (GLE) (2007) and *Comprehensive Curriculum* (CC) (2007). Perhaps more importantly, field work revealed the WP to be ingrained within the case-study teachers' personal belief system as the writing methodology to develop students' writing abilities. It should be clarified that the WP is what the name states, a *process*, and does not constitute the teaching of writing. Writing strategies must be added to the process: the making of writing moves to affect the desired reader response. To interpret the WP as a method to teach writing is a misunderstanding of the usefulness of the process.

Notes from field observations revealed the case-study teachers streamlining the WP whereby two of the five divisions of the WP were utilized: pre-writing and drafting. Omitted from the WP were the elements of editing, revision, and publication (not meant to describe a stage model but recursive). The eliminated activities from the WP model were the collaborative experiences of editing and revision; therefore, students missed the opportunities of peer reviews, peer/teacher conferences, and the publishing of students' work. From a sociocultural perspective, I wonder the effects of these decisions on students' collaborative learning?

The elimination of some parts of the WP and the decision to teach other parts of the process were attributed by the case-study teachers to a lack of class time to engage in all of the process. Known as a *modification* to the WP where some activities are eliminated, a majority of English teachers who participated in the three district survey admitted to using a modified

version of the WP. This was a startling discovery that the arbitrary use of the parts of the process does not appear to be an isolated event, but may indeed be widespread.

This study provides a descriptive analysis to further understand how English teachers work within the complexity of the teaching environment to provide the teaching of writing to adolescents. Both the quantitative approach of surveying English teachers in three school districts and the qualitative methods of ethnography to allow for “substantial involvement at the site of inquiry, to overcome the effects of misinformation, distortion, or presented ‘fronts,’ to establish the rapport and build the trust necessary to uncover constructions, and to facilitate immersing oneself in and understanding the context’s culture” (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, pp.303-304). In this way, these research methods are used in a complementary fashion.

This study will extend the findings of research involving writing teacher methodologies, such as *modes of instruction* (Hillocks, 1986; Sadoski et al. 1997; Piazzzi, 2005; Movitz & Holmes, 2007); *writing workshop and current-traditional models* (Atwell, 1988; Gold, 2006; Smith, 2006); *teaching form over content* (Albertson, 2007; Hillocks, 2005); *teaching using cognitive strategies* (Olson & Land 2007); *teacher roles and classroom context* (Graves, 1983; Olson, 2005; Lipstein & Renninger, 2007); *teaching the standards* (Guskey, 2005; Williams, 2005); *teacher and student talk* (Mahiri, 2004); *culture as meaning maker* (Spradley & McCurdy, 1972; Geertz, 1973; Spradley, 1980; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Goodlad, 1970; Sirotnik, 1981; and Anghileri, 2006 are not teachers of English; however, their research offers insight into writing in disciplines other than English. Finally, a segment of the English research community is paying attention to what has been termed, “post-process” and “ecological” approaches to composition where the former focuses on critical issues of race, gender, class, and culture, and the latter focuses on “natural” environments where students write about nature (Dobrin & Weisser, 2002).

All of the above research agendas add to the scholarship of the writing classroom and other forms of expression that contribute to the meaning-making process. One particular researcher has been important to the field of teaching writing. Nancy Atwell (1987) has been instrumental in contributing to teacher knowledge at the secondary level on the logistics of using the WP (Emig, 1971) in her research on writer's workshop. Donald Graves (1983) has also been an early proponent of the benefits of a "workshop approach," yet it was Atwell who provided teachers a comprehensive view into her classroom of 8<sup>th</sup> graders and to her methods for teaching writing.

Writing research at the secondary level and above has mainly focused on two distinctly different categories: either on students' finished product (essay, story, etc.) or the in-depth study of one aspect of the writing process, "such as prewriting, writing, revision, editing, or publishing without regard to sequence" (Kucera, 1995, p.179). The lack of a unified approach to the teaching of writing seems to stem from the lack of a comprehensive, and sequential, planned curriculum for the development of students' writing abilities (Yancey, 2009). Unfortunately, for secondary English teachers, qualitative research that focuses on more than one isolated teacher's writing pedagogy, the kind we need, have been few. The following sections detail plans for gaining a cross-section of data on how teachers instruct students in writing and particularize this data through case studies. My study will extend the research in secondary English for a "collective vision of what needs to be changed" (Nagin, 2004, p. 90).

### **Setting**

The settings for the observations and interviews for the case studies will be in the teachers' classroom to retain the "natural" environment in order to interpret the classroom culture, through what Sapir (1963) termed, "unconscious patterning of behavior." Sapir, known

as the “father of linguistics,” noticed that as we repeat behaviors we become “inured to it, rendering the behavior and orientation invisible to the participants [teachers]” (quoted in McCutcheon, 1981, p. 6). Consequently, the observations and interviews with my participants will work to reveal the cultural contexts where the teaching of writing occurs. The teachers are volunteers from the survey administered to three school districts. At the bottom of each anonymous survey there is a place where teachers can indicate interest in participating in my research study. Using *purposeful sampling*, (Patton, 1990, p.84) two teachers were selected who met a criteria established and explained in Chapter Three’s Methodology section.

Teachers’ students from all three selected districts are similar in demographics: approximately half are African Americans and half are White students with less than 2% “other”: American Indian/Native Alaskan; Asian/Pacific Islander; or Hispanic. The majority percentages are similar to the state’s demographics. My teachers’ students are poor with over half receiving free or reduced lunch: 51% to 71%. Academic abilities range from high to low with an alternative school in each district for students who need a different environment to be successful. There are no academic magnets in any of these districts. Each school has teachers with master’s degrees and those who are highly qualified.

As a school teacher in the State of Louisiana, I am aware that all teachers are expected to use the state developed *Comprehensive Curriculum* (CC) (2007), but how it is used is determined by each district. The CC incorporates standards and benchmarks in time-bound units and encompasses the *Grade Level Expectations* (GLE) (2007) for each subject. The CC contains unit plans and daily lesson plans for an entire academic year. Initially, we thought the CC was a top-down delivery system for instruction. Teachers then learned the state’s intention was for the CC to be used as a guide. Consequently, it will be instructive to see how the CC is used by the

case-study teachers. It is the teacher's responsibility to take the state's mandates and *re-*conceptualize those mandates in light of their students to move them forward in what Freedman & Delp (2007) term a "grand dialogic zone" (p. 41).

It is assumed that selecting three districts that geographically cover a large portion of this southern state, I will obtain data that represents a variety of teachers' experiences. The districts chosen for this study have similar characteristics to other districts in south Louisiana. (The New Orleans school district was not considered due to recovery efforts taking place from the aftermath of hurricane, Katrina.) District A has 32 schools in mostly rural areas but includes some suburban locations; district B has 24 schools in rural areas; and finally, district C has 5 schools in an all rural area.

The community where these districts are located plays a big part in these students' lives: community, family, school, teacher, and student create a multivocality that should become apparent in the classroom dynamics. In all three districts, a typical fall Friday night will find the whole family at the local high school's football game. It doesn't matter if the family has a child in high school or not, for the game is a social gathering place for the community. Up to 5,000 people will gather for the most competitive games, and at times, both teams are from high schools in the same district! These are part of students' experiences that form a part of his or her customs, traditions—culture.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The framework used for this study is decidedly Social Constructivism, in its milder considerations. In this paradigm, people create their reality and it is valid for them and it consists within a social environment (Patton, 2002, p.60). A major tool within the constructivism framework is the use of culture to "interpret experience" (McCurdy *etal*, 2005, p.7). Spradley

and McCurdy's (1975) work with language and how he categorizes the "folk" terms with *cover terms* and *taxonomies* will be used for this study's diagrams and tables (p.26). In addition, Patton's (2002) *process method* was used to order the data as it was put together for reporting (p.90).

According to McCurdy et al (2005), cultural knowledge can be divided between tacit and explicit; tacit knowledge is not spoken, so it must be inferred through observation i.e., field work. Explicit culture is spoken and coded in language categories, and consequently, can be discerned through listening and interviewing. Language is one example of both tacit and explicit knowledge. Both tacit and explicit cultural knowledge are research approaches within a linguistic, or symbolic, framework. "Our culture gives us an endless list of ways to see the world and we learn to believe that these categories reflect the *real* nature of the world" (emphasis in original, p.9). The goal of this research study is to determine how writing is taught in the secondary classroom and interpreting the cultural environment is a necessary component.

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study lies in the forthright evaluations of English teachers from three school districts on the obstacles they face to provide their students' the acquisition of writing skills, or writing literacy. The fundamental skills of reading and writing are the foundational building blocks for success in schooling; consequently, the results from this study should give school leadership pause and concern to begin a dialogue *with* teachers to facilitate the effective teaching of writing. If so, it would be worthwhile to capture a baseline of writing instruction as it exists prior to interventions and track progress as a writing program develops.

This study can be significant to both researchers and teachers as they pursue studies that pertain to classroom writing instruction, as the majority of previous research focuses only on

parts of the Writing Process (Emig, 1971), and these studies are at the elementary and college levels. It is hoped that other researchers will conduct similar studies in order to build a corpus at the secondary level of classroom writing instruction. Another significant element of this study for researchers is the survey they can use to gather data on writing instruction. Classroom teachers can benefit from this study as they perform teacher research or a self-study of their own practices in teaching writing.

Portions of this dissertation research, particularly the survey responses, could be of interest to Louisiana's State Department of Education. In addition, the complete study may be of interest to Louisiana's school superintendents to gain local insight on teachers' views in teaching writing and the reality of the classroom.

There is still much to do and learn about writing instruction. Technology is fast becoming another element of the English teachers' content responsibilities. While the meshing of the two, technology and writing, offers exciting opportunities for students, writing experts should give immediate attention to the potential affect on students' writing fluency. The significance of this study is purposeful action to understand where we are in our current teaching practices in writing so that collaborations may begin to discuss next steps to improve our students writing performance.

### **Research Questions**

Through the ethnography of two case-study teachers and a survey of English teachers in three school districts, this study seeks to understand secondary teachers' writing pedagogy and determine if the *Writing Process* (WP) (Emig, 1971) is being taught in English classrooms. The survey of English teachers will provide a larger pool of responses from which to contrast the ethnographic field work of the two case-study teachers. The observations, interviews, and

evaluation of case-study teachers' documents will allow the researcher to gain a methodical analysis to the teaching of writing. The interviews will draw out the language that accompanies the teaching of writing, and in combination with the data from the field work and surveys, will provide a comprehensive view in order to answer the research question below:

Q1. What processes are teachers currently using to teach writing? Why?

Q2. What are teachers' (colleagues') attitudes toward teaching writing? How do these attitudes affect instruction?

Q3. How do teachers' learn new knowledge on current methods to teach writing?

Q4. Do teachers use a writing program or plan to follow as he or she determines what's next for an individual student's writing abilities?

## **Conclusion**

This study consists of five chapters. In the next chapter, chapter two, I review the literature and attempt to describe the writing research *movement* by decade. In the 1960s, writing in the classroom consisted mainly of responding to literature. In the 1970's, writing emphasis was considered to be focused on the finished work—on the product, the essay, or the paper. The 1980's saw a major shift to a "process" movement where the teachers' focus was on the process the student used to write his or her paper. The finished paper still carried substantial weight. The 1990's was still heavily process-oriented, but critics turned their gaze towards the social context with an emphasis on culture. Finally, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is technology driven with a focus on students' self-sponsored writing away from school. There is also an emphasis on writing in the workplace using technology.

In chapter three, the research methodology for the study is explained and includes the plans, procedures, and development of the survey instrument. In chapter four, the two case-study

teachers are introduced and the cultural context: the school and classrooms. The research questions are used as an organizing strategy and answered. Finally, in chapter five, findings are analyzed as they affect the classroom, limitations to the study, and future directions for the research in writing instruction.

## Chapter II: Review of the Literature

Writing is an interdisciplinary subject; therefore, to capture a comprehensive review of the research on writing and the teaching of writing, a search must cover the disciplines of science, technology, reading, English, social sciences, including education, and more. As my study involves the teaching of writing in a whole class setting, my literature review will include research studies conducted in at least one secondary school classroom. This review begins with a few pivotal studies that helped shape current practices in writing instruction to form a logical chronology to give readers a sense of what is known about the teaching of writing in secondary schools in the United States.

This literature review intends to divide into sections the past and present research in developments on writing pedagogy. First, I will provide an overview of what happened in secondary classrooms in writing instruction until and throughout the 1960s: the national study by Squire & Applebee (1968) and the American educators' visit to British schools. Second, I review those publications throughout the 1970s and 1980s in writing research. I discuss Janet Emig's (1971) seminal work on students' writing practices in order to demonstrate the paradigm shift on the teaching of writing which shaped the next three decades. Next, the 1990s research in writing pedagogy reveals process writing to be entrenched in public school, but there is also a social-turn that looked to students' context and culture.

There has also been a concerted effort over the last decade to raise students' test scores. There has also been a debate among all stakeholders (parents, faculty, administrators, policy makers, etc.) how the emphasis of testing on our students. It is within this context that this research study was formulated. The final segment of the literature review covers the influx of technology within the English classrooms. Labeled, Writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, schools appear

to be trying to apply students' high level of interest in the computer to writing studies. Recently, the respected journal, *Research in the Teaching of English*, published an edition just on the technology emphasis in the English classroom. The final reviews discuss several viewpoints taken from this respected journal about this area of high interest, and that is the technology influx in English classrooms.

### **The 1960s English Focus: Literature**

In the late 60s a national study of the teaching of English in secondary classrooms by Squire & Applebee (1968) began with a positive goal, but what they found was disheartening. In this national study, 158 schools were observed by trained examiners from the University of Illinois. The purpose was to observe those secondary schools, mostly in the northern United States, that had a reputation for strong English departments to find out what instructional methods these teachers were using. The researchers were surprised, and disturbed, to learn such a large block of classroom time (up to 83% of class time) was devoted to discussing literature. There was little time left for the other elements of English studies: language, writing, and grammar. At this time the discipline of secondary school English was closely aligned with college preparatory needs. Therefore, it is not surprising the literature selected was more “literary” than about “life adjustment,” and teachers were experiencing difficulty translating the “close reading” into teaching practices. In addition, researchers noted there was a deliberate “de-emphasis of major twentieth century works” (p. 212).

The researchers were alarmed at the extreme contrast when they visited the lower tract English classes. Little emphasis was placed on the lower tracks of students who received less literature discussion and more worksheets and seatwork. This would seem to be the opportune time for the discipline of English to have conducted a self-study. Unfortunately, the evaluators

did not write adequate recommendations for the lack of rigor reported by observers. The researchers did write about the lessening of the lower tracts' instructional approaches that needed to be reviewed.

Up until the 1960s, research in writing focused on the teaching of grammar and mechanics in isolation through worksheets and sentence combining. This continued with emphasis on the “product” approach where teachers were only interested in the student's final paper, or the final response. Writing in school was informational for evaluation purposes (Applebee, 1981). In other words, writing was used as a way for teachers to know if students had learned the material. Students were giving back what the teachers had given to them.

One result of the national study was evidence of a lack of research based on instructional approaches: the continuance of a teacher-centered curriculum. John Dewey and the Progressive Movement had success at the elementary levels but failed acceptance at the secondary level. What did gain educators' attention enough to at least begin a discussion about needed change in English programs and teaching practices was the *National Council of Teachers of English* (NCTE) 1967 visit to “outstanding British schools.” What the American educators saw in 42 British schools was “a model for English instruction which focused not on the demands of the discipline but on the personal and linguistic growth of the child” (p. 229). Following the British schools tour a conference was held at Dartmouth where the results of the British visit spotlighted needed attention in American schools. The British focused on the developmental growth of the child. Drama courses and emphasis on language had students writing in class and out of class. Students were writing reflections and some of the writing would never be read by the teacher (American educators were alarmed at this) and lengthy discussions that stemmed from students' lived experiences rather than exclusively from a literature textbook. Indeed, “British teachers

relied on the process of discussion itself for the educative effects they were seeking” (p.120). Much of this could have been learned from the progressive movement. This visit would make American English experts interested in “some of the better parts of the progressive vision” (p. 232). At least English educators were willing to entertain ideas about a shift in focus from teacher-centered to student-centered curricula.

### **1970s-80s Research in Writing: The Winds of Change**

The flurry of writing research by college-level educators began in the early 1970s and was one attempt by a “generation of teachers to explore their own version of the progressive vision” (Applebee, 1974, p. 236). During the 1970s language study remained “narrowly conceptualized” (p. 249); however, any new focus on language would bring a modicum of new life to the English discipline. Janet Emig’s (1971) dissertation on how students arrive at the finished product was investigated through a process she termed, *protocol analysis*. Protocol analysis, now known as think-alouds, involves students orally expressing their thoughts while they are composing a text, and the session is recorded. What Emig found was that writers go through a deliberate process of organizing their ideas which she termed, a *writing process*. The results of her study had broad appeal for college instructors and classroom teachers. Emig characterized the process students experience while writing in five stages: *pre-writing, drafting, revision, editing, and publishing*. Soon, the academic journals were literally dominated by writing process research from the 1970s to the early 1980s.

What teachers learned during this time about writing was for students to produce their best writing, they must search their prior knowledge through some kind of brainstorming activity which was labeled, pre-writing. During pre-writing, the idea is that students are to write freely without concerns that what they write will be graded for a particular format or grammar or

mechanical errors. Students are to use whatever process they are most comfortable with to get their ideas down on paper. All people go through some pre-writing phase before writing. Students need dedicated *time* to work through this part of the process. In fact, research has shown that prewriting may be more valuable in increasing student writing gains than the peer-review aspect of the writing process (Sadoski *etal.*, 1997).

Arguably, writing is a valuable skill, even today, for the future work plans of our students. Writing is a constructive act (Britton, 1970) where students build on prior knowledge. The *writing-to-learn* movement studied the effects of composing and learning content (Emig, 1971; Odell, 1980). While the program, *writing-across-the-curriculum*, placed the responsibility of teaching writing in all disciplines, teachers need to model writing so the students can see the teacher writing. Most teachers know of the “writing process” and some even have students turn in the pre-writing and require a first-draft. In my experience as a writing teacher, this practice was not the norm. My question would be that if the writing is not being done “in class,” how does the teacher know the student has done the work?

Linda Flower (1979) was one of the earliest influences that turned the attention from the student writer to cognitive approaches. It seems there may have been an “under the surface” hostility as she takes issue with the research approach Emig (1971) used in her study. (I find these kinds of wars take place in many fields and the battleground is weaved in words in published reports. I caught Martin Nystrand (1989) sparring against Flower in his article! ) Emig (1971) used a psychological research approach, *protocol analysis*, where students spoke their thoughts out loud while writing. The talking while writing was a new twist Emig had added to the approach. She tape recorded and scribed what the students said as they were writing. Flower belittles Emig’s research approach, “An alternative to the ‘think it/say it’ model is to say that

effective writers do not simply *express* thought but *transform* it in certain complex but describable ways for the needs of a reader” (p. 19). Earlier in this article, Flower had implied Emig was mistaken, “misinterpretations readers still make suggest that we need a better model of this [writing] process” (p. 19). Flower suggests writer’s fail to “transform private thought into a public reader-based expression” (p. 19) in what she termed, *Writer-Based Prose*. Her research would be a precursor for research on the concept of audience.

Writer-Based prose is a natural way for a writer to get all of the ideas down; at this stage, the student is writing for himself or herself. Writer-Based prose is “a verbal expression written by a writer; It is the record and the working of his own verbal thought. The structure of Writer-Based prose represents the associative, narrative path of the writer’s own confrontation with her subject” (p. 19-20). Emig’s (1971) term would be pre-writing. The language of Writer-Based prose reveals privately loaded terms and shifting but unexpressed contexts for her statements” (p. 20).

Writer-Based prose contrasts with Reader-Based prose. Reader-Based prose is “a deliberate attempt to communicate something to a reader. It creates a shared language and shared context between writer and reader” (p. 19-20). Flower (1979) draws on both Piaget and Vygotsky’s work on “inner” and “egocentric” speech. Noticing a young child speaking to himself or herself, they describe the characteristics of the language as speech that makes “no effort or concession to the needs of the listener” (p. 20). This form of speech is a process in the development of extensions in cognitive capacity. Young children do this to solve problems as do adults use the “inner speech” of private verbal thought. These are “highly elliptical,” because the subject is “always known.” Consequently, “explicit subjects and referents disappear.” Frequently deals in the “sense of words, not their more specific or limited public meanings” There is an

“absence of logical and causal relations,” (p. 21) for these associations are already packed into the words. Writer-Based prose is this inner speech put on paper. This explains one reason students continue to make sentence fragments in their writing when they know what they look and how to fix or avoid them. They don’t “hear” the fragments as they are composing. The fragment sounds perfectly logical in their mind.

Flower (1979) conducted a case study in her psychology class where two students had to analyze a problem a local organization was having. The students had to provide written progress reports to their teacher that included causes and conclusions. She and the “client,” business owner, were interested in knowing what the students “made of the observations” and why they took the actions they did. What she received was a process report with a full description on everything the students did and everywhere they went. Through discourse analysis she was able to delineate characteristics of Writer-Based prose. The “reader is forced to do most of the thinking, sorting. . . .and yet, although this presentation fails to fulfill our [reader’s] needs, it does have an inner logic of its own” (p. 25). Writer-Based prose uses either a narrative framework or what she called a “survey” form, a way of listing. A narrative structure is “often a substitute for analytic thinking. By burying ideas within the events that precipitated them, a narrative obscures the more important logical and hierarchical relations between ideas.” The focus is on the “discovery process of the writers: the ‘I did/I thought/I felt’ focus.” In this case it was a group, so it read, “We decided,” “We were aware,” and “We felt” (p. 25). Even though this report was not what the teacher wanted, the process is an important one for the writer. Writer-Based prose is not limited to student writers, adults do it, too. However, it functions as a thinking tool that benefits students as a first pass at writing. Obviously, they will need to refocus on the audience’s needs for the next draft, but Flower’s contribution was another way teachers can help

students overcome writing problems and increase the teacher's experience with problem-solving with writing. Flower offers some good ideas for teachers: "Select a focus of mutual interest to both reader and writer"; "Move from facts, scenarios, and details to concepts"; and "Teach writers to recognize their own Writer-Based writing and transform it" (p. 37). Rather than focus on errors, this experience can be used to instill confidence in the writer if one looks at the writing as a matter of form.

Flower's (1979) article is significant because it acknowledges the theoretical nature of teaching writing and marks the importance of the writing process movement. Hairston (1982) in her article, "The Winds of Change: Thomas Kuhn and the Revolution in the Teaching of Writing" echoes Kuhn's definition of paradigm shift and applies it to writing: A paradigm shift occurs when there is a change in theory brought about by "revolutions in [writing] that come about as the result of breakdowns in intellectual systems, breakdowns that occur when old methods won't solve new problems"(p. 76). The process movement was indeed a writing revolution. Hairston continues, "I believe we are currently at the point of such a paradigm shift in the teaching of writing, and that it has been brought about by a variety of developments that have taken place in the last 25 years"(p. 76). She believed composition teachers could benefit from studying Kuhn's theory to "illuminate developments that are taking place in our profession. Those developments, the most prominent of which is the move to a process-centered theory of teaching writing, indicates that our profession is probably in the first stages of a paradigm shift" (p. 77).

The *current-traditional* paradigm governed English for decades. This practice is defined by the emphasis on grammar drills isolated from purposeful writing, emphasis on the final paper and not the process of writing, lecture mode by teachers, students sitting in rows, the five-

paragraph theme, and topic sentences. It is no wonder that some people who experienced the traditional instructional delivery hate grammar and are truly terrified to write.

When characteristics of modern writing proliferated in magazines, journals, and articles, many traditionalists cried that the English language was going downhill. However, through modern (current) writing, there are new options in writing; for example, new genres such as creative non-fiction and the graphic novel. When new genres appear, it does not mean there is an absence of structure, the structures may vary from previous models in writing. Again, the example of the term, topic sentence, has simply been changed to, “controlling idea,” and no longer must be the first sentence in a paragraph; it could be the second, third, or fourth sentence. Using such a term as “controlling idea” shows action and tells the student the functionality he or she must create.

