


2017

# Elementary Teachers' Perceptions on Writing Proficiency of Military-Connected Students

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# Walden University

College of Education

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Kerrin Weatherwax

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2017

Abstract

Elementary Teachers' Perceptions on Writing Proficiency of Military-Connected

Students

by

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December 2017

## Abstract

At Base Elementary School (BES) in the Southwest United States school administrators were concerned that writing proficiency levels for 2014-2015 were below district and state standards and there was not a clear understanding of teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of military-connected (MC) students at the target site. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students at BES. Using Lave and Wenger's communities of practice framework, a qualitative instrumental case study was used to discern perceptions of elementary English Language Arts (ELA) teachers regarding the writing proficiency of MC students. Through a purposeful sample of 12 ELA teachers, telephone interviews were used to explore teachers' writing perceptions. Data from interviews were analyzed using inductive and iterative analysis resulting in identification of key themes. Major themes included the status of existing writing practices, diverse culture of MC students, need for collaborative relationship building among teachers, and the need for targeted writing professional development (PD) focused on connecting evidence-based practices (EBP) to state writing standards using culturally responsive practices (CRP). The resulting project of a white paper, will promote stakeholder awareness of teachers' perceptions, includes themes supporting the findings with recommendations that teachers would benefit from targeted writing PD focused on EBP and CRP using a collaborative model. Teacher use of these recommendations may promote social change by improving writing support for MC students possibly leading to improved performance on state proficiency assessments.

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## Dedication

This research study is dedicated to God and my beautiful family. Thank you for your love and support. You are my world.

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## Section 1: The Problem

### **The Local Problem**

School administrators of Base Elementary School (BES), a local public school located on a military base, lacked an understanding of teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of military-connected students. Declining state writing scores among the campus population of highly mobile military-connected students at BES were reported on the Campus Improvement Plan (2015). High mobility rates negatively influence scores of military-connected (MC) students (Jacobson, 2013; Smrekar & Owens, 2003; Welsh, 2016). The absence of data on teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students may have negatively influenced state writing scores. Due to the lack of understanding of administrators' and teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students, best practices were not identified or used and professional development (PD) was not developed or implemented.

Data on teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students may inform evidence-based practices (EBPs) for MC students. EBPs are essential to writing proficiency (Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). According to the Campus Improvement Plan (2015), Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Summary (2015), and the Title I Schoolwide Program Plan (2015), there have been no PD in the areas of writing EBP or teaching MC students. To understand the PD needs of teachers regarding writing for MC students at the local site, teachers' perceptions on these topics needed to be explored. Several abbreviations are used throughout this study to avoid repetition, as illustrated in Figure 1.

**Abbreviation Glossary**

Base Elementary School (BES)

military-connected (MC)

professional development (PD)

evidence-based practices (EBP)

culturally responsive practices (CRP)

*Figure 1.* Abbreviation glossary.

Average state writing assessment scores from BES campus for 2014-2015 were considerably lower than scores from the district and state. Average scores for 2014-2015 were the following: campus 65%, district 73%, and state 75% (Campus Improvement Plan, 2015; see Table 1). BES administrators identified a goal of proficiency on state writing assessments per the Campus Improvement Plan (2015), Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Summary (2015), and the Title I Schoolwide Program Plan (2015). The school goal of writing proficiency was not met due to low state writing scores. Table 1 shows 2014-2015 state writing scores for the campus, state, and district.

Table 1

*State Writing Scores*

Year	Campus	District	State
2015	63%	71%	72%
2014	67%	75%	72%

*Note.* Campus scores declined 4% from 2014-2015. Campus scores averaged 8% lower than the district in 2014 and 2015. Campus scores averaged 5% lower than the state in 2014 and 9% in 2015.

High mobility rates are a challenge associated with MC students that negatively influences state scores (Jacobson, 2013; Smrekar & Owens, 2003; Welsh, 2016). MC students change schools an average of nine times before high school graduation (Esqueda, Astor, & De Pedro, 2012; Welsh, 2016). Jacobson (2013) found that fourth grade, highly mobile students averaged proficiency levels that were 4 months behind their peers academically, and sixth grade highly mobile students averaged proficiency levels that were a full year behind their peers.

Teachers may not be adequately trained to educate highly mobile students (Esqueda et al., 2012; Jacobson, 2013; Smrekar & Owens, 2003). According to Esqueda et al. (2012), public school teachers need PD training to effectively educate MC students. Therefore, teachers at BES would benefit from PD training on teaching MC students.

The lack of writing proficiency has been an ongoing problem nationwide (Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Students achieve writing proficiency when state standards are mastered, which is proven by successfully passing the state assessment. Annual writing assessments are required of all schools statewide of which BES is a part (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2017).

Common Core State Standards inform curriculum development and instruction. However, according to researchers, state writing standards are unclear and do not equip teachers with enough information to effectively develop writing curriculum to prepare students for the state writing assessment (Alter, Walker, & Landers, 2013; Kim, Al Otaiba, Sidler, & Gruelich, 2013; Raudenbush, 2015; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). According to Troia and Olinghouse (2013), writing standards require teachers to consult



other resources to facilitate students' writing proficiency. Therefore, providing teachers who have a lack of clarity on connecting writing EBP to standards may be a factor for the lack of writing proficiency at BES (Alter et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2013; Raudenbush, 2015).

Elementary writing standards include mastery of purpose, production, research, and range (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2017). Mastery of standards is demonstrated on the state assessment by writing samples that are grade-level appropriate, which will include an opinion piece, informative text, descriptive narrative, and creative writing piece (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2017). According to The National Assessment of Educational Progress (2011), only about 27% of students performed at or above writing proficiency level in the United States. More than 70% of fourth graders in 2002 were not proficient on the National Assessment of Educational Progress writing test (Persky, Daane, & Jin, 2003). Therefore, from 2002-2011, state writing scores increased by only 3% nationally, which proves that writing proficiency is an ongoing problem in the United States (Persky et al., 2003).

Students carry a lack of writing proficiency from elementary grades to high school (Burns & Ysseldyke, 2009; Relles & Tierney, 2013; Sacher, 2016). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2012), writing proficiency was achieved by only 30% of eighth grade through 12th grade students. College developmental programs have become necessary due to high school students failing to master writing standards (MacArthur, Philippakos, & Ianetta, 2015; National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges, 2005; Sacher, 2016). High school graduates

are entering college and the workplace unprepared with the necessary writing skills to be successful (MacArthur et al., 2015; National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges, 2005; Relles & Tierney, 2013; Sacher, 2016).

Writing proficiency has been a focus of nationwide school reform since 2002. The establishment of the National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges in 2002 made writing proficiency a national focus. Promoting writing EBP for high quality instruction through scientific research is a primary goal of education reform (Applebee & Langer, 2006, 2011; Kiuvara, Graham, & Hawken, 2009). The development of the Common Core State Standards Initiative in 2009 also influenced school reform of writing practice (Morrow, Shanahan, & Wixson, 2012). According to Applebee and Langer (2011), students must achieve writing proficiency to be successful in school, college, and throughout their lives. Therefore, writing proficiency is a skill that is worth exploring.

Teachers must use writing EBP for students to achieve writing proficiency (Applebee & Langer, 2006; Gilbert & Graham, 2010; Graham, McKeown, Kiuvara, & Harris, 2012). The types of writing assignments that students complete and the amount of time dedicated to writing in the classroom are related to state scores (Applebee & Langer, 2006; National Commission on Writing, 2003). Also, elementary school teachers must have effective instructional tools that include expertise of EBP and PD for students to achieve proficiency (Graham et al., 2012). Therefore, the amount of time dedicated to classroom practice and the quality of PD are factors that could explain the lack of student writing proficiency at the local site.

## **The Role of Writing Instruction**

There are little data on elementary writing instruction, which is a barrier to evaluating writing practice and the lack of writing proficiency in the United States (Gilbert & Graham, 2010; Graham et al., 2015). There is also a need for further research on elementary writing EBP, according to Graham and Perin (2007) and Graham et al. (2015). There are no data available on writing instruction for elementary MC students. Therefore, further research on elementary writing instruction, elementary writing EBP, and writing instruction for elementary MC students is needed. Through research of these topics, elementary writing EBP for MC students may be found, which may result in student writing proficiency.

### **Rationale**

#### **Evidence of the Problem in the Local Setting**

There are no identified teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students by BES administrators or teachers. According to the BES principal (personal communication, April 29, 2015), administrators do not have an understanding of teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students. Administrators would benefit by gaining an understanding of teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students to identify EBP and implementing PD, as outlined by the goals in the Campus Improvement Plan (2015), Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Summary (2015), and the Title I Schoolwide Program Plan (2015). These documents are the result of a collaborative effort on behalf of the school's leadership and the overarching school district.

PD training for teachers at the local site has not included writing instruction or teaching MC students, according to the Campus Improvement Plan (2015). According to the Campus Improvement Plan (2015), teachers also expressed that they did not have opportunities to provide input on PD needs. Administrators of BES identified a goal of student proficiency on state writing assessments on the Campus Improvement Plan (2015), Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Summary (BES, 2015), and the Title I Schoolwide Program Plan (2015). PD focusing on EBP may address this goal, as illustrated in Figure 2.

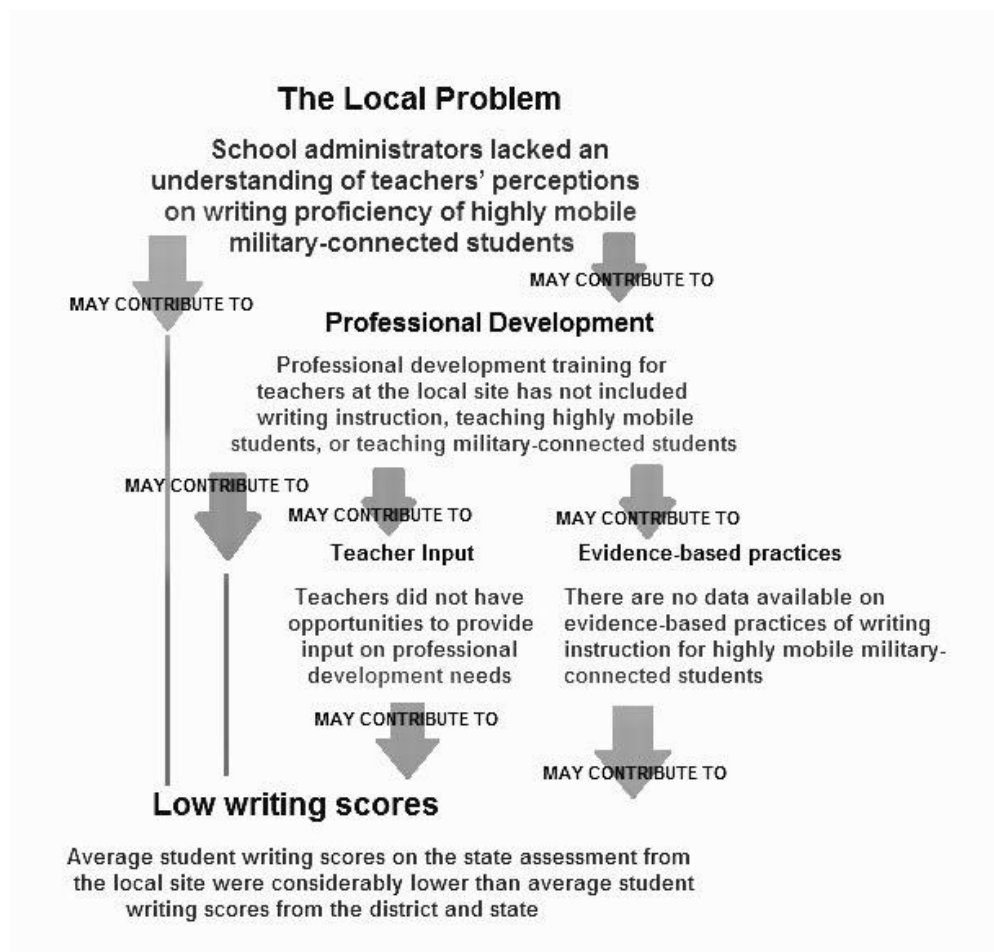


Figure 2. The local problem.

### **Evidence of the Problem at the Broader Level**

Teachers are not spending enough time on writing instruction in the classroom. Elementary teachers conduct writing instruction for approximately 15 minutes per day (Gilbert & Graham, 2010; Graham et al., 2015). The time and resources spent on writing should be at least doubled to achieve writing proficiency nationwide (Walpole & McKenna, 2012). According to the National Commission on Writing (2003, 2004), it is necessary for teachers to focus more attention on writing to support the success of students.

Teachers reported feeling underprepared to teach writing, which may explain the lack of proficiency (Gilbert & Graham, 2010; Graham et al., 2015). According to Walpole and McKenna (2012), teachers benefit from PD to learn writing EBP, which they may not have learned in teacher's college. By exploring teachers' perceptions on the writing proficiency of MC students, BES administrators may be positioned to make informed decisions regarding budgeting, planning, designing, and implementing PD (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999; Larson & Marsh, 2014). By gaining an understanding of teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students, I was able to make recommendations for PD that support the needs of teachers regarding writing instruction for MC students.

### **Definition of Terms**

The terms listed below are presented in this doctoral project and provide a clearer understanding of the study.

*Best practice/ Evidence-based practice (EBP):* Data- or research-based strategies that have proven superior results (Johnson, 2008).

*Military-connected (MC) student:* Child of a military service member who is typically classified as highly mobile by relocating every 2 to 3 years (Smrekar & Owens, 2003).

*State writing assessment:* Statewide standardized test designed to measure elements of student writing proficiency (Jeffery, 2009).

*Writing instruction:* Lessons and assignments led by the teacher that include drafting, editing, and revising (Graham & Perin, 2007).

*Writing proficiency:* Mastery of writing demonstrated by consistent performance and measured by established standards (Lembke, Deno, & Hall, 2003).

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study lies in exploring a topic that has not yet been researched, which is teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency for MC students who have been unsuccessful in reaching writing proficiency as measured by the state writing assessment. Examining teachers' perceptions enriches research data, which enhances the field of education (Alter et al., 2013). The findings from this study may inform school administrators on teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students, which may lead to best practices for writing, effective PD, writing proficiency, and high school success (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003; Larson & Marsh, 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013).

Teachers at the local site may benefit from this study in several ways.

Exploration of teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency could strengthen the community's practice by making meaning of and identifying successful practices (Casey, Miller, Stockton, & Justice, 2016). Writing instruction may be enhanced during this study while determining teachers' perceptions on the writing proficiency of MC students (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lodico, Spalding, & Voegtle, 2010). Also, writing EBP for MC students may be found (Alter et al., 2013).

School administrators may benefit from this research study in several ways. By exploring teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students, BES administrators may be positioned to make informed decisions regarding budgeting, planning, designing, and implementing PD (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999; Larson & Marsh, 2014). Improved writing instruction is associated with effective PD on EBP (Casey et al., 2016; Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999). Other elementary schools with MC students may also benefit from the findings of this study by using the data and subsequent recommendations as an improvement model for writing proficiency of MC students.

### **Research Question**

In this project study, I examined teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students. Teachers participated in semistructured individual interviews with open-ended questions from the interview protocol (see Appendix D), which guided each interview session (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010; Yin, 2014). The interview

questions were related to writing instruction, proficiency, and teaching MC students to answer the following research question:

1. What are teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of military-connected students at BES?

## **Review of the Literature**

### **Database Search Words and Phrases**

A literature review table was used to organize peer-reviewed journal articles published within the last 5 years and to identify literature topics. The three identified topics included MC students, writing instruction, and PD. Each topic identified during the literature review correlated to the problem of the study. The database search of words and phrases allowed me to explore research related to the topic of my study. Databases used to research the topic for this research study were EBSCO, ProQuest, and Sage Journals. Search topics used when searching these databases included *writing EBP, EBP, elementary writing instruction, writing proficiency, state writing assessments, military-connected students, professional development, researching teachers' perspectives, writing instruction, elementary students, MC students, writing proficiency, state assessments, writing assessments, PD, teachers' perspectives, writing, practices, instruction, elementary, students, proficiency, assessments, military, PD, teacher, research, and perspectives*. The strategy used to organize information for the database search was a reference web.



## Conceptual Framework

Teachers' perceptions of the writing proficiency of MC students at BES was the focus of this research study. The conceptual framework, which served as the foundation of this study, was communities of practice (COP) proposed by Lave and Wenger (1991). According to Lave and Wenger (1991), COP is summarized as a grouping of people with a common interest learning how to refine their expertise through regular interaction. COPs naturally evolve and are not a formal structure created by a manager (Liedtka, 1999; Vaughan & Dornan, 2014). The three components of COP include a domain, community, and practice, as illustrated in Figure 3 (Ciampa, 2016; Lave & Wenger, 1991).



*Figure 3.* Community of practice.

The subject of writing was the common interest, or domain, in this study. The key practice issue within the domain of this community needs of teachers to achieve writing proficiency (Vaughan & Dornan, 2014; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). Teachers have a collective competence through experience with teaching and learning from each other through discussion and collaboration (Ciampa, 2016; Vaughan & Dornan, 2014; Wenger et al., 2002). When this community has regular social interactions, they form perceptions regarding the domain (Vaughan & Dornan, 2014; Wenger et al., 2002).

The community included teachers of MC students at the local site. The COPs had a common interest of refining their practice over time through discussion (Ciampa, 2016; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Teachers learn how to refine their expertise through regular, informal, and social interaction within the workplace, which achieves authentic and motivated learning (Vaughan & Dornan, 2014; Wenger et al., 2002). Regular interaction within the community includes sharing experiences, challenges, support, strategies, problem-solving, requesting information, mapping knowledge, sharing tools, and identifying gaps in practice (Ciampa, 2016; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

The practice was writing instruction. Needs of teachers regarding writing instruction of MC students were better understood as a result of this study. Teachers' perceptions included practices, tools, and interventions for writing that could be used to develop EBPs for MC students (Ciampa, 2016; Vaughan & Dornan, 2014). Through PD training, teachers at BES may be better prepared to implement EBP of writing for MC

students, which may lead to the campus goal of writing proficiency (Ciampa, 2016; Vaughan & Dornan, 2014; Wenger et al., 2002).

### **MC Students**

Every school district in the United States has MC students enrolled in their schools, according to Esqueda et al. (2012). Public school teachers may not have training on deployment issues or high mobility, which are common challenges of MC students (Esqueda et al., 2012). On average, students from MC families change schools every 3 years or nine times before high school graduation (Esqueda et al., 2012; Milburn & Lightfoot, 2013; Welsh, 2016). Jacobson (2013) and Welsh (2016) further explained that high mobility negatively influences classroom environments by reducing student engagement and instructional continuity. High mobility also results in childhood stress due to adjusting support systems including peers, family members, teachers, coaches, and neighbors (Blasko, 2015; DePedro et al., 2014; Jacobson, 2013; Welsh, 2016). Hosek and Wadsworth (2013) added that the military lifestyle is also stressful due to long hours with dangerous work and prolonged separations during training and deployment.

Challenges associated with the diverse culture of MC students also include changes in daily routines, traumatic exposure, and mental health issues (DePedro et al., 2014; DePedro, Astor, Gilreath, Benbenishty, & Berkowitz, 2015; Paley, Lester, & Mogil, 2013). Milburn and Lightfoot (2013) and Sullivan, Barr, Kintzle, Gilreath, and Castro (2016) explained that the effects of deployment on MC students could be understood using a developmental perspective because military service and deployments influence child functioning and contribute to physical and mental health challenges.

Therefore, teacher PD should include the challenges associated with MC students, including high mobility, varying ability levels, learning gaps, content retention, and stress (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Astor & Benbenishty, 2014; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Welsh, 2016).

Training teachers on culturally responsive practice (CRP) may reduce challenges associated with MC students and enhance instruction (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Astor & Benbenishty, 2014; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Welsh, 2016). CRPs are intercollaborative practices and reflective pedagogies that focus on honoring and celebrating cultural diversity (Ford, Stuart, & Vakil, 2014). Therefore, teacher PD should include CRP.

CRP is also effective in addressing achievement gaps (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Vazquez-Montilla, Just, & Triscari, 2014). Implementing CRP motivates students, reduces behavioral problems, and improves student achievement (Rychly & Graves, 2012). Further, writing instruction is shaped by beliefs about cultural diversity; therefore, writing instruction and CRP are complimentary methods (Gay, 2013). Educator PD should include implementing CRP with writing instruction for MC students.

Support programs for MC students are limited, according to Murphy and Fairbank (2013) and Paley et al. (2013). Clever and Segal (2013) added that MC students need flexible and adaptive support programs and policies to be successful. DePedro et al. (2015) and Murphy and Fairbank also described promoting well-being, healthy development, and academic success as positive characteristics of school-based support and interventions for MC students. There is a need for research on MC students to

inform future programs and policies to effectively support MC students (Cozza, Lerner, & Haskins, 2014; DePedro et al., 2014; Murphy & Fairbank, 2013; Paley et al., 2013). Further, support programs for MC students are effective when grounded in research (Cozza, 2014). Therefore, teacher PD should include support programs for MC students.

### **Writing Instruction**

Low-quality student writing is an ongoing challenge for teachers nationally (Morrow et al., 2012; Ritchey & Coker, 2013). Effective writing instruction is critical for elementary students (Bifuh-Ambe, 2013; Dombek & Al Otaiba, 2015; Kent et al., 2014). Further, writing instruction that includes EBP is essential for proficiency (Furey, Marcotte, Hintze, & Shackett, 2016; Graham et al., 2012; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013).

EBP are research-based strategies that have proven superior results (Johnson, 2008). EBP for writing includes imagery, text structure, text transcription, sentence combining, write in response to text, peer collaboration, and self-regulation (Graham, 2010; Graham et al., 2012; Troia, 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Imagery is used in creative writing for constructing mental images to encode into writing (Hosp, Hosp, & Howell, 2016; Troia, 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Text structure includes cause-effect, compare-contrast, description, problem-solution, and sequencing (Graham et al., 2012; Troia, 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Text transcription includes using a word processor/ computer, which enables easier transcription and revision through use of technology (Troia, 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013).

Sentence combining is an EBP for writing that involves teaching students to add words to a simple sentence to create a more complicated sentence and to deconstruct

complex sentences (Saddler, 2012; Troia, 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Write in response to text is a literacy/ writing practice used to teach students to read a text and provide a response, which also improves comprehension (Troia, 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Peer collaboration includes students cooperatively working through the writing process together (Rohrbeck, Ginsburg-Block, Fantuzzo, & Miller, 2003; Troia, 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Lastly, self-regulation involves students independently developing the productivity and quality of their writing, which allows students to develop self-directed learning behaviors and independence (Hosp et al., 2016; Troia, 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Therefore, teacher PD should include EBPs for writing.

Students' writing skills benefit from a cycle of continuous practice, instruction, assessment, and modification according to Dombek and Al Otaiba (2015) and Kent et al. (2014). Plan, draft, revise, and edit are the steps of the writing process, which is the leading EBP for writing (Graham, 2010; Graham et al., 2010; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Alves et al. (2016); Graham, Beminger, Abbott, Abbott, and Whitaker (1997); and McCutchen (1996) added that a word processor/ computer used for developing text transcription skills is the leading writing tool. Therefore, educator PD should include cycles of practice, the writing process, and text transcription using a word processor/ computer into writing instruction for MC students.

Writing proficiency of elementary students is related to reading ability and comprehension (Graham & Hebert, 2011; Kent, Wanzek, Petscher, Al Otaiba, & Kim, 2014; Kim, Al Otaiba, Folsom, Greulich, & Puranik, 2014; Padeliadu & Antoniou, 2013).

Decoding and fluency are the basis of reading and writing comprehension, according to Padeliadu and Antoniou (2013). Decoding includes knowledge of letter-sound relationships and letter patterns to process a printed word into a sound, which is critical to comprehension (Kim, Bryant, Bryant, & Park, 2016; Padeliadu & Antoniou, 2013).

Writing proficiency is also connected to literacy predictors, which include letter/print knowledge, phonological awareness, and oral language abilities (Catts, Herrera, Nielsen, & Bridges, 2015; Kim et al., 2014; Padeliadu & Antoniou, 2013). Phonological awareness is the ability to manipulate sounds into speech (Saygin, 2013). Alter et al. (2013) and Kim et al. (2013) and added that language, literacy, and behavioral factors influence writing development. Therefore, in PD, educators should learn about connecting literacy and writing practices to enhance instruction.

Intervention is needed in early grades for students demonstrating risk factors for writing and reading (Kim, Al Otaiba, Wanzek, & Gatlin, 2015). Interventions that result in statistical improvement include the self-regulated model, peer assistance, product goals, prewriting activities, and text transcription (Graham et al., 2012; Rohrbeck, Ginsburg-Block, Fantuzzo, & Miller, 2003). Cozza (2014) added that necessary interventions for MC students are effective when grounded in research. One-on-one instruction and peer-assisted learning are also examples of effective elementary grade interventions (Arnold et al., 2017; Bowman-Perrott et al., 2013; Rohrbeck et al., 2003). Therefore, PD for educators should include using writing interventions including the self-regulated model, peer assistance, product goals, prewriting activities, text transcription, and one-on-one instruction.

