2017

Best Practices for Improving the Writing of 3rd and 4th Grade Students

Parastou Afshar Eftekhari
Walden University

Walden University

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Parastou Afshar Eftekhari

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. Tom Cavanagh, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. Sheilia Goodwin, Committee Member, Education Faculty
Dr. Anita Dutrow, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer

Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2017

Abstract

Best Practices for Improving the Writing of 3rd and 4th Grade Students

by

Parastou Afshar Eftekhari

MS, Counseling Education, Florida International University, 2006

BA, Psychology, Florida International University, 2003

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

July 2017

Abstract

Scores on a state comprehensive assessment test showed that writing skills of 4th grade students enrolled in a K-8 magnet school in the southeastern part of the United States were below target. The assistant principal of the K-8 magnet school explained that a review of 3-year longitudinal data revealed that the number of students who met proficiency for the 4th grade writing assessment decreased by 1% each year. The purpose of this case study was to gain an understanding from teachers about the best practices on how to improve students' writing skills. Denzin and Lincoln's constructivist theoretical concepts of accommodation and assimilation of learning were the basis of the conceptual framework. The research focused on how 3rd and 4th grade magnet school teachers described best practices to improve their students' writing skills. Data were gathered from three sources: (a) semistructured interviews with 5, 3rd grade and 5, 4th grade literacy teachers, (b) review of 10 lesson plans and 10 students' writing samples, and (c) 10 classroom observations. Based on the findings from the data, the following themes led to the professional development training: (a) oral activities to discuss as a class, (b) group discussions to gather feedback, (c) feedback to monitor progress, and (d) corrections. This professional development training is intended to strengthen the participating teachers' abilities to improve the writing skills of their students. The implications for positive social change ~~is~~ training teachers how to effectively instruct diverse elementary students to communicate effectively in writing.

Best Practices for Improving the Writing of 3rd and 4th Grade Students

by

Parastou Afshar Eftekhari

MS, Counseling Education, Florida International University, 2006

BA, Psychology, Florida International University, 2003

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

July 2017

Dedication

This project is dedicated to my loving parents, Mitra and Iraj Afshar, and to my loving and supportive husband, Dr. Parham Eftekhari. Your support and patience throughout my doctoral journey made me go forth and strive to reach the finish line. To my extended family and close friends, I thank you for your endless support and love. I would like to also thank my cousin, Sarah Rezai, for your continuous support from the moment I decided to take on this journey. This has been a dream for me to reach what I call it my finishing line.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge everyone that was there during my doctoral journey. I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Cavanagh for his outstanding mentorship, guidance and academic leadership throughout my project. I also would like to thank Dr. Goodwin and Dr. Dutrow for further supporting my academic endeavors and research project. Lastly, this project would not have been possible without the support of Mrs. Barbara M. Martin for assisting with the data collection and for providing me with the school resource information when it was time for me to develop my proposal.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Section 1: The Problem

Writing skills represent a component of literacy. Scores on the state comprehensive assessment test showed that writing skills of 4th grade students enrolled in a K-8 magnet school in the southeastern part of the United States were below target. The purpose of this case study was to gain an understanding from teachers about the best practices on how to improve students' writing skills. Section 1 includes a comprehensive discussion focused on the central phenomenon for this study, that is, improving students' writing skills. I provided the rationale for the selection of the problem, the definition of unique terms, the significance of the problem, and the research questions. I also included a review of related literature, with emphasis on researchers studying the topic of student literacy skills. I concluded this section with possible implications and a summary.

The Local Problem

To address the research problem, I designed this study to explore the perceptions of 3rd and 4th grade teachers in one magnet school, regarding the best practices of improving their students' literacy skills in writing. The study took place in a magnet school in the southern part of the United States. For the purposes of this study, I described a magnet school as a school with an International Baccalaureate program and a dual language curriculum. Students in the program are selected to either participate in the Portuguese or Spanish program. To attend this magnet school, students must have passed the appropriate grade level entrance-exam that evaluated each student's ability to participate at the grade level the student wishes to enter. The exam was derived from students' literacy and writing skills in both their primary and chosen, secondary language.

Once the student had passed the exam and found success in the lottery, district office administrators entered their name in a lottery system. The administrators send letters of acceptance to the students' parents.

Over the course of the past 3 years, the state changed the proficiency standard for the writing assessment in 4th grade. In 2012, the state proficiency standard equaled 3.0 or higher; in 2013 and 2014, the state proficiency standard equaled 3.5 or higher. Students who scored within the proficiency standard range identified by the state met the grade level expectation. The assistant principal explained that a review of 3-year longitudinal data revealed that the number of students who met proficiency for the writing assessment at the magnet school in 4th grade decreased from 73% in 2012, to 72% in 2013, and to 71% in 2014 (Mrs. Martin, 2014).

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

To understand the magnet school, where I conducted the study, I provided context in the demographic characteristics of the students listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Students in the Magnet School

Race	Percentage
Hispanic-Americans	68%
Caucasian-Americans	26%
African-Americans	4%
Asian-Americans	1%
Multicultural	1%

Each school in the south must design and implement its own plan in the teaching and assessing of writing skills to students (McDermott, 2011). No standardized guidelines, related to teaching writing skills, existed at the participating magnet school. The 4th grade chairperson at the magnet school confirmed this problem, stating, "There are no specific standardized guidelines in teaching writing; rather, we are provided with the expectations of what the expected results should be" (Personal communication, Velazquez, 2014). As a result, teachers in all grade levels and subject areas at the school shared the responsibility in establishing realistic goals that promoted the development of writing skills based on best practices for teaching writing skills.

A need existed to understand the current best practices at the school for teaching writing and the alignment between those practices and the best practices for teaching writing. The assistant principal at the magnet school said, "Grade level chairs should work collaboratively with other grade levels to develop what best practices could be practiced within not only their grade level but looking forward to the next grade level"

(Personal Communication, 2014). Based on a constructivist approach to the study, best practices remain contextually bound to the participating school. To address the research problem, I designed the purpose of this study to explore the perceptions of 3rd and 4th grade teachers in the magnet school, regarding the best practices of improving their students' literacy skills in writing.

Evidence of the Problem From the Professional Literature

Scholars have noted the difficulty of teaching literacy skills, including writing. Teaching literacy skills varied from teaching other subjects, such as mathematics and science, as students must express themselves, but often in a manner that they do not practice in other environments (Horner, Lu, Royster, & Trimbur, 2011). For example, teachers of subjects such as science and mathematics often sought unaccented English in speech and Standard English in writing at the expense of the vitality of expression in those students (Horner et al., 2011). However, I evaluated the expressions of students depending on if they could write their thoughts well.

With literacy, competent teachers should guide the students. In the U.S., Horner et al. (2011) contended that traditional approaches to the teaching of literacy skills operate under the assumption of heterogeneity in language as an impediment towards communication and meaning. This remained inconsistent with reality in countries where multiple cultural groups coexisted, students spoke more than one language, and "the Englishes they use vary and multiply" (Horner et al., 2011, p. 303). Feedback from teachers, who continued to hold outdated assumptions about how students should write, may prove to be an impediment to improving students' writing skills. I observed this

effect in the study conducted by Parr and Timperley (2010), where quality feedback from teachers demonstrated as significantly related to their students' performances on a nationally standardized assessment test.

Without understanding the best practices to teaching writing skills, receiving the proper training to undertake these approaches, and the establishment of a writing curriculum, writing teachers may remain unable to provide the quality feedback required to improve writing skills. However, this issue created an even larger problem (Cheng & Yeh, 2009). I also considered the problem of teaching writing skills from the perspective of literacy, as a basic human right. Schools have a legal and ethical obligation to provide all students with opportunities to learn literacy, including writing.

Significance of the Study

A need existed to study the perception of teachers, regarding what they thought or perceived constitutes best practices for improving students' writing skills. I felt this study remained important for the magnet school because it provided educators with information about what instructional methodology should stay adopted to ensure the improvement of writing skills of students. The best practices that I identified from the interviews, documents, and classroom observations, I used to develop the guidelines that teachers in the selected magnet school could follow to improve students' writing skills. These writing skills remained critical for an individual student's success in academics and in their future workplaces.

In a world where full literacy and excellent communication skills remain viewed as a necessity, rather than a luxury, the need for students to write effectively remains

important (Whiteman, 2013). This means that schools must meet the challenges of educating its students on how to write effectively (Whiteman, 2013). An individual's lack of articulation may disguise his or her actual knowledge and hinder future academic and professional success.

Research Question

I considered the research problem that currently, no standardized guidelines related to teaching writing skills exists at the participating magnet school. I observed a lack of understanding of the best practices used at the school for teaching writing skills and how these best practices aligned and supported relevant literature in the writing field. As such, I focused this study on the exploration of the perceptions of 3rd and 4th grade teachers in the magnet school, regarding the best practices of improving their students' literacy skills in writing.

I formulated the main research question to address the problem and to guide this study. In alignment with the research problem and purpose, I posed the following research question:

> How do 3rd and 4th grade magnet school teachers describe the best practices to improve their students' writing skills?

Review of the Literature

I explored the perceptions of 3rd and 4th grade teachers in one magnet school, regarding the best practices of improving their students' writing scores. To establish the problem and situate it within the context of the scholarly literature in the field of education, I reviewed related literature of 144 articles. I conducted the search for relevant

literature with the following search terms: *literacy, teaching writing, situated learning cognitive theory,* and *Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test*. The databases that I searched included the Walden University library, Google Scholar, EBSCOhost, ERIC, ProQuest, and the ProQuest dissertation database. I chose these databases because they could provide the information that I required in this review.

Conceptual Framework

I used the constructivist theory as the conceptual framework for this study. I used this framework as a guide for data collection and analysis. Constructivist theorists, such as Denzin and Lincoln (2002), believed that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through their experiences and reflections about these experiences. When individual encounters something new, then the individual must reconcile it with his or her previous ideas and experiences. The individual will then decide whether he or she must change his or her previous beliefs or discard the new information. In this theory, the individual represented an active creator of his or her own knowledge.

Denzin and Lincoln (2013) also stated, "Constructivism adopts a relativist ontology (relativism), a transactional epistemology, and a hermeneutic, dialectical methodology. Users of this paradigm are oriented to the production of reconstructed understandings of the social world" (p. 158). This remained consistent with the goal of the study, to explore the perceptions of 3rd and 4th grade teachers in the magnet school, regarding the best practices of improving their students' literacy skills in writing. The teachers provided their perceptions and observations. With the data collected, I

reconstructed a holistic understanding of the teachers, regarding what they thought represented best practices of improving their students' literacy skills in writing.

In this study, I aimed to connect "action to praxis and build on anti-foundational arguments while encouraging experimental and multi-voiced texts" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p. 158). I aimed to explore the different concepts and ways teachers utilized teaching literacy skills to students, which related to writing. In the constructivist worldview, meaning remained contextually bound; I limited my study to one context, the magnet school. I wanted to serve as an organizer and presenter to reconstruct the multiple voices of the teachers because these multiple voices represented the multiple realities, existing in the magnet school.

Denzin and Lincoln (2013) provided a description of the new paradigm, stating that it involved "an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world" (p. 3). The research study "is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p. 3), and caused me as the researcher to "study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 3). As I searched for meaning in the context of the magnet school, the constructivist paradigm gave voice to my worldview that (a) multiple realities existed, (b) it remained better to study something in its context, and (c) reconstructing knowledge from different perspectives would lead to new knowledge and understanding about the topic.

I noted that in accordance with Hatch's (2002) explanation as a constructivist, I adopted the typological method of data analysis, which represented a method often used

by postpositivists (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; van Manen, 1990). I used this method of data analysis to bring structure to the data analysis process. In this way, I hoped to uncover the lived realities of the participants, regarding the phenomenon of interest.

Students' Literacy Skills

The National Curriculum Board (NCB, 2009) posited that literacy referred to reading, writing, speaking, viewing, and listening effectively in a wide range of contexts. A modern definition of literacy includes a flexible, sustainable mastery of a set of capabilities in the utilization and production of texts and technologies that can aid in the use of spoken language, print, and multimedia (NCB, 2009). Literate students represent those who can adjust and modify their use of language to effectively address contextual demands of certain situations (NCB, 2009).

According to Waldfogel (2012), when U.S. children enter school, their backgrounds can largely determine their reading skills, deriving from their family's socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, and immigration status. Waldfogel posited literacy gaps exist before children even start school. Those literacy disparities derived from conditions outside of schools, such as the children's families and communities. Waldfogel explained that different out-of-school factors affected the literacy gaps, such as parenting style, lack of sources, parental proficiency, literacy, and others. However, no matter the factors affecting the literacy gaps in today's children, schools, especially the teachers, have a responsibility to try to close such gaps (Afflerbach et al., 2013).

Recent assessments showed that reading abilities of students have decreased. Because of these assessments, the issue of adolescent literacy has been a topic of debate amongst educators, and the federal government has offered to fund programs designed toward adolescent literacy (Arthur & Hiebert, 2011; Barrow, Brock, & Rouse, 2013). A need existed to implement literacy instruction into both high school and middle school curriculums. Attempts at such implementation have not equaled success. In many cases teachers remained unprepared to put into action content literacy approaches, in addition to the practices linked to content literacy instruction remained inconsistent with the conventional cultures and traditions found in middle and high schools (Barrow et al., 2013; Tleuzhanova & Madenyatova 2014). Teacher efficacy remained of the utmost importance, as it pertains to literacy instruction. Barrow et al. (2013) observed that teacher efficacy remained essential to literacy implementation because it stayed context specific.

Best Practices for Teaching Writing

Writing remains an important skill; it can help in persuading other people and remains essential for attaining jobs. Writing represents the main mode of communication used online. In the field of education, the writing skills of students represent the best indication of teachers' capabilities toward their students (Boyd, 2012). Negative consequences, associated with below-average writing skills, include a decrease in interpersonal relationships, the quality of their jobs, and the quality of their lives (Duncan et al., 2013). Writing not only provides a gateway for knowledge acquisition, but also supports and extends the "comprehension and learning of content material presented in

class or text" (Graham, 2012, p. 197). This represents one reason why it remains important to teach students how to write proficiently.

Having a clear model or writing style is important factor in success and produces a well-written piece. The elements of a writing workshop model, when implemented in a classroom-setting, can foster the development of a writer's identity in students (Chan et al. 2014). The exploration of developmental characteristics, common in a young person in the upper elementary grades, can influence an individual's self-perception (Graham et al., 2012). The discussion of several aspects of an ideal learning context, through which educators can provide students with meaningful and authentic writing opportunities, fosters development of a writers' identity (Chen, Liu, Shih, Wu, & Yuan, 2012). It reflects a reiterative act; however, the students will learn best if they can write repeatedly.

Teachers can evaluate students' skills in writing based on the year level of the students. According to a document published by the U.S. Department of Education (2011), only 24% of U.S. students from eighth and 12th grades are proficient in writing. Given the ubiquity of writing in the lives of these students through e-mailing, blogging, texting, and other forms of electronic writing, this represented a cause for concern (Muji & Reynold, 2015). The low rates of writing proficiency have prompted principals and other education stakeholders to push for methods that could increase this rate and help their students in their goals, whether the goals involved pursuing higher education, securing a job that pays a living wage, or participating fully in social and civic activities (Graham, 2012). If the proficiency of U.S. students in writing does not improve, they

may find it difficult to achieve their goals and contribute meaningfully toward their society.

Professional Development of Writing Teachers

Various obstacles exist in writing that teachers and students must face before they can effectively complete the task. While teachers do have the responsibility of assisting students in overcoming obstacles related to writing (Kelm & McIntosh, 2012), this may seem difficult to achieve if teachers remain unaware or negatively biased, regarding how their students write. Teachers must shape the way they teach based on the future, and not on the past (Shabani, Khatib, & Ebadi, 2010). It remains important that writing teachers stay aware of the latest developments in teaching writing and cultural differences in writing.

Teachers need to have continuous training to impart writing skills to the students. The increased emphasis on school accountability in recent years has led to the examination of the role of teachers in the education of their students (Poekert, 2012). Researchers have previously noted the influence of teachers on their students' writing scores. However, teaching methods can sometimes differ based on subjective factors, such as teacher personality and teaching style. The instructional adaptations used by writing teachers can also differ (Graham, Harris, Bartlett, Popadopoulou, & Santoro, 2016). This may lead to teachers using certain instructional adaptations more often and may make other ways less acceptable.

The rapid change in the understanding of culture and society affects perceptions of the various ways people can express their ideas through language. Wasik and Hindman

(2011) conducted a randomized control study with preschool teachers, where two groups of Head Start teachers volunteered as participants. One group received intensive, ongoing professional development, while the other received normal professional development provided by Head Start (Wasik & Hindman, 2012). The researchers learned that the professional development of the teachers who teach writing should remain ongoing.

The results of the study supported the importance of professional development, especially in teachers of writing. The group that received intensive professional development helped teachers with their conceptual knowledge and provided them with instructional strategies used to support the students' "development of vocabulary, alphabet knowledge, and phonological sensitivity" (Wasik & Hindman, 2011, p. 455). After 1 academic year, the children taught by the teachers in the intervention group exhibited significantly better scores on measures of receptive vocabulary and phonological sensitivity (Marulis & Neuman, 2013). This showed the possible influence of professional development in teachers of writing.

Teaching Literacy Collaboratively

Collaborative work remains essential to unfolding important issues within the teaching curriculum, including the teaching of writing. Teachers who work together benefit from opportunities to expand on professional knowledge and acquire best practices in education from one another that they can apply in the classroom, enhancing teaching and learning (Hughes et al., 2013). Collaboration among teachers remains important, not just to the development of teachers, but also for the students (Berry, 2010). Teachers who actively collaborate embrace conflicting opinions, strategies, and inquiries

in a productive manner, while promoting the development of shared leadership skills and interpersonal growth (Hipp & Huffmann, 2010; Levin & Marcus, 2010). When teachers stay open to collaboration, they gain a holistic perspective to engage learners, who may not come from the same background. Teachers can develop new concepts that they may not develop individually (Berry, 2010). By engaging in a collaborative work setting, educators can set similar goals and have the tools to continue developing strategies that will promote interpersonal growth within their teachings. The interaction of the students with fellow students, their teachers, and the society that they live in reflects an important factor, ensuring they will have something to write.

Source-based writing assignments conducted by groups of students represent a common learning task used in information literacy instruction (Sormunen, Tanni, Alamettala, & Heinstrom, 2014). The fundamental assumption, deriving from in-group assignments, remains that the collaboration of students substantially enhances their learning (Wardle & Roozen, 2012). The Situated Learning Cognitive Theory (SLCT) was influenced by two previous theories developed to understand human behavior: the theory of social interdependence (TSI) and the cognitive development theory (CDT). These led to the emergence of a collaborative environment in education (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1991).

Among contemporary means of enhancing student learning, formative assessment represents one of the most important and effective (Robinson, Myran, Strauss, & Reed, 2014). Robinson et al. noted that great teaching development would always stay helpful for the progress of the educational system. While formative assessment ideas and

practices have demonstrated as a proven, record-enhancing, student learning, teachers slowly integrate these practices into their day-to-day classroom practices (du Plessis & Webb, 2012). In daily activities, writing should represent a task that students remain focused on learning.

Writing Instruction Interventions

Researchers have tried different writing interventions to see which strategies work best with a specific set of students. In a meta-analysis of writing instruction for elementary students, Graham, McKeown, Kiuhara, and Harris (2012) examined literature on writing interventions, focusing their efforts on true and quasi-experiments. They observed 116 documents that included the statistics required for computing an effect size, and used these to determine the average weighted ES for 13 writing interventions. All writing interventions used by Graham et al. had previously tested positively in at least four studies. The studies revealed that different interventions among different sets of students might become required. The acceptability of writing interventions must also obtain examination to ensure that writing teachers stay comfortable using such interventions in their classroom.

Graham et al. (2014) randomly selected 125 primary-grade teachers from across the U.S. to discover the rate in which they utilized 20 instructional adaptations for their struggling writing students. Graham et al. used a 6-point Likert-type scale to measure this, along with the acceptability of each instructional adaptation, based on five dimensions: “suitability, effectiveness, negative effects, time to apply, and implementation know-how” (p. 879). Graham et al. concluded their most common

instructional adaptations included providing extra encouragement and extra time for their students in writing assignments. All the participants deemed the adaptations acceptable (Graham et al., 2014). This may indicate that these instructional adaptations for writing can work across various demographics of struggling writers. The peer feedback on student writing represents a core element in ensuring the writing style of the students improves, as they continue in their learning processes.

Schools play an important role in developing the writing skills of the students by ensuring the teachers who teach the subject stay qualified. Schools, in favor of addressing short-term gains, have overlooked the actual issue of improving students' reading and writing skills. A significant number of principals in the grade school level and above remain primarily concerned with meeting state standards, rather than focusing on the actual methods that they employ to improve reading and writing skills (Dunn, 2011; Graham, MacArthur, & Fitzgerald, 2013). Hewitt (2011) contended that this might lead to teachers who simply teach to the test, rather than improving the knowledge and skills of their students. Such methods may prove shortsighted, as it can seem intuitive that the most certain way of improving the students' scores on standardized tests and meeting state standards involves improving their knowledge (Dunn, 2011; Graham et al., 2013). If students can comprehend the content presented to them by their writing teachers, this will also afford them more opportunities to evaluate their knowledge in terms of real life situations, thus strengthening their grasp of the material (Dunn, Airola, Lo, & Garrison, 2013). By understanding how best to present course content to students, teachers can fulfill their state's requirements without compromising their goals as educators.

