2020

Elementary Teachers' Perceptions of Their Preparedness to Implement CCSS Writing Standards

LaTonja Allen-Mallard
Walden University

Walden University

College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

LaTonja Allen-Mallard

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Shelly Arneson, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. Lynn Varner, Committee Member, Education Faculty
Dr. Steve Wells, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2020

Abstract

Elementary Teachers' Perceptions of Their Preparedness to Implement CCSS Writing Standards

by

LaTonja Allen-Mallard

MA, Western Michigan, 2008

BS, Olivet College, 2001

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

August 2020

Abstract

Writing achievement is a concern in the United States at the national and local level. The problem addressed in this study, in an urban Illinois school district, is that there has been a lack of adequate teacher instructional preparedness in Common Core State Standards (CCSS) writing instruction coupled with low student writing performance. The purpose of this study was to explore how elementary school teachers who teach Language Arts perceive their instructional preparedness to teach writing that aligns with the CCSS writing standards; and, to explore what elements of instructional preparedness they perceive would be beneficial to meet the demands of the CCSS writing standards. The basis for the conceptual framework was Bandura's theory of self-efficacy, which holds that a person's beliefs about their ability to complete a given task are necessary to attain certain levels of performance. The basic qualitative research design was used to conduct semistructured interviews with 10 teachers who were responsible for teaching writing in Grades 3–8. Data were analyzed with open, axial, and a priori codes followed by thematic analysis. Findings indicated that teachers were only marginally prepared to teach writing according to CCSS standards and voiced a need for more instructional resources such as pacing guides, teaching strategies, mentor texts, time, technology, and instructional training to enhance their instructional practice. The study findings may inform district administrators' decisions about instructional resources for teachers. The findings resulted in the creation of a professional development project which can improve teachers' abilities to provide more effective writing instruction to students and enhance student writing achievement.

Elementary Teachers' Perceptions of Their Preparedness to Implement CCSS Writing Standards

by

LaTonja Allen-Mallard

MA, Western Michigan University, 2008

BS, Olivet College, 2001

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

August 2020

Dedication

First and foremost, I would like to dedicate this accomplishment to the Allen family, especially my mother, who has always been there through every stage of my life. Your strength, compassion, and unwavering love are greatly appreciated. To my father, thanks for the frequent check-ins to remind me that you have always been an advocate for all things LaTonja. Please know that I do not plan to let you down anytime soon.

To my husband, who crawled, walked, and ran with me to the finish line. Thank you for your love and continuous support. Thanks for continually praying for me and with me. To my daughter, London, this degree was never just for me. You are truly the reason why I continue to set the bar high for myself. I know that you are watching my every move. I pray that my accomplishments serve as a reminder to you that you can do anything. My hope is that it inspires you to strive to be your best. Never let anyone tell you that your dreams are too big. There is no ceiling, just stay focused, determined, and always have faith. The sky is truly the limit.

Lastly, to my late Godparents, Mr. Pippen and Ms. Ivory, thanks so much for sharing your wisdom over the years. You have impacted my life more than you know. I just wanted to take the time to share my news with you. I know you both would be so proud. Rest on!

Acknowledgments

First, I would like to say I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. I know my faith played a prominent role in the completion of this journey, and I am forever grateful. I would also like to acknowledge my chair and committee members who provided me with scholarly guidance throughout this journey. Dr. Fish, thank you for your encouragement and support. To my chair, Dr. Arneson, you were truly God sent, and I cannot thank you enough for being exactly what I needed. To Dr. Varner, you were the perfect piece to the puzzle. I appreciate you. Dr. Wells, thank you for your keen eye. My work is stronger because of it. Thank you all for your commitment to my success.

To my colleagues, friends, and family, I want to thank you all for your encouragement and inspiring words over the years. I also want to give thanks to the district who granted me site approval and to the teachers who took the time out to participate in my study. You all are appreciated!

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Section 1: The Problem

Students in the United States struggle to write proficiently. Since the implementation of CCSS, students have been required to show proficiency in their writing ability on standardized tests. Unfortunately, students have consistently scored below proficiency in writing. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2016), only one-third of students in the United States performed at the proficient level. This trend mirrors what is happening at the local level as well. According to District 12 public documents, out of 154, 225 students tested, only 31% met or exceeded the CCSS writing standards. There is a need to focus on writing instruction at the elementary school level (Kent & Brennan, 2016). Teachers are expected to teach the CCSS writing standards effectively, although some teachers may not feel prepared or they lack instructional training (Harris & Graham, 2016; Matlock et al., 2016). It would be advantageous to prepare teachers with the knowledge and competence to teach writing effectively, which could lead to more teachers embracing the CCSS writing standards as well as enhancement of student writing performance (Troia & Graham, 2016).

The Local Problem

According to the CCSS (2018), students should demonstrate "continuous growth in all aspects of writing from vocabulary to the development and organization of ideas with the ability to address complex content" (p. 1). This mandated reform places rigorous expectations on writing instruction, leaving elementary teachers with the challenge of meeting those demands in their classrooms. Although the CCSS are clear on what students need to know and be able to do, they do not convey to teachers how to

specifically teach the standards (Graham & Harris, 2015). In an urban school district in Illinois, referred to as District 12 in this study, there is a lack of adequate teacher instructional preparedness in CCSS writing instruction coupled with low student writing performance. The district offers an array of professional development for teachers, but not in CCSS writing standards. A teacher leader in the district affirmed that CCSS writing standards were never a focus of professional development training. (C.Cole, personal communication, August 12, 2018). Similarly, another teacher noted that the little training received from the district was not well planned or effective in assisting with the implementation of CCSS writing standards. (R. Davis, personal communication, August 12, 2018). District administrators have also voiced their concern about writing. A building administrator stated that writing instruction and teacher training of such has taken a back seat in recent years to various other initiatives in the district such as close reading, balanced literacy, and other components of the CCSS (B. Jordan, personal communication, August 13, 2018). The lack of adequate teacher instructional preparedness may be hindering teachers' abilities to implement the writing standards effectively which, in turn, may be affecting student writing proficiency.

The instructional practices of teachers influence student writing proficiency levels. Researchers who explored the issue of student writing deficiencies attribute teachers' lack of instructional preparedness as a contributing factor to students' lack of writing proficiency (Haas, Goldman & Faltis, 2018; Harris & Graham, 2016; Holtz, McCurdy & Roehling, 2015). In addition, Hall, Hutchinson, and White (2015) argued that if teachers feel the professional development they receive lacks substance, teachers

are less likely to meet the higher expectations of CCSS writing standards. Bastug (2016) suggested that schools can improve students' levels of writing proficiency by ensuring that teachers receive proper instructional support to provide students with writing instruction that is adequate for students' expected growth.

There is a gap in practice at the local level between current practice and adequate teacher training practices in writing. This is evidenced by C. Cole, a lead teacher, who expressed that writing instruction was never a focus of teacher training (personal communication, August 12, 2018). This information was further corroborated by my inability to find available trainings on the districts' knowledge center website pertaining to writing instruction. Furthermore, there are several studies where teachers reported having received little to no training in teaching writing (Brindle et al., 2016; Myers et al., 2016; Ray, Graham, Hebert, & Harris, 2015). Therefore, there is a need to focus on teachers' instructional preparedness as it pertains to the CCSS writing instruction (Lehman, 2017). Wilcox et al. (2015) expounded on the importance of teachers having access to quality training and professional development in CCSS writing.

In this study, I explored elementary teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to provide writing instruction that aligns with the CCSS writing standards as well as identify their perceptions on areas of professional development that are needed. Exploring the perceptions of teachers met the recommendation of Bifuh-Ambe (2013), who suggested that future studies include teachers' input on the development of their professional preparedness.

Rationale

Many elementary students in the state of Illinois are not writing at a proficient level. The Illinois Report Card (2017) stated that only 34% of Illinois elementary students are college and career ready and the other 66% of elementary school students are not meeting the expectations in writing which is reflected in their standardized test scores. The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers test is a rigorous assessment that Illinois elementary school students are required to take every March to show mastery of their writing ability based on their individual grade levels. In District 12, students' writing scores on the PARCC test have not improved in the last four years. The PARCC test, which is aligned with the CCSS, requires students to write at a more sophisticated level than previously required. In 2015, only 36% of students in Grades 3–8 met or exceeded the writing expectations. This number dropped to 32% in the year 2016, and in the year 2017, that number continued to decline to just 31% of students meeting or exceeding expectations in writing. In the year 2018, the percentage of students remained stagnant at just 31% meeting or exceeding expectations in writing.

Teachers in the district are concerned with students' writing performance and writing instruction. This has been revealed through several conversations among teachers held at staff meetings and quarterly network meetings (Language Arts Department, meeting minutes, March 20, 2018). The Learning Hub is the district's website that houses all the teacher trainings that are available to teachers as well as past professional development course options. The information in the Learning Hub revealed a lack of professional development in writing offered at the district level. In a search of previous

years to see if professional development was offered to teachers in the area of writing, there were no records of trainings specific to teaching writing. As a result, teachers are using varied teaching strategies and resources to teach the writing standards.

Despite the lack of training options at the district level, teachers are still charged with the task of providing students with rigorous writing instruction that aligns with the CCSS. The CCSS are mandated for District 12 teachers to use in their daily instructional practices. Although the goal of the standards is clear, how to effectively implement the standards is not. Preparing elementary students to become successful writers will require more challenging and relevant tasks from well-prepared teachers. It will require that teachers are readily prepared to grow students (Troia & Graham, 2016). For District 12 to increase the current student performance in writing, instructional training may be needed in order to strengthen students' writing skills.

Evidence of the problem from the professional literature

Writing achievement at the elementary school level is not only a local problem but is a concern across the United States. The National Center for Statistics (2016) stated that only one-third of students in the United States are writing at a proficient level. The National Assessment of Educational Progress results consistently show U.S. students are significantly below grade level proficiency (NCES, 2016). Likewise, current research paints a picture of overall weak writing instruction in today's classrooms (Graham et al., 2014; Mo, Kopke, Hawkins, Troia & Olinghouse, 2014). There is a need to focus on writing instruction at the elementary school level to increase the number of proficient students leaving high school (Kent & Brennan, 2016).

Additionally, teachers are not receiving adequate training in writing instruction (Harris & Graham, 2016). In several studies, teachers reported overwhelmingly that they received little to no training on how to teach writing (Brindle et al., 2016, Ray, Graham, Houston, & Harris, 2015; Troia &Graham, 2016). For students to meet the demands of the CCSS, teachers need the knowledge and skills as well as confidence in their teaching ability to teach writing more effectively (Yurtseven, 2017). Researchers who examined student writing deficiencies identified teacher preparedness as a factor contributing to low student writing levels (Bastug, 2016; Harris & Graham, 2016; Troia & Graham, 2016).

The challenge is for teachers to improve students' craft and sophistication through the implementation of the CCSS writing standards. The goal of the standards is to provide guidance for teachers and a clear balance for existing instruction. Consequently, the quality of the instruction that students receive contributes to their writing achievement (Bastug, 2016). Haas, Goldman, and Faltis (2018) purported that improving the writing ability of students requires teachers to receive adequate instructional training. Holtz, McCurdy, and Roehling (2015) stated it is important for researchers to investigate the different levels of instructional support that teachers might need to effectively implement a core writing curriculum.

The purpose of this study was to qualitatively investigate how elementary school teachers who teach language arts in District 12 perceive their instructional preparedness to teach writing that aligns with the CCSS writing standards. In addition, my goal was to explore what elements of instructional preparedness District 12 elementary teachers

perceive would be beneficial to meet the demands of the CCSS writing standards. I used a qualitative interpretive design to explore the perceptions of elementary school teachers who work for a local district in Illinois providing instruction in the subject of language arts. I collected data via semistructured interviews to gain an understanding of the perceptions held by elementary teachers toward their preparedness to provide writing instruction and whether or not they perceive it aligns with the CCSS writing standards.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are associated with this study and are provided for transparency.

Common Core State Standards: is a set of high-quality academic standards in mathematics and English language arts/literacy (ELA). These learning goals outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade (CCSS, 2018).

The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC): This assessment "is the state assessment and accountability measure for Illinois students enrolled in a public school district. PARCC assesses the New Illinois Learning Standards incorporating the Common Core and is administered in English Language Arts and Mathematics" (Illinois State Board of Education, 2017).

Rigorous instruction: is based on the Common State Standards that challenges a student's ability to think and tackle complex, high-level material (Sundeen, 2018).

Self-efficacy: a person's belief that he or she is capable of dealing with a complicated task. "Perceived efficacy refers to beliefs in one's capabilities to organize

and execute the courses of actions required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997)

Writing Workshop: is an interdisciplinary writing technique which can build students' fluency in writing through continuous, repeated exposure to the process of writing. Teachers can address whole group instructional needs as well as differentiate for individual students (Calkins**,** 1987).

6+1 Traits of Writing: a model used for writing instruction and assessment that focuses on seven key traits that promote quality writing: ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation (Culham, 2003).

Significance of the Study

Students are not writing at a proficient level in Illinois or across the United States. With inconsistencies in teacher training, writing instruction, and student writing performance, students are potentially being taught by teachers who have not had any formal training in writing. Current literature supports the need for future research in the area of writing instruction, teacher practice, and CCSS training/implementation (Adams-Budde & Miller, 2015; Bastug, 2016; Graham & Harris, 2015; Harris & Graham, 2016; Matlock et al., 2016; Murphy & Torff, 2016). Since it is unknown how elementary teachers in District 12 perceive their instructional preparedness for providing writing instruction that aligns with the CCSS writing standards and what instructional preparedness elementary teachers perceive would be beneficial to the challenge of meeting the demands of the CCSS writing standards, I focused specifically on teachers who are responsible for providing students with writing instruction. Through this study, I

provided an opportunity for teachers on the local level to share their perspectives on their level of preparedness, and what resources they perceive are needed to implement the CCSS writing standards.

The results of this study could also help administrators understand teachers' perceptions of how prepared they are to teach writing that aligns with CCSS writing standards. This study has the potential to assist students with low writing proficiency by exploring teachers' viewpoints on writing instruction. Administrators could potentially use information gathered from this study to support teachers in providing students with effective writing instruction by providing teachers with the resources or training needed to ensure their writing instruction is more aligned with the CCSS writing standards Multiple studies (Troia & Graham, 2016; Adams-Budde-Miller, 2015; Matlock et al., 2016) support the need for teachers' instructional preparedness in writing and suggested the need for future research in CCSS writing instruction.

The study may contribute to positive social change by informing district administrators' decisions about instructional resources for teachers that stemmed from perceptions and suggestions of teachers which could have the primary benefit of increasing teachers' ability to provide more effective writing instruction to students (Adam-Budde & Miller, 2015; Bastug, 2016; Kent & Brennan, 2016). Additionally, this study could lead to the secondary benefit of increased writing proficiency in students measured by the writing CCSS.

Research Question(s)

The problem that I addressed in this study was a lack of adequate teacher instructional preparedness in CCSS writing instruction coupled with low student writing performance. The purpose of this study was to investigate qualitatively how elementary school teachers who teach language arts in District 12 perceive their instructional preparedness to teach writing that aligns with the CCSS writing standards. In addition, I explored what elements of instructional preparedness District 12 elementary teachers perceive would be beneficial to meet the demands of the CCSS writing standards. The research questions were the impetus for choosing a qualitative design for this study because I sought to understand the perceptions of teachers regarding their instructional preparedness and professional development needs. I used the research questions for the study to understand how teachers perceived their preparedness to teach writing that aligns with CCSS writing standards and provided insight on what resources or training teachers feel are needed in order to implement the writing CCSS more effectively. This study was guided by the following research questions:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): How do elementary school teachers who teach language arts perceive their instructional preparedness to teach writing that aligns with the CCSS standards?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): What elements of instructional preparedness do the teachers perceive would be beneficial to meet the demands of the CCSS writing standards?

Review of the Literature

The purpose of this study was to understand how elementary school teachers who teach language arts perceive their instructional preparedness to teach writing that aligns with the CCSS writing standards. In addition, I explored what elements of instructional preparedness elementary teachers perceived would be beneficial to meet the demands of the CCSS writing standards. I reviewed the literature pertaining to: (a) the conceptual framework, (b) CCSS, (c) teacher preparedness, and (d) best practices in teaching writing. I explored peer-reviewed journals and other related texts from various databases within the last 5 years. The keywords used in the search were: writing, writing instruction, common core, national norms, teacher preparation, teaching writing, best practices, teacher effectiveness, and self-efficacy. The databases that I used to identify related literature were Education Source, Eric, Sage, EBSCOhost, and Google Scholar.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study included Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy. Bandura's theory emphasized that self-efficacy deals with a person's perceived beliefs and judgments about their ability to complete a given task or activity necessary to attain certain levels of performance. For example, a teacher's belief that a particular instructional strategy is effective does not necessarily mean they feel confident in implementing it (Bandura, 1986). Bandura argued that teachers' perceived beliefs are directly linked to their motivation, efforts toward a given task, and their behavior. Likewise, Pajares (1992) noted that the beliefs teachers hold impact their behavior and determine what they will do with their knowledge and skillset. According to Bandura

(1986), teachers' perceived ability to teach a specific subject is directly associated with students' level of performance.

The purpose of this study, the research questions, the interview protocol, and the data analysis were all derived from the self-efficacy framework. Bandura's concept of self-efficacy was used to develop research questions and an interview protocol to explore the perceptions of teachers. Teacher beliefs are determined through teachers' perceptions of their cognitive and emotional experiences, as well as their ability to perform educational tasks (Bandura, 1997). The self-efficacy framework is a guide for understanding teacher self-efficacy and how teacher beliefs are developed and inform instructional practices.

I conducted the data analysis for this study by using emergent codes and a priori codes to examine teacher beliefs about their instructional preparedness based on the concepts of the self-efficacy framework. Saldana (2013) found that methodologists from several studies supported the use of a priori coding when aligning one's analysis to their conceptual framework, which entails creating codes to guide the process of analysis.

Bandura (1997) identified four sources that play a role in the development of an individual's beliefs. Mastery experiences are when a person has succeeded in and demonstrated mastery of a challenging task, they begin to feel confident in tackling other challenging tasks as well, which is directly linked to success. Bandura explained that mastery experiences are the most effective way to develop strong efficacy beliefs. Vicarious experiences include comparing one's own capability to others through observation; a person develops a belief that they can successfully accomplish a

challenging task after seeing someone else master it. Physiological responses are experiences such as depression, anxiety, stress, and tension that can decrease a person's confidence, whereas more positive emotions such as joy and pride can boost a person's confidence. These various emotions can have an impact on how a teacher performs in the classroom and how they judge their competencies. Verbal persuasion is when influential people in a person's life can persuade them that they are capable to complete a given task and as a result they tend to put forth more effort in achieving it. Al-Bataineh, Holmes, Jerich, and Williams (2010) expounded on the four sources established by Bandura (1997) and identified eight factors that contribute to and influence a teacher's efficacy in teaching writing. The eight factors consist of teacher attitudes, positive personal writing experiences, mentor teachers, model teachers, negative writing experiences, insufficient training in teaching writing, collaboration, and school-induced pressure. Through professional development workshops, peer observations and overall teaching experiences, teachers develop new beliefs and their perceptions are formed based on those strategies observed. Teachers' beliefs about their pedagogy and their perceptions about their ability to teach students can affect how they implement instruction (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007).

Bandura (1997) stated that what separates those who have low versus high self-efficacy is that those who have high self-efficacy deal with failure easier and are quick to pick up the pieces and persevere. People with high self-efficacy do not give up on a task or doubt their ability instead they adapt and learn the skills needed. If elementary teachers are effective in teaching writing, their beliefs in their abilities will increase even

if they experience failure because of their level of confidence. Unlike those with low self-efficacy who tend to demonstrate a lack of confidence, anxiety, and stress when faced with challenging or new tasks. Teachers with high efficacy beliefs tend to work harder, be more involved in learning activities, and are less stressed (Bandura, 1997; Yılmaz, 2004). As Bandura (1997) indicated, "Unless people believe they can produce desired effects by their actions, they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties" (p.170). This point was expounded on by Klassen et al. (2014), who contended that the beliefs that teachers hold about their own capabilities directly affect their level of influence on student learning. A teacher who believes that a student can learn but lacks the necessary skill to teach them is different from a teacher who believes a student is incapable of being taught a skill. Teachers' beliefs in their ability to influence their students are one pathway to students' academic growth (Bandura, 1997).

Brouwers and Tomic (2000) conducted a study that revealed that there is a correlation between self-efficacy perception and a teacher's success. Most instructional and teaching-related outcomes are often assumed to be directly influenced by a teacher's confidence in their own abilities (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). A study by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk (2007) revealed that, through experience, teacher self-efficacy beliefs improved over time. According to Doruk and Kaplan (2012) and Louis and Mistele (2011), Self-efficacy in teaching is one of many key features that promotes and helps to create positive student outcomes Teachers' positive thinking about a task or challenge can greatly impact their ability and willingness to embrace new skills. In studies conducted by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010) and Tunkler et al. (2016), it was

found that teachers with high self-efficacy increased student achievement because of their willingness to gain the skills needed through appropriate training to be more effective teachers.

Kent and Brennan conducted a study that explored the impact of efficacy and attitude on teaching writing. Ninety-one teachers participated in the study and the survey results revealed that "Teachers with high efficacy generate stronger student achievement than those teachers with lower teacher efficacy" (Kent & Brennan, 2016, p. 12). Yoo (2016) emphasized the importance of continued scholarly interest in teacher efficacy because it provides insight into teacher quality and sustainability.

Past experiences and a teacher's present school culture can greatly impact their level of confidence in their ability. The theory of self-efficacy provides a foundation to explain the importance of teacher perceptions toward their level of preparedness to implement instruction that aligns with CCSS writing standards. Should teachers believe they have not received adequate instructional preparedness, their efforts to meet the CCSS writing standards are affected (Kent & Brennan, 2016). "Teachers' beliefs about their ability to effectively teach writing, specifically relating to the Common Core language arts standards, are significant as taking more instructional risks and incorporating best practice in instruction is more likely with a positive subject self-efficacy" (Kent & Brennan, 2016, p. 12).

I also addressed the recommendation from Bifuh-Ambe (2013) who stated that teachers should be more involved in their instructional preparedness. Under the framework of self-efficacy, having teachers involved in their own instructional

preparedness may have them more invested and build their confidence that they are adequately prepared to provide writing instruction that will result in meeting the CCSS writing standards. Bandura's theory of self-efficacy gave extensive insight into teaching and classroom best practices. The self-efficacy framework connects to the overall problem of students not meeting writing standards by exploring first-hand how teachers perceive they are prepared to implement the CCSS writing standards. Gaining insight through data collection and analysis into the intricacies of teacher beliefs could increase understanding to positively influence student achievement. A teacher's perception of their ability will influence their delivery of instruction in the classroom.

CCSS

The CCSS is a set of rigorous academic standards that outline what a student should know and be able to do by the end of each grade across the nation. The CCSS represents the most far-reaching, impactful reform of K-12 education in the United States, affecting a great number of teachers and students, with a huge influence on what curriculum is taught in schools (Murphy & Torff, 2016). CCSS provides goals and an explanation of the skills needed for students to be college and career ready. This new set of standards, unlike others before, provides states with common benchmarks for students to master in the area of language arts and math (Graham & Harris, 2015). Before the implementation of CCSS, the achievement expectations varied from state to state (Hamlin & Peterson, 2018). The shift from state standards to CCSS has proven to be academically challenging for teachers to design instruction and assessment based on the CCSS (Murphy & Torff, 2016). The CCSS require students to write every day in the

language arts classroom and promotes writing for a variety of purposes in all content areas. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) standards of the past only focused on the importance of literacy skills such as comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency (Graham & Harris, 2015). The NCLB standards did not place an emphasis on writing skills but the CCSS places just as much emphasis on writing as it does on reading (CCSS, 2018). Reading and writing, although they are different subjects, they derive from the same foundation and are equally important. According to the CCSS (2018), reading and writing are equally significant to students' overall academic growth. Students are now tested annually on their ability to write due to educational reforms such as the Every Student Succeeds Act, which requires states to administer assessments to students that are directly aligned to the CCSS. These new standards require students to acquire skills that may not be currently taught, and teachers may need to adjust their teaching practices in order to meet the requirements (Bastug, 2016; Graham & Harris, 2015; Sundeen, 2015; Woodard & Kline, 2015; Yurtseven, 2017).

The CCSS reform did not materialize without controversy. The implementation of the CCSS caused plenty of confusion and dissent. The Common Core can potentially provide schools with the rigor needed but there is plenty of opposition against the newly implemented standards, with some states opting to not participate (Phillips, 2015; Watson &Williams, 2018; Woodard & Kline, 2015). Initially, 46 states committed to the implementation of the common standards to promote aligned student learning goals across states but several states during the rollout of the standards had a change of heart and withdrew (Hamlin & Peterson, 2018). As of today, 41 states, including the District

of Columbia, have adopted the CCSS (CCSS, 2018). The great feature of CCSS is that they provide high expectations for all students, including diverse learners, but the standards do not provide teachers with guidance on how to implement the standards to reach students who may find the standards a bit challenging (Graham & Harris, 2015). Graham and Harris (2015) also noted the vagueness of the standards by saying, "The issue of how students acquire the stated writing and other objectives is not addressed, as the document is purposefully quiet about how teaching is to proceed" (p. 2). Woodard and Kline purported that the standards are intentionally ambiguous to give teachers and administrators alike the opportunity to use professional judgment when implementing instruction to meet the goals of the CCSS. As far as the Common Core is concerned, teachers appreciated the enhanced rigor of the standards but questioned the level of appropriateness for their students (Hall et al., 2015). Although teachers are considered to be a critical component in student learning, teachers were not involved in the creation of the CCSS (Matlock et al., 2016). Their perceptions were not considered in the development of the standards. Matlock et al. (2016) asserted that teachers should be involved in any educational reform in the first phase to avoid any unnecessary backlash. Matlock continued to express this need by noting that "The need to continue to study many facets of educational changes such as these remains critical, especially from the perspective of the teachers experiencing such changes" (Matlock et al., 2016, p.13).

Although CCSS has elicited controversy among educators, many researchers believe that this educational reform has several benefits and advantages (Graham & Harris, 2015; Troia & Graham, 2016; Rowlands, 2016; Hall et al., 2015). According to

Graham and Harris (2015), and Troia and Graham (2016), the CCSS are a blueprint for teachers' improved instructional practices but they also question whether CCSS is developmentally appropriate for teachers and students which could have an impact on standardized testing. What is unique about CCSS is that the standards place the emphasis back on writing. However, the lack of CCSS writing training in District 12 puts teachers at a disadvantage in their efforts to provide effective writing instruction to students. With the implementation of CCSS, writing instruction is required in all classrooms, not just in the language arts setting. Many teachers are attempting to deliver writing instruction with minimum or no training on how to explicitly teach writing (Mo et al., 2014). It would be at an advantage to prepare teachers with the knowledge and competence to teach writing effectively which could lead to more teachers embracing the CCSS (Troia & Graham, 2016). Teachers embracing the CCSS could be the pathway to better outcomes of student writing.

There are 10 writing standards that were developed by the CCSS. Although there are a total of ten writing standards that specifically states what a student is supposed to know and be able to do per grade level, the CCSS (2018) emphasized three primary types of writing: narrative, argumentative and informational which represents the expectations of the first three standards. The CCSS clearly defines the three types of writing and describes how student writing should progress from year to year. Writing standards 4-6 focus on students' abilities to produce coherent writing through planning, revising, and editing their work; Also, the use of technology to publish their writing. The CCSS expects students to be able to type three pages in one sitting by the time they reach the 6th

grade. Mo et al., (2014) asserted that technology offers teachers a great deal of support in realigning writing instruction and can provide students with the tools to acquire a deeper understanding of writing concepts. Unfortunately, not all schools at the local level, in District 12, have the luxury of computer access for all students. The lack of technology could serve as a challenge to meeting this standard (Kafyulilo, Fisser, &Voogt, (2016); Pittman & Gaines, 2015). CCSS 7-9 requires students to be able to draw evidence from literary and informational texts to support their analysis as well as to conduct research, assess the credibility of various sources, and avoid plagiarism by quoting and paraphrasing correctly. Standard 10 suggests that students write routinely in short and extended times frames for a variety of purposes (CCSS, 2018). The new writing standards demand quality writing instruction. In the past, students in elementary school were not expected to write at such a sophisticated level. The standards are rigorous and will require that teachers are clear on what the writing standards mean in order to ensure that students reach mastery. The CCSS expects schools to teach writing explicitly to prepare students to write for a variety of purposes across the curriculum. Although the standards are considered to be a blueprint for improved instruction, it is not the complete solution. There are still disproportions in instruction that exist due to teachers' levels of preparedness and student ability.