Teachers use state standards and the individual needs of students to develop curriculum and instruction (DeLuca & Bellara, 2013). Elementary state writing standards include mastery of purpose, production, research, and range, which students will demonstrate by differentiating between genres of writing and following different rules for each genre (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2017). Grade-level appropriate writing samples consist of an opinion piece, informative text, descriptive narrative, and creative writing piece (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2017). However, teachers reported that state standards are unclear and do not provide enough information to develop effective curriculum according (Alter et al., 2013; Kim, Al Otaiba, Sidler, & Gruelich, 2013; Raudenbush, 2015; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Therefore, educator PD should familiarize teachers with writing standards.

DeLuca, Chavez, Bellara, and Cao (2013) explained that despite policies promoting state standards, teachers continue to maintain low competency levels in instruction for standardized assessment. DeLuca, Chavez, and Cao (2013) and Greenberg, Walsh, and McKee (2015) added that teachers have limited training in connecting instruction to state assessments. Therefore, teacher PD should connect state writing standards to EBP for writing.

Ensuring assessment validity is important for effective writing instruction (Casey et al., 2016; Dombek & Al Otaiba, 2015; Ritchey & Coker, 2013). Further, curriculum-based assessment is mechanics focused and may not measure the expression and development of ideas (Casey et al., 2016; Dombek & Al Otaiba, 2015; Ritchey & Coker, 2013). Casey et al. (2016) added that the appropriate focus for elementary school



students is the ability to understand and share ideas, as opposed to spelling and punctuation.

It is crucial to investigate the validity of curriculum-based assessment to provide accuracy of measurement (Dombek & Al Otaiba, 2015; Ritchey & Coker, 2013).

Further, Kim et al. (2015) added that teachers would benefit from additional investigation in using writing assessment data to inform writing instruction and intervention.

Therefore, PD should ensure curriculum-based writing assessment validity.

### **Professional Development**

Quality PD influences teacher effectiveness, according to Raudenbush (2015).

PD is enhanced by collaborative input from teachers on successful instructional practices, which may result in best practices of writing for MC students at the local site (Alter et al., 2013; Bifuh-Ambe, 2013; Gouvea et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2015; Raudenbush, 2015). Alter et al. (2013) and Bifuh-Ambe (2013) showed that analyzing perceptions of teachers could positively inform the needs, design, and implementation of effective PD. Gouvea, Motta, and Santoro (2016) explained that sharing knowledge through cooperative learning enhances instruction, which are characteristics of COP. Therefore, teacher PD should include collaborative opportunities for teacher input and using teacher input to plan and design PD.

Teacher responsiveness influences student proficiency scores, according to Kim et al. (2013). Effective practices to engage students and decrease challenging behaviors include varying speech and intonation, allowing multiple opportunities to respond, and providing a variety of learning activities in different environments, according to Alter et

al. (2013). Alter et al. and Kim et al. added that behavioral factors, language, and literacy also influence writing development. Therefore, educator PD should include teacher responsiveness.

Esqueda et al. (2012) added that public school teachers may not have training on common challenges of MC students. Challenges associated with MC students include high mobility, varying ability levels, learning gaps, content retention, and stress (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Astor & Benbenishty, 2014; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Welsh, 2016). Therefore, educator PD should focus on the challenges associated with MC students. According to Clever and Segal (2013), DePedro et al. (2015), Murphy and Fairbank (2013), and Paley et al. (2013), MC students need support programs that promote well-being, healthy development, and academic success as positive characteristics of school-based support and interventions for MC students. Therefore, PD should include support programs for MC students. I stopped reviewing here due to time constraints. Please go through the rest of your section and look for the patterns I pointed out to you. I will now look at Section 2.

Effective instruction also requires knowledge of diverse communities, which includes MC students according to research by Achinstein and Ogawa (2012), Alter et al. (2013), Aronson and Laughter (2015), Astor and Benbenishty (2014), Griner and Stewart (2013), Kim et al. (2013), Raudenbush (2015), and Welsh (2016). Training teachers on CRP may reduce challenges associated with MC students and enhance instruction (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Astor & Benbenishty, 2014; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Welsh, 2016). Therefore, an implication for PD is CRP.

CRP is also effective in addressing achievement gaps (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Vazquez-Montilla, et al., 2014). Implementing CRP motivates students, reduces behavioral problems, and improves student achievement (Rychly & Graves, 2012). Further, writing instruction is shaped by beliefs about cultural diversity, which proves that writing instruction and CRP are complimentary methods (Gay, 2013). Therefore, an implication for PD is implementing CRP with writing instruction for MC students.

Writing instruction that includes EBP is essential for proficiency according to research by Furey et al. (2016), Graham et al. (2012), and Troia and Olinghouse (2013). Research by Alves et al. (2016), Dombek and Al Otaiba (2015), Kent et al. (2014), and Troia and Olinghouse (2013) added that cycles of practice, the writing process, and text transcription using a word processor/ computer. Therefore, an implication for PD is including EBP for writing into writing instruction for MC students.

Writing proficiency is also directly connected to literacy predictors, which include letter/print knowledge, phonological awareness, and oral language abilities according to research by Catts, Herrera, Nielsen, and Bridges (2015), Kim et al. (2014), and Padeliadu and Antoniou (2013). Research findings by Alter et al. (2013) confirmed the research findings of Kim et al. (2013) and added that language, literacy, and behavioral factors also influence writing development. Therefore, an implication for PD is connecting literacy and writing practices to enhance instruction.

Intervention is a critical need in early grades for students demonstrating risk factors for writing and reading according to research by Kim, Al Otaiba, Wanzek, and Gatlin (2015). Therefore, an implication for PD is utilizing writing interventions

including the self-regulated model, peer assistance, product goals, prewriting activities, text transcription, and one-on-one instruction.

Teachers use state standards and the individual needs of students to develop curriculum and instruction (DeLuca & Bellara, 2013). However, teachers reported that state standards are unclear and do not provide enough information to develop effective curriculum according to research by Alter et al. (2013), Kim, Al Otaiba, Sidler, & Gruelich (2013), Raudenbush, (2015), and Troia and Olinghouse (2013). Therefore, an implication for PD is familiarizing teachers with writing standards.

DeLuca et al. (2013) explained that despite policies promoting state standards, teachers continue to maintain low competency levels in instruction for standardized assessment. Therefore, an implication for PD is connecting state writing standards to EBP for writing. Ensuring assessment validity is important for effective writing instruction, according to research by Casey et al. (2016), Dombek and Al Otaiba (2015), and Ritchey and Coker (2013). Therefore, an implication for PD is ensuring curriculum-based writing assessment validity.

The findings of this research study may benefit teachers by informing best practices of writing for MC students. The findings of this research study may also inform PD training on best practices of writing instruction for MC students. The results of the PD training may result in more effective writing instruction, which may improve state writing assessment scores of students.

## **Implications**

In this literature review, I explored factors related to the research problem through peer reviewed journal articles published within the last five years. The three topics that were identified included Military-Connected Students, Writing Instruction, and Professional Development. Each topic identified during the literature review directly correlated to the problem of the research study. Within these three topics, 14 implications for improvement were identified.

Implications for improvement include:

1. collaborative opportunities for teachers
2. opportunities for teachers to provide input on PD
3. utilizing teacher input to plan and design PD

PD on:

4. teacher responsiveness
5. challenges associated with MC students
6. support programs for MC students
7. CRP
8. implementing CRP with writing instruction for MC students
9. implementing EBP for writing into writing instruction for MC students
10. connecting literacy and writing practices to enhance instruction
11. utilizing writing interventions
12. familiarizing teachers with writing standards
13. connecting state writing standards to EBP for writing

#### 14. ensuring validity of curriculum-based writing assessments

The findings of this research study may benefit teachers by informing best practices of writing for MC students. The findings of this research study may also inform PD training on best practices of writing instruction for MC students. The results of the PD training may result in more effective writing instruction, which may improve state writing assessment scores of students. Taking these factors into consideration, a white paper with an explanation of the research findings was the most appropriate method to bring about institutional awareness of the identified problem and recommendations to initiate change. Choosing a specific project occurred after data analysis upon establishing a specific need.

#### **Summary**

To summarize, school administrators at the local site did not have an understanding of teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students. This lack of data may have contributed to low state writing scores. The state writing scores of students at BES were lower than the district and state scores. BES administrators identified a goal of student writing proficiency, which proved that low writing scores were an identified problem. Therefore, the local problem of this research study was important enough to investigate.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to gain an understanding of teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students at the local site. The guiding question for this research study was the following: What are teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of military-connected students at Base Elementary School? The

research question was designed to identify PD needs of teachers at the local site regarding writing instruction for MC students.

The significance of the study for teachers, administrators, students, the district, and other schools with MC students was explained. Campus administrators and teachers will have a deeper and more informed understanding of writing proficiency for MC students through the research findings of this study. Best practices of writing instruction for MC students may be found by gaining an understanding of teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students. The conceptual framework of COP was described. Writing proficiency and instruction of MC students was explored and discussed through the conceptual framework.

Through the literature review, factors related to the research problem were explored through peer reviewed journal articles published within the last five years. Three topics and 14 implications for improvement were identified during the literature review. Implications for the project study include a white paper with an explanation of the research findings. The white paper may result in improved student state writing assessment scores by informing administrators and teachers at the local site on PD needs of teachers at the local site regarding writing instruction for MC students.

In Section 2 of this research study I discussed the methodology, setting, sample size, criteria for selecting participants, and justification of the participant sample. I also detailed the instrumentation, materials, data collection and analysis, and limitations. The project was explained in Section 3. Lastly, reflections and conclusions were discussed in Section 4.

## Section 2: The Methodology

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students at BES. I used qualitative methodology, which is naturalistic fieldwork that involves collecting data where the event of interest naturally occurs (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). By gaining an understanding of teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students, I was able to identify considerations for PD training that support the needs of teachers at the local site regarding writing instruction for MC students.

The research question was the following:

RQ1: What are teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of military-connected students at BES?

In this section, I describe the methodology and design used to discover the findings for the research question. In this case study, I conducted individual, semistructured interviews of 12 elementary teachers from the local site. In the interviews, I explored teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students. Next, I explain the justification of the design, the participation criteria, sampling procedures, and protection measures of participants. Lastly, I discuss the methods for data collection, data analysis, and my findings.



## **Methodological Approach and Research Design**

### **Qualitative Methodological Approach**

I used the qualitative approach with a case study design, which logically derived from the problem and research (guiding) question. In a qualitative study, a scholar seeks to identify underlying concepts and the relationships between them (Humphreys, 2006; Štrach & Everett, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Wells, 1993). This research design assists in identifying unknown concepts of a phenomenon, and scholars explore people, places, and events in their natural setting, which is why the qualitative methodology was chosen (Creswell, 2013, 2014).

The two general approaches to the acquisition of new knowledge include inductive reasoning and deductive reasoning (Hyde, 2000). Inductive reasoning begins with observation and seeks to establish generalizations. Deductive reasoning begins with generalizations, and researchers use deductive reasoning to discern if these generalizations apply to specific cases (Hyde, 2000). In this study, the data collected from participants included responses to semistructured interviews using an interview protocol. Therefore, I used deductive analysis in this qualitative study.

The basis for generalization in quantitative study is statistical generalization, which includes taking a sample of elements by a probability selection method, or sample, that allows estimation of the properties of the population with a given degree of accuracy (Hyde, 2000; Štrach & Everett, 2008). The basis for generalization in qualitative study is analytical generalization, which is described as the researcher goal to expand and generalize theories as opposed to establish the frequency within a phenomenon (Yin,

1994). Qualitative research is typically considered an inductive approach where the researcher systematically observes a phenomenon, searches for patterns and themes, and developments a generalization from the analysis of those themes (Eldabi, Irani, Paul, & Love, 2002; Lodico et al., 2010; Patton, 2002b). However, the qualitative researcher can adopt both inductive and deductive processes (Hyde, 2000; Patton, 2002b).

According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007) and Lodico et al. (2010), inductive reasoning in qualitative research is an approach in which the researcher uses observations to describe a given phenomenon. Qualitative methods produce a wealth of detailed data on a small number of individuals (Eldabi et al., 2002; Patton, 2002b). The field of qualitative research is broad in disciplines and subject matters while using several means of collecting data including descriptive interview transcripts, fieldnotes, photographs, videos, documents, or records (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Alternately, deductive research is typically associated with quantitative research in which the researcher makes a statement and then seeks to prove the statement through evidence (Lodico et al., 2010). Researchers use data or statistics to conduct a quantitative study if they wish to explain certain trends among people, which would not be appropriate for this study (Creswell, 2012; Triola, 2012). In a deductive process, a researcher uses theory and literature to create a hypothesis (Lodico et al., 2010; Triola, 2012). Next, the researcher uses the data to confirm or disconfirm the hypotheses (Lodico et al., 2010; Triola, 2012).

There are several strengths to using qualitative methodology. The research framework could be revised as new information emerges from the data (Lodico et al., 2010; Taylor et al., 2015). The methodology may change throughout the study to best represent the context, which is called emergent design (Creswell, 2013; Lodico et al., 2010). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Lodico et al. (2010), the qualitative research process results in self-understanding of participants, which may cause catalytic authenticity or a stimulation of change enhancing the lives of participants.

There are also several limitations to using qualitative methodology. The amount of data collected in qualitative research makes analysis time-consuming (Creswell, 2013; Taylor et al., 2015). Also, qualitative data are not generalizable to a larger population. However, it is possible for findings to be transferable to another setting (Merriam & Tisdale, 2015; Taylor et al., 2015). As the researcher, I was the primary data collection and analysis instrument in this qualitative study (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdale, 2015). Therefore, research quality could have been influenced by my personal biases (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Taylor et al., 2015). Participant responses could also have been influenced by my presence as the researcher (Lodico et al., 2010; Taylor et al., 2015).

The field of qualitative research is broad in disciplines and subject matters while using several means of collecting data including descriptive interview transcripts, fieldnotes, photographs, videos, documents, or records (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Qualitative research is an approach where the researcher systematically observes a phenomenon, searches for patterns and themes, and develops a generalization from the analysis of those themes (Lodico et al., 2010; Patton,

2002a). According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007) and Lodico et al. (2010), qualitative research is an approach in which the researcher uses observations to describe a given phenomenon. For these reasons, qualitative methodology was most appropriate for exploring the phenomena, investigating the problem, and answering the research question that my study was based on.

Quantitative research is an approach in which the researcher makes a statement and then seeks to prove the statement through evidence (Lodico et al., 2010). In quantitative research, a researcher uses theory and literature to create a hypothesis (Lodico et al., 2010; Triola, 2012). Next, the researcher uses the data to confirm or disconfirm the hypotheses (Lodico et al., 2010; Triola, 2012). Researchers use data or statistics to conduct a quantitative study if they wish to explain certain trends among people, which would not be appropriate for this study (Creswell, 2012; Triola, 2012). Quantitative methodology was not appropriate because I explored teachers' perceptions.

### **Case Study Design**

Qualitative inquiry often takes the form of a case study (Hyde, 2000). Qualitative case studies enable the researcher to explore individuals, relationships, communities, and programs (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). Case study is a logic of design to investigate the context of a phenomenon in its natural environment (Bonoma, 1985; Hyde, 2000; Yin, 1994). The case to be studied must include a defined person, an organization, or a geographic location (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Merriam, 2002).

Yin (1994) advocated a deductive, rather than an inductive, approach to case study research. According to Yin, case study is the preferred research approach when

investigating "how" or "why" questions. In this study, the case was elementary school teachers who taught writing proficiency. The case was of secondary interest, although significant to explore the external issue (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Stake, 1978, 1995).

Instrumental, intrinsic, and collective are types of case study research (Stake, 1995). The instrumental case study design was used to gain a deeper understanding of the topic of interest that was external to the case (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Stake, 1978, 1995). When the researcher is interested in exploring the case, the intrinsic case study is used (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Stake, 1995). When multiple cases are compared to explore an issue, the collective case study is used (Creswell, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Therefore, intrinsic and case study designs were not appropriate for this research study.

I used an instrumental case study design to gain a deeper understanding of elementary teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students at BES. An instrumental case study was the most appropriate design for this study because the research question called for the examination of participants' perceptions regarding a given phenomenon within a bounded system (Creswell, 2013; Lodico et al., 2010; Yin, 2014). A bounded system is used in case study research to examine a phenomenon (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). Case boundaries included time and place to avoid the research from becoming too broad (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014).

The data collected for this research study included perceptions of teachers who were employed at BES during the 2016-2017 school year. Therefore, this study was

bound by time and place. BES is a public school that is located on a military base, which also bound this school by geographic location. There were no civilian students at this school. All students of BAE were MC students who resided on this military base, which also bound the school as serving a culture of students and families.

There are several limitations to using a case study approach. Case study research is time-consuming, yet provides a large amount of data (Verschuren, 2003; Yin, 2014). Also, it is possible for single case study analysis to lack methodological techniques, epistemological grounding, and generalizability (Maoz, 2002; Yin, 2014). Another possible issue with case study research is the reliability and replicability of single case study analysis (Berg & Lune, 2012). Lastly, the validity and reliability of the data with single case study analysis could be affected by the presence and personal bias of the researcher (Merriam & Tisdale, 2015; Taylor et al., 2015; Verschuren, 2003; Yin, 2014).

### **Research Design Justification**

The research question in this research study was investigated through individual interviews to gain an understanding of writing proficiency of MC students from the perspective of participants (Stake, 1978, 1995; Yin, 2014). Quantitative or mixed-method methodologies were not appropriate for this study because numeric data were not collected to analyze the research question, and data were not used to prove or disprove a hypothesis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Doyle, Brady, & Byrne, 2009). Also, quantitative researchers begin with a statement and then seek to prove the statement through evidence (Lodico et al., 2010). To ensure that a qualitative case study was the most appropriate design for this study, I considered and rejected other qualitative design

approaches including ethnography, grounded theory, action research, phenomenology, and collective case study.

Ethnography design is a qualitative approach that includes an investigation of interactions within a cultural group (Creswell, 2013; Lodico et al., 2010; Merriam, 2002). Alternately, I focused on exploring teachers' perceptions as opposed to exploring a society or culture (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996; Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Yin, 2014). Ethnography also requires long periods of time in the field for data collection, which includes long-term access to the participants where the researcher becomes embedded within the group being studied to examine a culture (Creswell, 2012; Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Yin, 2014). Alternately, I relied on 12 individual interviews that took 45 minutes to 1 hour each. Therefore, ethnography was not appropriate for this study.

Grounded theory design is a qualitative approach that is used to generate a theory to explain a substantive topic (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010). A grounded theory approach would include developing a theory from the data to answer a research question rather than using an already established theory (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2014; Lodico et al., 2010). Alternately, I answered the research question without developing a data-based theory. Grounded theory is also a strategy of inquiry that uses theoretical sampling of different groups for an in-depth comparison of the data (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2014). I employed purposeful sampling of one group for data collection. Therefore, a grounded theory approach was not appropriate for this study because generating an original theory was not the purpose of this research (Yin, 2014).

Action research design is another qualitative approach that was rejected for use in this study. Action research is used to address a problem within an educational setting (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010). Action researchers use self-examination to determine the effectiveness of their own practices (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010). Action research was not appropriate as a design approach in this study because I was not examining my own practices (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010).

A phenomenological design is another qualitative approach that was not appropriate for use in this study. In a phenomenological design, the researcher uses longitudinal data to explore lived experiences of humans and ways they understand those experiences to form an understanding of human conditions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2014; Lodico et al., 2010; Marshall & Rossman, 2014). According to Seidman (1998), phenomenological inquiry consists of three in-depth interviews focusing on past, present, and overall experiences with the phenomenon.

Alternately, I relied primarily on one interview per participant with the possibility of a second interview for clarification, which was not needed. Phenomenological interviews provide a detailed account of life experiences of participants (Lodico et al., 2010). I aimed to interview participants as opposed to studying participants longitudinally. The researcher and participants must make psychological connections in phenomenological research, which was not appropriate for this research study (Lodico et al., 2010).

Lastly, a collective case study is a qualitative approach that was rejected for use in this study. Collective case studies are also called comparative case studies and are used



to compare multiple cases to explore a topic (Lodico et al., 2010). A collective case study was not an appropriate design because there was one case of teachers bounded by a single phenomenon rather than multiple cases (Merriam, 2002). Therefore, the case study design was determined to be the most appropriate qualitative design for this study.

## **Participants**

### **Population**

The participants of this qualitative study included teachers who taught writing at BES during the 2016-2017 school year. There were 20 teachers who were qualified to participate in this study. All 20 teachers who taught writing instruction for kindergarten through fifth grade at BES during the 2016-2017 school year were invited to participate in this study through an introductory e-mail. Inviting all teachers to participate in this study also allowed data collection to be possible for teachers of grades kindergarten through fifth, which enhanced the data through exploring perspectives of teachers who taught different grade levels. The first 15 teachers who responded to the introductory e-mail then received a second e-mail from me with a telephone interview appointment time and the informed consent requirements. Twelve of these teachers agreed to the informed consent form and interview time, which confirmed them as the study participants.

### **Sampling**

The participants for this study were recruited using purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling, also called purposive, strategic, or nonprobabilistic sampling, is the selection of participants who have knowledge related to the purpose of the study (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010). The basis of purposeful sampling is saturation,

which is the point that new information or themes within the data will not develop (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). There was no intent to generalize data findings in this qualitative case study. Therefore, purposeful sampling was appropriate (Creswell, 2013; Lodico et al., 2010; Merriam, 2002). I stopped reviewing here due to time constraints. Please go through the rest of your section and look for the patterns I pointed out to you. I will now look at Section 3.

The sample size for this case study was 12 participants based on data saturation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2002; Patton, 2002a). In qualitative research, a sample of 12 participants is the smallest acceptable sample size for data saturation (Guest et al., 2006; Marshall et al., 2013; Mason, 2010). Data saturation is the point that new information or themes within the data will not develop (Francis et al. 2010; Fusch & Ness, 2015; Guest et al., 2006). Participants included the first 12 teachers that responded to the introductory email (see Appendix B), agreed to the informed consent form, and confirmed their interview time.

**Access to participants.** I met with the principal of the local site and obtained permission to conduct my research study. Then, I gained approval to conduct my research study from the administrator at the local school district office with the intention of interviewing teachers through face-to-face-interviews at the local site. However, through Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) process, it was determined that because the local site was on a military installation, the best means to recruit participants and collect data was off site and through public records. Therefore, at that time, my research study changed directions from a plan to conduct face-to-face

interviews at the local site with the principal and school district as community research partners, to a plan to conduct interviews off site via telephone and no community research partners.

With these changes to my IRB application, I obtained permission to conduct the project study from Walden University's IRB on June 6, 2017 (approval number 06-06-17-0417585). The public elementary school's website displayed teacher's email addresses, which were used to make contact with the teachers. I relied solely on public records as means to recruit participants and collect data, the recruitment methods involved only public records of the participants' email addresses, and interviews were conducted off-campus via telephone.

According to the Standard Application for Research Ethics Review by Walden University's IRB (2015), community partners include any schools or other organizations who are involved in your research project and must be documented with a Letter of Cooperation. As stated in my IRB application, there was no school or other organization involved in my research study, and thus, I have no community research partner. Consequently, a Letter of Cooperation was unnecessary for my research study per Walden IRB (personal communication, June 5, 2017).

Then, BES teachers were sent an introductory email that included my contact information, a detailed summary of the study, and a detailed explanation of why their inclusion could help address the problem (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010). Prospective participants who responded to the introductory email then received a second email from me, which contained the informed consent form (see

Appendix C), a telephone interview appointment time, and an explanation that participation in the study was entirely voluntary and participants could choose to discontinue participation in the research study at any time without fear of retribution (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Participants agreed to the informed consent form by replying, “I agree” via email. When each telephone interview was complete, I asked each participant if they would be open to a second interview for clarification of their responses, if needed. All participants agreed to possible second interviews, however second interviews were unnecessary. I sent each participant his or her interview transcription via email for member checking (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002). Each participant reviewed his or her interview transcript and confirmed the accuracy of the collected data by responding, “I confirm” via email (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

**Researcher/ participant relationship.** At each stage of data collection, I used strategies that were designed to promote a safe experience where participants felt respected and valued. (Creswell, 2012; Lincoln, 2009; Lodico et al., 2010). The ethical protection of participants was guaranteed throughout the research process (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010). A professional relationship with appropriate boundaries was important to establish immediately between the researcher and participants (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010). I explained to participants that I was not evaluating them in any way. Rather, I wanted to help them by exploring their perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students to address the problem identified at the local site.

The purpose of the study was made clear in the letter of invitation, which also explained why they were invited to participate in this research study and how the data analysis results would be shared with all participants. The interview protocol that was used during individual telephone interviews was respectful of the time and expertise of each participant. In this research study, purposeful sampling provided the most descriptive and relevant data possible to answer the research question (Merriam, 2002). Lastly, I used protocols to ensure confidentiality and anonymity to all participants.

**Methods for ethical protection of participants.** It is imperative to protect participants from any physical, emotional, and psychological harm throughout the course of the project study (Lincoln, 2009; Lodico et al., 2010). Without ethical protection, participants could suffer harm, and the reliability and validity of the research study could be compromised (Creswell, 2012; Freeman, DeMarrais, Preissle, Roulston, & St. Pierre, 2007; Lincoln, 2009). Several measures were taken throughout the research study to guarantee the ethical protection of participants, which is the responsibility of the researcher (Allmark, Boote, Chambers, Clarke, McDonnell, Thompson, & Tod 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). As a prerequisite of the research process, I completed the National Institute of Health Office of Extramural Research training course “Protecting Human Research Participants” in August of 2015.