James Marshall (1987) studied the effects of writing on students’ understanding of literary texts in support of the “Writing to Learn” movement (Emig, 1971). In Marshall’s article, he “focused on the role of writing in determining what students take away from literary texts.” Marshall used qualitative methods of observation and interview to study 60 eleventh grade students in 3 American literature classes with 1 English teacher. He examined the effects of three writing tasks: *restricted writing*, or short answer response; *personal analytic writing* includes a teacher controlled prompt and five-paragraph essay; and *formal analytic writing*, teacher controlled prompt and five-paragraph expository essay, including the students’ writing processes, for their understanding of short stories.

Marshall selected six students to participate in protocol analysis: two from each class and had them to compose while talking out loud what they were thinking. In all three literature classes, the teacher’s style of delivering content was teacher-led where lecture predominates. The

essay assignments were of the thesis/support nature. After all class observations (18 visits) were complete, he interviewed the six students. Foster, said to be one of the “brightest” students, is asked how he handles the essay exam,

The first think I do is I just write an outline of what I’m going to do. I pick a subject and then I write an outline and it’s always the same. For the five-paragraph essay, the first thing I do is write down, Roman numeral I, and I write “intro,” and then I pick a, b, c, which will give me my three middle paragraphs. For an in-class essay, you don’t have much time to do a rough draft and a final, but I find it works better if you actually write a rough draft of your first paragraph because your thoughts are changing and it looks terrible if you scratch out. And then the rest of it just kind of comes. The conclusion you just restate the thesis. (p. 38)

The six selected students were all college bound to “very good schools.” While the teacher is sincerely trying to prepare them for a college English course, Marshall believes, “If these students get a progressive instructor in college English that asks these students to think and create, they may not be able to function.” Furthermore, because these students “never went beyond an adolescent level of writing, they will never grow past the level they are now.” They were not using this time in high school writing to take risks with their writing in all genres and experiment with language structure, therefore, their current writing may narrowly get them through the “freshman year in college, but after that they will start being penalized for what will then be an elementary style of writing.” Of course, the student can work on writing on his or her own, but “that will be a rare case.”

The traditional mode of teaching in this class where the discussions are teacher designed questions on the board, and teacher decided topics for essay writing, are carefully controlled. Marshall describes how the teacher leads the students to the correct answer and allows them little commentary, “The formal interpretive conventions that obtained in class often discouraged them from articulating personal reactions or elaborating upon them in their writing” (p. 41). There is

little to no outside writing assigned. This is a perfect example of “Traditional” teaching methods evidenced in this current research study.

Marshall had the six students meet him in another room and composed aloud while writing while the other students remained in class to complete the assignments. He used discourse analysis to evaluate students’ writing; specifically, T-units (Hunt, 1977), linguistic Local Operations (Odell, 1977), mode or aim for writing (Purves & Rippere 1968; Odell & Cooper 1976), and coding of communication units (Langer, 1986). He collected for evaluation 180 papers representing 3 assignments from 60 students and 18 composing aloud protocols (from the six selected students). According to Marshall, “in general, student responses were scored lower when they remained with a summary frame, using few textual specifics and making low level inferences. They scored higher when they moved beyond a retelling to an analysis of the texts features, supporting their inferences with specific details from the texts” (p. 46). The result from the restricted writing was “predictable” with 60% of the statements interpretive and 31% descriptive. In the personal analytic writing: interpretive statements 45% with support from personal experience 20% of the time and 30% descriptive writing. Finally, in the formal analytic writing, half of the time the students’ responses were interpretive and almost half (47%) descriptive. Marshall claims the type of assignment, or prompt, affects the writing, or the choices writers’ make (p. 43). I would have expected better results of the seniors. Marshall adds that these students “employed a limited range of options, seldom breaking away from the organization and approach in which they had been schooled” (p. 53). Hence, the need for writing instruction that can produce fluent writers.

This study echoes an observation made by Applebee in his study that has stuck with me. In the early sixties, Applebee surmised that English teaching methods would continue without

much change. A rather stark comment, but Applebee goes further to say that English is a subject that would only change when individual teachers who were progressive would make important changes based on research published in professional journals and attending conferences, and those teachers less secure in their content knowledge will continue to hold on to familiar teaching methods. It is more comfortable to continue teaching from familiar methods and may be the reason teachers do not seem to have moved beyond a lecture mode of delivery and tightly controlling assignments.

Marshall (1987) incorporates several observations on future directions for research on writing: “Studies of the writing process, while including writers’ knowledge as an operating part of the models, have seldom addressed the issue of how that knowledge might change or grow as a result of the writing process itself” (p. 32). Herein is another research opportunity or to follow up Langer and Applebee’s (1986) study and the patterns found in writing and learning with multi-paragraph compositions for recall of information from texts. Marshall noticed that in 1987 while there was a “theoretical base” on writing research, little “research exists on the relationship between writing and learning” (p. 32). His next remark is directly related to my study. Marshall remarks that “the instructional context surrounding a writing activity may influence what students put into and take away from their writing efforts” and has not been researched and would add to the “slender” body of research on writing and learning (p. 32). I agree with Marshall and the instructional context is a large consideration in my study.

Martin Nystrand (1989) in *A Social-Interactive Model of Writing* claims the eighties was the decade of the “social context in the composing process” (p. 67). He proclaims a shift from things cognitive to things social. By the time of Nystrand’s article, writing had become a “respectable object for serious academic inquiry” (p. 67) as inquiry continued with programs like

*Writing Across the Curriculum* and *Writing to Learn*. Writer's *purpose*, or reason for writing, such as "to inform," "to argue," "to describe," or "to persuade," was widely hailed to be a first principle of "enlightened praxis" (Nystrand, 1989, p. 68). He believes it is writer's purpose that "energizes the system and gives shape to the emerging text" (p. 68).

Writing teachers and researchers continued on a path to broaden the scope of writing with considerations of issues such as the relationship of writers to their discourse communities (Bizzell, 1982; Brodkey, 1987; Bruffee, 1986; Faigley, 1985); and relationships of writing to reading (Bazerman, 1980; Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1984; Kucer, 1987; Nystrand, 1986; Tierney & LaZansky, 1980). What Nystrand argued for was a theory of writing that required more than an inventory of components. He writes, "Composition theory needs a principled explanation of the relationship of text to the process that generates it" (69). He continues, "Writing theorists now see the relationship between writer and audience, writer and reader, and writing as an episode of interaction. . . .informed by the discourse community to which the writer belongs" (p. 70-71).

Nystrand (1986) fleshes out his own "social model of writing" with three essential moves writers make. He says the first move writers make is to initiate written discourse: The discourse must contain a clear topic and it must clarify the genre of the text, which he calls, "metadiscoursal elements." These elements in effect provide the reader with instructions on how to "interpret the text" (p. 79). The second move writers make is to "sustain written discourse." Writers must initiate a "temporarily shared social reality (TSSR)" (p. 79). Once this is done, the writer needs to check for "reciprocity" between writer (his or her text) and the audience to make sure the text is socially situated. Finally, Nystrand states the third move writers make are elaborations. Writers must consider the proper form, how long to make the text so as not to

endanger reciprocity, and must be consistent with expectations of the reader (pp.80-81).

Nystrand calls for researchers to make plain basic principles and regularities in a relatively simple form. My study seeks to answer his call gleaning research from sociology, linguistics, composition studies, English, and education.

Hillocks (1986) concurs that expectations for writing must be clearly laid out for students, and to give “students standards to meet for each mode of writing is crucial because it gives the students an improved command of various discourse methods and helps them plan and arrange their ideas and the content of their papers” (p. 181). In his meta-analysis of 60 studies between 1962-1982, Hillocks evaluated the effects of general pedagogical approaches on the quality of student writing. Included in his study were mode of instruction, focus of instruction, revision and feedback, duration of the treatment, and the students’ grade level.

Hillocks identified four modes of instruction in the following way; first, the presentational mode, which is the teacher-lecture model that uses explicit teaching methods to deliver instruction. The teacher makes all decisions and allows students little movement. The presentational mode corresponds to the Traditional teaching prevalent in this current research study. Second and third, the natural process (originated with writer, Donald Graves) and the environmental mode, are very similar. The natural process involves writing “freedom,” where students select their own topics. The environmental mode focuses on issues related to the students’ environment and originated with Hillocks. The students write on what is important within their environment. The individualized mode has to do with the solitary writer. The student writes alone without benefit of collaboration with peers.

One of the first advocates of student writing was Donald Murray (1982). An avid writer and researcher in the fields of education and composition, believes in the possibility that writing

holds for the student. He is always writing with children and this work is no different, *Teaching the Other Self: The Writer's First Reader* (1982). Here he advocates for a “bridge” to cover the gulf between reading and writing, “For the act of writing is inseparable from the act of reading” (p. 141).

Just like reading, the ability to write well is vital for a student's future. In Murray's article it appears he's sitting amongst children having a discussion about “audience.” He asks the children, “Who do you write for?” Edward says, “I write for me, the audience of me.” Isaac adds, “I am my own first reader.” Rebecca declares, “Writers write for themselves.” Thoughtfully, Edmund posits, “I don't think I have ever written for anybody except the other in one's self” (p. 140). Murray is student-centered and realizes the value of hands-on experiences, “Books and lectures may help, but only after the student writer has been out in the bush will the student understand the kind of reading [and writing] essential for the exploration of thinking. The teacher has to be a guide who doesn't lead so much as stand behind the young explorer, pointing out alternatives only at the moment of panic” (p.142). Murray says he will “always attempt to underteach so that they [students] can overlearn” (p. 144). It is difficult to conceive that teachers have to get out of the way so that students can learn. His wisdom for teachers in this article is to bring out the “other” in the student writer. The “other” is the monitor that is within the writer who watches over the writing. To help a student become more articulate about the writing, Murray suggests having him or her write a brief statement about the draft just finished. Let the student read it to the teacher during a conference. “The other self develops confidence through the experience of being heard” (p. 146).

During the 1970s and 1980s, I show how the focus of the teaching of writing wavers back and forth from teacher-centered practices to student-centered practices, but by the late 1980s the

writing class was an eclectic, backsliding effort-less return to teaching-to-the-test. For the most part, knowledge of the writing process reached the classroom. There was much published in a decade that in turn generated public speakers, professional development, video series, and other literature on writing.

### **1990s The Pendulum Swings**

The 1990s ushered in a political turn that focused on teacher quality and students' test scores. A survey by the *National Association of Educational Progress* (NAEP, 2003) accompanied the disappointing writing assessment talked about elsewhere and asked teachers to check off what approaches they used to teach writing. It appears the terminology was preprinted and teachers simply placed check marks by their choices. Most all of the teachers who responded to the NAEP questionnaire reported using some form of the writing process research in their classrooms. For example, students may pre-write at home developing his or her ideas and write a first draft. The remaining processes are completed in class the next day. This would be acceptable because the teacher can see the students' thought processes and then be able to help the student with completing the writing assignment (peer-edit, final draft). This procedure for writing text would be considered a hybrid: a combination of at home writing and in class writing, but is not considered a student-centered approach to teaching. In a workshop writing environment, all writing is done in class. The expectations are that secondary English teachers use student-centered approaches and the writing process in a continuum of writing assignments within a comprehensive writing program for the particular grade level he or she teaches. Teachers' objectives by the State Department of Education (2007), include the use of the writing process. Called a "framework," (Cuban, 1993, p. 239) teaching objectives are developed through the *Comprehensive Curriculum* (State Department of Education, 2007).

The converse of student-centered teaching practices would be teacher-led approaches to teaching. According to Larry Cuban (1993), previous secondary English teacher, superintendent, and college professor, we see “the durability of teacher-centered practices since the turn of the century” (p.246). Characteristics of this approach include “teachers as the dispensers of knowledge”; “whole-class instruction, teachers talking most of the time while students listen, a limited range of activities done by the entire class (such as using the textbook or worksheets), and little voluntary student movement” (p. 276).

A long-time friend to writing teachers has been the *National Writing Project* (NWP), a non-profit organization based at the University of California, Berkeley. Created by former high school English teacher and prolific writer, James Gray, in 1973, with a group of teachers who got together in the Bay Area to discuss issues related to student writing. In 2003, NWP published *Because Writing Matters: Improving Student Writing in Our Schools* to document the issues surrounding writing, what we know about written language, and where we need to head with writing in American education. Executive Director, Richard Sterling (2003) reports,

The core mission of NWP has been to improve writing and learning in our schools by improving the teaching of writing. Through a teachers-teaching-teachers professional development model, the NWP disseminates the exemplary classroom practices of successful teachers in all disciplines and at all grade levels. Apart from the NWP's direct experience in working with teachers in every state . . . have also yielded a rich vein of new research about writing—how it is learned, practiced, and assessed; its impact on how children learn to read; and the sociocultural factors that influence its [writing] development. (ix)

The training consists of a teacher-led program on teaching writing, and those who participate in the programs believe that writing can be taught. The NWP author, Carl Nagin (2003), agrees with what teachers know, “Writing is a gateway for success in academia, the new workplace, and the global economy, as well as for our collective success as a participatory democracy” (p.2), and yet it is still a “neglected area of study at most of the nation’s thirteen

hundred schools” (p. 5). A student’s lack of ability to write reduces his or her chances to succeed academically and then later, professionally.

There is such a heavy connotation associated with someone’s inability to read *and* write that is unfair, but still exists. The judgment is if someone can not read or write, he or she is ignorant. Nagin reports, “Sixty-nine percent of fourth grade teachers report spending ninety minutes or less per week on writing activities. Many of these activities require only a brief response. . . .” (p.12). The focus on writing in schools at all grade levels should be on writing as a learning tool. Researchers found that writing can “develop higher-order thinking skills: analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating, and interpreting” (Nagin, 2003, p. 13).

Lisa Scherff and Carolyn Piazza (2005) conduct a telling study taken from one of the author’s previous experience as a classroom teacher. Piazza had taught at her old high-school in Florida. She remembers when she was a student having to write using “portfolios” to assess her writing, and later as an experienced teacher in Florida highs schools, she’s seen the way writing is taught depends on standardized assessments and whether students can “pass the tests” (272). They claim in observing teachers they are “struggling to reconcile process approaches with rigid product formulas designed to satisfy requirements” (p. 273). After surveying in high schools classes in four regions, they asked the students questions about writing practices, particularly what opportunities were available to practice and learn writing. The survey targeted across grade levels and tracks. The surveys were pilot tested twice at a local high school in grades 9 through 11 with favorable response other than having to revise some of the wording. There was a second pilot test at the same school, but with only 18 students, with positive remarks about the language in the survey. Validity and reliability were established using Cronback’s alpha which measured internal consistency and item relatedness. Researchers mailed 3,763 surveys to principals to

distribute to English teachers to distribute to students. The response rate was 47% (1,801 surveys). However, 504 students wrote comments and these were coded according to qualitative analysis. The first question asked, “According to students, how often do they write, and what kinds of writing do they do in English language arts classes? Response to literature was the genre “almost every week.” Expository, persuasive, and summaries occurred “once or twice a month.” Narrative and comparison/contrast were reported as “once or twice a quarter.” Research papers represented “once or twice a year.” “Five types of writing—dramatic, poetry, personal, responses to art or music, and business letters—were ‘never or hardly ever’ done at all” (p. 283).

One student commented on his survey, “We need to write more fiction. There were far too many five-paragraph essays with banal topics to actually feel any true connection with the work.” The most alarming finding here is the “never or hardly ever” types of writing: business letters, drama, poetry, personal writing, responses to art or music. All of these genres are student favorites and align well for authentic writing experiences for real audiences. One of the four schools is an IB school where one student wrote, “Unfortunately, IB has destroyed all creativity I once possessed. I never had the chance to write essays, poetry, or any other such creative work. Instead we got to write about symbols and structure . . . They have turned art into math and science.” Personal writing includes journal writing. One student wrote, “We didn’t do journals this year to write our thoughts whether personal or for literature analysis. I think it’s a good idea for students to write their opinions” (Scherff and Piazza, 2005, p. 287).

Question number two on the survey asks, “Do students believe that their teachers provide models? Models would include professional or student samples of a similar assignment so students can “see” a visual to help them understand teachers’ expectations. Thirty-four percent reported their teachers did use these kinds of models with 28% stating on “a monthly basis.”

Here is a student comment that relates to my study. The student, a senior, wrote, “Never before have I actually had a teacher explain writing in a clear understandable manner; someone who helped me improve my writing skills and knowledge” (Scherff and Piazza, 2005, p. 288). The fact that a senior made this comment reveals there have been many years of missed opportunities to aid this student in developing his writing skills.

The survey’s question number three relates to my study, “How often do students report taking part in process-writing activities? The students reported that “few arranged for students to read each other’s papers and make suggestions and improvements.” The authors’ remark, “Our analysis found little process writing occurring in classrooms, in contrast to calls in the [professional journals] for experiences with brainstorming, revising, and publishing.” One student comments, “We wrote about two essays a quarter, but they weren’t explained in great detail. We didn’t check and grade each others’ papers, or learn any different writing techniques. That would have helped many students, myself included” (Scherff and Piazza, 2005, p. 288).

The last student who commented seems to be familiar with the language associated with writing process activities because of the phrase, “check each other’s papers,” but what is worst of all, it appears they want help with writing and did not get it. The authors comment that, “In spite of advances in writing research, little has changed in many high schools . . .we need to investigate, once again, if a process/product pendulum swing has replaced” (Scherff and Piazza, 2005, p.290) what was called current-traditional instruction, or focusing on the product instead of the process.

While the NAEP (2003) results and the writing of Scherff and Piazza (2005) reveal the need to understand how writing is taught in the secondary classrooms, the latter study would have been fortified with the addition of teachers’ responses. My study will be strengthened by

data triangulation from the survey responses, teacher observations, and teacher interviews. I agree that we need to investigate writing instruction and my study seeks to do this. In addition, I am interested to see if the teachers in my study use the writing process since it is written explicitly in the Comprehensive Curriculum. My study will also look at the context for writing instruction and teacher attitudes toward writing instruction, which both of the above studies overlook.

The research in writing closed the 1990s with questions as to whether the process movement was still the dominant mode for teaching writing. Research findings show little process approaches taking place in the classroom. The latter part of the 1990s would see a burgeoning technology movement evidenced by the placement of computers in many English classrooms. By the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, many students would possess home computers, yet a digital divide still exists between more affluent school districts and smaller rural districts that limits student access to computer technologies.

### **Writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Writing in secondary schools had progressed through ideological, political, and social movements over the last forty years, but it would be the technology movement that would have the potential to completely overhaul the way the teaching of writing would be conducted. Writing with technology turned the disciplines upon their heads from the perspective that the movement was basically student-driven. School administrators and teachers would begin a race to keep up with their students' computer knowledge and self-sponsored writing using tools to communicate with their friends. The challenge for teachers to keep up with their students' technical savvy is still on with no sign of abating anytime soon. Researchers also began to turn their gaze to the intersections of writing and technology.

In the English classroom, curricula for writing with technology, or multi-modal literacies, would aim to educate students into a future filled with digital tools and types of writing that might be required in college courses, and more broadly, the workplace. A new vocabulary would ensue with new words from wiki to twitter and professional organizations would be quick to issue position papers. The *National Council of Teachers of English* (NCTE) heralds the technology wave as, “Writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” and explains the fluidity of literacy,

Literacy has always been a collection of cultural and communicative practices shared among members of particular groups. As society and technology change, so does literacy. Because technology has increased the intensity and complexity of literate environments, the twenty-first century demands that a literate person possess a wide range of abilities and competencies, many literacies. These literacies—from reading online newspapers to participating in virtual classrooms—are multiple, dynamic, and malleable. (NCTE, retrieved 12.1.08)

Journal articles in writing with technology increased as researchers seized the opportunity to study this emergent phenomenon.

According to the NCTE (2005) position paper on “Writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” teachers must “accommodate the technology explosion.” The sad reality is that not all schools or homes of our students possess the new technologies. Within classrooms, the position paper explains, teachers can still teach the multi-modal capabilities without the latest technologies through picture books to consider the visual aspects of writing and sketching or storyboarding for students to link the visual and verbal arrangement of ideas. Nevertheless, in a multi-literacies world, students will consider the *design* of written communication along with the rhetorical elements of purpose and audience. The term associated with the combining of technologies and new genres for writing is considered “new” literacies; however, these new literacies “are rooted also in older ones (NCTE, retrieved 12/1/08).”

In her presidential address as editor for the NCTE publication, *Research in the Teaching of Writing*, Yancey (2009) would early pen a name for the 21<sup>st</sup> century writing era as, *The Age of Composition* (p.316). In her article she gives a brief history of writing and describes the impact of writing on society from the *Declaration of Independence* to the current President of the United States' autobiographical monograph to demonstrate how writing affects "agency, individual and collective." Interestingly, in her address she also educates on reasons why writing does not get the respect and attention it deserves. Yancey theorizes that the emotive connections tied to writing are typically painful associations from childhood memories of disgraced penmanship, embarrassing misspellings, and images of the solitary writer in "hospital beds" denoting isolation, loneliness, and despair. She contrasts these disappointing connections with writing to the satisfaction associated with reading; for example, the intimacy of childhood bedtime stories and the early locus of reading tied to the home, church and family. Yancey states, "In the early part of the century, much instruction in writing was no more than instruction in penmanship. Much as in the case of grammar today—when grammar is identified *as* writing (emphasis in original, pp.317-19)."

To add to the poor connotations associated with writing, Yancey (2009) adds the current criticism of "writing-as-testing," or when students regurgitate facts back to the teacher as a check on learning, and the teaching of formula writing for standardized tests. Putting all of the poor connotations aside, writing's earliest entry into the academy set it on this dreary skills path. Disciplinary content entered academia with a philosophy and pedagogy. Writing did not begin in such a way; in fact, writing was immediately remedial as Harvard professors were dumbfounded at the elite sons' poor writing skills, thus, writing instruction began and "tended to take on the

colors of the time, primarily its identification as a rudimentary skill and its predominant role in the testing of students” (p.320).

Yancey (2009) sees the joining of technology and writing as opportunities for students to compose with multiple medias. She wonders what will happen to the viable “print-based model(s) that universally culminate in publication,” and whether or not the “old” literacies should be made to fit with the “new” or should the model(s) of composing “begin anew?” One important observation she makes is that teachers should lay hold on these multi-modalities to use with composing and work towards developing a “fully articulated research base” that includes a “planned curriculum that have been missing from composition and its instruction for over a hundred years” (p.333). In other words, learn from the mistakes the field made when writing became an object of study.

As the research in technology and writing begins, warnings are being issued from scholars to begin the process of articulating such a philosophy. In the following articles, selected to show a range of issues with the technology explosion, researchers are investigating inside and outside the classrooms for evidences of students’ use of technology. It is an era of reform, and education is trying hard to recapture the imaginations of our students.

Agee and Altarriba (2009) write that despite the popularly held view that adolescents are immersed in technology, and especially outside of school, their research shows this may not be the case. They respond to an article by Bruce’s (2002) who proposed to “make sense of changes in literacy, we need to develop better ways of conceptualizing technologies in relation to epistemological and social processes” (p.12). Agee and Altarriba basically say, too late, it is here now: “The changes in literacy are already here and that students, even younger adolescents, have already developed practices and conceptions that may not fit popular perspectives of adolescents

as users of computer technologies” (p.392). They found that students’ technology usage is a “more complex picture” than even they had supposed and argue for a “more pluralistic literacy education in schools” (p.365). Their population for this study was 189 sixth and seventh graders from two suburban schools. Participation was voluntary and the mean ages ranged from 11-15. They combined a survey of these students with a qualitative research design of observations and interviews of 24 students. They wanted to know students’ use of technologies as part of everyday literacy and across grade and reading levels.

Agee and Altarriba’s (2009) findings revealed that not all students are interested in computers or feel competent in their use. Sixth graders were less interested in computer technologies than seventh graders. A majority of each group of students did not write email: 54% of sixth and 60% of seventh graders indicated they sent no email. However, “proficient seventh-grade readers showed significantly more email use than sixth-grade proficient readers” (p.376). Spontaneous and short writing spurts, many unfinished, that is characteristic of Instant messaging (IM) was preferred by both groups over writing email, yet “about 37% of sixth and seventh graders indicated they did not use IM.” Most surprising was that “over 65% of sixth graders reported not playing computer games at all” (p.377). This trend was reversed for seventh graders (41% did not play). Both grade levels of students reported using the computer for information purposes, either for a school assignment or personal interest. Both groups reported dissatisfaction with reading on the computer, the brightness of the screen, distraction of advertisements and pop-ups, and being seated too long at the computer was “uncomfortable” (p.378).