Murphy and Torff (2016) conducted a study to determine to what extent the standards influence teachers' perceptions of their capacity to teach specific student populations. Three hundred and seventy teachers who worked in seven public elementary schools in a large city in the northeastern United States participated in this quantitative

study. The results of this study revealed that the CCSS reduced teachers' perceptions of their ability to teach effectively.

In a study conducted by Wilcox, Jeffery, and Bixler (2016), teachers expressed an overall positive view of the CCSS but felt pressured to teach to the rubric and guide students toward a high score and focus less on the enjoyment of writing. Similarly, Matlock et al. (2016) aimed to grasps an understanding of teachers' views toward the implementation of CCSS in relation to years of teaching experience, grade level taught, and thoughts of leaving the profession. Out of a stratified random cluster sample 0f 6826 teachers, 1301 teachers participated in the survey. The results of the study revealed that teachers had an overall positive view of the implementation of CCSS; although teachers in the higher grades were slightly less positive than those in the earlier grades. The researchers suggest that further studies are needed involving the impact of CCSS and its implementation in today's classrooms. Woodard and Kline (2015) suggested five areas that need improvement in relation to the implementation of the CCSS: curriculum and instruction, teacher professional development, school leadership, assessment, and research.

Teacher Preparedness

Not only does society need teachers who are motivated to teach but they also need teachers who are prepared and properly trained in the specific pedagogy that they are required to teach. "Inadequate teacher preparation for teaching writing is a major factor in the poor writing performance of students today" (Harris and Graham, 2016, p. 79). With the implementation of CCSS, teachers are expected to teach writing and teach it well

according to the many high achieving standards listed under the Common Core. The reality is that most teachers have received little to no training in the area of teaching writing (Harris & Graham, 2016; Myers et al., 2016; Troia & Graham, 2016). Teacher preparedness is associated with teacher self-efficacy. Research shows that if a teacher does not feel confident in a particular pedagogical skill, they will more than likely avoid teaching it (Bandura, 1986; Bifuh-Ambe, 2013; Harris & Graham, 2016). Troia and Graham (2016) examined 3-8 grade teachers' beliefs and attitudes about the CCSS, their preparedness to teach writing and their self-efficacy beliefs toward teaching writing. A random sample of 482 teachers participated in the survey. Fifty-five percent of the teachers surveyed stated that they enjoy teaching writing while 44% of the teachers felt that their knowledge of instructional activities for writing contributed to student proficiency. Twenty percent of the teachers reported having no coursework on writing content in their teacher preparation program, while the majority reported having two or fewer classes related to teaching writing. Majority of the teachers felt that the CCSS standards were more rigorous than past standards and provided clear direction for writing instruction, but some teachers felt that the amount of standards to cover is too much and impossible to teach in the time allotted especially to struggling writers. They also expressed that professional development is limited for successful implementation.

There is not only a growing concern for the practice of current teachers of writing but also the programs that are responsible for ensuring their preparedness. A teacher preparatory program can have a positive impact on a teacher’s efficacy and their ability to teach writing effectively to a diversified group of students. Graham, Capizzi, Harris,

Hebert, and Morphy (2014), conducted a study where only 9% of the teachers reported being readily prepared to teach writing in their college preparatory program while 64% of teachers reported receiving no preparatory coursework. Pre-service teachers' limited training in writing leads to ineffective pedagogical practices (Sharp, 2016). In a study conducted by Myers et al. (2016), to explore how writing instruction is taught in teacher preparation programs, 63 teachers responded from 50 public and private institutions in twenty-nine different states. Twelve of the 63 teachers indicated that they had received some form of training in teaching writing while most teachers' knowledge was acquired through their own inquiries or research. Teachers rarely taught writing as reading was more of a focus. The survey also revealed time as a factor. Instructors were expected to simply embed writing instruction into their literary courses.

Myers et al. (2016) claimed that teacher educators, preservice teachers and professors of education alike received little to no training in teaching writing. Giving students a writing assignment to complete isn't the same as teaching them to write. If preservice teachers aren't provided with the tools to teach writing while in the program, they will only have prior knowledge and experience to rely on to provide students with instruction. The educational field cannot afford to enter another decade with educators teaching pre-service teachers who are not skilled in writing pedagogy (Myers et al., 2016). Based on the findings of this study, the researchers suggest that more attention is needed to writing instruction in the teacher pre-service programs and teacher educators need more support in the form of professional development to enhance their knowledge and skills to teach writing to pre-service teachers more effectively.

In a study conducted by Brindle, Graham, Harris, and Hebert (2016) three out of every four teachers that were surveyed reported receiving minimum to no training to teach writing at the college level, and teachers rated their college preparation to teach other subjects such as science, math and reading higher than their preparation to teach writing. Eighty-one percent of the participants reported having never taken a single course in college that focused specifically on writing pedagogy. Despite this verity, teachers' self- efficacy was high and felt very positive overall about teaching writing. These findings suggest that elementary teachers are not as prepared as they could be.

Teacher educators leave education programs ill-prepared to teach writing for a variety of reasons, one being that faculty in these programs either align their courses with the standards or they simply disregard the standards (Woodard & Kline, 2015). States are now working to promote standard alignment in teacher preparation programs and faculty should ensure that teachers fully understand the ELA CCSS, provide opportunities for teacher candidates to implement the standards in their "planning, instruction and assessment cycles" and increase the amount of time allotted to teach writing in literacy course work (Woodard & Kline, 2015, p.11). Teachers reported overwhelmingly that they felt undertrained to teach writing instruction (Brindle et al., 2016; Graham et al., 2014; Myers et al., 2016; Ray, Graham, Hebert, & Harris , 2015). Hall (2016) found that a single course focused on pre-service teachers' preparation to teach writing can have a positive impact on their self-efficacy, their understanding of writing instruction, and their ability to implement strategies to teach it effectively. College preparatory programs need to increase explicit instruction in methods classes as well as intervention strategies in

writing instruction to better prepare teachers for effective instructional delivery when they enter the classroom. For current teachers of writing, in-service training specifically on teaching writing would also be very beneficial (Sundeen, 2015).

Lehman (2017) explored the challenges of teaching middle school students to write by surveying early career teachers of writing and his findings revealed that the teachers involved in the study also reported that they did not receive any course work in writing instruction in their pre-service programs. It is clear that little emphasis is placed on writing in teacher preservice programs, although k-12 students are expected to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of content through writing in all subjects (Myers et al., 2016). Lehman (2017) reiterated that teachers should seek all opportunities for ongoing professional development in writing to better serve students. Many teachers have received minimum pedagogical guidance to teach writing during their student teaching training. CCSS may pose even more of a challenge and they may need even more support with the added expectations of the standards (Wilcox, Jeffery, & Bixler, 2016). Brindle et al. (2016) noted that educators must monitor and examine instructional practices to determine if writing is being taught effectively in order to improve students' writing proficiency in the US and across the world.

Hall et al. (2015) examined teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to teach CCSS in writing as well as any barriers to implementing the standards. Two hundred and fifty K-12 grade teachers were surveyed from eight different states: Kentucky, Minnesota, Michigan, Maine, Delaware, North Carolina, Georgia and Mississippi that had fully implemented the CCSS by 2013. Teacher responses revealed that they were

somewhat familiar with the standards and somewhat prepared to teach the standards. The results of the study revealed that teachers varied in their level of preparedness according to their number of years teaching and the amount of professional development received. Teachers with less teaching experience felt less prepared to implement the standards. Teachers who had less than one day of professional development in writing felt least familiar with the standards in comparison to a teacher who had two or more trainings on CCSS writing standards. One barrier to implementation, not enough time, had the highest percentage (69%). Although most teachers in the study revealed a lack of training in writing, the few teachers who actually had professional development in writing, found it very useful. Teachers voiced that having access to curricular resources that are aligned to CCSS would help them be more prepared as well as having more time to collaborate with colleagues. Teachers revealed a lack of professional development in CCSS writing.

In a similar study, Adams-Budde and Miller (2015) examined 158 elementary teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to implement the ELA CCSS. They defined preparedness across three dimensions: teachers' perceived levels of knowledge of the standards and its components; efficacy to implement changes; and actual changes to their instructional practices. Teachers' levels of preparedness varied based on knowledge, understanding of the standards and professional development received. Overall, teachers revealed that they were not fully prepared to teach the standards. Teachers are in need of more time and support to implement the standards effectively. Lehman (2017) found that teachers felt more confident in teaching writing after being provided a mentor and observing good writing instruction. Hall et al. (2015), and other researchers such as

Lehman (2017), Myers et al. (2016), Wilcox et al. (2015), and Woodard and Kline, (2015), believe that effective professional development in writing will bring about change that is needed to increase student outcomes and enhance instruction.

The training and pedagogy that teachers receive begin at the college level in the teacher preparation programs. The lack of hands-on experience and coursework in effective writing instruction during this time can have a negative effect on teachers' competence and their ability to provide students with quality instruction (Sharp, 2016). This could have an adverse effect on teacher practice. Adams-Budde and Miller (2015) and Murphy and Torff (2016) asserted that future research should be teacher-focused, studying teachers' level of preparedness and what is needed for teachers to fully implement the standards based on the new CCSS expectations.

Best Practices in Teaching Writing

It is believed that teachers are the hallmark of education; that teachers are the most important factor that impacts education (Bastug 2016; Myers et al., 2016). Students in the U.S, with or without learning disabilities, are not writing at a proficient level. Proficiency in writing doesn't come easy, proper development comes from explicit support for k-12 students (Harris & Graham, 2016). Writing is developmental so practices that focus on prevention would most likely be the most effective strategy to lessen the writing difficulties of elementary school children (Holtz, McCurdy & Roehling 2015; Routman, 2014). Schools should make the subject of writing a priority and it is essential that teachers create a learning environment that builds on students' competence to write (Kent & Brennan, 2016). However, there are limited resources that provide direct

guidance and support for teachers to teach writing effectively to students, especially diverse learners (Haas et al., 2018).

Harris and Graham (2016) claimed that self-regulated strategy development (SRSD) is an effective method for teachers to incorporate various strategies in their classrooms to meet the needs of all of their students. The SRSD instructional approach focuses on composing across grades and genres, including argumentative, informative/explanatory, and narrative writing which aligns with the expectations of CCSS. Equally, Haas et al. (2016) purported that the Writing Reform and Innovation for Teaching Excellence program is beneficial to improve students' writing, especially diverse learners. It consists of 6 phases: a) introducing the criteria/background knowledge, b) modeling quality writing for students, c) collaboration/student discussion, d) organizing and draft creation, and e) revisions of drafts and publication of student work. The WRITE program is different from the traditional approach to teaching writing because it places a strong emphasis on the prewriting stages to ensure students are receiving immediate feedback as they move through the six phases of the process.

Haas et al. (2016) claimed that teacher modeling is central to the WRITE process. Modeling is when an educator takes the time to show students what they expect them to produce. It can serve as support and motivation for reluctant writers leading to increased buy-in from students (Graham, Harris, & Chambers, 2016; Improving Student Writing through Modeling, 2018). A simple 15-20 minute model lesson in which the teacher is sharing their thinking around a given task can have a long term impact on student writing performance.

Fidalgo et al. (2015) conducted a study analyzing the effect that modeling has on student writing performance. Three 6th grade classes participated in the study. The students showed significant gains in their writing quality after the teacher modeled strategies during instruction. The results of this study suggest that through observation of effective modeling, students can improve their writing. By teachers' modeling their thinking and writing, students will see first-hand the criteria for the structure and process for organizing their writing. It promotes discussion, understanding of content and student reflection.

Rowlands (2016) suggested that it is a time to undo traditional beliefs and habits and offer readily adopted effective replacements for those habits. “If students are going to learn to write well, schools and teachers simply have to find ways to provide routine writing time and tasks that approximate the multiple purposes that drive writers to compose” (p.3). Rowlands suggested that schools teach purpose, audience, invention strategies, text structures, genres, writer’s craft and revision to promote quality student writing. Rowlands argued that form first is not an effective strategy for teaching writing; that nothing in the Common Core language suggests the five-paragraph essay as a standard for writing and proposed the RAFT strategy as a useful tool to promote students to write about a variety of genres and audiences.

There are programs available that are effective in preparing students to be proficient writers although not all programs provide the same level of instructional support for teachers to provide writing instruction to a diverse group of students. Holtz, McCurdy, and Roehling (2015) created a rubric that is aligned with the CCSS to assist

schools in the evaluation of identifying an effective writing curriculum. Four writing programs were reviewed using the created rubric: (a) Strategies for writers Zaner-Bloser (2013), (b) Being a Writer Developmental studies center (2013), (c) Write Source Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (2012) and (d) Reasoning and Writing McGraw Hill Education (2001). Two out of the four are writing workshop models. All four writing programs overall were rated at least adequate based on the rubric. Three of the four were rated ‘strong’ according to the rubric's criteria for being in alignment with CCSS-WL. Strategies for Writers, Being a Writer, and Write Source all comprised of numerous instructional strategies for teachers to implement explicitly as well as embedding of technology and peer collaboration.

Some strategies that lead to effective writing is the use of models of good writing, reserving time for writing daily, teaching students specific strategies and promoting peer collaboration (Mo et al., 2014). Miller, Berg, and Cox (2016) conducted a study to determine the most effective methods of writing instruction that were used by successful writing teachers in Texas classrooms. Results from the focus groups revealed that the teachers used writing workshop and the use of 6+1 Traits of Writing to successfully teach writing. Three aspects that made the teaching successful were the teacher guiding the process, teaching strategies through modeling and the students as authors. Miller et al. recommended 6+1 traits of writing be used when teaching writing as well as the writing workshop model.

With the implementation of CCSS and the continuous low writing performance of students, particularly those who come from economically disadvantaged households,

Collopy and Arnold (2017) conducted a study to investigate the impact of the 6+traits writing model on low-income students' CCSS writing performance. The researchers sought to determine whether the 6+1 traits model could be adopted school-wide to improve student writing performance. The participants in the study consisted of fourth and fifth-grade students from two rural, low-income elementary schools. One of the schools in the study had adopted the 6+1 traits model while the other had not. The students in the study engaged in a pre and post writing assessment. Throughout the school year, all students showed significant growth in all six traits with the greatest gains in the voice trait for the school who had previously adopted the model. The 6+1 traits showed potential in improving students writing to meet the expectations of the CCSS. The 6+1 traits framework can serve as instructional support for teachers to enhance their instructional delivery and better align their writing instruction to the CCSS. Collopy and Arnold (2017) asserted that the 6+1 traits model has the potential to enhance writing instruction for all students and minimize the gap that exists between high-poverty students and “their more affluent peers” (p.6).

Holtz et al. (2015) stated that monitoring of students' progress is necessary in order to see improvement in students’ writing. Writing instruction should involve effective feedback and formative assessments with the goal of modifying instruction based on the analysis of student work. Formative assessment is extremely necessary to evaluate students’ learning and instruction effectiveness which can ultimately lead to closing the achievement gap especially for struggling writers (Routman, 2014). Likewise, Graham, Hebert and Harris (2015) conducted a meta-analysis and found that providing

students with feedback from adults or their peers enhances students writing performance and the quality of their writing but did not find that monitoring of students' progress or the 6+1 traits model of writing had a great impact on students' writing progress.

In a study by Wilcox, Jeffery, and Bixler (2016), nine schools in New York with similar demographics participated in the study to determine how writing was being taught at the elementary level. The study revealed that the six schools who students performed above-predicted performance used evidence-based practices to improve writing instruction like peer collaboration, prewriting/planning, strategy instruction and use of rubrics. Additionally, the teachers held an overall positive view of aligning their instruction to the CCSS.

In conclusion, there is evidence in the literature that supports the need for future research in the area of writing instruction, teacher practice, and the CCSS (Adams-Budde & Miller, 2015; Bastug, 2016; Matlock et al., 2016; Murphy & Torff, 2016). The implementation of the CCSS standards requires more attention to be placed on writing instruction. Preservice teachers need guidance in their college preparatory programs to ensure their complete understanding of the standards and their readiness to implement the writing standards when they enter the classroom (Myers et al., 2016; Sharp, 2016). The complexity and rigor of the standards must be addressed if teachers are to be readily prepared to meet the needs of students in the 21st century (Graham & Harris, 2015). Current teachers of writing lack training while others have voiced time as an issue to implementation (Hall et al., 2015; Ray, Graham, Hebert, & Harris 2015). There are

effective teaching strategies and best practices noted that could serve as a bridge to improving writing instruction.

Implications

The purpose of this study was to understand elementary teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to teach writing that aligns with the CCSS and what instructional preparation is needed to support their pedagogical growth. Based on the personal communications gathered from teachers and administrators in the district, along with information conveyed through the research, teachers in the district may benefit from relevant, related trainings in writing instruction to enhance teachers' instructional delivery. If elementary teachers are knowledgeable about how to effectively teach writing, then students will have a greater chance of success. Essentially, teachers need to be adept at teaching writing so that they can implement best practices effectively to bridge the gaps that currently exist among students' writing abilities (Bastug, 2015; Brindle et al., 2016; Graham & Harris, 2015; Hall, 2016; Troia & Graham, 2016). The final project for this study consisted of a 3-day professional development workshop for elementary school teachers based on the outcome of the data collected from the teacher interviews. Through this qualitative method, I was able to gather rich information that could lead to minimizing the local problem by positively impacting teacher practice while increasing student success.

Summary

CCSS implementation forces educators to take a closer look at teaching practices. Quality writing instruction is needed to guide students toward proficiency and that can be

done effectively through the level of rigor that CCSS mandates. The CCSS requires more rigorous writing instruction across content areas; laying out what students need to know and be able to do with expected growth from year to year. This means that teachers that are not equipped with the pedagogical skills necessary to enhance student achievement in writing may experience instructional difficulties. Therefore, it is essential that all teachers preservice, novice and veteran teachers have access to quality training in writing instruction. Teachers across the U.S. may want to create proficient writers with effective instruction but there are various reasons why this remains to be a challenging task. Teachers' lack of instructional preparedness and time are contributing factors (Bastug, 2016; Graham, Early & Wilcox, 2014; Hall, Hutchinson, & White 2015; Harris & Graham, 2016). Student proficiency and writing instruction continue to be a national concern. There are a myriad of strategies and best practices that research shows to be effective in teaching writing. Teachers need to be properly trained and competent in implementing those strategies in their classrooms to meet the requirements of the CCSS and ultimately improve students' writing craft. In this qualitative study, I further explored teachers' perceptions regarding their level of preparedness and what they felt would aid in providing students with quality writing instruction. In the following section, the methodology, design, and approach for the study will be discussed.

Section 2: The Methodology

The purpose of this basic, qualitative study was to explore elementary teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to teach writing that aligns with the CCSS writing standards as well as identify what elements of instructional preparedness teachers perceived would be beneficial to meet the demands of the writing standards. I collected data for this qualitative study using face-to-face semistructured interviews conducted with 10 elementary school teachers. Creswell (2012) claimed that in qualitative research, emphasis is placed on the views of the participants. A qualitative study is ideal to address a research problem in which a phenomenon needs to be explored (Creswell, 2012). In Section 2, I explain the methodology of the study, including the research approach and design; the criteria I used to select participants; the justification of participants selected; and the methods I used to establish a researcher-participant relationship. I also discuss how I ensured that participants' rights were protected, data collection, and data analysis processes.

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

I chose a basic, qualitative design for this study because it allowed me to develop an understanding of teachers' perceptions of how prepared they are to teach writing based on the rigors of CCSS. Ravitch and Carl (2015) purported that in qualitative research, most of the studies are not labeled with a certain or specific approach, rather, they are basically qualitative. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) claimed that a basic interpretive study is the most common qualitative approach utilized by researchers in the field of education. In conducting a basic qualitative study, "the researcher is interested in understanding the

meaning a phenomenon has for those involved" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 24). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), researchers who implement the basic qualitative design are interested in "(a) how people interpret their experiences, (b) how they construct their worlds, and (c) what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 24). In a basic qualitative study, the primary goal is to discover and interpret those meanings. Therefore, I used a basic qualitative study to inquire into how elementary teachers in Illinois interpret their instructional preparedness for the teaching of writing at the elementary school level. The interpretive design was a practical choice for this study because I wanted to interpret the participants' perspectives and experiences. Through this approach, I was able to grasp a thorough understanding of elementary teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to teach writing according to the CCSS. Creswell (2012) confirmed that this design was suitable to identify themes that emerged from the data, acquire an in-depth understanding of the topic, and develop a rich descriptive report of the findings.

Although Merriam and Tisdell (2015) stated that the purpose of most qualitative studies is to understand and interpret, other qualitative designs have additional dimensions that did not necessarily work for my study. Ethnography would not have worked for my study because ethnography focuses on interpreting the culture of a group of people over an extensive period of time (Creswell, 2012), and I was not interested in the culture of my participants. I was interested in how elementary teachers perceive their preparedness to teach writing based on CCSS. The grounded theory was not feasible for my study because its purpose is to develop a theory based on the participants' views to

explain a process or action (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). I considered using the phenomenological design but it did not align to the research questions and its primary goal is to focus on the essence of an intense experience and the lived experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Van Manen, 2016). I did select the case study design because it focuses on the analysis of a single case instead of a sample and requires multiple data sources. Lastly, narrative analysis was not suitable for my study because according to Daiute (2014), it requires stories to be used as data and told in story form. I was not interested in participants' biographical stories.

In the initial review of methodologies, I considered the quantitative approach because of the simplicity of using surveys, but this approach would not yield the data that I was seeking from my participants. Standardized survey instruments cannot effectively measure the perceptions, beliefs, and opinions that participants hold without influencing the outcome (Creswell, 2012). According to Merriam and Tisdel (2015), "Qualitative research is based on the belief that knowledge is constructed by people in an ongoing fashion as they engage in and make meanings of an activity, experience, or phenomenon" (p. 23). This is contrary to quantitative research that is situated under the belief that knowledge preexists, simply waiting to be uncovered (Merriam &Tisdel, 2015). In quantitative research, the focus is on quantity, not quality. The goal of a researcher conducting a quantitative study is control/hypothesis testing versus understanding and meaning. The design characteristics of quantitative research are predetermined and structured, unlike qualitative research, which allows for more flexibility (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In quantitative research, findings are reported in graphs, numbers, or

inferential statistics, not in narrated form. In qualitative research, there are several data resources to use to determine themes, and the approach allows participants to build rapport with the researcher and gives participants an opportunity to express their perspectives in-depth (Creswell, 2012). Thus, the basic, qualitative research design was particularly well suited for this study to obtain a thorough understanding of an educational issue. I used this design as a blueprint for understanding the perceptions of elementary teachers on the implementation of CCSS writing standards, and what they perceived would aide in improving instructional practices.

Participants

In this study, I used homogeneous purposeful sampling to recruit 10 certified elementary teachers in an urban school district in Illinois who are responsible for teaching writing in Grades 3-8. “Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam & Tisdel, 2015, p. 96). Patton (2015) stressed that purposeful sampling derives from the need for an in-depth understanding that is central to the importance of the inquiry’s purpose. The selected participants in this study were an intentional selection of people who could best assist in an in-depth understanding of the issue related to the purpose of the study (Creswell, 2012). These 10 participants who are teachers of writing were able to provide pertinent information via interviews about their perceptions of their preparedness to teaching writing according to the CCSS, and what they perceive would be beneficial to improve their instructional practices.

Justification of Sample Size

According to Creswell (2012), the number of participants in a qualitative study could range from 1 to 40, but it is typical for a qualitative research study to only consist of a few participants. A researcher's ability to capture an in-depth picture of the data lessens with the accumulation of each new participant (Creswell, 2012). Patton (2015) agreed that in qualitative studies, the sample sizes are usually small. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) noted that there is not an exact sample size, but there should be an adequate number of participants to answer the research questions. Additional data do not necessarily equate to more information. In interviewing participants, a researcher can sometimes reach a point of redundancy where they begin to hear the same responses instead of new insights. Therefore, I utilized 10 participants in this study that met the selection criteria of being an elementary school teacher who is responsible for teaching writing in Grades 3 through 8.

Access to Participants

To gain access to participants, I first acquired approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University (approval number: 10-23-19-0231520) and then the school district where I planned to conduct interviews and collect data. To receive approval from the school district, I first had to complete and submit a Graduate Student Research Screening form that basically provided the district with an overview of my study. Once this form was approved, I then received notice to move forward with gaining approval from the Research Review Board (RRB). The district has an RRB who is

responsible for overseeing decisions regarding primary data collection in the district. Once I received approval from the RRB, I began the selection process by contacting the principals who were going to be affected by the study to provide them with a copy of the RRB's approval letter and obtain their approval to proceed with my study. I then contacted teachers individually via email who met the study's participant selection criteria- teachers responsible for teaching writing in Grades 3 through 8. An email was sent to potential participants to introduce the study, share the purpose, describe the selection criteria, and ask teachers to participate in the study. Once participants responded with interest in participating in the study, I created a list of the first 10 respondents. Using this list, I emailed those individuals an informed consent form that describes the details of the study, the protection of their identities, risks and benefits involved, my contact information, and to remind participants that their decision to participate in the study is voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw at any time.

Researcher and Participant Relationship

It was to everyone's benefit for me to build a rapport with participants. It was important for me to establish mutual respect and as Merriam and Tisdell (2015) suggested, develop a non-threatening/non-judgmental relationship with my participants. I am an employee in the district who meets similar criteria as the participants. I did not have any authority or supervisory role over any of the participants. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), authentic connections must be established between the researcher and participant or risk the study being negatively impacted. I ensured participants' rights to privacy by not sharing any of the information received and protecting all participants'

information by using numeric pseudonyms (Glesne, 2011). I emailed participants individually to introduce myself as the researcher, informed them of my study, and reiterated that I could be contacted anytime for any questions or concerns. By contacting teachers privately through email, they did not have to feel obligated to participate in my study. Creswell (2012) asserted that this process was necessary because the IRB primary purpose is to protect the rights of participants that are involved in a study. I provided all Participants with confidentiality and informed consent so that they were fully aware of what the research entailed as well as any risks involved. After the receipt of the participants' confirmed consent, possible dates, times, and locations were discussed to determine a neutral site for the interview to take place. I ensured that participants' names and schools were removed from all data collected to protect each participant's privacy and take precautions to maintain confidentiality.

Gaining their trust and support was the primary goal, while ensuring their awareness of the overall nature of the study. I utilized reciprocity to show appreciation and gratitude for the participants' time. I made certain that participants were aware that I appreciated their participation in the study and that their time was invaluable. I also listened intently. Glesne (2011) purported that listening seriously provides participants with a sense of relevancy and importance. To maintain a researcher-participant relationship, I showed respect to all participants before, during, and after research by acknowledging and ensuring their right to privacy, informed consent, ethical protections, reciprocity, and listening attentively.

Data Collection

Interviewing participants is one of the most effective strategies for gathering qualitative data (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). When conducting a basic qualitative study, interviews are one of the most common sources of data collection. I collected data via semistructured interviews to answer the study's research questions:

RQ1: How do elementary school teachers who teach language arts perceive their instructional preparedness to teach writing that aligns with the CCSS standards?

RQ2: What elements of instructional preparedness do the teachers perceive would be beneficial to meet the demands of the CCSS writing standards?

Interviews were the chosen source of data collection because interviewing participants is necessary to reveal information that cannot be directly observed such as feelings, thoughts, or a participant's intentions. Interviewing allows the researcher to become engrossed into another person's perspective (Patton, 2015). I conducted 10 individual teacher interviews to gather meaningful data. The focus of the interviews were on understanding elementary teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to teach writing and their perspectives on what is needed to meet the demands of the CCSS. I created an interview protocol with specific questions that directly related to the study's research questions (see Appendix B). These semistructured questions were designed to guide the interview process and provide consistency among the individual interviews during the data collection period (Creswell, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I utilized some follow up questions to probe when limited responses were given. This practice encouraged

interviewees to express their thoughts more freely and share their perspectives openly. As Merriam and Tisdell (2015) suggested, I took notes during each interview and the interviews were also audio-taped, by first obtaining permission from the participants, to ensure the collected data were preserved for data analysis.