National Institute of Health (NIH) policies were followed to protect participants mentally, physically, and legally. Approval of Walden University's IRB was obtained to ensure the protection of participant's legal rights. Participants in this research study

included teachers at Base Elementary School, which are all adults. Therefore, parental consent was unnecessary (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Each participant received and agreed to the informed consent form before data collection began, which confirmed that participants understood how their rights were protected (Creswell, 2012). Each participant received a copy of a detailed summary of the research study that included the purpose, problem, and rationale (Lodico et al., 2010). Each participant also received notice that participation in this research study was completely voluntary and they may opt-out or discontinue participation at any time (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Lastly, each participant received a copy of my contact information should any comments, questions or concerns arise (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Throughout the research process, there were measures to protect confidentiality (Freeman et al., 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). IRB protocols were followed to protect the confidentiality of the participants and the study site. Numeric pseudonyms were used instead of the names of participants to protect the identity and privacy of participants (Creswell, 2012). My colleague who provided peer debriefing signed a confidentiality agreement to ensure the confidentiality of participants.

Project study documents and data were kept private and confidential (Lodico et al., 2010). Research study data and information stored via personal computer was password protected and a secure personal safe stored hard copies of research study data and information. All hard copies of interview notes were stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home office. I will destroy the nonelectronic data after 5 years. I followed the Walden University protocols for storage and the eventual destruction of all the data.

### **Data Collection Methods**

Researchers must consider a variety of methods and sources to gather in-depth, comprehensive information for a case study (Creswell, 2014). The data collection methods met the needs of the case study to provide the best opportunity for rich, descriptive information about teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students at BES. Data collection for this study did not begin until approval was granted by Walden University's IRB on June 6, 2017 (approval number 06-06-17-0417585). Throughout data collection, I ensured participant confidentiality and protected participants from any possible harm (Allmark et al., 2009; Fontana & Frey, 2000; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

### **Interviews**

In this research study, individual semistructured interviews were the primary data source. Interviews provided data to draw valid conclusions and present meaningful recommendations (Allmark et al., 2009; Morgan, 1997). Teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students at BES was the data collected through individual interviews in this research study (Hatch, 2002; Yin, 2014). Interviews were appropriate for this research study to gain insight into lived experiences and perspectives of teachers on writing instruction of MC students at BES (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). An in-depth understanding of the phenomenon was gained during interviews (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Lodico et al., 2010). Further, interviews allowed for in-depth data about an individual's experience, which was required to answer the research question (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

There were several strengths to using individual semistructured interviews for qualitative data collection. Yin (2014) and Creswell (2012) noted interviews as a valuable source of data collection. Interview strengths include a direct focus on the research topic and providing a venue for the voice of the participants (Leech, 2002; Yin, 2014). Another strength of semistructured interviews lies in the flexible flow of the interview because the interviewer is able to respond in the moment (Merriam, 2002; Yin, 2014). With semistructured interviews there is also flexibility with the wording of questions within the interview protocol, while remaining on topic (Leech, 2002; Lodico et al., 2010).

There were several possible limitations to using individual semistructured interviews for qualitative data collection. Possible weaknesses of semistructured interviews include poorly worded questions and inaccuracies due to bias, memory, and attempts to please the interviewer (Yin, 2014). Interviews are also time consuming to administer (Lodico et al., 2010). It was very important to ensure that the presence of the researcher and personal bias did not affect the validity and reliability of the interview data (Errante, 2000; Lodico et al., 2010; Morse et al., 2002). Lastly, summarizing and analyzing data from interviews is time-consuming and complex (Lodico et al., 2010).

### **Interview Process**

Individual interviews, or one-on-one interviews, were used for data collection in this research study. Interviews are a qualitative research process that a researcher and participant engage in to discuss focused questions related to the research study (DeMarrais & Lapan, 2004). Individual interviews are the most common type of



interview (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Surveys were not appropriate for this research study because surveys typically provide brief responses to questions, while interviews provide more in-depth beliefs, knowledge, and experiences (Lodico et al., 2010).

First, individual telephone interviews were scheduled for participants immediately upon replying to the introductory email with a copy of the informed consent form. Next, participants agreed to the informed consent form by replying, “I consent” via email. Then, two days before the scheduled interviews, I sent participants a reminder email asking for confirmation of the interview session. Participants responded to the reminder email confirming their interview appointment.

I conducted interviews via telephone in the privacy of my home office to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participant and data. I instructed participants to also be in a private and quiet room during the interview session (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Lodico et al., 2010). Interviewees were not asked personal information during the interview to further protect participant privacy (Lodico et al., 2010).

I developed an interview protocol (see Appendix D) with listed open-ended questions to guide each semistructured interview session and support a thorough collection of descriptive data (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010; Yin, 2014). The interview protocol included a script and interview questions with prompts based on recommendations for interview protocols and construction of interview questions (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Turner, 2010). The interview protocol was used to ensure that each interview was conducted similarly to gather reliable and descriptive data (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012).

Reflective fieldnotes were recorded in a journal throughout the research process to continually monitor for researcher bias (Lodico et al., 2010). Reflective field notes included my feelings, thoughts, and reactions to what was discussed during the data collection process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). It was imperative to confirm that data collection was not influenced by personal thoughts or feelings by reflecting on personal values, opinions, and biases (Lodico et al., 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Reflective fieldnotes ensured that my personal biases did not influence the data (Lodico et al., 2010).

Each interview was audio-recorded on my password-protected recording device for transcription and analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Lodico et al., 2010). Audio-recording each interview also preserved the integrity of the data. Audio-recorded interviews were uploaded to my password-protected personal computer (Lodico et al., 2010). Interviews took 45 minutes to 1 hour.

When the interview was complete, I verbally asked each participant if they would be open to a second interview for clarification of their responses, if needed, which was also included in the participant letter and the IRB application. All participants agreed to possible second interviews for clarification purposes, however second interviews were unnecessary. I sent participants their interview transcription via email for member checking within one week of their interview. Each participant reviewed their interview transcript and confirmed the data by email within two business days.

### **Role of the Researcher**

As the researcher, my role was to collect data through individual interviews while providing positive interaction in a professional, respectful, nonjudgmental, and non-threatening manner (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). It was crucial for me, as the researcher, to remain neutral by refraining from arguing, debating, or injecting personal views (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The comfort of each participant was ensured during each interaction with me in order to gain trust for reliable and descriptive data collection (Patton, 2002a). Trust must be gained for interviewees to give honest and open opinions and experiences (Hollway, & Jefferson, 1997; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Throughout the research process, I was aware of personal values, opinions, and biases, and maintained the ability to put these personal aspects aside (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Reflections on personal values, opinions, and biases were included in my field notes (Lodico et al., 2010). It was imperative to confirm that data collection was not influenced by personal thoughts or feelings (Lodico et al., 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

I have never met or interacted with teachers at the local site. I do not have a past or present professional connection with the participants in any way. Therefore, there is no previous relationship to disclose that may have created researcher bias during data collection and analysis (Lodico et al., 2010).

### **Data Analysis**

In this research study, data analysis started when data collection began as immediate ideas and impressions become an interactive part of the data analysis process

(Merriam, 2009). The goal of this research study was to understand teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students at BES. For my research study to be informative, it was imperative to define research goals and then design the analysis methodology to achieve the goals (Gläser & Laudel, 2013). Collecting enough data to provide a clear understanding of the participants' perceptions was also necessary (Gläser & Laudel, 2013).

A systematic method of continuous, non-biased, and skillful interpretation of the data was essential to focus understanding and communicate an explanation of the patterns and themes found in the data (Gläser & Laudel, 2013; Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009). Reflection was used throughout the process to ensure that the analyzed data were related to the research question (Gläser & Laudel, 2013; Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009). Remaining focused during data analysis was essential to avoid potentially including extraneous data, diluting the data pool, and changing the direction of the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Gläser & Laudel, 2013).

The analysis and interpretation process defined the difference between interpretation and analysis through coding the data and searching for similarities, differences, and patterns (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Ideas that were developed and extrapolated from the data were included in the data analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This process was cyclical and allowed for interpretation of the top on a broader scale (Creswell, 2012).

### **Data Analysis Methods**

Qualitative data analysis began with identifying units in the data that were responsive to the research question (Merriam, 2009). Data analysis required a rigorous and systematic method of continuous, non-biased, and skillful interpretation of the data (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009). Codes are used to describe sections of an interview transcription (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Tesch, 2013). Reduction of textual data into themes through coding is a systemic process (Creswell, 2013; Tesch, 2013).

Coding is an analytic approach that was used to organize, categorize, and condense data (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995). A three-step iterative process was used to ensure trustworthiness of the findings (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009). Initial coding identified themes, axial coding identified broader categories, and iterative recategorization identified key themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009). This higher level of coding enabled me to identify any connections that may have existed between the codes (DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall, & McCulloch, 2011).

Initial coding, or first cycle coding, was conducted by exploring themes that emerged from the raw data during data analysis of transcriptions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Hatch, 2002; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Saldana, 2015). Audio-recorded interviews were immediately transcribed into a Microsoft Word document. After each participant confirmed their interview transcript for accuracy, I then began manually coding the data. Keywords, phrases, and patterns, which became codes, emerged while

reviewing each transcript (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). During cross analysis, codes were highlighted in the Microsoft Word document using seven highlight colors that represented different categories (Creswell, 2012).

Data analysis included Creswell's (2012) coding system, which was used to identify the color code and corresponding categories. This step of data analysis included coding and counting codes that represented occurrences within each interview transcript of descriptions of perspectives held by participants, which were highlighted a specific color in the Microsoft Word document according to the color key (see Appendix E). Twelve categories with corresponding color codes emerged through data analysis.

First, descriptions of setting and context within the interview transcripts were highlighted yellow to represent teachers' views of daily writing instruction for MC students. Second, descriptions of processes were highlighted bright green to represent teachers' views of practices for writing instruction. Third, descriptions of activities were highlighted turquoise to represent teachers' views of tools for writing instruction. Fourth, descriptions of intervention practices for struggling writers were highlighted pink to represent teachers' views of typical writing intervention practices used during daily instruction. Fifth, descriptions of relationship and social structures were highlighted gray to represent teachers' views of practices for writing instruction learned from teacher collaboration. Sixth, teachers' views of tools for writing instruction learned from teacher collaboration were highlighted light gray. Seventh, descriptions of participants' views of people and objects were highlighted red to represent teachers' views of challenges associated with writing instruction for highly mobile military-connected students.

Eighth, teachers' views of strengths associated with writing instruction for MC students were highlighted dark red. Ninth, descriptions of perspectives held by participants on state standards were highlighted green. Tenth, descriptions of perspectives held by participants on inter-collaborative relationship building practices to effectively teach writing instruction for MC students were highlighted dark yellow. Eleventh, descriptions of perspectives held by participants on intra-collaborative relationship building practices to effectively teach writing instruction for MC students were highlighted teal. Lastly, descriptions of perspectives held by participants on professional development needs associated with writing instruction for MC students were highlighted violet.

Codes were created during the initial coding cycle and analyzed in the second coding cycle, called axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Miles et al., 2013). During axial coding, second phase coding, initial themes were collapsed into broader categories or overarching themes (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011; Saldana, 2015). Categories of overarching themes that emerged during axial coding were documented using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. These categories made up the third phase of coding, which became the research study findings. (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011). Iteration is used in qualitative data analysis as a reflexive process, as opposed to a mechanical task, to further develop insight and meaning from the data (Tesch, 2013). The iterative process used in this study encompassed data annotation, theme identification, category construction, assignment of data to categories, and reflection and refinement of categories for qualitative data analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009).

### **Accuracy and Credibility**

The trustworthiness of a qualitative research study relies on validity and reliability (Morse et al., 2002; Seale, 1999). Validity determines the accuracy and honesty of the results (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Reliability of qualitative research is measured by the extent to which results are consistent, accurate, and reproducible with a similar methodology and instrument (Golafshani, 2003; Lodico et al., 2010).

Data collection methods, data analysis procedures, and results are kept consistent to guarantee validity, reliability, and credibility of the data (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010; Yin, 2014). When the interview was complete, I asked each participant if they would be open to a second interview for clarification of their responses, if needed. All participants agreed to possible second interviews, however second interviews were unnecessary.

In this study, member checking, reflective fieldnotes, and peer debriefing ensured internal validity, the validity of measures, and reliability and credibility of the data (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Through member checking, each participant reviewed their interview transcript to confirm or refute the accuracy of the data they provided (Lodico et al., 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Each participant reviewed their interview transcript and confirmed the collected data via responding email within two business days. Member checking provided credibility by ensuring that researcher bias did not influence the data (Lodico et al., 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).



I documented my personal thoughts, insights, and ideas through reflective fieldnotes (Creswell, 2012). Reflective fieldnotes ensured that my personal biases did not influence the data (Lodico et al., 2010). Reflective fieldnotes were recorded in a journal throughout the research process to continually monitor for researcher bias (Lodico et al., 2010). Reflective field notes included my feelings, thoughts, and reactions to what was discussed during the data collection process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Peer debriefing was also used to monitor the reflective fieldnotes for researcher bias (Creswell, 2012).

Peer debriefing, also called analytic triangulation, is another strategy that was used to ensure credibility, validity, and reliability (Given, 2008; Lodico et al., 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). A peer debriefer is a qualified person that regularly meets with the researcher to assist them in maintaining a check on their biases and assumptions to ensure that biases do not skew the data collection and data analysis (Given, 2008; Lodico et al., 2010). Peer debriefing conducted by a professor specializing in qualitative research and qualitative data analysis offered objective feedback on fieldnotes, study findings, sample codes, and the coding process (Given, 2008; Lodico et al., 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Peer debriefing guaranteed the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010). The qualitative professor that provided peer debriefing signed a confidentiality agreement to ensure the confidentiality of participants (Given, 2008).

Peer debriefing assessed the reliability of the interviews, coding, and the codes (Creswell, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Data collection analysis and all documents were forwarded to the peer debriefer via email for an objective review (Lodico et al.,

2010). The peer reviewer then coded a sample of the interview transcripts, chosen randomly, using the list of codes.

After the coding, the results were discussed and compared to determine if both coders found the same codes (Creswell, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). No significant coding differences were found. Peer debriefing confirmed the accuracy of the data and ensured against researcher bias (Creswell, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

### **Discrepant Cases**

Data codes that oppose main themes are called discrepant cases (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Participant's perspectives, formed by personal experiences, beliefs, and values, presented variable outcomes in the qualitative interview data (Freeman et al. 2007; Lodico et al., 2010). Discrepant case analysis is a vital step of data analysis used to contradict or disconfirm data (Lodico et al., 2010). Discrepant cases are used as negative case analysis to challenge common themes presented in the data or to challenge possible researcher bias (Lincoln & Guba; 1985). There were no discrepant cases in the study.

### **Data Analysis Results**

The purpose of this instrumental case study was to explore teachers' perceptions regarding writing proficiency of MC students at Base Elementary School. Participants of this research study included teachers who taught writing instruction at BES during the 2016-2017 school year. The sample size for this case study was 12 participants based on saturation of data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In this research study, individual semistructured telephone interviews were the primary data source.

Throughout the research process, measures were taken to protect participant rights (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Categories and themes that emerged through coding were organized using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Research data was collected, transcribed, and analyzed, which answered the research question through the findings. Member checking and peer debriefing ensured reliability and validity of the data while preventing researcher bias (Creswell, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013). The findings of this research study aimed to inform professional practice and provide evidence to stakeholders to inform decisions or policies, which corresponds to the Title I Schoolwide Program Plan (BES, 2015) goal of identifying means of training teachers on how to work with MC students.

### **Findings**

This section contains a summary of findings for the research question. Themes emerging from the findings are noted in Table 2. Overall, I found 4 major themes through the data analysis process. There were overlapping ideas within the themes, derived from the research question. Themes included Current Writing Practices, MC Students, Relationship Building, and PD Needs. Detailed information for the research question is included following Table 2.

#### **Themes from the Findings**

The research question was as follows:

- What are teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of military-connected students at Base Elementary School?

Findings indicated that current writing practices varied among participants, which implicated a lack of EBP. These variations of instruction included writing practices and tools, interventions, and writing practices and tools learned through teacher collaboration. Therefore, PD on EBP for writing is a need.

Participants reported dissatisfaction with state writing standards, which are used for curriculum development. This dissatisfaction appears to have resulted from a failure to deeply understand the writing standards and the relationship to the writing process for the target population. Teachers having a lack of clarity on connecting EBP for writing to state writing standards implicate a lack of EBP for writing and failure to implement a systemic writing process, which are possible contributing factors for the lack of student writing proficiency at BES (Alter et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2013; Raudenbush, 2015; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Therefore, connecting EBP for writing to state writing standards is a PD need.

Participants reported challenges and strengths of the target population regarding writing proficiency. It is imperative to student success for schools to train teachers on challenges associated with the diverse culture of MC students (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Alter et al., 2013; Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Astor & Benbenishty, 2014; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Kim et al., 2013; Raudenbush, 2015; Welsh, 2016). Therefore, training teachers on challenges associated with MC students is a PD need.

Participants expressed the need for relationship building practices, including inter-collaborative and intra-collaborative, which were described by participants as important aspects of writing for MC students. The expressed need to collaborate and build

partnerships with other colleagues implies that teachers believe working together to address the needs of students is preferred over working in isolation, as was the current practice. Therefore, teachers need regularly scheduled opportunities for relationship building practices.

Lastly, all participants reported the need for collaborative PD focusing on writing instruction for the target population, connecting writing EBP to state writing standards, and training teachers on challenges associated with MC students through CRP. Data analysis for this area included coding and counting codes that represented occurrences within each interview transcript of descriptions of perspectives held by participants on writing practices for the target population, which were highlighted yellow in the Microsoft Word document. Table 2 lists the themes and subthemes that emerged from data analysis.

Table 2

*Themes and Subthemes*

Themes	Subthemes
Current Writing Practices	Collaboration Opinions on Standards
MC Students Relationship Building PD Needs	

Major themes emerged throughout data collection and analysis. The first major theme was Current Writing Practices. Within this theme, 2 sub-themes emerged including Collaboration and Opinions on State Standards. The second major theme was

MC Students. The third major theme was Relationship Building. Lastly, the fourth major theme was PD Needs.

**Theme 1: Current Writing Practices.** According to interview data, current writing practices lacked EBP, which may contribute to low student writing proficiency scores. It is imperative for student writing proficiency to consistently use EBP for writing (Harris, Graham, & Adkins, 2015; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013; Walpole & McKenna, 2012). The most commonly reported writing practices were imagery, write in response to text, and the writing process. The most commonly reported writing tools were paper and pencil. The most commonly reported intervention was one-on-one instruction. The most commonly reported writing practice learned through teacher collaboration was collaborative writing. The most commonly reported writing tool learned through teacher collaboration was anchor charts. Recommendations for EBP and tools for writing that teachers are not currently implementing are discussed in the findings summary.

All participants (100%) reported regularly using imagery, write in response to text, and the writing process. Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 stated, “I regularly use imagery for writing instruction.” Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 stated, “I regularly use write in response to text for writing instruction.” Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 stated, “I regularly use the writing process for writing instruction.”

All participants (100%) reported that daily writing instruction typically lasted 15-20 minutes. Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 stated, “We regularly spend

about 15-20 minutes a day on writing instruction.” Participant 6 shared, “My students write a lot throughout the day, but we don’t spend more than 20 minutes per day dedicated specifically to writing.”

Eight participants (67%) reported regularly using text structure (participants 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12). Participants 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 stated, “I regularly use text structure for writing instruction.”

Six participants (50%) reported regularly using journaling (participants 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, and 12). Participant 11 shared, “I write a daily writing prompt on the board each morning for students to begin their journaling with.” Participants 4 and 6 stated, “We use journaling every day.” Participants 8, 9, and 12 stated, “We regularly use journaling.”

Seven participants (58%) reported regularly assigning writing homework (participants 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12). Participants 10 and 11 stated, “I assign writing assignments for homework about once a week.” Participants 4 and 9 shared, “I assign writing assignments for homework about twice a week.” Participants 6, 8, and 12 stated, “I assign writing assignments for homework about three times a week.”

Five participants (42%) reported that they did not regularly assign writing homework (participants 1, 2, 3, 5, and 7). Participant 7 shared, “Writing assignments are not usually sent home because students tend to need more guidance with them.” Participants 1, 2, 3, and 5 stated, “I do not regularly assign writing lessons for homework.”

Two participants (17%) reported regularly using peer editing (participants 4 and 11). Participants 4 and 11 stated, “We regularly use peer editing.” All participants

(100%) described a successful writing lesson as resulting in 70% and above in student proficiency on lesson objectives with lesson assessment. Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 stated, “Proficiency is 70% and above on assessments.” Data analysis for this area included coding and counting codes that represented occurrences within each interview transcript of descriptions of perspectives held by participants on writing practices, which were highlighted bright green in the Microsoft Word document.

All twelve participants (100%) reported regularly using paper and pencil as a writing tool. Participants 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, and 12 stated, “We regularly use paper and pencil for writing.” Participant 3, 4, 9, 11 shared, “The most used writing tool in my classroom is paper and pencil.”

Eight participants (67%) reported regularly using notebooks (participants 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12). Participants 2, 4, 6, 8 and 12 shared, “We use notebooks for journaling every day.” Participants 9, 10, and 11 shared, “We use notebooks regularly for writing.”

Five participants (42%) reported regularly using computers (participants 4, 8, 9, 11, and 12). Participants 4, 8, and 9 shared, “We use computers for writing about 20 minutes twice a week.” Participant 11 shared, “We use the computer lab for 30 minutes twice a week so that students can type up their paragraphs.” Participant 12 stated, “We use computers for writing about once a week.” Data analysis for this area included coding and counting codes that represented occurrences within each interview transcript of descriptions of perspectives held by participants on regularly used writing tools, which were highlighted turquoise in the Microsoft Word document.



All twelve participants (100%) reported using one-on-one instruction as an intervention for struggling writers. Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 stated, “We regularly use one-on-one instruction for writing interventions.” Participants 3, 7, and 2 shared, “One-on-one instruction is a writing intervention used daily in my classroom.” One-on-one instruction is an effective elementary grade intervention according to research by Arnold et al. (2017), Bowman-Perrott et al. (2013), and Rohrbeck et al. (2003).

Ten participants (83%) reported regularly using tutoring as an intervention (participants 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12). Participants 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12 shared, “We regularly use tutoring as a writing intervention.” Participants 5, 9, and 11 shared, “We use tutoring as a writing intervention.” Tutoring is an approach for academic intervention according to Maheady and Gard (2010). There is strong evidence of the positive impact of tutoring on student academic achievement and confidence (Walker, 2010).

Nine participants (75%) reported regularly using peer assistance as an intervention (participants 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12). Participants 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, and 12 shared, “We use peer assistance as a writing intervention every day.” Participants 2, 4, and 10 shared, “We regularly use peer assistance as a writing intervention.” Peer-assisted learning is an effective elementary grade intervention according to research by Arnold et al. (2017), Bowman-Perrott et al. (2013), and Rohrbeck et al. (2003). Data analysis for this area included coding and counting codes that represented occurrences within each interview transcript of descriptions of perspectives held by participants on

writing interventions, which were highlighted pink in the Microsoft Word document.

Table 3 lists current writing practices including tools and interventions that emerged from data analysis.

Table 3

*Current Writing Practices*

		No. of occurrences	% of occurrences
Practice	Imagery	12	100%
	Write in response to text	12	100%
	Writing process	12	100%
	15-20 min. daily instruction	8	67%
	Homework	7	58%
	Text structure	6	50%
	Journaling	5	42%
	Peer editing	2	17%
Tool	Paper and pencil	12	100%
	Notebooks	8	67%
	Computers	5	42%
Intervention	One-on-one instruction	12	100%
	Tutoring	10	83%
	Peer assistance	9	75%

***Sub-theme 1: Collaboration.*** Current writing practices learned through teacher collaboration included collaborative writing, peer editing, and write then read aloud. Ten participants (83%) reported regularly using writing practices learned through teacher collaboration (participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10). Participant 2 shared, “Most of the strategies that I use I learned from my teaching mentor.” Participant 3 shared, “As team teachers, we collaborate on teaching strategies and learn a lot from each other.” Participants 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 stated, “I use strategies for writing instruction that I

learned through teacher collaboration.” Teachers learn how to refine their expertise through regular, informal, and social interaction within the workplace, which achieves authentic and motivated learning (Vaughan & Dornan, 2014; Wenger et al., 2002). Sharing knowledge through cooperative learning enhances instruction, which are characteristics of COP (Gouvea, Motta, & Santoro, 2016).

Six participants (50%) reported regularly using collaborative writing (participants 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, and 12). Participant 12 shared, “Several collaborative writing assignments that we do throughout the year have been developed over time with other teachers.” Participants 4, 6, 8, 9, and 11 stated, “A strategy that I use that I learned through teacher collaboration is collaborative writing.” Collaborative writing is an effective writing practice to meet writing proficiency standards and increase self-confidence and motivation (Dobao & Blum, 2013; Shehadeh, 2011). Students plan and write on their own and then connect with others to provide and receive feedback for improvement, which is the process of collaborative writing according to Dobao, 2014; Dobao & Blum, 2013; Shehadeh, 2011).