The findings of Agee and Altarriba suggest that “new” literacy instruction should consider the variables in student usage of technologies and yet address these issues so that

conceptions for early adolescents with new technologies are seen as facilitating “learning in a multimodal world” (p.393). Educators would be wise to consider the variables as well since the popular notion is that most students are well versed in modern technologies. While sixth and seventh graders are at the beginning of their secondary years, the following study shows how older secondary students express high-levels of interest in technology use.

Bruce (2009) writes of the high interest students’ exhibit when producing videos and attempts to draw parallels for the processes of composing videos and composing written texts. His examination of classroom texts (usually in the communications studies), he found video producing depicted as a linear process: “The stages of producing a video tend to be described as following the sequential order of pre-production, production, and post-production” (p.429) with little description for these stages. The purpose of his study was to move away from these stage and phase descriptions of video production.

In a yearlong study, he examined the video production processes of three small groups of high school students in a Communications II elective class. Each group consisted of three to four students and their assignment was to produce two videos: a documentary and a music video. . His methodology included elements from writing research in “think aloud and retrospective think aloud protocols” to highlight the processes students used to create videos. Students would talk out loud as they planned the video and during the actual production they were tape recorded. During the first viewing of their finished videos, students’ reactions were recorded. In addition, Bruce video recorded the students as the students produced their video. He also used observations and kept a researcher’s journal where he daily recorded the classroom incidences. All students in the communications program (82) completed a survey.

Bruce created from his research a model for video production that depicts the recursive nature of producing videos contrary to previous research. His findings include that producing videos is a “complex, recursive process that allows for sequential multimodal representation of thoughts and ideas” (p.426). While he admits there are fundamental differences between video composition and written composition, he believes English classrooms can benefit by the use of videos in order to capture the high level of interest video production holds for students. He currently works with teachers in integrating videos with English content.

Initially, Bruce (2009) was intrigued by students’ self-motivation to produce videos. Students were willing to devote long hours on their projects using their free time, after school, and on weekends. Previous research on using videos in classrooms gave several reasons for students’ inclination toward producing videos such as setting, a video production classroom set-up is different from a regular classroom, or pedagogy, for students are able to use their “out-of-school literacies expertise,” (p.427) among other explanations. He felt students’ high level of interest had to be more complex than from pedagogy alone.

The role of video production has not typically been considered a viable tool for literacy, however, Bruce claims over the last decade, this perception has changed with more research now focusing on inclusion of video production within the English classroom. This may be the reason for the outward expressions he sees in students wanting to participate in this medium of expression that previously was not available to them. As this technology gains ground, he believes educators should take another look at the “practices by which students compose with print and video” (p.428).

Additional findings from Bruce’s research that may add to the student appeal include “expansion of compositional choices,” video producing “demonstrates the verisimilitude of

students' initial concept to videotaped image," and "highlights the visuality in students' representations of ideas, and provides research methodological considerations" (p.426). Our students do react to visual images and combining such technology within the English classroom should appeal to all students. Yet, students do want to compose written texts, and what follows is a study that reveals the extent to which our students desire to compose and compose well in order to communicate. Some of our students use self-sponsored writing away from school to compose literature and reach global audiences.

Black (2009) conducted research using qualitative methods in an "online fan fiction community." In so doing, she takes the familiar protocols of participant observer, interview, member check and others, and applied them to an online host. In her study, she follows three female English Language Learners (ELL) writings for three years. Participants in this study include Grace, who was located in the Philippines with Filipino as her first language. Grace began learning English at age seven in Philippine schools. The two other participants in Black's study are Nanako, who moved from Shanghai with her parents to Canada and started learning English at age eleven; and Cherry-Chan, a second generation immigrant, whose mother and brother moved to Canada from Taiwan while her father remained to work in Taiwan.

These three young authors write fiction in an online community specific for fans of novels and movies to "gain satisfaction" by rewriting story endings, play with characters' reactions, or completely change the stories, and as they do so they are also practicing and gaining fluency in English. In this forum, writers can recreate plotlines, use original plots as models, imbed music, poetry, or even emoticons to substantially change the original, and in so doing, they are modeling literacy practices that will further their academic accomplishments. What was common to all of the writers in the fan fiction site was the far reaching impact of their writings:

they received thousands of reviews of their stories from over twenty-one countries. In one of Grace's stories, a reviewer was translating her story into French. These adolescents used their writing to "enact cosmopolitan identities, make transnational social connections, and experiment with new genres and formats for composing (p.397)." This study shows the diversity of adolescent use of technology that is at once global in its reach; yet localized through the individuals' interest in particular genres.

Interestingly, the authors in Black's (2009) study began writing online as early as 2001, and substantiates Agee and Altarriba's (2009) comment that youths' actual usage of technology may not "fit popular perspectives" (p.392). In Black's study, ELL writers were composing self-sponsored literature, and without fear of censure (grades) they were free to write, create, and imagine in English as a second or third language. Black does not mention, so one has to wonder if the teachers of Grace, Nanako, and Cherry-Chan knew of their highly literate extracurricular endeavors.

## **Conclusion**

In summation, these reviews are described, in part, to show a history of some of the major works that have influenced the teaching of writing. In the latest research for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, that history is just beginning as the field has embraced what may be a new way English is presented in classrooms. The current research shows the diversity among popular notions and actual youth's involvement with technologies. The Agee and Altarriba (2009) and Black (2009) studies challenge the producer/consumer façade. Within a global perspective, researchers must remain searching for evidence of all of our students' literate lives and how they do and do not engage with materials in online spaces. Further, researchers must investigate the connections between the acquisition of print-based writing and the "new" literacies so there is not the

perpetuation of literate young adults and those who are not, and to guarantee that those who are technically sophisticated can also compose in print in academic and non-academic contexts.

### **Chapter III: Methodology**

Over the last forty years, research in writing has resulted in writing process pedagogy; yet studies over the last fifteen years have shown inconsistent use of this pedagogy in the secondary English classrooms. The rationale behind the design for this study is influenced by Patton (2002) as he explains how a qualitative study can legitimately be positioned in several ways, but cautions researchers not to report from many, but only one theoretical background for making meaning. He poses “foundational questions” (p.114) that when answered leads to the most appropriate framework. The following exhibits the answers to Patton’s “foundational questions” as applied to this research study in the form of *statements*: The teachers in this setting have constructed their reality of teaching writing as it exists in this study; they [the people] have reported their world-views through their perceptions, “truths,” explanations, and beliefs; and this paradigm will analyze the consequences of these constructions for their behaviors and for those with whom they interact, their students (pp.96-115). Through this process, the decision was to use a Constructivist framework and ethnography’s qualitative methodology.

#### **Research Design**

This study seeks to understand how writing is currently being taught in secondary classrooms in south Louisiana through the methodology of ethnography; that is, the “task of describing a culture” (Spradley & McCurdy, 1975, p.40). This study will highlight two case-study teachers’ writing pedagogy. In addition, a larger picture of English teachers’ writing pedagogy is captured through a survey from three school districts. Through the researcher’s role of *participant observer* in the “natural environments” of the teachers’ classrooms and formal interviews, the sociocultural context will be descriptively interpreted for its impact on instructional practices.

This study uses a narrative format and qualitative methods to present the case-study teachers' writing pedagogies through "discovering and describing what people know and how they use their knowledge to organize their behavior." Patton's *process approach* (p.439) was used for the ordering of the two cases that led to making meaning of the fieldwork in this research study. The "illustrative and systematic approach" applied by Spradley & McCurdy (1975) to language conventions in the reporting of ethnography with *cover terms*, *typologies*, and *taxonomies* are used in the current study to illustrate the language captured in the classrooms and displayed in tables and diagrams (pp.40-43).

The following sections will detail the methods used for gathering data that came from all sources in order to answer the four research questions. The data gathered includes the survey instrument, participant observations, formal and informal interviews, original documents, and researcher reflections. Also explained in the following sections are the approaches used in the development and distribution of the survey instrument (Tourangeau *et al*, 2002), the coding efforts and analysis, and finally, the issues of trustworthiness.

### **Survey Instrument: Plans and Procedures**

The *Survey of Teaching Writing* was conducted in three districts and was an enhancement to the qualitative study, for it extends, refutes, and supports the case-study teachers' responses, and serves as a check to triangulate data. To survey the English teachers, contacts were made by phone and letters were sent to the district supervisors (see Appendix C for Sample Letter to District Supervisors) for each of the three districts. The district supervisor was the contact person who gave explicit details on how he or she would handle the data collection process. Therefore, the requested copies were mailed directly to the district supervisors. The follow-up calls for the surveys took place in October through January, 2008. All surveys had been completed by

teachers and returned to this researcher by the supervisors by February, 2008. A set of the completed surveys were made for safekeeping, the original set was color coded with three different colors for the three districts with accompanying key, and then mailed to the computer analyst in March, 2008. The analyst emailed the results, returned original copies, and the results were interpreted by this researcher. The formal observations will be a check against the responses made by the case-study teachers to the survey questions. (See Appendix A for the tabulation of responses from all districts.)

The survey instrument was analyzed to determine the frequency in how teachers say they teach writing, how the teachers determine interventions for students' writing development, their professional development history in writing, and students' attitudes toward writing, and other related writing experiences.

### **Survey Instrument: Development**

The survey instrument was developed using two sources: the primary source was Tourangeau *et al*, (2002) *The Psychology of Survey Responses*. The secondary source used as a resource: *NCTE's Beliefs about the Teaching of Writing* (2004) written by the Executive Committee's Writing Study Group. The term used in survey research for the person completing the survey is "*respondent*" (Tourangeau *et al*, 2002, p.92). The term used in this research for the person administering the survey is the "*researcher*." This research study's survey consists of fifteen questions and is designed to take teachers no more than five minutes to complete. As a pilot test, four English teachers took between two minutes and fifty seconds to four minutes to complete the survey. The language on a few of the questions was changed for *clarity* based upon their suggestions.

*Decomposition* was the method used to aid recall from respondents. Decomposition is the method of “breaking an overall question into more manageable pieces” (p. 94). Researchers say this “usually produces better results” (p. 95) than questions that might have embedded parts. Decomposition aids in eliminating response error in the following ways: “It clarifies what is included in the question, provides an organized framework for responding, and reduces the computational burden on the respondent” (p. 163). In order to improve accuracy, Tourangeau *et al.*, (2002) suggest checking “survey results against another source” (p. 163). The survey will be a part of triangulation of the qualitative research methods: classroom observations and formal interviews of the case-study teachers. Since many obstacles can get in the way of truthful responses, careful attention was paid to the order the items were listed on the survey, the language used in each question, and intentioned simplicity in sentence construction.

The survey instrument consists of fourteen “factual” questions and one “opinion” question (Tourangeau *et al.*, 2002, p.14). The opinion question is referred to by published expert authors’ as *attitude* questions. Attitude questions consist of “an association between some object or person—the target of the attitude—and an evaluation of it. Mention the target of the attitude and the attitude is activated; all that’s left is to report it” (p. 167). The opinion question asks the teacher, “Do students have a positive attitude toward writing?” There were two purposes for this question: first, students’ general attitude can be a reflection of the teacher’s attitude; and second, it will give me an idea of the classrooms’ climate for writing. In response to the first purpose, this research study did not allow for a focus on students’ general attitudes, so a response to this question about student’s attitude is unknown; and second, the survey responses did give me an idea of the classroom climate for writing.

Developing a survey instrument is a complicated matter and should include researching the technical aspects of a survey. If the instrument is flawed, the results can be inaccurate. Consequently, the evaluation of the questions asked and how to ask the questions included a careful examination of existing findings based on a cognitive model of the survey response process.

There are considerations surrounding the questions for the respondents that can affect the survey results. For example, attitude questions are typically answered in less than five seconds (Tourangeau et al., 2002, p.14). The experts also state there are issues related to respondents “misreporting on sensitive topics.” Therefore, the survey developed did not contain sensitive questions. The respondents were made to feel confident the information they reported (self-administered) was being kept confidential. Misreporting was leaved by the fact that the survey was “self-administered” and “anonymous” (p.260).

### **Selection of Case-Study Participants**

I followed Patton’s (2002) *purposeful sampling* that focuses on “selecting information-rich cases” in order to “illuminate the questions under study” (p.230). The process allows for the flexibility required to coordinate multiple schedules from the pool. One of the most valuable attributes of the selected teachers for this case-study research is a positive attitude towards the teaching of writing. Several behaviors will help denote this characteristic in the survey responses: these behaviors will include teaching parts or all of the *Writing Process* (WP) (Emig, 1971) and demonstrate in teaching the processes attributed to student-led teaching that include students in the learning activities through a myriad of old and new opportunities. These student-led opportunities would invoke teaching that includes the students’ lived experiences as cultural topics: students’ traditions, forms of sports and entertainment, icons, and current affinities of

love, friendships, peer relations, for the list includes many activities to engage students. Students' cultural topics can be used to solicit their participation in learning writing strategies that uncover the benefits to them. The survey's question for attitudes toward writing should elicit some response to evidence a conversation taking place about writing. The survey's question about the teacher's methodology for responding to student work should include collaborative engagements and teacher conferences. These processes are attributed to the social nature of learning and determining "audience awareness." The WP is meant to be topical headings for which teachers complete with knowledge of strategies and knowledge of current students.

For the case-study teachers to respond on their survey according to the above attributes may indicate they are advocates for teaching writing. As an advocate for writing, my research would include the struggles teachers who want to teach writing have in the classroom. If proponents of writing are having problems, students of lesser advocates may be experiencing little to no writing instruction. It would be important for the research to evidence the struggle to provide writing instruction for students. As an additional criterion, I would like to attract a contrastive element among the teachers. This element could be in years of experience (not to include outliers on both ends of the spectrum: soon to retire or a new teacher with less than two years experience), background training, or some other contrastive element.

In a recursive fashion, Spradley and McCurdy, (1975) advocate a return to the "ground covered" for data analysis and a "breaking down of basic elements" in order to systematically "take things apart for more scrutiny" (p.80). This "breaking down" begins by preparing the research for analysis and followed Patton's (2002) guidelines for case analyses where each case contains all applicable field data in order to "make sense" (p.436) of the data. Further workings of this process required the chronological ordering of each case (based on school days) that put

the field notes in perspective, although segments of each case had been read many times. The extraction of all of Mrs. Jones' research data from all of Mrs. Hairston's research data involved copying documents that were intermingled; for example, the formal interviews were copied for both cases. The interviews (electronic copy) were formatted using the research questions as headings with the teacher's responses combined which was helpful in using cross-case analysis. Therefore, the final case records of the two case-study teachers included field notes and documents from classroom observations, formal interviews transcribed for each teacher and their combined responses, researcher's reflections, and the two case-study teachers, self-identified, surveys. The case-study teachers were identified by their giving of contact information to indicate interest in becoming a case-study teacher. Unfortunately, this would not be the final make-up of the case records.

The original contact to the two selected case-study teachers was by email in August, 2007 in order to make introductions and confirm the observations of their writing pedagogy. This contact was followed by a personal contact made prior to the beginning of the formal observations. The purpose for this brief personal contact was to personally settle any qualms that may have existed about the observations and work out the logistics to the second field site (teacher's school).

In the beginning, the two case-study teachers that were selected (based upon criteria from the survey) taught at two different locations just within a few miles interval. One "test" trip was made with minutes to spare. However, not realized at the time was the time it would take to sign out in the main office behind parent traffic and the late morning traffic in order to arrive at the second school before the next class period—I did not make it and was about seven minutes late. Seven minutes "tardy" is too late, for this research to run smoothly the researcher needs to either

enter with the students or be seated when they arrive. Otherwise, someone entering class late would be a disruption. After having this discussion with district supervisor who was able to offer me another teacher who similar attributes—she loved teaching writing. Fortunately, this learning experience only cost the research study one day to contact my major professor for advice, meet with the district supervisor of the research sites, and gain the contact information to meet with the potentially “new” case-study teacher. By the third day of the study, a very gracious Mrs. Jones would be a participant in this research study and the second case-study teacher. She called me from school and we discussed observing her second period class.

During our phone conversation, I was pleased to discover she met several criteria for a contrast with Mrs. Hairston: length of time teaching, background in teacher education, and she “enjoyed” teaching writing. I asked her how I might have overlooked her survey and she reported she did not remember filling one out and that she “must have been absent the day it was distributed. Mrs. Jones completed the survey on the first day of observations.” During the first day’s field observation, both teachers signed the consent form: *Ethnography of Secondary English Writing Teachers*.

The two case-study teachers now meet the criteria established for selection through their contrastive elements and will be called by different terms for ease in reporting the data. Mrs. Jones (hereafter called, Teacher A) is nearing ten years experience in teaching and Mrs. Hairston (hereafter called, Teacher B) is approaching five years. In addition, they come to teaching with different backgrounds: Teacher A would have been considered a “traditional” education student and Teacher B, a “non-traditional, alternate education” student, according to education terminology. Both of their responses evidenced teaching the entire writing process and other positive responses on the survey. From their participation, I hoped to gain additional perspectives

from one teacher who began teaching immediately after student teaching and college, and a teacher who had real-world experience, and no student teaching experience, to form her teaching-world view.

The time frame for the fieldwork included the months of November through January 2008. I observed a total of forty-six classroom hours. In addition, depending on their duty responsibilities, approximately 45 minutes was spent with one or the other teacher “doing duty” outside, in the halls, or in the cafeteria to gain anecdotal information, and ask questions. Two separate one hour planning periods were used for teachers’ interviews. On many occasions I walked the campus taking in the ebb and flow and scenery mindful this was an important part of their cultural context. The amount of time spent doing duty, conducting interviews, or walking the campus were not used in the observation hours, but could easily add another fifteen or more hours. Working on the teachers’ request, I did not attend their classrooms during final examination days (third week of December) and there was one additional holiday, *Martin Luther King Day* in which there was no school. Interviewing the case-study participants took place over a two day period during their planning period at the teachers’ request. Attempts to schedule interviews before school or after school were rejected.

The concept, “teaching writing” was used as a lens to comb through the daily activities in the written field work and the teachers’ formal interviews. Interviews were conducted during the teachers’ planning periods, at the request of the case-study teachers, on two separate days. The one hour interviews were recorded and transcribed. Data from the interviews were used to respond to the two themes developed from coding analysis.

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

Classroom observations, classroom artifacts, and researcher's reflections were collected following Patton's (2002) process method during the field work of the classroom observations. The goals for collecting the data were twofold: first, to gain a sense of the context where teaching occurs and the practices of teaching writing of these two case-study teachers and had to occur within their classroom environments; secondly, the goal was to signal to students a persona of the researcher that reflected an administrator doing their job in partnership with their teacher. I did not want the students to feel a need to compete with the teacher in performance and was best accomplished by not being overtly attentive to the students and intentionally not making eye contact but remaining focused on the teacher. I also tried to be as unobtrusive as possible by writing most of the period, and when no writing was necessary, my eyes remain focused on the teacher's presence. After a short time in the classroom, students carried on as usual.

After returning home from the field work, classroom notes were put in two one-inch binders in order to facilitate the access of daily field work. Attention was made on careful documentation in a consistent format for the analysis to come. The first day's scribing was to record the schematic of the room, placement of object, teacher's routines and teaching procedures and content. The routines were recorded as a format that would remain fixed so the focus could then turn to the details. Details of interest were of teacher's behaviors, mannerisms, personality, and routines and of course every word the teacher uttered. The researcher's reflections were written on loose-leaf paper and filed at the end of the day in the back of Teacher B's binder.

It was soon realized the handling of the paper flow would require some order. In a home office, wire baskets were labeled for materials garnered during the observations, such as, copies

of lesson plans, school newspapers, and occasional copies of student work. Each teacher had their own baskets. Students' work was requested only when the example could be provided in support of a lesson plan for writing. I remained alert for any artifact that could be copied in support of the research study. During the observations the teachers gave me items to view of recent accomplishments from students' work that were executed prior to these observations: folders of grammar activities and holidays essays, but these were not requested as examples of work reflecting the period of the research observations. The same occurred for teachers' lesson plans, they were viewed since the start of school to gain a sense of the teaching progression, but copies were made only for the period of the observations. By the end of the observation period, baskets kept the paperwork organized by teacher.

No analysis was done during the observation period; after all, I really did not know what I was looking for. I did have some ideas that were sensed during the field work and these thoughts were recorded in the researcher's reflections, but they were more sensory data. I did not want to fix any definite paths in my mind that could influence the openness for which the study required, and preferring instead to wait to see what the data would reveal. When it came time to sort through the documents, all types were stapled or paper clipped together, but remained separated by teacher through the analysis project.

**Coding Procedure.** Techniques for coding analysis are described by Patton (2002) as "across cases" that become part of the results of "cross-case analysis" (p.440) of the classroom observations and the formal interviews. This process includes looking for "variations" and "patterns of [writing beliefs and pedagogies] experiences" (p. 438). The field data consisted of classroom observations, formal interviews, anecdotal evidence from mini-interviews, and teachers' school documents which were used for cross-case analysis. Patton's "topics" as

*message chunks* are included with the formal interview questions that “constitute a descriptive analytical framework for analysis” (p.440) and is illustrated in Chapter IV. The classroom observations were chosen for analysis as these data were of the teacher in a natural environment. Since the interview transcripts were of questions compiled earlier and therefore are guided responses and not in a natural environment, they were used for the “teachers’ words” that add to the classroom observations. Any discrepancies are so noted in the Findings section of Chapter IV. For the interview’s questions, the teachers were told to elaborate on any question they desired; however, the teachers had determined to conduct the research questions during their “planning periods” so there was a time limit imposed by the teachers. The researcher’s design and implementing of research data supports the notion that “Qualitative inquiry is not a single, monolithic approach to research and evaluation” (Patton, 2002, p.76).

The use of Patton’s (2002) *sensitizing concept* as a lens to select tropes that coalesced with the study and resulted in the concept, “teaching writing,” to pin point more effectively and analyze the data along with the rereading of the classroom observations and interviews in the order of their actual occurrence. Each chunk was written as a list on a separate sheet of paper. This listing was evaluated for concepts related to the research questions, which are included in the interview questions and embedded the *Writing Process*. All chunks were prescribed acronyms to aid in identifying. Some examples of chunks leading to categories include TLI—Teacher-led instruction, TE—Teacher Edits, GDOL— Grammar Instruction D.O.L, Po P—Parts of Process, HWP—Heuristics for WP, PW—pre-writing, and DR—drafting from WP. These categories were grouped into two larger categories of the following: one category for Case-Study Teachers’ Types of Instruction and the second category for Case-Study Teachers Use of the Five Parts of Writing Process. The later category would change. The outlier, Relates to Students

World, later would be added to the category: *Traditional Teaching Methods*. Elements for the category Student-led Instruction appears early on to occur with less frequency than other categories.

Most of this process required the back and forth investigations between the listing and the original field notes for clarity of what the term entailed. The two largest categories were turned into analytical statements. After it became clear to me the types of instruction each case-study teacher used, the obvious question became, why? Why do the teachers expound upon a particular “type” of instruction? I read the data once again for category, TLI and SLI and the answers fell according to specific teachers who used a particular type of instruction, but did not give definitive answers to the why question, so I turned to the interviews. In the interviews were the answers to the question and the guiding forces behind each teacher’s pedagogy. This analysis resulted in a more thorough analytical statement: *Personal Beliefs Guide Teachers’ Choices in Writing Pedagogy*. The second statement became *Traditional Teaching Methods*. It also became clear through working with the classroom observations and the reading of their interviews, there was a disruption between the two. It may be helpful to see this process as a listing in ordinal format:

CODING PROCESS “Teaching Writing”:

1. Separate all data by case-study teacher and put in order by date.
2. Evaluate each case using “sensitizing concept,” teaching writing.
4. Identify message chunks and write them in margins of field notes and interviews.
5. Allocate message chunks into emergent categories.
6. Write *working* analytical statements for categories. Ask *Why* Question?
6. Repeat numbers 4 and 5; Reword analytical statement.