Once approval was obtained from the school district and IRB, and after teachers consented to participate in the study, I contacted teachers via email to determine a date, location, and time to conduct the interview. During the interview, I reminded participants that participation in the study was voluntary and that all measures were in place to ensure that they remain anonymous and information shared remains confidential. To keep track of the data gathered, I labeled each set of interview data with a numeric pseudonym. Then, the information was placed in a binder with dividers and filed away to ensure confidentiality and ethical protection.

Role of the Researcher

As a qualitative researcher, it was my duty to explore the thoughts and perceptions of participants that were involved in the study. It was my role to conduct and report findings honestly, without altering any of the data gathered. Any data collected via semistructured interviews were shared with the participants to verify accuracy through the process of member checking. It was my responsibility to protect participants from harm and ensure data was safeguarded. It was unlikely that participants would experience discomfort by participating in this study, but I reminded participants that they could withdraw from the study at any point, and their identities would remain protected. Participants were informed of the use of audiotaping during the interviews and that all

data would be secured. I conducted this study in an urban school district where I currently teach. I am an interventionist for middle school students, and I am also a member of the school's instructional leadership team. Teachers on my team, who I work with directly, were excluded from this study.

I am cognizant of the potential of personal bias swaying a researcher's interpretations. Being a teacher of writing myself and having a passion for the subject, I am aware of my own biases and personal beliefs about the topic. I know that I have a strong belief in how writing should be taught. While conducting interviews, I separated myself from any discussion to avoid the potential of my views affecting the data outcome. Seidman (2013) suggested that researchers should distance themselves in order to effectively ask authentic questions during the interview process. I established distance while collecting and analyzing data to ensure that I was listening to gain an understanding and make meaning of what participants discussed. My role as a researcher is to maintain trust, be non-judgmental and respectful to participants. This includes controlling my own biases so that I can effectively gather rich data of their perceptions. As an additional measure to diminish any biases, I conducted member checks to ensure the data was a true reflection of the participants involved.

Data Analysis

After data collection, I transcribed all audio-taped interviews verbatim by using the Otter application. I used the inductive process to analyze the data from the interviews to identify common themes that emerged from the data. Inductively analyzing data is a characteristic of qualitative research. It is the process of examining raw data to categorize

into themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Lincoln and Guba (1985) posited that qualitative research should be conducted and analyzed with rigor, precision, and consistency to establish credibility. The self-efficacy framework guided my analysis of this study through careful examination of teacher perceptions. Self-efficacy influences how a teacher thinks, feels, and interacts with others. Bandura (1997) explained that a person's psychological state, motivation, and actions are not a direct result of their capability but are influenced by their beliefs of their capability. The framework created a unique lens to examine human behavior. To become engrossed in the data, I actively reread the data to search for meanings and patterns before coding. As Yin (2014) advised, I first read the transcribed data to get the gist of it and then read more closely to look for patterns and relationships in the data. After reading each transcript, I began to code the data. Since the coding process should be guided by the conceptual framework (Saldana, 2013), I first used a priori codes, created based on the concepts of the self-efficacy framework, to identify elements of the conceptual framework in the data. I then identified emergent codes in the data collected. After examining all the data in detail, I used axial codes to begin categorizing the data into themes (Nowell et al., 2017). Merriam and Tisdell (2015) stated that this is an essential step in the analysis process to combine codes into "fewer, more comprehensive categories" (p. 206). Then, I established final themes, and a thick, detailed description for each theme was written up (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The research findings provided an understanding of teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to teach writing as well as identified what instructional resources

elementary language arts teachers perceived would be beneficial to the challenge of meeting the demands of the CCSS writing standards.

Accuracy and Credibility of the Findings

A study's worth is determined by its level of trustworthiness. Trustworthiness involves establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Patton (2015) purported that credibility depends largely on the researcher's integrity. Accuracy and credibility are vital in a research study (Creswell, 2012). To ensure accurate and credible data, I controlled my biases as the researcher before I started any data analysis, and I asked participants to check the accuracy of the findings through member checking (Creswell, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This process allowed participants to verify the data to ensure the validity of the information gathered from the participants. After interviews were transcribed and coded, I contacted participants via email to request their verification of the findings. Teachers were asked if they had any questions or concerns regarding the data. Once member checks were completed, I continued with the final analysis of the data. Maxwell (2013) claimed that "this is the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on and is an effective way of identifying your own biases" (p.126). Member checking allowed the participants to provide feedback and make any changes if necessary. Member checking helps to ensure that the final qualitative study is accurate and supported by the participants involved.

In addition to performing member checks, I followed Shenton's (2004) suggestion and provided a detailed description of the phenomenon being investigated to promote trustworthiness of the findings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that doing so will establish external validity, which helps with transferability (the extent to which the findings of the study can be applied to other situations, people, or places).

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) advised that there is no such thing as a flawless qualitative study and that there may be some discrepancies. I diligently looked for discrepancies in the data. I found two discrepancies during data analysis that were inconsistent with the rest of the data. I followed Yin (2014)'s suggestion and included the opposing data in my study rather than discarded of it. This information only further supported and protected the validity of this study.

Summary

All appropriate steps were taken during and after data collection and analysis to ensure the validity of this study. Those steps involved gaining approval from IRB, accessing participants through proper procedures, obtaining their consents, upholding ethical protections, use of a protocol, audio-taping of interviews, the interview transcriptions, coding data consistently, and searching for any discrepant cases. The participants involved in the study were fully aware of the purpose, their right to withdraw, and sign an informed consent. I used the member checking method to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the findings. Per Walden University's guidelines, all data will be kept locked in a file cabinet at my home for 5 years and then discarded.

Data Analysis Results

In conducting this study, I sought to capture the perspectives of writing teachers to gather a deeper understanding of their experiences with instruction. I conducted 10 individual teacher semistructured interviews over a four-week period to collect data for this study. I wanted a sample that was most reflective of the heterogeneity of the district. By recruiting from several schools in different areas of the city, I was able to recruit teachers at various stages of their careers, grade levels, and student demographics (Table 1).

Table 1

Participant Characteristics

Participant	Grade	Number of years Teaching
1	Third	27
2	Third	5
3	Fifth	26
4	Fifth	11
5	Sixth-Eighth	4
6	Fourth	14
7	Sixth-Eighth	31
8	Fourth	15
9	Sixth-Eighth	1
10	Fourth	21

During each interview, I recorded the data and then transcribed it using the Otter software. I organized and coded the data using a priori and emergent codes to create themes based on the research questions and the self-efficacy framework.

I also conducted member checks so that participants could verify the data and point out any inaccuracies. Once member checks were completed, the final analysis of the data led to six themes that were most prevalent that aligned to the research questions and framework.

Findings

The problem in this study is a lack of adequate teacher instructional preparedness in CCSS writing instruction coupled with low student writing performance. To address the problem, I explored elementary teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to teach writing that aligns with the CCSS writing standards as well as sought to identify what elements of instructional preparedness teachers perceived would be beneficial to meet the demands of the writing standards. The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: How do elementary school teachers who teach Language Arts perceive their instructional preparedness to teach writing that aligns with the CCSS standards?

RQ2: What elements of instructional preparedness do the teachers perceive would be beneficial to meet the demands of the CCSS writing standards?

Bandura's self-efficacy framework guided my analysis of teacher perceptions. The self-efficacy framework was a suitable guide for understanding teacher self-efficacy and how teacher beliefs are developed and inform instructional practices.

Findings for RQ 1

Overall, the findings for research question 1 revealed that teachers hold positive perceptions about writing instruction. Novice teachers that were interviewed felt less prepared to teach writing than those teachers who have 12 or more years of teaching

experience. Most veteran teachers felt more confident and more prepared to teach writing. Even participants with high confidence in their ability still expressed the need for professional development to improve their practice.

Findings for RQ 2

Participants voiced a need for more instructional resources such as pacing guides, teaching strategies, mentor texts, time, and technology to aide in their instructional delivery. Participants also revealed that instructional training would be beneficial to enhance their writing instruction.

After careful analysis of the data, six themes emerged that align to the research questions and conceptual framework. The themes of note were: teachers lack familiarity with the standards, teachers struggle with teaching to proficiency, teachers' beliefs varied about their teaching ability, time poses a challenge to instructional practice, teachers lack training and resources, and writing needs to be an instructional priority (Table 2).

Table 2

Themes

Themes	# of Participants	# of References
Teachers lack familiarity with the standards	10	19
Teachers struggle with teaching to proficiency	10	20
Teachers' beliefs varied about their teaching ability	10	10
Time poses a challenge to instructional practice	7	16
Teachers lack training and resources	10	34
Writing needs to be an instructional priority	7	14

Themes for Research Question 1

RQ1: How do elementary school teachers who teach Language Arts perceive their instructional preparedness to teach writing that aligns with the CCSS standards?

Theme 1: Teachers lack familiarity with the standards

The first theme that emerged was teachers' lack of familiarity with the writing standards. Seven out of ten participants revealed that they did not feel completely confident in aligning their writing instruction to the standards. Participant 2 voiced that "This is my first year really getting to know the Common Core State Standards with writing." Although she has five years of teaching experience, this is her first year in the district and state. Participant 3, a veteran teacher with 26 years in the district, simply teaches writing the same way he always has. Participant 3 explained,

> I'm more used to the old. Common Core, I don't know too much about it. I still have my kids write the way I want them to. Maybe I do need to go look at the Common Core, to see how much that has changed.

All seven of the participants rated their knowledge of the standards as five or less on a 1-10 scale. Participant 5 stated,

> I am probably between a five and a four. My writing instruction has been on writing proper sentences with capitalization and periods. So that's not even close to what they're supposed to be doing for that grade band in terms of writing. Some of the things that they do that relate to the standard is writing with appropriate task, and according to the audience that they have writing a paragraph relating to that. We also do writings with claim, but it's very simplified.

Participant 10 stated that their level of understanding the standards is very minimal. However, there is a strong desire to comprehend the standards better. Participant 10 discussed the need for greater understanding of the writing standards,

> On a 1-10 scale, I would rate myself a 2 or 3, but I could tell you those reading anchor standards front and back. I think that I will need a little bit more professional development around it. Just like to get those significant little points inside of the overarching standards.

Having knowledge of the writing standards could be the difference between effective and ineffective instruction. Teacher perceptions are an important factor in the success of the implementation of the standards in the classroom (Bandura, 1986; Endacott, et al. 2016). According to Graham and Harris (2015), teaching writing can be challenging, and in order to teach it skillfully, teachers will need knowledge on how, when, and what to teach. The complexity and rigor of the standards must be addressed if teachers are to be readily prepared to meet the needs of students.

Discrepant data. The data revealed a discrepancy. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) described a discrepant case as any data point that emerges that is not consistent with the findings. Although the majority of the participants revealed a lack of familiarity with the standards, three of the participants felt very familiar with the writing standards. They felt knowledgeable about aligning their writing instruction to the standards. Participant 1 was very confident concerning her knowledge of the standards and stated that she refers to the standards often when writing lesson plans. Participant 7 said, “I am very, very familiar

with the standards. First, I look at the standard and then find the appropriate skill to teach it". Participant 8 shared,

> I am familiar. See I use the six traits and Lucy Calkins, and it just aligns really well with the standards. They are actually not too complicated like some of the reading ones sound really like, wait what exactly does that mean?, but the writing ones, from what I have experienced are pretty straightforward, and they align really well with my instruction. I kind of do a combination of Writers Workshop with the Six Traits. I feel like whatever they each don't really emphasize, together they do.

These participants seem to have a clear understanding of the standards and know what each standard is asking of students, but the majority of the participants expressed a lack of familiarity with the writing standards.

Theme 2: Teachers struggle with teaching to proficiency

All the participants revealed that they face some challenges while teaching writing. Participants voiced the difficulty of getting their students to write proficiently and the many factors that play a role in their efforts. Participants 2, 3, and 7 discussed the difficulties of teaching a specific type of writing to their students. Participant 2 stated, "having students write narratives has always been a challenge." Participants 3 and 7 voiced concerns with getting students to the level in which to write an argumentative piece. Participant 3 shared that,

> Students do not know how to support whatever they are writing about. They just want to share their opinion, I like this because, and I dislike that because. And

> then I tell them, “but why?” And “why was the character bad?” or “why was he in danger” or whatever, and they cannot provide that strong support of why in their writing.

Participant 7 agreed, “The hardest genre to teach is argumentative. That takes up a lot of time just to get them to write down and formulate their own opinion is pretty difficult”. Participants 6, 8, and 9 find it challenging to get their students to simply generate ideas regardless of the writing task. Participant 6 explained, “I am trying to help my students to learn how to generate ideas and brainstorm.” Participant 8 stated, “just trying to meet the needs of students who are, you know, maybe really lacking with just getting the words on the paper.” All of the participants mentioned teaching grammar and mechanical issues as a challenge. Participant 4 shared, “It’s very difficult to get my students to write formally. I find myself correcting them a lot when they use informal language in their writing”.

The participants feel that it is necessary to go back to the basics. Teachers recognize that students are struggling to write. The participants think that one of the reasons students struggle to write is because they lack foundational skills. Participant 10 shared, “I'm still working on just basic stuff like sentence structure in fourth grade, and foundational skills like you have to capitalize this, and this is a proper noun.” Participant 4 emphasized, “I feel like basics are important if we ever want to see our students reach mastery.” Participant 6 confirmed, “My students can’t write.” Students must be given an opportunity to flourish as writers. Brown (2014) asserted that all children develop strong foundational skills when they are presented with purposeful and meaningful activities

early on. Foundational skills developed during primary years will serve as the basis for enhanced competence and proficiency in later years. The participants agree that writing instruction needs to be consistent across the grade levels, starting with the basic fundamentals in primary grades. Otherwise, it serves as a challenge for teachers to teach to mastery in the higher grades. Participant 7 expressed, "They have to have it from kindergarten all the way up." Participant 8 said,

> There are inconsistencies with prior grade levels. It would be nice to just agree on maybe like we're going to focus on this skill so that by the time they come to you, in this grade level, they really going to know whatever those strategies are.

Since writing is developmental, practices that focus on prevention would most likely be the most effective strategy to lessen the writing difficulties of elementary school children (Holtz, McCurdy & Roehling 2015).

Theme 3: Teachers' beliefs varied about their teaching ability

The third theme that emerged from the data concerned teachers' beliefs about their ability to teach writing according to the CCSS. Five of the ten participants revealed high self-efficacy for teaching writing. These participants were very confident in their ability to provide high-quality writing instruction to their students. All five of these participants are teachers with teaching experience between 11 to 30 years. Participant 1 stated, "Oh, I think I'm a writer, so I love writing. Writing is one of my favorite subjects to teach, so I feel very confident in my ability to teach it". Participant 4 said, "I feel good about that. Because I understand the curriculum and the standards and I know how to

create rubrics based on it so students can get the best experience of learning a writing skill". Participant 6 echoed,

> I feel like that I am a proficient enough teacher at it because I also do teach grammar, the different types of sentences, and paragraph structure. The only thing I don't teach that much is voice when it comes to writing.

Participant 7 rated her ability to teach writing a nine on a ten scale, and participant 8 simply stated, "I feel very capable."

Not all teachers felt confident in their ability to teach writing. The remaining five participants felt less confident in their ability to teach writing that aligns with the CCSS standards. These five participants ranged from novice to veteran teachers with 1 to 26 years of teaching experience. Participant 2 stated, "I know what my students need, but I necessarily don't know how to get them there. So, I think my instruction is just kind of basic". Participant 3 rated his ability to teach writing "50/50" and shared that "I don't know I think I better go back and look at the writing standards." Participant 5 said, "If I had to grade myself, I'd probably give myself a C. Only because I know that the writing demands, according to the grade level, are significantly higher than what my students are able to do". Participant 9 described her ability as "not great." Teacher self-efficacy is known to be a significant element of effective teaching (Latuche & Gascoigne, 2019). According to Bandura (1997) and Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2007), Teachers' beliefs about their pedagogy and their perceptions about their ability to teach students can affect how they implement instruction.

Themes for Research Question 2

RQ2: What elements of instructional preparedness do the teachers perceive would be beneficial to meet the demands of the CCSS writing standards?

Theme 4: Time poses a challenge to instructional practice

"Until we can manage time, we can manage nothing else" is an adage that held true in this research. Seven of the ten participants in this study mentioned that time is a significant factor in teaching writing frequently and effectively. The data revealed that the amount of writing instruction taking place in the classroom varied by teacher, ranging from once a week to daily lessons. Teachers explained that they try to incorporate and plan for writing in their lesson plans, but sometimes it just does not happen as planned for various reasons. Participant 2 stated, "I aim for five days a week, and that's what I plan for, but with, you know, schedule changing and things getting pushed back, I would say realistically it's probably three days a week." Participant 5 described, "There is no writing block in our schedule. Okay, like it's just reading and small groups. I think it's important, but there are just so many things that they want you to do, that it's difficult". Participant 6 said that she needs more time. "More time is needed. I feel like, at least at my school, you're expected to teach writing, but you're really not giving enough time in the day". Participant 9 and 10 shared how time-consuming it is to provide students with feedback. Participant 10 stated,

> I'm really literally doing more writing response, as compared to teaching to write. So I've had a lot of experience in it. However, the time to apply it is very minimal. Honestly, in a reading and writing combined class, you don't have the time to go

> over revisions and editing, and it gets lost because I'm still trying to teach fourth graders how to read as opposed to reading to learn.

Participant 1 and 3 stressed that time is important, and there needs to be time explicitly designated for writing instruction. Participant 3 stated, "I think we need to dedicate a little bit more time. I think writing needs to be, you know, as much as every day". Yurtseven (2017) contended that for students to meet the demands of the CCSS, teachers need the knowledge, time, and skills as well as confidence in their teaching ability to teach writing more effectively.

Theme 5: Teachers lack training and resources

Another theme that emerged was teachers' lack of training and resources. Participants revealed that they did not have any college courses specifically about writing instruction during their teacher preparatory coursework. Participant 1 stated, "I do not remember any that was specific to teaching writing." Participant 2 stated, "I don't think I had any." Some participants revealed that their undergrad degree wasn't even in education. Participant 3 shared, "I didn't have any writing classes. I was in accounting. I was a business major. So my undergraduate degree is in business". Participant 6 stated, "My undergrad degree was not in education. So, in my master's program, I don't think any of the classes focused on teaching writing. So, I would say zero". Some teachers shared that the only classes they took in college remotely close to teaching writing were literature. Participant 5 stated, "I don't think there was one course specifically that was like, we're going to teach kids how to write. I think it was more so like maybe part of the

literacy instruction". Participant 7 said, "we had college courses for language arts, but not specific to teaching writing." Participant 8 recalled,

> It doesn't stand out to me, so I don't think I really had one. It must've been like a part of a course like maybe in like literature. Yeah, but it wasn't a huge focus like it wasn't like a whole class; I know that for sure.

Likewise, participants also revealed a lack of sufficient training and resources for teaching writing. Participants revealed that their training was either limited to Lucy Calkins or they had not received any training at all since the implementation of the CCSS. Participant 1 explained, "Let's see oh Lucy Calkins training. And that was basically it for writing". Participant 8 stated, "I don't remember when I did the Lucy Calkins stuff, but it must have been before the Common Core so no, since the Common Core, I haven't had any official training. Participant 10 added,

> At our school, Lucy Calkins was a big deal, and there are some strategies in Teach like a Champion. I couldn't tell you exactly which ones right now that you can implement with a writing program but very minimum literally, very minimal. Everything has been basically around reading to me, reading, and the Common Core shifts with reading, as opposed to writing.

Participant 5 recalled,

> In my second year of teaching, we focused tremendously on writing for like three months. During our clusters, where we looked at a rubric and blew up that rubric, meaning like we went into it in detail. I forgot the name of the book that we went over during clusters, but we looked at a specific rubric that focused on like voice.

> The intent was there, but all that I took from those three months that we went over those six traits was rubrics that I can use, which are useful.

Although some teachers have been exposed to some form of training, fifty percent of the participants shared that they hadn't received any training in writing. Participant 2, 4, and 9 said, "none." Participant 3 stated, "None..None…I'll be honest with you…none!". Despite the lack of adequate training, teachers shared a desire to hone their skills in writing. All of the participants felt that training could be very beneficial, especially when it's relevant and useful. Participant 2 mentioned,

> I think that additional trainings, would be really helpful. I'm also a very visual person. So I would love to just sit and like watch someone's writing block and see how it's, you know, laid out; how it flows together.

Participant 4 stated, "We should get more professional development so that we can identify, and even in teams, where we can work together and piggyback off each other, what kind of strategies to use and just new ideas." Participant 10 described, "I think just maybe more professional development around writing. And what writing should look like". The teachers' perceptions mirror what was found in the literature. In several studies, teachers reported overwhelmingly that they received little to no training on how to teach writing (Brindle et al., 2016, Ray, Graham, Houston, & Harris, 2015; Myers et al., 2016; Troia &Graham, 2016). Lehman (2017) and Wilcox (2015) expressed the importance of teachers having access to quality training.

In addition to professional development, teachers also revealed that additional resources could help to enhance their writing instruction. Teachers believe that having

access to various resources like technology, mentor texts, or a pacing guide is needed to improve their writing instruction. Participant 6 feels that "the resources, should be better, I guess like an integration of a pacing guide concerning all areas of writing." Participant 9 said, "I guess just like an example of like oh this is something that works, that has worked." Participant 1, 6, and 10 shared their desire to have mentor texts readily available to enhance their instruction. Participant 1 stated,

> I'd like to have mentor texts that will help me to show the type of writing that I'm trying to get them to do. So I can point that out how the Arthur wrote the text and what to look for, and this is what I'm looking for in your writing. So, a lot of mentor texts are useful.

Participant 6 added, "I feel it would be nice to have a set of mentor texts for the different types of writing versus always having or trying to find your own." Participant 10 agreed that "One of my biggest go tos is having mentor text like students need to see what good writing looks like to have something to emulate. So maybe more mentor text and writing samples".

Some teachers mentioned having access to technology is a needed resource for all teachers of writing to teach writing more effectively. (Kafyulilo, Fisser, &Voogt, (2016) claimed that the lack of technology could serve as a challenge to meet the expectations of the CCSS writing standards. Participants want to be able to provide students with explicit instruction and use technology as another platform for students to express themselves as well as have the opportunity to engage students toward proficiency. Participant 7 stated, "It would be nice to have my own computer cart as well as technology to support my

instruction." Participant 4 stated, "in addition to PD, just technology." Participant 8 confirmed that,

> Some kids, you give them a Chromebook and let them write on Google Docs, and all of a sudden, they bloom as writers. Chromebooks can be life-changing for them because it's like they've been holding their pencil wrong. You know it like hurts to write, and now they can actually get their thoughts and things out onto the Google Docs.

Discrepant data. A discrepancy to note in the data is that one teacher, Participant 8, expressed that she did not need any instructional resources. She feels very confident in her ability to teach writing because she has all of the resources that she believes are necessary to deliver quality writing instruction. Participant 8 described,

> I feel that I have, well, I'm at a school with a lot of resources. I have an Elmo, we have new Promethean boards. I have Chromebooks; I feel like I have everything I need. Umm… I have the six traits kit; I have the Lucy Calkins set. I don't really feel like I need anything.

Unfortunately, this is not the reality for most of the participants. Teachers' experiences about access to materials varied from school to school across the district.

Theme 6: Writing needs to be an instructional priority

Another theme that emerged from the data is the need to make writing a priority. The teachers agree that writing instruction should be prioritized. According to the participants, writing instruction just isn't given much emphasis in the district. They feel like writing is put on the back burner to other district initiatives. Participant 5 stated,

> the urgency is there, but there are no actionable plans to make it a priority. I think this is with everything that we do. When we get told that there's an urgency for x, we have clusters for x, but then it doesn't transfer over into the classroom for a number of reasons. Whether there's no accountability on administration or a teacher just doesn't know how to make it fit in the classroom space, but not only making it a priority but having actual follow-through.

Participant 10 explained:

> I'm going to be totally honest. I think that because writing is not a standard that is assessed on the NWEA or any other type of performance task, it's not going to be something that people are going to put as much emphasis on.

The participants feel like reading and math instruction takes precedence over writing instruction due to standardized testing. The participants feel like they have to choose between teaching writing or reading. Participant 6 stated that "writing is part of ELA and that writing in response to reading is writing, and they should be equal." Teachers agree that writing is an important subject. They believe some form of writing should be taught to students every single day. Participant 8 emphasized,

> Writing is very important. It's a big connection to reading scores as well like reading and writing go hand in hand. So I think it's really important to teach it even if you don't believe you're doing it well like even if you're not doing a lot of it, but it needs to be a priority. Students need to be exposed to it every day.

Schools should make the subject of writing a priority, and it is essential that teachers create a learning environment that builds on students' competence to write (Kent &

Brennan, 2016). According to the CCSS, writing instruction is just as important as reading, and schools need to make a conscious effort to ensure that teachers have the resources and training to be readily prepared to effectively teach writing to students so that struggling writers can grow toward proficiency.

Evidence of Quality

The first step was the creation of an interview protocol (appendix B) that I aligned to my research questions and conceptual framework. I wanted to ensure that the questions asked of the participants would provide the answers to my research questions. This interview protocol was used during each face to face interview to ensure consistency during data collection (Creswell, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I took margin notes during each interview, and all ten interviews were recorded and then transcribed by me using the Otter.ai software. I read through each transcript multiple times to become familiar with the data. The transcripts were then uploaded into Nvivo12 for coding. The Nvivo12 software was very beneficial as it provided a structured and proficient way to organize and code the data. Outside of using this software, I did not deviate from my original proposed plan. I began the analysis of the data with a priori codes that aligned to the elements of the self-efficacy framework (Saldana, 2013). Then, more codes were developed through emergent coding in which transcripts were read thoroughly, and codes were assigned to pieces of data. This process allowed me to sift through the data to identify segments that were relevant to my research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Lastly, I used axial codes to look for patterns across the data to condense my data and form categories (Nowell et al., 2017; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Member Checks

I conducted member checks so that participants could verify the data and point out any inaccuracies. This process allowed participants to verify the data to ensure the validity of the information gathered from the participants. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) and Creswell (2012) pointed out that member checking is a principal strategy to ensure the validity and credibility of the findings. I solicited feedback from the participants via email by providing them a copy of my preliminary findings to see if the findings were accurate. I asked the participants to respond within a week, confirming or rejecting the accuracy of the findings. Participants confirmed the findings with no objections or requests for modifications. Once member checks were completed, the final analysis of the data led to six themes that were most prevalent that aligned to the research questions and framework.

Conclusion

The problem in this study is that there is a lack of adequate teacher instructional preparedness in CCSS writing instruction coupled with low student writing performance. Therefore, the purpose of this basic, qualitative study was to explore elementary teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to teach writing that aligns with the CCSS writing standards as well as identify what elements of instructional preparedness teachers perceived would be beneficial to meet the demands of the writing standards. Bandura's concept of self-efficacy was used to develop research questions and an interview protocol to explore the perceptions of teachers. Data collected for this qualitative study were through face-to-face semistructured interviews conducted with ten elementary school

teachers. After I collected the data, they were transcribed, coded, organized, and member checked in preparation for thematic analysis. I conducted the data analysis using emergent codes and a priori codes to examine teacher beliefs about their instructional preparedness based on the concepts of the self-efficacy framework. The findings revealed that teachers hold positive perceptions about writing instruction. Teacher perceptions and experiences gathered in this study are consistent with the research (Brindle et al., 2016, Ray, Graham, Houston, & Harris, 2015; Myers et al., 2016; Troia &Graham, 2016). The data confirmed that teachers received minimum to no instructional training in writing. Novice teachers that participated in this study felt less prepared to teach writing than those teachers who have 12 or more years of teaching experience.