Two participants (17%) reported regularly using peer editing (participants 4 and 11). Participant 4 shared, “I learned the peer editing technique that we use from my mentoring teacher.” Participant 11 stated, “Peer editing is a writing practice that we use that I learned through teacher collaboration.” Therefore, peer editing is an effective EBP that teachers are not regularly utilizing enough.

Two participants (17%) reported regularly using write then read aloud (participants 6 and 8). Participant 8 shared, “Students write in their journals and then

have the opportunity to read their paragraph out loud to the class. This is a technique I first saw during my student teaching.” Participant 6 stated, “A strategy that I use that I learned through teacher collaboration is write then read aloud.” Therefore, write then read aloud is an effective EBP that teachers are not regularly utilizing (only 17%).

Results of collaborative writing as a writing practice learned through teacher collaboration were reported successful by 5 out of the 6 participants (83% success rate; participants 4, 8, 9, 11, and 12). Participant 9 shared, “Collaborative writing assignments are effective if students are kept on task.” Participants 4, 8, 11, and 12 stated, “Collaborative writing is a successful writing strategy.” Therefore, collaborative writing is an effective EBP that teachers need PD on (reported successful by only 5 out of the 6 participants).

Results of write then read aloud were reported somewhat successful with 1 participant reporting it as successful (participant 6) and 1 participant reporting it as not successful (participant 8; 50% success rate). Participant 6 stated, “Write then read aloud is a successful writing strategy.” Participant 8 shared, “Some students are too shy or self-conscious for write then read aloud assignments, so it is not always successful.” Therefore, write then read aloud is an effective EBP that teachers need PD on (reported successful by only 1 participant).

Results of peer editing were reported unsuccessful by 2 out of 2 participants (0% success rate; participants 4 and 11). Participant 11 stated, “I have not had much success with peer editing.” Participant 4 shared, “Peer editing doesn’t work at this point because

students make too many mistakes when correcting.” Therefore, peer editing is an effective EBP that teachers need PD on (reported unsuccessful by 2 out of 2 participants).

A successful writing practice resulted in 70% and above in student proficiency on lesson objectives with lesson assessment. Data analysis for this area included coding and counting codes that represented occurrences within each interview transcript of descriptions of perspectives held by participants on regularly used writing practices that were learned through teacher collaboration, which were highlighted pink in the Microsoft Word document.

Nine participants (75%) reported regularly using writing tools learned through teacher collaboration (participants 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12). Regularly used writing tools reported by participants learned through teacher collaboration were anchor charts, manipulatives for structuring writing, and journaling. Four participants (33%) reported regularly using anchor charts as a tool learned through teacher collaboration (participants 6, 8, 9, and 12). Participant 6 shared, “I use many anchor charts that the last teacher who taught this classroom left.” Participants 8 and 9 stated, “A tool that we use for writing that was learned through teacher collaboration is anchor charts.” Participant 12 shared, “I have my student teacher make my anchor charts because they are time-consuming to make.”

Three participants (25%) reported regularly using manipulatives for structuring writing as a tool learned through teacher collaboration (participants 1, 3, and 7).

Participant 7 shared, “An effective manipulative that we use for structuring writing is

words that are magnetized.” Participants 1 and 3 stated, “A tool that we use for writing that was learned through teacher collaboration is manipulatives for structuring writing.”

Three participants (25%) reported regularly using journaling as a tool learned through teacher collaboration (participants 9, 11, and 12). Participant 9 shared, “My team teacher showed me several ideas to use for journaling projects.” Participants 11 and 12 stated, “A tool that we use for writing that was learned through teacher collaboration is journaling.”

Results of anchor charts were reported successful by 4 out of 4 participants (100% success rate; participants 6, 8, 9, and 12). Participant 12 shared, “Anchors charts are an effective tool that I use for my writing lessons. Participants 6, 8, and 9 stated, “Anchor charts are a successful tool for writing instruction.”

Results of manipulatives were reported successful by 2 out of 3 participants (67% success rate; participants 1 and 7). Participant 1 shared, “Manipulatives can be an effective tool for writing if students stay on task and don’t get involved with playing with them.” Participant 7 stated, “Manipulatives are a successful tool for writing instruction.”

Results of journaling were reported successful by 3 out of 3 participants (100% success rate; participants 9, 11, and 12). Participant 9 shared, “Journaling is the most effective writing tool that we use.” Participants 11 and 12 stated, “Journaling is a successful tool for writing instruction.” A successful tool resulted in 70% and above in student proficiency on lesson objectives with lesson assessment. Data analysis for this area included coding and counting codes that represented occurrences within each interview transcript of descriptions of perspectives held by participants on regularly used

writing tools learned through teacher collaboration, which were highlighted light gray in the Microsoft Word document. Table 4 lists current writing practices including tools learned through teacher collaboration that emerged from data analysis.

Table 4

*Practices Learned Through Teacher Collaboration*

		No. of occurrences	% of occurrences	Success rate
Practice	Reported	10	83%	N/A
	Collaborative writing	6	67%	83%
	Peer editing	2	17%	0%
	Write then read aloud	2	17%	50%
Tool	Reported	9	75%	N/A
	Anchor charts	4	33%	100%
	Manipulatives	3	25%	67%
	Journaling	3	25%	100%

***Sub-theme 2: Opinions on standards.*** Participants reported dissatisfaction with state writing standards noting issues with connections to the campus curriculum and ease of use when teaching writing. This dissatisfaction appears to have resulted from a failure to deeply understand the writing standards and the relationship to the writing process for the target population. Teachers having a lack of clarity on connecting EBP for writing to state writing standards implicate a lack of EBP for writing and failure to implement a systemic writing process, which are possible contributing factors for the lack of student writing proficiency at BES (Alter et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2013; Raudenbush, 2015; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Therefore, connecting EBP for writing to state writing standards is a PD need (Harris et al., 2015; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013).

Nine participants (75%) reported dissatisfaction with state standards (participants 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12). Dissatisfaction included the opinions that there were an excessive amount of writing standards and that writing standards exceeded student comprehension. Therefore, teachers expressed the opinions that they were required by state writing standards to cover too much content and the content was too difficult for the grade level. Five participants (42%) expressed the opinion that state writing standards required too much content to cover for the grade level (participants 2, 4, 8, 9, and 10). Participant 9 shared, “There is way too much writing content to cover in the year for students to reach mastery.” Participants 2, 4, 8, and 10 stated, “State writing standards require too much content to cover.”

Four participants (33%) expressed the opinion that state writing standards required content that was too difficult for the grade level (participants 4, 6, 11, and 12). Participant 6 shared, “Writing standards are too advanced for students.” Participant 11 shared, “In my experience, current state writing standards are too difficult for elementary students.” Participant 12 shared, “I believe many standards should be deleted or reduced to modify student expectations towards more realistic success.” Participant 4 stated, “State writing standards are too difficult for the grade level.” Three participants (25%) did not report an opinion on state standards (participants 1, 3, and 7).

Therefore, teachers need PD on connecting state writing standards to EBP for effective writing instruction. Data analysis for this area included coding and counting codes that represented occurrences within each interview transcript of descriptions of perspectives held by participants on state standards, which were highlighted dark red.



Table 5 lists opinions of participants on state writing standards that emerged from data analysis.

Table 5

*Opinions on Standards*

Opinion	No. of occurrences	% of occurrences
Excessive amount	5	42%
Exceed comprehension	4	33%
No opinion	3	25%

**Theme 2: Characteristics of Military-Connected Students**

Based on interview data, participants believed characteristics of MC students influenced writing proficiency. Participants reported challenges and strengths of the target population regarding writing proficiency. The most commonly reported challenge was varying ability level among students.

Participants reported student effort as the primary strength. It is imperative to student success for schools to train teachers on challenges associated with the diverse culture of MC students (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Alter et al., 2013; Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Astor & Benbenishty, 2014; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Kim et al., 2013; Raudenbush, 2015; Welsh, 2016). Effective instruction requires knowledge of diverse communities including MC students, which is an implication of the need for PD on CRP (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Alter et al., 2013; Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Astor & Benbenishty, 2014; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Kim et al., 2013; Raudenbush, 2015; Welsh, 2016).

Challenges to student writing proficiency reported by teachers included varying ability levels, learning gaps, content retention, and stress level. Ten teachers (83%) reported varying ability levels as a major challenge for student writing proficiency (participants 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12). Participant 9 shared, “A few of my students are advanced learners, and a few others don’t even know how to read.” Participants 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, and 12 stated, “A major challenge for student writing proficiency is varying ability levels.”

Nine teachers (75%) reported learning gaps as a major challenge for student writing proficiency (participants 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12). Participant 11 shared, “Most of my students have learning gaps because they miss weeks of school during relocation.” Participants 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 12 stated, “A major challenge for student writing proficiency is learning gaps.”

Eight teachers (67%) reported content retention as a major challenge for student writing proficiency (participants 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, and 10). Participant 6 shared, “I’ve noticed that when parents are deployed students have a harder time retaining new content.” Participants 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, and 10 stated, “A major challenge for student writing proficiency is content retention.”

Seven teachers (58%) reported stress level of students as a major challenge for student writing proficiency (participants 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12). Participant 8 shared, “Military kids seem to be more stressed than other students.” Participants 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, and 12 stated, “A major challenge for student writing proficiency is stress level.” Data analysis for this area included coding and counting codes that represented occurrences

within each interview transcript of descriptions of perspectives held by participants on challenges to writing proficiency of MC students, which were highlighted red.

Strengths of student writing proficiency that teachers reported included effort and motivation. Ten teachers (83%) reported student effort as a strength regarding writing proficiency among students (participants 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12). Participant 1 shared, "Students try their best most of the time." Participant 8 shared, "Students put effort into the content of their writing samples, although grammar and spelling are lacking." Participants 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, and 12 stated, "A strength students show is effort."

Nine teachers (75%) reported student motivation as a strength regarding writing proficiency among students (participants 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 12). Participant 2 shared, "Most students are motivated to learn." Participants 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 12 stated, "A strength students show is motivation." Data analysis for this area included coding and counting codes that represented occurrences within each interview transcript of descriptions of perspectives held by participants on strengths to writing proficiency of MC students, which were highlighted dark red. Table 6 lists characteristics of MC students that emerged from data analysis.

Table 6

*Characteristics of Military-Connected Students*

	Characteristic	No. of occurrences	% of occurrences
Challenge	Varying ability levels	10	83%
	Learning gaps	9	75%
	Content retention	8	67%
	Stress level	7	58%
Strength	Effort	10	83%
	Motivation	9	75%

**Theme 3: Relationship Building**

Based on interview data, teachers believed that relationship building was an important aspect to effectively teach writing. Teachers expressed that positive inter-collaborative practices between teacher and student are necessary for relationship building. Participants described patience and persistence as positive inter-collaborative practices. Participants expressed that positive intra-collaborative practices among teachers are also necessary for relationship building. Participants described collaborative opportunities for teachers as important for effective writing instruction.

All 12 participants (100%) stated that it is necessary to build a positive relationship with each student. Participant 5 shared, "If the students think that you don't care about them, they lose focus." Participant 1 shared, "I know that the way I treat my students affects their ability to learn. New students and students who are not comfortable in class are less focused and do not learn as well as students who are comfortable with the

teacher and the other students.” Participants 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 stated, “It is necessary to build a positive relationship with each student.”

All 12 participants (100%) expressed the importance of awareness of the unique culture of students when teaching highly mobile military-connected elementary students.

Participant 3 shared, “Military kids definitely are a unique culture of students.”

Participant 5 shared, “There are specific challenges to teaching military children.”

Participants 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 stated, “It is important to be aware of the culture of students when teaching.”

Participants reported patience and persistence as important attributes for teaching highly mobile military-connected students. Ten participants (83%) expressed the importance of patience for teaching highly mobile military-connected students (participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10). Participant 3 shared, “You have to have a caring environment within the classroom for your students, and that begins with a lot of patience.” Participants 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 stated, “Patience is important for teaching highly mobile military-connected students.”

Nine participants (75%) expressed the importance of persistence for teaching the target student population (participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10). Participant 7 shared, “It’s very important to be gently and consistently persistent with students who are not focused.” Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 10 stated, “Persistence is important for teaching highly mobile military-connected students.”

A holistic approach (teaching the “whole child”) was also reported by participants as an important aspect of teaching the target student population. Seven participants

(58%) stated the importance of a holistic approach (teaching the “whole child”) (participants 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 10). Participant 1 explained, “Teaching from a holistic approach helps new students to become comfortable quickly in their new classroom. Students who are comfortable in class show a decreased stress level, which is a major influence on the ability to learn.” Participants 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 stated, “Teaching the whole child is important for teaching highly mobile military-connected students.” Data analysis for this area included coding and counting codes that represented occurrences within each interview transcript of descriptions of perspectives held by participants on inter-collaborative relationship building practices, which were highlighted dark yellow.

All 12 participants (100%) stated that teacher collaboration is an important aspect of effective writing instruction. Teacher collaboration includes sharing strategies and experiences with other teachers. Participant 10 shared, “I meet with my mentor once a week to collaborate, and that is very helpful.” Participants 3, 5, 8, 9, and 12 stated, “Teacher collaboration is an important aspect of effective teaching.” Participant 7 shared, “I think I would benefit from collaborating with other teachers on writing techniques.” Participants 1 and 11 stated, “Opportunities for teacher collaboration are important for effective writing instruction.” Participant 6 shared, “When I have time to collaborate with teachers it is very helpful, but unfortunately I don’t have much time for that.” Participants 2, 4, 7, 10, and 11 stated, “I would benefit from sharing strategies and experiences with other teachers.”

Teachers learn how to refine their expertise through regular, informal, and social interaction within the workplace, which achieves authentic and motivated learning

(Vaughan & Dornan, 2014; Wenger et al., 2002). Research by Gouvea, Motta, and Santoro (2016) expanded on this finding by explaining that sharing knowledge through cooperative learning enhances instruction, which are characteristics of COP. Data analysis for this area included coding and counting codes that represented occurrences within each interview transcript of descriptions of perspectives held by participants on intra-collaborative practices for relationship building, which were highlighted teal. Table 7 lists relationship building practices that emerged from data analysis.

Table 7

*Relationship Building Practices*

	Practice	No. of occurrences	% of occurrences
Inter-Collaborative	Positive relationship with students	12	100%
	Awareness of student culture	12	100%
	Patience	10	83%
	Persistence	9	75%
	Holistic approach	7	58%
Intra-Collaborative	Teacher collaboration	12	100%

**Theme 4: Professional Development Needs**

Based on interview data, teachers believed that they would benefit from PD on EBP for writing and teaching MC students, which may help writing assessment scores increase. All 12 participants (100%) expressed the need of PD on EBP for writing. Participant 5 shared, “We need to be aware of current evidence-based practices for writing.” Participant 8 shared, “If there are new writing strategies that we don’t know it

would probably be good for us to try them out.” Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, and 12 stated, “I would benefit from professional development training on evidence-based practices for elementary writing instruction.”

All 12 participants (100%) expressed the need for PD on teaching military-connected students. Participant 10 shared, “Evidence-based practices for teaching highly mobile military-connected students would be very helpful.” Participants 2, 3, and 12 stated, “We need professional development training on evidence-based practices for teaching highly mobile students.” Participant 1 shared, “Teachers who work with specific cultures of students need training through professional development to best serve their students.” Participant 4 shared, “It would probably be beneficial to learn new strategies for teaching military kids.” Participants 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 11 stated, “We need professional development training on evidence-based practices for teaching military-connected students.”

Effective instruction requires knowledge of diverse communities including MC students, which is an implication of the need for PD on CRP (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Alter et al., 2013; Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Astor & Benbenishty, 2014; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Kim et al., 2013; Raudenbush, 2015; Welsh, 2016). Therefore, PD needs include writing EBP and CRP. Data analysis for this area included coding and counting codes that represented occurrences within each interview transcript of descriptions of perspectives held by participants on PD needs for writing instruction of MC students, which were highlighted violet. Table 8 lists PD needs that emerged from data analysis.



Table 8

*Professional Development Needs*

Need	No. of occurrences	% of occurrences
EBP for writing	12	100%
Teaching MC students	12	100%

**Summary of the Findings**

In this section, I will logically and systematically summarize the findings of this research study in relation to the problem, the research question, the larger body of literature on this topic, and the conceptual framework. The local problem that I explored through this qualitative, instrumental case study was the lack of data on teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students. Teachers' perceptions included practices for writing instruction that could be used to develop best practices of writing instruction for MC students (Ciampa, 2016; Vaughan & Dornan, 2014).

Regular practices for writing instruction varied among participants according to the research study findings. These variations of practice showed a lack of EBP, which may contribute to low student writing proficiency scores. According to Furey et al. (2016), Graham et al. (2012), and Troia and Olinghouse (2013), teachers must use EBP for students to achieve writing proficiency. The first major theme was Current Writing Practices. Within this theme, 2 sub-themes emerged including Collaboration and Opinions on State Standards.

During the review of scholarly literature, several important factors related to elementary writing instruction were identified. Writing proficiency of elementary

students is directly related to their reading ability, reading comprehension, literacy predictors, letter/print knowledge, phonological awareness, and oral language abilities (Catts et al., 2015; Graham & Hebert, 2011; Kent et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2014; Padeliadu & Antoniou, 2013). Phonological awareness is the ability to manipulate sounds into speech (Saygin, 2013). Decoding and fluency are the basis of reading and writing comprehension (Padeliadu & Antoniou, 2013). Decoding includes knowledge of letter-sound relationships and letter patterns to process a printed word into a sound, which and is critical to comprehension (Kim et al., 2016; Padeliadu and Antoniou, 2013). Write in response to text is a literacy/ writing practice used to teach students to carefully read a text and provide a brief response, which also improves comprehension (Troia, 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Therefore, teachers may benefit from PD on connecting literacy and writing practices throughout the curriculum to enhance instruction and strengthen the writing process.

Low-quality student writing is an ongoing challenge for teachers nationally (Morrow et al., 2012; Ritchey & Coker, 2013). Effective writing instruction is critical to writing proficiency of elementary students (Bifuh-Ambe, 2013; Dombek & Al Otaiba, 2015; Kent et al., 2014). EBP for writing are essential for elementary students to achieve writing proficiency (Fureyet al., 2016; Graham et al., 2012; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Effective instruction also requires knowledge of diverse communities, which includes MC students (Alter et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2013; Raudenbush, 2015). Therefore, teachers would benefit by PD on CRP.

According to the research study findings, the most commonly used writing practices of teachers included imagery, write in response to text, and the writing process. Teachers reported that daily writing instruction typically lasted 15-20 minutes, which is the national average according to Gilbert and Graham (2010) and Graham et al. (2015). The time and resources spent on writing instruction and practice should be at least doubled to achieve writing proficiency nationwide (Graham et al., 2015; National Commission on Writing, 2003, 2004; Puranik et. al., 2014; Walpole & McKenna, 2012). According to the National Commission on Writing (2003, 2004), it is necessary for teachers to focus more attention on writing instruction to support the academic success of students. The amount of time dedicated to classroom writing instruction directly relates to student writing assessment scores (Applebee & Langer, 2006; National Commission on Writing, 2003).

Paper and pencil were the most common writing tools. According to Alves et al. (2016), Graham et al. (1997), and McCutchen (1996), text transcription skills utilizing a word processor/ computer are successful in the development of writing proficiency. Only five teachers reported regular use of computers for writing instruction. Therefore, text transcription utilizing a word processor/ computer is an evidence-based writing practice that teachers at the local site do not regularly implement. Consistent practice of text transcription skills utilizing a word processor/ computer support the improvement of writing and the development of writing proficiency (Alves et al., 2016; Graham, et al., 1997; McCutchen, 1996).

During the review of scholarly literature, EBP for writing were identified. Elementary students' writing skills benefit from a cycle of continuous practice, instruction, assessment, and modification of instruction (Dombek & Al Otaiba, 2015; Kent et al., 2014). The primary elementary EBP for writing is the writing process, which includes four steps: plan, draft, revise, and edit (Graham, 2010; Graham et al., 2010; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). A word processor/ computer is a successful writing tool for developing writing proficiency (Alves et al., 2016; Graham, et al., 1997; McCutchen, 1996).

Effective practices for writing instruction that engage students, decrease challenging behavior, and directly influence student writing proficiency scores include allowing multiple opportunities to respond, varied learning activities in different environments, responsiveness of teachers, and varying speech and intonation during instruction (Alter et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2013). According to Kim et al. (2013), the responsiveness of teachers during writing instruction directly influences student writing proficiency scores. EBP for writing include imagery, text structure, text transcription, sentence combining, write in response to text, peer collaboration, and self-regulation (Graham, 2010; Graham et al., 2012; Troia, 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Therefore, text structure, text transcription, sentence combining, peer collaboration, and self-regulation are EBP for writing that teachers at the local site do not regularly implement.

One-on-one instruction was the most commonly reported intervention. Teachers also reported regularly using tutoring and peer assistance as interventions. Effective

interventions for MC students promote well-being, healthy development, and academic success (DePedro et al., 2015; Murphy & Fairbank, 2013). Therefore, teachers need professional development focusing on writing interventions.

During the review of scholarly literature, writing interventions were identified. Interventions for struggling writers are vital in early grades for students demonstrating risk factors for writing and reading difficulties (Kim et al., 2015). Writing interventions that result in statistical improvement include the self-regulated model, peer assistance, product goals, prewriting activities, and word processing (Graham et al., 2012; Rohrbeck et al., 2003). Writing interventions for students in elementary grades also include one-on-one instruction and peer-assisted learning (Arnold et al., 2017; Bowman-Perrott et al., 2013; Rohrbeck et al., 2003). Therefore, self-regulation, product goals, prewriting activities, and word processing are Writing interventions that teachers at the local site are not regularly implementing.

A lack of teacher collaboration was evident when exploring writing practices and tools learned through teacher collaboration. Ten teachers reported regularly using writing practices learned through teacher collaboration and nine teachers reported regularly using writing tools learned through teacher collaboration. Collaborative writing was the most common writing practice learned through teacher collaboration.

Writing practices and tools learned through teacher collaboration were varied and success rates were reportedly low, which implies a need of opportunities for teacher collaboration. Teachers expressed that they would benefit from sharing strategies and experiences with other teachers. According to Gouvea et al. (2016), sharing knowledge,

cooperative learning, and collaboration result in the improvement of instruction and working processes.

Teachers expressed dissatisfaction with state standards due to excessive and difficult content. PD is needed for teachers to effectively develop curriculum and instruction based on state writing standards (Alter et al., 2013; Kim et al. 2013; Raudenbush, 2015). Further, state writing standards do not equip teachers with enough information to prepare students for writing proficiency as measured by the state writing assessment, which is an implication of a PD need to connect the state standards to EBP for writing (Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Table 9 lists the summary of findings for teachers' perceptions on current writing practices that emerged from data analysis, which consists of research data from theme 1. Evidence-based writing practices that could be implemented to fulfill the identified need are also listed.

Table 9

*Current Writing Practices*

	Implemented	Not Implemented
Practices	Imagery Write in response to text The writing process 15-20 minutes per day	Text structure Text transcription Sentence combining Peer collaboration Self-regulation 30 minutes per day min.
Tools	Paper and pencil	Text transcription utilizing a word processor/ computer
Intervention Practices	One-on-one instruction Tutoring Peer-assistance	Self-regulation Product goals Prewriting activities Word processing
Teacher Collaboration	Varied with reportedly low success rates	Opportunities for teacher collaboration
Opinions of Standards	Dissatisfaction Excessive content Difficult content	Professional development training to effectively develop writing curriculum and instruction based on state writing standards

The second major theme was MC Students and included characteristics of MC students regarding writing proficiency reported by participants. The most common strength among students was effort and the most common challenge among students was varying ability levels. Varying ability levels is a common challenge associated with military-connected students' due to high mobility according to DePedro et al. (2014), Jacobson (2013), and Welsh (2016). Other challenges of writing proficiency for students that were reported by participants included learning gaps, content retention, and stress level.

The military lifestyle is stressful for children due to frequent relocation and parental absences during training and deployment according to DePedro et al. (2014), Hosek and Wadsworth (2013), Milburn and Lightfoot (2013), and Sullivan et al. (2016). Blasko (2015) and Welsh (2016) explained that high mobility results in childhood stress due to constantly adjusting support systems including peers, family members, teachers, coaches, and neighbors. However, only seven teachers (58%) reported stress level of students as a major challenge for student writing proficiency. Table 10 lists the summary of findings for teachers' perceptions on professional experiences that emerged from data analysis, which consists of research data from theme 2. EBP for writing that could be implemented to fulfill the identified need are also listed.

Table 10

*MC Students*

	Implemented	Not Implemented
Challenges to Student Writing Proficiency	Varying ability levels Learning gaps Content retention Stress level	Evidence-based writing interventions PD for teaching highly mobile military-connected students
Strengths of Student Writing Proficiency	Effort	N/A

The third major theme was relationship building. Based on interview data, teachers believed that relationship building was an important aspect to effectively teach writing instruction for MC students. Teachers stated that positive inter-collaborative and intra-collaborative practices are necessary for relationship building.



Teachers stated that it is important to build a positive relationship with each student. Teachers also expressed the importance of awareness of the unique culture of students when teaching highly mobile military-connected elementary students.

Participants described patience and persistence as positive inter-collaborative practices.