7. On a separate sheet of paper list the final two themes with message chunks.

Cultural categories or themes (coded language for teaching writing) were located in both classroom observations and interviews, “Themes are a postulate or position declared or implied and usually controlling behavior and usually stimulating activity, which is tacitly approved or openly promoted in a society” (p.675). After developing themes, in one case, the theme appeared to be incomplete. The use of a Patton’s (2002) sensitizing concept (teaching writing) helped to pinpoint the coding to answer the *why*; *why* did the teachers chose particular classroom pedagogies? The use of Patton’s concept contributed to a more thorough theme, for in this process, was the “breaking down of basic elements” to “[take] things apart for more scrutiny” (p.80).

**Timeline.**

<b>10/ 2007</b>	<b>Survey instrument mailed to three district supervisors for the three school districts’ English teachers.</b>
<b>10/ 2007</b>	<b>Follow-up phone calls to district supervisors to make sure surveys were delivered to teachers and there were no questions.</b>
<b>12/ 2007</b>	<b>Follow-up phone call to district supervisors to see if surveys sent out. They will not be sent out until January, 2008.</b>
<b>1/2008</b>	<b>Follow-up phone call to district supervisors to check on survey. They have been delivered to teachers but not all back yet.</b>
<b>2/ 2008</b>	<b>All surveys arrive at my home. Make one complete set for safekeeping. Color-code a set.</b>
<b>3/2008</b>	<b>Mail color-coded surveys to analyst/ Analyst returns surveys to me.</b>

**Interviews.** Interviews were held on two separate days during the teacher’s regular planning period that lasted fifty minutes each. The teachers requested a copy of the interview questions prior to the interviews and their request was granted. The reasons they gave for wanting a copy of the questions included the following, “to make some notes so I don’t forget anything I want to say,” and “to jot down some thoughts so we can get through them all during the one period.” Time constraints were clearly on their mind. Originally, I had asked each

teacher to meet either before school or after school for their interviews. My thinking was they would be more relaxed without the pressures of their teaching responsibilities and initially they agreed. Later, both requested the interviews be held during their planning periods and this is how they were conducted. Conducting interviews during their planning periods is not an ideal situation. We were all rushed and it seemed to hamper any elaborations on their part.

The case-study teacher and researcher sat in two students' desks pulled up across one from the other. A tape cassette recorder was placed on a third desk nearby and used to tape the teachers' responses. Within twenty minutes of the interview, the questions stopped so the tape device could be checked to make sure it was recording. There were no interruptions during Teacher A's interview. During Teacher B's interview the same child interrupted, twice, looking for Teacher B. Both times about the library, obviously, Teacher B had told the student she would meet her in the library because she told the student, "I'll be with you in a little while." She (Teacher B) apologized, and I told her we could finish the interview at another time. She said, "No, she can wait." I felt rushed after that point.

The two cassettes were not dropped off for transcribing until the observations were complete. In addition to the hard copies, an electronic copy of the interviews was provided by the transcriptionist. This electronic copy was used to combine the teachers' responses according to each interview question. By combining both case-study teachers' responses to each question, their experiences and perspectives were obvious. This was indispensable to analyzing their reactions to the teaching of writing and preparing the final document (See Appendix B for Interview Questions).

**Triangulation of Data.** Triangulation of the data collected was conducted in order to establish credibility with the research findings. This procedure used data from all sources: field

notes from both of the case-study teachers' classroom observations, formal and informal interviews, teachers' documents, researchers' notes and reflections, and the survey instrument. Field notes were periodically discussed with the case-study teachers and checked by the researcher at the end of each day of observations for accuracy. The teachers' one hour interviews were recorded and transcribed and used to check against classroom field notes. An electronic copy of the interviews was provided to the teachers for them to check for accuracy. They both reported the information was true to what occurred in their interviews. In addition, the electronic copy of the interviews was used to combine the case-study teachers' responses together under the heading of each interview question. The transcribed interviews were examined individually and after their responses were combined. Since the interview questions content was about teaching writing, they were used as a check against the classroom observations field notes. After evaluating the interview transcripts, it was discovered that both teachers reported the use of student-led activities, yet these were not evidenced during the classroom observations. This was attributed to "espousal theory" and the "theory-in-use" (Patton, 2002, p.163).

The survey used in the three districts of English Teachers (n=115) was distributed and collected by the district supervisor for each school district. After they were collected and mailed to me, they were photocopied. Each set was color-coded with a different color for each district and labeled School A, School B, and School C. These color-coded surveys were mailed to the out of state analysis. When the analysis was completed and returned, I calculated the survey's frequency of response for each question and aligned these with the case-study teachers' responses. The majority of surveyed teachers agreed with the case-study teachers' responses. On three occasions the case-study teachers were divided in their response. In those cases the majority of surveyed teachers were evenly split, too. This may give credence to the accuracy of

reporting and that the teachers, both case-study and three districts' English teachers answered truthfully, according to Tourangeau *et al*, (2002). The formal interview questions and responses and classroom field observations will be a check against the responses to the survey instrument. These three documents will check each other for consistency and reliability. Data collected from the formal and informal interviews, classroom observations, and the responses from the surveyed teachers were used to respond to the research questions.

The sensitizing concept of "teaching writing" was not used when coding for themes in the interviews because the responses were guided by specific questions. However, the themes that emerged from these interviews contributed to the understanding of the relationships which resulted from the case analyses. The interview responses are used in the narrative to give support through "their own words." In chapter four, each case-study teacher is described alone and then in relationship. Both case-study teachers are then discussed in relation to the responses of the surveyed teachers.

Analysis of the field notes included multiple readings by first examining "across cases" when each case has been completed with all relevant source materials. Coding efforts were conducted for each case by reading and coding message chunks, or thought units, in the margins. These message chunks were then transferred to a clean sheet of paper in the form of a list. After the coding efforts were completed for each case, they were then evaluated "across cases" looking at the message chunks for repetitions or differences. Repetitions were written together on another part of the paper, and then categories were determined and recorded. From these categories, themes were developed. The sensitizing concept (Patton, 2002, p.440) of "teaching writing," used as a lens to analyze the field notes, was again used to review the categories and develop the themes. The sensitizing concept resulted in the strengthening of at least one of the resultant

themes. The categories determined from final efforts of the coding analysis resulted in two overarching themes.

### **Pilot Study**

A pilot study of ethnographic field work was conducted for an Anthropology course assignment in the year 2000. The focus of the study was to experience the types and amount of data generated through keen observations of instruction and the context: the school environment and inside the classroom. The process was a valuable learning experience for the basic qualitative research skills including access to the research site, recording field notes, and reporting of observations. The researcher observed three English teachers' for their writing pedagogies. Observations were once per week during one class period each for seven weeks. The data collected included field notes and researchers' reflections. Through reflection, it was realized how the study could be strengthened through additional qualitative methods and personal interviews with the teachers. Hence, the current research study includes the in-depth study of two-case study teachers using observations, formal interviews, analysis of teacher documents, researcher reflections, and a survey to capture a larger population of teachers.

**Trustworthiness.** According to Stake (1978), researchers should pay attention to the “particulars” of a study, and to do a good job of “particularization.” A full knowledge of the particulars contributes to the social construction of knowledge and lends credibility to the legitimacy of the study. To emphasize the soundness of this study it is necessary to employ several established research procedures throughout the data gathering and presenting of the information: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

**Content Validity.** Rather than focus on generalizability, ethnographic methods focus on the particulars and provide rich, thick description. It is up to the reader to make a pragmatic

decision as to whether or not parts of the study have transferable qualities. In that direction I would like to offer the following comments: The school districts chosen are not extreme cases, in fact, they are typical of school districts located in any southern township in the United States. The teachers were chosen through a volunteer process and then a criterion was applied. Choosing two teachers was deliberate in order to provide breadth and depth. Cronbach (1975) concludes that “social phenomena are too variable and context bound to permit very significant empirical generalizations” (p. 122). He then offers an alternative strategy that has relevance to the social scientist by suggesting, “When we give proper weight to local conditions, any generalization is a working hypothesis, not a conclusion” (pp. 125). I wholeheartedly agree with Stake (1978, 1995, 2000) suggests we concern ourselves with “particularization” where the “first priority is to do justice to the specific case” (p.6). Unfortunately, I see in the research efforts attempting to meet this challenge but doing so by going in the traditions of positivistic experimental research designs with good data as the result but no one is translating that knowledge into digestible language for use with classroom teachers. Perhaps, this will be forthcoming. The NAEP (2007; 2002, 1998, 1992) studies have the raw data from which this could begin to happen, despite its limitations, it draws upon both traditions: experimental research and then puts the data into plain language. Joining NAEP’s work with a national sample of qualitative studies could form the baseline for real teaching practices that could show great potential to turn around the writing pedagogy in the classrooms. NAEP’s (2007) most recent results reveal that real intervention needs to occur soon in the secondary writing pedagogy rather than accepting the static results.

**Subjectivity.** As a way to limit subjectivity, Patton (2002) determines that objectivity of the “pure positivist variety” will not happen, but work at getting as close to objectivity as possible. Here are ways he suggests: incorporate the language and principles of 21<sup>st</sup>-century

science for qualitative studies to show I am concerned with getting as close to objectivity as possible. Make biases clear, use rigorous field procedures, discuss possible bias influence when reporting, and keep proof of all research or an ‘audit trail’ so that I can confirm the data. Use solid description and analysis and “not your own personal perspective or voice,” but “acknowledges that some subjectivity and judgment may enter in.” Use triangulation of data sources and “analytical perspectives to increase the accuracy and credibility of findings.” Use quality criteria as ‘truth value’ and “plausibility of findings; credibility, impartiality, independence of judgment; confirmability, consistency, and dependability of data; and explainable inconsistencies or instabilities” (p. 93). The term “subjectivity” has such negative connotations that we should move away from using the word and replace it with “*trustworthiness* and *authenticity*” (p. 51).

In many ways, I tried to adhere to this for this study; for example, at the time of the defense of the prospectus with my committee to gain approval to continue with my research efforts, the NAEP 2007 results on writing had just been made public. Having kept up with this national study in writing for many years it was very tempting to let those results influence this study. As a result, I refrained from reviewing the data until recently, for a driving force behind this research is “openness” to letting the data speak for itself. This is one example towards ‘truth value’ and “plausibility of findings, credibility, and impartiality, independence of judgment, confirmability, consistency, and dependability of data.” I have attempted to explain inconsistencies or instabilities” (p.93).

**Limitations.** The limitation which speaks the loudest addresses Patton’s (2002) report on “subjectivity” and “dependability” and “instabilities.” During the course of writing this report, there were many “good” reasons not to complete the work, none of which were really good, just

seemed good at the time. The research drove me to push forward drawing on faith that that I did not know was even possible. I heard the passion the teacher wrote at the bottom of her anonymous survey, “I would go to training for writing if it were available, where is it?” and all of the teachers who responded to the survey in spite of any perceived repercussions. The high return rate has to account for more than just the force behind the district manager’s handling of the survey. At least their voices will be in a public venue for other writing researchers.

Personal limitations abound, but the two most evident that will be rectified is this researcher’s lack of confidence in statistics. Using data from this study and a refresher course will take care of this limitation. This last shortcoming may take more time and that is a lack of organization. Conducting a research endeavor such as this with so many particulars made this weakness even more apparent.

## **Conclusion**

Conducting research on peoples’ lived experiences is conducive to a qualitative methodology, but a complex project does not have to be limited to one method (Patton, 2002). The narrative, descriptive nature of qualitative analysis is shared with methods typically associated with other domains, such as a survey, to enhance this study for the collective voices found in a schoolhouse. The weaving of the many research tools that strengthen this study each played an important part. Realized through the varied methodology and procedures in this chapter working collectively is a story of how desperately needed professional development is for secondary teachers writing pedagogy. Even further is the need for writing researchers to provide the field with an agreed upon methodology for students’ long term writing development so that all students receive age and developmentally appropriate instruction and expectations for achievement.

While this chapter sums up a large undertaking, it was the bones of the research endeavor. Chapter IV will provide the flesh. The careful documentation of the case-study teachers' pedagogy (observations and formal interviews) and the district surveys were the most meaningful. It was appreciated in the end that more could have been done with the researchers' reflections and would have played a bigger role in this study. The effort to remain unbiased kept me from engaging the materials during the observation process, but now I wonder if that was such a good idea. I see now that the dissertation is the groundwork for additional meaningful work that can affect the field in positive ways.

## Chapter IV: Results and Discussion

The purpose of this research study was to examine how secondary English teachers teach writing within their classroom environments, and if teachers use the methodology labeled, The Writing Process (WP). This chapter begins with introducing the reader to the case-study teachers, their school and classroom environments. Next, the research questions and responses are stated chronologically and serve as an organizing strategy to present the findings. Each research question is thoroughly analyzed through the lens of stated themes derived from the data sources of field notes, formal interviews, and the 3 district survey English teachers. Themes are used to position the case-study teachers contextually. The results of coding efforts centered around two themes, or typologies (Patton, 2002, p. 457) that were prevalent throughout the data and embedded within the sensitizing concept (Patton, 2002), “teaching writing”: Traditional Teaching Methods and Teacher Perceptions Influence Writing Choices. Both themes affect the outcome of teaching writing in critical ways for they stem from the teachers’ core values and serve to complicate their personal pedagogies.

For each research question there is careful analysis of each case-study teacher, followed by a comparison of the two case-study teachers to see any similarities or differences. The comparison also looks at how the micro-culture of the two case-study teachers aligns with the macro-culture of three district survey of English teachers. In most cases, the case-study teachers’ responses are in harmony with their district counterparts providing a snapshot of the individual teacher to the larger sample. To use the research questions as an organizing tool allows for a comprehensive response of the complexity of the teaching environment while remaining focused on the scope and purpose of this study. As a qualitative study is usually of a small sample size, but focuses on depth whereby “one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to

the purpose of the inquiry” (Patton, 2002, p. 230), it seemed logical to organize the findings from the research by this study’s actual questions. Throughout the responses, tables and diagrams help illustrate conceptual data. Finally, a discussion follows to encapsulate the data from all sources.

Throughout this chapter, the “language of culture” and ways of meaning-making are highlighted and precisely decoded as to the effects on the case-study teachers. As Gee (1989) captures an explanation for culture as the “saying (writing)-doing-being-valuing-believing combinations,” including culture as a necessary dynamic in this study helps understand the teacher’s “ways of being in the world” (i.e., the classroom). Elements of the culture of teaching are “forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes” (pp. 6-7). Gee’s doing/believing expression is really the language of culture that adds depth to this study’s research findings.

### **Cases-Study Teachers A and B**

Both Mrs. Jones (hereafter described as Teacher A) and Mrs. Hairston (hereafter described as Teacher B) are natives of this southern state, graduates of the state’s flagship university, and have deep roots in this area (all names and locations are pseudonyms). They love being surrounded by family, and when their child(ren) is(are) mentioned, their eyes light up, which brightens their countenance. Their family ties serve to strengthen their affinity for the community and school, Bridgewater Middle School, where they teach English Language Arts. Teacher A’s seventh graders matriculates into Teacher B’s eighth grade English class. Both teachers once mentioned to this researcher, “We work closely together.” Yet, during the time of the field observations, there were no face-to-face communications between them, nor did they ever allude to plans to meet or having met. However, this does not rule out the possibility.

Both case-study teachers are strong proponents of writing. It is necessary to make this characteristic plain because English teachers have differing attitudes toward the teaching of writing which are not all favorable. In fact, over the last decade, a strong move has been to increase awareness the teaching of writing is a responsibility of all disciplines. What may appear to be a logical statement, in reality some teachers still harbor the belief it is the English teacher's responsibility to develop students' writing abilities in all its forms. Unfortunately, this is the sentiment at Bridgewater Middle School and serves as a point of contention for the case-study participants. This issue will be elaborated later in this chapter. Teachers' have a powerful influence on students' attitudes, and when students talk about writing, "their interest for writing is often influenced by their teachers and classroom practice" (Lipstein and Renninger, 2007, p.79). It is evident through students' communication and behavior toward the case-study teachers, they have garnered the students' respect. What follows is an overview of the case-study teachers and their teaching environments: their school and classrooms.

**Teacher A.** Petite, with a low, soothing voice, Teacher A never raises her voice to speak over the students, but uses 'silence' to regain class control. She appears younger than her years and is aglow over the birth of her first child. The only personal tokens within the classroom are pictures of her months old son placed on her desk as well as eye-level on the television cart. Constant reminders. Teacher A teaches seventh grade at Bridgewater Middle School and has been teaching for close to ten years. She entered college right after high school and began teaching immediately after college. She would be what is labeled by administrators as a "traditional" student; and that is, someone who enters college right after high school and begins teaching immediately after college. In her education studies, she spent a semester student

teaching. She has taught seventh grade English Language Arts here at Bridgewater Middle for her entire career, and has “no desire to teach at any other school.”

Teacher A always has a smile on her face, seldom steers off track during instruction, but on one occasion she stopped to give a student a complement about the barrette the student had in her hair. The young girl gleamed. Even when she disciplines a student, one who loses focus often, she uses positive words rather than a rebuke. Her students seem to know the level of behavior expected of them and generally play a game of tug-of-war when it comes to talking to their friends, and they begin their game from the time they enter the classroom. Pockets of students will break out into conversation until the noise level induces Teacher A to stop speaking and become silent. I found this on a daily basis to characterize Teacher A’s classroom dynamics.

**Teacher B.** Teacher B is tall with a commanding voice. Interestingly, she feels a lack of confidence when it comes to teaching writing. She confides, “I know there are things I should be doing with them that I’m not doing.” Teacher B obtained her teaching certificate through what is termed, alternative certification. Instead of the traditional route where an education student participates in student teaching under a veteran teacher, alternative certification allows a student to begin teaching while undergoing strict supervision. It was this experience that left her with a nagging suspicion she did not learn all that was needed. Despite any preliminary qualms, Teacher B is impressive with a noticeable ease with adolescents. She knows many of her students’ families personally because her son is the same age (he is one of her students), and she will use this familiarity to her advantage whenever necessary. She has four children and will soon have her youngest child enter Bridgewater Middle.

Teacher B has been an eighth grade English Language Arts teacher for less than five years and this is her fourth year at Bridgewater Middle School. Prior to teaching middle school

she taught second grade, which she did not like. She earned her bachelor and master degrees at the state's flagship university in the business field. She spent several unhappy years in the field of business, but deep inside she wanted to be a teacher. Her family owned a successful local business, and when it was sold, she returned to school to train to become a teacher. Therefore, she left a lucrative field but found her niche in teaching middle school English. She sounds very "business-like" when teaching, and her passion for teaching and learning is evident. She plays with language with her students who catch on quickly when she makes a humorous statement. Humor is a large part of her classroom management tools. As students enter the class, they are lively, wanting to elicit her humor and most times they succeed.

**The School and Classrooms: Cultural Contexts.** The School, known as Bridgewater Middle School, is considered a neighborhood school; in other words, students live in the general area of the school they attend. On one sunny school day, I was able to meet Teacher B's father, Bill, who came to deliver fried chicken fingers and sodas for her students who had received twenty homework "punches." Homework punches is a school-wide reward system to encourage attention to homework. The token system works in this way: randomly, the classroom teacher will apply hole-punches to the students' card (developed specifically for this purpose) for those students who have their homework completed on that day. After a certain number of punches students earn a reward. The teacher determines the number of punches required and the type of treat. On this occasion during recess, twenty-two students received this coveted treat. Bill boasts that he had attended Bridgewater Middle School many years ago. He reports, "The buildings look the same today as they were back then," and chuckles pointing toward the large gym, "In that building I had gym and played a little basketball, and over there was..." There is a sense of

pride in his voice and I realize standing here are three Wildcats (mascot) generations: Mr. Bill, Teacher B, and her daughter, Kylie, who came with him.

The school sits about one mile off the road and behind an expansive circle driveway. In front of the driveway are six large Live Oak trees. These majestic oaks could be taken right off the cover of a southern living magazine. The huge limbs that sweep the ground are ensconced with grey moss and great round trunks that are hundreds of years old. All of the school buildings exteriors have been freshly painted a bright white, and inside the classrooms are painted mauve, yellow, or blue and are clean and well kept.

In the beige colored hallways, old, but shiny maroon lockers line one side of the hall. Instructions and rules fill these walls with “how to”: how to use the lockers, how to go to the library, how to walk in the hallway, and who goes to the lockers and when. The hallways are quiet between classes. There is a strong sense of structure and order both within the classrooms and without—much like the strong silhouette of the oak trees that line the circle drive to greet the school buses in the mornings and send them away in the afternoons.

Pervasive with codes, rules are written in large, bold black ink on posters push-pinned to the walls in the hallways and cover every possible student question: when to go to the locker, when to enter the class, how to exit the building, which side of the aisle to walk on going to and from the library, and library availability. In the classrooms, the codification system continues by the written rules: how to enter the classroom, how to pack up to leave the classroom, when to leave for recess, how the class goes to the cafeteria, and how missed homework assignments will be handled. The teacher will also have her own rules posted in the classroom pertaining to student behavior: No gum chewing, keep hands to your self, raise your hands when you have a question, be courteous to your fellow students, sharpen pencils at the beginning of class, hold

trash to the end of class, and no tapping on desks! Classroom rules are expected by students and are meant to convey this teacher is no pushover. The pervasiveness of rules throughout the hallways and classrooms, where students travel, constitutes the authoritarian language at Bridgewater Middle School.

At Bridgewater, the layout of the building includes a “wing” for each grade level and these wings are connected by a vestibule. Each wing consists of one long hall with classrooms on either side. The eighth grade wing houses the attendance office and the library. The seventh grade wing houses the computer laboratory. Separate buildings include the gymnasium and cafeteria.

The classroom observations were used during the first two days to become familiar with the teacher’s routines and allow the students to get used to having a visitor in the classroom. Afterwards, I was able to scribe specific teacher language, academic content, and culture, what Patton (2002) depicts as “behavior patterns and beliefs” (p. 21). Both of the case-study teachers’ classrooms have three or four bright and colorful pre-printed posters. Happily, in each room, there is one pre-printed poster that illustrates the writing process. First impressions are that the case-study teachers are proponents of the writing process.

Entering the case-study teachers’ classrooms, one stark observation is made: there is no student work displayed anywhere on the walls, nor do these teachers have any personal items in the classrooms that reflect a part of their lives. For example, a teacher may make a thematic impression based on a love for something from the teacher’s personal life. Students look to the personal images a teacher reveals to gain a sense of who their teacher is as a person and without these personal icons both case-study teachers give the impression they are all business. Consequently, the classroom spaces are barren, so they feel cold, and more so because it is set

against a room composed of large, rectangular concrete blocks. However, in a few days, the empty walls did not occur to me and there was a certain level of comfortableness in each room once the bell rings and students enter the room. This is due to the systematic routines students have come to expect.

Classrooms are not built with instruction in mind. The range of classroom situations for a teacher varies so much and so often that teachers are used to having to be creative in setting up a classroom for optimum learning experiences. Naturally, it is ideal for all students to face the front of the class and if the room is squared, this can be achieved. Albeit, Teacher A's classroom is long and rectangular in shape. This places students who are on one end of the class far from the whiteboard and all students have to turn their heads to see the whiteboard, but not an ideal set up for instruction. The room is constructed of the same rectangular concrete materials, but Teacher A's room is painted a sunny yellow in color. The teacher's desk is by the door as one enters, but after she greets the entering students, she checks roll and then goes to the whiteboard for instruction. Occasionally, she will migrate to the front of the students' desks, but not often. She is usually instructing from the whiteboard fielding student responses.