Implications

The purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions of 3rd and 4th grade teachers in one magnet school, regarding the best practices of improving their students' writing skills. An understanding of these teachers' views can lead to the identification of issues that serve as barriers toward the improvement of students' writing skills. The findings of the study helped address the below-target scores in writing by influencing school administrators to develop a model that could help increase their students' knowledge and skills in writing by providing information for the development of a professional seminar or planning guide for teaching writing. My findings became instrumental, providing the basis for an intervention program that can aid teachers in improving the writing skills of 4th grade students. An example of such a program included a professional development-training program for 4th grade teachers, incorporating the best practices for teaching writing skills. The training curriculum and materials included the purpose, goals, and learning outcomes, reflective of the best practices findings, emerging from analysis of the data, and as presented by the literature review. The professional development training ran for 3 full days to incorporate the insights presented by the teachers interviewed for this study.

Summary

I explored the perceptions of 3rd and 4th grade teachers in a magnet school, regarding the best practices of improving their students' writing skills. I addressed the problem that teachers of the magnet school needed a better understanding on ways to improve their students' literacy skills, involving improvement in speaking and reading

skills and developing methods that could make their students' education in writing more effective. This section included a comprehensive discussion of the problem, the definition of the problem, and the rationale behind this problem, the definitions used in the study, the significance of the study, and the research questions that I posed for the study. I reviewed related literature, which I divided into three subheadings: the conceptual framework, the literature on students' writing skills, and the challenges that teachers face in teaching students writing.

I also recognized a problem deriving from low scores on writing tests at the local site in the field of education. By investigating the perceptions of teachers in the magnet school, I hoped to have gained a clearer idea on how to address ways to improve their students' writing skills. The first section ended with a description of the implications of this study.

In the next section, I will discuss the methodology I chose to achieve the purpose of this study. I will discuss the design and appropriateness of the method, as well as the population and sampling, the data collection process, the instrumentation, and the data analysis. Lastly, I provided a conclusion before the next section.

Section 2: The Methodology

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of 3rd and 4th grade teachers in a magnet school, regarding the best practices of improving their students' writing skills. I formulated the research question for the study to allow 3rd and 4th grade teachers to describe what they think the best practices to improve their students' writing skills involve. I focused on eliciting qualitative information from the 3rd and 4th grade teachers to address the research problem and research question. The best practices for teaching writing skills were used as the typologies for the analysis of the data. Those typologies were based on what the literature described as the best practices for teaching writing. In that way, a comparison could be made between what the teachers were doing and what the literature identified as best practices. Analysis of the data showed there were some areas that needed to be used for teaching writing by all teachers. I used constructivist theory as my conceptual framework in order to provide structure to the data analysis process of the study.

I used a qualitative research approach for this study. Differences exist between the qualitative approach and the quantitative approach. A quantitative method reflects a more precise approach in conducting research, especially when a researcher wants to measure or compare items. For example, a researcher may employ this approach to compare 3rd grade writing scores to 4th grade writing scores (Silverman, 2009). Researchers utilizing a qualitative method allow for a more in-depth discussion and analysis of the research and use it for increasing their understandings of a phenomenon or perspective. Some

researchers prefer one method to another, and some researchers choose to use mixed methods, taking advantage of the benefits of each method in one study (Creswell, 2013).

The method a researcher chooses to use in a study remains important. As I explored the subjective perceptions of teachers, I determined a qualitative case study method represented the most appropriate method because it involves understanding complex phenomena by gathering in-depth data from various sources of information (Stake, 2005). I deemed a quantitative research design as inappropriate for the purpose of this study because an exploration of the underlying attitudes and beliefs of the teachers remain beyond the reach of a quantitative research design (Silverman, 2011). Moreover, no definite variables existed regarding the problem of this study that could yield numerical data for quantitative analysis (Creswell, Klassen, Clark, & Smith, 2011). Given the complex nature of the problem of this study and the various solutions proposed for it, a qualitative case study remained useful to describe and identify how a specific group of teachers perceive the problem and what they perceive as the best practices to address the problem.

I used a case study as the specific qualitative research design (Stake, 2005). Stake (2005) stated that one must obtain multiple sources of information for case studies. Stake emphasized the role of the researcher as the main interpreter, making the case studies appear “more human” and “transcendent” (p. 443). Stake described a case as a “system with boundaries” (p. 443). My role as researcher in this case study was to determine the coherence and sequence of the features inside these boundaries.

In this instance, the bounded case consisted of a group of 3rd and 4th grade teachers who teach writing in one school. Stake (2005) noted the contexts of the case could make the relationships between the factors under study more understandable. In this study, I explored the relationship between students' writing skills and teachers' roles and practices in teaching these skills in the classroom. However, I stayed reflective in considering impressions and exploring the recollections of participants. I ensured I explored participants' perceptions, the meanings of these perceptions, and their relation to the context. The case study approach for Stake represented a "reflective" (p. 433) process.

According to Leedy and Ormond (2010), the case study research design allows researchers to evaluate and explore how and why questions by analyzing a complex case or multiple complex cases for a particular period. Researchers choose the method, carrying out studies to identify unique features of an issue, activity, program, or individual. Yin (2009) claimed that an exploratory case study enables researchers to analyze a case by asking general questions, which allows the building of relevant propositions, and can then lead to the discovery and discussion of a larger study subject or issue. This process allows researchers to develop insight into the localized problem and develop an idea or project from the findings generated by the study.

Qualitative approaches, such as case studies, offer more richness of data, as compared to quantitative approaches, especially if researchers collect data through interviews that allow the participants to use their words to express their perceptions (Creswell, 2013). This reasoning reflects why researchers, who want to answer what and

how questions, often choose a qualitative approach, as it allows researchers to form valid inferences from events in their natural settings and not in a controlled environment. According to Leedy and Ormond (2010), researchers choose a case study research design with objectives of determining unique attributes of events, activities, or individuals. I chose an instrumental case study research design because this type of designed remained less defined and more open-ended, which allowed me to study an instance or case through a bounded system (Stake, 2005). I felt this type of case study remained most appropriate for a case like this that has not undergone extensive empirical research.

Participants

I chose the participants for this study from teachers in a magnet school located in the southern part of the U.S. The interview sample consisted of 10 teachers who taught writing. A total of five 3rd-grade and five 4th-grade teachers taught in the selected magnet school. I invited the teachers to participate in order to obtain an understanding of what the best practices entailed from their perspective. I reviewed the student writing assessments and assessment criteria, used by all 10 teachers, conducted classroom observations in addition to the interviews, and performed a document analysis of the participants' lesson plans.

The number of participants represented an important factor in ensuring that I achieved saturation of the data collected. According to Englander (2012), the exact number of participants needed for a qualitative study remains undefined; the goal of revealing the essential structure of the phenomenon being explored remains important, which defines when saturation occurs. Studies with fewer participants can still collect the

same amount of data, if not collect more, given the extra time that having fewer participants can afford the researcher (Mason, 2010). This process allowed for a deeper analysis of the perceptions collected from the teachers through the interviews.

I gained access to the participants through a letter of cooperation from leaders of the subject magnet school, who I asked to grant their permission for the teachers' participation in this study. I followed the formal ethical procedures for conducting research set by the school and Walden University. Participants who volunteered to participate completed the informed consent forms. A working relationship between the participants and me was established by ensuring the participants that I was also a teacher, and I was not there to judge or evaluate them, instead, my goal involved gathering their perspectives about the best practices to teach writing. In my role as a teacher in the school, I did not supervise or evaluate the interviewed teachers. I also assured the participants that, although I was a teacher in the school, that role remained separate from this study. I informed them that I was a doctoral student at Walden University, which represented my role in this study.

While it remained theoretically possible that no teachers might choose to participate in this study, I felt it was practically impossible, given two reasons: (a) I assumed that teachers would want to assist in studies that could help them discover ways to engage their students in learning how to write, and (b) the leaders of the magnet school assured me that a majority of the 4th grade-writing teachers have expressed willingness to seek better ways of engaging their students to improve literacy skills. As such, the inclusion criteria for this study were: (a) currently teach in either 3rd-grade or 4th-grade

level, (b) currently work in the selected magnet school, and (c) taught writing or literacy skills.

The procedures for gaining access to the participants for this study were, (a) I invited all teachers that taught 3rd and 4th grade at the school, personally, to participate in the study after gaining approval from the administrator; and (b) I discussed face-to-face with the teachers the purpose of the study and what I expected from them if they decided to participate in the study.

Primarily, the participants for this study were only teachers that taught in 3rd and 4th grade. I selected these teachers to participate because I wanted to analyze and provide an understanding of what the problem is and what strategies were needed to be implemented, based on student performance in the state standardized writing assessments. I kept all information gathered confidential. The training that I received from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) research ethics course helped me maintain an environment of mutual respect in the data gathering process. While anonymity did not technically apply for this study because of the use of face-to-face interviews, I provided confidentiality by using pseudonyms for the participants. I also affirmed institutional and organizational confidentiality in this study.

I followed the requirements of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University to protect the rights of all participating individuals and institutions. Once the Walden University's IRB conditionally approved the study, then I provided the proposal and Walden University's IRB letter of conditional approval to the research department of the school district where data collection occurred for approval. Once I obtained a letter of

approval from the school district, I submitted the approval letter to Walden University's IRB for final approval of the IRB application, which was approved with an approval number of 12-02-15-0324114.

I provided the informed consent form to the participants for their voluntary signature to ensure that they remained fully aware of the benefits and risks associated with their participation in this study. I included in the consent form, their rights and the approximate duration of their participation, to allow them to assess whether they had the time to participate. I made no written records or oral recordings with information that could link that information to the participants.

Data Collection

In-Depth Interviews

I used interviews as my main data collection technique. See Appendix B for the interview questions. Using this method, I engaged in a conversation with the 10 teacher participants, individually, by using open-ended questions that I formulated to explore the interviewee's perceptions, regarding the central phenomenon (Turner, 2010). To attain a precise understanding of this phenomenon, I used interviews as one of the data collection techniques, which allowed the participants to use their words to describe their experiences (Silverman, 2011). The interviews were conducted in a face-to-face context; nonverbal cues provided additional clues toward the understanding of the central phenomenon (Onwuegbuzie, Leech, & Collins, 2010). According to Hamill and Sinclair (2010), an unexplored topic becomes best addressed by using interviews, as it allows for the collection of data that depicts the experiences of the participants, as they perceive

these experiences. Given that the gap in practice exists regarding this problem, I required richer, more in-depth data for this study, which interviews seemed best able to provide.

I found advantages in having face-to-face interviews. I observed that face-to-face interviews allowed observation of nonverbal cues, and I formed a stronger rapport with the interviewees (Knox & Burkard, 2009). I used an interview protocol to ensure I discussed the essential aspects of the topic. Before beginning, I reviewed the relevant details in the interview protocol to ensure I conducted the interviews with the same set of questions for each participant.

During the interviews, I took notes and recorded the interviews by using an audio-recorder. I coded participants' names using pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality, which included a random number assigned to each participant. I transcribed the interviews, and I presented the transcribed interviews to the participants afterwards for accurate checking of their recorded responses. I applied alterations in the interview transcripts, as suggested by the participants, to clarify unclear responses as well as other answers or perceptions that they wanted to add to their responses. The interviews lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes and I held them in a private room in the selected magnet school.

Document Review

I requested student lesson plans from the 10 teachers I interviewed in order to gain further understanding of the meaning of the interview data. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), documents can provide the researcher with information about contexts, processes, and activities that can help indicate the need for more data, while strengthening the data collected from other sources. I deleted personally identifiable

information from the documents, so I ensured maintenance of individual confidentiality. I removed any information that could identify participating individuals.

My evaluation or review of student lesson plans focused on determining what 3rd and 4th grade teachers thought as the best practices on how to improve students' writing skills through the building of a lesson. My review of documents helped to reveal what teachers perceived as good or bad writing skills based on the assessment criteria that they usually used in grading a student's work. I analyzed the student lesson plans in order to gain a deeper understanding about what these teachers thought were writing best practices that teachers must possess. The lesson plans were used to obtain information from all participants in the study on what writing activities were being implemented in the class. The assessment criteria that was used was the lesson plan, including evidence of writing strategies. The strategies were selected based on effective writing techniques supported by research.

I analyzed 1 week of lesson plans from all 10 participants. Each lesson plan was from a different week within the 2015-2016 school year. By assessing and contrasting these teachers' lessons plans with the interview data, I was able to add evidence of triangulation to my results. Using document analysis in combination with interviews and observations not only provided another data point, but also allowed me to appropriately gain a rich understanding of teachers' literacy practices.

Observations

Ultimately, the classroom observations will help to validate and add more insights as to what are the best practices that teachers are currently doing in improving students'

writing skills. I conducted classroom observations to validate and gain a deeper understanding about the meaning of the interview data. who were interviewed with the aim of authenticating the responses of the teachers concerning the best and most effective writing skills they employed. I conducted the classroom observations by going to each classroom of the participants in the study and focused on the following three questions (a) how teachers established a positive atmosphere for students in learning to write, (b) how teachers established an atmosphere that fostered respect for and among students, and (c) how teachers encouraged students to listen to the discussion and to their classmates. I analyzed the observation data by using thematic analysis. In using thematic analysis to analyze the observation data, I closely read the data, then formed it into themes and placed it under categories. I refined the categories and revised continuously (Hatch, 2002).

Data Collection and Analysis Timeline

The following table served as a working timeline for the collection and analysis of the data used in this study. Table 2 contains the data collection and analysis timeline, which I followed in completing the current research study. (data collection and analysis timeline)

Table 2

Data Collection and Analysis Timeline

Phase	Explanation of activities	Weeks per Activity
Permissions	▪ Submitted an application and supporting documents to Walden IRB to ensure rights of human subjects will be protected. ▪ Upon obtaining the required Walden IRB, recruited participants and obtained written consented from those that will participate. ▪ Scheduled the interviews.	2-4 weeks 1week
Interviews	▪ Conducted 10 interviews, one interview every day. ▪ Obtained documents from teachers. ▪ Transcribed interviews. ▪ Began analyses of interview data.	2 weeks for all interviews 2 weeks concurrently with interviews 2 weeks 2 weeks
Document review	Analyzed document data.	2-3 weeks
Final data analysis	Conducted final data analysis.	1 month

Obtaining the permissions took 2 weeks. Scheduling the interviews took 1 week. Conducting the 10 interviews took 2 weeks in total, while obtaining the documents from teachers was concurrent with conducting the interviews. After the interviews, transcribing and analyses of the interview data took two weeks each. The document review took 2 weeks, while the final data analysis, which involved analyzing all the data, took a month to complete.

Data Analysis

Interviews

I recorded the data collected from the interviews through an audio recording device and transcribed the data. I reviewed and analyzed all of the data, using the method of typological analysis (Hatch, 2002). Hatch (2002) described typological analysis as "data analysis [that] starts by dividing the overall data set into categories or groups based on predetermined typologies. Typologies are generated from theory, common sense, and/or research objectives, and initial data processing happens within those typological groupings" (p. 152). Based on utilizing this typological method of analysis, I reviewed the literature to find the major factors considered best practices for teaching writing. These factors were represented in the typologies that I used for coding the data. I first reviewed the interview data to see what chunks of data fit with one or more of the typologies listed. I noted which typologies did not have any interview data attached. I felt this information was an important part of the findings as well as being important in creating a project for this study.

I listed each typology and cited the literature that supported the typology. Those data that I did not code by using typological analysis, I then analyzed by using inductive analysis (Thomas, 2006). Below includes the list of predetermined typologies, based on the literature regarding best practices for teaching writing. These predetermined typologies were selected primarily because Denzin and Lincoln constructivist theory discussed the perception that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through their experiences and reflections about these experiences. These typologies were used for the initial typological analysis:

- Teachers must establish a positive atmosphere for learning to write (Graham & McArthur, 2013). Teachers need to create a classroom atmosphere that fosters respect for and among students (Cheung, 2013; Flaherty & Choi, 2014; Gallo & Hermann, 2014; Locke, Whitehead, & Dix, 2013). Teachers should encourage students to listen to them and to their other classmates. Teachers should let students offer their ideas.
- Teacher as writer (Bromley, 2007; Cremin & Baker, 2014). Teachers must also engage in and practice writing. Teachers should share their writing. Teachers must share that they are part of the writing community within the classroom as well as outside the classroom.
- Teachers must relay expectations, procedures, and routines right from the start (Bromley, 2007). These must not be rigid or oppressive. However, they must remain sensible.

- Teachers must organize how they plan to teach writing (Bromley, 2007). Teachers must remain systematic. Teachers must plan the curriculum from the start. Teachers must take on a meaningful approach to writing, which can differ based on their students (e.g., multi genre, inquiry-based, theme writing, more others; (Graham et al., 2012).
- Teachers must present to students that there are meaningful reasons to write (Chen et al., 2011). Teachers must take ownership of work. Teachers need to realize that writing is not simply a school experience (e.g., authentic writing and publishing opportunities).
- Teachers must give students chances to read works of other writers to see how they implement certain styles (Cheung, 2013; Flaherty & Choi, 2014; Gallo & Hermann, 2014; Locke et al., 2013). Teachers must help students become familiar with the work of various writers. Teachers need to provide diverse reading materials.
- Teachers must ask students to write regularly and for different purposes (e.g., journaling, reflection papers, essays, reports, creative writing; Bromley, 2007).
- Teachers need to provide constructive feedback to writing outputs (Graham et al., 2014).
- Teachers must provide students the chance to provide constructive feedback to their classmates' writing outputs (Graham et al., 2014).

- Teachers should engage in collaborative activities (Wigglesworth & Storch, 2012).
- Teachers must undergo continuous professional development programs (Locke et al., 2013).

Inductive Analysis

Using the inductive analysis method, I first prepared the raw data files or cleaned the data. I formatted the transcribed data correctly, according to font size, margins, questions, and interviewer comments when necessary. I retained an original, raw data, backup file for all data that were cleaned. After cleaning the data, I read the text closely. Reading each data file closely revealed the themes and details that I found in the text (Hatch, 2002).

I expected that some transcribed data would remain inapplicable to any predetermined typological category; these data remained uncoded. I then inductively coded these data. For each category, I looked for more subtopics, which contained contradictory perspectives and new insights. I used the most appropriate quotes that conveyed or represented the essence of the theme or category. With inductive coding, I reduced the pages of transcribed data into segments, then numerous categories, then to around 15 categories, then to around three to eight categories in the end. These end categories served as themes for the main findings (Hatch, 2002).

Observations

I used classroom observations to observe what were the best practices the teachers used in the classrooms. I analyzed the observation data by using typological analysis. I

reviewed the classroom observation field notes in coordination with the interview transcripts. In using thematic analysis to analyze the observation data, I closely read the data, then formed it into themes, and then put it under categories. Then, I refined the categories and revised continuously (Hatch, 2002). Six typologies were found to be supported by the data in the observations: (1a) teachers must establish a positive atmosphere for learning to write (Graham & McArthur, 2013), (b) teachers must present to students that there are meaningful reasons to write (Chen et al., 2011), (c) teachers must give students chances to read works of other writers to see how they implement certain styles (Cheung, 2013; Flaherty & Choi, 2014; Gallo & Hermann, 2014; Locke et al., 2013), (d) teachers must ask students to write regularly and for different purposes (e.g., journaling, reflection papers, essays, reports, creative writing; Bromley, 2007), (e) teachers should engage in collaborative activities (Wigglesworth & Storch, 2012), and (f) teachers must undergo continuous professional development programs (Locke et al., 2013). No additional practices were observed in the observations. Furthermore, teachers did not ask students to write regularly for different purposes.

Documents

One kind of document was collected. I reviewed lesson plans spanning 1 week from each of the eight participants in an attempt to understand the convergences or deviations from best literary practices. These documents not only offered an invaluable source of information about the best practices identified in the interviews and observations but also acted as an instrumental part of triangulation. The analysis of the lesson plans supported only one of the typologies that were observed in the interviews:

teachers must relay expectations, procedures, and routines right from the start (Bromley, 2007). However, it should be noted that this typology was found within the homework facet of lesson plans, rather than the in-class lesson content. Lesson plan analysis did not support any of the other three typologies found in the interviews. In addition to the one typology from the interview data, the document review analysis also reinforced three typologies that were found within researcher observation: (a) teachers must present to students that there are meaningful reasons to write (Chen et al., 2011), (b) teachers must give students chances to read works of other writers to see how they implement certain styles (Cheung, 2013; Flaherty & Choi, 2014; Gallo & Hermann, 2014; Locke et al., 2013), and (c) teachers must ask students to write regularly and for different purposes (e.g., journaling, reflection papers, essays, reports, creative writing; Bromley, 2007). No additional practices were observed in the document analysis. Therefore, typological analysis of the documents did support one typology from the interviews and three from the observation; this suggests once again that what teachers talk about as the best practices are not necessarily borne out within their practices.