Teachers also stated that teacher collaboration is an important aspect of effective teaching. According to Raudenbush (2015), collaborative PD opportunities directly influence teacher quality. Teachers described collaborative opportunities among teachers as important for effective writing instruction. Lastly, teachers stated that they would benefit from sharing strategies and experiences with other teachers, which implicates the need for collaborative PD opportunities for teachers. Table 11 lists the summary of findings for teachers' perceptions on relationship building that emerged from data analysis, which consists of research data from theme 3. EBP for writing that could be implemented to fulfill the identified need are also listed.

Table 11

*Relationship Building*

	Currently Implemented	Not Implemented
Inter-collaborative Practices	Building a positive relationship with each student Awareness of student culture Patience Persistence	Evidence-based writing interventions PD for teaching highly mobile military-connected students
Intra-collaborative Practices	N/A	Collaborative opportunities Sharing strategies with other teachers Sharing experiences with other teachers Professional development opportunities

The last major theme was PD needs. Based on interview data, teachers stated that they would benefit from collaborative opportunities for PD focused on EBP for writing and teaching MC students. All schools must provide effective professional development for teachers that result in improved classroom practices according to the federal requirements of No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top (Helterbran, 2012; Hopkins et al., 2012). However, traditional PD does not effectively translate into classroom practice (Goddard et al., 2007).

Providing authentic learning experiences for teachers requires targeted PD, which is collaborative, goal-directed, and teacher-directed (Gallagher Browne, 2010; O'Brien & Jones, 2014). Traditional PD does not effectively translate into classroom practice (Goddard et al., 2007). Alternately, targeted PD creates professional learning communities/ communities of practice and provides a systemic structure for continuous improvement that supports the development of innovative experimentation, practice

towards mastery, and increased efficacy, which improves school culture and student achievement (Gallagher Browne, 2010; O'Brien & Jones, 2014). Therefore, teachers need targeted PD, as opposed to traditional PD.

During the review of scholarly literature, several important factors related to PD for effective writing instruction were identified. Teacher instruction is enhanced through PD on EBP for writing according to Graham et al. (2012) and Walpole and McKenna (2012). Teachers are underprepared to teach writing, which may explain the lack of focus on writing instruction and the lack of writing proficiency (Gilbert & Graham, 2010; Graham et al. (2015). According to Alter et al. (2013), Kim et al. (2013), and Raudenbush (2015), effective instruction requires knowledge of diverse communities, which includes MC students.

Quality PD opportunities directly influence measures of teacher effectiveness (Raudenbush, 2015). PD is enhanced by input from teachers on successful instructional practices (Alter et al., 2013; Bifuh-Ambe, 2013; Gouvea et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2015; Raudenbush, 2015). COP also promotes PD through sharing of knowledge, cooperative learning, and consequently the improvement of instruction and working processes (Gouvea et al., 2016).

During the review of scholarly literature, several important factors related to MC students were identified. Every school district in the United States has MC students enrolled in their schools (Esqueda et al., 2012). High mobility rates are a common challenge associated with MC students, which negatively influence classroom environments by reducing student engagement and instructional continuity (DePedro et

al., 2014; Jacobson, 2013; Welsh, 2016). MC students may change schools an average of every three years or nine times before high school graduation (Esqueda et al., 2012; Milburn & Lightfoot, 2013; Welsh, 2016). Challenges associated with the diverse culture of MC students also include constant relocation, varying ability levels, learning gaps, content retention, and stress (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Astor & Benbenishty, 2014; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Welsh, 2016).

It is imperative to student success for schools to train teachers on challenges associated with the diverse culture of MC students (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Alter et al., 2013; Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Astor & Benbenishty, 2014; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Kim et al., 2013; Raudenbush, 2015; Welsh, 2016). Training teachers on the diverse culture of MC students is an implication of the need for PD on culturally responsive practices (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Astor & Benbenishty, 2014; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Welsh, 2016). Effective instruction requires knowledge of diverse communities including MC students, which is an implication of the need for PD on CRP (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Alter et al., 2013; Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Astor & Benbenishty, 2014; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Kim et al., 2013; Raudenbush, 2015; Welsh, 2016).

CRP is an inter-collaborative practice and reflective pedagogy that focuses on honoring and celebrating student cultural diversity (Ford et al., 2014). CRP is effective in addressing achievement gaps (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Vazquez-Montilla, et al., 2014). Writing instruction is shaped by beliefs about cultural diversity (Gay, 2013). Implementing CRP motivates students, reduces behavioral problems, and improves

student achievement (Rychly & Graves, 2012). Table 12 lists the summary of findings for teachers' perceptions on PD needs that emerged from data analysis, which consists of research data from theme 4. EBP for writing that could be implemented to fulfill the identified need are also listed.

*Table 12*

*Professional Development Needs*

	Currently Implemented	Not Implemented
PD Needs	N/A	Targeted EBP for writing Connecting standards to EBP CRP for teaching MC students Regular input from teachers on PD needs

In conclusion, several problems (needs) associated with student writing proficiency at the local site were identified in the research study findings from Section 2 of this research study. Teachers are not:

- spending enough time on writing instruction and practice;
- collaborating with other teachers (intra-collaborative practices);
- receiving targeted PD;
- regularly implementing writing EBP (text structure, text transcription utilizing a word processor/ computer, sentence combining, peer collaboration, product goals, prewriting activities, and self-regulation);
- clear on how to connect the state writing standards to writing EBP;
- connecting literacy and writing to enhance instruction throughout the curriculum;

- trained on challenges associated with MC students (constant relocation, varying ability levels, learning gaps, content retention, and stress); or
- trained on CRP for teaching MC students (inter-collaborative practices).

My solutions to the identified problems are as follows. Teachers need:

- to dedicate one hour per day to writing instruction and practice;
- collaborative opportunities to share strategies and experiences with other teachers (intra-collaborative practices);
- targeted PD on writing EBP;
- targeted PD on how to connect writing standards to writing EBP;
- targeted PD on how to connect literacy and writing;
- targeted PD on challenges associated with MC students; and
- targeted PD on CRP for teaching MC students (inter-collaborative practices).

Recommendations to address the problems and solutions include targeted PD focusing on:

- writing EBP,
- writing standards,
- connecting literacy/ writing, and
- CRP.

Table 13 lists problems/ needs associated with writing proficiency at the local site and my corresponding solutions/ recommendations.

Table 13

*Recommendations*

Problems/ Needs	Solutions	Recommendations
Teachers are not spending enough time on writing instruction and practice	Teachers need to dedicate one hour per day to writing	Teachers need to dedicate one hour per day to writing
Teachers do not have collaborative opportunities	Teachers need collaborative opportunities	Targeted PD
Teachers are not implementing writing EBP	Teachers need PD on implementing writing EBP	Targeted PD on Writing EBP
Teachers are not clear on how to connect writing standards to EBP	Teachers need PD on connecting standards to EBP	Targeted PD on writing standards
Teachers are not clear on connecting literacy and writing	Teachers need PD on how to connect literacy and writing	Targeted PD on connecting literacy/ writing
Teachers are not trained on challenges of MC students	Teachers need PD on challenges of MC students	Targeted PD on CRP
Teachers are not trained on CRP for teaching MC students	Teachers need PD on CRP for teaching MC students	Targeted PD on CRP

The conceptual framework that served as the foundation for this research study was communities of practice (COP) proposed by Lave and Wenger (1991). According to Lave and Wenger (1991), COP is summarized as a grouping of people with a common interest learning how to refine their expertise through regular interaction. In this research study, the community of the communities of practice framework was teachers of MC students at Base Elementary School. The practice was effective writing practices for MC

students at BES. The summary of the findings through the lens of the conceptual framework is illustrated in Figure 4.

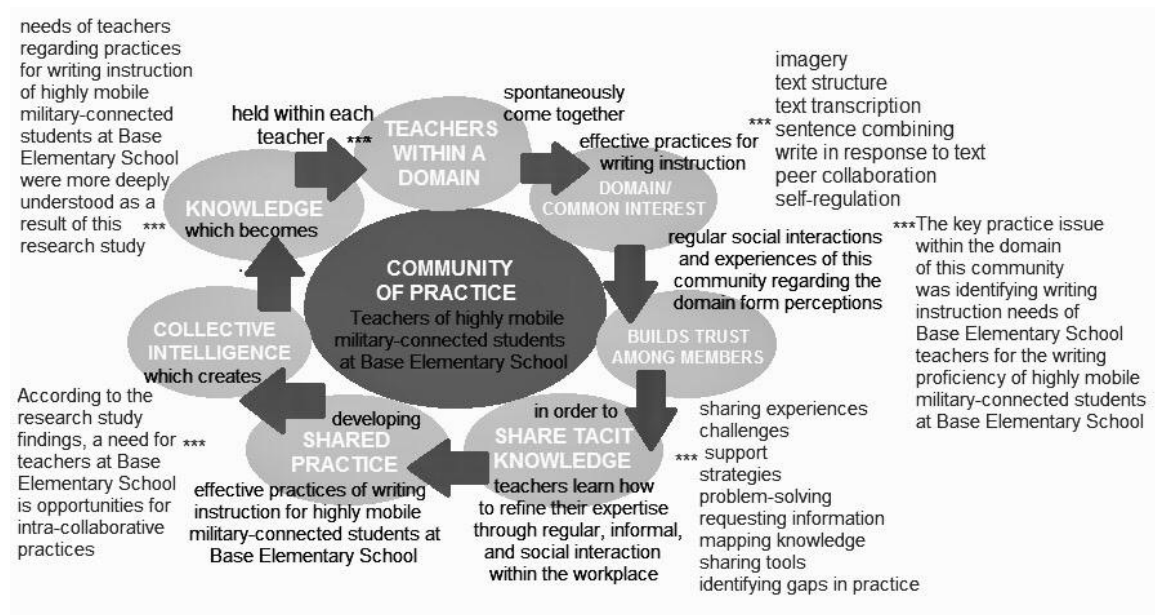


Figure 4. Framework summary.

The common interest, or domain, in this study was effective writing practices (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vaughan & Dornan, 2014; Wenger et al., 2002). The key practice issue within the domain of this community was identifying writing needs of MC students (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vaughan & Dornan, 2014; Wenger et al., 2002). According to the literature, effective writing practices include imagery, text structure, text transcription, sentence combining, write in response to text, peer collaboration, and self-regulation.

The most commonly used writing practices by teachers at the local site included imagery, write in response to text, and the writing process according to the research study findings. Text structure, text transcription, sentence combining, peer collaboration, and



self-regulation are EBP for writing that teachers do not regularly implement. Paper and pencil were the most commonly used writing tools and only five teachers reported regular use of computers for writing practice according to the research study findings. Therefore, text transcription utilizing a word processor/ computer is an EBP for writing that teachers at the local site do not regularly implement.

The community of practitioners, teachers at the local site, had a common interest of refining their practice over time through discussion (Ciampa, 2016; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Teachers have a collective competence through experience with teaching and learning from each other through discussion and collaboration (Ciampa, 2016, Vaughan & Dornan, 2014; Wenger et al., 2002). Regular social interactions and experiences of this community regarding the domain form perceptions (Vaughan & Dornan, 2014; Wenger et al., 2002). Regular interaction within the community includes sharing experiences, challenges, support, strategies, problem-solving, requesting information, mapping knowledge, sharing tools, and identifying gaps in practice (Ciampa, 2016; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Teachers learn how to refine their expertise through regular, informal, and social interaction within the workplace, which achieves authentic and motivated learning (Vaughan & Dornan, 2014; Wenger et al., 2002). According to the research study findings, a need for teachers is opportunities for intra-collaborative practices. Teachers at the local site are a support group to each other when allowed opportunities for collaboration. Therefore, teachers are empowered through learning together and sharing

strategies. Consequently, when teachers are empowered, they can better meet the needs of students (Dierking & Fox, 2012).

Through targeted PD, teachers at BES may be better prepared to implement EBP for writing for MC students, which may lead to writing proficiency and the campus goal of meeting proficiency standards on state writing assessments (Ciampa, 2016, Vaughan & Dornan, 2014; Wenger et al., 2002). According to the research study findings, teachers need targeted PD (intra-collaborative) focusing on: implementing EBP for writing, connecting state writing standards to EBP for writing, and culturally responsive practices for teaching MC students (inter-collaborative practices). Implications for the project deliverable as an outcome of the results of the research study include the development of a white paper detailing findings from the research study and subsequent recommendations, which will be presented to stakeholders, including the principal of the local site and the school district office, via email, as a proposed form/plan of distribution. Needs of teachers regarding writing instruction for the target population were more deeply understood as a result of this research study.

### **Project**

A white paper is a detailed and authoritative report on a specific topic that uses facts and logic to promote a solution to a given problem (Graham, 2010; Kemp, 2005; Mattern, 2013; Purdue, 2017). The purpose of a white paper is to promote a specific solution to a given need and influence the decision-making processes of stakeholders (Graham, 2010; Kemp, 2005; Mattern, 2013; Purdue, 2017). A white paper with an explanation of the research findings and subsequent recommendations to initiate change

was the most appropriate method to bring about institutional awareness in a manner that could be understood by stakeholders (Graham, 2010; Kemp, 2005; Mattern, 2013; Purdue, 2017). In the white paper, I outline the problem at the local level, present the research study results, discuss conclusions, and make recommendations to school and district administrators regarding my research study findings of PD needs of teachers of MC students at the local site (Graham, 2010; Kemp, 2005; Mattern, 2013; Purdue, 2017). Lastly, I used Kemp's (2005) process to ensure the effectiveness of the white paper.

**Recommendations.** In response to data findings, I recommended targeted PD delivered systemically within an integrated and coherent framework to promote collaboration, dialogue, and understanding within and across content areas for the target population. Targeted PD, as opposed to traditional PD, is collaborative, goal-directed, teacher-directed, and providing authentic learning experiences for teachers (Alter et al., 2013; Bifuh-Ambe, 2013; Ciampa, 2016; Gallagher & Browne, 2010; Goddard et al., 2007; Gouvea et al., 2016; O'Brien & Jones, 2014; Kim et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2015; Raudenbush, 2015; Vaughan & Dornan, 2014; Wenger et al., 2002). Targeted PD also creates professional learning communities/ communities of practice and provides a systemic structure for continuous improvement that supports the development of innovative experimentation, practice towards mastery, and increased efficacy, which improves school culture and student achievement (Alter et al., 2013; Bifuh-Ambe, 2013; Ciampa, 2016; Gallagher & Browne, 2010; Goddard et al., 2007; Gouvea et al., 2016; O'Brien & Jones, 2014; Kim et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2015; Raudenbush, 2015; Vaughan

& Dornan, 2014; Wenger et al., 2002). Therefore, teachers need targeted PD to address the collaboration need identified through the data findings.

PD recommendations include Writing EBP, Writing Standards, Literacy/ Writing, and CRP. The Writing EBP PD should include best practices, tools, and interventions. EBP include cycles of practice, the writing process, imagery, text structure, text transcription, sentence combining, write in response to text, peer collaboration, and self-regulation (Bifuh-Ambe, 2013; Dombek & Al Otaiba, 2015; Furey, et al., 2016; Graham, 2010; Graham et al., 2012; Johnson, 2008; Kent et al., 2014; Morrow et al., 2012; Ritchey and Coker, 2013; Troia, 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Text transcription using a word processor/ computer is the most effective writing tool (Alves et al., 2016; Dombek & Al Otaiba, 2015; Graham, 2010; Graham et al., 2010; and Kent et al., 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Interventions include one-on-one instruction, self-regulated model, peer assistance, product goals, prewriting activities, and text transcription (Arnold et al., 2017; Bowman-Perrott et al., 2013); Cozza, 2014; Graham et al., 2010; 2012; Kim et al., 2015; Rohrbeck et al., 2003).

The Writing Standards PD should include elementary writing standards including mastery of purpose, production, research, and range (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2017). Training should also include demonstrating and differentiating between genres of writing and following different rules for each genre (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2017). Grade level appropriate writing samples consist of an opinion piece, informative text, descriptive narrative, and creative writing piece (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2017). Lastly, training should include

connecting state writing standards to EBP (Alter et al., 2013; DeLuca & Bellara, 2013; DeLuca, Chavez, Bellara, & Cao, 2013; DeLuca, Chavez, & Cao, 2013; Greenberg & Walsh, 2012; Kim et al., 2013; Raudenbush, 2015; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013).

The Literacy/ Writing PD should include decoding, fluency, literacy predictors, and connecting literacy and writing throughout the curriculum to enhance instruction (Alter et al., 2013; Bryant et al., 2016; Catts et al., 2015; Graham & Hebert, 2011; Kent et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2014; Padeliadu & Antoniou, 2013; Saygin, 2013). Training should also include reading and writing comprehension, letter/print knowledge, phonological awareness, and oral language abilities, which are directly associated to writing proficiency of elementary students (Catts et al., 2015; Graham & Hebert, 2011; Kent et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2014; Padeliadu & Antoniou, 2013). Also, write in response to text is a literacy/ writing practice used throughout the curriculum to teach students to carefully read a text and provide a brief response, which also improves comprehension (Troia, 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013).

The CRP PD should include components of CRP to enhance teacher responsiveness and address challenges associated with MC students, which include constant relocation, varying ability levels, learning gaps, content retention, and stress (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Alter et al., 2013; Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Astor & Benbenishty, 2014; Esqueda et al. 2012; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Kim et al., 2013; Raudenbush, 2015; Welsh, 2016). Training teachers on culturally responsive practice may reduce challenges associated with MC students and enhance instruction (Achinstein

& Ogawa, 2012; Alter et al., 2013; Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Astor & Benbenishty, 2014; Ford et al., 2014; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Kim et al., 2013; Raudenbush, 2015; Welsh, 2016). CRP is also effective in (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Rychly & Graves, 2012; Vazquez-Montilla, et al., 2014). Further, writing instruction is shaped by beliefs about cultural diversity, which proves that writing instruction and CRP are complimentary methods (Gay, 2013). Therefore, an implication for PD is implementing CRP with writing instruction for MC students.

Expertise for support of this systemic PD initiative should include experts in the areas of: writing EBP, state writing standards, CRP, teaching MC students, literacy, and the reading and writing processes. I recommended that implementation of targeted PD based on the data findings occur systematically, regularly, and frequently to maximize change. However, the effectiveness of the project to bring about substantial change will rely solely on the appropriate stakeholders (Graham, 2010; Kemp, 2005; Mattern, 2013). The audience must understand the problem, the research study findings, and areas needing improvement for real change to result from the project (Graham, 2010; Kemp, 2005; Mattern, 2013).

### **Conclusion**

In Section 2, I discussed and justified the methodology and design of my research study. I discussed how a qualitative, case study design was used to determine elementary teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students at the local site. I explained how purposeful sampling was used to recruit participants for this study and individual

interviews of twelve teachers were conducted. My responsibilities as a researcher were thoroughly explained.

Next, I described participants of the study, ethical protections, as well as data collection and data analysis procedures. I also presented and explained my study findings logically and systematically in relation to the local problem, research question, larger body of literature related to the topic, and the conceptual framework. Writing proficiency of MC students was explored and discussed through the COP framework. According to the research study findings, teachers may be better prepared to implement writing EBP for MC students through targeted PD, which may lead to the campus goal of meeting proficiency standards (Ciampa, 2016, Vaughan & Dornan, 2014; Wenger et al., 2002).

Implications for the project deliverable as an outcome of the results of the research study were also discussed. The project, white paper, was described detailing the study findings and subsequent recommendations. Lastly, the white paper (see Appendix A) was based on themes emergent from the data findings and literature review.

In Section 3 of this research study, I presented the project derived from the data analysis. Based on the findings of this research study, I recommended a white paper that will be distributed to the campus principal and district director (stakeholders) via email. The white paper included the qualitative data, which highlighted the results of the research question for this study. Section 3 included the project description, goals, evaluation plans, rationale, and literature review detailing supporting information from scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles published in the last 5 years. Lastly, in Section 3

I discussed implications of the project on social change locally, as well as on a larger scale.



### Section 3: The Project

#### **Introduction**

This section includes the project goals and rationale and a literature review of supporting information from peer-reviewed journal articles published in the last 5 years. I also discuss an implementation timeline and implications for social change. The purpose of this doctoral project was to explore elementary teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students at the local site. Declining state writing assessment scores among the campus population of MC students at the local site and the lack of data on teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency for MC students prompted the study. The research question guided the research study.

- What are teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of highly mobile military-connected students at BES?

Several problems/ needs associated with student writing proficiency at the local site were identified in the study findings. Teachers were not spending enough time on writing instruction and practice. Teachers did not have collaborative opportunities to share strategies and experiences with other teachers (intracollaborative practices).

Teachers did not regularly implement EBP for writing. Teachers were not clear on how to connect state writing standards to EBP for writing. Teachers were not implementing CRP for teaching MC students.

My solutions/ recommendations to the identified problems/ needs were as follows. Teachers need to dedicate 1 hour per day to writing instruction and practice. Teachers need targeted PD to collaboratively share strategies and experiences with other

teachers. Teachers need targeted PD on EBP for writing. Teachers need targeted PD on connecting state writing standards to EBP for writing.

### **Description and Goals**

The project was created as a result of the findings of this study, which indicated that through collaborative PD training, teachers at BES would be better prepared to implement best practices for writing instruction for MC students, which may lead to student writing proficiency and the campus goals of MC students meeting proficiency standards on state writing assessments. The white paper was chosen to bring institutional awareness of the identified problem and recommendations to initiate change (Graham, 2010; Kemp, 2005; Mattern, 2013; Purdue, 2017). The purpose of the white paper is to inform appropriate stakeholders on the findings of this study, which was through targeted PD training at BES to implement writing EBP for MC students, which may lead to the campus goals of MC students meeting proficiency standards on state writing assessments. PD recommendations include writing EBP, writing standards, literacy/ writing, and CRP.

In response to the findings, I recommended targeted PD delivered within an integrated and coherent framework to promote collaboration, dialogue, and understanding within and across content areas for the target population. Targeted PD, as opposed to traditional PD, is collaborative, goal-directed, teacher-directed, and authentic learning experience for teachers (Alter et al., 2013; Bifuh-Ambe, 2013; Ciampa, 2016; Gallagher & Browne, 2010; Goddard et al., 2007; Gouvea et al., 2016; O'Brien & Jones, 2014; Kim et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2015; Raudenbush, 2015; Vaughan & Dornan, 2014; Wenger et al., 2002). Targeted PD also creates professional learning communities/ communities of

practice and provides a systemic structure for continuous improvement that supports the development of innovative experimentation, practice towards mastery, and increased efficacy, which improves school culture and student achievement (Alter et al., 2013; Bifuh-Ambe, 2013; Ciampa, 2016; Gallagher & Browne, 2010; Goddard et al., 2007; Gouvea et al., 2016; O'Brien & Jones, 2014; Kim et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2015; Raudenbush, 2015; Vaughan & Dornan, 2014; Wenger et al., 2002). Teachers need targeted PD to address the collaboration need identified through the findings.

PD recommendations include writing EBP, writing standards, literacy/ writing, and CRP. The writing EBP PD should include best practices, tools, and interventions. EBPs include cycles of practice, the writing process, imagery, text structure, text transcription, sentence combining, write in response to text, peer collaboration, and self-regulation (Bifuh-Ambe, 2013; Dombek & Al Otaiba, 2015; Furey, et al., 2016; Graham, 2010; Graham et al., 2012; Johnson, 2008; Kent et al., 2014; Morrow et al., 2012; Ritchey & Coker, 2013; Troia, 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Text transcription using a word processor/ computer is the most effective writing tool (Alves et al., 2016; Dombek & Al Otaiba, 2015; Graham, 2010; Graham et al., 2010; Kent et al., 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Interventions include one-on-one instruction, self-regulated model, peer assistance, product goals, prewriting activities, and text transcription (Arnold et al., 2017; Bowman-Perrott et al., 2013); Cozza, 2014; Graham et al., 2010, 2012; Kim et al., 2015; Rohrbeck et al., 2003).

The writing standards PD should include elementary writing standards including mastery of purpose, production, research, and range (Common Core State Standards

Initiative, 2017). Training should also include demonstrating and differentiating between genres of writing and following different rules for each genre (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2017). Grade-level appropriate writing samples consist of an opinion piece, informative text, descriptive narrative, and creative writing piece (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2017). Training should include connecting state writing standards to EBP (Alter et al., 2013; DeLuca & Bellara, 2013; DeLuca, Chavez, Bellara, & Cao, 2013; DeLuca, Chavez, & Cao, 2013; Greenberg & Walsh, 2012; Kim et al., 2013; Raudenbush, 2015; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013).

The literacy/ writing PD should include decoding, fluency, literacy predictors, and connecting literacy and writing throughout the curriculum to enhance instruction (Alter et al., 2013; Bryant et al., 2016; Catts et al., 2015; Graham & Hebert, 2011; Kent et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2014; Padeliadu & Antoniou, 2013; Saygin, 2013). Training should also include reading and writing comprehension, letter/print knowledge, phonological awareness, and oral language abilities, which are associated with writing proficiency of elementary students (Catts et al., 2015; Graham & Hebert, 2011; Kent et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2014; Padeliadu & Antoniou, 2013). Also, write in response to text is a literacy/ writing practice used throughout the curriculum to teach students to read a text and provide a response, which also improves comprehension (Troia, 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013).