Teacher B's classroom is square in design that allows for all desks to face the front whiteboard. Her desk is in the upper left corner and filled with papers, a pencil cup, and stapler. As you enter the class you see the back of the students. On the opposite wall are large windows with blinds that are closed at all times. The walls are made of concrete blocks painted a deep mauve. There are colorful pre-printed posters about the elements of grammar and the Writing Process. The term, writing process, and its derivatives of brainstorming, prewriting, drafting, revising, and publishing have become coded language among English teachers and is a direct result of the writing process movement begun in the 1980s. On the second classroom observation,

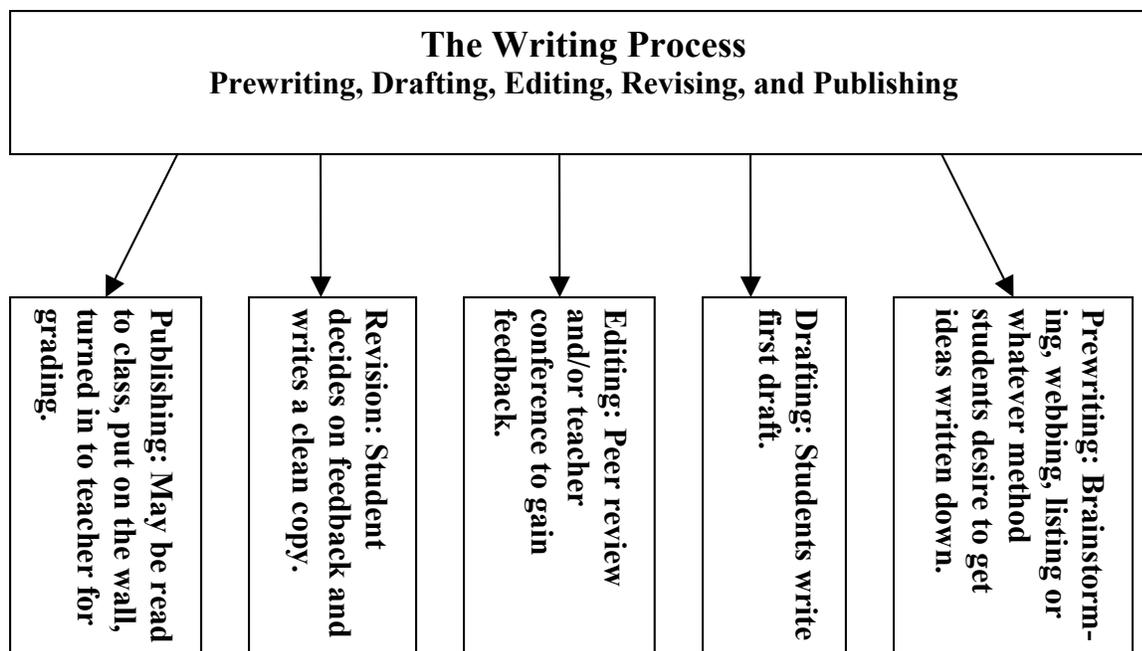
it was observed in Teacher B's classroom a handmade diagram had been added to the wall: a small cluster display that in the center is written, "Word Wall." Extending from the cluster are sentence strips naming different genres.

## **Research Questions**

### **Research Question One: What Processes do Teachers Use to Teach Writing? Why?**

Findings from the research study reveal that secondary English teachers report using the Writing Process (WP) (Emig, 1971) methodology. Case-study teachers have two reasons for so doing: first, the WP methodology is required by the state's curriculum or Grade Level Expectations (GLE) and the accompanying Comprehensive Curriculum (CC); secondly, both teachers believe in the efficacy of this methodology through their personal writing experiences. Both case-study teachers were influenced by this method during their teaching practicum and when they were students. Both teachers used writing in their private lives through journaling and saw the WP as a means to an end: a process to get thoughts out on paper.

Case-study teachers reported use of the WP parallels the results from the survey administered in this study to secondary English teachers in three districts. Survey results revealed 79% reported using the WP to teach writing a minimum of one to two times a week, and only 2% of respondents stated they do not use this methodology at all. Described in more detail later in this study, the WP consists of five components: prewriting, drafting, editing, revising, and publishing (See the following Diagram 1).



**Diagram 1: Components of the Writing Process with Examples, (Emig, 1971).**

It is important to state at this time and to keep in mind throughout this research study that the WP is an approach to aid in the teaching of writing and is *not* all inclusive. As the name implies, it is a process approach where teachers are to teach students how to write through strategies and knowledge of rhetorical elements, such as purpose for writing and audience considerations. Delineating the limits and characteristics of the term, writing process, has to be made plain as the remaining observations are discussed.

Case-study teachers were observed utilizing some of the components of the WP, or a modified version. They were not teaching all of the parts even though the GLE and CC mandate its full use. According to Teacher A, “There is just not enough time to do it all.” The surveyed teachers overwhelmingly are doing the same: 93% report using a “modified version” of the WP. “Modified” means parts of the WP have been eliminated. It is possible the surveyed teachers have the same reasoning for modifying the WP as the case-study teachers: lack of class time. What are the consequences to students when the full spectrum of the WP is not followed?

Possible consequences to students when the WP is modified will be investigated in the Discussion section at the end of this chapter.

Within the first few moments of entering Teacher B’s classroom, I began to reiterate the reason for the research study was to see how writing is taught. While I was still speaking, she declared, “I use the Writing Process!” Teacher A’s reaction was similar. The WP is coded language in the domain of English teachers. Coded language simply stands for terms that are known among a community, in this case, English teachers.

Teacher A made a comment that at first puzzled me. She stated, “I’m grading writing all of the time!” I understood the term, writing, as in composing; therefore, I expected to see her grading essays often, but this was not the case. What I came to learn through paying close attention every time she used the word, “writing,” I would locate its referent. Teacher A uses the term, writing, as a *cover* term for every time students’ take pen or pencil in hand and make marks on a paper. Spradley & McCurdy (1975) describe a cover term as “labels for large categories.” To discover what Teacher A meant by the term, writing, the “thing” that went with the word had to be located. The following table illustrates the “things” that go with the term, writing, and is used by both case-study teachers. The table illustrates what Spradley & McCurdy term a *contrast set*, “A contrast set reveals the term the researcher allocates to the word in contrast to the words that make up the cover term” (p.79).

**Table 1. Contrast Set: Cover Term, “Writing.”**

<b>Cover Term</b>	<b>“Writing”</b>					
<b>Researcher’s Term</b>	<b>Composing</b>					
<b>Contrast Set</b>	<b>Editing</b>	<b>Grammar</b>	<b>Paper</b>	<b>Copying</b>	<b>Essay</b>	<b>Sentences</b>

In the table above, the researcher's term, composing, is the "large category" that could include a myriad of terms. For example, if students were writing a narrative story, I might say, "Turn in your stories." Case-study teachers would say, "Turn in your writing." Consequently, in writing the analysis for this study, I have changed my use of the word, writing, to "composing" to make a distinction. All of the words listed next to the contrast set are words the case-study teachers mean when they use the word, writing. Yancey (2009) has commented on this phenomenon as she viewed all grammar being called, "writing!"

One of the major themes that surfaced during analysis of field notes came through the predominance of terms associated with a framework for teaching labeled, Traditional teaching methods, also known as teacher-led (Warriner & Griffith, 1951), or teacher-centered instruction (Cuban, 1993), with all such terms interchangeable. As a framework, teacher-centeredness is a philosophy of teaching and has much to do with exhibiting a classroom's culture. Cover terms (Spradley and McCurdy, 1975) for this teaching philosophy include, "seatwork," which means students remain in their seats during the entire class period and on a daily basis, "lecturing" for "whole class instruction," and "teacher-led questioning" (see Table 2).

A historical and influential study at the turn of the twentieth century helped institutionalize the term, "teacher-centered" instruction versus what reformers pushed for more "student-centered" instruction (Cuban, 1993). In *How Teachers Taught: Constancy and Change in American Classrooms 1880-1990*, Cuban defines teacher-centered instruction when a teacher controls what is taught, when, and under what conditions. Observable measures of this type of instruction include the following: "Teacher talk exceeds student talk during instruction. Instruction occurs frequently with the whole class. Use of class time is largely determined by the teacher. The teacher relies heavily upon the textbook to guide curricular and instructional

decision making. The classroom furniture is usually arranged into rows of desks or chairs facing a chalkboard with a teacher’s desk nearby.” These are “instructional patterns” that have long been entrenched within classrooms and the subject of debate as to which is better for students: teacher-centered or student-centered approaches.

In this research study, it was noted that both case-study teachers used teacher-centered approaches with some modification to this approach when the class was working on a composition assignment. The student-centered approaches included, “student talk about learning tasks at least equal to, if not greater than, teacher talk,” and when “students help choose and organize the content to be learned” (Cuban, 1993, pp.6-7). Donald Graves (1983), among other reformers, were early proponents of student-centered teaching, which he termed, a “child-centered” approach, and later Hillocks (1986), which called his version, a “natural process mode” (p. 108). One difference with these last two modes, child-centered and natural process, were typified by frequent writing on student selected topics. The following table delineates some of the characteristics of Traditional teaching models compared to the Student-Centered approach.

**Table 2. Traditional versus Student-Centered Teaching Philosophy, (Cuban, 1993).**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Traditional</b>	<b>Student-Centered</b>
Lecture (predominant)	Yes	No
Desks in rows/Remain fixed	Yes	No
Seatwork (predominant)	Yes	No
Whole class instructed at same time	Yes	No
Teacher talks majority of class time	Yes	No
Student selected writing topics	No	Yes

**Theme One: Traditional Teaching Methods in the Teaching of Writing.** Both case-study teachers use traditional teaching methods, otherwise known as, teacher-centered, as a major style of instruction that includes “seatwork,” “whole class instruction,” “teacher led questioning,” and “lecturing” (Cuban, 1993). Students remained in their seats for each class period for the duration of the study. Teachers instructed from the whiteboard orchestrating the lesson to the whole class and solicited responses from individual students. Traditional methods were used during the first thirty to thirty-five minutes of each class which were routinized; for example, in the fifty minute class, the class begins with a grammar and mechanics paragraph that students copy into a journal that they edit. An expanded language activity is written on the other side of the whiteboard that students copy into a notebook consistent with the day’s objective[s]. Therefore, thirty to thirty-five minutes of the class is routine. Afterwards, a vocabulary quiz, end of unit test, or composing assignment completes the class period.

Both teachers have students writing from “bell-to-bell” with most of the writing as copy editing of grammar and mechanics from the whiteboard that stemmed from the textbook. Composing assignments were not given everyday, but when a composition assignment was assigned, it was observed that teaching patterns changed from the traditional mode of teaching to a modicum of student-centered approaches. Characterized by more interaction between teacher and students, students became more vocal about the assignment with some requesting to “pair up” in order to do a “peer review” of writing.

**Teacher A.** Mirroring their teacher’s soft spoken demeanor, Teacher A’s seventh grade students enter the classroom quietly. Their talking soon begins and after a couple of reminders to, “Get out your journals,” students comply. Students copy the Daily Language (DL) sentences from the whiteboard that consist of up to five sentences to edit for correct grammar and

mechanics usage. This activity is the “warm-up,” or “bell-ringer,” that begins each class period, which allows Teacher A to perform housekeeping duties: for example, record attendance in her dark green spiraled notebook, collect notes from students regarding absences, and speak to individual students, if necessary. Students know the routine. The whiteboard is covered with the teacher’s writing before the students arrive. On the left hand side of the board reads the daily task: “Objective[s]: The learner will determine if a word is used as one of the 8 parts of speech.” The warm-up consists of five sentences written with various parts of speech underlined. The students copy the sentences and record what part of speech is underlined.

The students’ chatter ascends from the start of class, and later as Teacher A passes by where I am seated, she whispers, “This is characteristic of this class!” “OK guys,” Teacher A says using a firm and deliberate teacher- voice. Students’ responses are similar, “Wait, wait, I’m not finished!” “Just one more minute, pleeeaze!” Teacher A proceeds to the whiteboard without acknowledging their requests, and stands motionless in “silence” to gain their attention. The silence is deafening; students begin, rather quickly, to look up at her. Students write during the entire class period.

The two activities: Daily Language and followed by a more extensive grammar activity are daily routines and constitute approximately 35 of the 55 minute class. The remainder of class time can be used for a quiz, test, paragraph editing, or a composing assignment. The prevailing mode of instruction is best described as Traditional Teaching Methods and is characterized by the following:

Teacher talk exceeds student talk during instruction. Instruction occurs with the whole class. Use of class time is largely determined by the teacher. The teacher relies heavily upon the textbook to guide curricular and instructional decision making. The classroom furniture is usually arranged into rows of desks or chairs facing a chalkboard with a teacher’s desk nearby (Cuban, 1993, p.6).

Traditional teaching methods are heavily scripted and yet, something unusual occurred when the composing assignment was given. When the composing assignment was given, the classroom dynamics changed when elements of a student-centered, or student-led approach ensued. Students were vocalizing requests to the teacher that changed her scripted plans for the assignment. These were minor requests, such as to collaborate with a partner, or to do a peer-review, but in this way, “students help choose and organize the content to be learned” (Cuban, 1993, p.7). Here, students evidenced knowledge of practices commonly exhibited in the WP. There was a more conversational approach to the lesson delivery with a discussion volley going back and forth from teacher to student. Both of these occurrences: students negotiating the assignment and a conversational approach to instructional delivery are student-centered teaching modes. In this way, Teacher A would be using a hybrid method of teaching.

**Teacher B.** Teacher B’s class routines are similar to Teacher A with students starting class with a warm-up of editing sentences and then complete a more intense grammar and mechanics lesson they copy from the whiteboard. Students enter the classroom loudly, but as soon as they are seated, they retrieve their journals and notebook and begin scribing the daily language “warm-up” from the whiteboard. Students copy until the teacher interrupts to begin the day’s lesson. The warm-up and extended grammar and mechanics lesson are sequential. Once per week a quiz or test will follow with a one or two day review. When a composing assignment is given, students begin the assignment during the last fifteen to twenty minutes of class. They complete the assignment over the next day or two. Humor plays a pivotal role in Teacher B’s classroom culture as a way to keep students involved. At this age, students want to give a quick retort if the need arises; therefore, they remain alert and appear to enjoy this class. She will usually have to raise her voice over theirs to get class started. The class is a back and forth

exchange of teacher-led questioning with the whole class of students commenting. Whoever knows the answer can reply, and at times, the teacher will specifically call on a student.

There is more emphasis on test-taking in this eighth grade class with many references to the state test that will come in the spring and determines if the students can advance to ninth grade. Teacher B asks the class, “There’ll be a contraction question on the LEAP, are you going to get that right?” Jalen replies, “I’m going to get that right!” In concert, the remaining students repeat, “I’m going to get that right!” Teacher B’s teaching pattern is teacher-centered due to the amount of seat-work and the following attributes of traditional teaching methods,

Teacher B also uses the term, writing, as an umbrella term to include all copy editing exercises and all writing that incurs during English class. In addition, somewhere Teacher B has understood the English class as mostly grammar and mechanics. Teacher B utilizes the five-paragraph theme as a way for students to organize their compositions. The five-paragraph theme has come to be associated with traditional methods of teaching writing. There is also debate on the value of this method for the development of students’ writing abilities (Marshall, 1987, p.38; Scherff & Piazza, 2005). Teacher B also uses a hybrid form of teaching: Traditional teaching methods and student-centered approaches.

**Comparison of Teacher A and Teacher B: Traditional Teaching Methods in the Teaching of Writing.** Both case-study teachers predominant method of teaching is known as Traditional. However, it was noted that when a composition assignment was given, the dynamics of the class had characteristics of student-centered approaches. This was true in both classrooms. Consequently, their teaching methods would be better characterized as a hybrid. When a composition assignment was given, both teachers told students, “We will use the writing process.” Students did not ask for clarification; this mean the writing process is coded language

in the English classroom. The students have an understanding of the methodology of the writing process.

In the following survey results, when asked, “How often do you (the teacher) use the writing process?” case-study teachers’ align with the majority of respondents from the 3 district English teachers. The breakdown is as follows: Teacher A reports using the writing process Frequently, or 1 to 2 times per week; Teacher B reports using the writing process Very Often, or 3 times per week. Of the survey teachers, 79% align with the case-study teachers. The breakdown of the district surveys are as follows: 47% use the writing process Frequently, like Teacher A, or 1-2 times per week; and 32% Very Often, like Teacher B, or 3 times per week; 19% report Occasionally or every other week; and 2% Never (see Appendix C for the results from all survey responses).

To interpret these findings several things need to be considered; first, what is meant is that on Day 1 students may begin the writing process by exploring a topic (the last 20 minutes of class), and Day 2, students may then be drafting, editing, and so forth. They are still in the original writing process, but the teachers appear to be counting the second day as a second writing process. Actually, they are still using the first writing process. They are not completing up to 3 writing process cycles per week, which may not even be possible. Secondly, this interpretation of these responses is supported by the case-study teachers’ responses to a previous question on the survey. When asked, “How often do students compose at least 3 paragraphs?” both case-study teachers report, Once a Week. Therefore, this response supports the above interpretation. The remaining survey responses to the 3 paragraph question are as follows: 75% of survey respondents said, Once a Week, which agrees with the case-study teachers; 1% said,

“Everyday,” 16% said 2-3 times per week, and 6% of teachers said, Never. One teacher commented, “I only focus on types of writing that will be on the test.”

**Theme Two: Teacher Perceptions Influence Writing (Composing) Choices.** The second theme that pervades this study is the case-study teachers’ strong belief in the WP to teach writing. Both teachers use the WP methodology for organizing the students’ writing. Using the sensitizing concept of “teaching writing” as a lens to focus analysis, some of the terms from the coding analysis taken from the field notes in the case-study teachers’ classrooms include, “models pre-writing,” “models cluster/Venn diagrams,” “generate ideas,” and “drafting”: all associated with writing process protocol. During the formal interviews, both teachers were explicit in their belief that learning to write well is a vital part of student literacy. Both teachers have favorable personal experiences with writing and the WP. Teacher A remembers fondly during her school years on her own writing in a journal to record her thoughts. She associates her journal writing as a “peaceful time.” She still uses the WP when preparing her teaching units that culminates in an essay to pull everything together in her mind. Case-study teachers’ hold strong convictions that students must learn to write well, and this belief guides their selection of writing assignments.

**Teacher A.** In a twist on a Cinderella story, students were told they would be a “Party Coordinator” for a ball celebrating Cinderella’s new marriage to Prince Charming. This composing assignment calls for three styles of letters: personal, social, and business and the formatting of an envelope. In this writing composition assignment, student-centered teaching approaches were observed as the students used the writing process. There was more student participation in the form of questioning during this composing assignment than for the other parts of class writing segments (daily warm-up and language activity). For example, as the

teacher describes what is expected for a social letter, in this case an invitation, Shelly asks, “Can I draw on my invitation?” Before the teacher can respond, another student asks, “Can I write like an email, like I’m emailing a friend?” Later, Jasmine asks, “Can we move our desks close and do a peer review?” In this way, the students were organizing the assignment to make meaning for them, hence, a general excitement about the assignment.

Teacher A perceives learning to write well is a vehicle for her students to communicate in the real world. While the students followed a model for an expressive form of writing that was on the whiteboard, the teacher also modeled ways to brainstorm for ideas and demonstrated two choices: a cluster and Venn diagram. The generating and organizing of ideas are examples of skills that students will use away from school in the “real world.” During our interview, Teacher A reveals her motivation for teaching students to write to communicate,

You know, you may have to speak to the cable guy or the company, you know, and tell them what is going on. You can pre-write; you have to think about what you’re going to say before you call, and practice. It goes with every aspect of life, so that is what I try to instill to the students. You know, everybody can use it. (Formal Interview)

Teacher A’s pragmatic motives for teaching writing so students can communicate with the cable guy, on the job, or as the following study reveals, when speaking to “gate-keepers.” Bergin & Garvey (1999) researched an urban community’s day-to-day uses of literacy. What the researchers found was a common practice for the informants to write out what to say using “institutional language” when important literacy events occur to converse with landlords, policy makers, among others. As the informant developed her prose, fellow community members helped to shape the language into what they called a “public script.” The authors say these community members practice through writing each time they have to face “the domination of language” (pp.268-271) that “emerges in the written and oral communications, interviews,

applications, verification forms, letters, or phone calls used by gatekeepers,” and supports what Teacher A knows about her students’ literacy needs.

**Teacher B.** Two class periods were spent with students in the computer lab devoted to a composition assignment of a holiday letter. The letter featured expository and narrative writing and students would use the computer software, Inspiration. Initially, students were side-tracked with more interest in the features of the software than in generating original ideas. Once they were able to “drag and drop” they settled down to composing. Teacher B used the term “writing process” as part of the assignment and it was noted that none of the students asked for clarification. This implies, the term, writing process, is a coded term in the English classroom. In support of this observation, other terms associated with the writing process were used without explanation, and without student questioning. For example, Teacher B explains, “You will be writing a letter to a friend about what you want for Christmas. Now you will need to pre-write [writing process terminology] and I will need to see your pre-write.” Jacob says, “Can I do a list?” Erika joins in with, “Can I do a web?” Both terms, a “list” and a “web,” are pre-writing terminology used with the writing process methodology. The teacher modeled a web on the chalkboard and also suggested they might want to outline before writing (optional).

Teacher B wants her kids to use writing as a tool for learning, and for them to explore ideas. The first day in the computer lab, this noisy bunch entered the computer lab more excited than usual because spending time in the computer lab is a treat, and a switch from the normal classroom routine. It was observed that on the second day, as students entered the computer lab and knowing their composition awaited, they entered the lab with less socializing, heading straight to the computer and immediately started to work on their letter. Students exhibited less talking off topic and instead their talk centered on particulars of the assignment. They were

disheartened when it was time for the class to end! In this instance, the writing process included pre-writing for generating ideas and drafting of paragraphs. Students were able to experience part of the process of writing, an important skill that coincides with Teacher B's belief in using the writing process—to explore ideas.

During her interview, when asked about her experience with the writing process, Teacher B tells how she loved to write as a child, and she used the writing process in her school years. Using the writing process to write her papers was a successful strategy and many times she shared the techniques with her fellow students to aid them in solving writing problems, she explains,

I felt like some of the kids would be like, “I’ve got writer’s block” [says in a whining tone]. I’m like, you guys, when you have writer’s block you have to get rid of that. You have to go investigate, find something on your topic. That way you open the gates to get your information and that way you can put your thoughts down. And take your thoughts from that process and put into an outline form. ‘Cause without an outline form kids don’t know where they are going, and I didn’t know where I was going. I have to have some kind of chronological order to get my thoughts down. (Formal Interview)

Teacher B allowed students to explore for ideas throughout the drafting part of this writing assignment urging students who would get “stuck” to revisit their web or Venn diagram and explore for more ideas. Her overall perception is that exploring is time well spent to gain new ideas. She was allowing students to be recursive while writing which helps build fluency.

**Comparison of Teacher A and Teacher B.** Both case-study teachers’ have had positive personal experiences with writing and this experiential knowledge influences the composing assignments chosen for students. Case-study teachers’ deep personal convictions impact instruction through the choices of composing assignments: Teacher A believes students need to learn to write for the real-world and is evidenced by the students composing three types of letters and writing an envelope as these are skills used in everyday life. Teacher B believes students

should experience a process approach for writing, in order to explore and organize ideas. Both case-study teachers assigned one new composing assignment within each two week period during field observations. Both teachers use a teacher-centered teaching style, yet when a composition assignment is given, the dynamics change partially to a “student-centered” style where the “[t]eachers permit students to determine, partially or wholly, rules of behavior” (Cuban, 1993, p.7). This student-centered behavior was noted only during the composition assignments. The teachers’ movement patterns also change during the student-centered writing of compositions. Both teachers normally station at the front of the class by the whiteboard. During composing assignments they circulate around the room, look over students’ shoulders, read students writing, and direct class through various positions within the classroom.

**Research Question Two: What are Teachers’ (and Colleagues’) Attitudes Toward Teaching Writing?** The response to this research question comes from case-study teachers’ formal interviews. Both case-study teachers want their students to be prepared for the writing demands they will face in the future. Traditionally, the teaching of writing has been the English teachers’ domain (Applebee, 1974, p. 235). Recent moves have been to change that tradition to the idea that since students write for all disciplinary matters, all classroom teachers should be teachers of writing. This policy has been met with mixed results, and in far too many cases, English teachers are still perceived as the teachers of writing.

As early as the 1980’s, The National Education Association (NEA) commissioned a book for teachers on Teaching Writing in the Content Areas: Middle School/Junior High. The program later came to be known as, “Writing Across the Curriculum,” and targeted teachers in every discipline, not just English teachers. The Tchudi & Huerta (1983) publication stressed, “Students need to apply their language skills to real communications tasks, including writing in science,

geography, social studies, mathematics, and vocational and career education” (p 5). There was resistance then to this notion of “every teacher is a writing teacher,” and according to data from field work, there is still resistance from many teachers.