Data Analysis Results

I employed typological and inductive analyses derived from Hatch (2002) to analyze the interview data. I compared the typologies I found in the literature and identified which ones were supported by the data collected through the interviews, observations, and document analysis. I will also discuss in this section which typologies were consistent across all participants and any typologies that were not consistent across all participants.

Only four of the typologies listed above were supported by data from the interviews: (a) teachers must relay expectations, procedures, and routines right from the start (Bromley, 2007), (b) teachers must organize how they plan to teach writing (Bromley, 2007), (c) teachers need to provide constructive feedback to writing outputs (Graham et al., 2014), and (d) teachers must provide students the chance to provide constructive feedback to their classmates' writing outputs (Graham et al., 2014). Within the first and second typology, participants were asked "How do you manage the class when teaching writing skills?" Their answers, which correlated with both the first and second typology, included "Oral examples," "Read aloud," "Discuss as a class," "Oral language expression," "Brainstorm," "Talk amongst themselves," and engage with peers. For the 3rd typology, participants were asked two questions: "What activities/ways do you implement to ensure that students do understand what is/are being discussed in class?" and "What are some examples of the best writing skills that are learned and practiced in your class?" Participants responded: "Ask students;" "Give each other feedback;" "Classroom discussion;" "Ask questions;" "Pair in groups;" "Share thoughts for feedback;" "Feedback in writing;" "Feedback;" "Progress;" "Meeting individually;" "Open forum;" and "Question-response discussion." Within the 4th typology, teachers were asked, "What activities/ways do you implement to ensure that students do understand what is/are being discussed in class?" and "What are some examples of the best writing skills that are learned and practiced in your class?" The participants answered that they used "Monitoring to quickly correct students," "making corrections," and said that "Questions are welcome."

Within the observations six typologies were found: (a) teachers must establish a positive atmosphere for learning to write (Graham & McArthur, 2013), (b) teachers must present to students that there are meaningful reasons to write (Chen et al., 2011), (c) teachers must give students chances to read works of other writers to see how they implement certain styles (Cheung, 2013; Flaherty & Choi, 2014; Gallo & Hermann, 2014; Locke et al., 2013), (d) teachers must ask students to write regularly and for different purposes (e.g., journaling, reflection papers, essays, reports, creative writing; Bromley, 2007), (e) teachers should engage in collaborative activities (Wigglesworth & Storch, 2012), and (f) teachers must undergo continuous professional development programs (Locke et al., 2013). Within the first typology, that teachers must establish a positive atmosphere for learning to write, there was an example from classroom observation of Participant 10. Students were asked to go to the media center where they had an opportunity to work on the computer and were given twenty minutes to research on a topic based on real world events. Within the second typology, I observed Participant 2's classroom, where during a paired-off activity the teacher encouraged them to make connections to real world events currently going on in the news. Students were motivated to work on this activity because they seemed interested in developing their ideas of what was currently going on and hearing reflections with their partners. In the classroom of Participant 6, students worked as a whole on a class activity, encouraged to practice critical thinking about making connections with the real-world events that have happened to themselves.

The 3rd typology was observed in the classroom of Participant 8, where the students were engaged in paired work, building on previous knowledge of the topic that was discussed from the previous class. Students could take action and develop a higher order question, based on the prior reading assignment. The teacher provided several examples to ensure students were aware of what was expected.

Observation of Participant 5's class demonstrated the 4th typology. The teacher asked students to work independently on a book they read in class. The teacher provided students the opportunity to have the book with them, as a source of research. The teacher asked the students to write a question and develop a narrative essay based on the question they designed. Students could practice critical thinking and actively take ownership of their learning.

Within the fifth typology, students worked individually and were encouraged to learn by engaging in analyzing and researching in classroom observation of Participant 1. The teacher provided students about 30 minutes to work on researching about the topic individually, and once they obtained knowledge and facts about the information, they had to share their information to peers. In the classroom of Participant 2, the teacher asked students to work in pairs of two. The teacher encouraged them to make connections to real world events currently going on in the news. Finally, from the classroom of Participant 4, the teacher asked students to work in groups of four. The activity involved a science activity that they were working on for a week. The four typologies that were revealed in the interview data were not found in the classroom observation data. While

teachers talked about the best practices, such actions were not demonstrated by what was seen in the observations.

The analysis of the lesson plans supported only one of the typologies that were observed in the interviews: teachers must relay expectations, procedures, and routines right from the start (Bromley, 2007). Clear evidence of distinct instructions was found in lesson plans when it came to two areas: assigning of language arts homework, and vocabulary and spelling. In addition to the one typology from the interview data, the document review analysis also reinforced three typologies that were found within researcher observation: (a) teachers must present to students that there are meaningful reasons to write (Chen et al., 2011), (b) teachers must give students chances to read works of other writers to see how they implement certain styles (Cheung, 2013; Flaherty & Choi, 2014; Gallo & Hermann, 2014; Locke et al., 2013); and (c) teachers must ask students to write regularly and for different purposes (e.g., journaling, reflection papers, essays, reports, creative writing; Bromley, 2007). Lesson plans revealed all four of these typologies. Lesson plans 13 and 14 both assigned homework that involved modelling. All four lesson plans, Numbers 3,7, 8 and 9, used freewriting in a journal as a warm-up activity for the day's start. Typological analysis of the documents did support one typology from the interviews and three from the observation; this suggests once again that what teachers talk about as the best practices are not necessarily borne out within their practices.

Summary

Only four typologies in the literature were supported by data from the interviews: (a) Teachers must relay expectations, procedures, and routines right from the start (Bromley, 2007); (b) teachers must organize how they plan to teach writing (Bromley, 2007); (c) teachers need to provide constructive feedback to writing outputs (Graham et al., 2014); and (d) teachers must provide students the chance to provide constructive feedback to their classmates' writing outputs (Graham et al., 2014). Six typologies were found to be supported by the data in the observations: (a) teachers must establish a positive atmosphere for learning to write (Graham & McArthur, 2013), (b) teachers must present to students that there are meaningful reasons to write (Chen et al., 2011), (c) teachers must give students chances to read works of other writers to see how they implement certain styles (Cheung, 2013; Flaherty & Choi, 2014; Gallo & Hermann, 2014; Locke et al., 2013), (d) teachers must ask students to write regularly and for different purposes (e.g., journaling, reflection papers, essays, reports, creative writing; Bromley, 2007), (e) teachers should engage in collaborative activities (Wigglesworth & Storch, 2012), and (f) teachers must undergo continuous professional development programs (Locke et al., 2013). The analysis of the lesson plans supported only one of the typologies that were observed in the interviews: teachers must relay expectations, procedures, and routines right from the start (Bromley, 2007).

The document review analysis also reinforced three typologies that were found within researcher observation: (a) teachers must present to students that there are meaningful reasons to write (Chen et al., 2011), (b) teachers must give students chances

to read works of other writers to see how they implement certain styles (Cheung, 2013; Flaherty & Choi, 2014; Gallo & Hermann, 2014; Locke et al., 2013), and (c) teachers must ask students to write regularly and for different purposes (e.g., journaling, reflection papers, essays, reports, creative writing; Bromley, 2007). These combined typologies formed the basis for recommending the need for professional development training since these typologies represent the best practices for teaching writing skills based on the literature. The typologies that were not supported by the three sources of data as helped form the basis for recommendations. The four areas covered in the professional development are: (a) using oral activities to help students improve their literacy, (b) using group discussions to gather feedback, (c) open discussion on how to provide meaningful reasons for students to write, and (d) providing ongoing corrections and feedback.

Discussion of Findings

Based on analysis of data from the interviews, participant observations, and document analysis four themes emerged to address the main research question. The presentation of findings is focused on a discussion of each of these four themes.

Thematic Label 1A: Management of Class When Teaching Writing Skills

The first sub category of the main research question included the management of class when teaching writing skills. In the typologies found in the literature, teachers must relay expectations, procedures, and routines right from the start (Bromley, 2007). In the interviews it was found that teachers managed their classes when teaching writing skills by providing oral activities to discuss as a class. However, this was not supported by either participant observation or by document analysis of lesson plans.

Major Theme 1: Provide Oral Activities to Discuss as a Class

Four of the 10 teachers believed that proper management of writing classes could be achieved by providing oral activities to discuss as a class. Participant 1 stated that one effective management or teaching skill included asking the students to provide oral examples, so they could discuss their work as a class. “Oral examples. I have my students read aloud their writing so we can discuss and edit as a class.” Participant 7 then emphasized that oral examples or language remains effective in improving the writing skills of the students. “Oral language expression is conducive to writing. If the students can talk about a certain topic then I believe they can write about it. ‘How does this relate to you?’ is a question I always ask my students.” Participant 8 added that another effective skill included discussing the lessons aloud and as a whole class, brainstorm questions and ideas more successfully.

> If students are talking amongst themselves during a writing lesson, I ask one of them a question to try to get them back on track. I encourage them to take notes on new information or techniques. We brainstorm topic ideas and discuss any questions they may have. I also walk around the class to ensure everyone is on task.

Participant 9 indicated that she also implemented fun and engaging activities on vocabulary words, which she discussed with students and peers to make the lessons more interactive

> I implement activities that focus on the vocabulary words of the week and I work on having them engage with their peers in discussions about the vocabulary

words. One of these activities a ball game. Students have to catch a ball that is marked with several numbers. Each number corresponds to one of the vocabulary words. They have to give the meaning of the word and make a sentence from the word.

Participant observation did not demonstrate an emphasis on oral activities. While four teachers discussed the need for oral activities during their interviews, there was no evidence of it in participant observation, showing a schism between words and actions. An analysis of lesson plans did not find a significant emphasis on oral activities. Only one lesson plan from Lesson Plan 9 listed any oral activity related to writing. In this instance, the teacher was introducing a new unit within Language Arts and having students ask questions about the unit, putting them in sticky notes.

The first minor theme that emerged under the category of the management practices employed by the teachers included the employment of model examples to students. Three of the 10 teachers, or 30% of the total sample population, provided the said perception. Participant 2 shared that teachers also provided model samples to students, so that students could better understand the work as well as the expectations from them. “I provide my students with model samples and discuss its qualities so they can understand the expectations.” Participant 5 added how she also provided the students with model examples of good writing to guide them accordingly. “First, I teach them expectations and provide them examples or models of good writing as a guide.” Models were similarly evident in two lesson plans; however, modeling in both these lesson plans came from homework, rather than in-class work.

While three teachers discussed their use of models of examples, I did not observe any modeling during classroom observations. However, there was some evidence of modeling in lesson plans. Both Lesson Plan 13 and 14 assigned homework that involved modeling. The teachers requested that students "identify at least 10 sentences from the novel that has prepositional phrases," using the novel the students were reading as a model for prepositional phrases.

The second minor theme that emerged under the category of the management practices employed consisted of reading a passage to start the class. Three of the 10 teachers, or 30% of the total sample population, provided the said practice or activity. Participant 3 highlighted how she started a class with a passage to get the attention and engage the students. "I start off with a passage that I read to my class and then I have them engage in classroom discussions in order to have them engaged with the topic." Participant 6 shared that she started the lesson by reading passages that taught the proper structure of the paragraph and importance of the following: "Structure of the paragraph I let them know the importance of capitalization, correct conjugation of verbs, nouns, et cetera."

There was no evidence of beginning the class off with passages of reading in any of the classroom observation. None of the lesson plans indicated the reading of passages to start the class. This could merely be a matter of the level of detail of the lesson plans; that is, teachers may begin class reading a passage, but not list it on their lesson plans.

The 3rd minor theme that followed included providing the students with guidelines, which received only one occurrence, or 10% of the total sample population.

Participant 10 stated that she also provided students with guidelines and expectations, so they could properly develop the skills of the students. “I believe that by providing them with writing guidelines, the students is given an understanding of what the expectations are and how they should develop their ideas about the topic given.” There was also no observation of teachers giving guidelines and expectations, which reinforces the responses from the participants during their interviews.

However, while guidelines and expectations of writing specifically were not found in any of the lesson plans, there was clear evidence of clear instructions when it came to two areas: assigning of language arts homework, and vocabulary and spelling. Every lesson plan had a list of both vocabulary words and spelling words that students were required to learn for that week. Listing out each word within its category of either spelling or vocabulary made it clear what the teacher’s expectations were. Moreover, two lesson plans were specific in their home learning instructions. Lesson Plan 13 instructed students to “write sentences for 10 of your voc. Words [sic] and use prepositional phrases,” while Lesson Plan 14 told students to specifically “write your spelling words 3x each; write 10 sentences using your vocabulary words.”

Thematic Label 1B: Activities or Ways to Ensure the Participation of Students

The second sub category of the main research question included the activities or ways to ensure the participation of students. In the typology found in the literature, it was found that teachers need to provide constructive feedback to writing outputs (Graham et al., 2014). In the interviews, the teachers mainly employed group discussions to gather feedback; they improved the engagement, participation, and skills of the students. Table 5

contains the breakdown of typologies and themes. However, these group discussions and feedback were not observed within the classroom observations. Moreover, according to document analysis, lesson plans emphasize development of vocabulary and freewriting as modes of active student participation.

Major Theme 2: Group Discussions to Gather Feedback

Eight of the 10 teacher participants indicated that they employed group discussions to ensure the participation of their students. Participant 3 highlighted that it remained vital to listen to the feedback of the students to constantly improve the lessons and their writing skills.

> I ask my students questions and also I like to ask them if they can develop some examples. I also find that as part of the teaching strategy, it is important to provide constant feedback to the students in order to show them they as a teacher, I care to know what they are writing about, and I also am working on making them reach their goals.
>
> First, students share their writing with a partner to give each other feedback and then we do a whole classroom discussion to share their work.

Participant 5 echoed how she also asked her students questions for feedback to ensure they understand the activities. “I ask my students questions in order to keep them constantly involved with the activity.” Participant 7 shared how she asked students to group together, listen to their own works, and then provide feedback to one another to learn and improve based on the ideas and suggestions of their own peers.

> I pair them up in groups and have them develop their own group leaders and each member of the group has a responsibility. In the end, they are asked to read to one another what they have written. This provides students with the ability to orally listen to their thoughts, and also be able to provide feedback as well to each other.
>
> I have my students do a whole class discussion, which I find that it helps them share their ideas and thoughts. It also provides them with other examples that they can use for their own writing.

Participant 9 also highlighted that grouping and feedback represented two vital practices in writing.

> Students in my class are paired in two's. They work with a checklist that I provide and from there, they provide one another feedback.
>
> I find that positive praises and making sure to meet with my students on a one-to-one basis is essential. Students like to feel important and in a group of 19 students, they feel special when you call out their name and speak to them individually about their thoughts and providing them with feedbacks about their writing.

Participant 8 explained how the discussion of feedback allowed for a better understanding of the work or output expected from the students.

> I find that by providing feedback at all times allows students to develop an understanding of what the expectations are and how they are supposed to construct their ideas in an organized manner.

> I like to have my students orally read and share their drafts with one another. I find that they feel motivated and develop leadership roles when they are standing in front of the class discussing about the topic chosen in class.

Group discussion for feedback was also discovered by my classroom observation. From the classroom of Participant 1, students worked individually and were encouraged to learn by engaging in analyzing and researching. The teacher provided students about 30 minutes to work on researching about the topic individually, and once they obtained knowledge and facts about the information, they had to share their information to peers. Students took ownership of their learning by taking action in researching and then reflecting with their peers. Students remained motivated at all times and seemed to enjoy the activity, especially when they were asked to share their facts and findings with their peers. Participant 2 asked students to work in pairs of two, asking students to interact with one another and engage in intellectual conversations. This activity took about 20 minutes of discussion, and then students had an opportunity to share their information and write their reflections for the next 20 minutes. Participant 4 asked students to work in groups of four, where students in the group were given a leadership role. One student was responsible in writing the facts, another was asked to illustrate from the findings, and the last student was asked to present to the whole class. First, students were encouraged to practice critical thinking with this activity and were able to interact with one another by analyzing and exploring from their findings. Students were actively engaging in reflection and taking ownership of the role they were given by each other.

Some teachers used a mix of individual work and group discussion. In Participant 5's classroom, individual projects were followed by students asked to work the last 15 minutes to work in groups of four and share their reflections with the group. Students seemed to find this activity interesting because each of the students could develop a new idea about the book, and they felt engaged in learning from one another. Despite the evidence of collaboration in both the interviews and in the classroom observation, there was no indication of collaboration within the lesson plans analyzed.

The first minor theme that followed the second major theme of the study included the employment of a checklist of guidelines, containing the best writing skills. Four of the 10 participants, or 40% of the total sample population, shared the said perception or practice. Participant 4 stated that she provided her students with a checklist based on the most effective aspects or lessons and writing skills from her previous students. "I provide my students with a checklist that I have worked with my prior students in the past and have seen it to be an excellent resource to guide my students with their writing." Participant 10 also shared that she had a data chart that allowed student as well as the teachers to monitor the development of the students' skills.

> I do what is called data chats. Data chats allow students to see where they were in the beginning of the school year as far as their writing abilities and mid-year I follow-up by showing them their progress. I find that students feel motivated when they see that they use to write only five sentences and mid-year are able to write two paragraphs.

Despite these interviews, neither classroom observations nor the document review of lesson plans indicated any group discussions of feedback. This could indicate that teachers do not plan for group discussions and that the occur organically, or that they are planned for, but do not occur on a weekly basis.

The second minor theme that followed included the development of a graphic organizer. Three of the 10, or 30% of the total sample population, shared this method. Participant 2 shared that she asked her students to develop a graphic organizer that could breakdown the thoughts and ideas of the students, which allowed better writing processed.

> I like to ask my students to develop a graphic organizer, some type of way that I know that they are putting their thoughts/ideas in a way that will help them plan how and what they are going to write about.

Participant 8 also asked her students always to create a graphic organizer first, before starting their writing activities. “Students are always asked to develop a graphic organizer as they are brainstorming about a topic to write about. This also helps students not forget what they were about to write and their ideas will flow easily.”

Participant observation also yielded findings related to graphic organizers. In Participant 3’s classroom, the teacher asked students to work as a whole on a class activity. Students read a book in class that they were asked to build on from their previous classroom discussions and knowledge about one part that they enjoyed the most in the book by using graphic organizers. The teacher provided each student with two sheets of paper, one for the development of the graphic organizer and the other to use as

their reflection. The use of graphic organizer was also present in the observation of Participant 4's classroom, as well as Participant 6's classroom, where students were asked to first explore and analyze their thoughts and develop an anchor chart (similar to a graphic organizer). Teacher 6 allowed students to first illustrate an anchor and write their ideas on the anchor. This activity consisted with teacher facilitating students and working with small groups as an approach to teaching. However, there was no mention of graphic organizers within the document review of teachers' lesson plans.

The 3rd minor theme that followed included the focus of the writing using real-life experiences as the topic. Three of the 10, or 30% of the total sample population, agreed to the effectiveness of the method. Participant 1 stated that she observed the effectiveness of employing real-world experiences as the main topic of creative writing for her students, "I find topics that puts the students in a real-world experience and how they feel about it and that also engages them into what I call creative writing which my students love to write narrative essays." Participant 6 echoed that it seemed effective to ask the students to write about a topic that they could perfectly relate to. "I select a topic that they can relate to. Again, I believe that if they can talk about it then they can write about it. Keeping students interested at all times is key." Participant 9 highlighted how using real-life experiences as the topic motivated the students to write better. "I like to find real-world events for students to write about because I find that their own experiences also help them develop ideas to write about, and also motivates them to write more."

Within the document analysis, there was one indication of using real-life experience in writing. Lesson Plan 8 noted that the assignment for home learning for one night was to bring in an example of a simile or metaphor the next day. This indicates that students had to find real-life examples of a simile or metaphor.

Real-life experience was also found in classroom observation. In Participant 2's classroom, I saw that during a paired-off activity, the teacher encouraged them to make connections to real world events currently going on in the news. Students were motivated to work on this activity because they seemed interested in developing their ideas of what was currently going on and hearing reflections with their partners. Similarly, in the classroom of Participant 6, students worked as a whole on a class activity, encouraged to practice critical thinking about making connections with the real world events that have happened to themselves. Likewise, in the classroom of Participant 10, students were asked to go to the media center where they had an opportunity to work on the computer. Students were given 20 minutes to research on a topic based on real world events. Students then had 10 minutes to draft a graphic organizer and begin typing their thoughts on the computer. The purpose of this activity was to engage the students on the use of technology, practice critical thinking, and make connections to real world events. Students were encouraged to learn by exploring, researching, and taking ownership of their learning through action and reflection. However, there was no indication of real-life activities within the document review of the lesson plans.

The 4th minor theme included the freedom for freestyle writing. Three of the 10 participants, or 30% of the total sample population, practiced the style indicated.

Participant 10 suggested that it remained important to allow the students to have a freestyle writing at least once a week to engage the students better.

> I believe it's not how you write; it's more of how a student can develop the ideas to write about a topic. I try to engage my students in journal writings first part of my class activity because students have a lot of things going on, some engage in extracurricular activities, some even have tutoring after school. The last thing on their mind is writing about it. So, the key is to let them engage in free-style writing at least twice a week.

Participant 2 also added that she allowed students to have different journal topics everyday.

> Journal topics everyday change and I try to ask them on Fridays I ask them to develop a question and then ask them to look at facts either on the internet or in books in the library in order to have them research and get in the habit of reading and writing.