Overall, teachers in the district are only somewhat prepared to teach writing according to the standards and voiced the need for instructional resources and professional training in the area of writing. The six themes that emerged from the data analysis were: teachers lack familiarity with the standards, teachers struggle with teaching to proficiency, teachers' beliefs varied about their teaching ability, time poses a challenge to instructional practice, teachers lack training and resources, and writing needs to be an instructional priority. Based on the findings that teachers are not very familiar with the writing standards, face many challenges when teaching writing, and lack instructional training, I recommend a full 3-day professional development training on writing instruction.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

In this basic qualitative study, I collected data to explore elementary teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to teach writing as well as discover what elements of instructional preparedness were needed to improve writing instruction. The findings revealed that, although teachers' perceptions about writing instruction were positive, there is still a need for instructional supports and training to support instructional practices. The key themes that surfaced from the data analysis were: teachers lack familiarity with the standards, teachers struggle with teaching to proficiency, teachers' beliefs varied about their teaching ability, time poses a challenge to instructional practice, teachers lack training and resources, and writing needs to be an instructional priority. Based on these results, I decided to develop a 3-day professional development training on writing instruction that would assist teachers in mastering the standards, teaching writing more effectively and provide them the time to collaborate and plan for future instruction. This professional development training will help prepare teachers with the knowledge and skills to teach writing at the level of rigor that aligns with the CCSS. In Section 3, I described the project description and goals. I also discussed the rationale for selecting the specific genre, the review of the literature, proposal for implementation, and evaluation plan.

Description and goals

The project consists of a 3-day professional development training for elementary teachers who are responsible for teaching writing (Appendix A). The professional

development will follow the workshop model, where participants can take ownership of their learning. The workshop model allows for the facilitator to cover a learning topic or skill but also allows for collaborative discussions among the attendees to build knowledge, share ideas, discuss ways of implementation and participate in hands-on activities to apply what they have learned. Day 1 will focus on deconstructing the writing standards. Teachers will engage in activities and use a template to analyze and deconstruct the individual standards to deepen their knowledge of what students need to know and are expected to be able to do. Day 2 will focus on research-based teaching strategies and resources for writing. Participants will collaboratively explore strategies and protocols that are effective that can be implemented in their classrooms. Day 3 will focus on what writing should look like at various grade levels. Teachers will have the time to plan and create a pacing guide for the first quarter. Now that teachers have a clearer understanding of the standards, teachers will use their curriculum resources and work to align their writing instruction to the CCSS standards.

There are three goals associated with this project. The first goal is that teachers will leave the 3-day professional development training with an actual planning guide to immediately implement to enhance their writing instruction. The second goal is that teachers gain additional knowledge and skills that can be applied to improve their instruction. The third goal is that teachers fully comprehend the level of rigor required to teach the standards to move students from basic to proficient. If these goals are accomplished, they will achieve the project's purpose. Through this project, I intended to enhance teachers' pedagogical skills and motivate teachers to implement more effective

writing instruction in their classrooms. Thus, exposing students to more writing opportunities to improve students' level of writing proficiency.

Rationale

I chose a professional development training workshop as the genre for this project because it will provide teachers with additional knowledge and strategies to use to support rigorous writing instruction. Barbinski et al. (2017), Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Garner (2017), and Markussen-Brown et al. (2017) affirmed that professional development training is an effective strategy to enhance teachers' instructional craft. Bates and Morgan (2018) reviewed 35 studies that demonstrated that there is a link between professional development and positive student learning outcomes. Patton, Parker, and Tannehill (2015) argued that professional development enhances teachers' content knowledge and is directly linked to student achievement. The new knowledge gained through professional development will positively affect students (Polly, 2015). Adam-Budde and Miller (2015) concluded that professional development is a critical component to address teacher preparedness. When teachers engage in professional development activities geared toward their students' deficiencies, not only does it improve their craft, but it leads to increased student achievement (Avidov-Ungar, 2016; Hunziker, Arquette, & Quinzio-Zafran, 2014). This project will support teachers in honing their craft through standards analysis, implementation of strategies, and developing a sufficient plan that aligns with their curriculum resources.

The findings in this study revealed that there is a need for professional development training in writing instruction. The participants collectively agreed that their

students are struggling to write and lack basic writing skills. It is a challenge for them to teach writing at the level of rigor that CCSS requires. The results of this study imply that there is a gap between the teachers' knowledge and classroom practice. Teachers shared that writing was not a focus in their teacher preparation programs nor had professional development in writing been available for staff to engage in. Teachers voiced a need for additional training in writing to get a better understanding of the writing standards and effective teaching strategies. They also stated the lack of time and resources as factors that contribute to their current instructional practices. This professional development workshop will give teachers time to plan and design tailored writing instruction for their classrooms. The professional development will provide teachers with an opportunity to work collaboratively to gain a deeper understanding of the standards, develop instructional strategies to address student deficiencies, and apply them to their classroom practice. Ultimately, I designed a professional development workshop to address the needs of the participants in this study based on themes that emerged. The 3-day workshop will serve as a tool to be utilized by both veteran and novice teachers to enhance their pedagogical skills to increase student writing achievement.

Review of the Literature

Based on the data collection and analysis, I created a 3-day professional development workshop because participants in this study demonstrated a need for adequate training and resource materials to teach writing more efficiently. I conducted a review of literature on the theory of andragogy to ensure the project addressed the needs of adult learners. In this section, I also explore professional development to provide an

overview of the selected genre for this project and deconstructing the standards which addressed one of the major themes that surfaced in the study. To conduct the literature review, I searched the Walden Library for peer-reviewed articles and books using Education Source, Eric, Sage, EBSCOhost, and Google Scholar as databases to identify related literature. The keywords that I used were: *professional development in writing, professional development, teacher professional development, relevant professional development, types of professional development, teacher collaboration, adult learning theory, andragogy,* and *deconstructing standards.*

Theory of Andragogy

This project is guided by Knowles's (1987) theoretical framework of andragogy. Andragogy focuses on the unique needs of adult learners. According to Knowles (1987), andragogy is the art and science of helping adults learn. Andragogy is suitable for this project because the framework aids in providing administrators, staff, and facilitators with direction when creating learning materials for educating adult learners (Knowles, Swanson, & Holton, 2011). I wanted to ensure that I created a project that would effectively address the distinctive way that adults learn. Knowles (1987) purported that when developing training materials, one must consider these four questions: (a) what content should be covered? (b) how should the content be organized? (c) what sequence should be followed in presenting the content? and (d) what is the most effective method for conveying this content? These questions are based on the andragogical approach to ensure facilitators consider the structure of the professional development, the level of engagement, and give learners an active role in the learning process. Additionally,

Knowles (1978) pinpointed specific actions that a person should perform in the role of a facilitator: establish a positive climate conducive to learning, provide a myriad of learning resources, help clarify learning expectations, allow for mutual planning and ask thought-provoking questions rather than just provide expert answers. According to Knowles et al. (2011), an effective facilitator will be capable of challenging learners to examine their previously held beliefs, values, and behavior.

There are six assumptions that Knowles et al. (2011) presumed are to be considered when structuring learning for adults. A need to know is when adult learners need to understand the purpose of the professional development or training, why it is necessary and how it will benefit them in order to fully commit to new learning. They must see the value in what is to be presented and find it applicable to their practice (Sang, 2010). Self-concept is when an adult learner matures and move from being dependent on information to becoming self-directed. Adult learners want to be viewed as capable of self-direction and take ownership of their own learning. Prior experience pertains to adults building knowledge as they progress through life. That prior knowledge and experience can be a great source for new learning and sharing of knowledge through collaboration. Readiness to learn purports that their level of readiness depends on the content being presented as well as their perception of its relevancy and usefulness to their needs. Orientation to learning implies that as adults develop skills and become better problem solvers, they want to learn skills that can be applied immediately to their current practice. Motivation to learn is when adults are internally motivated to learn based on factors related to their self-satisfaction.

I took these six assumptions into consideration for the development of this project because it is beneficial to apply the andragogic model to any professional development training to advance teacher practice and professional growth (Knowles et al., 2011; Smith & Robinson, 2020). Teachers in the study openly and honestly shared their perspectives about their professional development experiences and lack thereof. They desired to have professional development training opportunities that would be useful and relevant to enhance their instructional practices. Significant themes and participants' specific needs, as discovered through the study's findings, are addressed in this professional development training. Applying the assumptions and practices of the andragogical theory based on the distinctive characteristics of adult learners will lead to positive outcomes in the learning process (Conaway & Zorn-Arnold, 2016; Loeng, 2018).

Knowles et al. (2011) stated that adult learners are the richest resources in the learning process, so it is important that I give teachers an opportunity to participate in experiential learning that taps into their prior experiences, which involves sharing knowledge through discussions, group collaboration, and learning exercises (Gutierez, 2019). These exercises will highlight participants' readiness and focus on their need to know, which supports their self-directedness and puts them in control of their learning.

Evaluative assessments are also important in andragogy. By creating an evaluative tool, it will give the participants a chance to assess their learning as well as the impact of the professional development activities on their learning (Chan, 2010). Ultimately, the professional development components will enhance their motivation to apply the learned concepts to their practice.

Professional Development

A district's goal is to provide students with an education that builds on their knowledge and skills by focusing on the learning process. To meet this goal, there is a need to focus on teacher learning to escalate the effectiveness of the process of learning (Ozdemir & Sahin, 2020). According to Dewey (1997), "Teachers are the organs through which pupils are brought into effective connection with the material. Teachers are the agents through which knowledge and skills are communicated" (p.18). Unfortunately, not all teachers are readily equipped to do so. Therefore, effective professional development is necessary to ensure teachers are prepared. Avidor-Ungar, (2016) defined professional development as "a process in which the professional identity of the teacher is formed, and implicit knowledge becomes explicit," (p. 3). Its intended purpose is to address any existing gaps in knowledge and skills that a teacher may have. Professional development is an avenue for providing teachers with learning opportunities that will possibly enhance their instructional abilities. Professional development is support for teachers to obtain new knowledge, apply the new knowledge, and incorporate effective instructional strategies to cultivate student progression in learning (Yurtseven, 2016). Professional development has been known to be a vital part of teachers' success in the classroom (Collins & Mitchell, 2019; Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Garner, 2017; Edwards, 2018). Various forms of professional development are utilized to meet the needs of student achievement. The design for professional development typically includes some form of group training through courses or workshops (Cunningham, Etter,

Platas, Wheeler, & Campbell, 2015). The purpose of professional development is to enhance the quality of teaching so students can achieve at mastery levels.

Bautista, Yau, and Wong (2017) asserted that traditional forms of professional development lack the potential to assist teachers in improving their craft, and therefore have very limited impact on student achievement. In some cases, professional development is considered too generic and does not cater to teachers' way of learning or needs (Koc, 2016; Yolcu & Kartal, 2017). Schools often fail to develop a process to adequately support the professional growth of teachers (Sia & Siraj, 2015). The need to develop efficient ways to advance teachers, especially those who teach in high-need areas, to progress and use standards-based instruction and assessments are critical (Meyers, Molefe, Brandt, & Dhillon, 2016). Professional development that is well-designed can assist teachers in becoming highly effective, content experts (Mohammadi & Moradi, 2017). Babinski et al. (2017) suggested that the structure of a professional development should include a mechanism to support teachers to successfully engage in the change process, address challenges and consider positive alternatives to their current practice. A supportive experience will foster their acquisition of new skills and growth.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) reviewed several rigorous studies and concluded that effective professional development has most or all of the common elements described below. They identified professional development as: (a) content-focused; (b) incorporates active learning; (c) supports collaboration, particularly in job-embedded contexts; (d) utilize models of effective practice; (e) provides coaching and expert support; (f) offers feedback and time for reflection; and (g) sustained duration, giving

teachers time to learn, practice and reflect on the new strategies (p. v). Similarly, Bautista et al. (2017) stated that high-quality professional development prepares teachers in three areas: (1) content knowledge, its associated competencies, and skills (subject matter); (2) pedagogical strategies needed to help students develop their competencies and skillset (instructional practices); and (3) how students will think and learn the concepts in relation to the subject (student thinking and learning). In addition to these three areas of understanding, high-quality professional development should be responsive to teachers' needs, preferences, and motivation as well as align with the current curriculum requirements and standards of the schools and districts (Bautista et al., 2017). Professional development is found to be effective in improving teachers' knowledge, instructional practices, and can potentially change their beliefs (Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2018; Markussen-Brown et al., 2017; Piasta, et al. 2019). It is most effective when teachers are provided with follow-up support and held accountable for implementation (Babinski, et al. 2017). A successful training will embody the characteristic of teacher autonomy and focus on the needs of the participants. How well professional development can meet the needs of its participants will determine how effective the training is (Gökmenoğlu & Clark, 2015). Effective professional development is a vital component of any successful school district. It has been known to assist and improve the quality of teachers' pedagogy and instructional delivery.

School-Based Professional Development

There is a common complaint among teachers that professional development often is irrelevant to their subject or cover materials that they do not find useful. When facilitators are brought in from outside of the district to introduce instructional practices, teachers feel a disconnect when they must sit through long lectures with no opportunity for peer interaction. When professional development is presented in this fashion, teachers believe it does not respect their time, expertise, or experience (Keay, Carse, & Jess, 2019). In a study conducted by Martin, Kragler, Quatroche, & Bauserman (2019), teachers expressed not having an opportunity to give their input regarding professional development topics based on their needs. Hence, teachers struggled to understand how it would benefit their classroom. Taking heed to teachers' perceptions about professional development is vital, seeing that there's such a large investment in professional development training (Gökmenoğlu & Clark, 2015). School leaders are making an effort to change this by offering teachers various professional development options so that they can take ownership of their own learning through school-based professional development, in which teachers can learn from each other (Keay et al., 2019). The school-based approach is intended to enhance targeted instructional practices with the intent of improving student achievement (Zepeda, 2015). School-based professional development is job-embedded, so teachers are learning in an environment that they are accustomed to with familiar colleagues. Professional development must be based on the needs of the participants to ensure that it contributes to their individual growth and benefits the school and students (Martin, Kragler, Quatroche, &Bauserman, 2019). Ke,

Yin, and Huang (2019) stated that when teachers participate in school-based or job-embedded professional development workshops, teachers have an opportunity to learn from each other, grasp a deeper understanding of the content knowledge, and engage in reflection on their current practices. There needs to be a shift in teacher current practice to enhance and transform their teaching at the school level (Kelly and Cherkowski, 2015). Administrators play a key role in the process and success of school-based professional development. Administrators need to support teachers and create an environment conducive to learning and participating in professional development. Through effective leadership, encourage participation and application of the new knowledge gained (Ke et al., 2019). Activities developed for school-based professional development should be diversified with some level of flexibility to allow teachers to make choices based on their own schedules. Teachers' varied instructional needs should be considered when designing teaching activities related to their content, professional level, and individual goals (Ke et al., 2019). Teacher professional development has been well documented as being essential. Several researchers, Gökmenoğlu and Clark (2015) and Polly, McGee, Wang, Martin, Lambert, and Pugalee, (2015), agreed that teachers' level of satisfaction with the professional development in regards to it being job-embedded, addressing their needs and contributing to their self-efficacy, plays a role in the increase of student learning. School-based professional development is identified as an efficient way to improve teacher self-efficacy, teaching strategies, and student achievement.

Teacher Collaboration

A powerful tool used in professional development is collaboration. It creates opportunities for teacher advancement and reflection, although school districts consistently struggle with the concept of implementing and sustaining teacher collaboration (Tellman, 2019). In recent years, district leaders have pushed to rework schools into places where teachers work collectively on instruction and called for organizational structures that would promote regular possibilities for teachers to collaborate with teams of colleagues (Ronfeldt, Farmer, McQueen & Grissom, 2015). In a study by Collins and Liang (2015), teachers desired to work collaboratively. They felt that the professional development was not as effective because there was no opportunity to share their ideas with their peers and elicit support. The collaboration was a missing essential component. Teacher interactions are necessary and very vital to perfect their teaching and engage in the learning process. When teachers discuss, experiment, explore, and reflect on their practice with colleagues, it helps them become well-informed critics of their own pedagogy (Lund, 2020). They can make potential progress in two categories: (a) their perceptions of their teaching competencies and change how they deliver instruction, and (b) their learning process will change as a result of being in a professional learning community (Lund, 2020). Tellman (2019) conducted a study where all teachers experienced personal and professional growth as a direct result of collaboration. Likewise, the results of Lund's (2020) study revealed that teachers find the process and outcome rewarding when they are able to experiment with their own learning systematically alongside their colleagues.

Collaboration encourages mutuality, trust, and growth among teachers leading to better learning experiences. Martin et al. (2019) asserted that when educators work together to address issues surrounding learning and practice, it creates an environment of unity and is a tool that supports school reform. Hubbard, Fowler, and Freeman (2020) stated that it is essential for professional development to include a collaborative model so that teachers are not learning in isolation. It eliminates the feeling of isolated learning, leading to better learning outcomes (Kelly & Cherkowski, 2015; Tellman, 2019). It is vital that professional development encourages teacher collaboration because it is directly associated with student achievement (Avidov-Ungar, 2016). Ronfeldt et al. (2015) purported that collaboration positively affects student achievement because teachers gain useful knowledge when given opportunities to collaborate with other teachers about instructional practices. There is a need to focus on the honest and lively dialogue between teachers, allowing for positive debates among their peers (Lund, 2020). This is what fosters adult learning. Vangrieken, Dochy, Raes, and Kyndt (2017) reviewed 82 studies on teacher collaboration and concluded that teacher collaboration has many benefits for teachers and teaching, such as being more motivated, great efficiency, and improved skills. “In effective schools, the working atmosphere is collaborative where teachers and staff are valuable participants in the decision-making process, which may include a distribution of shared responsibility and a shared school vision for improvement that is sustainable over time”(Martin et al., 2019, p.182). This could potentially be established through professional learning communities. There are several definitions of professional learning communities, but Sai and Saraj (2015) defined it as: “Professional learning

communities enable teachers to collaborate and upgrade their skills to enhance student learning" (p. 16) Professional learning communities can be an important tool to meet the needs of teachers as they adapt and improve in their field which is beneficial to the teacher and the school district (Sia & Siraj, 2015; Vangrieken et al., 2017).

Collaboration combined with job-embedded professional development leads to positive teacher efficacy and confidence, which results in widespread improvement for the district (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Several participants in this study expressed a desire to have more opportunities to collaborate with their grade-level teams and other colleagues in general. So I felt it was necessary to incorporate collaborative activities within the 3-day workshop with the hope that teachers will form PLCs, where they can continue to build on their knowledge and enhance their skill set beyond the professional development training through classroom application, peer observations and student work analysis. The social interactions immanent in collaborative practices build a sense of community between teachers leading to healthy relationships and improves the quality of teaching and learning initiating a lasting effect on teachers' professional lives (Tallman, 2019). A study conducted by Ke et al. (2019) revealed that teacher collegiality had the highest impact on teachers' desire to learn new teaching techniques and positive self-efficacy. Their study results highlight the importance of establishing collaborative activities for teachers. This professional development project centers around collaboration. Teachers will have an opportunity to generate ideas individually and collectively toward common goals with a focus on student achievement.

Deconstructing the Standards

Many of the participants in this study revealed that they were not as familiar with the CCSS standards as they would like to be, so focusing on deconstructing the writing standards will ensure teachers are more prepared and understand what students need to know and be able to do in their classrooms. The CCSS for writing is a set of rigorous standards that need to be taught indiscriminately. Teachers' lack of familiarity with the writing standards is one of the prominent themes that emerged in this study. Some participants who participated in the study revealed that only certain writing standards are addressed in their classrooms, some due to lack of time, most due to unfamiliarity. Given the amount of standards that need to be addressed, if a specific standard is not being taught as part of the instruction or lesson, teachers risk indirectly communicating to students that the skill associated with that standard is not important (Kaplan, Graham-Day & Troyan, 2017). Communicating the learning targets to students is necessary to foster effective writing instruction. Therefore, it is imperative to address teachers' desire to become acquainted with the standards by deconstructing them. Deconstructing the standards will assist teachers in interpreting the skills and concepts that are needed for students to master the standards (Zengler, 2017). There are three steps involved in deconstructing a standard: (1) get to know the standard- analyze it and identify the nouns and verbs to understand the content and skills that are expected of students;(2) identify the thinking level- determine if it is a lower-level or a higher level thinking skill; and (3) develop learning targets- to be used for instructional planning. The learning targets

should be written in language that can be easily understood by students (Konrad et al., 2014).

The process of analyzing standards is not an easy feat and can be challenging for some teachers. Therefore, providing teachers with a practical model to deconstruct the standards would be beneficial (Kissau & Adams, (2016). The idea and process of deconstructing standards through thorough analysis may appear to be a daunting task for individual teachers to accomplish alone, but if the task is completed collaboratively with other teachers within a school or district, the process may lead to enhanced knowledge of standards, in-depth discussions about the requirements of the standards, and the sharing of ideas, activities, and strategies for implementation (Kaplan et al., 2017; Strand & Bailey, 2020).

Instructional planning should begin with teachers examining the content of the standards. Teachers sometimes approach the standards as an afterthought, lacking the alignment of instructional activities to specific standards. Some teachers will plan the lesson activities and then attempt to find a standard that fits (Kaplan et al., 2017). It is important that teachers analyze their instructional materials to determine if it aligns with a particular standard ensuring not to give preference to one standard over another. Teachers need to be able to deconstruct the standards into relevant learning targets that include all skills embedded within the standard (Kaplan et al., 2017). The process of deconstructing the standards is beneficial for teachers and students because it will enhance teachers understanding of the standards to plan for instruction more effectively

so that they can provide students with more engaging lessons that address the CCSS standards.

Project Description

The project consists of a 3-day professional development workshop on writing instruction for elementary school teachers with a focus on what participants expressed as immediate needs in the study. Ideally, the workshop would be beneficial for any teacher in the district who feels they could benefit from additional strategies for teaching writing. The professional development is centered around the CCSS writing standards, best practices of teaching writing, and teacher collaboration. The project was designed to provide teachers with support for effective implementation of writing instruction. Teachers will analyze the standards to ensure clarity of what students are expected to know and be able to produce. The professional development will contribute to teachers' repertoire of strategies to implement the CCSS writing standards effectively. On the first day of the professional development workshop, teachers will collaboratively deconstruct the CCSS writing standards to determine learning targets and design lessons based on the deconstructed writing standards. Teachers will use an unpacking template to break down the writing standards into student-friendly learning targets. In the afternoon session, teachers will work collaboratively to create weekly lesson plans based on the learning targets to present whole group and peer-assess each other's work using the Tuning protocol. On the second day of the professional development workshop, teachers will focus primarily on the 6+1 Traits model writing strategies. Teachers will have an opportunity to take a deep dive into the model through a collaborative group activity. The

afternoon session will focus on strategies to use to enhance the writing process and assessment. Teachers will gain an understanding of the 6+1 Traits model for teaching and assessing students' writing and learn effective strategies to implement in their classrooms to support quality instruction. On the last day of the professional development workshop, teachers will analyze the writing expectations across grade levels, align the standards to their writing instruction, and collaboratively develop a pacing guide to implement during the first quarter of school. Teachers will extend their knowledge and immediately apply what they learned to enhance instructional practices.

Resources, Supports, and Barriers

The resources that are needed for this project are minimal and are already available in most District 12 schools. Laptops, chart paper, markers, projector, curriculum materials, pen, notebook, sticky notes, and a large space to host the professional development training. This workshop could take place in the school's library, or the areas were administrators usually hold meetings for their teaching staff. Human supports include a facilitator to ensure the workshop is organized, prepared, and carried out as planned. Ideally, the facilitator would be very knowledgeable about writing instruction and have an existing relationship or rapport with the participants. Administrators' and coaches' support and presence during the workshop would ensure time on task and available for teachers' immediate needs. A potential barrier is time for the 3-day professional development to take place. Schools in District 12 typically have set schedules and agendas for the school year and may have difficulty incorporating the workshop into the schedule. One solution could be that the workshop be held during the

summer months but that could potentially lead to another barrier because teachers may not want to spend any part of their summer in professional development, especially if there is not additional pay available. So the best option would be to host the workshop during the pre-service week when teachers are required to return back to work anyway. This would be an excellent time for them to learn new strategies, collaborate and plan instruction for the upcoming semester.

Proposal for Implementation

A comprehensive summary of the findings from this study will be shared with district administrators via email as requested upon receiving Walden University's approval. Stakeholders may use this study's findings as an opportunity to have meaningful discussions about writing instruction and teacher practice. In addition to the summary, district administrators will also receive a copy of the final project deliverable i.e., Professional development/training materials (Appendix A). I would advise that the professional development be held over the summer or during the teachers' pre-service week, which would take up three of the five days that they are required to work and participate in professional development activities. The district could also host a professional development where teachers from multiple schools could attend the same sessions. The timetable for the workshop consists of three full days. Day one will focus on deconstructing the standards, day two will focus on teachers gaining new strategies for teaching writing, and day three will provide time for teachers to plan for future instruction. Following the professional development workshops, there should be follow-through to ensure teachers are incorporating the strategies and following the plan for

writing instruction and have additional collaborative opportunities throughout the year to discuss lesson planning and student writing tasks.

Roles and Responsibilities

My primary role as the researcher is to share the findings and discuss the implementation of the professional development project with district administrators. The facilitator, literacy coach, or instructional leader, will facilitate the three days of professional development, and I will provide all of the materials needed for each day of the workshop. It would be beneficial for an administrator to be present during all sessions for support and to ensure the sessions run smoothly. Teachers are expected to attend all three days of the training and be willing to collaborate with other teachers about instructional practices to truly engage in learning and gain additional information to enhance writing instruction. Full participation and collaboration from teachers during professional development is a vital component to successfully address the learning outcomes.

Project Evaluation Plan

This professional development project will use a formative and summative evaluation. Evaluating the professional development will provide the facilitator with information on its level of effectiveness in providing teachers with training that is beneficial to their needs (Khairil & Mokshein, 2018). The evaluations will help to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the project so that adjustments can be made for future workshops (Douglass, Carter, Smith, & Killins, 2015). It is essential for the facilitator to know if the professional development is useful to the participants and that

the strategies and activities are appropriate for effective teaching (Douglass et al., 2015). During the first two days of the workshop, a formative evaluation will be utilized to gather immediate feedback from the participants so that the facilitator can gauge how well the professional development is going and if any immediate changes need to be made during the workshops. Tobin, Mandernach, and Taylor (2015) assured that formative evaluations solicit rapid feedback that allows for timely revisions during the learning process to enhance the learning experience and potentially increase its effectiveness. The summative evaluation will be conducted at the end of the professional development workshop, Day 3. Teachers will have an opportunity to rate the overall effectiveness of the professional development, materials, and knowledge of the facilitator (Dixson & Worrell, 2016). Teachers will also be able to express what part of the professional development was most impactful for them and areas of improvement. The goal of the project is to provide teachers with additional knowledge and skills to teach writing more effectively. The overall goal of the evaluation is to improve on and plan for effective professional development for teachers that will prepare them to provide students with quality writing instruction to compete globally on standardized tests to become proficient writers. The key stakeholders include teachers, administrators, central office staff, and students.

Project Implications

To contribute to social change, I created a professional development project to be utilized at the local level to enhance the instructional practices of teaching writing with the ultimate goal of improving student achievement in writing. This project is important

because the local problem and needs of the stakeholders are addressed through this project by providing teachers with support and instructional resources to enhance writing instruction (Brindle et al., 2016; Haas et al., 2018 & Woodard & Kline, 2015). Only a third of District 12 students are writing at a proficient level, and based on the study's findings, teachers need effective instructional strategies and resources to enhance their instructional practices. These findings corroborated with several studies (Adam-Budde & Miller, 2015; Haas, et al., 2018; Harris & Graham, 2016; Wilcox et al., 2015) who concluded that teachers lack instructional training and could benefit from additional support. During the interview process, participants expressed their issues and concerns with teaching writing and their students' performance. This project could potentially assist in closing the achievement gap by promoting teacher collaboration and supporting teachers in the development of their pedagogy in an effort to improve writing instruction (Ketterlin-Geller, Baumer, & Lichon 2015; Troia & Graham, 2016). In the broader context, this project is essential to all stakeholders: district leaders, administrators, teachers, students, and the community as a whole because the project is an opportunity for overall instructional improvement to lead students toward writing proficiency (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). If student achievement is positively affected by professional development (Rigsby, Woulfin, and Marz, 2016), then it is beneficial to all parties involved because essentially, student achievement is the ultimate educational goal.