The CRP PD should include components of CRP to enhance teacher responsiveness and address challenges associated with MC students, which include constant relocation, varying ability levels, learning gaps, content retention, and stress

(Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Alter et al., 2013; Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Astor & Benbenishty, 2014; Esqueda et al., 2012; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Kim et al., 2013; Raudenbush, 2015; Welsh, 2016). Training teachers on culturally responsive practice may reduce challenges associated with MC students and enhance instruction (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Alter et al., 2013; Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Astor & Benbenishty, 2014; Ford et al., 2014; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Kim et al., 2013; Raudenbush, 2015; Welsh, 2016). CRP is also effective in addressing achievement gaps (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Rychly & Graves, 2012; Vazquez-Montilla et al., 2014). Writing instruction is shaped by beliefs about cultural diversity' writing instruction and CRP are complimentary methods (Gay, 2013). Therefore, PD should implement CRP with writing instruction for MC students.

Expertise for support of this systemic PD initiative should include experts in the areas of writing EBP, state writing standards, CRP, teaching MC students, literacy, and the reading and writing processes. I recommended that implementation of targeted PD based on the findings occur systematically, regularly, and frequently to maximize change. However, the effectiveness of the project to bring about change will rely on the appropriate stakeholders (Graham, 2010; Kemp, 2005; Mattern, 2013). The audience must understand the problem, the research study findings, and areas needing improvement for change to result from the project (Graham, 2010; Kemp, 2005; Mattern, 2013).

The white paper is also helping appropriate stakeholders understand the needs of this population of students at BES. The goal of the white paper is to promote a solution

and influence the decision-making processes of the appropriate stakeholders (Graham, 2010; Kemp, 2005; Mattern, 2013; Purdue, 2017; Spaulding, 2008). In this case, the problems or needs the white paper focuses on were derived from the research findings detailed in Section 2. The solution that I focused on in this white paper was collaborative PD opportunities focusing on EBPs of writing instruction for MC elementary students, as illustrated in Figure 5.

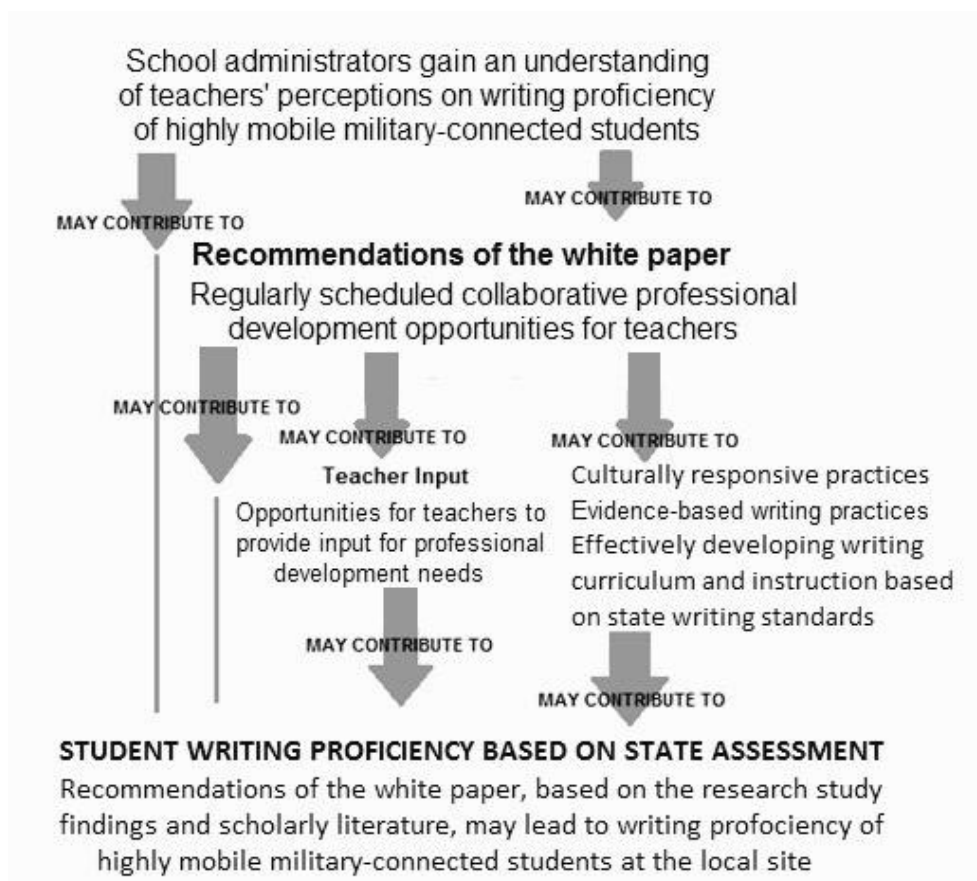


Figure 5. Recommendations.

The intended audience for the white paper includes stakeholders, including school and district administrators. A white paper was the most appropriate project based on the intended audience and themes that emerged from the data. In the white paper, I will

outline the results of this study for stakeholders, including school and district administrators, via e-mail. The white paper allows for the sharing of the study findings in a scholarly manner that can be understood by stakeholders (Graham, 2010; Kemp, 2005; Mattern, 2013; Purdue, 2017; Spaulding, 2008).

In the white paper, I outline the research problem at the local and broader levels through a literature review. I present the results of the study, state conclusions, and make recommendations to school and district administrators regarding study findings of PD needs of teachers of MC students at the local site (Graham, 2010; Kemp, 2005; Mattern, 2013; Purdue, 2017; Spaulding, 2008). I also recommend targeted PD focusing on writing EBP, writing standards, connecting literacy/ writing, and CRP. Targeted PD should occur regularly and frequently, once a week is optimal, to maximize EBP for writing at the local site (Kretlow et al., 2012; Martin et al., 2010; Mundy, Howe, & Kupczynski, 2014; Pancsofar & Petroff, 2013; Schrum & Levin, 2013).

### **Rationale**

The findings of this study, which are presented in the white paper, provided the data that were lacking. The local problem discussed in Section 1 was addressed by by developing an understanding of teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students at BES. There was a lack of understanding regarding teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency, which were the collected data detailed in Section 2. The participants indicated the need to inform professional practice and provide evidence to stakeholders to inform decisions.

The white paper addresses declining state writing scores among the campus population, which prompted the study. The white paper requires a project genre that allows for presentation of the data in a precise manner due to a large number of tables generated during data analysis. Below is a scholarly review of the literature from the last 5 years related to the findings of this study.

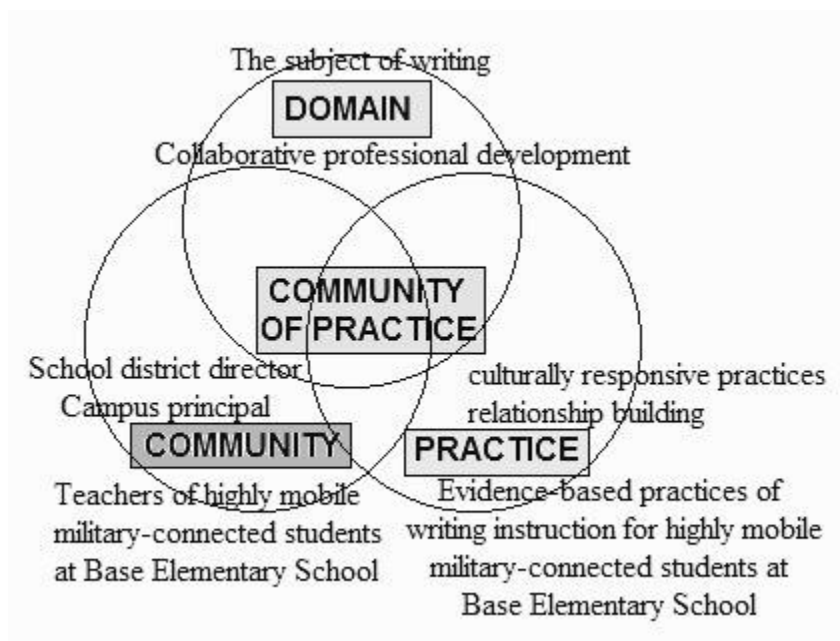
### **Review of the Literature**

The focus of the literature review is on the white paper, which is the project study. The white paper addressed the lack of data on elementary teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students, which may have attributed to declining state writing scores. Through the white paper, I provide evidence to stakeholders to inform decisions regarding PD needs of teachers and needs of this population of MC students regarding writing proficiency. Lastly, findings inform stakeholders on writing EBP that support this population and culture of students.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework that was used throughout this study was COPs, as proposed by Lave and Wenger (1991). According to Lave and Wenger, a COP is a grouping of people with a common interest learning how to refine their expertise through regular interaction. The three components of COP include a domain, community, and practice (Ciampa, 2016; Lave & Wenger, 1991). This figure illustrates the relationship of the components of the conceptual framework in relation to the project are illustrated in Figure 6.





*Figure 6.* The Project - COP.

In the project, the community includes the school district director and campus principal, who may or may not choose to distribute the white paper to the teachers of BES. The school district director may also choose to distribute the white paper to other school principals within the school district. A literature review table was used to organize peer-reviewed journal articles and to identify literature topics. Peer-reviewed journal articles in the field of education that were published within the last 5 years, as well as the research findings, were used to explore related topics. The five main topics that emerged included the white paper genre, EBPs, culturally responsive practices, relationship building, and PD.

### **Database Search Words and Phrases**

The database search of words and phrases allowed me to explore research published in the last 5 years related to the data findings of my research study. Databases

used to research the topic for this study were EBSCO, ProQuest, and Sage Journals. Search topics used when searching these databases were *elementary EBPs for writing*, *culturally responsive practices for teaching MC students*, *teacher collaboration*, *PD*, and *white paper*. The strategy used to organize information for the database search was a reference web. Google Scholar was also used to locate peer-reviewed scholarly articles published within the last 5 years on the given topics. I stopped reviewing here. Please go through the rest of your section and look for the patterns I pointed out to you. I will now look at Section 4.

### **White Paper Genre**

A white paper is a detailed and authoritative report on a specific topic that uses facts and logic to promote a solution to a given problem (Eldawlatty, 2016; Lyons & Luginsland, 2014; Mattern, 2013; Purdue, 2017). The purpose of this white paper was to promote recommendations implied by the research study findings and to influence the decision-making processes of the audience (Graham, 2010; Kemp, 2005; Mattern, 2013; Purdue, 2017). The white paper was used to share the research findings with the appropriate stakeholders (Graham, 2010; Kemp, 2005; Mattern, 2013; Purdue, 2017).

A white paper is implemented to promote a certain solution to a specific need and to influence the decision-making processes of the appropriate stakeholders (Graham, 2010; Kemp, 2005; Mattern, 2013; Purdue, 2017). The local education problem of my research study was the lack of data on teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students at the local site, which may have contributed to declining students state writing assessment scores. The purpose of my research study was to explore teachers'

perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students at the local site through semistructured, individual interviews. The research study findings indicated the need for collaborative PD opportunities for teachers based EBP of writing for teaching students at the target site. The research study findings could also be used to form an ongoing process for discerning the effectiveness of teacher practices for this population of students.

The white paper was the most appropriate project genre for several reasons. First, the researcher or stakeholders were not required to invest a substantial amount of time or finances (Lyons & Luginsland, 2014). There was no funding necessary to conduct or implement the white paper and the white paper consisted of the research study findings, which was information that was already established. Next, a white paper is commonly used when the audience consists of academic professionals due to the scholarly format, which is the case in this instance because the audience consists of the school district director and the campus principal (Bly, 2015).

I followed a specific outline, as identified by Kemp (2005) to create a cohesive and effective white paper,

- Establish goals and audience.
- Form a plan to develop and share the white paper.
- Review information and data.
- Organize data.

- Design layout.
- Determine major concepts.
- Add illustrations.
- Review.
- Publish.

In the first step, I established goals and audience (Kemp, 2005). The goals of the white paper were to inform the audience (school and district administrators) of the local problem (the lack of data on elementary teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students prompted the research study, which may have attributed to declining writing scores. Next, present the results of the study, state conclusions, and make recommendations to stakeholders (the need for targeted PD on writing EBP for MC students).

In the second step, I formed a plan to develop and share the white paper (Kemp, 2005). I decided to format the white paper in a Microsoft Word document and provide the white paper to stakeholders via email. I am the subject matter expert for my research study along with the researchers of the chosen peer-reviewed journal articles. My doctoral study committee served as reviewers of the white paper.

In the third step, I acquired information (Kemp, 2005). During this phase, I reviewed and analyzed the information and research data from Sections 1 and 2. The research study findings are the primary content of the white paper.

In the fourth step, I organized content (Kemp, 2005). During this phase, I organized the information and research data into a Microsoft Word document. The primary focus of the white paper was to make recommendations to the audience in response to the research study findings, which may lead to the campus goals of MC students meeting proficiency standards (Ciampa, 2016, Vaughan & Dornan, 2014; Wenger et al., 2002).

In the fifth step, I designed the style and layout of the white paper (Kemp, 2005). During this phase, I organized the layout of the white paper to convey the information and research data in a simple to understand and visually interesting way. It was important to ensure that the audience could easily read and understand the information and research data.

In the sixth step, I wrote the white paper (Kemp, 2005). During this phase, I determined the major concepts to focus on, which were the research study findings. Next, I stated the major concepts with supporting peer-reviewed journal articles and visual representations.

In the seventh step, I added illustrations to the white paper (Kemp, 2005). During this phase, I added graphics to convey important information visually. Tables illustrating the research study findings were used as visual representations.

In the eighth step, I reviewed the white paper (Kemp, 2005). During this phase, I reviewed and revised the white paper to ensure that it was clear and concise with visually interesting graphics. Next, I submitted the white paper for content and style review.

In the final step, I publish the white paper (Kemp, 2005). During this phase, I distribute the final draft of the white paper to the audience. The white paper will be distributed to school and district administrators via email to inform and influence decision-making. By following these steps, all relevant data was insured to be included in the white paper for clarity and effectiveness.

### **Evidence-Based Practices**

Through the literature review, I compared writing practices of teachers to writing EBP according to peer reviewed journal articles published within the last 5 years. Based on research findings, daily writing practice varied among participants showing a lack of best practice procedures, which may have contributed to low proficiency scores. Variations of professional experience implicate the need for PD to promote consistent, EBP of writing (Harris et al., 2015; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013).

The most commonly reported opinion of state standards was teacher dissatisfaction due to the large amount writing standards that were too difficult for students within the designated grade level. Standardized education means that regardless of cultural background and experiences, all students must meet standards mandated by institutions (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Aronson & Laughter, 2015). According to the literature, writing EBP were effective with students (Graham et al., 2015). Although we cannot change the state standards, we can explore how the standards relate to writing EBP.

According to the data findings, 15-20 minutes a day were devoted to writing instruction. Teachers should dedicate 1 hour per day to writing instruction and practice

(Applebee & Langer, 2006; Gilbert and Graham, 2010; Graham et al., 2015; National Commission on Writing, 2003, 2004; Walpole & McKenna, 2012). Teachers must use writing EBP for students to achieve writing proficiency (Furey et al., 2016; Graham et al., 2012; Harris, Graham, & Adkins, 2015; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013; Walpole & McKenna, 2012). Also, according to the data findings in Section 2, teachers at the local site believed that awareness of the unique culture of students is important when teaching MC elementary students. PD on CRP would support this issue.

According to the data findings, currently implemented writing EBP included imagery, write in response to text, and anchor charts. The primary elementary writing EBP is the writing process, which includes four steps: plan, draft, revise, and edit (Graham, 2010; Graham et al., 2012; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Writing EBP include imagery, text structure, text transcription, sentence combining, write in response to text, peer collaboration, and self-regulation (Graham, 2010; Graham et al., 2012; Troia, 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013).

Elementary writing EBP begin with sentence structure, which means forming complete sentences that include a subject and predicate (McCarthy & Mkhize, 2013). Next, students must learn sentence structure and punctuation as the basis of writing proficiency (McCarthy & Mkhize, 2013). Imagery instruction is also an effective practice for elementary students (Graham et al., 2002; McCarthy & Mkhize, 2013). Also, text transcription skills utilizing a word processor/ computer are successful in the development of writing proficiency (Alves et al., 2016; Graham et al., 1997; McCutchen, 1996). Therefore, the writing process, text structure, text transcription, sentence

combining, peer collaboration, the writing process, and self-regulation are writing EBP that teachers at the local site do not regularly implement.

Writing EBP, used as interventions for struggling writers, that result in statistical improvement of students' writing include the self-regulated model, peer assistance when writing, product goals, prewriting activities, and word processing (Graham et al., 2012; Rohrbeck et al., 2003). Writing EBP, used as interventions, also include one-on-one instruction and peer-assisted learning (Arnold et al., 2017; Bowman-Perrott et al., 2013; Rohrbeck et al., 2003). Therefore, self-regulation, product goals, prewriting activities, and word processing are effective writing EBP, used as interventions, that teachers at the local site are not regularly implementing.

Teachers referred to their student demographic as a significant influence on their instruction, according to the research study findings of McCarthy and Mkhize (2013). Teachers must understand the needs of students from increasingly diverse backgrounds (McCarthy & Mkhize, 2013). Lastly, EBP of writing are reinforced through PD (McCarthy, Woodard, & Kang, 2013; Newell, VanDerHeide, & Olsen, 2014).

### **Culturally Responsive Practices**

Culture and learning are strongly connected (Ford, Stuart, & Vakil, 2014). According to the data findings in Section 2, teachers at the local site believed that awareness of the unique culture of students is important when teaching MC elementary students. Achinstein and Ogawa (2012), Aronson and Laughter (2015), and Griner and Stewart (2013) confirmed the importance of this topic by stating that it is imperative to student success for teachers and school staff to utilize culturally responsive practices.



CRP is a reflective pedagogy that focuses on honoring and celebrating student cultural diversity (Ford et al., 2014). According to Achinstein and Ogawa (2012) and Griner and Stewart (2013), culturally responsive teaching acknowledges and celebrates cultures equally. CRP are effective in addressing achievement gaps (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Vazquez-Montilla, et al., 2014). Writing instruction is shaped by beliefs about cultural diversity (Gay, 2013). According to the research study findings of Kea and Trent (2013), teachers developed deeper understandings about culturally responsive pedagogy through one-on-one student-teacher interaction and critical reflection.

Culturally responsive teachers see cultural differences and experiences as an asset (Gay, 2013). In culturally responsive practice, students and their families are treated with equity and respect (Gay, 2013). Teachers who engage in reflective practices and explore sociocultural influences form a greater understanding of personal beliefs, which enables the teacher to identify biases (Debnam, Pas, Bottiani, Cash, & Bradshaw, 2015; Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2007). Identifying biases influences teachers' ability to be effective in educating diverse students (Debnam et al., 2015; Richards et al., 2007; Zyngier, 2012).

Implementing CRP motivates students, reduces behavioral problems, and improves student achievement (Rychly & Graves, 2012). Culturally responsive teachers better understand the values and learning styles of diverse students, which leads to improved student achievement (Aronson & Laughter; 2015; Debnam et al., 2015; Richards et al., 2007). Culturally responsive teachers also promote a sense of responsibility by encouraging students to be independent learners (Lewthwaite, Owen, Doiron, McMillan, & Renaud, 2013; Richards et al., 2007).

Instructional practices and supplemental resources that validate students' cultural identity are used by culturally responsive teachers (Gay, 2013; Lethwaite et al., 2014). Culturally responsive teachers promote social consciousness in their students and become socioculturally conscious themselves (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Through these methods, culturally responsive teachers are highly effective in improving student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2014).

There are four components of culturally responsive classroom management (Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, & Curran, 2004). First, teachers must understand their own beliefs, biases, and assumptions. Second, teachers must develop cross-cultural skills. Third, teachers must be aware of how dominant groups gain privilege and minority groups are marginalized. Fourth, teachers must understand how to promote equal access to learning for all students.

### **Relationship Building**

Relationship building was an important aspect to effectively teach writing instruction for MC students, according to the data findings in Section 2. According to the data findings in Section 2, varying ability levels were the most commonly reported challenge among MC students. Also, patience and persistence were the most important attributes for teaching MC students and were described as positive inter-collaborative practices.

Positive inter-collaborative practices between teacher and student are necessary for effective instruction and relationship building, according to the research findings of Ford et al. (2014). Teachers' responses to student's early attempts at writing influenced

future attitudes on writing (Mackenzie, 2014). Writing feedback was influential in writing motivation and self-regulation beliefs (Zumbrunn, Marrs & Mewborn, 2016; Aronson & Laughter, 2015). According to the research study findings of Mackenzie (2014), some teachers are focused on accuracy when reviewing early writing samples, which may cause unnecessary writing difficulty for some students.

Teacher-student interactions influence students' motivations, engagement, self-regulation, and learning outcomes (Arguedas, Daradoumis, & Xhafa, 2016; Ossa-Parra, Gutierrez, & Aldana, 2015). The emotional well-being of students within the classroom is essential to the teacher-student relationship and learning (Bretherton et al., 2014; Conroy, Sutherland, Vo, Carr, and Ogston, 2013). Creating an emotionally safe and comfortable classroom environment leads to positive communication and feedback, which improves practice (Hughes, Wu, Kwok, Villarreal, & Johnson, 2012; Roussin & Zimmerman, 2014). Also, developing positive relationships with students also reduces classroom behavior problems and increases student motivation (Conroy et al., 2013; McLeod et al., 2016). The research findings of Arslan and İlin (2013) and Urhahne (2015) confirmed that developing positive relationships with students reduced classroom behavior problems.

According to the data findings in Section 2, teachers at the local site expressed that positive intra-collaborative practices (teacher-to-teacher) are necessary for relationship building and effective writing instruction. Collaborative opportunities allow teachers time to develop the content knowledge necessary for student success with state standards (McCarthy et al., 2014). According to the research findings of Edwards-

Groves (2014), teacher collaboration is also essential for effective classroom management skills. Teachers need opportunities to collaborate and discuss writing pedagogy, including understanding the discourses endorsed by state standards, within their communities (Gay, 2013; Arslan & İlin, 2013). Research study findings by Villegas and Lucas (2002) also showed that teachers need collaborative opportunities to discuss pedagogy within their specific school communities.

Personality traits of effective teachers include caring for students' emotional needs, development of relationships, respect for all students, a sense of responsibility for students, and high expectations (Conroy & Sutherland, 2012; Poplin et al., 2011). Characteristics of effective teachers also included caring, empathy, personal reflection, and knowledge about other cultures (Rychly & Graves, 2012). According to the research study findings of Rychly and Graves (2012), caring teachers were more successful with achieving high expectations from students. Caring teachers also fostered positive teacher-student interactions, which resulted in a positive classroom atmosphere with less emotional and behavioral issues (Conroy & Sutherland, 2012).

Positive student-teacher relationships influence student achievement (Gehlbach, Brinkworth, & Harris, 2012; McClure, Yonezawa, & Jones, 2010; Powers, Kaniuka, Phillips, & Cain, 2016; Wilkens, 2014). Disengaged students are more responsive to caring teachers (Collins & O'Connor, 2016; Espinoza, 2012). A positive relationship between teachers and their students is the most significant tool for learning (Gehlbach et al., 2012; LaPoma & Kantor, 2013). Students are more likely to seek necessary

assistance from their teacher if they have a strong relationship with their teacher, which correlates to higher student achievement (Smart, 2014).

A teacher's effort to support and mentor students can greatly strengthen the educational goals and aspirations of these students (Espinoza, 2012; Powers et al., 2016). A positive teacher-student relationship improves student motivation and emotional needs, which can improve student achievement (Wilkins, 2014; McClure et al., 2012). Kiefer, Ellerbrock, and Alley (2014) found that positive teacher-student relationships informed teacher instructional practices and supported student motivation. Lastly, student engagement and student motivation occurred when teachers made continuous attempts to build caring relationships with students (Kiefer, Ellerbrock, & Alley, 2014).

### **Professional Development**

According to the data findings in Section 2, teachers at the local site expressed that they would benefit from targeted PD on writing EBP, writing standards, and CRP. PD recommendations include Writing EBP, Writing Standards, Literacy/ Writing, and CRP. Effective PD is the primary determinate of effective teaching (Cone, 2012). PD can improve the cultural responsiveness of teachers, which improves student achievement (Cone, 2012; Sparapani, Seo, & Smith, 2011). Targeted PD is highly effective in improving student learning because teachers can learn from and support their peers (Cone, 2012; Van Driel & Berry, 2012).

Consistent PD for teachers may lead to improved student achievement, according to the research study findings of Shaha and Ellsworth (2013). Teachers become more effective when PD provides needed training, individualized coaching, and modeling

through observations (Creemers, Kyriakides, & Antoniou, 2012; Pianta, 2011). The quality of PD may positively influence a teacher's ability to learn content, skills, and strategies, according to the research study findings of Kretlow, Cooke, and Wood (2012), and Pancsofar and Petroff (2013), which are all needed at the local site according to the research study findings. Quality PD positively influence teacher instruction (Abilock, Harada, & Fontichiaro, 2013; Gregory, Allen, Mikami, Hafen, & Pianta, 2014; Yost & Vogel, 2014).