There was freewriting involved with participant observation. Participant 5 asked students to work independently on a book they read in class. The teacher provided students the opportunity to have the book with them, as a source of research. The teacher asked the students to write a question and develop a narrative essay based on the question they designed. Students could practice critical thinking and actively take ownership of their learning. Freewriting also happened in the classroom of Participant 7, where students were asked to take out their journals in the beginning of class and write about a topic of their own choice. This activity reflected an individual activity and students felt

encouraged to make connections to the real world and interact with others and then after they completed a five-paragraph essay.

Freewriting was also popular within the document analysis of teachers' lesson plans; four lesson plans explicitly mentioned free writing. All four lesson plans, Numbers 3,7, 8 and 9, used freewriting in a journal as a warm-up activity for the day's language arts lesson. These warm-up activities occurred multiple times in 1 week, making journal freewriting a more frequent event. For Lesson Plan 7, there was an additional freewriting exercise, with time planned for students to write a narrative story in their journal.

The fifth minor theme again highlighted the effectiveness of modeling the lessons to students. Only two of the 10 participants, or 20% of the total sample population, shared the said practice. Participant 1 emphasized the significance of modeling examples to ensure the participation of students. "A lot of modeling, I believe students listen when they are given examples that are correct and meet high expectations." Two lesson plans also mentioned modelling, albeit in the same capacity as modelling in the previous thematic label. Lesson Plans 13 and 14 scheduled home learning assignments of identifying at least 10 sentences with prepositional phrases from the novel the students were reading. This assignment acted as a modelling of prepositional phrases.

There was also modeling found in participant observation. Participant 8 engaged students in paired work, building on previous knowledge of the topic that was discussed from the previous class. Students could take action and develop a higher order question, based on the prior reading assignment. The teacher provided a several examples to ensure students were aware of what was expected.

The sixth minor theme that followed included the strict activity monitoring of the teachers. Two of the 10, or 20% of the total sample population, shared the perception. Participant 6 indicated that she made sure that she took the time to walk around the classroom to monitor the activities and tasks of the students. “I walk around and provide eye contact with my students as much as possible to ensure everyone is on task.” Strict monitoring of activity was extremely prevalent in participant observation, as well. Participant 10 facilitated student engagement and monitored students at all times to ensure they stayed on task. Participant 7 continued to facilitate student and teacher engagement and monitor students’ work throughout the period. Likewise, Participant 5 continued to monitor the class and provided feedback as she walked around each group, as did Participant 4, who monitored the students and work engagement at all times. Similarly, both Participants 2 and 3 monitored student work and encouraged students to engage and ask one another higher order questions that would allow them to practice critical thinking. Finally, Participant 1’s teacher dynamic included monitoring student work and engagement and prompting them to develop higher order questions to engage students with the research activity. Higher order questions are questions that address and initiate higher order thinking skills of students.

According to the document review of teachers’ lesson plans, tests and quizzes acted as the primary mode of strict monitoring. Three lesson plans, LP31, LP7, and LP9, all scheduled test and quizzes to monitor students’ progress with facets of writing. This included tests on adjectives (LP31), common and proper nouns (LP7), and plural and collective nouns (LP9).

The seventh minor theme included the method of providing incentives for students. Two of the 10, or 20% of the total sample population, shared the perception. Participant 6 used positive reinforcements, such as incentives, to encourage the students to participate. “I maintain the conducive and engaging atmosphere through student participation, asking and responding activities, behavior charts, one-on-one conferencing, and lots of positive reinforcements such as a treasure box that I use as my incentive in class.” However, there was no indication of incentives within either classroom observation or the document analysis of lesson plans.

The eighth minor theme that followed included the need for constant vocabulary development. The minor theme received only one occurrence, or 10% of the total sample population. Participant 10 shared that another practice included having a journal where students could write about the new vocabulary words assigned. “I ask my students before they enter my class to take out their journals and each day there is a new topic or word of the day that they are asked to reflect and write about.” Similarly, there was no observation of vocabulary development in classroom observation.

Despite the lack of citation of vocabulary development within the interviews, however, this minor theme was the most prevalent within the document review of lesson plans. All eight lesson plans contained a list of vocabulary words that the students were required to learn for that week. Four of the lesson plans assigned vocabulary-based home learning. Two lesson plans – LP13 and LP14, assigned students to write synonyms or antonyms for each vocabulary word; four lesson plans, LP13, LP14 (twice), LP3, and LP10, assigned students to write sentences for ten of their new vocabulary words, and

LP3 additionally asked students to study their vocabulary words for a separate home learning assignment.

The ninth minor theme included the suggestion to have more time for brainstorming. The minor theme again received only 1 occurrence, or 10% of the total sample population. Participant 3 shared that another technique for better writing outcomes for students included providing them more time to think and brainstorm.

> One of the many strategies that I apply in my classroom is the use of brainstorming technique to generate descriptions of topics. For example, I ask students to take 3 to 5 minutes to list words or phrases that describe the concept that we are currently working on. I generate classroom discussions and then students are then put into groups and they compare their lists.

However, there was no indication of brainstorming in either the classroom observations or the document analysis of lesson plans.

The tenth minor theme included the practice of proofreading of writing activities. The minor theme received one occurrence, or 10% of the total sample population. Participant 5 highlighted that proofreading reflected another effective method of developing the writing skills of the students. “I ask my students questions and have students read their examples. In addition, I proofread their draft and provide feedback on their writing.” As with the previous minor theme, there was no evidence of proofreading in either classroom observations or lesson plans.

The eleventh and final minor theme that I discovered included the playing of classical music. The minor theme received 1 occurrence, or 10% of the total sample

population. Participant 1 stated that another method included playing classical music in the background, which helped the students loosen up and become more relaxed while writing, "I find that by playing classical music in the background helps students relax and allows them a moment to think about what they are going to write about." None of these final three minor themes were mentioned or described within classroom observations or the document analysis of teachers' lesson plans.

Thematic Label 1C: Examples of the Best Writing Skills That are Learned and Practiced in the Classroom

The 3rd sub category of the main research question included the examples of the best writing skills, learned and practiced in the classroom. In the typology found in the literature, it was found that teachers need to provide constructive feedback to writing outputs (Graham et al., 2014). I then found, through the qualitative thematic analysis, that the teachers, using feedback, could monitor the progress of their students; thus, they could develop the best writing skills along the way.

Major Theme 3: Feedback to Monitor Progress

Three of the 10 participants, or 30% of the total sample population, indicated in their interviews that one of the best practices to develop and improve the writing skills of the students included providing feedback to monitor the progress. However, there was no such explicit reference to structured feedback in classroom observation or the document review of teachers' lesson plans. Participant 1 highlighted the importance of feedback so that students could understand their progress and development in learning to write. "Feedback, feedback, feedback. It is important for students to learn that everything is a

progress. Each stepping-stone in learning to write is to not give up and continue to grow and learn more." Participant 5 echoed how helpful it was to personally meet with the students to monitor their progress and provide feedback from improvement: "I find that by meeting with my students individually and letting them know about their progress is the best strategy in teaching writing." Meanwhile, Participant 10 added:

> Develop an open forum for students to ask and engage in a question-response discussion. Students enjoy to talk to one another, for the first five minutes of class, I find that by providing them topics to talk about, then having students engaging and hear other perceptions of the topics, gives students the ability to think about certain topics in a differently.

The first minor theme that followed included the practice of editing and proofreading of work by the students. Two of the 10 participants, or 20% of the total sample population, shared the said practice. Participant 3 stated various practices, but believed the key to successful writing focused on the patience for editing the writer.

> Modeling and understanding the writers' workshop, brainstorming, paragraph formatting, spelling, grammar, vocabulary, teaching the six traits of writing, discuss and have my students practice multi-genre writing is key. The importance is in the editing I believe.

Participant 4 also shared that the students' own proofreading of work allowed them to realize their own mistakes, as well as learn from them after. "I believe when students proof-read their own work is key. When they proof-read many times they are able to catch on to their grammatical mistakes."

There was some evidence of feedback, particularly peer-to-peer reviewing, within participant observation. In the classroom on Participant 8, the students were paired together to develop their ideas, and then were asked to share their paper with one another. Students were given the writing rubric and were asked to read each other's paper quietly. They were asked to provide feedback on their partner's paper. This peer mentoring monitored student engagement and prompted to critical thinking. Despite the appearance of peer editing in participant observation, however, there was no scheduled editing or proofreading time found within the lesson plans.

The second minor theme that followed included the proper guidance from the teacher or instructor. Two of the 10 participants, or 20% of the total sample population, shared the said practice. Participant 6 explained that proper guidance allowed students to have prior or background knowledge to their writing topic.

> I try to guide my students so they know what to do. Nothing is worse when they are not familiar with the topic and they are asked to write about the topic. So prior to engaging in the writing activity, I provide examples and from there, I ask my students if they have any questions prior to them engaging in the writing activity.

Guidance and instruction from the teacher was also supported by the researcher's participant observation. Participant 7 asked the students to keep a copy of the classroom-writing rubric in front of them, while in Participant 3's classroom, the teacher used the classroom rubric to guide and engage her students to follow with the writing rules. For Participant 9, one-on-one guidance was invaluable. From the classroom of Participant 9, students were asked to find a topic of interest and begin writing about it. Students were

asked to first develop a title, and from there, construct the body of their paper based on three to five sentences. Students were also asked to develop an illustration of what they wrote and present it to the whole class the next day. Students were able to use technology, explore, research, and build on their ideas. The teacher prompted and redirected some students to stay on task and focus on a topic for which they had previous knowledge. Some students engaged in the activity; others said they felt a bit confused with the assignment because they had so many ideas and did not know which one to select as a topic. The teacher worked one-on-one with those that needed support, and once they could develop some examples, they began working.

All eight lesson plans explicitly outlined proper guidance and instruction from the teacher. Most frequently, this minor theme took the form of teaching students new aspects of grammar. LP13 scheduled "using quotation marks, italics/underlining, & commas," while L14 wrote "teach possessive nouns" for one day and "nouns in prepositional phrases" for another day. Similarly, LP3 had "teach about run-on sentences" scheduled for one lesson and simple and compound sentences for another day. LP31 said "teach adjectives that compare" for one day and "teach grammar: more and most" for another day. Each of these eight lesson plans emphasized the guidance aspect of instruction.

The 3rd minor theme that followed included the practice of reading to widen the vocabulary and know the grammatical rules. The minor theme received just one occurrence, or 10% of the total sample population. Participant 2 explained how helpful it

was to read, as it allowed the development of vocabulary, as well as the awareness for grammatical rules.

> As a teacher of a second language, I focus on the spelling and how students can better express their ideas in a correct way. So, grammar is really important for their writing to make sense. The verbs need to agree with the subject. The articles also need to agree with the subject, in order to have your audience understand their writing. Portuguese is a complex language with a great number of verbs and many grammatical rules. In order to students to write in Portuguese, they need to have a basic knowledge of these rules. So, one of the best writing skills strategy is reading. Reading makes the students turn into improving writers.

While there was no indication of reading to widen knowledge within classroom observation, within the document review of lesson plans, there were two references to reading to widen knowledge about vocabulary and grammar from LP14 and LP13. Both were the same references from the previous thematic labels; as home learning assignments, the teachers asked students to "identify at least 10 sentences from the novel that has prepositional phrases." In this way, reading was used to teach about grammar.

The 4th minor theme that followed included the significance of timing when writing. The minor theme received just 1 occurrence, or 10% of the total sample population. Participant 8 also added that timing is vital when it comes to writing.

> I find that what works with my students is when they are organized and focused on the topic. I like to teach writing right before lunch, because students are not as

> lethargic and their thought process is clear. Timing is everything when it comes to writing.

There were no references to timing of writing within classroom observations or document review.

Finally, the fifth and last minor theme included the development of a structured key. The minor theme received just one occurrence, or 10% of the total sample population. Participant 9 shared that a structured key allowed students to develop better writing and thought processes, which produced better outcomes.

> Developing a structured activity is key. Students like to spend some time engaging in writing activities that are narrative, they are able to engage in free-style writing, and that is important to incorporate in the unit of teaching because reflections can show their thought process, and how their ideas flow into the paper.

There was no evidence of structured activity in either classroom observations or document analysis.

Thematic Label 1D: Follow-up Procedures to Ensure That Students Learned From Their Mistakes

The 4th and final sub category of the main research question included the follow-up procedures to ensure that students learned from their previous writing mistakes. In the typology found in the literature, it was found that teachers need to provide constructive feedback to writing outputs (Graham et al., 2014). I then explored and discovered,

through the qualitative thematic analysis, that the teachers relied on the significance of corrections and feedback to ensure the development of students' skills.

Major Theme 4: Corrections and Feedback

The fifth and last major theme discovered through the analysis included the effectiveness of providing corrections and feedback to the students. Seven of the 10 participants, or 70% of the total sample population, shared the said practice. However, within the document review of teachers' lesson plans, there was no scheduled references to providing corrections or feedback to the students. Participant 1 shared that she enjoyed monitoring the students closely to quickly correct them; questions were also welcome to help the students learn better. "I like to make the correction with the student next to me. I ask the students questions and from their students learn from it." Participant 4 reviewed the final draft of the students personally and provided corrections, as needed. "I review their final draft with them. I find that I am able to help them take turn making corrections on unrevised writing models." Participant 7 stated that she asked the students to detect the mistakes and correct them together. "I ask my students to re-write and make the corrections with me." Participant 8 highlighted that, as a teacher, she observed students and engaged in their writing activities closely.

> I like to walk around and observe my students as they are engaged in their writing activities. When I see a student gazed and not focused, I do my best to re-direct them and remind them to plan and organize their thoughts.

Participant 10 explained how she met up with the students individually to monitor their progress, as well as motivate them along the way.

> I like to meet individually with my students and continue to monitor their progress by comparing their writing before the beginning of the school year to the current time. Students need to be motivated at all times in order to not feel intimidated and feel that their thoughts and ideas are unique and interesting. Students also need to know about the topic beforehand, I find that students that are not familiar with the topic do not find themselves able to write more than two-three sentences.

There was one instance of feedback in participant observation as well. In the classroom of Participant 7, the teacher provided constructive feedback as she walked around and ensured students were capitalizing and providing proper placement of punctuation. However, there was no evidence of feedback within lesson plans.

The first minor theme that followed included the weekly follow-ups, as suggested by only one teacher, or 10% of the total sample population. Participant 2 practiced weekly follow-ups to develop the writing skills of the students. “I do what I like to say weekly follow-ups with my students individually.” However, there was no weekly follow up in the classroom observation of Participant 2, or in the lesson plan.

The second minor theme that followed included the modeling example, which was again suggested by only one teacher, or 10% of the total sample population. Participant 3 provided modeling examples to visually help the students learn the different aspects that they should develop. “Re-teach the class and provide a lot of modeling and examples that they can visually see and learn from.” As with previous thematic labels, there were two references to modeling examples, from LP14 and LP13, both of which

emerged from learning prepositional phrases from the novel the students were reading. In this way, the writing of the novel served as a model of prepositional phrases for the students.

Finally, the 3rd minor theme included the use of a differentiated instruction, which was again shared by only one participant, or 10% of the total sample population. There were no references to differentiated instruction that emerged from classroom observation or from the document review of teachers' lesson plans. Participant 5 explained how a differentiated instruction remained important, especially in accommodating and adjusting according to the writing levels and needs of the students. "I implement literacy centers during language arts/reading blocks, which all students take turn participating. The activities are setup through differentiated instructions taking each student's learning style and level into account."

Evidence of Quality

To ensure the data gathered from interviews remained accurate and valid, I conducted member checking. I provided the teachers, who participated in this study, with the opportunity to review the transcribed data to determine if I transcribed what they meant accurately and completely. I asked participants to check my interpretations of the interview data, by asking them to give feedback on the ideas and language used in the interviews; thereby ensuring the credibility of the data analysis (Stake, 1995). Aside from member checking, I had evidence of triangulation by gathering of multiple kinds of data (Curtin & Fossey, 2007). For the purposes of this study, I provided evidence of triangulation by gathering data in the forms of interviews, documents, and observations.

Summary of Outcomes

This study aimed at understanding teachers' best practices on how to improve students' writing skills. Under the constructivist theory, the concepts of accommodation and assimilation of learning engages the learner to obtain knowledge through experience. By acquiring such capabilities, an understanding of what best practices should result to the improvement of students' writing skills. The research question focused on how 4th grade magnet school teachers described best practices to improve their students' writing skills. Data were gathered from three sources: semi-structured interviews with five 4th grade, and five fifth grade teachers, review of lesson plans, and classroom observations.

Analysis of data collected were based on typological and inductive analyses, through which I discovered that the teachers provided oral examples, employed group discussions, and developed the students' overall skills and knowledge through feedback. After examining the data derived from the semi-structured interviews, it was determined that four major themes arose from the analyses: (a) teachers provided oral activities for class discussion, (b) feedback from peers, (c) feedback to monitor progress, and (d) feedback and corrections. However, these themes were not fully supported by either classroom observation or document analysis of lesson plans, indicating a possible schism in how teachers ideally teach and the way they teach in practice.

Six typologies were found to be supported by the data in the observations: (a) teachers must establish a positive atmosphere for learning to write (Graham & McArthur, 2013), (b) teachers must present to students that there are meaningful reasons to write (Chen et al., 2011), (c) teachers must give students chances to read works of other writers

to see how they implement certain styles (Cheung, 2013; Flaherty & Choi, 2014; Gallo & Hermann, 2014; Locke et al., 2013), (d) teachers must ask students to write regularly and for different purposes (e.g., journaling, reflection papers, essays, reports, creative writing; Bromley, 2007), (e) teachers should engage in collaborative activities (Wigglesworth & Storch, 2012), and (f) teachers must undergo continuous professional development programs (Locke et al., 2013).

The analysis of the lesson plans supported only one of the typologies that were observed in the interviews: teachers must relay expectations, procedures, and routines right from the start (Bromley, 2007). In addition, the document review analysis also reinforced three typologies that were found within researcher observation: (a) teachers must present to students that there are meaningful reasons to write (Chen et al., 2011), (b) teachers must give students chances to read works of other writers to see how they implement certain styles (Cheung, 2013; Flaherty & Choi, 2014; Gallo & Hermann, 2014; Locke et al., 2013), and (c) teachers must ask students to write regularly and for different purposes (e.g., journaling, reflection papers, essays, reports, creative writing; Bromley, 2007).

While there was some crossover between the typologies found with the classroom observations and the document analysis of lesson plans, the disparity is clear when it comes to the typologies from interviews with teachers. These findings suggest two important aspects for professional development training. One, professional development should focus on the use of specific writing practices, as opposed to only a pedagogical emphasis on writing practices, as demonstrated by the gap between what teachers said

they do in classrooms and what classroom observation and lesson plans showed they do in classrooms. Two, that professional development focus on the typologies that were present in classroom observations and lesson plans, and those that were not found from either source of data. In this way, best practices can be reinforced and reiterated, while new practices can be emphasized and exercised, such as, teachers developing writing activities that would consist of students engaging to write on a regular basis in their journals.

Project Deliverable

Professional development training is the proposed project deliverable for this study. This professional development training is intended to strengthen the participating teachers' abilities to improve the writing skills of their students. However, the teachers in the interviews did not mention project development. In the interviews, teachers required the need for professional development training in order to utilize all possible strategies to teach writing skills. it emerged that teachers needed professional development training to utilize all possible strategies to teach writing skills.

As a result, professional development training is needed to build the capacity of these teachers in order to increase the students' writing skills. The purpose of the professional development training then is to provide educators with the opportunity to learn about the most effective practices for increasing the writing skills of their students. The project will be discussed in detail in Section 3.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The findings discussed in Section 2 and the literature on teaching writing both led to the conclusion that a writing workshop would be a valuable professional development tool. In Section 2, I summarized findings from that data regarding information that was missing and did not triangulate. based on what teachers faced in teaching writing to students with varying levels of writing and language skills. In this section I will begin with a brief description of the proposed project—a writing skills workshop for teachers—and identify the goals and rationale for the project. This will be followed by a review of the literature specific to the professional development writing skills workshop. I will conclude with a more thorough discussion of the workshop which incorporates the projected timeline, evaluation plan, and implications. In Section 4 I will explore my reflections and conclusions regarding the final study.

Brief Description of the Proposed Project

This project is a writing skills workshop designed to teach best practices in teaching writing to elementary school students. The workshop will provide educators with tools to implement best practices in teaching writing, as well as teach educators how to best teach writing through writing exercises, peer review, oral instruction, and effective written feedback to students. The project requires 3 days of training, including lectures and classroom exercises. Initially the main content will be presented to trainers, who will then practice teaching other teachers. The train-the-trainer program would take 3 days. The complete workshop is included in Appendix A. The workshop material and

organization are also intended to reflect the themes that emerged in the findings discussed in Section 2. The themes were to provide oral activities to discuss as a class, group discussions to gather feedback, feedback to monitor progress, and corrections and feedback.

Teachers of English in elementary schools in the United States are the target audience for this training program. Teachers of English outside of the United States might also be able to benefit from the training. The workshop focuses on new teaching techniques that are simple to apply and will make a difference for both native speakers of English and English Language Learner (ELL) students. The emphasis is on general teaching techniques, not ELL education. Teachers who complete the training should be more effective in teaching elementary students to write effectively in English. Teachers will also learn how to customize their lesson plans for classes with large numbers of students who are below grade level or are ESL students. The magnet school used for the initial study was over 60% Hispanic. In other elementary schools with similar demographics there would likely be students who do not speak or write English at home and may struggle with writing in English more than students who do speak and write English at home.