Conclusion

Due to the study's findings that there is a lack of teacher training as well as a need for greater knowledge of the CCSS, I developed a 3-day professional development

workshop to support writing instruction**.** In Section 3, I discussed the goals of the professional development project and described what the project entails. I also provided a rationale for the project chosen. The needed resources for the project, the potential barriers, proposal for implementation, evaluation plans for the project, and the project implications were also discussed. Additionally, I conducted a scholarly review of the literature to gain insight on the genre of the project, which included andragogy, professional development, teacher collaboration, and deconstruction of the standards. The primary aim is that the professional development project would contribute to the resolution of the local problem, leading to effective writing instruction that would engage students in rigorous learning so that students can achieve at mastery levels.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to qualitatively investigate how elementary school teachers who teach language arts in District 12 perceive their instructional preparedness to teach writing that aligns with the CCSS writing standards, and what elements of instructional preparedness District 12 elementary teachers perceive would be beneficial to meet the demands of the CCSS writing standards. As a result of the data collected, I created a 3-day professional development project to address the problem. In this final section, I discuss the strengths of the project and its limitations. I also discuss alternative approaches to address the problem, scholarship, leadership, and social change. Lastly, I reflect on the importance of the work, implications, and direction for future research.

Project Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

One strength of this professional development project is that its components address the needs of the participants who participated in this study. The CCSS mandate assumes that writing will be taught more often, and instruction will be rigorously aligned to the standards to increase student academic growth. To support this, this project addresses the writing standards and strategies to enhance writing instruction. Saderholm, Ronau, Rakes, Bush, and Mohr-Schroeder (2016) concluded that professional development that is well-designed with a clear purpose and relevancy to the participants' needs could positively enrich instruction. Mohammadi and Moradi (2017) claimed that well-designed professional development could also assist teachers in becoming highly

effective content experts. When teachers' needs are taken into account (Gökmenoğlu and Clark, 2015), professional development is more effective and worth the investment.

Another strength of the project is the embedding of opportunities for teachers to collaborate. The collaborative design enhances instructional practices by giving teachers an opportunity to reflect on their practice, gain new knowledge and actively work together to develop outcomes with student achievement in mind (Voogt et al., 2015). Ultimately, collaboration positively affects student achievement because teachers interact and gain additional knowledge and ideas that can be applied to their practice. Ronfeldt et al. (2015) argued that teacher collaboration is the key to improved instructional practices that leads to increased student performance.

An additional strength is that the project is practical. This professional development implementation is designed to be job-embedded, so teachers are able to participate in the professional development inside their own school building or district (Keay et al., 2019). Instructional coaches or instructional leaders can also facilitate it (Duncan, Magnuson, & Murnane, 2016). They are already employed by the district, which means that the professional development is cost-effective and does not require an outside source. All materials that are needed to implement the workshop effectively will be provided, and all other needed resources are readily available at schools across the district.

Limitations

Although the findings of this study suggest that professional development is needed, some teachers may not want to engage in 3 consecutive days of professional

development, as it may appear as an additional burden to their already full schedules (Wyatt & Ončevska Ager (2017). This professional development is planned to be implemented over the summer or at the beginning of the school year. Teachers may resist using their summertime for work-related tasks, and the district may find that implementing this workshop during the first week of school may cause conflict in the schedule with so many various tasks that need to be completed. So ultimately, time is a factor in the successful implementation of this project (Rentner, Frizzell & Ferguson (2016). Even if the professional development is able to fit into the schedule perfectly and teachers engage in the development of a pacing guide to use for the first quarter of writing instruction, there is still a chance that time may affect teachers' abilities to transfer the knowledge into the classroom.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Based on the findings of the study, I developed a 3-day professional development workshop that would address the deficiencies in writing instruction, such as knowledge of standards, teaching strategies, and pacing of instruction. In addition to the professional development workshop, there is an alternative approach that could be implemented to address the problem. Teachers, with the assistance of instructional coaches, could participate in lesson studies. Lesson studies are a professional development approach that involves teacher collaboration, teacher observations, and peer feedback (Murphy, Weinhardt, Wyness & Rolfe, 2017). The process includes teachers working collaboratively throughout the school year in grade bands to plan and develop writing lessons to implement in their classrooms. Teachers would work together to develop the

writing lessons based on the CCSS standards and then create a schedule to conduct peer observations to observe each other teaching the lessons to provide authentic feedback. Teachers will reflect on their practice and use the feedback to make necessary instructional adjustments. The feedback and continuous cycle of planning and observing would significantly impact teacher development and student writing outcomes (Ozdemir, 2019). This approach provides opportunities for teachers to reflect, plan, and analyze instructional practices for continuous growth.

Scholarship, Project Development, Leadership, and Change

Scholarship means gaining and attaining knowledge at a higher level, and this program has afforded me that. This doctoral study has been a continuous journey of learning. Throughout the development of this study, I have learned to distinguish between qualitative and quantitative methods (Creswell, 2012; Glesne, 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015. I mastered the basic, qualitative process and used it to gather meaningful data to defend my study. Through the qualitative process, I was able to collect data through semistructured interviews from willing participants who could share first-hand experiences relating to my study's problem and research questions. Having the opportunity to work with fellow educators who are passionate about student learning to hear their perspectives about my topic was invaluable. Teachers' perceptions are vital to improving educational outcomes (Castro-Villarreal, Rodriguez & Moore, 2014). Through the findings of Bifuh-Ambe (2013) and Mattos et al. (2016), I learned that it is so important that teachers' voices are heard when making instructional decisions. I also

learned the importance of being authentic, an active listener, and remaining unbiased. I feel teachers felt comfortable and free to express their thoughts on the topic because of it.

I also learned the importance of being organized. It was critical for me to collect data in an orderly fashion, label it, and sort it to efficiently analyze the data. Through the data analysis, I gained a deeper understanding of my study's problem and the best way to address it. Based on the findings, I developed a project that would assist teachers in honing their craft and adding to their repertoire of teaching strategies. In the process of developing the professional development project, I learned the importance of the professional development being effective, relevant to participants' needs, and catering to adult learners (Knowles et al., 2011). I also realized that the professional development must be practical while still achieving the goals of the professional development. This entire process has been very enlightening and significantly contributed to my growth as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer.

I learned that effective leadership does not exist without change (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). It involves developing competencies to influence others to create change. Leadership that empowers can stimulate change in others (Li, Liu, Han & Zhang, 2016). As a school leader, one must be able to assess what is working and what needs improvement within their school building (Gurley, Anast-May, O'neal & Dozier, 2016). The development of this professional development project further prepared me for a leadership role because making informed decisions based on data is something that a leader is expected to be able to do in many instances to ensure continuous growth for their staff, students and the entire school environment (Mattos et al., 2016). I explored a

local problem and involved participants in identifying a solution. I am grateful for this experience. It has taught me the true meaning of grit and perseverance. I have grown tremendously as a scholar, practitioner, and leader.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

I began this doctoral study because I wanted to focus on a local problem of low student writing proficiency, coupled with inadequate teacher training. After investigating further, I learned that this is not just a local issue but is also a national concern. Students are not writing proficiently, and with the CCSS rigorous standards in play, teachers have to be prepared to instruct their students toward mastery. With only a third of the United States students writing proficiently, there is definitely a need to address this problem. I sought to explore teachers' perceptions about writing instruction to support teachers in developing better strategies to teach writing and, ultimately, seek a resolution for students' improved achievement in writing. The research on this topic, as well as my interaction with teacher participants at the local level, has taught me the importance of the work. Student writing assessment data is less than proficient locally and nationally. Teachers across the world have voiced their lack of adequate instructional training to teach writing effectively. I have learned that in order for students to be college and career ready, it is vital that they receive quality writing instruction during their elementary school years.

If student writing achievement does not improve, then the achievement gap will only grow wider. We must tackle the problem in every possible capacity because writing is a vital component of literacy development (Graham & Harris, 2015). Through this

qualitative study, I wanted to focus on the teachers' thoughts and experiences with writing instruction in District 12. After solidifying the proposal stage, I knew I was entirely responsible for seeing it through to the end. I learned via participants' voices that they desired change in their writing instructional practices, and they expressed their efforts toward their students' lack of mastery. The data shared by the participants directed me to design a professional development workshop on writing instruction with their needs in mind that involves teacher planning, collaboration, and writing strategies. Overall, the completion of this project study was important because it demonstrates the need for enhanced instructional practices to serve students better. It also provides support for refined writing instruction, which could greatly impact social change.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

This project study has the potential to impact social change because student writing achievement is vital for students' current academic success, in college, and in their careers (Graham, Early & Wilcox, 2014; Harris & Graham, 2016). Students are struggling to write proficiently at the elementary level. This study can be used to inform district administrators' decisions about instructional resources that could substantially provide the support teachers need to be successful in their delivery of writing instruction. This project could potentially increase teachers' ability to provide students with more effective writing instruction by addressing the gaps in practice (Appendix A). Teachers play a significant role in student achievement. Calkins, Ehrenworth, and Lehman (2012) and Culham (2018) claimed that students' writing proficiency could only be established through quality instruction where teachers are the experts of knowledge and hone the

skills necessary to improve students' writing. They are the ones on the frontline of instruction. If teachers are readily prepared to teach the standards, then there could be a significant impact of increased writing proficiency in students. I developed this project to support teachers at a specific site, but other school districts may be faced with similar challenges and find the information to be useful. This study has the potential to provide insight and serve as a guide for other school districts that are seeking improvement in student writing performance.

Future research could include further investigation into teacher perceptions. I believe that teachers are at the heart of school reform, and according to Mattos et al. (2016) and Revelle (2019), their beliefs and perceptions should be considered when making informed decisions about instruction . Future studies could use the same methodology to explore primary teachers' perceptions about writing instruction as this study's sample only included third through eighth-grade teachers. Researchers could also qualitatively investigate high school writing teachers to gather their perceptions about writing instruction. Ultimately, this study could be adapted in a variety of ways to inquire into teacher practice to support writing instruction and student achievement.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore elementary teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to teach writing that aligns with the CCSS writing standards as well as identify what elements of instructional preparedness teachers perceive would be beneficial to meet the demands of the writing standards. The number of students lacking basic writing skills is a concern. Therefore, it is essential to prepare teachers. Through a

basic, qualitative design, I explored the perceptions of teacher participants, which afforded me a deeper understanding of the nature of the problem and answers to my research questions. Data revealed that teachers were not as confident in their ability to teach writing and desired additional resources and training to support their craft. As a result, I developed a professional development project to support teachers with writing instruction. It is important that teachers have access to the resources and professional development that is needed so that they can effectively provide students with support and quality instruction to meet the demands of the CCSS writing standards fully. With the emergence of struggling writers, it would be beneficial for schools to make writing an instructional priority. Effective professional development opportunities for teachers is a step in the right direction to ensure instructional competency. The information collated in this study can further assist district administrators' efforts to address the factors that contribute to teacher preparedness and low student writing proficiency.

References

Adams-Budde, M., & Miller, S. (2015). Examining Elementary Literacy Teachers' Perceptions of Their Preparedness to Implement the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards. *Online Submission*, *1*(1), 19-33. doi: 10.22596/erj2015.0101.19.33

Al-Bataineh, A., Holmes, B. R., Jerich, K. F., & Williams, E. (2010). Factors that Impact Self-efficacy in Writing Instruction. *International Journal of Learning*, *17*(5). doi:10.18848/1447-9494/CGP/v17i05/47064

Avidov-Ungar, O. (2016). A model of professional development: Teachers' perceptions of their professional development. *Teachers and Teaching*, *22*(6), 653-669. doi: 10.1080/13540602.2016.1158955

Babinski, L. M., Amendum, S. J., Knotek, S. E., Sánchez, M., & Malone, P. (2018). Improving young English learners' language and literacy skills through teacher professional development: A randomized controlled trial. *American Educational Research Journal*, *55*(1), 117-143. doi: 10.3102/0002831217732335

Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Bandura, A. (1997). Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control, New York: Freeman.

Bastug, M. (2016) Classroom teachers' feelings and experiences in teaching early reading and writing: a phenomenological study. *Education* 3-13, 44(6), 736-750. doi: 10.1080/03004279.2015.1009927

Bates, C. C., & Morgan, D. N. (2018). Seven Elements of Effective Professional Development. *The Reading Teacher*, *5*, 623. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1002/trtr.1674

Bautista, A., Yau, X., & Wong, J. (2017). High-quality music teacher professional development: A review of the literature. *Music Education Research, 19*(4), 455-469. doi: 10.1080/14613808.2016.1249357

Bifuh-Ambe, E. (2013). Developing successful writing teachers: Outcomes of professional development exploring teachers' perceptions of themselves as writers and writing teachers and their students' attitudes and abilities to write across the curriculum. *English Teaching, 12*(3), 137.

Brindle, M., Graham, S., Harris, K. R., & Hebert, M. (2016). Third and fourth grade teacher's classroom practices in writing: A national survey. *Reading and Writing, 29*(5), 929-954. doi: 10.1007/s11145-015-9604-x

Brouwers, A., & Tomic, W. (2000). A longitudinal study of teacher burnout and perceived self-efficacy in classroom management. *Teaching and Teacher education, 16*(2), 239-253. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X(99)00057-8

Calkins, L. (1987). The writing workshop. *A truth](if flifi 'erent'e. Portsmouth..\Il—l.: Heinemann*.

Calkins, L., Ehrenworth, M., and Lehman, C. (2012). *Pathways to the common core: Accelerating achievement.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Castro-Villarreal, F., Rodriguez, B. J., & Moore, S. (2014). Teachers' perceptions and attitudes about Response to Intervention (RTI) in their schools: A qualitative

analysis. *Teaching and teacher education, 40*, 104-112. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2014.02.004

Chan, S. (2010). Applications of andragogy in multi-disciplined teaching and learning. *Journal of adult education, 39*(2), 25-35.

Collins, L. J., & Liang, X. (2015). Examining High-Quality Online Teacher Professional Development: Teachers' Voices. *International Journal of teacher leadership, 6*(1), 18-34.

Collins, L., & Mitchell, J. T. (2019). Teacher training in GIS: what is needed for long-term success?. *International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education*, *28*(2), 118-135. doi:10.1080/10382046.2018.1497119

Collopy, R., & Arnold, J. M. (2017). Adoption of the Six Traits Writing Model with Low-Income Population: A Comparative Study of Improvement in Student Writing. *International Journal of Educational Reform*, *24*(4). https://doi.org/10.1177/105678791702600406

Common Core State Standards Initiatives. (2018). Retrieved April 26, 2018, from http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/introduction/

Conaway, W., & Zorn-Arnold, B. (2016). The keys to online learning for adults: the six principles of andragogy, Part II. *Distance Learning*, *1*, 1. Retrieved from https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fsearch.proquest.com%2Fdocview%2F1822357259%3Fac

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2015). Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J.W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.) Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Culham, R. (2003). *6 + 1 Traits of writing: The complete guide grades 3 and up*. New York: NY: Scholastic Inc.

Culham, R. (2018). *Teach writing well: How to assess writing, invigorate instruction, and rethink revision*. Stenhouse Publishers.

Cunningham, A. E., Etter, K., Platas, L., Wheeler, S., & Campbell, K. (2015). Professional development in emergent literacy: A design experiment of teacher study groups. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 31*, 62-77. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2014.12.002

Daiute, C. (2014). *Narrative inquiry: A dynamic approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., & Gardner, M. (2017). Effective teacher professional development. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute. Retrieved from https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/teacher-prof-dev.

Dewey, J. (1916). Democracy and education. *New York; MacMillan.*

Dixson, D. D., & Worrell, F. C. (2016). Formative and summative assessment in the classroom. *Theory into practice, 55*(2), 153-159. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2016.1148989

Doruk, M., & Kaplan, A. (2012). Sınıf öğretmeni adaylarının matematik öğretimine yönelik özyeterlik inançlarının incelenmesi [Examining prospective primary

school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs toward mathematics teaching]. The Journal of Academic Social Science Studies, 5(7), 291-302. doi:10.9761/jasss_250

Douglass, A., Carter, A., Smith, F., & Killins, S. (2015). Training together: State policy and collective participation in early educator professional development. *New England Journal of Public Policy, 27*(1), 5. Retrieved from https://scholarworks.umb.edu/nejpp/vol27/iss1/5

Duncan, G. J., Magnuson, K., & Murnane, R. J. (2016). Reforming preschools and schools. *Academic pediatrics, 16*(3), S121-S127. doi:10.1016/j.acap.2015.12.003

Edwards, L. C., Bryant, A. S., Morgan, K., Cooper, S. M., Jones, A. M., & Keegan, R. J. (2019). A professional development program to enhance primary school teachers' knowledge and operationalization of physical literacy. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education, 38*(2), 126-135. https://doi.org/10.1123/jtpe.2018-0275

Endacott, J. L., Collet, V., Goering, C. Z., Turner, R., Denny, G. S., Wright, G., & Jennings-Davis, J. (2016). On the frontline of CCSS implementation: A national study of factors influencing teachers' perceptions of teaching conditions and job satisfaction. Cogent Education, 3(1), 1162997. https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186x.2016.1162997

Fidalgo, R., Torrance, M., Rijlaarsdam, G., van den Bergh, H., & Álvarez, M. L. (2015). Strategy-focused writing instruction: Just observing and reflecting on a model benefits 6th grade students. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, *41*, 37-50. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2014.11.004

Gokmenoglu, T., & Clark, C. M. (2015). Teachers' evaluation of professional development in support of national reforms. *Issues in Educational Research, 25*(4), 442. Retrieved from http://www.iier.org.au/iier25/gokmenoglu.pdf

Graham, S., Capizzi, A., Harris, K. R., Hebert, M., & Morphy, P. (2014). Teaching writing to middle school students: A national survey. *Reading and Writing, 27*(6), 1015-1042. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-013-9495-7

Graham, S., Early, J., & Wilcox, K. (2014). Adolescent writing and writing instruction: an introduction to the special issue. *Reading and Writing*, 27(6), 969-972. doi:10.1007/s11145-014-9497-0

Graham, S., & Harris, K. R. (2015). Common core state standards and writing. *Elementary School Journal, 115*(4), 457-463. doi:10.1086/681963

Graham, S., Harris, K. R., & Chambers, A. B. (2016). Evidence-based practice and writing instruction. *Handbook of writing research, 2*, 211-226.

Graham, S., Hebert, M., & Harris, K. R. (2015). Formative assessment and writing: A meta-analysis. *The Elementary School Journal, 115*(4), 523-547. doi:10.1086/681947

Gurley, D. K., Anast-May, L., O'Neal, M., & Dozier, R. (2016). Principal Instructional Leadership Behaviors: Teacher vs. Self-Perceptions. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation, 11*(1), n1.

Gutierez, S. B. (2019). Teacher-practitioner research inquiry and sense making of their reflections on scaffolded collaborative lesson planning experience. *Asia-Pacific Science Education, 5*(1), 1-15. doi:10.1186/s41029-019-0043-x

Haas, E., Goldman, J., & Faltis, C. (2018). Writing practices for mainstream teachers of middle school English learners: Building on what we know works effectively. In *The Educational Forum* (Vol. 82, No. 2, pp. 208-226). Routledge. doi: 10.1080/00131725.2018.1420865

Hall, A. H. (2016). Examining shifts in preservice teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward writing instruction. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, *37*(2), 142-156. doi:10.1080/10901027.2016.1165761

Hall, A. H., Hutchison, A., & White, K. M. (2015). Teachers' perceptions about the common core state standards in writing. *Journal of Research in Education*, *25*(1), 88-99. Retrieved from *https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1097997&site=eds-live&scope=site.*

Hamlin, D., & Peterson, P. E. (2018). Have States Maintained High Expectations for Student Performance? an Analysis of 2017 State Proficiency Standards. *Education Next*, *18*(4), 42-49.

Hancock, D. R., & Algozzine, B. (2016). *Doing case study research: A practical guide for beginning researchers*. Teachers College Press.

Harris, K. R., & Graham, S. (2016). Self-regulated strategy development in writing: Policy implications of an evidence-based practice. *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain*, *3*(1), 77-84. doi: 10.1177/2372732215624216

Holtz, J., McCurdy, M., & Roehling, J. V. (2015). Examining Core Curricula in Writing for Grades 3-5. *Research in the Schools*, *22*(1). Retrieved from https://search-

ebscohostcom.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edo&AN=122026987&site=eds-live&scope=site

Hubbard, J., Fowler, M., & Freeman, L. (2020). PreK–5 Teacher Views of Professional Development Integrating Common Core Language Arts With Science and Social Studies. *Journal of Educational Research and Practice*, *10*(1), 1. https://doi.org/10.5590/JERAP.2020.10.1.01

Hunzicker, J., Arquette, C., & Quinzio-Zafran, A. (2014). Improving Writing Instruction in Second and Third Grade Classrooms. *Writing & Pedagogy*, *6*(3), 497-530. doi: 10.1558/wap.v6i3.497

Illinois Report Card. (2017). *Academic progress*. Retrieved June 8, 2017, from https://www.illinoisreportcard.com/state.aspx?source=trends&source2=achievementgap&Stateid=IL

Illinois State Board of Education. (2017). Retrieved February 9, 2018, from https://www.isbe.net/pages/parcc-place.aspx

Improving Student Writing Through Modeling. (2018). *NACTA Journal*, *62*(2), 201–202. Retrieved from https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eue&AN=132823323&site=eds-live&scope=site

Kafyulilo, A., Fisser, P., Voogt, J. (2016). Factors affecting teachers' continuation of technology use in teaching. *Education and Information Technologies*, 21(6), 1535-1554. doi:10.1007/s10639-015-9398-0

Kaplan, C. S., Graham-Day, K. J., & Troyan, F. J. (2017). Starting at the End: Deconstructing Standards as Planning's First Step. *Language, 38*.

Ke, Z., Yin, H., & Huang, S. (2019). Teacher participation in school-based professional development in China: does it matter for teacher efficacy and teaching strategies?. *Teachers and Teaching*, 1-16. doi:10.1080/13540602.2019.1662777

Keay, J. K., Carse, N., & Jess, M. (2019). Understanding teachers as complex professional learners. *Professional Development in Education*, *45*(1), 125-137. doi:10.1080/19415257.2018.1449004

Kelly, J., & Cherkowski, S. (2015). Collaboration, collegiality, and collective reflection: A case study of professional development for teachers. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, (169).

Kent, A. M., & Brannan, L. (2016). Teaching newly adopted writing standards -- The impact of attitude and efficacy. *Literacy Practice & Research*, *41*(3), 9-16.

Ketterlin-Geller, L. R., Baumer, P., & Lichon, K. (2015). Administrators as advocates for teacher collaboration. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 51*(1), 51-57. doi: 10.1177/1053451214542044

Khairil, L. F., & Mokshein, S. E. (2018). 21st century assessment: online assessment. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, 8*(1), 659-672. doi: 10.6007/IJARBSS/v8-i1/3838

Kissau, S., & Adams, M. J. (2016). Instructional decision making and IPAs: Assessing the modes of communication. Foreign Language Annals, 49, 105–123. doi: 10.1111/flan.12184

Klassen, R. M., Durksen, T. L., & Tze, V. M. (2014). Teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. *Teacher motivation: Theory and practice*, 100. doi:10.4324/9780203119273-7

Knowles, M. S. (1987). Adult learning. In R.L. Craig (ed.), Training and Development Handbook. New York: McGraw Hill. Pages 168-179 (3rd ed.).

Knowles, M. S., Swanson R. A., & Holton III E. F. (2011). The Adult Learner: The Definitive Classic in Adult Education and Human Resource Development, 7th ed. New York: Taylor & Francis Group.

Koç, E. M. (2016). A General Investigation of the In-Service Training of English Language Teachers at Elementary Schools in Turkey. *International electronic journal of elementary education*, *8*(3), 455-466.

Konrad, M., Keesey, S., Ressa, V. A., Alexeeff, M., Chan, P. E., & Peters, M. T. (2014). Setting clear learning targets to guide instruction for all students. Intervention in School and Clinic, 50(2), 76–85. doi:10.1177%2F1053451214536042

Kouzes, J. M. & Posner, B. Z. (2007). *The Leadership Challenge: Vol. 4th ed*. Jossey-Bass.

Kraft, M. A., Blazar, D., & Hogan, D. (2018). The effect of teacher coaching on instruction and achievement: A meta-analysis of the causal evidence. *Review of educational research*, *88*(4), 547-588. doi:10.3102%2F0034654318759268

Latouche, A. P., & Gascoigne, M. (2019). In-service training for increasing teachers' ADHD knowledge and self-efficacy. *Journal of attention disorders*, *23*(3), 270-281. doi:10.1177%2F1087054717707045

Lehman, C. (2017). Where Early-Career Educators Learn to Teach Writing. *Voices From the Middle*, *25*(2), 41-43. Retrieved from https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fsearch.proquest.com%2Fdocview%2F1975977826%3Facco

Li, M., Liu, W., Han, Y., & Zhang, P. (2016). Linking empowering leadership and change-oriented organizational citizenship behavior. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*. doi:10.1108/JOCM-02-2015-0032

Lincoln, Y. S. & Guba, E. G. (1985). Naturalistic Inquiry. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Loeng, S. (2018). Various ways of understanding the concept of andragogy. *Cogent Education*, *5*(1), 1496643. doi:10.1080/2331186X.2018.1496643

Louis, R. A., & Mistele, J. M. (2011). The differences in scores and self-efficacy by student gender in mathematics and science. International Journal of Science and Mathematics Education, Online First, 1-28. doi:10.1007/s10763-011-9325-9

Lund, L. (2020). When school-based, in-service teacher training sharpens pedagogical awareness. *Improving Schools*, *23*(1), 5-20. doi:10.1177/1365480218772638

Markussen-Brown, J., Juhl, C. B., Piasta, S. B., Bleses, D., Højen, A., & Justice, L. M. (2017). The effects of language-and literacy-focused professional development on early educators and children: A best-evidence meta-analysis. *Early childhood research quarterly*, *38*, 97-115. doi:10.1016/j.ecresq.2016.07.002

Martin, L. E., Kragler, S., Quatroche, D., & Bauserman, K. (2019). Transforming Schools: The Power of Teachers' Input in Professional Development. *Journal of Educational Research and Practice*, *9*(1), 13. doi:10.5590/JERAP.2019.09.1.13

Matlock, K. k., Goering, C. Z., Endacott, J., Collet, V. S., Denny, G. S., Jennings-Davis, J., & Wright, G. P. (2016). Teachers' views of the common core state standards and its implementation. *Educational Review*, *68*(3), 291-305. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2015.1070333

Mattos, M. W., DuFour, R., DuFour, R., Eaker, R., & Many, T. W. (2016). *Learning by Doing: A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work*. Solution Tree Australia Pty Limited.

Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Merriam, S. & Tisdell, E. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Meyers, C. V., Molefe, A., Brandt, W. C., Zhu, B., & Dhillon, S. (2016). Impact results of the eMINTS professional development validation study. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *38*(3), 455-476. doi: 10.3102/0162373716638446

Miller, M., Berg, H., & Cox, D. (2016). "Basically, you have to teach them to love what they are writing about": Perceptions of fourth grade writing teachers. *National Teacher Education Journal*, *9*(1), 57-64.

Mo, Y., Kopke, R. A., Hawkins, L. K., Troia, G. A., & Olinghouse, N. G. (2014). The neglected “R” in a time of Common Core. *The Reading Teacher, 67*(6), 445-453. doi:10.1002/TRTR.1227

Mohammadi, M., & Moradi, K. (2017). Exploring Change in EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Development. Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability, 19(1), 22-42. doi:10.1515/jtes-2017-0002

Murphy, A. F., & Torff, B. (2016). Growing pains: The effect of common core state standards on perceived teacher effectiveness. In *The Educational Forum* (Vol. 80, No. 1, pp. 21-33). Routledge. doi: 10.1080/00131725.2015.1102999

Murphy, R., Weinhardt, F., Wyness, G., & Rolfe, H. (2017). Lesson Study: Evaluation Report and Executive Summary. *Education Endowment Foundation*.