The teaching of writing plays a major role in the English Language Arts curricula. For example, according to the Grade Level Expectations (GLE), standards teachers must follow, and the Comprehensive Curriculum, a prescriptive document of time-bound units, for the six-week Unit 1 in seventh grade English, 63 GLE are listed. Twenty-four are cued to composing and signaled by the terms, “write multi-paragraph compositions,” “apply writing process,” “write for various purposes,” “write paragraphs and compositions,” “generate grade-appropriate research reports,” and “use word processing.” This emphasis on the teaching of writing and the writing process is typical in each of the units (seven) that covers the entire school year (Louisiana Department of Education, 2008, pp.1-4). Therefore, teachers have a mandate from state agencies to teach writing and are made to feel totally responsible to teach writing from their colleagues.

Both case-study teachers feel this pressure from colleagues when students write poorly in other classes. Teachers from other disciplines come to the case-study teachers and tell them specifics of the students’ writing errors. Both teachers listen patiently to the ridicule and at times suggest ways the other teachers can get successful writing from students. Their suggestions fall on deaf ears.

**Theme One: Traditional Teaching Methods in the Teaching of Writing. Teacher A.** Teacher A has a positive disposition towards the teaching of writing, she says, “I enjoy it.” The doing of “it” [teaching writing] “takes a lot out of you,” she adds. Her fellow teachers “are pretty glad I do it and not them.” Her colleagues hold to traditional ways of teaching writing whereby the English teacher is responsible for teaching writing. She states, “I feel like that’s why they

come to me.” She finds pleasure in teaching writing, but is deeply affected by her colleagues’ comments about students’ writing errors. She shared her reaction, “It makes me feel so horrible when they come and tell me those things [students’ writing errors]. I know I cannot always control that—the student’s attitudes in other classrooms.”

Teacher A attempts to give her colleagues advice on how to affect student writing, “and you know, I try to tell them [colleagues] if you want them to do that then please put that in your directions or tell them that before you start because sometimes when you tell them what you expect, they will do it.” She was pleased to report that the science teacher was having the students write a research report, but her frustration is evident, she states, “I can’t get it through to them [colleagues] that you don’t just do that in English class. So, I try to work with that, but they pretty much don’t teach them to write. They feel that that’s my job and they’re glad I do it and not them.” During class, I witnessed her talking to the students about their writing performance in other classes. She let them know, “Some of the teachers have told me about yall’s [sic] writing. Now you have to capitalize.” The students do not reply, but sit looking wide-eyed at their teacher.

**Teacher B.** Teacher B also carried the majority of the responsibility for teaching writing. During her interview, when asked what her colleagues thought about teaching writing, her response was quick, “I think every teacher should be a writing teacher! I do. I think that. They’re not writing teachers. I’m the writing teacher.” She had strong feelings about this topic—her voice became forceful as she revealed, “I think they could do a little better...” I can tell she is thinking, going through her mind of each teacher as she continues,

I know the science teacher is giving them a research paper. She grades it for writing. She doesn’t grade it as hard as I would, you know. She tries to grade for punctuation, complete sentences, things most people would know. And she also makes them write book reports . . . We have a new math teacher so I haven’t talked with her. Social studies...hm...not really. Doesn’t do a lot with writing. (Formal interview)

Teacher B's actions support her strong conviction that students become literate while writing. The more students write, the more they learn about writing.

**Comparison of Teacher A and Teacher B.** To see whether or not students were having sustained writing opportunities was the motivation behind the survey question, "How many opportunities do students have to compose at least 3 paragraphs? Both case-study teachers responded, Once a Week, and in fact, this was observed in their classrooms. The responses from the survey are as follows: 75% of survey teachers agree with the case-study teachers at Once a Week. 16% report 2-3 times per week (more desirable); 1% report, Everyday (in a perfect world); and 6% state, Never, (totally unacceptable). Once per week composing of 3 paragraphs sounds as though it could be easily accomplished and as a teacher, I would presume it is not the only writing (composing) assignment for which students engage in a week. In some weeks, it is possible for there to not be any writing assignments due to planned (and unplanned) activities on the school calendar: holidays, testing, etc. A plan for students' writing development could look something like the following: students would always be "in process" on a longer work (3-5 pages for middle school, 7-10 pages for high school), have several unfinished first drafts on various topics in their writing folders that were abandoned with the intention to return at a later date, and the regular consistent pacing of 3 paragraphs to one page essays. Students would still participate in daily sentence and multi-sentence writing activities. This type of writing plan would not all have to take place in the English classroom, if more teachers would contribute to a coordinated plan for writing across the disciplines.

In today's English curriculum, there simply are not enough minutes of class time for the adequate teaching of writing. New knowledge over the last fifty plus years in the field of study of the English curriculum have expanded the teaching requirements without increasing class time or

providing human assistance for the English teachers to carry out its work. This has become evident with the explosion of technology applications and accompanying expectations for the English teacher. Consider this, in the old business education classes students learned typing, which included all forms of business writing. The elimination of vocational education courses finds those expectations in the English class. Now, there are computer classes, but this has not excluded the demand for composing on the computer within the English classroom. In English Language Arts (ELA is English in middle school), the term Language Arts was added to incorporate the study of speech when speech classes were eliminated from most school schedules. The same holds true for drama, and to a lesser degree, art.

More pointedly, the discipline of written composition has increased in scope to include its own research base, philosophy, pedagogy, professorial ranks, college departments, and not to mention conferences, journals, and textbooks. There are elements of writing that should be taught in secondary schools and are not, mainly rhetoric and the study of language. When Writing Across the Curriculum first surfaced in the research in the late 1990s, there was the realization that each discipline has different purposes for writing, for “writing, like all uses of language, relies on contextual interactions for its interpretations” (Gee, 2006, p.153). Many writing teachers, myself included, hoped the teaching of writing would then receive more attention and students would have more experience grappling with the written word and thereby, fluency levels would increase. Unfortunately, this hope never materialized.

Both case-study teachers expressed getting minimal help from colleagues in teaching writing. Only the science teachers in seventh and eighth grades assign a research report, and in the eighth grade, the science teacher also assigns a book report. Neither case-study teacher knew the specific writing strategies taught by the science teacher. Both case-study teachers state the

Reading class' focus is strictly on comprehension, and that no writing instruction takes place. Both teachers feel strongly that all teachers should be writing teachers. I wanted to gain a better understanding of the reading instruction and on two occasions tried to make an appointment with the teacher to observe the eighth grade class but was unsuccessful.

Teacher A received negative feedback from a colleague on students' writing during my first week of observations. Seventh graders were not using capitalization correctly in the colleague's class when Teacher A knows the students know how to perform these skills. She realizes that students' writing is idiosyncratic. During an informal conversation, she said, "They do it in my class," yet they are not performing these same skills in the other teacher's class. She hears about it from the other teachers, and it makes her feel, "horrible." In her formal interview, she continued this conversation and made a comment jokingly and then turns very serious, "There is a saying that teachers should not be able to assess what they have not taught themselves. If that were the case, they would not be able to make assessments vocally or otherwise. But, I would definitely say give them [students] a model of what you want whether it is a type of paper. That's only fair to the kids." It is obvious that the issue of students' writing performance concerns Teacher A.

**Theme Two: Teacher Perceptions Influence Writing (Composing) Choices. Teacher A.** During Teacher A's interview, she shares how she perceives writing which transfers to the writing assignments she chooses for her students, "Ever since I had my child, I have no time, and writing takes a lot out of you. I am grading a lot of writing all the time, you know, and so that takes a lot of my time. But, I do write essays before I start a class just so I can get my mind straight before them, you know." Her personal experience with writing and how she uses the writing process is passed on to her students in the form of functional composition assignments. It

is possible her perception on writing, “taking a lot out of you” may also affect students’ attitude about writing.

She connects getting “her mind straight” to when she writes out an essay as a part of planning her lessons, and she transfers her experience to how students can use the writing process to gather their thoughts before speaking to the public in an example of talking with the cable guy. Consequently, the writing process serves a utilitarian focus, “My attitude is that I think it [writing] is important to know how to do this, not just for, you know, if they are college bound, but just for, you know, anything in life.” Her internalized “attitude” is her belief system that writing benefits, “anything in life,” and particularly in the real-world, prompts her to prepare prescriptive writing activities that are functional, as in formatting announcements and envelopes for social communicative purposes as in the Cinderella writing activity.

As Teacher A has experienced her students “resisting” the writing process, she devised “ways” for them to bypass some of the struggle (that all writers experience) through the use of prescriptive formats, otherwise known as “formula writing” (Hillocks, 2005. p. 241) she developed. Part of her reason for developing heuristics is to save classroom time. However, the time may be well spent for her students’ learning experience. She states,

For the most part, at first my students were very resistant to the writing process. So, I have tried to come up with a simplistic plan to do it. I show them strategies. I try to look at the Comprehensive Curriculum, the Iowa LEAP review and everything else that the 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher does in her class room and I try to construct outlines that would be just general for how to get the students to start off. Also, I showed them little prewriting steps, so it is not as hard or difficult at first, and then we move up to more difficult things. We start with baby steps and that is pretty much it. (Formal Interview)

Teacher A is doing a lot of the work for the students. The inclination to save class time is the motivation and stems from an ever-increasing curriculum.

**Teacher B.** Teacher B's experienced positive writing experiences when she was in school and in the field of business that required a lot of writing. During her master's work, she would often rally her study group through the planning stages of the writing process for class projects. In one experience, her group did not have prior knowledge as a springboard for research. She would take her fellow students through the writing process' exploratory stage until an area of interest could direct them, she says, "You have to know where you're going to get there." She tries to "take that experience and bring it to the classroom." She sees the value of learning to write well as a way of finding out what you have to say through exploratory writing. Writing is not only a functional skill, but is part of life experiences. She plans to write a children's book, and along with her daughter it will be a family affair. From the real-world to composing creatively, she is capable of giving students a well rounded approach to composing for many purposes and many audiences.

Teacher B is a life-long writer. She will teach her eighth grade students to write because she has experienced positive personal and social benefits writing can have on a life, but she also believes the other teachers need to work with students in teaching writing. She is correct because beginning writers' skills do not always transfer into new contexts.

**Comparison of Teacher A and Teacher B.** Both case-study teachers have pleasurable experiences with writing, and from the time they were young throughout their lives. They enjoy teaching writing regardless of the lack of support from colleagues. However, case-study teachers do have different perspectives on the value of teaching writing. Teacher A takes a prescriptive approach in teaching writing through her development of "outlines" and other heuristics to move students along through the process. In contrast, Teacher B believes the students benefit through the process of exploring and deciding among many options.

Teacher A states that she spends a lot of time grading students' writing. The grading she is referring to is recurring formative assessments of editing skills. In this regular class assignment, students edit a teacher prepared paragraph. She assesses and returns to them with feedback. Students then recopy the paragraph adding in corrections. The term, "writing," is a "cover term," or "linguistic label" (Spradley and McCurdy, 1975, p. 79) that covers a large category. Over time, how we use words shifts, or "drifts." When Teacher A uses the term, writing, she means each time students mark symbols on a page. Therefore, it is necessary to differentiate and use the term, "composing," when discussing writing using the WP as opposed to copying from the board or completing fill-in-the-blanks worksheets. This cultural example holds true for Teacher B, also. She, too, uses the term, "writing," as a cover term for copying, editing, or composing.

At the eighth grade level, emphasis is placed on the writing portion of the high-stakes standardized test. All disciplines are concerned with how students will do for their respective course. What is considered "good" writing is based upon the outside scorers of the state's examination, but when expert writing teachers examine the "model" essays considered as top scorers from the state's exam, the composition did not equate to the expert writing teachers' ideas for writing excellence. In my opinion, it is better for the student if teachers were to focus on developing students' writing skills rather than spend an inordinate amount of precious class time on the two possible modes that might be on the state's standardized test.

**Research Question Three: How Do Teachers Learn New Knowledge on Current Methods to Teach Writing?** In order to stay current in the field of writing, a teacher may have access to several ways of gaining this knowledge: in school professional development, formal instruction through college coursework, workshops, colleagues, the Internet, among others. Both

case-study teachers report gaining knowledge on teaching writing through colleagues and researching on the Internet. However, the researcher noted in field notes and from the formal interviews just how influential the state's test is on directing the case-study teachers focus for teaching writing and will be discussed under their respective sections below.

Teachers have typically been very generous in “sharing” activities they have found to be successful in their classrooms. While this is a notable resource, it should not be a main avenue for gaining teaching resources. Most teachers probably have several websites “bookmarked” they can trust to supply them with good activities for teaching writing. The problem with both sources is that all of the resources are activities. What the teachers need is a comprehensive plan for writing that shows teachers how to determine the students' level of writing skills when they enter the program, set individualized writing goals, and the types of writing skills the students need to further writing development.

**Theme One: Traditional Teaching Methods in the Teaching of Writing. Teacher A.**

Teachers have long had to be independent learners themselves to seek out resources they need to teach students, “To do so require that teachers find new materials in the school or district or, if they are not available there, then elsewhere. Otherwise, teachers must make the materials themselves” (Cuban, 1993, p. 267). In addition, there is “the personal cost in time and energy and the lack of help to put complex ideas into practice. Teaching ordinarily requires a major investment of time and emotional, if not physical, energy” (p.265). Many times there is no help to implement plans that otherwise could be implemented if only there were an extra set of hands, and eyes and ears to monitor students, as Cuban (1993) notes, “To incorporate any departures from routine practice, especially if they entail revising the customary role of teacher, demands a

large personal investment of time, energy, and effort while posing a threat to classroom routines” (p. 266).

Teacher A says she creates her own “little ways,” and a “simplistic plan to do it [writing process]” that includes “constructing outlines” in order to save time for students to use in the writing process. These “helps” stem from her personal belief in the utility of writing that “everybody can use it” that has played a large role in her writing pedagogy; however, she hungers for knowledge and resources for teaching writing. Personal experience is a powerful influence over behavior and her pleasant experiences with writing as a young person and as a professional has fueled her desire to teach writing. She heavily relies on the Internet to locate composing activities that will peak the students’ interest. On one occasion she mentioned gaining a writing assignment from a colleague that she thought the students “would enjoy.” The training she has been provided through seminars has been on grammar and technology, she says,

You need to go to a grammar workshop, or technology. I’ve been to so many of those, but not a lot in writing. Well, I know that I can teach writing. I am a teacher and I know that I can keep learning, you know, you never stop. So, you know, I feel like I need more. I would like to get more. (Formal Interview)

Teacher A uses the materials that come with the state’s testing materials that cover writing. During our interview when asked, “How do you learn about new teaching methods about writing? Do you think you have had enough training in the teaching of writing?” She stated that her main resources for teaching writing come from the Internet, colleagues she sees “out in public,” which are mostly “veteran teachers,” materials from the “Iowa LEAP review,” and she also looks at the state’s writing test materials (LEAP) for 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

Teacher A had high praises for a seminar she attended that was a computer generated individual learning module for teaching writing for students to access. This program offered “strategies on how to write essays: basically it has different types of sentences built into a

paragraph . . . is a strategy that really works.” But then she added it was a program that had to start in first grade, “You can’t pick apart the book, you have to do, you know, it is a scripted model. But it does me no good if the rest of [the district’s] teachers don’t use it because then it doesn’t help.” What Teacher A does not realize is that she can “pick apart the book”; in fact, she must because students are at different levels of writing fluency. Most importantly, the teaching of writing development is as a spiral, teaching and re-teaching until students move into higher levels of complexity. Many of the same strategies taught in elementary school are the same in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, but with added levels of complexity and writing purposes for various audiences.

**Teacher B.** During her formal interview, Teacher B admitted to being “so envious” when she saw the brand new social studies textbook. She explains,

The other curriculums have so much to offer me. Their books are fantastic, brand new, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, and their workbooks have poems, and songs. It’s got questions that could help . . . English teachers. I could take the poetry, let the kids answer questions, have them write something for like [*sic*] What did you think about that? I could take the history and we could write about it in small groups. . . .  
(Formal Interview)

Teacher B found an inventive way to learn new knowledge by looking at another disciplines brand new textbook. A teacher can compare how the other discipline asks questions, types of content coverage, the types of activities, and research methodologies. English has traditionally been aligned with social studies for interdisciplinary learning experiences, and team-teaching with the social studies teacher could provide Teacher B with new resources and vice versa.

Teacher B shared with me that while she could go to the Assistant Principal for help in teaching writing (the assistant principal had been the 8<sup>th</sup> grade English teacher, was promoted and Teacher B filled the teaching spot) but says, as “a new assistant principal there isn’t time to

spend with me on teaching writing.” This sentiment echoes Cuban’s (1993) notion that many times there is no one for teachers to go to get help in teaching writing (p. 267).

The one year Teacher B taught 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, she was “in training to be the ‘writing person’ for elementary.” “Some people came to us to train us,” and she would then teach the teachers what she had learned. Her comments reveal the focus for Teacher B’s training, “I would ask the teachers questions, such as ‘How did you prepare the students to write the short answer questions’ or maybe the essay portion?” Her training was “test” driven, which she, in turn, taught her colleagues. The focus for writing is test driven, as she states, “I think I can teach the kids better now because I know what they’re (state test: LEAP) looking for.” She does not feel the training she has in teaching writing is enough.

**Comparison of Teacher A and Teacher B.** Both case-study teachers have a conflicted notion on the teaching of writing. In their formal interview they confide in their need for instruction on how to teach writing, and yet, as Teacher A states, “Well, I know that I can teach writing.” Her statement is confirmed in the 3 district survey when the question was asked, “How confident are you” in your ability to teach writing, on a scale of 1-10 with 10 meaning, Very Confident, both case-study teachers marked, 10, Very Confident. Case-Study teachers align with 53% of survey responses. Therefore, over half of English teachers in 3 districts are Very Confident in teaching writing, and on the surface, this is good news, but if they (English teachers in the three districts) were interviewed, would they feel the same as these case-study teachers? The remaining responses from the district survey are as follows: 38% state they are Somewhat confident, and finally, 4% state Not Very confident in teaching writing.

I witnessed a desire in both case-study teachers to learn more about teaching writing (composing) in the classroom and to do more of it in class. Both report to work at home at night,

or stay late (until 6:00) each day after school to avoid taking work home. Professional development in teaching writing is key to aid teachers in developing a repertoire of strategies to teach writing. Both case-study teachers state that such professional development is rare.

**Theme Two: Teacher Perceptions Influence Writing (Composing) Choices. Teacher A.** Based upon Teacher A's view of writing as a functional tool for individual purposes, she sees this as a goal for students to learn to write. Her experience with writing is the foundation from which she forms her writing pedagogy. She uses the Internet resources to find activities her students, "would like." She also has a high regard for veteran teachers in the knowledge they can pass on to newer teachers. She also uses materials from both the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade state testing resources (Iowa LEAP and LEAP)." Teacher A reports that her time outside of class is limited now that she has a child and therefore whatever personal time she used in the past to search out writing possibilities has narrowed. It is interesting to note that even with these limited opportunities for her to stay abreast of current research in writing, on her survey she notes she is Very Confident (10) in teaching writing and Very Confident (10) in assessing writing.

**Teacher B.** Teacher B applies her prior knowledge as new knowledge to teach writing. She combines her knowledge of students and this age-groups culture to develop writing assignments. As a native in this rural community, her acquired knowledge of the students' family backgrounds gives her immediate status with these students. Since she has a teenage child, she is current on the types of music and movies that provide the cultural icons, which are a large part of many young lives at this moment in time. In this way, she uses the relevancy of the students' culture as an aid to teach writing. Teacher B actively searches for new knowledge about writing through discussions with colleagues and even investigating other disciplinary textbooks. However, the state exam is prominent in her thinking and planning when teaching writing.

**Comparison of Teacher A and Teacher B.** While Teacher A looks outwardly to the Internet, veteran teachers, and state testing materials to locate knowledge on teaching writing, Teacher B looks inwardly, drawing upon her prior writing experiences, native culture, and uses these resources in the teaching of writing. However, it must be added, the state exam is a firm resource for what they teach in the classroom. Neither teacher looks to the local administration or scholars for aid in teaching writing. In a way, this is a sad commentary, for whereas employees in other employment sectors expect timely training and development from “The Company,” these teachers look to themselves and colleagues for the vital resources to do their job day-in and day-out. Both teachers are open to new knowledge and expressed a desire for more knowledge in teaching writing. In order to learn new knowledge in the field of teaching writing, a teacher needs regular professional development that can come in variety of ways: In school instruction by a local expert, he or she may take a college class on writing, or a distant education course through the Internet.

Both case-study teachers report on their surveys they “Sometimes” participate in activities to learn how to teach writing. While there exists professional development opportunities that demonstrate writing activities for students, there is very little training for teachers in managing students’ writing development. Lacking from the field of composition is a comprehensive plan for teaching writing at the secondary level (Yancey, 2009). In addition, training for teaching writing is more often about preparing students for the writing portion of the standardized tests. Case-study teachers’ responses to the question of participation in training to teach writing align with 69% of survey responses. An alarming 12% of survey teachers report Never giving time to learn new knowledge in writing instruction. Based upon the case-study teachers’ reality, little professional development in writing instruction is available.

The case-study teachers report minimal exposure to new knowledge in teaching writing, yet they report on a confidence scale of 1-10 (with 10 being the highest level of confidence). See Table 3 below for a comparison of the amount of professional development in teaching writing and the confidence levels of teachers in teaching and accessing writing.

**Table 3. Percentage (%) of Professional Development Time Spent for the Teaching of Writing. Teachers’ Confidence Levels in Teaching Writing and Assessing Writing (n=115).**

Survey Question	% from Total PD Time Given to Learning to Teach Writing		
	Never 0-10%	Sometimes 20-40%	Freq/Always 50-100%
Survey Respondents	12%	57%	31%
Case-Study Teachers		Both	

Survey Question	Confidence Scale in Teaching Writing 1-10. 10 being Highest.			Confidence Scale in Assessing Writing 1-10. 10 being Highest.		
	Not Very	Somewhat	Very Confident	Not Very	Somewhat	Very Confident
Survey Respondents	4%	38%	53%	5%	35%	56%
Case-Study Teachers			Both			Both

Some elaboration may be in order for the district survey question which asks, “Of the total time allotted to professional development, what percentage of this time is learning to teach writing?” To stay current in the field of English, professional development could include the domains of technology (a burgeoning focus in English at this time), composition, literature,

grammar, punctuation, and reading. In addition, much of professional development time is given to state testing procedures.

The case-study teachers marked Sometime, what they mean is that of all of the time allocated for professional development, 20-40% is about teaching writing. Furthermore, 31% of survey respondents report giving one-half to 100% of professional development time to teaching writing. On the surface, 31% getting 50-100% of professional development time in teaching writing sounds very good and should be investigated further. What is happening with the 31% that is not happening for the case-study teachers?

**Research Question Four: Do Teachers Use a Writing Program or Plan to Follow as He or She Determines What is Next for an Individual Student's Writing Abilities?** At the beginning of each school year the case-study teachers meet with their colleagues: the reading teachers, and discuss those parts of the Grade Level Expectations (GLE) and Comprehensive Curriculum (CC) that pertain to each area of responsibility. For example, English teachers will cover grammar, mechanics, writing, and technology; the reading teacher will determine literature selections and comprehension components, as well as technology. There are not computers available in every classroom. (Neither case-study teacher had a computer in the classroom for student use.) According to Teacher A, and confirmed by Teacher B, there are no writing of compositions in the reading class, "only comprehension." The researcher attempted to make arrangements to observe the seventh grade reading class on two occasions but to no avail. In addition, there is no differentiation in the teaching of writing from either case-study teachers' pedagogy.

**Theme One: Traditional Teaching Methods in the Teaching of Writing. Teacher A.** Teacher A reported she set students' writing goals at the beginning of each semester

(approximately every 15 weeks). 31% of survey teachers' responses align with Teacher A. The state test, I-Leap, guides her writing focus. She also reviews the Comprehensive Curriculum (CC), which is a compilation of activities that align with the Grade Level Expectations (GLE)—it does not provide developmental levels of writing skills or strategies. She may use the CC activity but “make it fit [her] topic.” The plans that are made are for “whole class” instruction and there are no plans for differentiation. At the beginning of the semester, and after scouring the I-Leap exam, she determines the format and content the students will need to learn for the state test. She adds, “but I don't have a type of chart, you know. They keep their writing in a binder and they can see.”