Training would take place at first in a school, during a break. Because the training takes almost 32 hours, it would be impractical to conduct the training around other school activities. The other option is to bring in substitute teachers during three days when the English teachers are in the workshop. This approach may also prove impractical or unacceptable in many schools, so the default plan is to use a scheduled break.

Goals of the Proposed Project

In beginning this doctoral project study, I identified a gap in practice in the local setting in that there was a lack of understanding among 3rd and 4th grade teachers regarding application of best practices for teaching writing. In Section 2, I discussed the findings of my project study that supported this lack of understanding in that teachers expressed the use of specific teaching methods for improving students' writing skills that were not confirmed through observations and examination of lesson plans. The project described here is intended to specifically address findings of the project study detailed in Section 2. The goal of the workshop is to provide teachers with writing instruction skills that produce measurable improvement in the teachers' ability to teach writing and as a result create measurable improvement in students' writing skills. Teachers who participate will learn how to use oral feedback, facilitate group discussions, accommodate the needs of ELL students, and use general techniques for giving effective feedback. This professional development project will address the following objectives to assist teachers in improving their skills in teaching writing to students in 3rd and 4th grade in the local setting:

1. Develop best practice strategies in teaching writing, such as having students write on a regular basis in their journals about a topic of their choice.
2. Provide effective feedback to students.

Rationale

Teaching literacy skills including writing pose various challenges to educators as students must express themselves, but often in a manner that they do not practice in other environments (Horner, Lu, Royster, & Trimbur, The assistant principal of the chosen magnet school, found in a review of 3-year longitudinal data that the number of 4th grade students who met proficiency for the writing assessment at the magnet school decreased from 73% in 2012, to 72% in 2013, and to 71% in 2014 (Mrs. Martin, 2014). Each school in the south must design and implement its own plan in the teaching and assessing of writing skills to students (McDermott, 2011). No standardized guidelines, related to teaching writing skills, existed at the participating magnet school. The participating 3rd and 4th grade writing instruction teachers of the magnet schools were interviewed to determine how they approach writing instruction and if they had any needs in this area. Interview data were triangulated with classroom observation field notes and documentation, namely teacher lesson plans. Both of these kinds of data were analyzed by means of typology analysis and further analyzed to see they fit or did not fit into the themes created from analysis of the interview data (Hatch, 2002). These themes were utilized in determining that a professional development program was the appropriate project to address the problem identified for this project study.

The principal purpose of this research study was to explore and describe perceptions of 3rd and 4th grade teachers' literacy teaching practice that are critical in generating higher than anticipated outcomes in writing. In principle, this means examining the scopes of teacher-perceived effective practice and related instructional

strategies that teachers employ in writing instruction. The central phenomenon explored in the study, addressed largely as a consequence of the reported position of under-achievement in writing, related to "what teachers of writing need to know to actually make a difference." With this question in mind, I designed a professional development program for writing teachers of 3rd and 4th grade students.

Review of the Literature

The teaching of writing at the elementary school level has been the subject of research by education scholars. The literature in this field was explored by using key words to search based on the four themes identified in the findings discussed in Section 2, as identified in the previous paragraph. The databases utilized for the literature review were Google Scholar, EBSCOhost, ERIC, and ProQuest. In addition, the project, which is professional development training, is relevant to elementary schools and to writing skills.

The review focuses on research that investigates and explores the process of teaching writing to elementary students. Sections address the subtopics of (a) teaching teachers (b) teaching writing, (c) best methods, (d) interactive writing, and (e) writing identity, meeting the demands in teaching and weakness. Keywords generated from the abovementioned themes included *teaching teachers, writing instruction, best methods of teaching, interactive writing, ongoing, teachers benefit, writing identity, weaknesses, effective feedback, professional development AND teachers,* as well as combinations of these keywords. These keywords and combinations were used to identify relevant articles using the abovementioned databases. In addition, articles that reviewed literature related to the research topic were also used to identify relevant articles.

Teaching Teachers

Teachers who have a high percentage of ELL students in their classes face the additional challenge of helping those students express themselves in their second language. The best methods for teaching language to these students may require additional training for teachers to use them correctly. Creating workshops that allow teachers to develop new teaching strategies and creative lesson plans and to learn alternative teaching approaches from other experienced teachers will allow more freedom in teaching writing to students (Fan, 2016). By providing teachers strategies about developing creative lesson plans on writing, students will increase their creativity and developing critical thinking skills for their writing.

Writing workshops are helpful for teachers who are teaching writing in the classroom. For example, in one large review of teaching studies, researchers found that a writing workshop model was useful for teaching writing to upper elementary students (Fan, 2016). When a teacher takes part in writing workshops or continued education where the teacher becomes a student, they can improve their techniques for teaching writing to native English students and ELL students. Teachers who attend writing workshops obtain insight into various teaching strategies from other educators (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016). This experience can enrich a teacher's appreciation for the learner and help them develop a deeper understanding of what students experience when being taught how to write.

The thinking map is another tool that experts have developed to assist teachers in the classroom. Teachers that incorporate the strategy of implementing the thinking map

in their classroom can help students to explore and develop critical thinking, which assists them in organizing their thoughts into writing (Fan, 2016). A thinking map helps students structure their writing, develop their writing ideas, and become more confident in their writing ability. This can help students in the classroom explore and develop new cognitive processing that will illustrate their thoughts into writing, increasing their creativity, while engaging them in descriptive writing skills.

Visual thinking maps are another possible tool to use for teaching writing. Fan's (2016) research included mention of the work of Hyerle who developed a set of eight visual maps, called thinking maps, to facilitate teaching a range of subjects. These thinking maps are useful in reading education as well (Kessler et al., 2013). These visual thinking maps embody cognitive skills. They transcend language and represent a way of structuring thoughts that can then be captured in writing.

In teaching, these thinking maps can be used to facilitate thinking about writing. Students who were trained in using thinking maps displayed better organization in their writing (Fan, 2016). The use of thinking maps helps in developing confident writers. Another important tool that English teachers have access to is interactive writing.

Interactive Writing

Interactive writing is another tool for teaching writing. Interactive writing means that the teacher involves the children in the writing process by means of interactive communication in the classroom (Williams & Pilonieta, 2012). By implementing interactive writing as a tool in the classroom, students have an opportunity to develop their ideas in small group discussion in class with their classmates and incorporate those

ideas into their writing (Williams & Pilonieta, 2012). Interactive writing creates a collaborative environment for writing. This approach also helps students to become independent writers.

By incorporating interactive writing as a strategy, students have an opportunity to obtain independent writing skills. This process allows students to become independent in their writing skills. Williams and Pilonieta (2012) explained that teachers could transition students from interactive writing to independent writing with the appropriate scaffolding of lessons. Williams and Pilonieta used journal writing as an example of moving students to a more independent method of writing to reinforce lessons learned during the interactive writing sessions.

As the students' progress using interactive writing and become more efficient writers, their writing improves. Roth and Dembrowski (2014) described a methodology for using interactive writing with elementary school students to improve their writing. This application of interactive writing has four elements: (a) a fluid and dynamic process that includes discussion and modeling, decision-making about word choices, and other writing conventions; (b) modified elements of Share the Pen method; (c) lessons that decrease in frequency and increase in length; and (d) teaching points that go beyond genre. In this way, interactive writing is a vibrant teaching tool that engages both the student and teacher in creating meaningful text by means of discussion of the elements of the writing process. These four elements allow students to become efficient in their skills and develop interactive writing skills needed to improve their writing.

A fluid and dynamic process including word choices and decision-making is the first element in describing the use of interactive writing skills taught in the elementary level. Roth and Dembrowski (2014) described it as a flow that allows students to obtain feedback from peers and interact in classroom discussions that allow students to develop critical thinking. The next methodology describes the interaction between students and teachers.

The second element outlined by Roth and Dembrowski (2014) was the Share the Pen method. This method involves the students and the teacher sharing the pen and writing a letter, word, or sentence on a main board or some other medium (Rhodes, 2014). This method also changes as the students become better writers. Depending on the age of the students, the teacher can add more phrases, letters, and words to the lessons. The next methodology focuses on frequency that goes along with the increasing length of the writing, resulting in a higher level of student engagement.

For the 3rd element, the teacher decreases the lessons in frequency, and increases them in length. Roth and Dembrowski (2014) advised that interactive lessons should be fairly brief, fast-paced, and have a high level of student engagement. Teachers have to adjust lesson frequency per grade level depending on the amount of interactive lessons required. This allows students to engage in short increments where they are allocated time to review and increasing the time spent in developing their writing skills.

The 4th and final element is teaching points that go beyond genre. In this step a teacher keeps the students engaged by focusing on a topic that is relevant for the entire class (Roth & Dembrowski 2014). In this way, students have buy in to the process. Fan

(2016) laid out a systematic plan and explanation of the interactive writing tool for teachers to utilize in their classrooms.

Writing teachers should use each step in the interactive writing process. These steps include: (a) balancing planned and spontaneous teaching opportunities, (b) making careful teaching decisions as students develop, and (c) creating connections between the whole lesson and each student's writing (Fan, 2016). Following these steps will help teachers develop a collaborative learning lesson that will allow students to obtain independent writing skills. Teachers will also have an opportunity to provide students with feedback that allows students an opportunity to think and reflect critically.

Collaborative writing is part of interactive writing. It is an essential strategy that encourages students to engage and debate various ideas with their peers. Learning from immediate peer feedback in the one-on-one or small group setting provides benefits to students as in terms of social collectivism because human learning is primarily socially based (Roth & Dembrowski, 2014). Peers provide immediate feedback by means of activities such as editing another student's paper for grammar and content, completing ideas, or adding suggestions and comments on the writer's paper (Wigglesworth & Storch, 2014). The feedback from peers differs from the feedback a teacher may provide. Peers provide feedback on grammar and content on a similar level and also provide a positive experience.

ELL students in particular benefit from a collaborative learning environment. A meta-analysis of studies on learning groups in writing classes showed that all students and ELL students specifically benefit from the extra opportunities that learning

environment provides (Wigglesworth & Storch, 2014). By using collaborative writing processes students communicate their ideas with one another in small groups or pairs and benefit from having to explain and defend their ideas to peers (Storch, 2005). Language diversity is another tool that teachers use in order to provide assistance for ELL students.

Language Diversity

Teacher training can incorporate the idea that language diversity is a benefit and promote the use of that diversity to the benefit of ELL students during writing lessons. Statistics from the National Center for Education indicated that in school year 2013-2014, 9.3% of students in public schools were ELL students, a number that represents a slow and steady increase from 8.7% in 2002-2003 (NCES, 2016). Recognizing language diversity as a positive attribute critical to successful writing for ELL students.

Respect for language diversity is important. Developing writing identity is one way teachers can honor language diversity. Hall (2010, 2012) and McCarthey and Moje (2002) defined writing identity as the perceptions that people hold about the purposes of writing—who may write about what, how and when—beliefs about how to use writing and taboos about who may become a writer. Writing identity operates in the realm of children's writing practices and motivation to write.

There are barriers to developing writing identity with ELL students. Given the intricacies of writing acquisition, the development of a positive writing identity in ELL children is difficult due to the odds of learning a new language and having to write in it (Wagner, 2016). The writing instruction children receive is pivotal in creating a writing

identity. In creating a writing identity, teachers are encouraged treat language differences of ELL students as positive, not as writing problems.

One response to the future challenge of teaching an increasing number of ELL students is teaching teachers how to foster a writing identity in ELL students whose backgrounds shape how they want to express themselves in writing. Wagner (2016) explained that language differences give diverse students new ways to create meaning in their writing. By allowing ELL students to make decisions as authors of their writing, the children's writing identities are developed such that they feel empowered to write different kinds of text (Laman, 2014). As a result, they are encouraged to relate their lived experiences and to use non-English lexicon in writing.

Teaching Writing

Teachers need instruction on the best techniques for presenting grade-level writing lessons and giving feedback using techniques that are based on research into what works. These techniques need to be reflected in lesson plans, as teachers may revert to the well-trodden paths and fail to include the new techniques learned in their classroom teaching practice. Teachers can use several instruction methods to assist ELL students with their writing. These methods are outlined below.

English Language Learners (ELL) and English Foreign Language Learners (EFL). Young ELLs face a unique challenge as they are still in the process of learning their mother tongue and have to acquire English as a school language. In the United States, where the majority of teachers are monolingual, the challenge is even bigger as the teachers seldom understand the ELL child's first language. García and Wei (2013)

recommended that ELL children should be allowed to use non-English words in the writing class. In that way the ELL student can improve native language literacy while learning how to write in English.

When there is more than one child speaking the same foreign language, they can be grouped together for a group discussion in their mother tongue. In order to enrich all the students' language and writing experiences, the teacher can maintain a classroom library that contains bilingual books. This practice will enrich the writing and language learning experience as well as the linguistic identity. of which writing identity forms a part (García & Wei, 2013; Kumar, 2016; Wessels, 2014). Having a multilingual library will motivate ELL students to be better writers. Group discussions among students speaking the same native language are a benefit for writing.

In the same vein peer feedback, can result from group discussions. Hong (2015) suggested that the ELL students benefit from receiving peer feedback from another student who speaks the same language because some mother tongue words can be used to convey the message more accurately. Using vocabulary of another language not only validates the child's home language but also develops the metalinguistic awareness of all the children in the class.

In order to facilitate effective group discussions, teachers can benefit from training on how to run one-on-one and small group writing exercises for elementary students. A meta-analysis of studies on learning groups in writing classes showed that ELL students specifically benefit from the extra opportunities that learning environment

provides (Laman, 2014). These small group discussions provide an excellent pedagogical approach to teaching writing, including vocabulary from other languages help

Allowing the ELL students to use non-English vocabulary items assists ELL students in acquiring the English equivalent more easily. They can compare the two versions of the same word or words, which facilitates memory and recall. This process is recommended because ELL students follow a different cognitive pathway in learning English. Barac, Bialystok, Castro, and Sanchez (2014) and Hammer et al. (2014) indicated that these children have a more acute metalinguistic awareness, display greater cognitive flexibility, recognize patterns more easily, and are better at solving mental problems. These students are able to engage in multiple languages at once.

Recognizing and enhancing these cognitive differences will help ELL students to have improved writing outcomes. Laman (2014) conducted a 12-month study of 18 ELL students in grades one through three who partook in writing workshops. Laman asserted that teachers who capitalized on the students' different cognitive pathways in learning did a better job of facilitating writing skills in the students. By embracing the non-English language of ELL students, the teacher allows the child's bilingual status to be an asset and not a hindrance in the writing class.

Group discussions. Elementary school students can benefit from working with their peers to improve each other's writing. Wigglesworth and Storch (2012) found that group work, particularly in pairs, is important for ELL students. Teachers should be encouraged to pair up students or put them in small groups, and give them guidelines for

giving each other feedback. The next stage is for developing goal setting techniques within the classroom.

Goal setting. Teaching writing to elementary students should be more effective if goal-setting techniques are used. There are several ways students can set or acquire goals. Young students may adapt goals by watching other students, or their teacher. Schunk (2003) found that students who are interested in academic achievement tend to pay attention to teachers' display of new skills as opposed to socially oriented students who focus more on activities that are popular among their friends or peers. Teachers can set learning goals that clearly elucidate what knowledge or skills the student needs to acquire, or set a performance goal that sets out a task that the student is supposed to complete (Gadd & Parr, 2016; Schunk, 2003). Goals can be short-term, or long-term, depending on the task or skill the student is set to acquire. Short-term goals are generally more effective for younger children, as they cannot yet process distant outcomes in thought (Schunk, 2003). This provides students an opportunity to monitor their own progress through goal setting and goal achievement.

Teachers demonstrate and facilitate academic goal setting in students by communicating the goals for a lesson or term and regularly reminding students of the goals and where they stand in relation to the overall goals. Students with high self-efficacy use self-regulation; it was found that the level of self-efficacy could predict the degree of self-regulation of students. Academic goal setting mediated this relationship (Lee, Lee, & Bong, 2014). The goals that students aspire to out of their own free will, will explain the relationship between self-efficacy and self-regulation. Different

instructional factors play a role in the link between writing self-efficacy and self-regulation, for example the learner's perception of the peer feedback received, and the challenges and support teachers provide in class to name a few. The interplay of self-efficacy, self-regulation, and goal setting determines the student's willingness to take on harder writing tasks and codetermine student success in writing.

Goal-setting can be used as self-regulation. Setting (learning or writing) goals and putting practices in place to systematically achieve those goals by regulating one's own learning is an essential skill. Teachers who assist the students with setting realistic goals and checking their achievement thereof model ways to regulate learning through self-assessment (Andrade & Brookhart, 2016). Andrade and Brookhart (2016) proposed a three phase model of self-assessment namely (a) setting realistic goals, (b) monitoring progress through peer and teacher feedback, and (c) adjusting ways of achieving the goals by acting on the feedback received. Self-regulation through goal-setting and monitoring is a skill that can be developed and perfected throughout one's life to ensure achievement of key performance areas, completing tasks on time and at the desired level of perfection. Teachers who engage students in goal setting and monitoring from an early age contribute to essential life skills of students. A workshop approach should incorporate tactics for using goal setting that is realistic for each student. The next stage is to engage students in writing practices on a daily basis.

Writing practice. Daily writing practice is a common task that can assist students with their writing practice. In regards to teaching writing to ELL students, Ferris and Hedgcock (2004) stated, "professionals should approach the teaching of composition as

an opportunity to build their students' academic, vocational, professional, social, and cultural literacies" (p. 33). This suggestion of Ferris and Hedgcock is echoed by the advice of the National Council on Effective Education (NCEE, 2012) that teachers make time for daily writing practice. Teachers can use different approaches to teach ELL and native English speaking students the skills that they need to succeed in writing, for instance daily writing practice could be a task such as journaling. Based on the proven connection between reading and writing (Hebert, Gillespie, & Graham, 2013). Ferris and Hedgcock suggested teachers include tasks such as reading for meaning and details, journaling and more in writing lessons. Incorporating reading skills and utilizing tasks such as journaling allows students to integrate their literacies into the writing lessons.

Teachers were found to be less prepared for teaching writing than teaching reading, in a study of Grade 3 and 4 teachers' writing instruction. Brindle, Graham, Harris, and Hebert (2016) found that teachers seldom prepared for writing instruction and that those who regularly did had more success in teaching writing. Teaching writing is not just about a student mimicking what the teacher writes students must digest the information to be able to create their own sentences and become independent writers, following English rules, but also bringing their unique experiences and culture into the writing. Followed by daily practices, teachers need to develop a form of evaluation, and how to provide feedback to their students.

Evaluation. Writing instruction needs to include effective techniques for evaluating students' work, as well as for giving feedback effectively. Teachers need specific instruction to evaluate students' writing effectively, whether they use a self-

developed system of formal assessment, or one created by curriculum developers. A qualitative rating system might be useful, for example, or just a custom numerical rating scale. In their study on formative assessments, Graham, Harris, and Hebert (2011) reiterated the value of feedback about their writing in general or progress made with learning a specific writing skill on students' writing achievement. Graham et al. confirmed the importance of self-assessment and ongoing monitoring by teachers in mastering writing.

Whatever grading systems teachers adopt; they have to be able to give useful feedback to elementary students. Feedback methods also need to be adjusted to account for the needs of ELL students (Samson & Collins, 2012). When teachers assess writing from several samples of a student's writing, this may give a more accurate formative assessment of the student's writing skill (Graham et al., 2011). Formative assessment has a positive effect on students' writing practice; but, teachers have to implement it carefully. Training teachers in the best practices to implement formative assessment, such as using multiple writing samples, student self-assessment, and peer or teacher feedback, can increase the positive effect of the assessment.

Giving feedback. Students need to be given feedback at several points in the learning process or they are likely to continue making the same mistakes. However, some researchers suggested that teachers do not always use effective feedback strategies with their students (Fonseca et al., 2015). Fonseca et al. (2015) indicated that writing instruction for teachers should include reflective sessions and classroom application of good feedback techniques, so those techniques can be transferred to the elementary

classroom. Reflective sessions would help teachers learn from their own experiences with elementary school writers and would help the students learn to think in a focused way about how well their writing worked. Likewise, reflective sessions will assist students to think about how they organize their thoughts and write them down. If a student makes a similar mistake repeatedly this might also become clear.

Effective feedback, including reflective sessions, is particularly important for ELL students who, as noted above, may have difficulty following Standard English composition rules. Writing teachers who employ constructive feedback rather than critical feedback may get better results from their ELL students (Gulzar et al., 2013). The feedback method works for ELL students and is becoming more important as the number of non-native speakers of English grows. English language learner students need extra feedback to help them keep their native language rules from creeping into English writing (Lincoln, 2015). Feedback must be grounded in some form of assessment.