Myers, J., Scales, R.Q., Grisham, D.L., Wolsey, T.D., Dismuke, S., Smetana, L. & Martin, S. (2016) What about writing? A national exploratory study of writing instruction in teacher preparation programs. *Literacy Research and Instruction*, 55(4), 309-330. doi:10.1080/19388071.2016.1198442

National Center for Education Statistics. (2016). A nation’s report card. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/

Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *16*(1), 1609406917733847. doi:10.1177/1609406917733847

Ozdemir, G., & Sahin, S. (2020). Principal's Supervisory Practices for Teacher Professional Development: Bureaucratic and Professional Perspectives.

International Online Journal of Educational Sciences, *12*(1). https://doi.org/10.15345/iojes.2020.01.002

Özdemir, S. M. (2019). Implementation of the Lesson Study as a Tool to Improve Students' Learning and Professional Development of Teachers. *Participatory Educational Research*, *6*(1), 36-53. http://dx.doi.org/10.17275/per.19.4.6.1

Pajares, F. (1992). Teachers' beliefs and educational research: cleaning up a messy construct. Review of Educational Research, 62(3), 307–332. https://doi.org/10.3102%2F00346543062003307

Patton, K., Parker, M., & Tannehill, D. (2015). Helping teachers help themselves: Professional development that makes a difference. *NASSP bulletin*, *99*(1), 26-42. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192636515576040

Patton, M.Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (4th ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Phillips, C. A. (2015). Common core state standards: Challenge and collaboration. In *The Educational Forum* (Vol. 79, No. 2, pp. 200-205). Routledge. doi: 10.1080/00131725.2015.1004209

Piasta, S. B., Farley, K. S., Mauck, S. A., Soto Ramirez, P., Schachter, R. E., O'Connell, A. A., ... & Weber-Mayrer, M. (2019). At-scale, state-sponsored language and literacy professional development: Impacts on early childhood classroom practices and children's outcomes. *Journal of Educational Psychology*. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/edu0000380

Pittman, T., & Gaines, T. (2015). Technology integration in third, fourth, and fifth grade

Classrooms in a Florida school district. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 63(4), 539-554. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-015-9391-8

Polly, D. (2015). Examining how professional development influences elementary school teachers' enacted instructional practices and students' evidence of mathematical understanding. *Journal of research in childhood education, 29*(4), 565-582. https://doi.org/10.1080/02568543.2015.1073198

Polly, D., McGee, J., Wang, C., Martin, C., Lambert, R., & Pugalee, D. K. (2015). Linking professional development, teacher outcomes, and student achievement: The case of a learner-centered mathematics program for elementary school teachers. *International Journal of Educational Research, 72,* 26-37. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2015.04.002

Ravitch, S. M., & Carl, N. M. (2015). *Qualitative research: Bridging the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological*. Sage Publications.

Ray, A. B., Graham, S., Hebert, J. D., & Harris, K. R. (2016). Teachers use of writing to support students' learning in middle school: A national survey in the United States. *Reading and Writing*, *29*(5), 1039-1068. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-015-9602-z

Rentner, D. S., Kober, N., Frizzell, M., & Ferguson, M. (2016). Listen to Us: Teacher Views and Voices. *Center on Education Policy*. Retrieved from http://www.cep-dc.org/displayDocument.cfm?DocumentID=1456#sthash.ULhb9iBQ.dpuf.

Revelle, K. Z. (2019). Teacher perceptions of a project-based approach to social studies and literacy instruction. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *84*, 95-105. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2019.04.016

Rigby, J. G., Woulfin, S. L., & März, V. (2016). Understanding how structure and agency influence education policy implementation and organizational change. *American Journal of Education*, *122*(3), 295-302. https://doi.org/10.1086/685849

Ronfeldt, M., Farmer, S. O., McQueen, K., & Grissom, J. A. (2015). Teacher collaboration in instructional teams and student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*, *52*(3), 475-514. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002002831215585562

Routman, R. (2014). *Read, write, lead: Breakthrough strategies for schoolwide literacy success*. ASCD.

Rowlands, K. D. (2016). Slay the Monster! Replacing Form-First Pedagogy with Effective Writing Instruction. *English Journal*, *105*(6), 52–58. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/26359255

Saderholm, J., Ronau, R. N., Rakes, C. R., Bush, S. B., & Mohr-Schroeder, M. (2017). The critical role of a well-articulated, coherent design in professional development: an evaluation of a state-wide two-week program for mathematics and science teachers. *Professional Development in Education*, *43*(5), 789-818.

Sai, X., Siraj, S. (2015). Professional learning community in education: Literature review. The Online Journal of Quality in Higher Education, 2, 65–78.

Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Sang, C. (2010). Applications of andragogy in multi-disciplined teaching and learning. MPAEA Journal of Adult Education. 39(2): 25–35. Retrieved from http://www.mpaea.org/publications.htm

Seidman, I. E. (2013). Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences (4th ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Sharp, L. (2016). Acts of writing: A compilation of six models that define the processes of writing. *International Journal of Instruction, 9*(2), 77-89. doi:10.12973/iji.2016.926a01-108.

Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for information*, *22*(2), 63-75. doi:10.3233/EFI-2004-22201

Skaalvik, E. M., & Skaalvik, S. (2010). Teacher self-efficacy and teacher burnout: A study of relations. *Teaching and teacher education*, *26*(4), 1059-1069. doi: 10.1016/j.tate.2009.11.001

Smith, O. L., & Robinson, R. (2020). Teacher Perceptions and Implementation of a Content-Area Literacy Professional Development Program. *Journal of Educational Research and Practice*, *10*(1), 4. doi:10.5590/JERAP.2020.10.1.04

Strand, K. L., & Bailey, K. (2020). Supporting Teacher Learning through "Sketching Standards". *Mathematics Teacher: Learning and Teaching PK-12*, *113*(3), 196-200. doi:10.5951/MTLT.2019.0039

Sundeen, R. (2018). Decoding the truth about: Common core. Old schoolhouse, 34-38. doi:10.1002/jaal.444

Tallman, T. O. (2019). How Middle Grades Teachers Experience a Collaborative Culture: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. *RMLE Online*, *42*(8), 1-16. doi:10.1080/19404476.2019.1668103

Tobin, T. J., Mandernach, B. J., & Taylor, A. H. (2015). *Evaluating online teaching: Implementing best practices*. John Wiley & Sons.

Troia, G. A., & Graham, S. (2016). Common core writing and language standards and aligned state assessments: a national survey of teacher beliefs and attitudes. *Reading and Writing*, *29*(9), 1719-1743. doi:10.1007/s11145-016-9650z

Tschannen-Moran, M., & Woolfolk Hoy, A. (2007). The differential antecedents of self-efficacy beliefs of novice and experienced teachers. Teaching and Teacher Education, 23, 944 –956. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2006.05.003

Tunkler, V., Ercan, A. N., Beskirli, M., & Sahin, I. (2016). Relationship between preservice teachers' course attitudes and professional self-efficacy beliefs. *International Journal of Research in Education and Science*, *2*(1), 212-222. Retrieved from http://www.ijres.net/

Vangrieken, K., Meredith, C., Packer, T., & Kyndt, E. (2017). Teacher communities as a context for professional development: A systematic review. *Teaching and teacher education*, *61*, 47-59. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2016.10.001

Van Manen, M. (2016). *Phenomenology of practice: Meaning-giving methods in phenomenological research and writing*. Routledge.

Voogt, J., Laferriere, T., Breuleux, A., Itow, R. C., Hickey, D. T., & McKenney, S. (2015). Collaborative design as a form of professional development. *Instructional science*, *43*(2), 259-282. doi:10.1007/s11251-014-9340-7

Watson, K., & William, S. (2018). The common core moral panic. *Conference papers-Psychology of Mathematics & Education of North American*, 101-108.

Wilcox, K. K., Jeffery, J., & Gardner-Bixler, A. (2016). Writing to the common core: Teachers' responses to changes in standards and assessments for writing in elementary schools. *Reading & Writing*, *29*(5), 903-928. doi:10.1007/s11145-015-9588-6

Woodard, R., & Kline, S. (2015). Moving Beyond Compliance: Promoting Research-based Professional Discretion in the Implementation of the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts. *Mid-Western Educational Researcher*, *27*(3). Retrieved from http://www.mwera.org/MWER/archives.html

Wyatt, M., & Ončevska Ager, E. (2017). Teachers' cognitions regarding continuing professional development. *Elt Journal*, *71*(2), 171-185. doi:10.1093/elt/ccw059

Yılmaz, E. (2004). The relationship between novice and experienced teachers' self-efficacy for classroom management and students' perceptions of their teachers' classroom management, Master thesis, Bilkent Üniversitesi.

Yin, R. (2014). Case Study Research: Design and Methods (5th ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.

Yolcu, H., & Kartal, S. (2017). Evaluating of In-Service Training Activities for Teachers in Turkey: A Critical Analysis. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, *5*(6), 918-926. doi:10.13189/ujer.2017.050602

Yoo, J. H. (2016). The effect of professional development on teacher efficacy and teachers' self-analysis of their efficacy change. *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability*, *18*(1), 84-94. doi:10.1515/jtes-2016-0007

Yurtseven, N. (2017). The investigation of teachers' metaphoric perceptions about professional development. *Journal of Education and Learning*, *6*(2), 120-131. doi:10.5539/jel.v6n2p120

Zengler, C. J. (2017). Standards and professional development. *COABE Journal*, *6*(1), 45. Retrieved from https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?qurl=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1925690613?fromopenview=true&pq-origsite=gscholar&accountid=14872

Zepeda, S. (2015). *Job-embedded professional development: support, collaboration, and learning in schools*. New York, NY: Routledge. doi:10.4324/9781315719693

Zumbrunn, S., & Krause, K. (2012). Conversations with leaders: principles of effective writing instruction. *Reading Teacher*, *65*(5), 346-353. doi: 10.1002/TRTR.01053

Appendix A: The Project

The purpose of this doctoral study project is to provide support for teachers who are responsible for teaching writing. The project was developed primarily based on the findings of this study. The data revealed that teachers desired additional support and resources to improve writing instruction in an effort to increase student writing achievement. The findings of this study demonstrated a need for professional development that would increase teachers' knowledge of the standards and develop strategies for effective writing instruction. As a result, I developed a 3-day writing professional development workshop that would support teachers in deconstructing the standards and acquiring strategies to teach writing more effectively. Time is also built in to allow for teacher collaboration and instructional planning. This Professional development training will help prepare teachers to teach writing at the level of rigor that aligns with the CCSS. The targeted audience is elementary teachers who teach writing in grades 3-8 as well as curriculum coaches, intervention specialist, and administrators, anyone who directly impact writing instruction. However, the workshop would be beneficial for any teacher in the district who feel they could benefit from additional strategies for teaching writing. Ideally, this 3-day workshop will be implemented during the district's pre-service week so that teachers can be readily prepared for the start of the school year. Each PD session will start at 8:30 am and conclude at 3:30 pm. The 3-day schedule is as follows:

- Day 1: Deconstructing the Standards
- Day 2: Strategies that Work

- Day 3: What Writing should Look Like

Goals and Outcomes

There are three ultimate goals associated with this project. The first goal is that teachers will leave the 3-day professional development training with an actual pacing guide to immediately implement to enhance their writing instruction. Secondly, the goal is that teachers gain additional knowledge and skills that can be applied to improve their instruction. The third goal is that teachers fully comprehend the level of rigor required to teach the standards to move students from basic to proficient. If these goals are accomplished, they will achieve the project's purpose. Here is a specific breakdown of the goal and learning outcome for each day of the professional development workshop.

Day 1: The goal is that teachers will collaboratively deconstruct the CCSS writing standards and design lessons based on the deconstructed writing standards. During the am session, teachers will use a template to break down the writing standards into student-friendly learning targets. In the afternoon session, teachers will work collaboratively to create weekly lesson plans based on the learning targets to present whole group and peer-assess each other's work using the Tuning protocol. By the end of day 1, teachers will develop a deeper understanding of the writing standards and have completed lessons based on learning targets to use for future practice.

Day 2: The goal is to increase teachers' knowledge of instructional strategies that are effective in teaching writing. Day 2 am session will focus primarily on the 6+1 Traits model writing strategies. Teachers will have an opportunity to take a deep dive into the model through a collaborative group activity. The afternoon session will focus on

strategies to use to enhance the writing process and assessment. The learning outcome is that teachers will gain an understanding of the 6+1 Traits model for teaching and assessing students' writing and learn practical strategies to implement in their classrooms to support quality instruction.

Day 3: The goal is for teachers to analyze the writing expectations, align the standards to their writing instruction, and collaboratively develop a pacing guide for nine weeks of instruction. During the am session, teachers will view a video clip and reflect on their practices. Then, teachers will analyze the standards across grade levels and examine exemplar student work at various grade levels. During the afternoon session, teachers will have the entire time to plan for the first nine weeks of school by developing a pacing guide. The learning outcome is that teachers will gain an in-depth understanding of writing expectations across grade levels and have a completed pacing guide to use for 1st quarter instruction.

Daily Timeline, Activities, and Materials

Day 1
Deconstructing the Standards

Goals / Purposes / Objectives-

- **A.** Collaboratively deconstruct the CCSS writing standards
- **B.** Design lessons based on the deconstructed writing standards

Learning Outcomes-

- **A.** Teachers will develop an enhanced knowledge of the writing standards
- **B.** Teachers will have completed lessons based on learning targets to use for future practice

Materials needed-

Laptops, handouts (templates, tuning protocol), chart paper, markers, CCSS writing standards, Bloom's Taxonomy, Depth of Knowledge tool

Time	Agenda
8:30- 9:00	**Welcome**
9:00- 10:00	**Group Norms & Google Survey**
10:00- 12:00	**Deconstructing of Standards** -Overview -Collaborative teams
12:00-1:00	**Lunch**
1:00- 3:00	**Instructional Planning** -Collaborative Lesson plan activity -Feedback & Discussion
3:00- 3:30	**Wrap up- Dismissal**

Day 1- Deconstructing the Standards Template

<table>
<tr><td colspan="4">CCSS Standard</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Write it out:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Content (nouns)</td><td colspan="2">Actions/Skills (verbs)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2"></td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Cognitive Thinking Level</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Lower - Level</td><td colspan="2">Higher- Level</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Learning Targets</td></tr>
<tr><td>Knowledge</td><td>Skill</td><td>Reasoning</td><td>Product</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
</table>

Day 1- Lesson Plan Template

LESSON PLAN TEMPLATE

Name of teachers		Subject		Week	
Title:					

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Essential Question					
Learning Target/Objective - SWBAT					
Standards (CCSS)					
Academic Vocabulary					
Cycle of Instruction Activities Materials Technology					
Assessment					

Day 1- Tuning Protocol

SRI SCHOOL REFORM INITIATIVE
A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS

Tuning Protocol
Examining Adult Work

Based on the Tuning Protocol developed by Joseph McDonald and David Allen; further developed in the field by educators.

When you tune adult work you have 2 basic components: a set of goals or purposes and a design or document (i.e., lesson plan, rubric, newsletter, etc.). The general objective is to get feedback from your colleagues about the degree to which the design or document you've offered seems likely to allow the presenter to achieve her/his goals. The work is "in tune" when the goals and design are most in alignment.

Note: When student work is the focus, you may want to consider using the original Tuning Protocol.

Time
Approximately 1 hour

Roles
Presenter
Participants (if more than 8-10, split into groups of 4-5, each supported by a small group facilitator)
Whole group facilitator who leads the protocol

1. **Presentation** (15 minutes)
   Presenter shares information about her work, including:
   - Context
   - Goals
   - Focusing question for feedback

   Notes: This question might be something like, "To what extent are my goals and moves/design in alignment?" Charting/posting the presenter's focusing question and goals as part of the presentation can increase the likelihood that feedback will be helpful to the presenter. Participants listen silently and make notes.

2. **Clarifying Questions** (3-5 minutes)
   Clarifying questions regard matters of fact. Substantive issues are saved for later in the protocol. The facilitator supports the presenter by making sure that clarifying questions are really clarifying.

3. **Examination of the Plan** (10 minutes)
   - Participants study the work, making notes about where it seems "in tune" or aligned with presenter's goals and where there might be problems or gaps.
   - Facilitator's decision: It's possible that participants might offer 1 or 2 more clarifying questions at this time and presenter answers them.

4. **Pause to Reflect** on feedback you are about to offer (2-3 minutes)

Protocols are most powerful and effective when used within an ongoing professional learning community and facilitated by a skilled facilitator. To learn more about professional learning communities and seminars for facilitation, please visit the School Reform Initiative website at www.schoolreforminitiative.org.

5. **Feedback** (15-20 minutes)
   Participants talk with one another about the presenter's work in the third person, beginning with the ways it seems aligned with her/his goals (ex: "One place where the document is aligned with goal x is _____") and continuing with possible disconnects or gaps (ex: "One place where there is a potential gap between the document and goal x is _____"), and perhaps ending with 1 or 2 probing questions for further reflection on the part of the presenter. Though not in a tight sequence, it is helpful to begin with warm feedback (alignments).

6. **Reflection** (5 minutes)
   - Presenter reflects aloud about what she/he is now thinking after hearing the presenters' feedback.
   - Facilitator may need to remind participants that once the work has been returned to the presenter, there will be no more feedback offered.

   Note: This is not a time to defend oneself, but a time to think out loud about interesting ideas that came out of the feedback section.

7. **Debrief** (5 minutes)
   Facilitator leads discussion about this experience.

See *Tuning Protocol Guidelines* for information on effective participation in a Tuning.

Anchor Standards for Writing

Text Types and Purposes[1]:
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1
Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.2
Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.3
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.

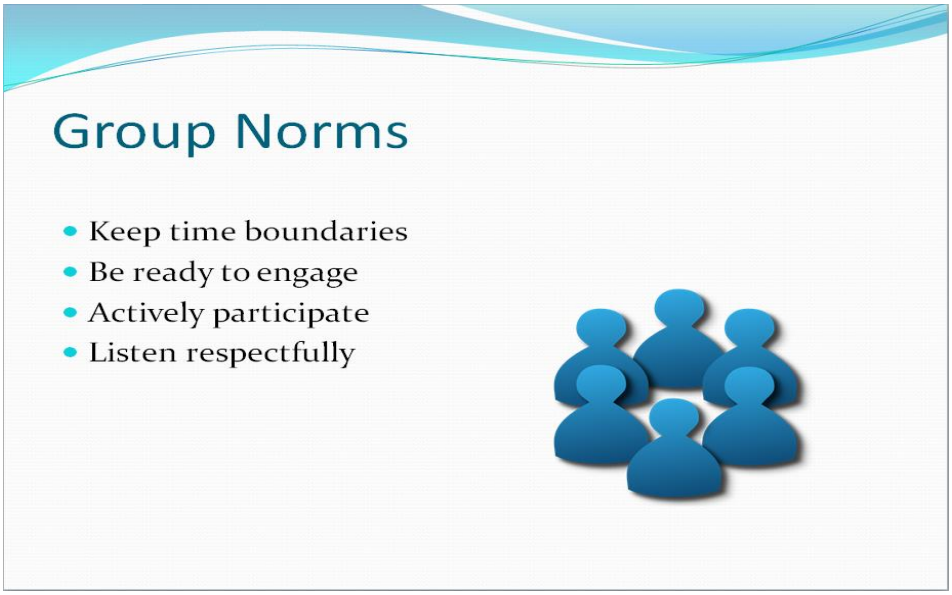
Production and Distribution of Writing:
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4
Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.5
Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.6
Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge:
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.7
Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.8
Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.9
Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Range of Writing:
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.10
Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

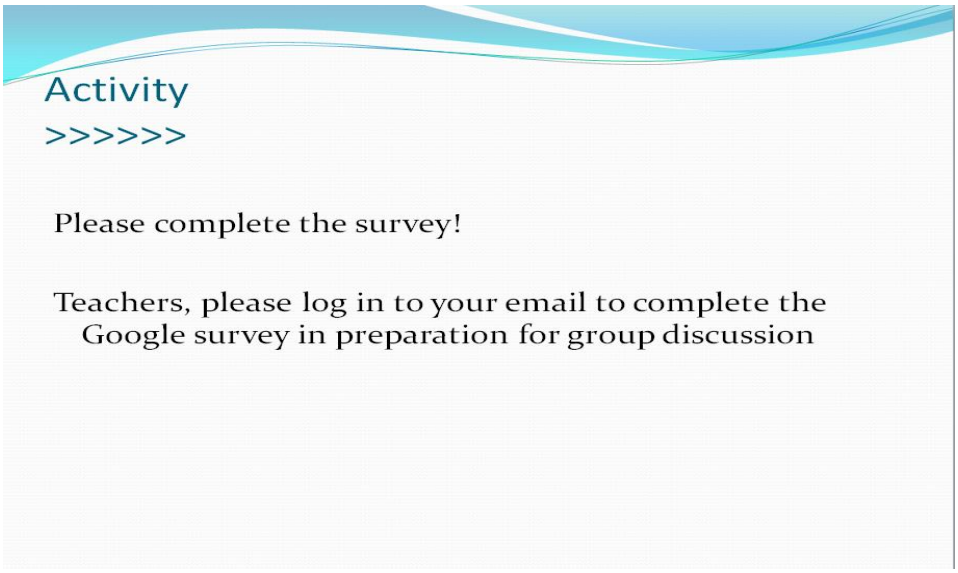
Day 1- PowerPoint Slides with Notes

- Welcome everyone to the workshop. Introduce yourself and mention breakfast
- Handout agenda and give an overview of the agenda and materials needed

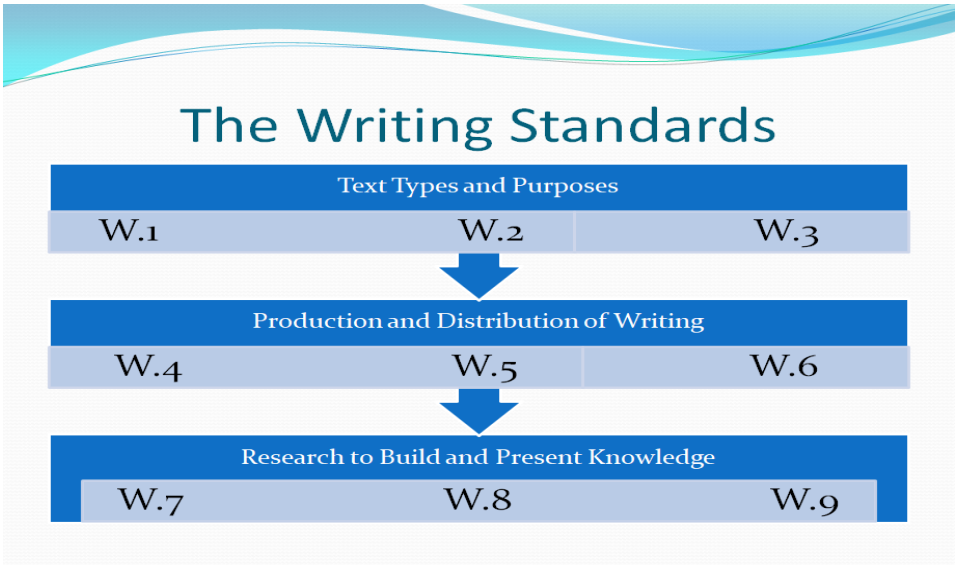


- Discuss the purpose, goals, and outcomes of the PD.
- What are the group norms to live by? Discuss and write on chart paper.
- Also, discuss the purpose of a parking lot.
- Place parking lot (chart paper) on wall with sticky notes at desks so that

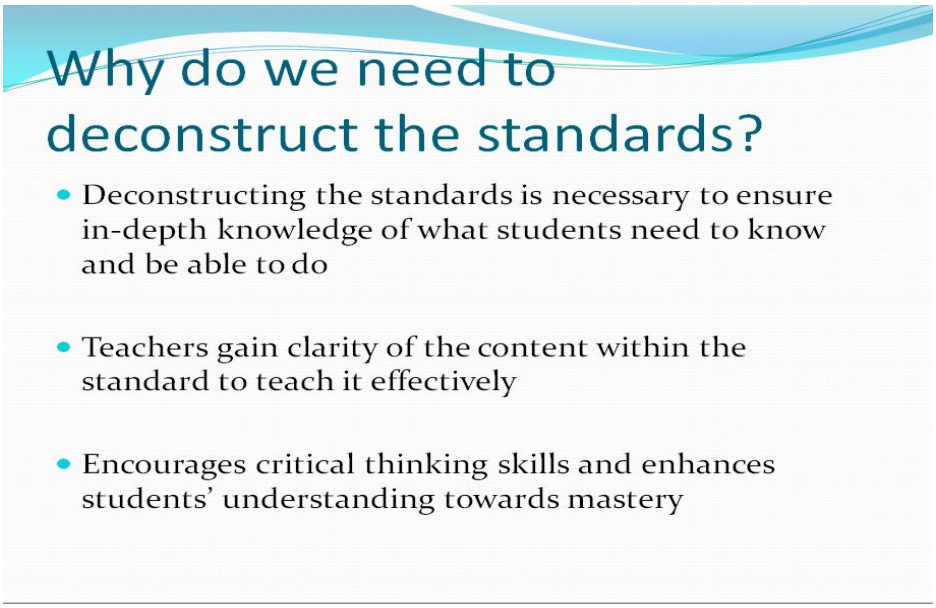
teachers can easily place questions or concerns throughout the day.



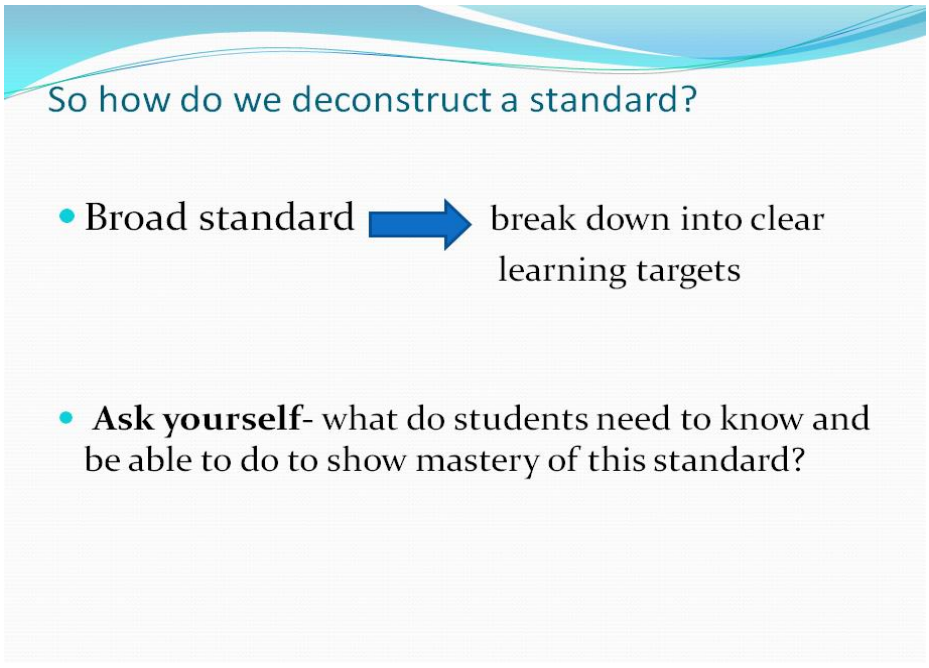
- No name is required. Ensure everyone is able to access the survey.
- When everyone is finished, pull up the survey results to display.
- Please turn and talk to your neighbor, what stands out in the data?
- What do you notice? After 5 minutes, discuss the survey results whole group.



- Today we are focusing heavily on the Writing Standards so that we are clear on what students need to know and be able to do to reach mastery.
- Give an overview of the breakdown of the Writing Anchor Standards.
- End with discussing Standard 10, Range of Writing.