PD should be available on a weekly basis (Martin et al., 2010; Mundy et al., 2014; Schrum & Levin, 2013). Targeted PD that is ongoing and sustained, as opposed to one-day workshops, are important for effective writing instruction (McCarthy et al., 2014; Hughes et al., 2012). Collaboration, feedback, and reflection is a process that enhances instruction (Van Diggelen, den Brok, & Beijaard, 2013). Further, targeted PD focuses on critically reflective teaching methods through analysis of thoughts, experiences, and beliefs, according to the research study findings of Matias (2013).

PD that enhance teachers practice beyond curriculum and state standards are imperative to effective instruction (Lumpe, Czerniak, Haney, & Beltyukova, 2012). Writing instruction is influenced by PD and personal experiences of teachers' regarding writing, according to the research findings of McCarthy et al. (2014). Participatory learning communities, or inquiry groups, are found within targeted PD and are essential for teachers to problem solve and collaborate (Popp & Goldman, 2016). The research study findings of Fishman et al. (2013) and Bean, Lucas, and Hyers (2014) also showed that targeted PD is essential for teachers to problem solve classroom issues.

## **Project Description**

The resultant project based on the study findings is a white paper. The white paper allowed for the sharing of the research study findings in a scholarly manner for stakeholders to understand (Graham, 2010; Kemp, 2005; Mattern, 2013; Purdue, 2017). In the white paper, I discussed the problem, outlined the results of the study, presented conclusions, and made appropriate recommendations to school and district administrators (Graham, 2010; Kemp, 2005; Mattern, 2013; Purdue, 2017).

In response to the study findings, subsequent recommendations include targeted PD on Writing EBP, Writing Standards, Literacy/ Writing, and CRP. In this section, I discuss the required resources, current supports, and possible barriers related to the white paper and consequent recommendations. Lastly, I discuss the implementation timetable and roles and responsibilities.

### **Resources and Potential Barriers**

The white paper is the primary resource for this project, which is a clear and concise document, detailing the research study findings and recommendations. The white paper was designed in a Microsoft Word document and emailed to the intended audience, which consists of the campus principal and school district director. I will email the white paper to the audience, the campus principal and school district director, who will then become the vital resource of disseminating and implementing the findings of the research study.

Although there were no community partners involved with this research study, the primary support for the resulting project, the white paper, is the campus principal and

school district director. The campus principal and school district director are solely responsible for the effectiveness of the project to bring about substantial change, which is also a possible barrier to the effectiveness of the project. The research study findings and consequent recommendations could be publicized and distributed to other stakeholders including administrators and teachers throughout the school district using the given timeline.

### **Implementation Timeline**

I will distribute the white paper via email to the audience upon completion of Walden University's requirements and within a month of my graduation. My vision is that the campus principal and school district director will find the content of the white paper interesting and useful. Then the campus principal would distribute the white paper to teachers and discuss the research study findings and recommendations. Next, collaborative professional development opportunities would be designed with teacher input to meet the outlined needs of the teachers.

Teachers would implement the information gained from the white paper in their daily practice. The district director may also use this process as a model and share the white paper with principals of other schools within the district. The campus principal and district director (audience) are solely responsible for disseminating the research findings and implementing the recommendations.

I designed an implementation timeline, which details my actions regarding distribution, implementation, and future support of this project. I will graduate from Walden University on December 27, 2017. I will distribute the white paper to the



audience via email on January 8, 2018. I will call the audience to confirm receipt of the email and schedule a meeting to discuss the white paper on January 9, 2018.

I will meet with the audience to review and discuss the white paper at the scheduled appointment time, within a week of receiving the white paper via email, between January 10, 2018 and January 18, 2017. I will make myself available to the audience for consultation regarding implementation of the white paper throughout the 2017-2018 school year, from January 10, 2018 to May 18, 2018. Table 19 lists the project implementation timeline, which details my actions regarding distribution, implementation, and future support of this project.

Table 14

*Project Implementation Timeline*

Date	Action
12/27/1	Graduate
1/08/17	Distribute white paper
1/09/17	Schedule meeting
1/10/17-1/18/17	Meet with audience
1/10/17-5/18/17	Consultation availability

**Roles and Responsibilities**

As the researcher, I am the vital stakeholder in distributing the information of the research study. I conducted the literature and data regarding teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students at BES. I was solely responsible for developing a white paper to outline the findings of the study and recommendations after data collection and analysis. I was also responsible for disseminating the white paper to the audience, which consisted of the campus principal and school district director.

I will email the white paper to the audience within one month of my graduation from Walden University. Upon receiving the white paper via email, the campus principal and district director then become the vital resource of disseminating and implementing the findings of the research study. The campus principal and district director are also solely liable for the effectiveness of the project to bring about substantial change by determining if they will proceed with the recommendations of the white paper.

### **Project Evaluation**

There are various types of evaluations; however, the main philosophical approaches include formative and summative (Dixson & Worrell, 2016; Nolen, 2011; Yu & Li, 2014). Formative evaluation is a process of continuous and immediate feedback implemented during a program cycle (Bloom, 1971; Dixson & Worrell, 2016; Yu & Li, 2014). Formative evaluation is for examining, adjusting, and providing timely feedback on occurring processes (Dixson & Worrell, 2016; Nolen, 2011; Yu & Li, 2014). Also, formative evaluation is used in the early phases of program development to refine or improve a program (Svinicki & Centra, 1995; Yu & Li, 2014). Types of formative evaluation include needs assessment, structured conceptualization, implementation evaluation, and process evaluation. (Brookhart et al., 2008; Dixson & Worrell, 2016; Nan, 2003; Sadler, 1989).

Summative evaluation is used to assess final learning outcomes (Bloom, 1971; Brookhart, Moss, & Long, 2008; Dixson & Worrell, 2016; Nolen, 2011). Summative evaluation determines overall program effectiveness (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013; Dixson & Worrell, 2016; Youker, 2013). Summative evaluation provides an overall description

of program effectiveness at the end of a program (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013; Dixson & Worrell, 2016; Youker, 2013). Types of summative evaluation include goal-based evaluation and outcome-based evaluation (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013; Dixson & Worrell, 2016; Youker, 2013). Goal-based evaluation uses specific measurable objectives to determine program performance (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013; Dixson & Worrell, 2016; Youker, 2013). An outcome-based evaluation is used to establish the audience and outcomes, as well as measure outcomes (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013; Dixson & Worrell, 2016; Youker, 2013).

### **Justification**

I chose to use summative evaluation to measure the effectiveness of the project because summative evaluation provides an overall description of program effectiveness at the end of a program (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013; Dixson & Worrell, 2016; Youker, 2013). The type of summative evaluation that I chose is goal-based evaluation. State writing assessments scores of students at the local site are measured and published annually. If stakeholders choose to implement the recommendations of the white paper, state writing assessment scores would be the measure. The goal-based measure correlates to the identified goal of student writing proficiency.

### **Project Implications**

#### **Local Community**

The local site could implement the study findings to promote positive social change at their campus. The study findings could begin a conversation among administrators and teachers regarding the needs of teachers and students and goals of

administrators and teachers. Writing instruction and assessment scores may be positively influenced if the administrators and teachers choose to implement the study findings and recommendations outlined in the project.

### **Far-Reaching**

This instrumental case study was bound by geographic location and a specific culture of students, which may limit the generalizability of the study findings. However, other schools may use the study findings and recommendations as a model to determine the needs and goals of their specific campus. Other schools with populations of MC students may also use the research study findings and recommendations as a model to implement writing EBP. Further, other school district administrators may disseminate the study findings and recommendations to other districts to use as a model.

### **Conclusion**

To summarize, this study focused on exploring educators' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students. Through this study, campus administrators and teachers will have a deeper and more informed understanding of writing proficiency for MC students. Campus administrators and educators gaining an informed understanding of writing proficiency for MC students may result in effective writing instruction strategies and higher state assessment scores in writing proficiency for MC students.

Through semistructured individual interviews, I explored teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students at the local site. After data collection and analysis, I created a white paper to disseminate the research study findings and recommendations to the appropriate stakeholders. I will email the white paper to the audience, the campus

principal and school district director, who then become the vital resource of disseminating and implementing the findings of the research study. The campus principal and school district director are also solely liable for the effectiveness of the project to bring about substantial change by determining if they will proceed with the recommendations of the white paper.

Student state writing assessment scores also may be positively impacted if the administrators and teachers choose to implement the research study findings and recommendations outlined in the project. State writing assessments scores of students at the local site are measured and published annually. If stakeholders choose to implement the recommendations of the white paper, state writing assessment scores would be the measure.

Other schools with populations of MC students may also use the research study findings and recommendations as a model. Also, other school district administrators may disseminate the study findings and recommendations to other districts to use the research study findings and recommendations as a model to determine the needs and goals of their specific districts and campuses. In Section 4, I outlined the reflections and conclusions of the study.

## Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

### **Introduction**

In this section, I will discuss project strengths and limitations, recommendations for future research, and a scholar practitioner self-reflection. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to gain an understanding of teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students at the local site. Through semistructured individual interviews, I explored teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students. In the interviews, teachers expressed several needs in regard to writing proficiency of MC students. The white paper consists of a detailed explanation of these needs and recommendations to meet the needs expressed by teachers.

After data collection and analysis, I created a project, which is the white paper, to address the local problem. Through the white paper, I will disseminate the study findings and recommendations to the appropriate stakeholders. Upon receiving the white paper via e-mail, the campus principal and school district director then become the resource of disseminating and implementing the findings of the study.

I designed an implementation timeline, which details my actions regarding distribution, implementation, and future support of this project. I will graduate from Walden University on December 27, 2017. I will distribute the white paper to the audience via e-mail on January 8, 2018. I will call the audience, campus principal, and school district director to confirm receipt of the e-mail and schedule a meeting to discuss the white paper on January 9, 2018. I will meet with the audience, campus principal, and school district director at the scheduled appointment time, within a week of receiving the

white paper via e-mail, to review and discuss the white paper between January 10, 2018 and January 18, 2017. I will make myself available to the audience, campus principal, and school district director for consultation regarding implementation of the white paper throughout the 2017-2018 school year, from January 10, 2018 to May 18, 2018.

### **Project Strengths**

This doctoral study had strengths within the methodology, design, and participant sample. The research design used for this study was a qualitative approach with a case study design, which logically derived from the problem and research (guiding) question. In this study, interviews were the primary qualitative data collection source used to determine teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students at Base Elementary School. A qualitative research design assists in identifying unknown concepts of a phenomenon and explores people, places, and events in their natural setting, which is why qualitative methodology was chosen (Creswell, 2013, 2014).

There were several strengths to using qualitative methodology for this research study. Qualitative research design is an approach where the researcher systematically observes a phenomenon, searches for patterns and themes, and developments a generalization from the analysis of those themes (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010; Patton, 2002a). The field of qualitative research is broad in disciplines and subject matters while utilizing several means of collecting data including descriptive interview transcripts, observations, fieldnotes, photographs, videos, documents, or records (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Lodico et al., 2010). By using a qualitative methodology, I was able to explore teachers' perceptions on writing

proficiency of MC students through individual interviews (Merriam, 2009). For these reasons, qualitative methodology was most appropriate for exploring the phenomena, investigating the problem, and answering the research question that my research study is based on.

The research question in this research study was investigated through individual interviews to gain an understanding from the perspective of participants (Stake, 1978, 1995; Yin, 2014). Quantitative or mixed-method designs were not appropriate for this research study because numeric data was not collected to analyze the research question and data was not used to prove or disprove a hypothesis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Doyle, Brady, & Byrne, 2009). Also, quantitative research begins with a statement and then seeks to prove the statement through evidence (Lodico et al., 2010). To ensure that a qualitative case study was the most appropriate research design for this research study, I considered and rejected other qualitative design approaches including ethnography, grounded theory, action research, phenomenology, and collective case study.

There were several strengths to using an instrumental case study design for this research study. Qualitative case study research enables the researcher to explore individuals, relationships, communities, and programs (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). The case to be studied must include a defined person, an organization, or a geographic location (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Merriam, 2002). In this research study, the case was elementary school teachers who teach writing. The case was of secondary interest,



although significant to explore the external issue (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Stake, 1978, 1995).

Instrumental, intrinsic, and collective are types of case study research (Stake, 1995). The instrumental case study design was used to gain a deeper understanding of the topic of interest that was external to the case (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Stake, 1978, 1995). When the researcher is interested in exploring the case, the intrinsic case study is used Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Stake, 1995). When multiple cases are compared to explore an issue, the collective case study is used (Creswell, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Therefore, intrinsic and case study designs were not appropriate for this research study.

This research study used a qualitative instrumental case study design to gain a deeper understanding of elementary teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students at the local site. Instrumental case study was the most appropriate design for this research study because the research question called for the examination of participants' perceptions regarding a given phenomenon within a bounded system (Creswell, 2013; Lodico et al., 2010; Yin, 2014).

A bounded system is used in case study research to examine a specific phenomenon (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). Case boundaries included time and place to avoid the research from becoming too broad (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). The data collected for this research study

included perceptions of teachers who were employed at BES during the 2016-2017 school year. Therefore, this research study is bound by time and place.

BES is a public school that is located on a military base, which also bound this school by geographic location. There are no civilian students at this school. All students of BES are MC students who reside on this military base, which also bound the school as serving a specific culture of students and families. There were several strengths to the participant population.

Participants of this qualitative research study included teachers who taught writing at BES during the 2016-2017 school year. There were 20 teachers who were qualified to participate in this research study. All 20 teachers who taught writing instruction for kindergarten through fifth grade were invited to participate in this research study through an introductory email.

Inviting all teachers to participate in this research study also allowed data collection to be possible for teachers of grades kindergarten through fifth, which enhanced the data through exploring perspectives of teachers who teach different grade levels. The first 15 teachers who responded to the introductory email then received a second email from me with a telephone interview appointment time and the informed consent requirements. Twelve of these teachers agreed to the informed consent form and interview time, which confirmed them as the research study participants.

### **Project Limitations**

This doctoral study had limitations within the methodology, design, participant sample, and project. Limitations to using qualitative methodology included a large amount of collected data, which made data analysis time-consuming (Creswell, 2013; Taylor et al., 2015). Qualitative data is not generalizable to a larger population, however it is possible for findings to be transferable to another setting (Merriam & Tisdale, 2015; Taylor et al., 2015). The researcher is the primary data collection and analysis instrument in qualitative research (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdale, 2015). Awareness and reflection on researcher bias was imperative to ensure research quality (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Lodico et al., 2010; Taylor et al., 2015).

There were several limitations to using a case study approach. Case study research is time-consuming, yet provides a large amount (Verschuren, 2003; Yin, 2014). Also, it is possible for single case study analysis to lack methodological techniques, epistemological grounding, and generalizability (Maoz, 2002; Yin, 2014). Another possible issue with case study research is the reliability and replicability of single case study analysis (Berg & Lune, 2012). Lastly, the validity and reliability of the data with single case study analysis could be affected by the presence and personal bias of the researcher (Merriam & Tisdale, 2015; Taylor et al., 2015; Verschuren, 2003; Yin, 2014).

There were several limitations to the participant sample. Participants of this qualitative research study included teachers who taught writing at BES during the 2016-2017 school year. Teachers who taught writing at BES and left employment of this

campus prior to the 2016-2017 school year were not included in the participant sample. Interviewing formerly employed writing teachers of the local site may have provided longitudinal data on teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students.

There were 20 teachers who were qualified to participate in this research study. All 20 teachers who taught writing instruction for kindergarten through fifth grade at BES during the 2016-2017 school year were invited to participate in this research study through an introductory email. Inviting all teachers to participate in this research study also allowed data collection to be possible for teachers of grades kindergarten through fifth, which enhanced the data through exploring perspectives of teachers who teach different grade levels. However, only 12 teachers agreed to participate in the research study. If all 20 teachers from the local site agreed to participate, the research data may have been more thorough by providing the maximum number of participants.

Interviewing teachers throughout the school district would have provided a much larger participant sample. Every school in the district connected to the local site has highly mobile military-connected students enrolled. Participants in this research study only included teachers of BES. However, by inviting all writing teachers within the school district, the research data findings may have been enriched.

### **Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change**

As an analysis of myself as a scholar, I reflect on several aspects of my doctoral journey. Throughout my doctoral journey, my abilities as a scholar were enhanced. I learned about methodology, design, data collection, and research analysis. I am now well

versed in searching for peer-reviewed journal articles. I also mastered the research process by practicing these new skills and writing for publication. I plan on continuing to conduct research and publish research articles by using the education I have received throughout my doctoral journey.

As an analysis of myself as a practitioner, I reflect on several aspects of my research study. In this study, I wished to explore teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students at BES. Through participant responses, I learned that teachers at the local site used a variety of writing instruction practices and did not utilize many evidence-based writing practices.

As a practitioner, I learned the importance of respecting the opinions and experiences of participants. Allowing participants ample time to express their perspectives in a comfortable and safe environment was also very important while collecting data for this research study. After completing this research study, I believe that I will collaborate more effectively with my colleagues and implement evidence-based practices of instruction more thoroughly.

As an analysis of myself as a project developer, I reflect on the doctoral study process. I learned about many projects that can be created to address local gaps in practice, throughout the doctoral study process. To address the local problem, I chose to write a white paper for my project. The white paper was the most appropriate project format to present the research study findings and recommendations to the audience.

By completing the research study process, I feel competent in creating many different types of projects to provide evidence-based practices and professional development recommendations for writing proficiency of MC students.

### **The Project's Potential Impact on Social Change**

The results of this research study have several implications for positive social change. The local site could use the research study findings to promote positive social change at their campus. The research study findings could be used to begin a conversation among administrators and teachers at the local site regarding the needs of teachers and students and goals of administrators and teachers. Writing instruction for MC students at the local site may be positively impacted if the administrators and teachers choose to implement the research study findings and recommendations outlined in the project. Student state writing assessment scores also may be positively impacted if the administrators and teachers choose to implement the research study findings and recommendations outlined in the project.

This instrumental case study was bound by geographic location and a specific culture of students, which may limit the generalizability of the research study findings. Other schools, however, may use the research study findings and recommendations as a model to determine the needs and goals of their specific campus. Other schools with populations of MC students may also use the research study findings and recommendations as a model to implement EBP for writing. Further, other school district administrators may disseminate the research study findings and recommendations to

other districts to use the research study findings and recommendations as a model to determine the needs and goals of their specific districts and campuses.

I created a white paper to disseminate the research study findings and recommendations to the appropriate stakeholders. I will email the white paper to the audience, the campus principal and school district director, who then become the vital resource of disseminating and implementing the findings of the research study. The campus principal and school district director are also solely liable for the effectiveness of the project to bring about substantial change by determining if they will proceed with the recommendations of the white paper.

Student state writing assessment scores also may be positively impacted if the administrators and teachers choose to implement the research study findings and recommendations outlined in the project. State writing assessments scores of students at the local site are measured and published annually. If stakeholders choose to implement the recommendations of the white paper, state writing assessment scores would be the measure. Other schools with populations of MC students may also use the research study findings and recommendations as a model to implement EBP for writing. Also, other school district administrators may disseminate the research study findings and recommendations to other districts to use the research study findings and recommendations as a model to determine the needs and goals of their specific districts and campuses.

### **Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research**

The limitations of this research study provide many opportunities for future research. Scholars could measure growth in student writing proficiency using a validated instrument through a quantitative study. Scholars could also use other qualitative designs to explore writing proficiency of MC students.

Ethnography design is a qualitative approach that investigates interactions within a cultural group and the impacts on the group and broader society (Creswell, 2013; Lodico et al., 2010; Merriam, 2002). Scholars may use this qualitative research design to focus on the society or culture of highly mobile military-connected students (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996; Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Yin, 2014). Ethnography requires long periods of time in the field for data collection, which includes long-term access to the participants where the researcher becomes embedded within the group being studied to examine a specific culture (Creswell, 2012; Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Yin, 2014).

Another qualitative approach is grounded theory design, which is used to create a theory to explain a substantive topic (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010). Scholars may use this qualitative research design to develop a theory from the data to answer a research question rather than using an already established theory (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2014; Lodico et al., 2010). Grounded theory is also a strategy of inquiry that uses theoretical sampling of different groups for an in-depth comparison of the data (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2014).

Therefore, different groups of MC students could be compared using grounded theory.



Scholars may use action research, which is also a qualitative approach, to address a specific problem within an educational setting (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010). Action researchers examine their own practices, as opposed to examining the practices of someone else (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010). Therefore, a teacher of MC students may use action research to distinguish between evidence-based writing practices for a specific grade and class of students.

A phenomenological design is another qualitative approach. Researchers may use action research to explore lived experiences of humans and ways we understand those experiences to form an understanding of human conditions through longitudinal data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2014; Lodico et al., 2010; Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Phenomenological inquiry consists of three in-depth interviews focusing on past, present, and overall experiences with the specified phenomenon (Seidman, 1998). The researcher and participants must make important psychological connections through interviews that provide a detailed account of life experiences of participants (Lodico et al., 2010). Therefore, scholars may use phenomenological research in longitudinal studies to explore teachers' perceptions on MC students over an extended period of time.

Lastly, a collective case study, which is also a qualitative approach, is used to compare multiple cases to explore a specific topic (Lodico et al., 2010). Scholars may use collective case study to compare state writing assessment scores of MC students from multiple classes, grades, or schools. These possible future studies may address other gaps in literature regarding writing proficiency of MC students.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to gain an understanding of teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students at the local site. Through semistructured individual interviews, I explored teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students at the local site. In the interviews, teachers expressed several needs in regard to writing proficiency of MC students. The white paper consists of a detailed explanation of these needs and recommendations to meet the needs expressed by teachers.

In conclusion, several problems/ needs associated with student writing proficiency at the local site were identified in the research study findings. Teachers are not spending enough time on writing instruction and practice. Teachers do not have collaborative opportunities to share strategies and experiences with other teachers (intra-collaborative practices). Teachers do not regularly implement EBP for writing. Teachers are not clear on how to connect state writing standards to EBP for writing. Teachers are not implementing CRP for teaching MC students.

In response to data findings, I recommended targeted PD delivered systemically within an integrated and coherent framework to promote collaboration, dialogue, and understanding within and across content areas for the target population. Targeted PD, as opposed to traditional PD, is collaborative, goal-directed, teacher-directed, and providing authentic learning experiences for teachers (Alter et al., 2013; Bifuh-Ambe, 2013; Ciampa, 2016; Gallagher & Browne, 2010; Goddard et al., 2007; Gouvea et al., 2016; O'Brien & Jones, 2014; Kim et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2015; Raudenbush, 2015; Vaughan

& Dornan, 2014; Wenger et al., 2002). Targeted PD also creates professional learning communities/ communities of practice and provides a systemic structure for continuous improvement that supports the development of innovative experimentation, practice towards mastery, and increased efficacy, which improves school culture and student achievement (Alter et al., 2013; Bifuh-Ambe, 2013; Ciampa, 2016; Gallagher & Browne, 2010; Goddard et al., 2007; Gouvea et al., 2016; O'Brien & Jones, 2014; Kim et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2015; Raudenbush, 2015; Vaughan & Dornan, 2014; Wenger et al., 2002).

My solutions/ recommendations to the identified problems/ needs are as follows. Teachers need to dedicate one hour per day to writing instruction and practice. Teachers need targeted PD to collaboratively share strategies and experiences with other teachers. Teachers need targeted PD on EBP for writing. Teachers need targeted PD on connecting state writing standards to EBP for writing. PD recommendations include Writing EBP, Writing Standards, Literacy/ Writing, and CRP.

Expertise for support of this systemic PD initiative should include experts in the areas of: writing EBP, state writing standards, CRP, teaching MC students, literacy, and the reading and writing processes. I recommended that implementation of targeted PD based on the data findings occur systematically, regularly, and frequently to maximize change. However, the effectiveness of the project to bring about substantial change will rely solely on the appropriate stakeholders (Graham, 2010; Kemp, 2005; Mattern, 2013). The audience must understand the problem, the research study findings, and areas

needing improvement for real change to result from the project (Graham, 2010; Kemp, 2005; Mattern, 2013).

Targeted PD should occur regularly and frequently, once a week is optimal, to maximize EBP for writing at the local site (Kretlow et al. 2012; Martin et al., 2010; Mundy, Howe, & Kupczynski, 2014; Pancsofar & Petroff, 2013; Schrum & Levin, 2013). However, the effectiveness of the project to bring about substantial change relies solely on the appropriate stakeholders (Graham, 2010; Kemp, 2005; Mattern, 2013). The audience must understand the problem, the research study findings, and areas needing improvement for real change to result from the project (Graham, 2010; Kemp, 2005; Mattern, 2013).

The effectiveness of the project to bring about substantial change relies solely on the audience, which was a possible barrier that did not have a reasonable solution. (Graham, 2010; Kemp, 2005; Mattern, 2013). The audience must support and disseminate the project for recommendations to be implemented by teachers at the local site. The audience must also understand the problem, the research study findings, and areas needing improvement for real change to result from the project (Graham, 2010; Kemp, 2005; Mattern, 2013). The goal of the white paper is to promote a specific solution to a given need and to influence the decision-making processes of the appropriate stakeholders (Graham, 2010; Kemp, 2005; Mattern, 2013; Purdue, 2017).

After data collection and analysis, I created a project, which is the white paper, to address the local problem. Through the white paper, I will disseminate the research study

findings and recommendations to the appropriate stakeholders. I will email the white paper to the audience, the campus principal and school district director, within one month of graduating from Walden University. Upon receiving the white paper via email, the campus principal and school district director then become the vital resource of disseminating and implementing the findings of the research study.