Peer assessment, like peer feedback, has been found to be successful in the teaching process provided that the students receive training and practicing opportunities to perform this activity. A set of assessment criteria is needed to enable students to evaluate peer's work, and this set of assessment criteria could be drafted by the teacher or workshopped with the students (Low & Wang, 2015). To remind the students of the criteria teachers could draft criteria lists and make it available to the students, Low and Wang (2015) suggested that during the initial phases of peer assessment training students should practice on their own work that was already marked by the teacher. Providing the students an opportunity to formulate assessment criteria allows them to discuss their ideas

in small groups, which is a valuable learning opportunity as it promotes negotiation skills and the ability to formulate and write down ideas. By assessing peer's work the student also learns about how to apply the set criteria although this will only follow when the students learned how to perform the peer assessments well.

This training includes giving and receiving feedback which is in itself a difficult task as it involves the students' feelings about their own work, their friendships, and the need to point out discrepancies as compared to the set criteria. In the literature review of peer reviewed articles done by Low and Wang (2015), giving and receiving feedback was mentioned as a potential problem area. Students are often negative about performing peer assessment and giving feedback because they do not want to give negative feedback to their peers. Although they have been trained to apply the criteria for assessment, students do not always accept their friends' legitimacy to judge their work and therefore do not readily accept the peer's advice. A suggested solution is regular discussions between the peer assessor, the student, and the teacher to verify the legitimacy of the peer assessor's judgment and feedback (Low & Wang, 2015). Although giving and receiving feedback is not easy, especially when friendships are at stake, this technique has been found to assist students in improving their writing (Graham et al., 2015), facilitate a deeper understanding of the criteria in both the peer assessor and recipient (Foley, 2013), and empower students to self-assess their own work (Reinholz, 2016). An interesting finding was by Kaivanpanah, Alavi, and Sepehrinia (2015) that the English foreign language students in their study preferred feedback from their peers despite the caution of the teachers lest students would be offended or demotivated. Kaivanpanah et al. pointed out

that teachers should determine the students' preferences to offer them the widest possible variety of educational intervention.

Peer review and feedback are useful techniques for improving writing; however, a particular strategy needs to be used. Zumbrum, Marrs, and Mewborn (2016) showed that feedback is especially important in writing instruction for two reasons. First, good feedback can improve the student's feeling of self-efficacy. Second, good feedback supports students in regulating their own writing process. Further, peer feedback has been shown to improve the quality of revisions compared with just being told by a teacher what was wrong (Ruegg, 2015). As a result of incorporating peer feedback, it was apparent in Ruegg's study, students used both specific feedback and general comments on their peers' writing to help them.

Different scholars have researched the question of how best to incorporate feedback into writing lessons. Boon (2016) studied how best to incorporate feedback into writing lessons. The research findings indicated that students need time to discuss feedback with peers and to internally process the teacher's feedback on their writing. Boon (2015) suggested that students need training in how to give effective feedback to their peers. This finding matches up with previous research suggesting that ELL students, in particular, benefit from one-on-one and small group discussions. Practical ways to perform self-assessment and peer feedback should be modeled by teachers during the course of writing instruction, assisting students to engage in positive feedback that enlightens and builds peers and self (Panadero, Jonsson, & Strijbos, 2016; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2012). Boon and other researchers cited in this section point to the value of

teaching a workshop that emphasizes facilitation, feedback, and tactics to help ELL students master English composition. The literature generally points to the value of a workshop that educates English teachers how to instruct elementary school classes that contain ELL students. Much of the literature reviewed here is also applicable to general writing instruction, even though the focus is on teaching elementary students.

Results of a study designed to explore writing instruction of 118 successful teachers in New Zealand indicated that successful teachers used different techniques and varied the techniques according to the desired outcomes of the writing instruction (Parr & Jesson, 2016). The overall instructional approach was that of "teaching as enquiry," where teachers use inquiry (e.g. assessment) to find out what each student needs. Parr and Jesson recommended that teachers also find out what the learners' unique skills and interests are and to use that knowledge in the classroom situation. Another growth area was found to be the teacher's ability to use inquiry to improve their own instruction to provide more individualized teaching and to promote equity for non-dominant groups and leaders with specific challenges (Parr & Jesson, 2016). In contrast, Jesson and Cockle (2014) asserted that teachers did utilize the diverse areas of expertise of learners when teaching writing. In an earlier research project also focusing on effective writing instruction, Jesson and Cockle (2014) indicated that teachers used specific classroom routines during writing instruction. These included whole class modeling, shared writing based on shared reading and discussion of text, small group instruction using independent and guided writing, and regular feedback from the teacher.

Successful teachers exhibited the ability to motivate the students to participate in their learning activities by asking their input on the nature of the writing process, utilization of co-defining learning goals and success indicators, and enabling students to self-monitor their work (Gadd, 2014). Successful writing instructors link reading and writing practices to some extent during writing instruction, which is another way to improve the student's knowledge of text and develop writing strategies (Parr & McNaughton, 2014). Knowledge of different strategies to teach writing and the ability to improvise or adapt strategies to best suit individual students are amongst the teachers' best instructional approaches when teaching writing. Writing teachers should be instructed in strategies known to improve students' writing skills.

Weaknesses in Standard Writing Instruction

Teaching writing to elementary students is already a difficult task, but can be more difficult with ELL students mixed into a classroom with native English speakers and writers. Teachers of English writing tend to discount the value of nonstandard writing that ELL students might use, which can violate the strict rules of composition in their writing process (Horner et al., 2011). Teachers in mixed classes can correct this weakness in their teaching, when they learn other effective teaching methods for writing. Language use strategies of ELL students, spoken and written, may differ from those used in Standard English; however, this difference does not imply that the students' language use is deviant or less important (Horner et al., 2011).

These strategies for language use are linked to the students' cultural, linguistic and educational backgrounds and experiences. Teachers should embrace these strategies

if they prove to be useful even though they do not represent what teachers would normally teach (Folse, 2004). Teachers need to be more flexible when it comes to teaching ELL students in a mainstream classroom. Instead of always trying to enforce the strict rules of Standard English, ELL students may benefit more from allowing the writing process to flow more naturally, account for their prior education, cultural differences, and English language level. Horner et al. (2011) noted that many writing teachers considered diversity in language an impediment to effective literacy instruction in classrooms.

There is a call to move away from the view that the perceived ideal of standard written English or edited American English is the only acceptable form of written English. In 1974, there was a move towards greater tolerance of the many forms of English being spoken by different people and in fact at times by the same person for different purposes (Horner et al., 2011). Teachers need to realize that differences in language use are not necessarily deviances and do not signify that the user is less able in terms of cognition or self-expression. By accepting differences in the use of English and treating it as a source to both learn from and use, the writing class becomes enriched by the differences to be found in every human including the ELL who might exhibit more noticeable differences due to their status.

Ongoing Professional Development

Teachers receive ongoing instruction as part of their certification requirements. Professional development that aims to provide teachers with more insight and skills in teaching their specific subject matter is seen as professional development (Wagner,

2016). Although not all instruction in subject matter is aimed at furthering professional (teaching) knowledge and skills, ongoing instruction in the field of education or pedagogy can be deemed to be professional development (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001). This professional development covers a wide range of subjects related to teaching, new state standards, and more.

To meet the demands of the national educational reform, teachers must be immersed in their teaching subjects to enhance their ability to narrate the basic information about their fields of specialization, and to promote more advanced insight and problem-solving skills in their students (Garet et al., 2001). Teachers learned teaching practices that focus on memorizing instead of facilitating insight and higher order thinking skills; they are therefore ill-equipped to participate in the kind of teaching that is required in the educational reform (Garet et al., 2001). Professional development, aimed at deeper knowledge and skills of teaching pedagogy, can help teachers develop skills and learn the tools to improve how they teach students.

Project Description

The workshop project is aimed to improve the professional level of teaching of writing to elementary students. The professional development training is not intended to replace any teaching standards for writing, such as Common Core, but to teach feedback, instruction, and evaluation techniques that teachers can use to teach their students to write, including the students for whom English is not their first language. As with any training activity, the workshops would require staff time, scheduling changes in the school, and support from principals. The detailed workshop schedule is in Appendix A.

Resources, Supports, Barriers, and Potential Solutions to Barriers

Needed Resources. Time, instructional space, and support from school administrators are necessary to implement the workshop project. The 3 days required for the workshop are a potential issue. Teachers will need to be able to focus on the worksheet, which I prepared for the training and will hand out to the participating teachers, for most or all of the 3 days. Principals will need to be able to arrange for the training by moving other professional development activities or administrative days, so the uninterrupted study time is available. Learning space at the school for the professional development program would be ideal, if this is feasible. Community space at a nearby library would also be a viable option. Aside from participating in the training there would be no formal expectations of teachers. The school districts or individual school administrators would have to decide whether or not to evaluate their newly trained teachers.

Two sets of materials, one for program instructors and one for participants, would accompany this workshop. The instructor guide includes exercises and lecture notes to accompany each section of the presentation. The slide deck with bullet points, discussion questions and key points from each part of the workshop would be included as well. Student materials would include a workbook with writing prompts, guides for giving feedback to fellow students, and writing exercises that cover persuasive writing, summarizing articles, presenting research, explaining an activity, and relating a personal story.

Existing Supports and Resources. Available space to conduct the 3-day workshop. In the case that assistance is needed, the school's IT person provides assistance during the workshop (media support).

Potential Barriers. Getting teachers to allocate three days in a row for a professional development workshop might be a challenge. In addition, it may be impossible during the school year. However, by scheduling the workshop for breaks solves this problem.

Alternatives. The best way to overcome both barriers, teachers time constraints and potential principals' resistance, is to present an alternate method of presenting the material. The best way of doing that is to break down the workshop into smaller pieces. This would spread out the teaching in smaller, more manageable modules. A self-paced course that is completed online would be an ideal option for convenience, saving time, and resources.

Project Implementation Plan

The professional development will be given during three teacher planning days in the school year and will also provide an opportunity for teachers to obtain their master plan points for their renewal of their teaching certification. Teachers will be given an opportunity to attend the professional development during a District Professional Development Day, which they will be required to attend a professional development workshop and will be paid. Teachers will be given approval based upon their teacher certification and will be receiving professional development points that will be accounted for their certification renewal.

Project implementation could face two substantial barriers. Teachers have a limited amount of time available for training and other non-classroom activities. Setting aside three full days to focus on professional development training that covers only one aspect of teaching may not be accepted by teachers. Support from principals might also be a barrier for the same reason. I will obtain approval and support from the administration once I provide them with the final results of the final study and the feedback from the questionnaires that I will obtain at the end of the workshop.

Roles and Responsibilities of Participants

Based on the project findings, I created a professional development workshop for 3rd and 4th grade teachers. The role of the school administrator is to ensure that the 3 day trainings is allowed and are willing to provide the support to the study. In addition, school administrators need to provide time for three consecutive days of training and an empty classroom or training room. As the researcher, my roles is to ensure that the professional development is deliverable. In addition, my roles is to also ensure that the teacher participants are committed to attend the 3 day professional development training.

Project Evaluation Plan

Planning of professional development must include evaluation. For purpose of this study, the actual benefits of students by means of analysis of their writing results was considered the best way to evaluate the success of the workshop, this was also suggested by Hill, Beisiegel, and Jacob (2013) as an excellent indicator of program success. Another suggestion made by Hill et al. (2013) was to elicit feedback from the teachers who participated in the program.

There are two areas on which feedback is necessary, the teaching strategies in place and what teachers would consider success in teaching writing skills (Guskey, 2014; Starman, Larson, Proffitt, Guskey, & Ma, 2013). Professional development requires time and organization from the instructor to provide a training that teachers will obtain accurate information that can be modeled back into their classroom. Guskey (2009) discussed the importance of modifying teaching strategies. (a) specific elements of the workshop training, and (b) what the teachers consider the likelihood of school success was upon implementation of the workshop suggestions. This evaluation will be done by administration of a questionnaire after the workshop to get more input from the teachers.

This project uses questionnaires after the workshop to get more input from the teachers. The formative evaluation will focus on whether the teachers (a) perceived the professional development and teacher participation as sufficient, (b) whether the teachers perceived the impact and future use of the professional training was high, medium or low, (c) what changes (positive or negative) the teachers expect in their pupils following the implementation of the workshop practices, and (d) the applicability of the workshop contents to the grade level being targeted and whether the teachers would use the new skills in class (Guskey, 2002; Guskey, 2014; Starman et al., 2013).

Type of Evaluation

I will start this workshop project with a clear purpose in mind (Guskey, 2002), to equip elementary writing teachers with well-researched and practical skills to teach writing to their 3rd and 4th grade pupils with specific mention of ELL students. The intended outcome of the professional development is improved writing abilities of all

pupils whose teachers attended the workshop. Confidentiality issues do not permit me to have access to the students' actual results, and this obvious route of evaluation can, therefore, not be followed. Furthermore, the reason that is why I am conducting an evaluation only at the end of the workshop. The formative evaluation will consist of the participating teachers during the training. Furthermore, summative evaluation will consist of the responding to a questionnaire that will consist of the information discussed in the workshop.

Justification for Type of Evaluation

Guskey (2002) identified five levels of participant evaluation, three of which involve the perceptions of teacher participants: (a) Participants' Reactions, (b) Participants' Learning, and (c) Participants' Use of New Knowledge and Skills (p. 46-48). Guskey (2002) also suggested a variety of instruments to obtain feedback from the teacher participants for evaluation purposes, such as questionnaires focusing on new teachings that were introduced during the workshops. Guskey used questionnaires directly after the workshop, and the demonstration of new teaching skills were introduced during the workshop. Overall, participation in the training should result in the participants feeling more confident about teaching writing.

The summative evaluation that I am using will obtain feedback from teacher participants at the end of the workshop. Teachers will evaluate the workshop based on a questionnaire that will be provided at the end of their 3-day workshop.

Overall Goals of the Proposed Project

The workshop presents new techniques for creating writing exercises, giving feedback to students, and leading discussions. New lessons on how to write will also be outlined in a way that makes the lessons suitable to elementary school students. Teachers in the workshop will learn several new techniques for teaching writing to elementary students. Teachers of English in elementary schools in the United States are the target audience for this training program. Teachers of English outside of the United States might also be able to benefit from the training and the research it is based on.

Overall Evaluation Goals

The evaluation focus is on how effective the training is for the teachers. A future evaluation would test children whose teachers who have been taught using the workshop methodology against those who have not. This evaluation might take the form of a short quiz in class. Ideally, it would be possible to compare classes or individual based on their standardized test scores. Confidentially rules might make it impossible to get individual students' scores or scores by teacher. If scores by teacher can be obtained it would be easy to see how their students performed on the writing portion of the test, as compared to those who got other forms of writing instruction.

Description of Key Stakeholders

This project has four key groups of stakeholders: elementary school students who get the writing instruction, parents of these children, teachers responsible for teaching writing, local school districts, community members, and elementary school administrators who are responsible for their students' achievements. Elementary schools'

students need to learn the basics of writing. Students who are non-native speakers of English need extra help. Teachers need to learn effective teaching tools and need to make effective use of their continuing education hours. The last group of stakeholders is important because they need to approve training and they need to make sure teaching activities and professional development time contributes to high performance in each school.

Project Implications

Implications for this professional development project may be a wider social impact of implementing this program among teachers who have many students who do not speak English as a first language. Because of participating in the project, it is hoped that all teachers' writing pedagogy will improve, which will also improve the writing ability of the teachers' ELL students. In addition, teachers may not cooperate or see the importance of implementing best practices and strategies in teaching writing.

Possible Implications for Social Change

There may be a wider social impact of implementing this program among teachers who have many students who do not speak English as a first language. Because of participating in the project, teachers' writing pedagogy will improve, which will also improve the writing ability of the teachers' ELL students. Implementing the best practices for teaching ELL students to write in standard English, teachers would better prepare students to participate in later schooling and other aspects of life where the ability to communicate in written English is crucial. By participating the professional development training teachers will be served by learning how to teach diverse elementary

students to communicate effectively in writing. This pedagogical practice is going to be a key job skill for the 21st century. Students will learn more about writing than they would if they had been exposed to standard means of teaching writing.

Importance of Project to Local Stakeholders and Larger Context

This project should be important to students, teachers, and to the education community more generally. The previous section describes how the project could shape the teaching of writing. Teachers will improve their ability to teach writing. Teachers who need to work with ELL students will be better equipped to prepare them. The project workshop, if successful and if adopted widely, will improve the writing instruction that many ELL students in elementary school receive. Based on the findings of the study, the professional development is structured to provide the participating teachers an opportunity to: (a) use oral activities to help students improve their literacy, (b) using group discussions to gather feedback, (c) open discussion on how to provide meaningful reasons for students to write, and (d) provide ongoing corrections and feedback. In addition, the workshop will provide participants to engage in group activities that will allow them to review current literature on best practices, strategies of developing more writing activities during class, and creating a classroom environment that will allow students to engage in classroom discussions and journal writings.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Section 3 was a description of the professional development project that was created to address the themes that emerged from the findings of this project study. The ultimate goal for this project study is for the results to have a positive impact in the local setting with potential for broader impact in the larger social context. In Section 4, I discuss my reflections regarding the study and the professional development that was developed to addressed the findings. This section includes a description of the project strengths and limitations; recommendations for alternative approaches; and scholarship, project development, and leadership and change. In addition, I reflect on the importance of the work, and a discussion about implications, applications, and directions for future research. This section ends with final conclusions regarding the study.

Project Strengths and Limitations

The workshop focused on how teachers can teach writing and how students like to learn writing. The best practices that teachers mentioned in the workshop also show up in the selection of workshop topics. Teachers cited oral activities, feedback, group discussion, and giving feedback. Brindle, Graham, Harris, and Herbert (2016) found that teachers seldom prepared for writing instruction and those who did showed success in teaching writing. One of the effective techniques for evaluating students' work is providing feedback. Graham, Harris, and Herbert (2011) reiterated how the value of providing feedback about student writing ensured specific writing skills on students' writing achievement. The feedback method is an excellent method of system for ELL students, as it provides them with the tools to keep their native language rules from

appearing into English writing (Lincoln 2015). This project provides teachers the tools and knowledge of different strategies to teach writing, as well as the ability to improvise or adapt strategies to best fit individual students. Writing teachers should be instructed in strategies known to improve students' writing skills and the purpose of this project study is to ensure that they receive the strategies to incorporate it in their classroom. This project study provides an opportunity for teachers to adhere to the needs of their students' needs in learning and developing tools in writing skills. With the information from the workshop teachers will obtain information that is resourceful in developing and teaching writing within their teachings. As discussed in Section 3, writing teachers should use each step in the interactive writing process. These steps include: (a) balancing planned and spontaneous teaching opportunities, (b) making careful teaching decisions as students develop, and (c) creating connections between the whole lesson and each student's writing (Fan, 2016).

Implications for this project study may occur when transferring the lessons or the workshop design to a wider audience of teachers. Needed resources, such as time and instructional space may be challenging. In addition, to allocating three days in a row for a professional development workshop. Another implication for this professional development project in a larger context offers an example of teachers that may not cooperate or see the importance of implementing best practices and strategies in teaching writing.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

During the course of this project, recommendations were made from the teacher participants' on how teachers' think writing should be taught in the classroom. However, in the absence of a single best-practices system for teaching writing at the elementary grade level, a comparative evaluation may be useful. The information that was provided during the professional development for the 10 participating teachers in 3rd and 4th grade. As a result, this only is limited to two grade levels and may require a comparative evaluation to be conducted with other grade levels, like 5th and middle school grade level teachers.

There are many strategies and systems in use, and some research on how effective they are. One alternative approach would be to develop a new curriculum for teaching writing. A tool that could work with teaching writing would be to implement the thinking box. Thinking boxes represent a set of graphical tools for teaching writing and other subjects (Fan 2016). Thinking Boxes may help students learn writing and compared with what methodology. An alternative to conducting the research in a magnet school would be to conduct similar focus groups in standard elementary schools. Students might have different needs and teachers might have different ideas about best practices.

An alternative to the proposed workshop organizes teaching around different strategies for teaching writing. Strategic and Interpretive Writing and Thinking Boxes are two possibilities. It is not clear if either method would be superior to the content of the proposed workshop content.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

As a School Counselor, I had an opportunity to learn how teachers collaborate within their grade levels, and about the importance of their teaching approaches. Some of the elementary school students in the school where I work come from impoverished homes, where English is not the primary language and where one or both of the parents are not literate in English. I learned about the challenges that teachers face when teaching writing after attending several grade level meetings, I learned about the importance of developing a workshop for teachers that focused on using best practices for teaching writing. In creating this professional development training, I exposed myself to peer reviewed articles that focused on developing techniques that work for teaching writing to ELL students and native speakers.

One thing that I found to be a challenge was the introduction of early training of teachers and how teachers can engage in training that focuses on effective critical aspects of proficiency in student writing. By reading and analyzing the literature, I obtained knowledge about different methods that would expose Grade 3 and Grade 4 students to good writing practices.

I found this project helped me grow as a scholar and practitioner and obtain knowledge on the importance of writing skills and improving methods of teaching writing can enrich their literacy skills. This project has changed my perspective of teacher evaluations of student progress and how they convey that evaluation to the student and to parents. The deliverable from this project study not only provides

strategies for best practices for teachers, but also tools that I can appreciate and understand in my role as a school counselor to provide support for classroom teachers.