Teacher A is cognizant of the effect of poor or failing grades on students' motivation and so she provides feedback through “verbal praise” when returning students' writing and also provides feedback “through little notes.” For example, “I'll tell them, ‘much better, or your introduction is so much better.’” Time constraints are also a continuing concern for Teacher A when determining writing plans and is evidenced by her comment, “I always say, ‘Look how much time it took you to do that. Before it took you three days, it takes us one day now to do this.’” In this, students may learn that quickness equals quality. The teaching of grammar and mechanics consume the majority of class time and are isolated from the actual writing instruction. On teaching grammar, she emphasizes, “We practice, practice sets of sentences, breaking them down, giving them examples of good ones and bad ones. We do that almost everyday.”

Included in the planning for writing instruction is the assessment for the writing assignment. The intrusion of the state exam is pervasive throughout the entire school year that dictates writing instruction and assessment models. She explains her synthesis of with her writing instruction,

I take their rubrics [I-Leap] and basically I add a little extra, but that's what I do, I pick up off the I-Leap rubric and then cover all the points. Do they have the structure right, do they have the grammar, spelling, and all that correct? Do they stay on topic, unity and coherent [sic]; is everything that goes along with it clear, is it creative? Did they bring in humor? Do they have metaphors or figurative language? Did they grab the reader's attention? You know, the whole shebang. (Formal Interview)

During the field research, the actual assessment device was not disclosed during the actual writing instruction, but was provided to students with the assignment's handouts. The I-Leap also provides a checklist that consists of questions students are to have available while writing. Designed as an enlarged bookmark, and in addition to obvious questions, there is space available for teachers to insert specific criteria from the assignment. It is a handy tool to keep qualities of good writing in front of students as they are composing. However, there is one potential problem with this tool and that is the language is not written in kidspeak. If students are not versed in the language of writing instruction, the students' interpretation could lead to errors. Ideally, teachers, along with his or her students, could hold a "mini-lesson" to create their own bookmark based upon kidfriendly terminology. This is not to squelch the building of technical vocabulary, but students need to be able to understand the information, so the meaning has to be clear until students are fluent in the technical language.

**Teacher B.** Teacher B reports setting students' writing goals every nine weeks that aligns with 32% of survey teachers. The plans that are made are for the "whole class," and there are no plans for differentiation. The nine week goal setting aligns with the mode of writing as given in the GLE, she explains, "For the first nine weeks we wrote a mystery. The third nine weeks the research paper; the second nine weeks usually persuasion or compare/contrast." She then selects an assignment, "They get excited. They want to be proud of their work." The persuasion

assignment was observed during the field visits. The third nine week research paper coincides with the skills on the state test: information gathering, documenting sources, etc.

Throughout the year, Teacher B, “I take the LEAP stuff and make them write about it.” The state’s test is a guiding force for both case-study teachers in writing instruction. Teacher B uses the state test’s rubric to score students’ classroom writing so they become familiar with the assessment requirements. She gives verbal feedback and “writes little notes” on their papers to let students know how they are doing.

In her interview, Teacher B talked about the students gaining feedback from their groups and peer-reviews, but during the field observations these collaborations were not observed. When asked about how she shows students’ their writing progress, she says at the end of the semester she will be putting all of their writing on a computer diskette as a “kind of an electronic portfolio.” When asked about how she determines “what is next for students’ writing development,” she said she thinks in terms of whether their writing is mature, “How can this student improve and that’s the direction we go. If they’re writing sentences okay, I’ll have them add clauses or phrases for more mature writing. I get them to use figurative language.” She uses verbal praise to the whole class when colleagues have positive remarks about the students’ writing,

When I get feedback from a teacher, “Oh, the kids are doing this so well . . . they did the introductions well.” I will make a big deal out of it to the class and praise them. I write comments or a little note on their papers for good and bad, like, “I’m not sure about ending with a question mark—you’re the expert!” When I work with them one-on-one then I let them know where they’ve improved and what they still need to work on. They get feedback from their groups. If a student is really struggling, he and I can work together on the side. Peer review with another student does help.

The state exam influences Teacher B in her decisions for writing assignments. In addition, she uses the LEAP materials for instruction so they become familiar with the types of writing expected. She says,

I use a rubric, especially the one from LEAP. I'll add something... whatever we are working on at the time. I try to score their writing like LEAP does. One point off for grammar errors. I'm not going to take off for spelling. If they can get their feeling across clearly I'll give them a point.

Clearly, Teacher B relies on the authenticity of the LEAP rubric in taking for granted that the elements of writing being reinforced by the rubric are critical to student learning.

#### Comparison of Teacher A and Teacher B

Case-study teachers reported setting students' writing goals every nine or fifteen weeks. Combined, 63% of all surveyed teachers align with the case-study teachers, and responses are almost evenly divided (31% and 32%). In other words, 31% of respondents agree with Teacher A who sets students' writing goals at the beginning of each semester (approximately every fifteen weeks), and 32% align with Teacher B who sets students' writing goals every nine weeks. Both case-study teachers are guided by state testing materials (I-Leap and Leap) to determine their plans for writing. They look at the testing materials and fashion similar ones for writing in the classroom, or use the state's very rubric. The emphasis is "top down" with mandates or recommendations coming from the state (state tests, CC, GLE) to the teacher who then slightly modifies for local considerations.

For the question, "How often does teacher provide written comments on students' compositions?" The 43% who responded that they comment on their students' writing three or more times per week may not be providing the in-depth comments that once or twice per week could allow in the individualization that is high for student interest. Even commenting every

other week is satisfactory provided the comments are customized to challenge the students' writing complexity (Lipstein and Renninger, 2007, p. 83).

**Theme Two: Teacher Perceptions Influence Writing (Composing) Choices. Teacher**

**A.** Teacher A stated on her survey she feels "Very Confident" in teaching writing. She feels very proud of how she has taken parts of the WP that students resisted and devising shortcuts to reach the same ends. She is cognizant of the influence bad grades can have on a student's self-esteem and uses verbal praises framed in such a way to encourage students to press on. She teaches parts of the writing process: revision and publishing, and says, "Mostly our focus is on revision and publishing every week. We revise a broken up paragraph and take a quiz on it on Friday. That covers everything from spelling, capitalization, and grammar." There is not a formal plan for individual student's writing development, instead, feelings about how a student is progressing is the guide. She explains,

A lot of time if I feel they need more feedback than others I will go to them and talk to them about what they have done or I will write small notes, if I can get away with that. That's pretty much it. As a class if they are doing something wrong I will address it that way, too. I will address it some kind of way. And I'll edit and make comments when I'm grading.

**Teacher B.** Teacher B reports on her survey she also felt "Very Confident" in teaching writing. The state's test results in 8<sup>th</sup> grade will determine if students progress to 9<sup>th</sup> grade; therefore, considered to be what is termed, a "high-stakes" year for testing. Teacher B is well aware of this and during field visits not a day went by where the "test" was not mentioned at least once. This is a huge weight to have to carry all year for the teacher and for the students to have to hear the comments daily.

To lead students to higher levels of writing development, Teacher B looks for students' writing to be "mature,"

From day one. I try to make writing interesting, and especially with different openings and they are going to use some kind of figurative language and they (I tell them) I want to “feel” what they are writing. If they are “angry,” I want to feel that burning anger. Sad... same thing; happy, etc. Normally, on my board I’ll have descriptive adjectives, descriptive verbs listed and they will go up to them and try to find some to use. In the journals I have them write different things—things they might not normally do like making a noun into a verb, or a verb into a noun.

Teacher B does not teach the entire writing process, but uses the prewriting and drafting portions and realizes that the revising efforts are lacking,

They do a lot of editing. I make them go back and rework sentences. I think in terms of whether their writing is mature and how can this student improve and that’s the direction we go. If they’re writing sentences okay, I’ll have them add clauses or phrases for more mature writing.

**Comparison of Teacher A and Teacher B.** Both case-study teachers use portions of the writing process and not the complete process. While they may have thought to use the whole process, their decisions to use parts of the process has been the results of using the process within the time constraints of the classroom schedule and ever-increasing curriculum. They use the terminology, “incorporate grammar teaching into the writing.” This is a misunderstanding of the application of this teaching. The proper application is within the students’ authentic writing is where grammar instruction should take place and not from isolated sentences with grammar prompts. The reason for this method is clear: students will learn grammar when they need to know it, or when knowing grammar benefits them (through a grade or personal advantage). Students do not learn grammar through rote memorization.

The case-study teachers’ readily state they “use the writing process,” but in reality, only parts of the process are used. The entire writing process theoretically consists of “prewriting, writing, revision, editing, and publishing without regard to sequence” (Kucera, 1995, p. 189); further, the process is recursive and not linear. To complete one such process requires a

minimum of a week and this is giving little time to other areas of the discipline, therefore, it is not possible to complete the process more than once per week. I think we have here a confirmation of what Brindley and Schneider (2002) found in their research, “teachers believed that for their pupils to obtain higher test scores, teachers needed to focus on prescriptive test formats” (p. 337). The prescriptive test formats are fragmented writing opportunities that include responding to a prompt, using sequencing in a paragraph, and locating errors in a prepared paragraph, and so on. This is not sustained writing whereby students become invested in a work, gain feedback from peers, consult with their teacher, and consequently learn from the experience.

Of the survey teachers, 63% align with the two case-study teachers who state they set students’ writing goals at the beginning of each semester (Teacher A—approximately every fifteen weeks) or every nine weeks (Teacher B). In other words, 31% agree with Teacher A, who sets students’ writing goals at the beginning of each semester (approximately every fifteen weeks), and 32% align with Teacher B who sets students’ writing goals every nine weeks. Part of any program or plan is goal setting. When asked on the survey, “How often do you set individual students’ writing goals,” 21% of surveyed teachers state Very Often, or every four weeks; 15% of teachers state, Never. The range of responses is troubling for there does not appear to be specific objectives for teachers to track a student’s writing progress. According to the research findings, some teachers set writing goals at four weeks, some at nine weeks, others at fifteen weeks, and some, Never.

Both case-study teachers set students’ writing goals as a whole class objective by reviewing several resources: GLE, CC, and the LEAP test samples. As teachers follow these criteria, there is not much room left for differentiation, especially without some kind of tracking system to know how students are developing. The writing that does take place is prescribed in

order to meet the teachers' assessment criteria. It is as Hillocks (2005) found to be true in his study: formula writing is widespread in schools and dominates instruction" (p. 241). When teachers follow "form" correctly it is possible to mistake this for teaching writing.

## **Discussion**

The lack of utilizing the entire writing process may have serious developmental implications for students. The reason more time is not given to the entire process is due to the emphasis on grammar and mechanics instruction that consumes approximately thirty-five minutes of the fifty-minute classes. There is not enough class time for student collaboration in writing, an important skill for the student and is replaced with students writing the entire class period. If the training and resources were within reach, teachers would reach for them. Teacher B attested to this fact during our interview of her desire to have students work collaboratively, but struggles with ideas. She explains that once she viewed a social studies text that had just arrived and was "envious" because of "all of the things I could do in English class." She laments,

'cause as an English teacher I find it hard to work collaboratively in small groups because it's [English] a lot of writing, a lot of independent work. I'd like to take them to the library, I might could find some other information with another class and bring it in here and let them write using English for the real world.

This teacher is reaching for resources where she works and it should be available for her. There must be many teachers in this situation. Continued professional development in teaching writing should be within reach for their career development.

The survey results prove that teachers are not getting the training they need to properly teach writing development. They are using what they have been trained in to the best of their abilities, but there is so much more our students could be doing and learning. What profession requires its employees to work without tools? Yet, we require teachers to produce successful

writers without providing the tools members need to learn, and to be successful. In a space provided at the bottom of the survey for teachers to make comments, many commented on a lack of professional development opportunities to teach teachers about writing instruction; the passion in one teachers remarks was evidenced by big, bold letters followed by multiple exclamation marks: “Where is professional development in writing available??!! I would love to attend more training in writing if it were offered!!!”

The term, writing, is used as a cover term for all writing or the marking of symbols on a page to composing longer texts. This, too, falls under the heading of a lack of professional development in the teaching of writing. Further, the writing process itself is used as a methodology for teaching writing when in fact it is simply a process. Teachers are to teach writing strategies to further students’ skills in writing. The five paragraph theme is also used for teaching writing when it is but one type of format where particular strategies are included in that form, and that form alone.

When asked during the interviews how the case-study teachers have grown in teaching writing, their benchmarks included increasing the number of sentences students write in a paragraph and that “70% of students scored ‘basic’ or above on the writing section” on the state test, or through the knowledge of writing, how to minimize the process to meet time constraints.

The lack of developing individual student’s plan for writing development is by far the most neglected area when it comes to teaching writing. I have yet to read any studies that discuss the foundations, theory, or practice of setting goals for student writers. Atwell (1987) has described the development of student writing goals explicitly in her work with middle school students and would be a resource for teachers. However, Atwell has a very specific teaching environment since she owns the school and may not have the teaching load and curriculum

mandates as these case-study teachers. My case-study teachers interpreted this research question on determining a student's writing needs to mean setting students' writing goals as a whole class by following the GLE for the form of writing (persuasive, expository, etc.) in the grading term. Intended by the inquiry was differentiation for individual writing development and tracking that progress. In such a program, the student and teacher together set the goals according to genre with defined competencies to achieve by the end of the school year.

The case-study teachers' response to the confidence levels (10) in teaching and assessing writing on the survey contradicts their statements in the interviews. The 38% of teachers who said they were, "Somewhat Confident," seems a truer reflection of the majority of teachers. The high rating of teacher perceptions in teaching writing (53%) may mean what Hillocks (2005) found in his study, "formula writing is widespread in schools and dominates instruction" (p. 241). When teachers follow a formula correctly it is possible to mistake this for teaching writing. Here, the setting for teaching writing mediates the instruction that takes place. Teachers are pressed for time to cover a range of material and the tendency for prescriptive writing does not allow students time to think through the processes to solve writing problems and take risks with writing. The setting prescribes, "long-term exposure to and drill on such static forms of writing [that] do not prepare students for the significant challenges they will encounter beyond high school" (VanDeWeghe, 2006, p.62).

The lack of class time for students' writing development is an internal issue in secondary schools that no one seems to be working towards a solution. Unfortunately, teachers' lack of training in composition does not afford them the knowledge to stand up for appropriating adequate time to teach writing. Learning to teach writing requires experience, mentorship, and formal training. Writing assessment, the type that contributes to student learning, where teachers

council with students while in the drafting and revision stages of writing, should be what counts as effective assessment and not the ability to find and correct errors after the fact.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter put forth the purpose of the research study and begins with an introduction to the people whose actions were studied and reported, the two case-study teachers. The teachers' background and school context were explored to give the reader a sense of their personal lives and where they meet with students each day. The narrative continues with descriptions of the classrooms where the real work takes place. The four research questions are addressed comprehensively: within each case-study teacher's cultural context from the interviews to their classrooms, by comparing the two teachers' perspectives, and through the surveyed teachers' responses juxtaposed to the case-study teachers. The next chapter hones in on the findings in a deeper way which speaks to specific concerns, limitations, and directions for further research. The conclusion records considerations given to the findings in this study and possible implications.

## Chapter V: Conclusion

The purpose of this research study was to examine how secondary English teachers teach writing within their classroom environments, and if teachers use the methodology labeled the *Writing Process* (WP) (Emig, 1971). The WP is required teaching according to the state department's *Grade Level Expectations* (GLE) and the *Comprehensive Curriculum* (CC). In particular, the research questions are designed to understand secondary teachers' writing pedagogies, the type and frequency of feedback given to students about their writing, and the teachers' methods used to plan for the advancement of students' knowledge in writing. Understanding the teachers' attitude (both stated and observed) towards teaching writing, and that of their colleagues, allows insight into the teachers' motivation for teaching writing because their attitudes affect instruction. The final area of inquiry has to do with the resources teachers have in teaching writing, the amount of training provided them and how teachers supplement this training to stay current in the research on writing pedagogy.

Themes were pivotal in contextualizing the work of classroom teachers. The phrase, teaching writing, was used as a *sensitizing concept* (Patton, 1990) that worked as a lens for reading the field notes and uncovered two overarching themes: *Traditional* teaching methods and *Teacher Perceptions Influence Writing Choices*. The themes used in this research study pervade the case-study teachers' pedagogies, for they stem from their personal belief system to affect the teaching of writing in critical ways. While the case-study teachers' pedagogies would be described as *Traditional*, it was noted that when a composing assignment was given, a shift occurred to characteristics of *student-centered* teaching methods. Both traditions of teaching, traditional or teacher-centered and student-centered, are the two dominant teaching approaches that have existed in school and are "millennia old." The term, *hybrid*, better describes both case-

study teachers' pedagogy. According to Cuban's (1993) historical review of teaching practices, hybrids of teaching turn up as early as the beginning of the twentieth century (p.7-8). The Saussurean (Eagleton, 1996, p. 84) view of language as a "system of signs" (semiotics), demonstrated the "internal relations" of the sign (signified) to the teacher (signifier). Semiotics was used to highlight the entrenched "language" that underscores teacher behaviors

Teacher A and Teacher B are strong proponents of writing and have been using the WP since they were in high school and college. Both teachers see the WP as instrumental to the task of "getting ideas onto paper and organizing the writing" (interview with Teacher B). Both case-study teachers' writing pedagogies stem from personal beliefs that guide their selection of composing assignments; however, their purposes for teaching writing reveal extreme differences. Teacher A's writing pedagogy focuses on writing as a functional tool, or utilitarian; Teacher B's pedagogy is expressive, encouraging exploratory writing. A utilitarian perspective is characterized by writing in "particular formats," and usually for the workforce, for example, writing to format an envelope. Expressive or, exploratory, writing encourages students to "let the writing lead," and is characterized by generating many ideas students return to often during the process of writing. Expressive writing promotes recursive thinking. It should be noted that, "In actual practice, the approaches and activities employed by teachers may vary considerably, even over short periods of time, and may be combined in various ways to produce unintended outcomes" (Stotsky, 1997, p. 123).

Responses from a three (3) district survey of English teachers' was used to contrast the case-study teachers' responses: the micro culture alongside the macro culture of English educators. It is interesting to note that in most (majority) instances the case-study teachers' responses to the survey are congruent with the majority of English teachers' responses from the

survey. The consistency to which the case-study teachers' responses agree with the majority of survey responses add credence to the reliability of the case-study teachers' responses. In addition, the case-study teachers' responses could be verified through direct observation.

Two discoveries rise to the top that could be further investigated through additional research and will be discussed further in the Conclusion of this chapter: The prevalence of the Writing Process (Emig, 1971) as the sole method for teaching writing with minimal strategies added to the mix and the use of the "espousal theory" and "theory-in-use." The occurrence of these theories in this research study could have been the effect of the researcher in the classroom or may be characteristic of the teaching profession. If it is the latter, is it a by-product of the predominance of standardized testing prevailing in the profession today?

Teacher A

The field research data revealed a predominant use of Traditional teaching methods with brief instances of student-centered approaches when teaching composing constituting a *hybrid* (mixture of these two methodologies) approach (Cuban, 1993, pp.7-8). While Teacher A reports using the WP, in fact, she has streamlined the process through the use of prescriptive formats for students to follow. This is done in an effort to save class time. The two elements of the process used are pre-writing and drafting. The pre-writing gathers the ideas for the content, and the drafting is guided by the purpose for writing from the particular assignment.

Whole class instruction eliminates student collaboration for the WP procedures of peer-review, teacher conferences, and revision processes. Planning for writing occurs on a semester basis delineated from the *Grade Level Expectations* (GLE) and *Comprehensive Curriculum* (CC) with the latter used for activity ideas with the teacher supplying her own topic choices. For assessment, Teacher A looks to the rubric provided with the state's standardized tests. Due to her

personal philosophy of writing, the focus for teaching writing is utilitarian. With this focus, students are prepared for real-world writing.

Students receive teacher feedback as a whole class, written notes on the students' writing, and intermittent one-on-one praises. Students keep their writing in the English binder that stays with them. Teacher A expressed a desire to learn more about teaching writing, and she felt the focus for professional development has been mainly in the areas of grammar, technology and standardized testing. She seeks out writing activities from veteran teachers and the Internet.

It is very possible that during Teacher A's student teaching practicum that she observed her mentor teacher using traditional teaching methods, and it is also possible that the teacher lecturing in front of the class is how Teacher A was taught in middle and high school and therefore is her model for teaching. The hybrid method that incorporated student-centered elements occurred during the composition assignment.

The modification of the WP that eliminates the collaborative elements of the process approach to writing stems from a lack of training in sociocultural and sociopolitical discourses. The methods of peer review and teacher conference are important to students growing awareness of "school language." If they are going to learn these practices that lead to successful school outcomes, in school is where they must learn them.

Children come to school with extraordinary linguistic, cultural, and intellectual resources, just not the same resources. It is the responsibility of teachers to draw on these resources in support of school learning, including teaching the language practices valued in school. If there are crucial language experiences needed for school success then teachers must provide them (Dudley-Marling and Lucas, 2009, p.369).

Both sociocultural and sociopolitical discourses look at school practices in how they affect a student's self perception about literacy abilities and deficits and how the student's interactions are affected by school routines. Training in writing instruction would instill how

students learn from one another, the language of peer groups, and assessing writing during teacher conferences and the importance of timely feedback to developing writers.

The first day of observations, both teachers expressed using the WP. It is puzzling how teachers can state this when crucial parts have been eliminated. There needs to be professional development in writing instruction.

Teacher B.

Many similarities exist between the two case-study teachers. The data from the field research indicates Teacher B's writing pedagogy as "Traditional." Elements of "student-centered" approaches become apparent during writing instruction indicating a hybrid of these two methodologies (Cuban, 1993). While Teacher B has also modified the WP using the same processes as Teacher A: pre-writing and drafting. Students take the draft and finalize into a finished product. Teacher B's motive, however, may stem from an admitted lack of expertise in collaborating engagements. She does not use prescriptive devices for outlining or essay writing, but instructs students if they desire to outline. The essay's elements are based upon the purpose of the assignment with the teacher assisting students one-on-one as she walks to the students' desks. She reports planning for writing every nine weeks based upon the GLE and CC. The state's standardized test's rubric is used for writing assessment. She encourages students to explore for many ideas and return to exploration when additional ideas are needed in a recursive fashion. Her focus for teaching writing is one of exploratory. With this focus, students explore for personal interest in order to sustain writing motivation.

Teacher B gives students feedback on writing through written notes and whole class praise. The latter stems from when other teachers comment on her students' writing progress. Students keep their own writing within their English notebook. She feels there is more she

should be doing in teaching writing and a lack of professional development in this area. Teacher B seeks writing help from previewing other disciplines materials, colleagues, and teacher resources on the Internet.

Teacher B did not take the “traditional” path to teaching and have student teaching experiences. Instead, she tells me a displaced teacher from New Orleans after hurricane Katrina came and worked with her in the classroom for which she was very grateful. She needed to learn basics that she had missed. She expressed a desire to learn more about writing instruction. There is a definite need for teachers to train other teachers or university professors to work with teachers in the teaching of writing.

### **Implications for the Classroom**

At least five implications can be derived from this study that affects instruction. The first one incorporates the teachers’ methodology for teaching writing, and the last three (not in order of importance) reveal what is missing from the students’ writing environment. The dynamic shift in teaching style from a traditional approach to elements of a student-centered approach, illustrate the first two outcomes. Mentioned in Chapter IV was the change in students’ body language during the student-centered composing activities. For the latter, students faced the teacher instead of their eyes glued to the whiteboard, and a conversational style of interaction occurred with students interjecting comments and making requests that altered the assignment.

Perhaps because of the strict order of most of the class, due to the established routines, that the shift appeared dramatic. There was a definite lightening of the mood during the composing assignment. This did not occur during the routine teaching segments. During the grammar and mechanic instruction that covers most of class time, students’ heads look from the whiteboard to their tablet, writing continually. When the shift occurred during composing, their

heads were up and their faces forward towards the teacher, hands were raised seemingly full of attention to the lesson and what the teacher had to say.

The obvious changes in students' behavior during composing activities were encouraging, and it should be mentioned there were teacher changes also. There was a readiness by the teachers to allow for students' voices in negotiating the assignment (requesting to write as an email and to draw). The teachers could have prepared worksheets for students to complete the composition assignment, but they did not. They appeared to be as engaged as the students. They smiled, made jokes, and walked around to the students' desks to offer help. This follows Patton's (1990) reporting on a study and the use of "nonverbal communication" and how it is possible to "read the tenor of the group by observing the amount and nature of physical contact participants [are] having with each other" (p.291).