- This leads us into our main purpose for today's workshop.
- Deconstructing the CCSS writing standards.
- Inform teachers to retrieve all materials for today's session in Google drive



- explain the process of deconstruction
- discuss the ultimate goal of student mastery

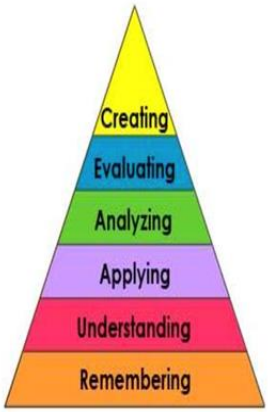
Steps to deconstruction

1. Get to know the standard
   - analyze it
   - identify the nouns
   - identify the verbs
   - determine categories
2. Identify the required thinking skill level
   - lower-level
   - higher-level
3. Develop learning targets
   - easily understood by students

- pass out analyzing standard templates.
- explain the steps for deconstructing a standard

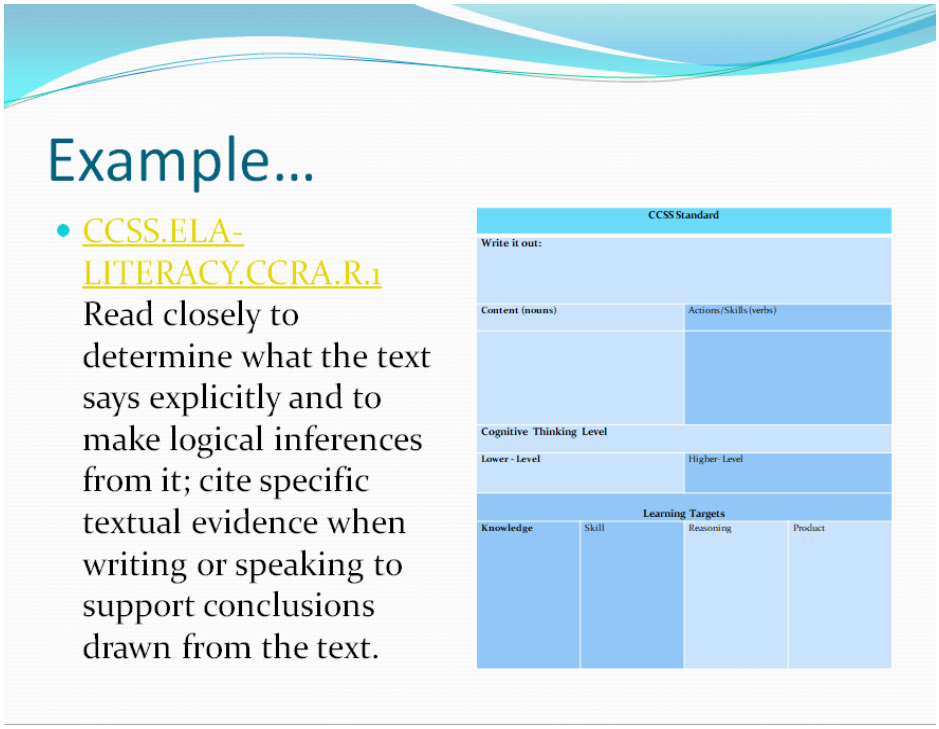
How do I determine the thinking level?

- Lower level → foundational skills
- Higher level → greater cognitive complexity
- Focus on the verbs
- Bloom's Taxonomy →
- Depth of Knowledge levels
  - DOK1: Recall
  - DOK2: Basic Application
  - DOK3: Strategic Thinking
  - DOK4: Extended Thinking



- Explain what is meant by thinking skill level
- Clarify the difference between lower-level and Higher level
- The verbs in the standards determine the level of complexity
- Classify the verbs into one of Bloom's six levels or DOKs
- Teachers, students should be exposed to a range of complexity levels.

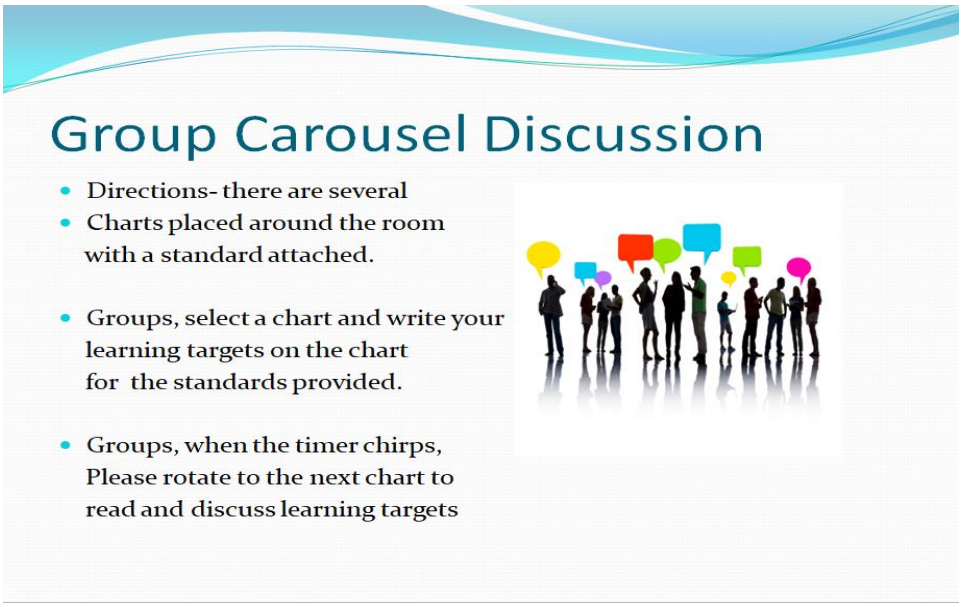
If all targets are based on lower-level thinking, then it would make it difficult to determine students' capabilities. The same applies if all learning and assessment is based on higher-order thinking, doesn't allow for proper evaluation of student learning.



- Use a sample model to demonstrate the process.
- Involve teachers in the deconstructing process.
- Read the sample standard, engage the audience in identifying the verbs, nouns, and classify the cognitive thinking level.
- Explain the differences in categories-knowledge, reasoning, skill, and product.
- Walk teachers through the process.

- Direct teachers to get into groups of 4 according to their grade bands (3-5, 6-8) to deconstruct the writing standards using the template provided.
- Handout templates and remind teachers that all materials were sent electronically.
- Observe and check in with groups periodically.

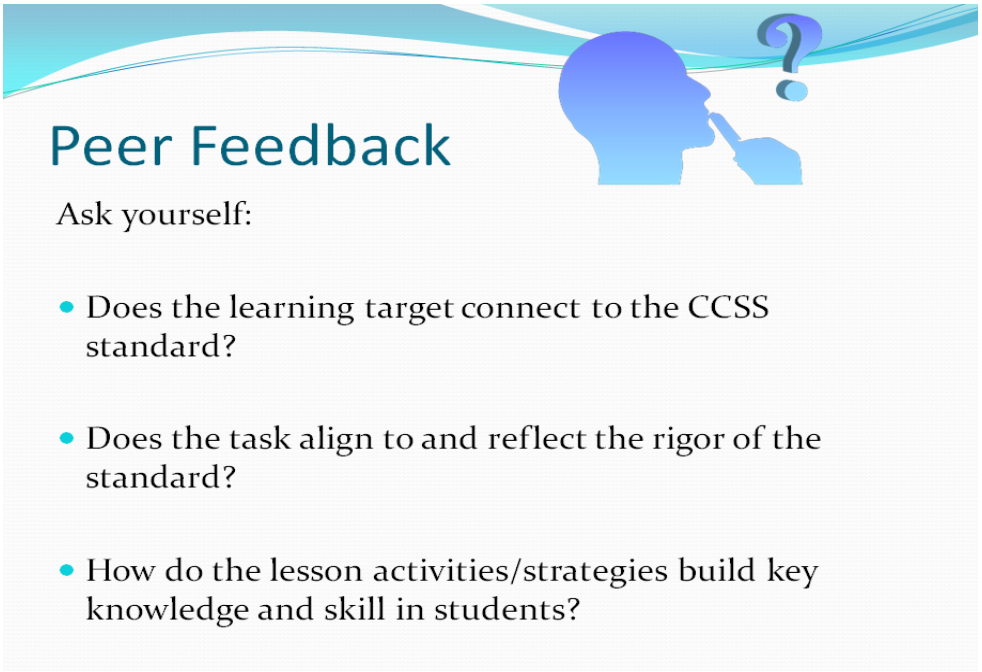
- Remind teachers of the start time for the afternoon session
- As well as the parking lot for any concerns or questions
- Prepare charts and place on the wall for carousel activity



- Have teachers discuss and share learning targets that derived from the deconstruction of the standards using the carousel protocol.
- Teachers will have 1-2 minutes to discuss the content.
- Groups will rotate until they have visited each group's chart.
- Brief whole group discussion to share thoughts, observations, and wonderings

- Ask teachers to remain in their groups from earlier.

- Teachers will be assigned one of the CCSS writing standards to complete a detailed lesson for the week based on the developed learning targets to share out whole group for peer feedback using the Tuning Protocol.
- Pass out lesson plan template and send it electronically to teachers so groups can submit their lessons to one google folder for whole group access and presentations.
- The facilitator will monitor as well as assist when needed



- Ask teachers to consider these questions as they reflect on their own practice as well as the critiquing of their peers' work.
- Groups will share their lessons whole group while the remaining groups observe and provide feedback in the form of discussion using the turning protocol handout.

Wrap up

This concludes today's workshop. Please fill out the evaluation form for today's session

- Final discussion and questions.
- Ask teachers to fill out the evaluation form before dismissal.
- Pass out the evaluation form.
- Thank you for being present and active.
- See you tomorrow.
- Review sticky notes from the parking lot. Address first thing Tomorrow if necessary.

Date

Professional Development Workshop Day 1

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS EVALUATION FOR TODAY'S SESSION

Did today's sessions meet its intended objective?

What part of today's session did you find most useful?

What new information did you learn today?

What questions or concerns do you still have?

Day 2

Strategies that Work

Goals / Purposes / Objectives-

A. To increase teachers' knowledge of instructional strategies that are effective in teaching writing

Learning Outcomes-

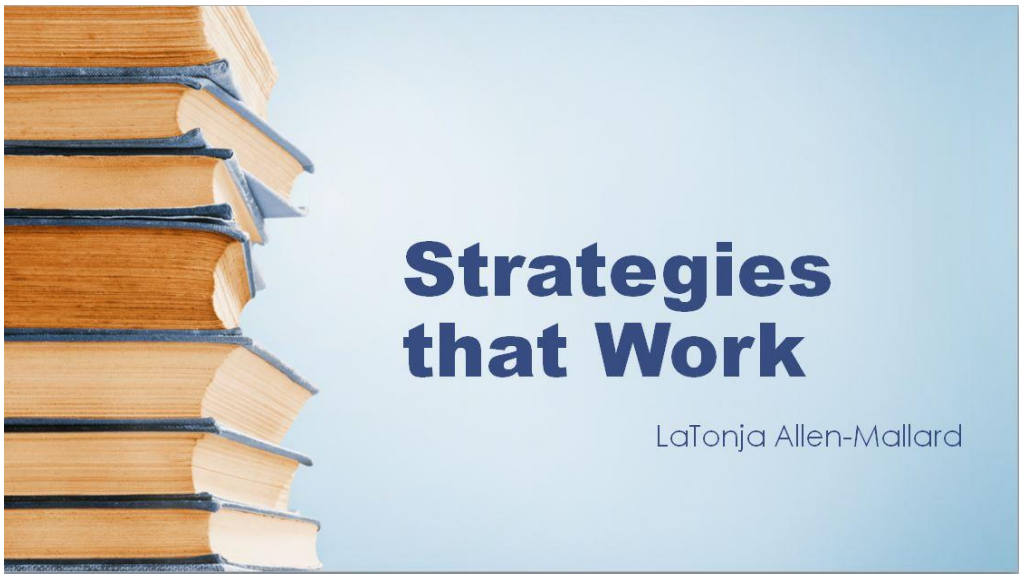
A. Teachers will gain an understanding of the 6+1 Traits model for teaching and assessing students' writing.
B. Teachers will learn effective strategies to implement in their classrooms to support quality instruction.

Materials Needed-

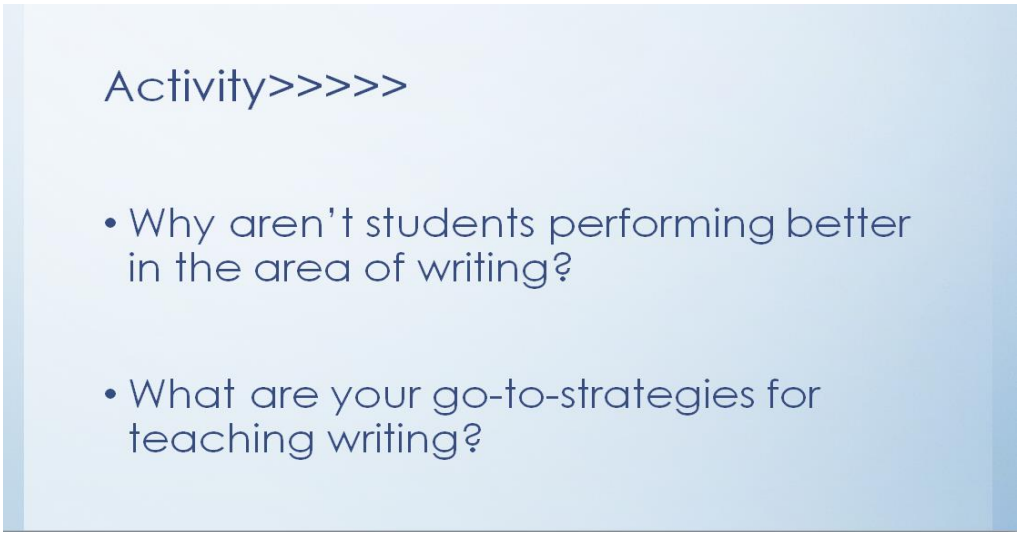
Laptops, speakers, sticky notes, chart paper, and markers

Time	Agenda
8:30- 9:00	**Welcome & Breakfast**
9:00- 9:30	**Opening Activity**
9:30- 10:30	**6+1 Traits of Writing**
10:30-11:30	**6+1 Traits Collaborative activity**
11:30-12:00	**Group presentations**
12:00-1:00	**Lunch**
1:00- 3:00	**Strategies for The Writing Process** -mini lessons -modeling -mentor texts -effective feedback -assessment
3:00- 3:30	**Wrap up- Dismissal**

Day 2-PowerPoint with Notes



- Reiterate group norms, discuss the goal and agenda for the day
- Remind participants of the parking lot and breakfast



- Guide teachers in a Milling to Music activity. Facilitator will play music as an indicator for teachers to start walking around the room; when the music stops, they must find the nearest person to share their thinking with. When the facilitator asks a question, teachers will face their partner and discuss the question being asked. Then repeat the cycle for the next question.
- Upon completion, the facilitator will ask participants to share out whole group.

6 + 1 Traits of Writing

- Research shows that 6+1 traits is a very effective strategy for teaching writing (Collopy & Arnold, 2017; Culham, 2003 ; Miller, et al. 2016)
- 6+1 Trait model can positively change the way we teach and assess student writing
- It can help teachers prioritize and focus their writing instruction

- This 6+1 model is a useful tool for teaching and assessing student writing.
- When teachers embed the traits into their instruction, they model effective strategies for the writing process.
- When students gain these strategies, they become independent writers.

6+1 Traits of Writing

- Ideas
- Organization
- Voice
- Sentence Fluency
- Word Choice
- Conventions
- Presentation

- Give an overview of the traits. It's important to make sure that students understand what each trait means and how it should look in their writing.
- They should also be able to recognize the traits in other pieces of writing.
- By exposing students to how other writers use the traits, it will become clear to them the qualities of good writing.

Why use 6+1 Traits for Assessment?

- It provides a way to identify students' writing strengths
- It provides a way to identify students' specific areas of need
- Through assessment, student progress can be monitored and provide insight for future instruction.

- Discuss the benefits of using the 6+1 Trait model as an assessment tool.
- Explain the relationship between standards, instruction, and assessment.
- Discuss scoring guides and the use of rubrics to assess any genre of writing.
- How helpful is it for teachers to teach the standards without a way to measure students' progress and growth?
- How can teachers deliver meaningful lessons if they don't have assessment data to inform their instruction?

The Ideas Trait

- Is the content of the writing piece
- Strong ideas lead to a clear message in writing
- Students transform their writing from general to specific

- Give an overview of the key components of the Ideas trait.

For students to create good content, teachers must help them in the process of:

- selecting an idea (topic)
- Narrowing the idea (focus)
- Elaborating on the idea (development)
- Discovering the best information to convey the idea (details)

- Explain the reasons why students commonly struggle with generating ideas.
- Discuss the importance of guiding students toward choosing a topic, staying focused on the topic, and developing it.
- What strategies do you currently use to get students to generate ideas? Turn and talk, then discuss whole group.

Strategies for generating ideas

- Brainstorming
- Outlines
- Graphic organizers
- Show vs. Tell
- Use of prompts
- RAFTS
- Favorite places

The Voice Trait…

Culham(2003) describes voice as:

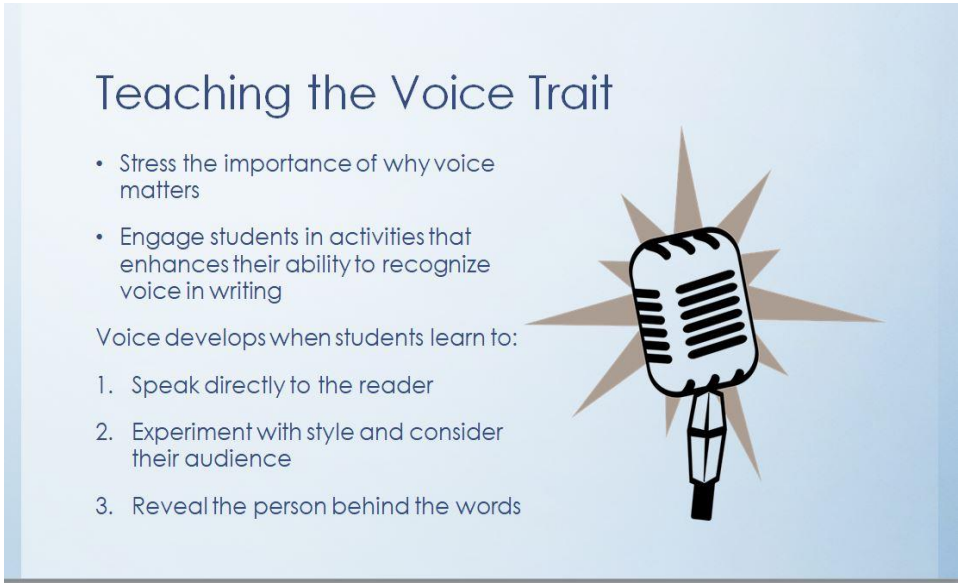
- The golden thread that runs through a piece of writing. It's how the reader knows it is really you speaking.
- the writer's music coming out through the words, the sense that a real person is speaking to you and cares about the message.
- the heart and soul of the writing, the magic, the wit, the feeling, the life and breath.

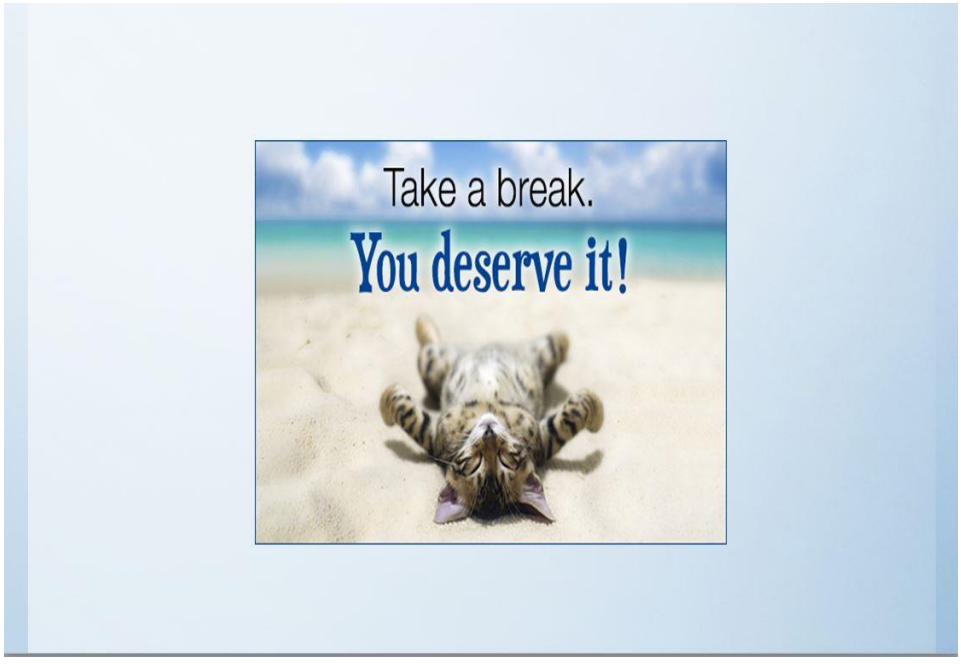
- Give an overview of the voice trait.
- Every student's voice is expected to sound different because students have different views, personalities, and ideas.
- Voice is what makes students' writing unique to them.

Why Teachers Struggle with Teaching Voice

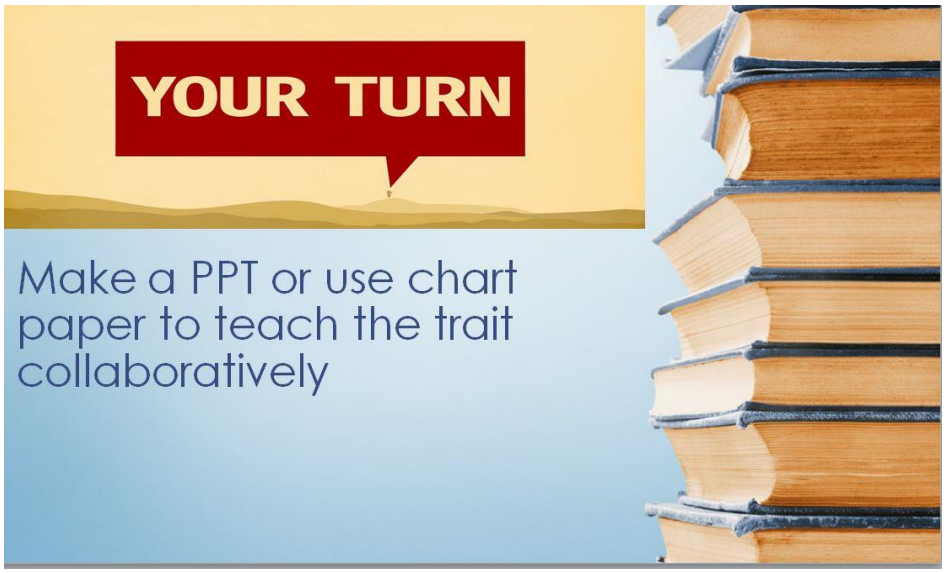
1. Voice is not clearly understood or easy to define
2. Accustom to traditional teaching perceptions
3. Does not see voice as a priority
4. It is beyond their comfort zone

- Discuss why teachers tend to struggle with teaching this trait
- It is often overlooked and not taught.
- Engage teachers in discussion to clear up common misconceptions.





- Inform teachers that they can take a 10-minute break but return promptly



- Ask teachers to form groups to work collaboratively and pass out chart paper/markers.
- Facilitator will assign each group one of the remaining traits- organization, word choice, sentence fluency and conventions.
- Teachers will be emailed documents about their assigned trait to read.
- After working collaboratively, groups will share their understanding of their assigned trait with the rest of the group.

- As always, you have one hour for lunch, enjoy.

What is needed to support student growth?

- Clear learning targets
- Explicit instruction
- Use of Modeling
- Mentor texts
- Time to write
- Effective feedback

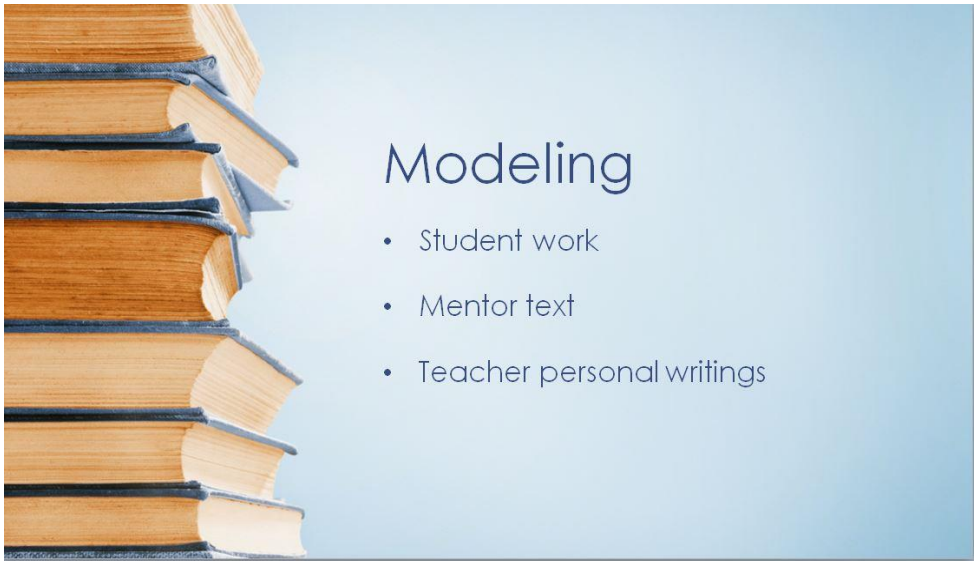
➢ Discuss key strategies for effective writing instruction practices.

Mini-Lessons/Teaching Points

- A mini-lesson generally lasts 5-10 minutes
- raise a concern, explore an issue
- model a technique, reinforce a strategy
- Ask yourself, "What is the one thing I can teach or demonstrate that might help most?"
- Choose a teaching point that would benefit many members of the class

➢ Give teacher groups 10 minutes to brainstorm what critical teaching points are necessary for teaching the three types of writing.
➢ Teachers will discuss and share out whole group.
➢ Use probing questions to facilitate discussion

- Explain the importance of incorporating a daily teaching point in writing instruction.
- What mini-lesson you decide to teach should depend on the standard
- and the type of writing you are covering.
- Remind teachers that mini-lessons are meant to be brief but explicitly taught to guide students toward proficiency.



Why Model?

- Haas et al. (2016) claimed that teacher modeling is a central component to the writing process. Modeling is when an educator takes the time to show students what they expect them to produce.
- It can serve as support and motivation for reluctant writers leading to increased buy-in from students.
- A simple 15-20 minute model lesson in which the teacher is sharing their thinking around a given task can have a long term impact on student writing performance.

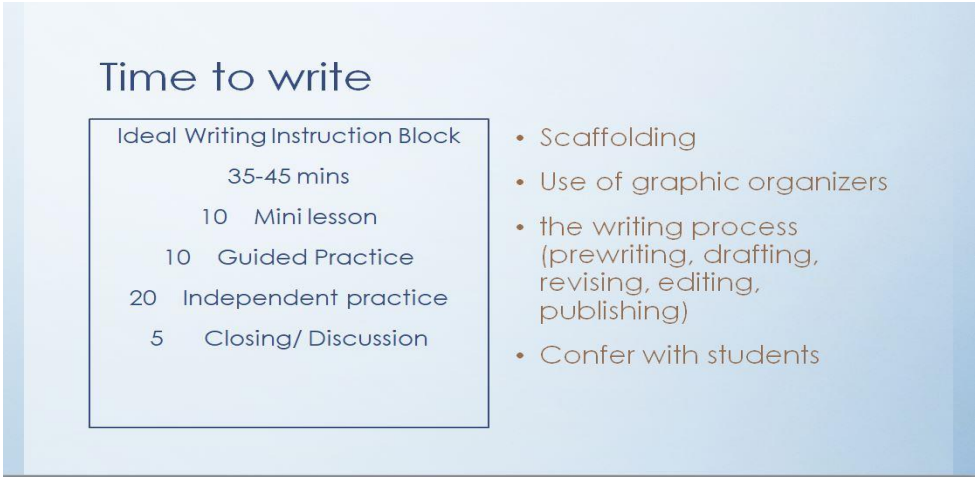
- Explain that through observation of effective modeling, students can improve their writing.
- By teachers' modeling their thinking and writing, students will see first-hand the criteria for the structure and process for organizing their writing.
- It promotes discussion, understanding of content and student reflection.

What are Mentor Texts?