My perception of teachers and the hours of planning and developing lesson plans has transitioned into a feeling of empathy, that they work hard and strive to develop a curriculum for all students. I had an opportunity to observe typical errors that students made, including grammatical errors and writing mechanics, among a few. This project made it clear that something needed to be done to improve the writing skills of students at the participating school, and by developing this professional development training, teachers will be provided support and an opportunity to collaboratively work in developing best practices.

The project has several implications for teaching and for academic research. More needs to be known about modifying a general teaching approach to serve classrooms with large numbers of students who struggle with English. There is a great deal of scholarship on how to teach ELL students to write in standard English (a citation is needed to support this claim.), but in blended classrooms the techniques that work for ELL students might slow down or frustrate the native English speakers. This project uses peer review as a tool for both types of students.

This project has focused on best practices in the teaching of writing to elementary students. A fundamental question remains regarding how good teachers' best practices match up with what scholars have learned about the teaching of writing to elementary students. There is a need for more data from non-magnet schools. The students at those schools could differ in important ways, as could the teachers, so the practices that seem to

work there cannot be generalized to all schools. What teachers generally do, their best practices, might also differ in systematic ways from what scholars have learned about effective use of reading, peer reviews, group discussions and written feedback. If there are significant gaps between actual practices and research-based teaching practices, then this information needs to be incorporated in a future teaching workshop.

The magnet school used in this research did not have a set of formal rules for teaching of writing. They have Common Core writing standards to work from; but the standards only cover what needs to be taught so students can pass a test. How to teach those skills is not covered. This is where a set of written, research-based teaching guidelines are needed. Training in how to use those guidelines with elementary students in general or in magnet schools is needed. Participating in this project taught me more about the gap between how writing is taught in practice and how research provides guidelines for best practice in teaching writing.

In planning and executing this project I had to manage not only the research and implement the writing workshop, I also had to deal with the demands of my regular job as a school counselor and private life. This multitasking taught me to manage projects by planning in detail each step and to prioritize the workload I had to face on a daily basis. The same could be said about the literature research, which required time and constant work so as not to get behind of schedule. I also had to outline the literature I had to study and write about. In short, I became far more structured in my approach to everything I had to deal with, a valuable trait that I will build on in the future.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

Two factors bear on the importance of developing a better system for teaching students to write. There is the critical importance of writing as a skill. There are limits to what can be done with traditional approaches to teaching spelling and punctuation. An approach to teaching writing that incorporates best practices from teachers goes well beyond the mechanics of writing. Combining the teaching of mechanics with learning about other content areas is the right way to move forward.

Feedback is another area of concern. Knowing that students need verbal feedback at several points in time is not the same as knowing when to give feedback and how to do it effectively. Without specific training or written guidelines on how to do those things, young teachers have to guess or rely on what older and more-experienced teachers tell them. This teacher training workshop outlined in this study aimed to change teacher guessing into specific practice and implementation of skills in the classroom, therefore, changing daily writing instruction to a best practice situation for all students.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Writing is a basic skill that people engage in daily. Even though computer software can capture a person's words in electronically written format, editing of the written material is still needed. People need to write clear, well structured, grammatically and syntactically correct documents. Documents must be well organized in terms of logical structure and well researched. This skill is not developed automatically without being taught. Writing instruction is, therefore, crucial to students' future development and success.

Successful implementation of this writing workshop will enable teachers to teach writing as a subject and facilitate student's ability to produce written material that is not only correct in terms of spelling and punctuation but well written and easy to read and understand. Such writing instruction has the potential to positively impact students' lives not only at the magnet school but at every school where this writing workshop is presented.

The most obvious direction for future research is to investigate how well this professional development training program translates into better writing by elementary school students. The Common Core writing standards provide a measure of writing performance at a school. A future study could be done to compare Common Core writing results for a number of schools, comparing students' standardized writing test scores from some schools where the teachers had the workshop training and students' standardized writing test scores from some schools where the teachers continued to use whatever methods they are comfortable with.

Investigating the validity of that assumption could be done through a larger study at schools that have a large percentage of ELL students. results from a larger qualitative study might reveal more about teachers' best practices in teaching of writing. A set of focus groups or individual interviews with a larger sample of teachers might reveal new best practices, new teaching techniques, and new teaching challenges to add to knowledge gathered from the data collected in this study.

Conclusion

Teachers' ideas about the best practices in teaching of writing to elementary students needed to be supported with empirical research on what works with different types of students. This project study involved such research and the creation of a professional development training based on the research findings. The *what* of teaching writing is covered in Common Core or other state standards for elementary students. The *how* of teaching writing is the outcome of this project study, generally, teachers rely on general instruction in how to teach writing and personal experience about what works, perhaps, in a haphazard manner. Teachers need the best tools for teaching writing techniques to students whose first language is English and to those students who do not use English as their primary language. The professional development training outlined in this project study offers a best tool for helping teachers in the important work of teaching writing.

References

Afflerbach, P., Cho, B., Kim, J., Crassas, M.E., & Doyle, B. (2013). Reading: What else matters besides strategies and skills? *Reading Teachers, 6*(6), 440-448. doi:10.1002/TRTR.1146

Baker, S. & Cremin, T. (2014). Teachers as writers: implications for identity. *Primary English Teaching Association Australia (PETAA), 194*. . Retrieved http://www.researchgate.net/publication/269399316_Cremin_T_Baker_S_(2014)_Teachers_as_Writers_a_PETAA_occasional_research_paper_Sydney_PETAA

Barrow, L., Brock, T., & Rouse, C. E. (2013). Postsecondary education in the United States: Introducing the issue. *Future of Children, 23*(1), 3-16. doi:10.1353/foc.2013.0006

Berry, B. (2010). Teacher effectiveness: The conditions that matter most and a look to the future. Retrieved from http://www.teachingquality.org/content/teacher-effectiveness-conditions-matter-most-and-look-futurehttp://www.teachingquality.org/content/teacher-effectiveness-conditions-matter-most-and-look-future

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: Practice and Critique, 12*(3), 137-156. Retrieved from http://education.waikato.ac.nz/research/files/etpc/files.2013v12n3art8.pdf

Bogdan, R. C. & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Boon, S. I. (2016). Increasing the uptake of peer feedback in primary school writing: Findings from an action research enquiry. *Education, 44*(2), 212-225 Retreived from http://www.tandfonline,com/doi/abs/10.1080/03004279.2014.901984#.VFqRipByb3g.

Boon, S. I. (2015). The role of training in improving peer assessment skills amongst year six pupils in primary school writing: An action research enquiry. *Education, 43*(6), 666-682. doi:10.1080/03004279.2013.856930

Boyd, M.P. (2012). Planning and realigning a lesson in response to student contributions. *Elementary School Journal, 113* (1), 25-51. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com.ezproxylocal.library.nova.edu/docview/1081953222?accountid=6579

Bromley, K. (2007). 9 things every teacher should know about words and vocabulary instruction. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 50*(8), 528-539. doi:10.1598/JAAL.50.7.2

Brindle, M., Graham, S., Harris, K. R., & Hebert, M. (2016). 3rd and 4th grade teacher's classroom practices in writing: A national survey. *Reading and Writing, 29*(5), 929-954. doi:10.1007/s11145-015-9604-x

Campbell, H., Espin, C., & McMaster, K. (2013) The technical adequacy of curriculum-based writing measures with English *learners. Reading and Writing: An*

Interdisciplinary Journal, 26(3), 431-452. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/?q=rating+systems+for+writing+proficiency+elementary+school&id=EJ998206. doi:10.1007/s11145-012-9375-6

Casey, L.B.; Miller, N.; Stockton, M.; Justice, & William V. (2016). Assessing writing in elementary schools: Moving away from a focus on mechanics. *Language Assessment Quarterly, 13*(1),42-54. doi:org.ezproxylocal.library.nova.edu/10.1080/15434303.2015.1136311

Chan, P.E., Graham-Day, K.J., Ressa, V.A., Peters, M.T., & Konrad, M., (2014). Beyond involvment: Promoting student ownership of learning in classrooms. *Intervention in School and Clinic,* 105-113. doi:10.1177/1053451214536039

Cheng, Y., & Yeh, H. (2009). From concepts of motivation to its application in instructional design: Reconsidering motivation from an instructional design perspective. *British Journal of Education Technology, 4*(40), 597-605. doi:10.1111/.1467-8535.2008.00857x

Cheung, A. (2013). The impact of educational technology applications on student achievement: What forty years of research tells us. *Cypriot Journal of Educational Sciences, 8*(1), 19-33. www.oalib.com/paper/2752059#.WDzEgdygNE4

Chen, Y., Liu, E., Shih, R., Wu, C., & Yuan, S. (2012). Use of peer feedback to enhance elementary students' writing through blogging. *British Journal of Educational Technology, 42*(1), E1-E4. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8535.2010.01139.x

Christensen, L. (2006). Teacher quality: Teachers teaching teachers. *PENN GSE Perspectives on Urban Education, 4*(1), n1. Retrieved from http://www.rethinkingschools.org/index.shtml

Codding, R., Petscher, Y., & Truckenmiller, A. (2015). CBM reading, mathematics, and written expression at the secondary level: Examining latent composite relations among indices and unique predictions with a state achievement test. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 107,* 437-450. doi:10.1037/a0037520

Creswell, J. W., Klassen, A., Clark, V., & Smith, K. (2011). Best practices for mixed methods research in the health sciences. Bethesda, MD. National Institute of Health. Retrieved from http://obssr.od.nih.gov/mixed_methods_researchhttp://obssr.od.nih.gov/mixed_methods_research

Calp, M. (2015). The comparison of 4th grade students' essays based on free and guided writing technique in terms of the quality of written expression. *Educational Research and Reviews, 10*(4), 444-452.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1999). *Teacher quality and student achievement: A review of state policy evidence.* Washington, DC: Centre for the Study of Teaching and Policy

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2013). *Strategies of inquiry. Handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2002). *The qualitative inquiry reader.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Duncan, N.G., Dufrene, B.A., Sterling, H.E., & Tingstrom, D.H. (2013). Promoting teachers' generalization of intervention use through goal setting and performance feedback. *Journal of Behavioral Education, 22* (4), 325-347. doi:10.1007ls10864-013-9173-5.

Dunn, K. E., Airola, D. T., Lo, W. J., & Garrison, M. (2013). Becoming data driven: The influence of teachers' sense of efficacy on concerns related to data-driven decision making. *Journal of Experimental Education, 81*(2), 222-241. doi:10.1080/00220973.2012.699899

Dunn, M. W. (2011). Writing-skills instruction: Teachers' perspectives about effective practices. *Journal of Reading Education, 37*(1), 18-25. Retrieved from http://oter.coedu.usf.edu/jreabout.htm

du Plessis, A., & Webb, P. (2012). A teacher proposed heuristic for ICT professional teacher development and implementation in the South African context. *Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology, 11*(4), 46-55. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ989254http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ989254

Fan, Y. (2016). Thinking maps in writing project in English for Taiwanese elementary school students. *Universal Journal of Educational Research, 4*(1), 36-57. doi:10.13189/ujer.2016.040106

Ferris, D. R., & Hedgcock, J. (2004). *Teaching ESL composition: Purpose, process, and practice.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Flaherty, J., & Choi, H. S. C. (2014). Is writing important for graduate success? A preliminary investigation into the communication skills required of Hospitality

and Tourism graduates. *Teaching and Learning Innovations, 16*. Retrieved from http://citl.indiana.edu/

Foley, S. (2013). Student views of peer assessment at the International School of Lausanne. *Journal of Research in International Education, 12*(3) 201–213. doi:10.1177/1475240913509766

Fonseca, J., Carvalho, C., Conboy, J., Valente, M.O, Gama, A.P., Salema, & M.H:Fiúza, E. (2015). Changing teachers' feedback practices: A workshop challenge. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 40.* Retrieved from files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1073639.pdf

Gadd, M. (2014). What is critical in the effective teaching of writing? A study of the classroom practice of some Year 5–8 teachers in the New Zealand context. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Auckland. Retrieved from hdl.handle.net/2292/23491

Gadd, M., & Parr, J. M. (2016). It's all about Baxter: task orientation in the effective teaching of writing. *Literacy UKLA, 50*(2). 93-99. doi:10.1111/lit.12072

Gallo, J., & Herrmann, B. (2014). Transforming writing teachers: Two professional development possibilities. *Teaching/Writing: The Journal of Writing Teacher Education, 3*(2), 8. Retrieved from scholarworks.wmich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1019&context=wteRetrieved from scholarworks.wmich.edu/wte/http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/wte/

Garet, M. S., Porter, A. C., Desimone, L., Birman, B. F., & Yoon, K. S. (2001). What makes professional development effective? Results from a national sample of

teachers. *American Educational Research Journal, 38*(4), 915-945. doi:10.3102/00028312038004915

Graham, S., McKeown, D., Kiuhara, S., & Harris, K. R. (2012). A meta-analysis of writing instruction for students in the elementary grades. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 104*(4), 879-896. doi:10.1037/a0029185

Graham, S. (2012). Introduction to special issue on writing assessment and instruction. *Exceptionality: A Special Education Journal, 20*(4), 197-198. doi:10.1080/09362835.2012.724622

Graham, S., & Santangelo, T. (2014). Does spelling instructions make students better spellers, readers, and writers? A meta-analytic review. *Reading and Writing, 27* 1703-1743. doi:10.1007/s11145-014-9517-0.

Graham, S., Harris, K.R., Bartlett, B.J., Popadopoulou, E., & Santoro, J. (2016). Acceptability of adaptations for struggling writers: A national survey with primary-grade teachers. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 39*(1), 5-16. doi:10.1177/0731948714554038

Goetz, J. P., & LeCompte, M. D. (1984). *Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research.* New York, NY: Academic Press.

Graham, S., Bollinger, A., Olson, C., D'Aoust, C., MacArthur, C., McCoutonen, D., & Ollinghouse, N. (2012). Teaching elementary school students to be effective writers: A practice guide. (NCEE Publication No. 2012-4058). Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED533112http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED533112

Graham, S., Harris, K., & Hebert, M. (2011). Informing writing: The benefits of formative assessment. A Report from Carnegie Corporation of New York.Carnegie Corporation of New York. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED537566.pdf

Graham, S., Harris, K., Bartlett, B., Popadopoulou, E., & Santoro, J. (2014). Acceptability of adaptations for struggling writers: A national survey with primary grade teachers. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 39*(1), 5-16. doi:10.1177/0731948714554038

Graham, S., MacArthur, C. A., & Fitzgerald, J. (2013). *Best practices in writing instruction.* New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Graham, S., Hebert, M., & Harris, K. R. (2015). Formative assessment and writing. *Elementary School Journal, 115*(4), 523-547. doi:10.1086/68194

Guskey, T. R., & Yoon, K. S. (2009). What works in professional development?. *Phi Delta Kappan, 90*(7), 495-500. outlier.uchicago.edu/computerscience/OS4CS/landscapestudy/resources/Guskey-and-Yoon-2009.pdf

Hammer, C. S., Hoff, E., Uchikoshi, Y., Gillanders, C., Castro, D. C., & Sandilos, L. E. (2014). The language and literacy development of young dual language learners: A critical review. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 29*(4), 715–733. doi:10.1016/j.ecresq.2014.05.008

Hansen, Blake D., Wills, & Howard P. (2014). The effects of goal setting, contingent reward, and instruction on writing skills. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 47,* 171-175. doi:10.1002/jaba.92

Hansen-Thomas, H., Grosso R., Liliana; K., Kanika,O., & Christine (2016). I do not feel I am properly trained to help them! Rural teachers' perceptions of challenges and needs with English-language learners. *Professional Development in Education, 42,* 308-324. doi:10.1017/S026144480500286

Hatch, J. A. (2002). *Doing qualitative research in education settings.* Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Hebert, M., Gillespie, A., & Graham, S. (2013). Comparing effects of different writing activities on reading comprehension: A meta-analysis. *Reading and Writing, 26*(1), 111–138. doi:10.1007/s11145-012-9386-3

Hipp, K., & Huffman, J. (2010). *Demystifying professional learning communities.* Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield.

Hong, H. (2015). Exploring young children's writer identity construction through the lens of dialogism. *International Journal of Early Childhood, 47*(2), 301–316. doi:10.1007/s13158-015-0136-y

Horner, B., Lu, M., Royster, J., & Trimbur, J. (2011). Opinion: language difference in writing: Toward a translingual approach. *College English, 73*(3), 303-321. Retrieved from http://www.ncte.org/journals/ce

Hughes, M.T., Parker-Katz, M., Balasubramanian, A. (2013). Learning to teach literacy through collaborative discussions of student work. *Teachers and Teaching*

Theory and Practice, 19(5). Retrieved from s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/30527013/Literacy_Discussion.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAJ56TQJRTWSMTNPEA&Expires=1480394150&Signature=lijMimjqPDppyaSg1X6umeDZ%2B2U%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DLearning_to_Teach_Literacy_through_Colla.pdfsearch.proquest.com.ezproxylocal.library.nova.edu/docview/1437340097?accountid=6579http://www.ncte.org/journals/ce

Jesson, R. N., & Cockle, V. (2014). The opportunities to build on existing expertise in writing classrooms: a study of writing lessons in New Zealand primary schools. *Education 3*(13), 1-13. doi:10.1080/ 03004279.2014.923479

Johnson, D., Johnson, R., & Smith, K. (1991). *Collaborative learning: Increasing college faculty instructional productivity.* Washington, DC: The George Washington University. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED343465)

Kaivanpanah, S., Alavi, S. M., & Sepehrinia, S. (2015). Preferences for interactional feedback: differences between learners and teachers. *Language Learning Journal, 43*(1), 74-93. doi:10.1080/09571736.2012.705571

Kelm, J.L., & McIntosh, K. (2012). Effects of school-wide positive behavior support on teacher self-efficacy. *Psychology in the Schools,49*(2), 137-147. doi:10.1177/0829573514540266

Knox, S., & Burkard, A. W. (2009). Qualitative research interviews. *Psychotherapy Research, 19*(4-5), 566-575. doi:10.1080/10503300802702105

Kumar, T. (2016). Teaming up for literacy: examining participants' contributions to a collaborative family-based program. *Multicultural Education, 23*(2), 38-46. Retrieved from eric.ed.gov/?q=source%3a%22Multicultural+Education%22&id=EJ1097856

Laman, T. T. (2014). Transforming literate identities: Writing and multilingual children at work. *Talking Points, 26*(1), 2–10. Retrieved from www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/Journals/TP/0261-oct2014/TP026rasforming.pdf

Lee, W., Lee, M. J., & Bong, M. (2014). Testing interest and self-efficacy as predictors of academic self-regulation and achievement. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 39*(2), 86–99. doi:10.1016/j.cedpsych.2014.02.002

Levin, T., & Marcus, A. (2010). How the structure and focus of teachers' collaborative activities facilitate and constrain teacher learning. *Teacher and Teacher Education, 26*(3), 389-398. Retrieved from http://www.journals.elsevier.com/teaching-and-teacher-education/

Lincoln, F., & Ben Idris, A. (2015). Teaching the writing process as a first and second language revisited: Are they the same? *Journal of International Education Research, 11*(2), 119-124. Retrieved from search.proquest.com/openview/5a9193046220f03608157607ad6109fb/1?pq-origsite=gscholar

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

Locke, T., Whitehead, D., & Dix, S. (2013). The impact of "writing project" professional development on teachers' self-efficacy as writers and teachers of writing. *English in Australia, 48*(2), 55-69. Retrieved from https://www.aate.org.au/journals/english-in-australiahttps://www.aate.org.au/journals/english-in-australia

Loder Buechel, L. (2015). Young learner writing performance in Swiss elementary schools--which teacher variables .matter?. *RELC Journal: A Journal of Language Teaching and Research, 46*(3), 275-292. Retreived from eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1082755

Mason, M. (2010). Sample size and saturation in PhD studies using qualitative interviews. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 11*(3). Retrieved from http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs

Marulis, L., & Neuman, S. (2013). How vocabulary interventions affect young children at risk: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness, 6*(3), 223-262.

www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/19345747.2012.755591

Mujis, D., & Reynolds, D. (2015). Teachers' beliefs and behaviors: What really matters? *Journal of Classroom INteraction, 50*(1), 25-40. Retreived from www.jstor.org/stable/23870407?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

National Center for Education Statistics (2016). English language learners in public schools. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgf.asp

Onwuegbuzie, A., Leech, N., & Collins, K. (2010). Innovative data collection strategies in qualitative research. *Qualitative Report, 15*(3), 696-726. Retrieved from http://tqr.nova.edu/ufdc.ufl.edu/UFE0046066/00001

Poekert, P.E. (2012). Teaching leadership and professional development: Examining links between two concepts central to school improvement. *Professional Development in Education,38*(20), 169-188. Retreieved from eric.ed.gov/?q=teacher+leadership&id=EJ971634

Parr, J., & Timperley, H. (2010). Feedback to writing, assessment for teaching and learning and student progress. *Assessing Writing, 15*(2), 68-85. doi:10.1016/j.asw.2010.05.004

Parr, J. M., & McNaughton, S. (2014). Making connections: The nature and occurrence of links in literacy teaching and learning. *Australian Journal of Language & Literacy, 37*(3), 141–150. Retrieved from https://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=622201992859680;res=IELHSS

Parr, J. M., & Jesson, R. (2016). Mapping the landscape of writing instruction in New Zealand primary school classrooms. *Reading and Writing, 29*(5), 981-1011. doi:10.1007/s11145-015-9589-5

Reinholz, D. (2016). The assessment cycle: a model for learning through peer assessment. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 41*(2), 301-315. doi:10.1080/02602938.2015.1008982

Robinson, J., Myran, S., Strauss, R., & Reed, W. (2014). The impact of an alternative professional development model on teacher practices in formative assessment and student learning. *Teacher Development: An International Journal of Teachers Professional Development, 18*(2), 141-162. doi:10.1080/13664530/2014.900516

Roth, K., & Dabrowski, J. (2014). Extending interactive writing into Grades 2-5. *Reading Teacher, 68*(1), 33-44. doi:10.1002/trtr.1270

Ruegg, R. (2015). Differences in the uptake of teacher and peer feedback. *RELC Journal: A Journal of Language Teaching and Research, 46,* 131-145.