Another implication from this study that affects instruction was the teachers' use of the WP as the prevailing instructional approach to teach writing. As the name makes clear, the WP is a *process* approach that when it first appeared was in stark contrast to the view of composition which had dominated instruction. Originally, teachers were only concerned with the finished product—the paper. No emphasis was given to how students arrived at achieving the final paper. Teachers did instruct on the body of the paper; they gave the assignment and set a deadline for the work to be turned in. Therefore, a process approach to composition and class time given over to writing was a sweeping change. However, the WP was never intended, nor is it possible, to be a method for teaching writing. Students need to see models of rhetorical conventions, they need to hear examples of effective use of strategies, and those strategies need to be instructed, directly. Along with the establishing of effective writing, strategies should be provided with scaffolding and plenty of practice with teacher guidance and feedback *before* they are to be

expected to draft a document. Once a draft is penned by the student, collaborative activities must happen in the classroom. Teachers need to be instructed in these processes and how to make assessments during this process.

The remaining implications for the classroom address the expressed lack of professional development in writing instruction. The elimination of the collaborating elements from the writing process (peer-review, teacher conferences, and revision) denies students the necessary developmental opportunities they need to be successful and is the result of a lack of training. Unfortunately, for students, there can be consequences for the lack of these experiences the first time that they are expected to know the behaviors, and language, required in collaborative situations. The strategic decision-making skills during revision activities with their peers is problem-solving that benefits students beyond the writing classroom. There is terminology associated with collaborative learning that will be missing from their language schemata if students are not provided these experiences.

Teachers should be trained in how formative assessment is used as part of the process of writing development. The lack of effective feedback that is individualized and timely is a vital ingredient for student growth as writers. A lack of training in the development of student writing has led to these deficiencies in teacher feedback mechanisms that coincide with and the planning for students' growth in writing. What is telling are the survey responses as over one-half of survey teachers and both case-study teachers report they *Occasionally* (56%) provide writer feedback through teacher conferences with students one-on-one. Overall, there is a lack of professional development and resources available in these critical areas and therefore teachers rely on materials supplied by the standardized test developers. On the other hand, teachers also

seek out resources from veteran teachers and teacher resources on the Internet, but these efforts are not enough.

Most of the comments here have been about the students and how the lack of experiences in writing will lead to literacy deficits, but there are implications for the teacher, also. The lack of professional development in writing instruction denies teachers the professional satisfaction from witnessing students' growth as writers. Most teachers enter the profession to see students learn and there is a certain amount of satisfaction in witnessing your students' success. However, the lack of professional development does not necessarily stem from the neglect of school or state administrations. There is a dearth of resources in comprehensive planning for adolescent writing development available for secondary teachers. From the three district survey of English teachers, only 25% report *frequently* allowing students to engage in peer-review activities. Case-study teachers report *Occasionally* allowing peer-review along with 51% of the survey teachers. It must be noted, that during the field visits, I did not observe any peer-reviews taking place. As stated in chapter four, two of the five stages (not to be literally understood as definite stages but recursive activities) are used by the case-study teachers: prewriting and drafting.

### **Limitations**

The limitations encountered in this study are the results of a lack of experience in conducting a comprehensive research effort. After careful planning for selecting the case-study teachers, this area was one of least concern because there was a well thought out plan. Making the selection was based on a criteria that when followed should have reached the intended results. I failed to take into account logistics and teacher schedules. When one of the selected teacher's schedules did not allow for the researcher to physically arrive to class on time, it was necessary to contact my major professor for an alternate plan. The district supervisor played an important

role in selecting a teacher whose qualifications were similar to the teacher I could no longer use. Only one day was lost due to the rescheduling, but future researchers should allow for more flexibility in setting the initial criteria for selecting the case-study participants.

Another example of a limitation that could have been avoided is the ordering of observations. It was noted that the order and efficiency (second hour followed by third hour) for the observations was purposefully achieved; however, it would have been more productive to have had a break between the two classes so the researcher could record personal reflections before proceeding to the next observation. Not having such a break for reflection proved to be a limitation, for when I did write a reflection, the most recent class (third period with Teacher B) was the more memorable. I resolved this dilemma by coding within the class observation period a couple of notes set off by brackets “[ ]” when a notion came to mind that needed to be pursued later. At the end of both observations, I could retrieve these ideas as I wrote my personal reflection on the day’s activities. In this case, the lack of time between observations could not be avoided based on the teachers’ scheduling. What appears to work on paper has to be tempered with the reality of the teaching environment. These two limitations were learning experiences that fortunately were able to be corrected and did not hamper the research results and can be avoided in the future.

A third limitation resulted from trying to get by with minimal technology. The recording device selected was not powerful enough to capture the teachers’ voices during instruction. It was fine for the formal interviews. I resolved this issue by scribing every word uttered with shorthand marks for pauses and changes of tone. If the classes could be taped recorded without affecting the authenticity of the research, the writer could have then been able to absorb more of the teacher’s behaviors.

The remaining limitations have to do with general impressions regarding the execution of the research effort. It has been generally noted in scholarly reports of the expense involved (from an administrative perspective) in doing this type of qualitative research. Whether the personnel are administrators, teachers, or other professionals, the time in the field means time away from other duties. Graduate students seem to be the most viable candidates for this type of research and therefore giving graduate students more access to qualitative experience. I disagree with this evaluation. The reason for the disagreement is because teachers researching teachers can add credibility to the study because the reporting could be more fair and balanced. One example is where being a teacher disallowed a cursory reading of the survey results that revealed a lack of professional development offered teachers in writing instruction. The surveys did reveal a desire from teachers for professional development in writing instruction and it would be easy to fault administrators for not providing such; however, a teacher of writing would have knowledge of the scant research that is available that would form the basis of the training. Therefore, the answer is not the obvious.

There is the impression that covering more teachers over a larger geographic area will produce better results. This may only be true if covering many school districts and would require a research team. For this study, the number of teachers observed, at least in the same district, and the amount of time spent in observations probably would not have changed the results of this study. The two case-study teachers were observed and one day was spent with the teacher who was originally part of the case-study, but due to logistics and teacher schedules, another teacher was selected. All three exhibited teacher-centered, Traditional, pedagogies. Traditional teaching may be systemic, and therefore, observing more teachers within this same district may have yielded the same results.

## **Suggestions for Further Research**

My findings indicate that research needs to look at developing a comprehensive approach to teaching writing building from sixth through twelfth grade. A comprehensive approach has to include detailed explicit instructions for teacher practice. Research should include cognitive studies to determine developmental effects and levels to writing instruction. The reading-writing connection should also be included in a comprehensive plan for writing and various forms of assessment procedures. Then, writing activities can be included at appropriate junctures. A wealth of activities exist in the field but missing is how they fit into a growth model. A balance of creative writing and academic writing should be put forth. From a proper framework for writing instruction, research can then look at other issues such as comparative gender issues related to writing, cross-cultural approaches, and technology integration just to name a few.

Additional research studies of secondary teachers' writing instruction should be conducted and then shared with local education authorities. There is a wealth of research at the early elementary levels and the college level, but more research needs to take place at the secondary level. In addition, these secondary studies should be collected and analyzed to patterns in teaching practices. These studies need to be expanded to include the prevalence of the WP used as a methodology to teach writing.

How teachers characterize their pedagogy needs to be evaluated against actual practice. Chris Argyris (1982), an organizational theorist, described two theories that my research reveals to have implications for teacher pedagogy: "Espoused Theory" and "Theory-In-Use." Espoused Theory is what people say, or believe, to be how they do their job. Obviously, Theory-In-Use is what "really happens" (Patton, 1990, p.163). These theories are an explanation for the discrepancy is in how the teachers' perceived their writing pedagogy instruction versus the actual

fulfillment within the classroom, at least during the time of the field work. I go into greater detail on this insight in the following section and the application for the teaching profession.

## **Conclusion**

This researcher was very perplexed over a phenomenon I saw occurring over the course of the field work. It is explained by Argyris' (1982) "Espoused Theory" and "Theory-In-Use" (Patton, 1990, p.163) that can be applied to the teaching profession. It was reported in Chapter Four, in both case-study classrooms, students and teachers would vocalize terminology associated with the WP that indicated a familiarity with the process. For example, when a student expressed a desire to conduct a "peer-review," the teacher granted permission. More importantly, it was observed, that the teacher only provided assent, there was no support or encouragement for this student-centered activity. Here would have been an opportune time to bring the whole class into a peer-review session. However, this was not done. It could only be deduced that peer-review was not part of the teacher's pedagogy she wanted to pursue. Cuban (1993) expressed the reality of student-centered approaches that may account for the Theory-In-Use,

[Student-centered approaches] make a shambles of routines geared to handling large groups of students. These approaches would require a complete overhaul of basic modes of classroom operation. When the entire burden of change is placed upon the shoulders of the teacher, it should come as no surprise that few teachers are willing to upset their intimate world . . . Hence, the practical approach of teacher-centered instruction continues to dominate schooling because of the organizational pressures of the school and district upon the classroom. (p.253)

The same scenario occurred with Teacher B in the computer lab. One student asked, "Can I work with a partner and do a peer-review?" Teacher B agreed, but there was no encouragement or support for the student. The students made a brief exchange about the content of their paper, but because the student's peer was across the aisle and the students were anchored to a computer, the conversation died. Teacher B's actions were more disturbing for this researcher because in

her interview she espoused all student-centered attributes. She was well versed in the language which she could have learned during her one year indoctrination as the elementary teacher writing coach and her university coursework for alternative teacher certification. The reality in the classroom was teacher-centered, albeit a more conversational style, but lecture delivered content and tightly controlled classroom management. There were no elements of student-centered activity during the field observations. Once back in the classroom from the computer lab, students made no requests for collaborative engagements.

As a researcher, I do not believe Teacher B was trying to mislead me in her interview. She clearly perceived her classroom pedagogy in the way she described. At some point in her teaching she has students engage in collaborative activities and to her characterizes her pedagogy. Cuban (1992) encountered similar treatment he described as “paradoxes and puzzles” when a teacher cites different “teaching practices” and the researcher observes “modest alterations” of teacher-centered practices (p.239).

More research needs to investigate teachers’ espousal theory in relation to their theory-in-use for clearly this occurs in the profession. The first step in transforming teachers’ pedagogy is confrontation with reality. This can be done through video taping of the teachers’ classroom performances. Along with this visual witness must be formal instruction on the benefits of collaborative activities for students’ social and educational experiences and teachers’ professional progress through students’ success. Then, and only then, can rebuilding occur from a student-centered foundation.

My findings indicate that the *Writing Process* (Emig, 1971) as a methodology does not constitute the teaching of writing. It is a process that will do what it was designed to do: to complement writing strategies in the teaching of writing. As a thinking tool, the WP draws out

ideas onto paper (one of the first hurdles to writing is the gathering of ideas), includes collaboration with peers to gain an awareness of the readers' needs, and encourages reflection and problem-solving. Without writing strategies and sustained writing opportunities to make words perform the writer's intentions to a target audience, students have very little to work with to transform their writing. The writing process methodology consists of "prewriting, writing, revision, editing, and publishing without regard to sequence" (Kucera, 1995, p. 189); further, the process is recursive and not linear. It is not surprising that teachers eliminate parts of the process to save class time or develop prescriptive forms to students to complete thereby eliminating the good things the process approach offers. Labeled a *modified* approach, what this simply means is parts of the process are eliminated. Students miss out when the process approach is shortened. According to the three district survey, 100 % of teachers use a modified approach of the writing process. This is happening because we have failed to provide research in writing development presented in instructional formats that are in tandem with the entire writing process.

There is a hierarchy to skill development in learning to write, just as there is for any other skill. For example, novice writers are more adept at "telling" or describing for descriptive writing than using logic in persuasive writing. It is understandable that teachers would not have a formal plan for tracking students' development if there has not been professional development in this area available to them. They use what is available, and unfortunately, some of these resources come with test-taking materials; therefore, students are learning one-way of writing that test developers have determined has value. Once writing pedagogy makes it to the classroom teachers, teachers will need to spend time explicitly teaching students. As teachers of writing, we forget how difficult it is to struggle with the blank page. There is still a place for deliberate teaching as developing writers need much guidance, modeling, and practice. And, I am reminded

of Vygotsky's (1962) words, "What a child can do in cooperation today, he can do alone tomorrow" (p.104). A school wide plan for writing would allow for each grade level of development that is cognitively appropriate, "where people read, write, and talk about reading and writing, where everybody can be student and teacher" (Atwell, 1989, p.240).

The findings from this research study showed the many challenges teachers face in this one element of teaching in English studies. The selection of two teachers who were proponents of writing was in order to see the hurdles professed advocates experience in trying to provide writing instruction. This study also illustrated the real needs for resources in the teaching of writing and they should expect these tools be provided.

It is fortunate for these students their English teachers' attitudes toward the teaching of writing is positive, for some of their colleagues believe writing instruction is the English teachers' responsibility and do not teach writing in their respective disciplines. Both attitudes, positive and negative can have an effect on students' attitude towards writing. Students would have more exposure to learning the writing craft if all teachers were teachers of writing. Students would gain experience writing for different purposes for various audiences—a level of fluency critical to development in writing.

Teacher B had a "gut" feeling there was more she should be doing in teaching writing. I suspect this is the case with most English Language Arts teachers in writing instruction. The truth is there are more strategies for teaching poetry and available to teachers than the type of writing most needed. This is not to say that poetry is not important because it has its place. These same types of materials need to be available for academic, or school writing. The teaching of grammar and mechanics in isolation would be discarded. These skills in isolation do not transfer to the writing experience. Students learn grammar and mechanics when they need to know them.

When they are engaged in writing that is challenging yet taught deliberately so they can gain success, they will care about grammar and punctuation. It is within the writing of authentic texts where the instruction should take place in grammar and mechanics. As Weaver (1990) states, “the meaningful and enduring learning occurs most readily as the result of an active process of meaning-making, rather than a passive process of filling in blanks or repeating or recopying information presented by the teacher or the text” (p. 8).

If the requirements for teachers to provide writing instruction in all disciplines were to materialize, students would have added benefit due to additional practice with their fingers around a pen or pencil. We must make sure that this additional benefit is not to the students’ detriment by providing writing instruction to all teachers and not just English teachers. The purpose and audience varies in every discipline. Teachers should have discussions about the teaching of writing to learn how it is being taught in other disciplines. Understanding that becoming proficient in writing is really a life-long process; therefore, the case-study teachers’ colleagues’ attitude toward teaching writing must change. Students can have many reasons for not performing in one class or another. Teacher A knew her students could capitalize the first word in a sentence, yet the students were not doing so in science class. All teachers have to model and explain their expectations for writing in their discipline. I concur with Teacher A’s statement—“it’s only fair to the students” to provide this information.

The time spent in secondary school, from sixth through twelfth grade, is the time when students should be learning the specialized knowledge in order to develop a large repertoire of writing skills. As they develop cognitively, they will learn to focus those skills in more refined ways. Writers are not born, they are developed. Basic understandings of usage and knowledge of

genre will come together during later years in high school, but not if they are deficient in writing knowledge they should have gained in previous years.

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## Appendix A: Survey Results

<i>Comparison Markings from Survey on the Writing Process</i>						
<b>ATTRIBUTES of Writing Process</b>	<i>TeacherB Case study</i>	<i>TeacherA Case Study</i>	Responses % of n=115	Responses % of n=115	Responses % of n=115	Responses % of n=115
1) How many oppty's do students have to <u>compose</u> at least *3 paragraphs?	<b>Once a wk.</b>	<b>Once a wk.</b>	<b>Everyday</b> 1%	<b>2-3times wk</b> 16%	<b>Once a wk.</b> 75%	<b>Never-</b> write 3 para. 6%
2) How often do <u>teachers</u> use the <u>writing process</u> ?	<b>Very Often</b> 2-3x wk	<b>Frequently</b> 1-2x wk	<b>Very Often</b> 2-3x wk 32%	<b>Frequently</b> 1-2x wk 47%	<b>Occasionally</b> Every other wk. 19%	<b>Never-</b> Do not use 2%
3) How often do <u>teachers</u> use a <u>modified version</u> ?	<b>Frequently</b> 1-2x wk.	<b>Frequently</b> 1-2x wk.	<b>Very Often</b> 3+ times wk. 22%	<b>Frequently</b> 1-2x wk. 47%	<b>Occasionally</b> Every other wk. 24%	<b>Never-</b> Do not use 7%
4) How often do <u>students</u> <u>revise</u> each draft?	<b>Frequently</b> 1-2x wk.	<b>Very Often</b> 3+ times wk.	<b>Very Often</b> 3+ times wk. 18%	<b>Frequently</b> 1-2x wk. 43%	<b>Occasionally</b> Every other wk. 33%	<b>Never-</b> Teacher edits 5%
5) How often does <u>teacher</u> provide <u>written comments</u> on students' compositions?	<b>Occasionally</b> Every other wk.	<b>Frequently</b> 1-2x wk.	<b>Very Often</b> 3+ times wk. 43%	<b>Frequently</b> 1-2x wk. 38%	<b>Occasionally</b> Every other wk. 17%	<b>Never/</b> Seldom 2%
6) How often do <u>students</u> participate in <u>Peer Review</u> ?	<b>Occasionally</b> Every other wk.	<b>Occasionally</b> Every other wk.	<b>Very Often</b> 3+ times wk. 10%	<b>Frequently</b> 1-2x wk. 25%	<b>Occasionally</b> Every other wk. 51%	<b>Never/</b> Seldom 11%
7) How often does <u>teacher</u> conduct <u>one-on-one</u> <u>conferences</u> with students?	<b>Frequently</b> 1-2x wk	<b>Occasionally</b> Every other wk.	<b>Very Often</b> 3+ times wk 10%	<b>Frequently</b> 1-2x wk. 23%	<b>Occasionally</b> Every other wk. 56%	<b>Never-</b> Do not use 10%
8) How often does <u>teacher</u> make <u>individual student's</u> <u>writing goals</u> ?	<b>Frequently</b> Every 9 wks.	<b>Occasionally</b> Begin/sem.	<b>Very Often</b> 4-4 ½ wks. 21%	<b>Frequently</b> Every 9 wks. 32%	<b>Occasionally</b> Begin/semester 31%	<b>Never-</b> No specific goals 15%
9) How <u>confident</u> are you, the <u>teacher</u> , in teaching writing? <i>Confidence Scale 1through 10</i> 1    2-4    5-7    8-10 Not    Not    Somewhat    Very    Confi- At All    Very                dent	<b>Very Confident</b>  10	<b>Very Confident</b>  10	<b>Not at All</b> 1  1%	<b>Not Very</b> 2-4  3%	<b>Somewhat</b> 5-7  38%	<b>Very Confident</b> 8-10  53%
10) How <u>confident</u> are you, the <u>teacher</u> , in assessing writing? <i>Confidence Scale 1through 10</i> 1    2-4    5-7    8-10 Not    Not    Somewhat    Very    Confi- At All    Very                dent	<b>Very Confident</b>  10	<b>Very Confident</b>  10	<b>Not at All</b> 1  1%	<b>Not Very</b> 2-4  4%	<b>Somewhat</b> 5-7  35%	<b>Very Confident</b> 8-10  56%
11) How often does <u>teacher</u> attend professional development on the teaching of writing?	<b>Occasionally</b> 2-3 Times/yr.	<b>Occasionally</b> 2-3 Times/yr.	<b>Very Often</b> 7+Times/yr 5%	<b>Frequently</b> 4-6 Times/yr. 12%	<b>Occasionally</b> 2-3 Times/yr. 52%	<b>Never</b> 0-1 Times yr. 23%
12) Of the time given to <u>stay current</u> in field, how much does <u>teacher</u> give for writing instruction?	<b>Sometimes</b> 20-40%	<b>Sometimes</b> 20-40%	<b>Always</b> 80-100% 8%	<b>Frequently</b> 50-80% 23%	<b>Sometimes</b> 20-40% 57%	<b>Never</b> 0-10% 12%
13) <u>Opinion</u> : <u>Teacher</u> feels # of students have a positive attitude towards writing?	<b>Most</b> 40-75%	<b>Some</b> 20-30%	<b>About All-</b> 80-100% 1%	<b>Most</b> 40-75% 42%	<b>Some</b> 20-30% 47%	<b>None-few</b> 0-15% 5%
14) Method(s) of <u>teaching grammar &amp; mechanics</u> (mark ALL that apply)	<b>A, B, C, D</b>	<b>A,B,D</b>	<b>A) Work-sheets</b> 37%	<b>B) Direct Instruction</b> 64%	<b>C)Conference w/student</b> 25%	<b>D) Within Context</b> 74%

## Appendix B: Interview Questions

Interview questions are adapted from Patton, 2002, pp. 348-427.

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself: where are you from and how did you end up in city ?
2. What made you desire to become a teacher? A teacher of English?
3. Now, I'd like to ask you about the teaching experiences you've had. Let's begin with your first teaching experience. Where did you teach and when? Next work experience?
4. How satisfied have you been teaching here?
5. Tell me about your experience with the *writing process*?
6. Do you write? What kind of writing?
7. How do you feel teaching writing (attitude towards writing)?
8. \*How do your colleagues feel about teaching writing?
9. Where does writing fit into your curriculum? How do you plan for writing lessons?
10. \*What kind of professional development have you had in teaching writing? Do you think this has been enough? In general, how do you learn about teaching methods? How do you gain additional knowledge on your own (about a technique, fad, etc.)? About writing?
11. \*As you know, the writing process consists of pre-writing, drafting, peer-review, revision, and publishing. What parts do your students engage in a typical week?
12. \*How do your colleagues teach writing (English or any subject)?
13. How do you teach grammar and mechanics?
14. Have you ever been "stumped" with a writing problem (in class with students or on your own)? How did you solve the problem?
15. How have you grown over the years as a teacher of writing?
16. How do you assess writing? How do you give feedback to students on their writing?
17. How do you determine "next steps" or sequencing for writing assignments?
18. Do you have a process for showing a student his or her growth over a semester, or year?
19. If you had to assign yourself a grade in teaching writing, what would it be?
20. Further Discussion Questions: Do you have any suggestions for a new teacher in gaining expertise in teaching writing? Or, is there something you wish you had done, but didn't, in learning how to teach writing?

**Appendix C: Sample Letter to District Supervisors**

October 1, 2007

[redacted]  
e | [redacted] board  
[redacted]  
[redacted]

Dear [redacted]

I am writing to request your permission to run a survey (attached) to all secondary (6-12) English [redacted] Public Schools. I am a doctoral student working on the research portion of my dissertation that will focus on how our English teachers are incorporating all of the demands facing them in the teaching of writing in our secondary schools. The title of the dissertation is, "An Ethnographic Study of English Teachers Current Writing Pedagogy." It is my hope to articulate the complexities our teachers face in teaching our students how to write and obtain written literacy amongst the myriad of challenges within the classroom. Current research in published journals (*English Journal*, *Research in the Teaching of English*, etc.) support such a study, and in fact, call for researchers to conduct the type of studies that will contribute to a realistic picture of the teaching of writing in our schools. Research and pedagogy had taken writing to new levels in the recent past, but now some evidence is surfacing that reveals a regression from established "best practices" in the teaching of writing; in effect, losing the gains we've made through forty years of research. My dissertation will contribute to the literature on this important topic.

I am currently running the survey in two parishes: [redacted] Parish. I would like to ask for your permission to run the survey [redacted] [redacted] agreed to serve as contact and to assist in the distribution of the surveys. [redacted] was instrumental in helping me make contact with [redacted] [redacted]

as practical.

Please let me know if the survey meets with your approval, and if you have any questions, you can contact me [redacted] [redacted]

Sincerely,  
Lisa F. Morales [redacted]  
LSU, College of Education  
[redacted]

## Vita

In May of 1996, Lisa F. Morales received a Bachelor of Arts in English from Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. In May of 1998, she received a Master of Humanities from Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Her master's thesis title is as follows: *Join in the Dance: Didacticism in Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice*. In December of 2009 she will complete the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Education from Louisiana State University, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The title of her dissertation is the following: "It Takes A Lot Out of You": Ethnography of Secondary English Teachers' Writing Pedagogy. Her major field of study is Curriculum and Instruction.

Lisa F. Morales is a certified teacher in secondary English and computer science. She has taught secondary school English and freshman composition at the college level. She has been a graduate assistant in college administration and a coordinator for the *National Writing Project*. She maintains professional memberships in the National Council of Teachers of English and the Louisiana Council of Teachers of English.