- The National Writing Project (2013) defines Mentor Texts as:

  Mentor texts are pieces of literature that you — both teacher and student — can return to and reread for many different purposes. They are texts to be studied and imitated … Mentor texts help students to take risks and be different writers tomorrow than they are today. It helps them to try out new strategies and formats. They should be [texts] that students can relate to and can even read independently *or* with some support.

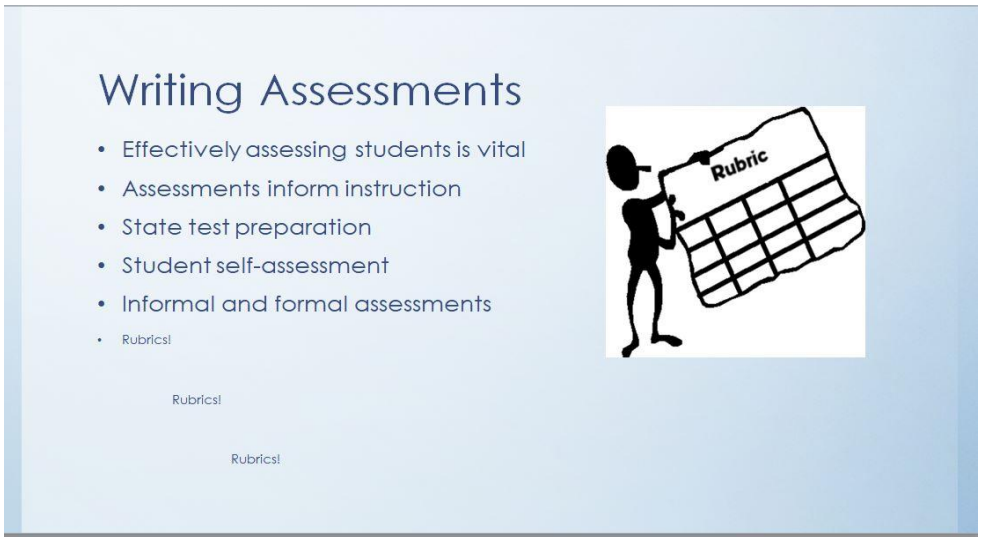
- Facilitator will navigate through one or two of the sites with teachers to give them an idea of the resources that are available for access to quality mentor texts.
- Facilitator will reiterate that there are a magnitude of texts that can be utilized to show students what they are expected to produce which can also be retrieved right from within your current reading curriculum, student samples, and teacher samples.
- Give teachers time (10 mins) to browse the sites, challenge them to find mentor texts that they can use immediately with their students.



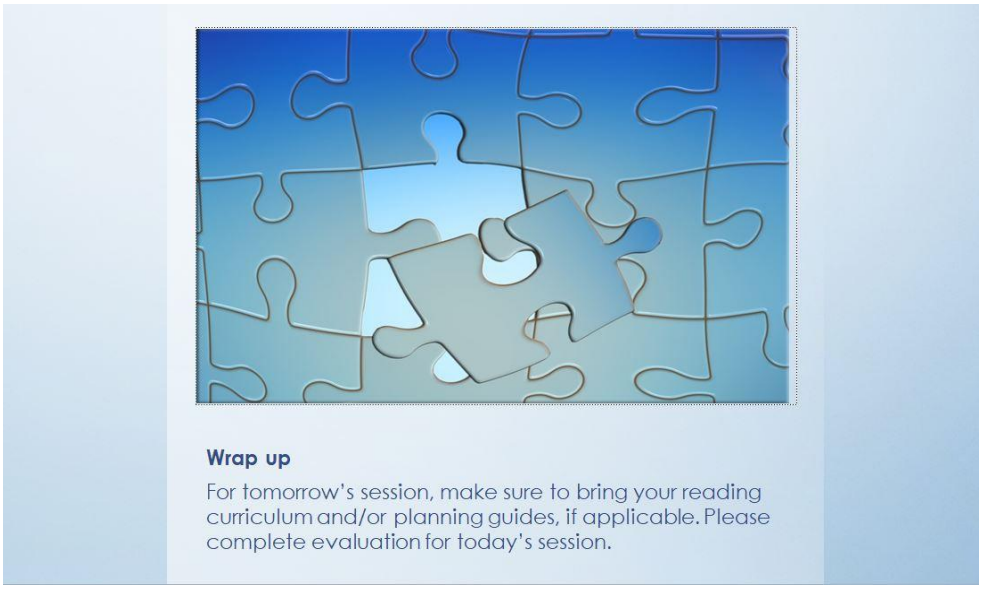
- Discuss a typical writing block and the importance of allowing time for students to write independently.
- Discuss the benefits of scaffolding, using graphic organizers, teacher/student conferences, as well as the writing process.

- Generate a discussion about the writing process
- Explain how it allows teachers to teach writing in chunks to make it more accessible for students to grasp the concepts.

- Stress the importance of teaching students revision strategies for repeated practice and how powerful feedback can be in increasing student achievement.
- Engage teachers in a Feedback Carousel. Review the directions.
- The facilitator will place charts regarding feedback around the room.
- Teacher groups will grab markers and rotate to each chart to read content, discuss, and provide feedback.
- Teachers will have 3 minutes at each chart.
- Groups will rotate until they have visited all charts.
- Brief whole group discussion to share thoughts, observations, and wonderings.



- Discuss the requirements and expectations for the state writing assessment and how it is critical that we expose students to the same writing expectations in the classroom.
- Discuss designing pre-assessments and how they are beneficial to improve writing practices.
- Pre- assess their ability to use data to differentiate, develop teaching points and inform instruction.
- Use of rubrics to measure students' level of success as well as assess how well the rubric aligns with the standards and lesson.



- Pass out the evaluation form and check the parking lot

Date

Professional Development Workshop Day 2

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS EVALUATION FOR TODAY'S SESSION

Did today's session meet its intended objective?

What part of today's session did you find most useful?

What new information did you learn today?

What questions or concerns do you still have?

Day 3

What Writing should Look Like

Goals / Purposes / Objectives-

A. Analyze writing expectations and align standards to instruction
B. Collaboratively develop a pacing guide for nine weeks of instruction

Learning Outcomes-

A. Teachers will gain an in-depth understanding of writing expectations across grade levels
B. Teachers will have a completed pacing guide to use for 1st quarter instruction

Materials needed-

Laptops, CCSS writing standards, sticky notes, chart paper, markers, pacing templates, curriculum materials

Time	Agenda
8:30- 9:00	**Welcome**
9:00- 9:30	**Writing to Learn/Learning to Write** -Video/Discussion
9:30- 10:30	**What writing should look like**
10:30-11:30	**Analysis of standards-based Writing** -Core Standards -Student work samples
11:30-12:00	**Pacing Guide Overview**
12:00-1:00	**Lunch**

1:00- 3:00	**Collaborative Instructional Planning** -Aligning standards to instruction -Creation of pacing guides
3:00- 3:30	**Wrap up- Dismissal**

September Pacing Calendar

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
7 Labor Day	8 Learning Target Teaching Point Mentor Text	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30		

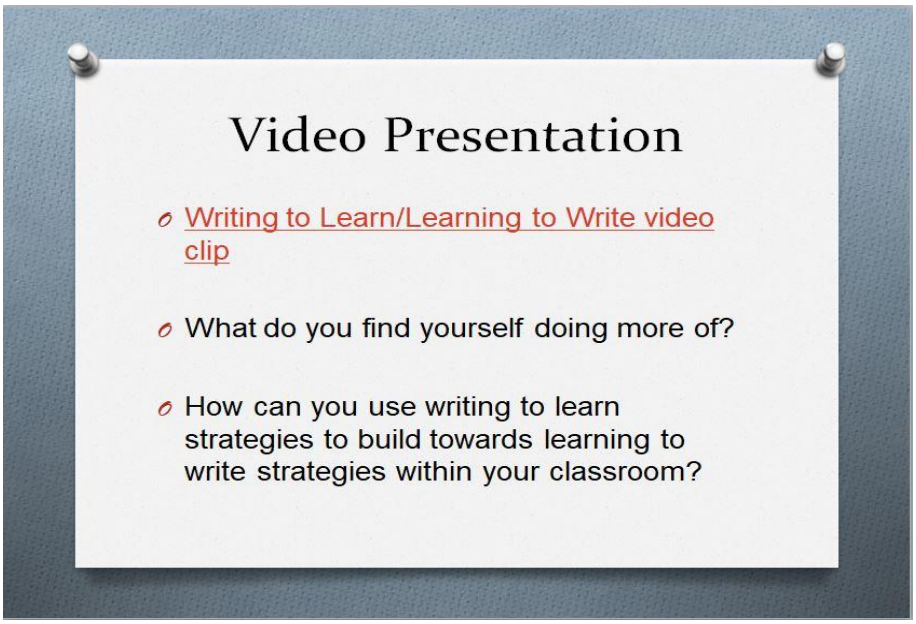
October Pacing Calendar

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
			1	2
5	6	7	8	**9**
12 NO SCHOOL	13	14	15	**16**
19	**20**	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	30

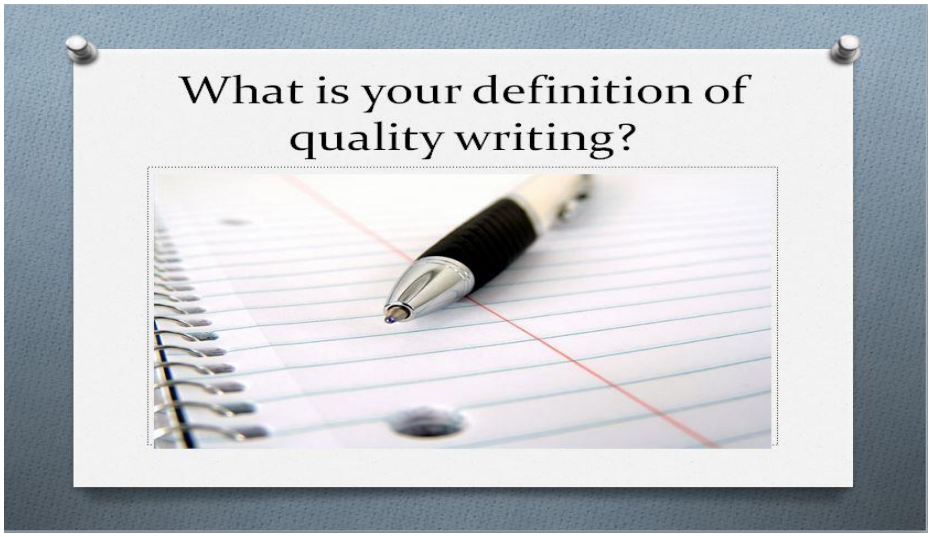
November 2	3	4	5 End of Quarter	6

Day 3- PowerPoint Slides and Notes

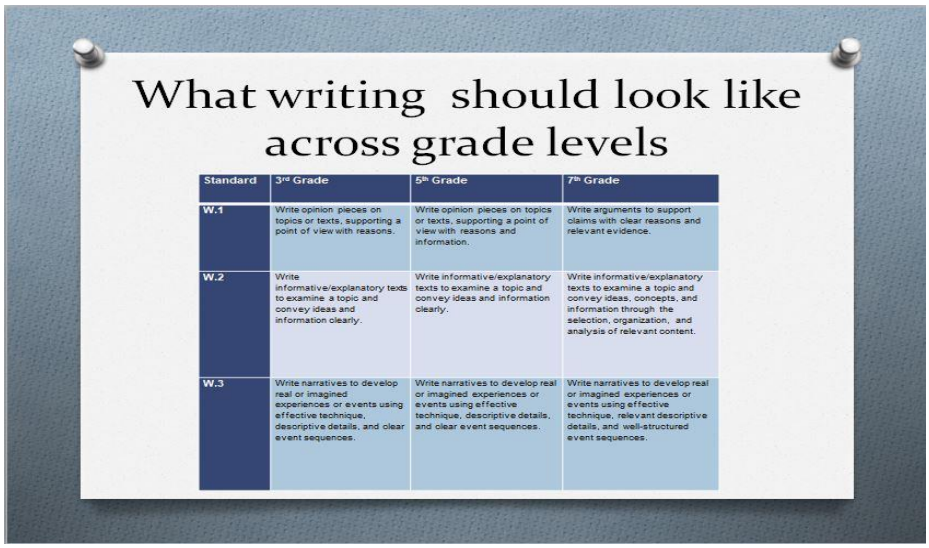
- Discuss the goals for today, review the group norms
- Give an overview of today's agenda



- Play the video and ask teachers to turn and talk, sharing their answers to the presented questions.
- Then share and discuss whole group.



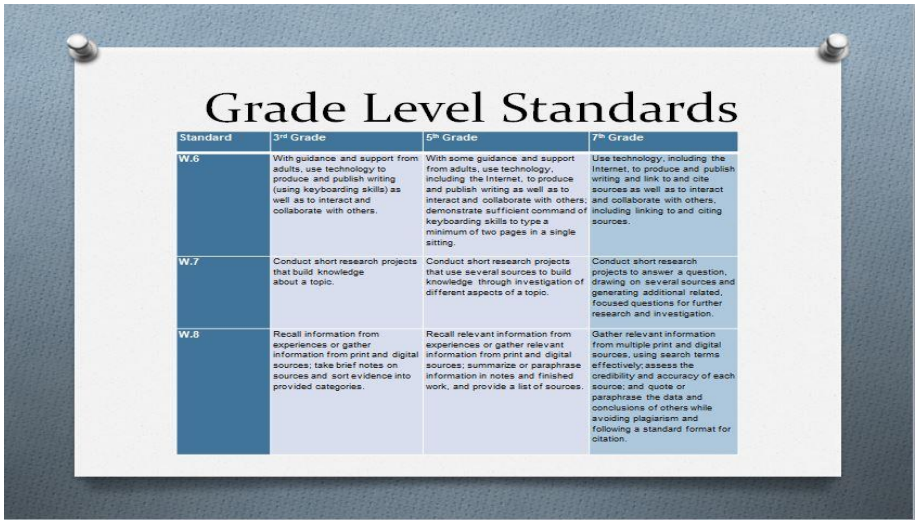
- Ask teachers to write their responses on a sticky note.
- Then collect sticky notes and randomly pass them back out.
- Call on several teachers to share the response on their sticky note.
- Then, explain how the CCSS define quality writing



What writing should look like across grade levels

Standard	3rd Grade	5th Grade	7th Grade
W.1	Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons.	Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.	Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
W.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
W.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

- Let's take a look at the standards across grade levels.
- Ask teachers to take out a copy of the standards or pull it up on their laptops electronically.
- The Common Core Writing Standards show the expectations of students' writing growth from year to year.
- Have teachers examine the standards horizontally, start w/ W.1
- What do you notice?
- What are the implications for writing instruction? Discuss.

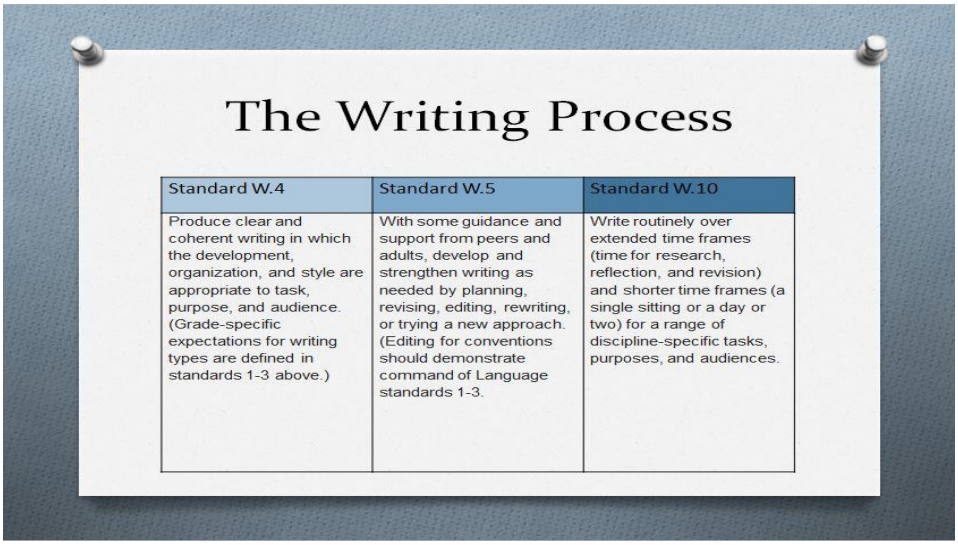


Grade Level Standards

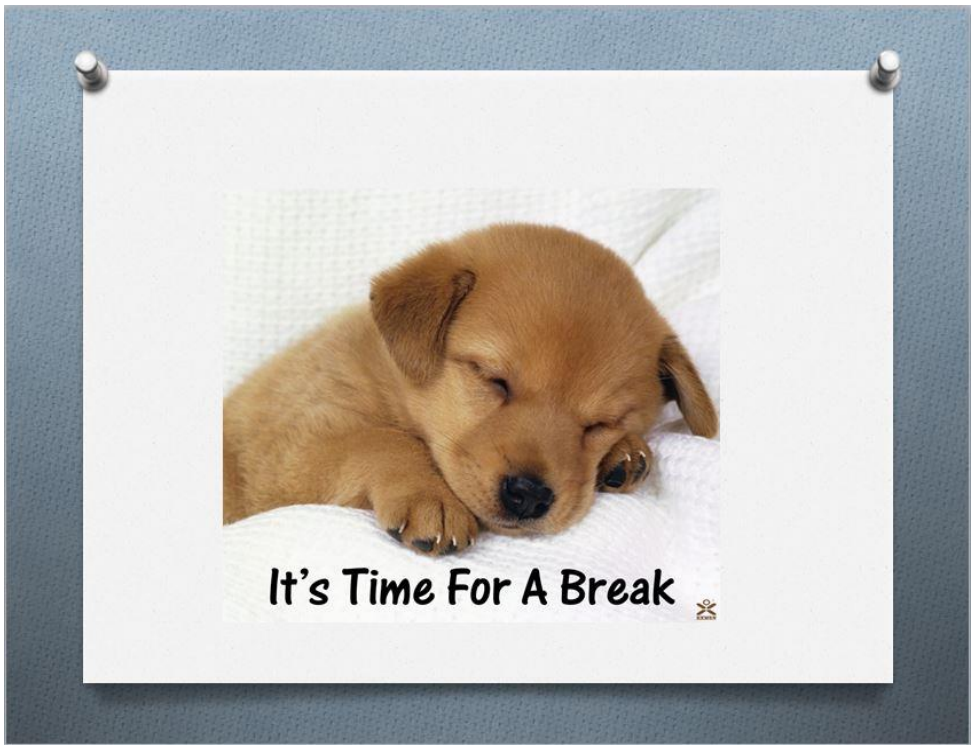
Standard	3rd Grade	5th Grade	7th Grade
W.6	With guidance and support from adults, use technology to produce and publish writing (using keyboarding skills) as well as to interact and collaborate with others.	With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of two pages in a single sitting.	Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and link to and cite sources as well as to interact and collaborate with others, including linking to and citing sources.
W.7	Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.	Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.	Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions for further research and investigation.
W.8	Recall information from experiences or gather information from print and digital sources; take brief notes on sources and sort evidence into provided categories.	Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; summarize or paraphrase information in notes and finished work, and provide a list of sources.	Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

- Continue the analysis and discussion on the expected progression of skill development for standards W.6, W.7, and then W.8

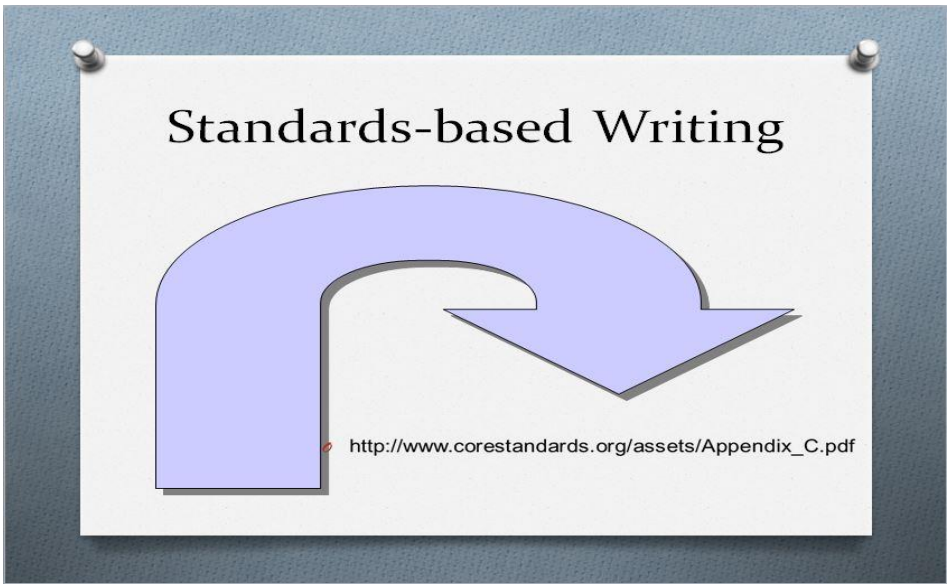
- Facilitator will explain that Standard 9 doesn't begin until grade 4.
- What do you notice about the writing expectations for standard 9 across grade levels?
- Give teachers time to assess, and then discuss.
- Reiterate that Standard 9 acknowledges the importance of the reading and writing interconnectedness.
- Students are expected to write in response to reading of informational and literary text drawing on evidence, research etc.
- How do we teach this standard? Discuss.
- What does it look like in your classroom?
- How can you support a progression of skill development?



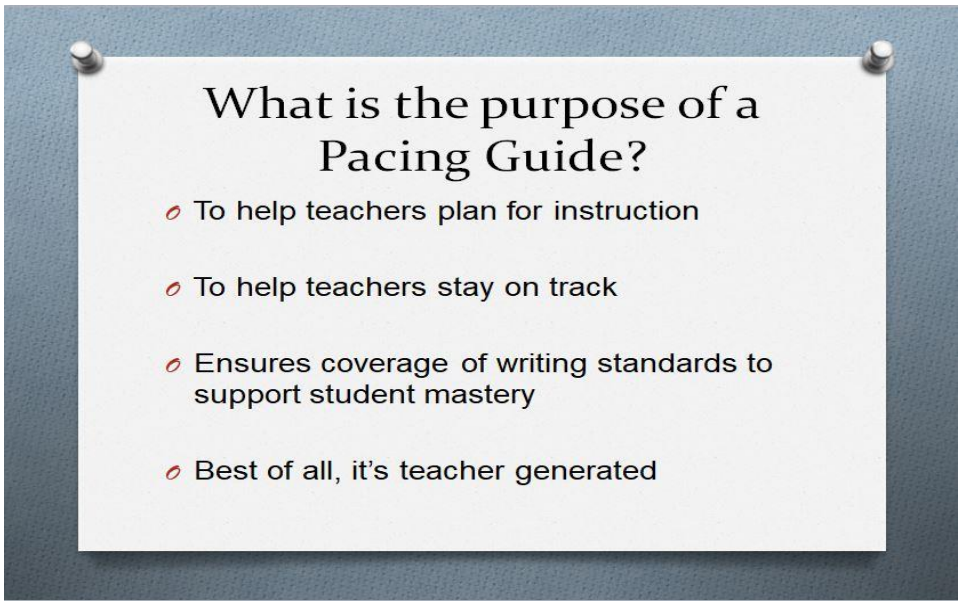
- Give an overview of these three standards that focuses heavily on the writing process.
- Explain that these three standards are practically the same across all grade levels, but that doesn't minimize their importance.
- Standard 4 and 5 explains the process of writing, and standard 10 emphasizes the importance of students writing routinely and more often.
- These standards play an integral role in students' mastery of the other standards.



- Teachers take a 10-minute break.
- Make sure your laptops are charged for the next activity.
- Remind teachers about the parking lot.

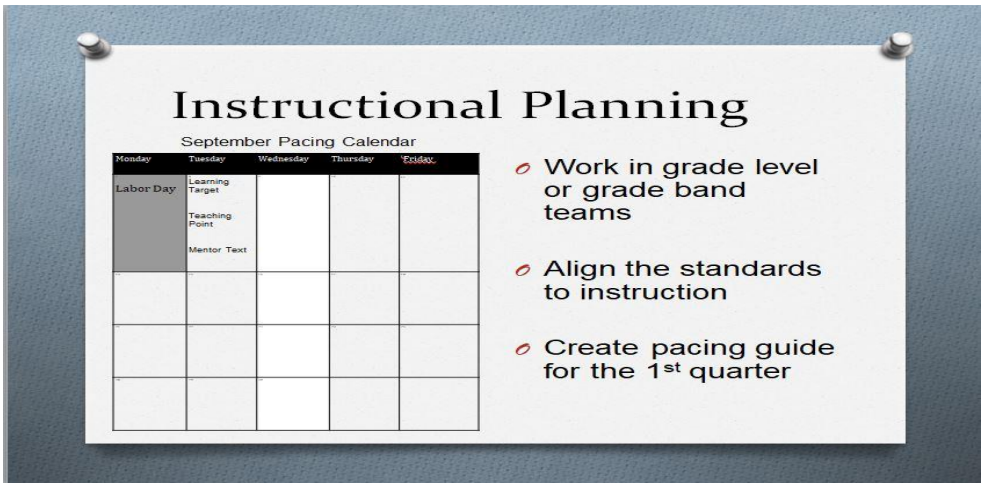


- Ask teachers to log into CoreStandards.org if they haven't already done so.
- Direct them to Appendix C to explore the sample texts that students are expected to be able to produce at different grade levels.
- Select a few student samples to explore.
- Generate a discussion of the quality of writing that is expected at each grade level.
- These writing pieces are examples of what students should be able to do at each grade level.
- Ultimately, the commonality is that students are expected to develop well-crafted writing pieces at a high level of proficiency.



- Ask teachers to close their laptops and transition into the next task.
- Discuss the purpose of a pacing guide and its benefits for instruction.
- Ask teachers to read an article about pacing in groups of 4 using the Jigsaw method.
- Assign a section to each teacher or have them divide it up accordingly
- After the reading is complete, each teacher in the group will share a
- synopsis of their assigned section. The facilitator will debrief before lunch.

- Teachers you have one hour for lunch. Please return promptly at 1 pm so that we can form groups and get started right away on the creation of our pacing guides.



- The facilitator will pass out pacing guide template as well as share it with teachers electronically to create the final draft.
- Ask teachers to form groups with teachers in their same grade level or grade level band.
- Collaboratively work in grade level or grade band teams to develop a pacing guide for the first quarter of the school year.
- Where will you cover the standards? What will be your teaching points?
- What could make for a great mentor text to teach the skill or strategy?
- Teachers need to consider specific teaching points to address collaboratively so that there is consistency across grade levels, and students are prepared for the next grade writing expectations.

- Bring the group back together. Make final statements and remarks.
- Ask are there any questions and answer any final questions.
- This has been a great three days of working with you.
- Please complete the evaluation form before you leave today.

Day 3- Summative Professional Development Evaluation

Title of Workshop- Effective Writing Instruction

Please rate the following statements based on your experience with 1 being strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3-neutral, 4-agree, and 5-strongly agree.

1. The professional development workshop objectives were met.

   Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

2. The professional development sessions were relevant to my learning needs.

   Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

3. The professional development activities catered to my adult learning style.

   Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

4. The PD sessions provided me with useful knowledge/strategies for classroom use.

   Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

5. The facilitator was knowledgeable about the topic.

   Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

6. The facilitator was prepared and presented materials in an organized manner.

   Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

Strengths of the PD sessions: Overall, what were the most impactful experiences and features of the 3-day workshop?

Suggested Improvements: What are some suggestions for improvement of the 3-day workshop?

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Participant Number_____ Grade Level_____

Date of Interview_____ Number of Years Teaching_____

1. How often do you teach writing?
2. How would you describe your familiarity with the Common Core State Writing Standards?
3. How do you align your writing instruction to the CCSS?
4. What specific challenges have you encountered while teaching writing?
5. How many college courses did you have in your education program specific to teaching writing effectively?
6. Since the implementation of CCSS, what specific trainings have you received to aide in teaching writing effectively?
7. What instructional strategies do you feel are effective to teach writing that aligns with the standards?
8. How do you feel about your ability to teach writing that aligns with the CCSS?
9. What resources, if any, are needed in order for you to teach writing more effectively?
10. What do you feel is needed to improve writing instruction and student writing performance at the elementary level?