Samson, J. F., & Collins, B. A. (2012). Preparing all teachers to meet the needs of English language learners: Applying research to policy and practice for teacher effectiveness. Center for American Progress. Retrieved from files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED535608.pdf

Schunk, D. H. (2003). Self-efficacy for reading and writing: Influence of modeling, goal setting, and self-evaluation. *Reading & Writing Quarterly, 19*(2), 159-172. doi:10.1080/10573560308219

Shabani, K., Khatib, M., & Ebadi, S. (2010). Vygotsky's zone of proximal development: instructional implications and teachers' professional development. *English Language Teaching, 3*(4), 237-248. doi:0.5539/elt.v3n4p237

Shanahan, T. (2015). Common Core state standards: A new role for writing. *Elementary School Journal, 115,* 464-479.

Silverman, D. (2011). *Qualitative methodology* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sormunen, E., Tanni, M., Alamettala, T., & Heinstrom, J. (2014). Students' group work strategies in source-based writing assignments. *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology 65*(6), 1217-1231. doi:10.1002/asi.23032

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Stake, R. E. (2005). Qualitative case studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.; pp. 443-466). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Storch, N. (2005). Collaborative writing: Product, process, and students' reflections. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 14*(3), 153-173. doi:10.1016/j.jslw.2005.05.002.

Tleuzhanova, G.K., & Madenyatova, A.M. (2014). The professional competence of teachers: Which skills and knowledge contribute to a teacher effectiveness. 5(9): 146-148. Retrieved from search.proquest.com/openview/ed58d4c0dee7247c745f7ae0343a67b4/1?pq-origsite=gscholar

Turner, D. W. (2010). Qualitative interview design: A practical guide for novice investigators. *Qualitative Report, 15*(3), 754-760. Retrieved from search.proquest.com/openview/d378ec2c9d7929d226d1f0b46b26eae2/1?pq-origsite=gscholar

U.S. Department of Education (2011). Fiscal year 2012 budget summary. Retrieved from http://www.2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget12/summary/ed-litesection1.html

van Manen, J. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Wagner, C. J. (2016). Teaching young dual language learners to be writers: Rethinking writing instruction through the lens of identity. *Journal of Education, 196*(1), 31-40. Retrieved from s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/43101421/Wagner_2016_JOE.pd AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAJ56TQJRTWSMTNPEA&Expires=1480395505&Signature=Vc7JV3qRJNMLjR5n5yZ3nQhPg7g%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DTeaching_young_dual_language_learners_to.pdf

Waldfogel, J. (2012). The role of out-of-school factors in the literacy problem. *Future of Children, 22*(2), 39-54. doi:10.2307/23317410

Wardle, E., & Roozen, K. (2012). Addressing the complexity of writing development: Toward an ecological model of assessment. *Assessing Writing, 17*(2), 106-119. doi:10.1016/j.asw/2012.01.001

Wasik, B., & Hindman, A. (2011). Improving vocabulary and pre-literacy skills of at-risk preschoolers through teacher professional development. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 103*(2), 455-469. doi:10.1037/a0023067

Wasik, B. & Hindman, A. (2012). Fidelity of implementation for an early-literacy intervention: Dimensionality and contribution to children's intervention outcomes. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 37*(4) 165-174. www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0885200616300564

Wessels, S. (2014). Supporting English and Spanish literacy through a family literacy program. *School Community Journal, 24*(2), 147–163. Retrieved from www.questia.com/library/journal/1P3-3538906201/supporting-english-and-spanish-literacy-through-a

Whiteman, M. F. (2013). *Writing: The nature, development, and teaching of written communication.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Wiggins, G. P., & McTighe, J. (2007). *Schooling by design: Mission, action, and achievement.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Wigglesworth, G., & Storch, N. (2012). What role for collaboration in writing and writing feedback. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 21*(4), 364-374. doi:10.1016/j.jslw.2012.09.005

Williams, C., & Pilonieta, P. (2012). Using interactive writing instruction with kindergarten and first-grade English language learners. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 40*(3), 145-150. doi:10.1007/s10643-012-0508-y

Witney, D., & Smallbone, T. (2011). Wiki work: Can using wikis enhance student collaboration for group assignment tasks? *Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 48*(1), 101-110. doi:10.1080/14703297.2010.543765

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Zumbrunn, S., Marrs, S., & Mewborn, C. (2016). Toward a better understanding of student perceptions of writing feedback: a mixed methods study. *Reading and Writing, 29*(2), 349-370. doi:10.1007/s11145-015-9599-3

Appendix A: The Project

This project is a professional development workshop on the teaching of writing to elementary students. This training is not intended to replace any teaching standards for writing, such as Common Core, but to teach feedback, instruction, and evaluation techniques that teachers can use to better teach their students to write. A focus on mechanics is not enough, especially for students who do not speak English as their first language. Because many elementary students now come from homes where English is not the first language, there is an increasing need for teachers to know how to teach these students in mixed classes, where some of the students speak English as their native language and some do not. The proposed project will meet this training need and the desire for teachers to learn best practices for teaching writing. Teachers may know that giving feedback at several points is important, but they don't use the best methods for doing so. Furthermore, based on the findings in Section 2, teachers will obtain an opportunity to examine lesson plans and explore the literatures provided about best teachings in writing that will enhance their knowledge and skills.

The workshop plan is based on lessons gleaned from a search of literature on writing education, and the findings outlined in Section 2. Those sources of information yielded a workshop plan, project goals and objectives, workshop materials, an evaluation plan, and an implementation plan.

Project Goals and Objectives

The product of this project is a professional development workshop that presents new techniques for creating writing exercises, giving feedback to students, and leading discussions. New lessons on how to write are also be outlined in a way that makes the lessons suitable to elementary school students. Teachers who complete the workshop will be better equipped to teach writing at the elementary level to all students, including ESL students. Teachers will learn best practices for teaching writing.

Audience

The training was designed to meet the needs of the teachers at the participating school. Teachers of English in elementary schools in the participating school and perhaps throughout the United States are the target audience for this training program. This training is focused on teaching in magnet schools, but to the extent teaching is the same outside of magnet schools, K-12 teachers in other types of schools can also benefit from the training. Teachers of English outside of the United States might also be able to benefit from the workshop training.

Project Objectives

The workshop focuses on new teaching techniques that are simple to apply and will make a difference for both native speakers of English and ELL students. The emphasis is on techniques for teaching writing, not ESL education. Teachers who

complete the course should be more effective in teaching elementary students to write effectively in English.

Project Materials

This workshop would be accompanied by two sets of materials, one for instructors and one for the participating teachers. The instructor guide includes exercises and lecture notes to accompany each section of the presentation. The slide deck with bullet points, discussion questions and key points from each part of the workshop would be included as well. Student materials would include a workbook with writing prompts, guides for giving feedback to fellow students, and writing exercises for students. The writing exercises include persuasive writing, summarizing articles, presenting research, explaining an activity, and relating a personal story. The writing exercises were selected to match the specific writing abilities mentioned in Common Core teaching standards.

The Workshop

The three-day workshop teaches writing in a way that enables native speakers of English and ESL students to learn written communication, not the mechanics of punctuation and spelling. Best practices identified from the project's findings and from the literature will be the focus. Workshop attendees will learn best practices for giving individual feedback to students, facilitating group discussions, using oral feedback and readings to improve writing, and using peer feedback. The complete workshop schedule is summarized in this table.

Teaching of Writing Workshop Schedule – Day 1

Activity	Time
Introduction and overview of workshop	8:30 – 9:00
Discussion on teaching techniques	9:00 – 10:00
How Children Learn to Write	10:15 – 12:00
Lunch	12:00 – 1:00
Review of Grading Standards – Common Core	2:30 – 3:30

Teaching of Writing Workshop – Day 2

Activity	Time
Open Discussion on teaching techniques	8:30 – 10:15
Constructivism in Teaching Writing	10:30 – 12:00
Lunch	12:00-1:00
Oral Feedback and Instruction	2:30-3:30

Writing Workshop Schedule – Day 3

Activity	Time
Teaching Peer Review	8:30 – 10:00
Practicing Feedback (Evaluation)	10:15 – 12:00
Lunch	12:00-1:00
Overview of Lesson Plan	1:00 – 2:35
Evaluation Questionnaire	2:30-3:30

As the workshop is designed to have measurable impacts on teachers of English and on students, there must be a way to evaluate the workshop's impact.

Implementation and Evaluation

The general goal is to find out what teachers do and how confident they feel about their effectiveness. The post-test would come in two parts. First, students would be asked to evaluate how much they learned and how useful the material is likely to be in their classes. The second outcomes-focused evaluation will be a follow-up that comes after teachers have used what they learned in at least one group of elementary school students. This part of the evaluation will ask for impressions about how well their new language instruction lessons worked in practice. The project workshop treats evaluation as a learning tool for the attendees currently. Attendees will also be asked to complete a brief feedback form, so workshop attendees can give feedback to workshop instructors and administrators.

This evaluation might take the form of a short quiz in class. Ideally, it would be possible to compare classes or individual based on their standardized test scores. Confidentially rules might make it impossible to get individual students' scores or scores by teacher. If scores by teacher can be obtained it would be easy to see how their students performed on the writing portion of the test, as compared to those who got other forms of writing instruction.

Training would take place at first in a school, during a break. Because the training takes almost 36 hours, it would be impractical to conduct the training around other school activities. The other option is to bring in substitute teachers during three days when the English teachers are in the workshop. This approach may also prove impractical or unacceptable in many schools, so the default plan is to use a scheduled break. Workshop instructors would have to be trained separately.

Teaching of Writing Workshop Schedule – Day 1

Activity	Time
Introduction and overview of workshop	8:30 – 9:00
Discussion on teaching techniques	9:00 – 10:00
How Children Learn to Write I	10:15 – 12:00
How Children Learn to Write II	1:00 – 2:30
Review of Grading Standards – Common Core	2:30 – 3:30
Standards-Based Teaching, Overview	3:45 - 5:00

Teaching of Writing Workshop – Day 2

Activity	Time
Open Discussion on teaching techniques	8:30 – 10:15
Constructivism in Teaching Writing	10:30 – 12:00
Giving Effective Feedback	1:00 – 2:30
Oral Feedback and Instruction	2:30-3:30
Monitoring and Reporting Progress	3:45 – 5:00

Writing Workshop Schedule – Day 3

Activity	Time
Teaching Peer Review	8:30 – 10:00
Practicing Feedback (Evaluation)	10:15 – 12:00
Practicing Oral Feedback	1:00 – 2:30
Overview of Lesson Plan	2:30 – 3:45
Quiz to Test Learning & Discussion	4:00 – 5:00

What do you expect from this workshop?

Expectations Snowball –

Write down your expectations for this workshop

Crumble the paper and throw at the lecturer / paper basket

Each participant fetches a 'snowball' and read the suggestion / expectation out loud

This person becomes the custodian of this expectation and must ensure it is dealt with during the workshop

Do a check-in at the end of the day to see if the questions were answered

TEACHING WRITING SKILLS

Why teach writing beyond grade 1?

Results on Standard Writing Tests

Provide some statistics
Let teachers decide individually where their class results fall compared to the national / district standard

 *How did you experience writing when you were in grade 4? What were the things that worried you, were hard or wished that the teacher would help you with?*

 *Which messages did you receive as a child when having to write?*

☐ "Just give it a try"

☐ "Be perfect"

☐ "Do your best"

☐ "Is this all you can do?"

☐ "Don't be lazy!"

☐ "Just write about something you know"

☐ "Oh no, that is not a good topic, try harder!"

☐ "Come on get going we don't have all day"

☐ "Always finish what you start"

☐ "You must write properly, that is not how you spell that word"

☐ "You should use full stops and commas; this is a mess"

☐ "Be careful you are not telling the story correctly"

Mark the above types of criticism on your writing that you received as a child. It will help you understand your student's reactions to criticism better.

If you do not change your beliefs, your life will be like this forever. Is that good news?
ROBERT ANTHONY

Teaching Writing I

Provide information taken from your dissertation.

Exercise:

✍ **Examples of writing activities in the classroom:**

Homework: How do you teach writing?

✍

1. ✍ List the positive criticisms you give to students and their reactions:

 **Feedback: How do you teach writing**

REMARKS AND PLAN OF ACTION:

Examples of activities to use in adult education

Expectations Snowball –

Write down your expectations for this workshop

Crumble the paper and throw at the lecturer / paper basket

Each participant fetches a 'snowball' and read the suggestion / expectation out loud

This person becomes the custodian of this expectation and must ensure it is dealt with during the workshop

Do a check-in at the end of the day to see if the questions were answered

Placemat

Pose a question – problem and:
Group 4 participants around a large piece of paper
Draw a circle on the paper with a square around it – lines going from the corners but not entering the circle. Thus, creating 4 blocks on the outside of the circle.
Thinking time – individual – write down on paper corner
Group's ideas in common written in the circle – 3 ideas per group
Feedback to the larger group

Think – pare – share

Individual thinking time – gives safety and familiarity
Discuss in pares / small groups – give safety but a little exposure
Share with the larger group – lecturer selects a speaker as this increases accountability as everyone has to participate

PD Evaluation Questionnaire

1.) Not Resourceful 2.) Somewhat 3.) Resourceful 4.) Very Resourceful

Was the professional development training helpful?

Did you obtain new knowledge of best practices that you can implement in your classroom setting?

Was it helpful to obtain current researches about best practices?

Did the group discussions provide strategies that could be implemented in your lesson plans?

Were the examples and case studies discussed beneficial to the development of obtaining new ideas of implementing writing activities in your classroom?

Overall, what would you rate the quality of the sessions and the group discussions that were held?

Any suggestions or comments

Best Practices for Writing

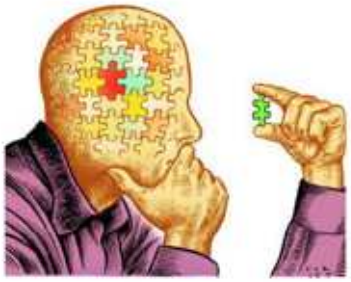
Parastou Afshar Eftekhari

Introduction and Overview of Workshop

- Introduction of the group members
- Discussions of various teaching techniques each grade level teachers provide in their classroom
- How Children Learn to Write: Primary section that is based on peer reviewed literature provided from the Power Point. Facilitator will present and participants will write down their feedback on a notecard and will post the notecards on the wall. There will be sections divided with various discussion posts.
- How Children Learn to Write II: Focusing further on the literature review and various activities that teachers can incorporate in their classroom teachings.
- Reviewing the Rubric

Teaching Techniques

- Management of Classroom discussions
  - Engaging in Oral classroom discussion prior to having students write
  - Providing model samples of expectations
  - Reading passages prior to engaging classroom discussion on writing



How Children Learn to Write

- Open discussion
  - Activity of dividing the room to have five teachers observing participants that were engaged in oral discussions in class. While the remaining five were given a writing prompt and asked to begin writing

How Children Learn to Write

- Students' Literacy Skills
- The National Curriculum Board (NCB, 2009) posited that literacy referred to reading, writing, speaking, viewing, and listening effectively in a wide range of contexts. A modern definition of literacy includes a flexible, sustainable mastery of a set of capabilities in the utilization and production of texts and technologies that can aid in the use of spoken language, print, and multimedia (NCB, 2009). Literate students represent those who can adjust and modify their use of language to effectively address contextual demands of certain situations (NCB, 2009).

How Children Learn to Write

- Recent assessments showed that reading abilities of students have decreased. Because of these assessments, the issue of adolescent literacy has been a topic of debate amongst educators, and the federal government has offered to fund programs designed toward adolescent literacy (Arthur & Hiebert, 2011; Barrow, Brock, & Rouse, 2013).
- Writing skills of students represent the best indication of teachers' capabilities toward their students (Boyd, 2012).
- Writing not only provides a gateway for knowledge acquisition, but also supports and extends the "comprehension and learning of content

How Children Learn to Write

- The elements of a writing workshop model, when implemented in a classroom-setting, can foster the development of a writer's identity in students (Chan et al. 2014).
- Teachers can evaluate students' skills in writing based on the year level of the students. According to a document published by the U.S. Department of Education (2011), only 24% of U.S. students from eighth and 12th grades are proficient in writing.
- Teachers who work together benefit from opportunities to expand on professional knowledge and acquire best practices in education from one another that they can apply in the classroom, enhancing teaching and learning (Hughes et al., 2013).

How Children Learn to Write

- Researchers have tried different writing interventions to see which strategies work best with a specific set of students. In a meta-analysis of writing instruction for elementary students, Graham, McKeown, Kiuhara, and Harris (2012) examined literature on writing interventions, focusing their efforts on true and quasi-experiments.
- They observed 116 documents that included the statistics required for computing an effect size, and used these to determine the average weighted ES for 13 writing interventions. All writing interventions used by Graham et al. had previously tested positively in at least four studies. The studies revealed that different interventions among different sets of students might become required. The acceptability of writing interventions must also obtain examination to ensure that writing teachers stay comfortable using such interventions in their classroom.

How Children Learn to Write

- Review lesson plans in groups
- Develop questions for your partners
- Write one lesson plan together in the group
- Discuss some best practices highlighted from this activity
- The exploration of developmental characteristics, common in a young person in the upper elementary grades, can influence an individual's self-perception (Graham et al., 2012)
- Negative consequences, associated with below-average writing skills, include a decrease in interpersonal relationships, the quality of their jobs, and the quality of their lives (Duncan et al., 2013)

Review of Grading Standards

Standards Based Teaching

Overview of Lesson Plans

Providing Feedback

Giving Effective Feedback

• When teachers assess writing from several samples of a student's writing, this may give a more accurate formative assessment of the student's writing skill (Graham et al., 2011). Formative assessment has a positive effect on students' writing practice, but teachers have to implement it carefully.

Peer Feedback

- Zumbrum, Marrs, and Mewborn (2016) showed that feedback is especially important in writing instruction for two reasons. First, good feedback can improve the student's feeling of self-efficacy. Second, good feedback supports students in regulating their own writing process.

Peer Review

- Each section of the room will be divided into four different elements of teaching writing.
- With the index cards provided, write down some strategies that work best in your class.
- Write one to two questions for each strategy provided from the team board.

Constructivism in Teaching Writing

Constructivism in Teaching Writing

- Teachers who assist the students with setting realistic goals and checking their achievement thereof model ways to regulate learning through self-assessment (Andrade & Brookhart, 2016). Andrade and Brookhart (2016) proposed a three phase model of self-assessment namely (a) setting realistic goals, (b) monitoring progress through peer and teacher feedback, and (c) adjusting ways of achieving the goals by acting on the feedback received.

Group discussion

- Based on Andrade and Brookhart (2016) model:
  - Develop your own realistic goals
  - How would you monitor the progress by the use of peer and teacher feedbacks

Monitoring and Reporting Progress

•Case Study Activity

- The purpose of this activity is to provide each grade level teachers an opportunity to critique and monitor student's writing. Throughout this activity, they will engage in group discussions and develop lesson plans primarily for their case study.
- Each group will critique the writings of three students randomly provided from various classes.
- The participants in the group will have a note taker that will take notes throughout the activity.
- Each group will spend time focusing on what the concerns are in the paper and how they can be addressed.
- Once they have provided feedback, they will write a lesson plan primarily for those three students.

Appendix B: Interview Questions for Teachers

The purpose of these interview questions is to gather in-depth data on the perceptions of 3rd and 4th grade magnet school teachers regarding the best practices to improve their students' writing skills. The interviews will focus on these questions:

i. How do you manage the class when teaching writing skills?
    i. What activities/ways do you conduct to ensure that students are listening to the discussion?
    ii. What activities/ways do you implement to ensure that students do understand what is/are being discussed in class?
    iii. How do you maintain the conducive and engaging atmosphere during your class?
ii. What are some examples of the best writing skills that are learned and practiced in your class?
iii. What do you think are the common mistakes or failure areas of students in terms of their writing skills?
    i. What do you do to correct these mistakes?
    ii. What follow-up procedures do you do to ensure that students learned from their mistakes?

Probes

As the interviewee responds to the open-ended questions that are posed, I will listen carefully for the opportunity to ask on or more of the following probes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007):

What do you mean?
I'm not sure that I am following you.
Would you please explain that?

What did you say then?

What were you thinking at that time?

Give me an example.

Tell me about it.

Take me through the experience. (p. 104)

Bogdan, R.C. & Biklen, S.K. (2007). Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.