The local site could use the research study findings to promote positive social change at their campus. The research study findings could be used to begin a conversation among administrators and teachers at the local site regarding the needs of teachers and students and goals of administrators and teachers. Writing instruction for MC students at the local site may be positively impacted if the administrators and teachers choose to implement the research study findings and recommendations outlined in the project. Student state writing assessment scores also may be positively impacted if the administrators and teachers choose to implement the research study findings and recommendations outlined in the project. State writing assessments scores of students at the local site are measured and published annually. If stakeholders choose to implement the recommendations of the white paper, state writing assessment scores would be the measure.

This instrumental case study was bound by geographic location and a specific culture of students, which may limit the generalizability of the research study findings. Other schools, however, may use the research study findings and recommendations as a model to determine the needs and goals of their specific campus. Other schools with populations of MC students may also use the research study findings and

recommendations as a model to implement EBP for writing. Lastly, other school district administrators may disseminate the research study findings and recommendations to other districts to use the research study findings and recommendations as a model to determine the needs and goals of their specific districts and campuses.

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Appendix A: The Project: White Paper

Teachers' Perceptions on Writing Proficiency of Military-Connected Students

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## Teachers' Perceptions on Writing Proficiency of Military-Connected Students

### **Introduction**

School administrators of Base Elementary School (BES) lacked an understanding of teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of military-connected students. Declining state writing assessment scores among the campus population of military-connected (MC) students were reported on the Campus Improvement Plan (2015). Due to the lack of a deep understanding of administrators and teachers regarding the phenomena of teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students, best practices, evidence-based practices (EBP), were not identified or utilized and professional development (PD) opportunities on this topic were not developed.

Data on teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students may inform best practices of writing instruction for MC students. Best practices for writing instruction are an essential tool for writing proficiency (Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). According to the Campus Improvement Plan (2015), Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Summary (2015), and the Title I Schoolwide Program Plan (BES, 2015), there have been no PD available to teachers in the areas of writing instruction or teaching MC students. To understand the PD needs of teachers regarding writing instruction of MC students at the local site, teachers' perceptions on these topics needed to be explored.

### **Problem**

Average state writing assessment scores from the campus were considerably lower than average state writing assessment scores from the district and state in 2014-2015. According to the Campus Improvement Plan (2015), average state writing

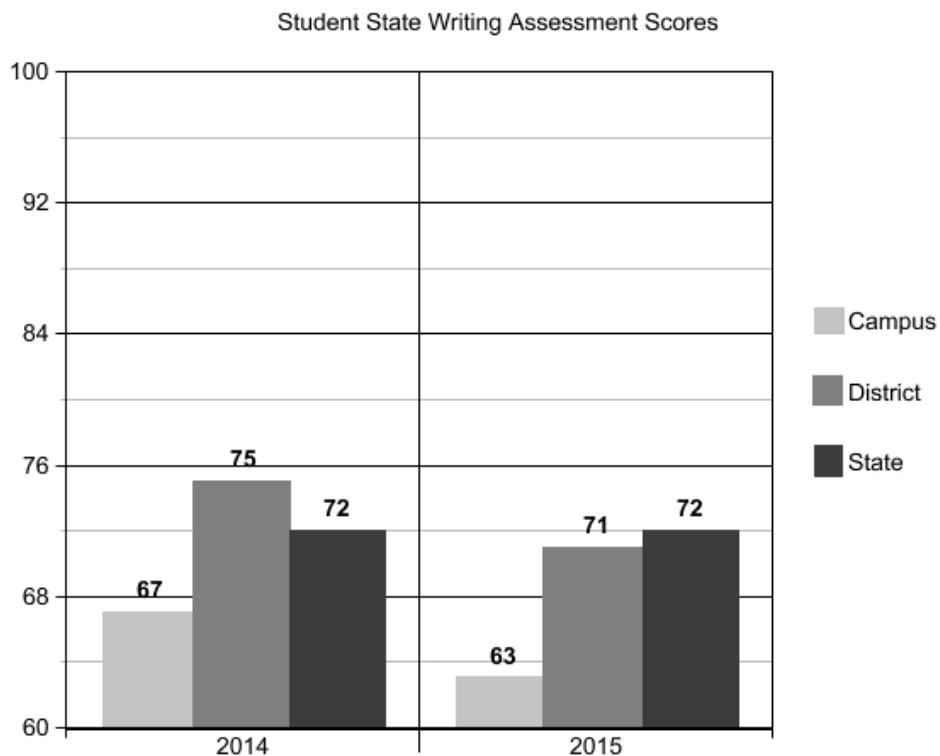
assessment scores for 2014-2015 were: campus 65%, district 73%, and state 75% (see Table 1). Administrators identified a goal of student proficiency on state writing assessments per the Campus Improvement Plan (2015), Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Summary (2015), and the Title I Schoolwide Program Plan (2015). The school goal of overall student writing proficiency was not met due to the low state writing assessment scores of students. Table 1 shows 2014-2015 state writing assessment scores for the state, district, and campus.

Table 1

*State Writing Scores*

Year	Campus	District	State
2015	63%	71%	72%
2014	67%	75%	72%

*Note.* Campus scores declined 4% from 2014-2015. Campus scores averaged 8% lower than the district in 2014 and 2015. Campus scores averaged 5% lower than the state in 2014 and 9% in 2015.



*Figure 1.* Comparison of scores.

High mobility rates are a common challenge associated with MC students that could negatively influence assessment scores (Jacobson, 2013; Smrekar, 2003; Welsh 2016). MC students change schools an average of nine times before high school graduation (Esqueda et al., 2012; Welsh, 2016). Fourth grade highly mobile students average proficiency levels four months behind their peers (Jacobson, 2013). Also, sixth grade highly mobile students averaged proficiency levels that were a full year behind their peers (Jacobson, 2013). Further, teachers may not be adequately trained to educate highly mobile students (Esqueda et al., 2012; Jacobson, 2013; Smrekar, 2003). According to Esqueda et al. (2012), public school teachers need PD to effectively educate highly mobile MC students.

The lack of student writing proficiency has been an ongoing problem nationwide (Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). According to National Center for Education Statistics (2012), only about 27% of students performed at or above writing proficiency level in the United States in 2011. More than 70% of fourth graders in 2002 were not proficient on the National Assessment of Educational Progress writing test (Persky, Daane, & Jin, 2003). Therefore, between 2002 and 2011, state writing assessment scores increased by only 3% nationally, which proves writing proficiency is an ongoing problem for students in the United States (Persky, et al., 2003).

Student writing proficiency has been a focus of nationwide school reform since 2002. The establishment of the National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges in 2002 made student writing proficiency and writing instruction a national focus. Promoting evidence-based practices for high-quality instruction through scientific research is a major goal of education reform (Applebee & Langer, 2006, 2011; Kiuahara, Graham, & Hawken, 2009). The development of the common core state standards in 2009 also influenced school reform of writing practice and proficiency (Morrow, Shanahan, & Wixson, 2012). Students must achieve writing proficiency to be successful in school, college, and throughout their lives (Applebee & Langer, 2011).

Common Core State Standards inform curriculum development and instruction. However, half of the state writing standards require teachers to consult other resources to facilitate students' writing proficiency (Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Due to teachers having a lack of clarity with state writing standards, PD is needed for teachers to



effectively develop writing curriculum and instruction (Alter et al., 2013; Kim, Al Otaiba, Sidler, & Gruelich, 2013; Raudenbush, 2015).

Students carry the lack of writing proficiency from elementary grades to high school (Burns & Ysseldyke, 2009; Relles & Tierney, 2013; Sacher, 2016). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2012), 30% of eighth through twelfth grade students achieved writing proficiency. College developmental writing programs have become increasingly necessary due to high school students failing to master state writing standards (MacArthur, Philippakos, & Ianetta, 2015; National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges, 2005; Sacher, 2016). High school graduates are entering college and the workplace unprepared regarding necessary writing skills (MacArthur et al., 2015; National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges, 2005; Relles & Tierney, 2013; Sacher, 2016).

### **Research Question**

There was a need for school administrators of BES to develop an understanding of teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of highly mobile military-connected students. The lack of data may have contributed to low student state writing assessment scores, which were considerably lower than the district and state scores in 2014-2015 (campus 65%, district 73%, and state 75%; Campus Improvement Plan, 2015). The guiding question for this research study was the following: What are teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of military-connected students at Base Elementary School? The research question was designed to identify PD needs of teachers and writing best practices for MC students.

## **What Does the Research Say About Writing Proficiency of Military-Connected Elementary Students?**

Through the literature review, I compared writing practices of teachers at the local site to writing evidence-based practices (EBP) from peer reviewed journal articles published within the last 5 years. Based on research findings, daily practice of writing instruction varied among participants showing a lack of best practice procedures, evidence-based procedures, which may contribute to low student writing proficiency scores. Variations of professional experience implicate the need for PD to promote consistent writing EBP (Harris et al., 2015; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013).

### **Components of Writing Proficiency of Military-Connected Students**

A literature review table was used to organize peer reviewed journal articles published within the last five years and identify literature topics. The three identified topics included Military-Connected Students, Writing Instruction, and Professional Development. Each topic identified during the literature review directly correlated to the problem of the research study.

### **Military-Connected Students**

Every school district in the United States has MC students enrolled in their schools according to research by Esqueda et al. (2012). Public school teachers may not have training on deployment issues or high mobility, which are common challenges of MC students (Esqueda et al. 2012). On average, students from MC families change schools every three years or nine times before high school graduation (Esqueda et al., 2012; Milburn & Lightfoot, 2013; Welsh, 2016). Jacobson (2013) and Welsh (2016)

further explained that high mobility negatively influences classroom environments by reducing student engagement and instructional continuity. High mobility also results in childhood stress due to constantly adjusting support systems including peers, family members, teachers, coaches, and neighbors according to research by Blasko (2015), DePedro, Atuel, Malchi, Esqueda, Benbenishty, and Astor (2014), Jacobson (2013), and Welsh (2016). Hosek and Wadsworth (2013) confirmed these findings and added that the military lifestyle is also stressful due to long hours with dangerous work and prolonged separations during training and deployment.

Challenges associated with the diverse culture of MC students also include changes in daily routines, traumatic exposure, and mental health issues according to research by DePedro et al. (2014), DePedro, Astor, Gilreath, Benbenishty, and Berkowitz (2015) and Paley, Lester, and Mogil (2013). Milburn and Lightfoot (2013) and Sullivan, Barr, Kintzle, Gilreath, and Castro (2016) expanded on this topic by explaining that effects of deployment on MC students could be understood using a developmental perspective because military service and deployments influence child functioning and contribute to physical and mental health challenges. Therefore, an implication for PD is challenges associated with MC students, including high mobility, varying ability levels, learning gaps, content retention, and stress (Achinsteins & Ogawa, 2012; Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Astor & Benbenishty, 2014; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Welsh, 2016).

Training teachers on culturally responsive practice may reduce challenges associated with MC students and enhance instruction (Achinsteins & Ogawa, 2012; Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Astor & Benbenishty, 2014; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Welsh,

2016). Culturally responsive practice (CRP) is an inter-collaborative practice and reflective pedagogy that focuses on honoring and celebrating cultural diversity (Ford et al., 2014). Therefore, an implication for PD is CRP.

CRP is also effective in addressing achievement gaps (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Vazquez-Montilla, Just, & Triscari, 2014). Implementing CRP motivates students, reduces behavioral problems, and improves student achievement (Rychly & Graves, 2012). Further, writing instruction is shaped by beliefs about cultural diversity, which proves that writing instruction and CRP are complimentary methods (Gay, 2013). Therefore, an implication for PD is implementing CRP with writing instruction for MC students.

Support programs for MC students are currently limited according to research by Murphy and Fairbank (2013) and Paley et al. (2013). Research by Clever and Segal (2013) added that MC students need flexible and adaptive support programs and policies to be successful. DePedro et al. (2015) and Murphy and Fairbank (2013) also described promoting well-being, healthy development, and academic success as positive characteristics of school-based support and interventions for MC students. There is a need for research on MC students to inform future programs and policies to effectively support MC students (Cozza, Lerner, & Haskins, 2014; DePedro et al., 2014; Murphy & Fairbank, 2013; Paley et al., 2013). Further, support programs for MC students are effective when grounded in research according to Cozza (2014). Therefore, an implication for PD is support programs for MC students.

## **Writing Instruction**

Low-quality student writing is an ongoing challenge for teachers nationally according to research by Morrow et al. (2012) and Ritchey and Coker (2013). Effective writing instruction is critical for proficiency of elementary students (Bifuh-Ambe, 2013; Dombek & Al Otaiba, 2015; Kent et al., 2014). Further, writing instruction that includes EBP is essential for proficiency according to research by Furey, Marcotte, Hintze, and Shackett (2016), Graham et al. (2012), and Troia and Olinghouse (2013).

EBP are data or research based strategies that have proven superior results (Johnson, 2008). EBP for writing include imagery, text structure, text transcription, sentence combining, write in response to text, peer collaboration, and self-regulation according to research by Graham (2010), Graham et al. (2012), Troia (2014), and Troia and Olinghouse (2013). Imagery is used in creative writing for constructing mental images to encode into writing (Hosp, Hosp, & Howell, 2016; Troia, 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Text structure includes cause-effect, compare-contrast, description, problem-solution, and sequencing (Graham, et al., 2012; Troia, 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Text transcription includes using a word processor/ computer, which enables easier transcription and revision through use of technology (Troia, 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013).

Sentence combining is an EBP for writing that involves teaching students to add words to a simple sentence to create a more complicated sentence and deconstruct complex sentences (Saddler, 2012; Troia, 2014; Troia and Olinghouse, 2013). Write in response to text is a literacy/ writing practice used to teach students to carefully read a

text and provide a brief response, which also improves comprehension (Troia, 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Peer collaboration includes students cooperatively working through the writing process together (Rohrbeck, Ginsburg-Block, Fantuzzo, & Miller, 2003; Troia, 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Lastly, self-regulation involves students independently developing the productivity and quality of their writing, which allows students to develop self-directed learning behaviors and independence (Hosp et al. 2016; Troia, 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Therefore, an implication for PD is EBP for writing.

Students' writing skills benefit from a cycle of continuous practice, instruction, assessment, and modification according to Dombek and Al Otaiba (2015) and Kent et al. (2014). Plan, draft, revise, and edit are the steps of the writing process, which is the leading EBP for writing (Graham, 2010; Graham et al., 2010; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Research by Alves et al. (2016), Graham, Beminger, Abbott, Abbott, and Whitaker (1997), and McCutchen (1996) added that a word processor/ computer utilized for developing text transcription skills is the leading writing tool. Therefore, an implication for PD is including cycles of practice, the writing process, and text transcription using a word processor/ computer into writing instruction for MC students.

Writing proficiency of elementary students is directly related to reading ability and comprehension according to Graham and Hebert (2011), Kent, Wanzek, Petscher, Al Otaiba, and Kim (2014), Padeliadu and Antoniou (2013), and Kim, Al Otaiba, Folsom, Greulich, and Puranik (2014). Decoding and fluency are the basis of reading and writing comprehension according to Padeliadu and Antoniou (2013). Decoding includes

knowledge of letter-sound relationships and letter patterns to process a printed word into a sound, which is critical to comprehension (Kim, Bryant, Bryant, & Park, 2016; Padeliadu and Antoniou, 2013).

Writing proficiency is also directly connected to literacy predictors, which include letter/print knowledge, phonological awareness, and oral language abilities according to research by Catts, Herrera, Nielsen, and Bridges (2015), Kim et al. (2014), and Padeliadu and Antoniou (2013). Phonological awareness is the ability to manipulate sounds into speech (Saygin, 2013). Research by Alter et al. (2013) confirmed the research by Kim et al. (2013) and added that language, literacy, and behavioral factors influence writing development. Therefore, an implication for PD is connecting literacy and writing practices to enhance instruction.

Intervention is a critical need in early grades for students demonstrating risk factors for writing and reading according to research by Kim, Al Otaiba, Wanzek, and Gatlin (2015). Interventions that result in statistical improvement include the self-regulated model, peer assistance, product goals, prewriting activities, and text transcription (Graham et al., 2012; Rohrbeck, Ginsburg-Block, Fantuzzo, & Miller, 2003). Research by Cozza (2014) added that necessary interventions for MC students are effective when grounded in research. One-on-one instruction and peer-assisted learning are also examples of effective elementary grade interventions according to research by Arnold et al. (2017), Bowman-Perrott et al. (2013), and Rohrbeck et al. (2003). Therefore, an implication for PD is utilizing writing interventions including the self-

regulated model, peer assistance, product goals, prewriting activities, text transcription, and one-on-one instruction.

Teachers use state standards and the individual needs of students to develop curriculum and instruction (DeLuca & Bellara, 2013). Elementary state writing standards include mastery of purpose, production, research, and range, which students will demonstrate by differentiating between genres of writing and following different rules for each genre (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2017). Grade level appropriate writing samples consist of an opinion piece, informative text, descriptive narrative, and creative writing piece (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2017). However, teachers reported that state standards are unclear and do not provide enough information to develop effective curriculum according to research by Alter et al. (2013), Kim, Al Otaiba, Sidler, & Grulich (2013), Raudenbush, (2015), and Troia and Olinghouse (2013). Therefore, an implication for PD is familiarizing teachers with writing standards.

DeLuca, Chavez, Bellara, and Cao (2013) explained that despite policies promoting state standards, teachers continue to maintain low competency levels in instruction for standardized assessment. Research by DeLuca, Chavez, and Cao (2013) and Greenberg, Walsh, and McKee (2015) added that teachers have limited training in connecting instruction to state assessments. Therefore, an implication for PD is connecting state writing standards to EBP for writing.

Ensuring assessment validity is important for effective writing instruction, according to research by Casey et al. (2016), Dombek and Al Otaiba (2015), and Ritchey and Coker (2013). Further, curriculum-based assessment is mechanics focused and may



not measure the expression and development of ideas according to research by Casey et al. (2016), Dombek and Al Otaiba (2015), and Ritchey and Coker (2013). Research by Casey et al. (2016) added that the appropriate focus for elementary school students is the ability to understand and share ideas, as opposed to spelling and punctuation.

It is crucial to investigate the validity of curriculum-based assessment to provide accuracy of measurement according to research by Dombek and Al Otaiba (2015) and Ritchey and Coker (2013). Further, Kim et al. (2015) added that teachers would benefit from additional investigation in using writing assessment data to inform writing instruction and intervention. Therefore, an implication for PD is ensuring curriculum-based writing assessment validity.

### **Professional Development**

Quality PD directly influences teacher effectiveness according to Raudenbush (2015). PD is enhanced by collaborative input from teachers on successful instructional practices, which may result in best practices of writing for MC students at the local site (Alter et al., 2013; Bifuh-Ambe, 2013; Gouvea et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2015; Raudenbush, 2015). This finding was confirmed by Alter et al. (2013) and Bifuh-Ambe (2013) with research findings that showed that analyzing perceptions of teachers could positively inform the needs, design, and implementation of effective PD. Research by Gouvea, Motta, and Santoro (2016) expanded on this finding by explaining that sharing knowledge through cooperative learning enhances instruction, which are characteristics of COP. Therefore, implications include providing collaborative opportunities for teacher input and utilizing teacher input to plan and design PD.

Teacher responsiveness directly influences student proficiency scores according to Kim et al. (2013). Effective practices to engage students and decrease challenging behaviors include varying speech and intonation, allowing multiple opportunities to respond, and providing a variety of learning activities in different environments, according to Alter et al. (2013). Research findings by Alter et al. (2013) confirmed the research findings of Kim et al. (2013) and added that behavioral factors, language, and literacy also influence writing development. Therefore, an implication for PD is teacher responsiveness.

Research by Esqueda et al. (2012) added that public school teachers may not have training on common challenges of MC students. Challenges associated with MC students include high mobility, varying ability levels, learning gaps, content retention, and stress (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Astor & Benbenishty, 2014; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Welsh, 2016). Therefore, an implication for PD is challenges associated with MC students. According to research by Clever and Segal (2013), DePedro et al. (2015), Murphy and Fairbank (2013), and Paley et al. (2013), MC students need support programs that promote well-being, healthy development, and academic success as positive characteristics of school-based support and interventions for MC students. Therefore, an implication for PD is support programs for MC students.

Effective instruction also requires knowledge of diverse communities, which includes MC students according to research by Achinstein and Ogawa (2012), Alter et al. (2013), Aronson and Laughter (2015), Astor and Benbenishty (2014), Griner and Stewart (2013), Kim et al. (2013), Raudenbush (2015), and Welsh (2016). Training teachers on

CRP may reduce challenges associated with MC students and enhance instruction (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Astor & Benbenishty, 2014; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Welsh, 2016). Therefore, an implication for PD is CRP.

CRP is also effective in addressing achievement gaps (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Vazquez-Montilla, et al., 2014). Implementing CRP motivates students, reduces behavioral problems, and improves student achievement (Rychly & Graves, 2012). Further, writing instruction is shaped by beliefs about cultural diversity, which proves that writing instruction and CRP are complimentary methods (Gay, 2013). Therefore, an implication for PD is implementing CRP with writing instruction for MC students.

Writing instruction that includes EBP is essential for proficiency according to research by Furey et al. (2016), Graham et al. (2012), and Troia and Olinghouse (2013). Research by Alves et al. (2016), Dombek and Al Otaiba (2015), Kent et al. (2014), and Troia and Olinghouse (2013) added that cycles of practice, the writing process, and text transcription using a word processor/ computer. Therefore, an implication for PD is including EBP for writing into writing instruction for MC students.

Writing proficiency is also directly connected to literacy predictors, which include letter/print knowledge, phonological awareness, and oral language abilities according to research by Catts, Herrera, Nielsen, and Bridges (2015), Kim et al. (2014), and Padelidiu and Antoniou (2013). Research findings by Alter et al. (2013) confirmed the research findings of Kim et al. (2013) and added that language, literacy, and behavioral factors also influence writing development. Therefore, an implication for PD is connecting literacy and writing practices to enhance instruction.

Intervention is a critical need in early grades for students demonstrating risk factors for writing and reading according to research by Kim, Al Otaiba, Wanzek, and Gatlin (2015). Therefore, an implication for PD is utilizing writing interventions including the self-regulated model, peer assistance, product goals, prewriting activities, text transcription, and one-on-one instruction.

Teachers use state standards and the individual needs of students to develop curriculum and instruction (DeLuca & Bellara, 2013). However, teachers reported that state standards are unclear and do not provide enough information to develop effective curriculum according to research by Alter et al. (2013), Kim, Al Otaiba, Sidler, & Gruelich (2013), Raudenbush, (2015), and Troia and Olinghouse (2013). Therefore, an implication for PD is familiarizing teachers with writing standards.

DeLuca et al. (2013) explained that despite policies promoting state standards, teachers continue to maintain low competency levels in instruction for standardized assessment. Therefore, an implication for PD is connecting state writing standards to EBP for writing. Ensuring assessment validity is important for effective writing instruction, according to research by Casey et al. (2016), Dombek and Al Otaiba (2015), and Ritchey and Coker (2013). Therefore, an implication for PD is ensuring curriculum-based writing assessment validity.

The findings of this research study may benefit teachers by informing best practices of writing for MC students. The findings of this research study may also inform PD training on best practices of writing instruction for MC students. The results of the

PD training may result in more effective writing instruction, which may improve state writing assessment scores of students.

In this literature review, I explored factors related to the research problem through peer reviewed journal articles published within the last five years. The three topics that were identified included Military-Connected Students, Writing Instruction, and Professional Development. Each topic identified during the literature review directly correlated to the problem of the research study. Within these three topics, 14 implications for improvement were identified.

Implications for improvement include:

1. collaborative opportunities for teachers
2. opportunities for teachers to provide input on PD
3. utilizing teacher input to plan and design PD

PD on:

4. teacher responsiveness
5. challenges associated with MC students
6. support programs for MC students
7. CRP
8. implementing CRP with writing instruction for MC students
9. implementing EBP for writing into writing instruction for MC students
10. connecting literacy and writing practices to enhance instruction
11. utilizing writing interventions
12. familiarizing teachers with writing standards

13. connecting state writing standards to EBP for writing
14. ensuring validity of curriculum-based writing assessments

The findings of this research study may benefit teachers by informing best practices of writing for MC students. The findings of this research study may also inform PD training on best practices of writing instruction for MC students. The results of the PD training may result in more effective writing instruction, which may improve state writing assessment scores of students. Taking these factors into consideration, a white paper with an explanation of the research findings was the most appropriate method to bring about institutional awareness of the identified problem and recommendations to initiate change. Choosing a specific project occurred after data analysis upon establishing a specific need.

### **Research Design**

To address the local problem, I conducted a qualitative, instrumental case study to explore teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC at BES. The lack of data on teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency for MC students was the research problem that this study explored. This research study used qualitative methodology, which is naturalistic fieldwork that involves collecting data where the event of interest naturally occurs (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

By gaining an understanding of teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students, I was able to identify potential considerations for PD that support the needs of teachers at the local site regarding writing instruction for MC students. A case study design was used in this research study. The purpose of this case study was to gain an

understanding of teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students at the local site. The research design logically derived from the problem and research question.

### **Data Collection and Data Analysis Results**

Data were collected through semistructured individual interviews of 12 teachers from the local site, which were conducted via telephone. The interview questions were related to writing instruction, student writing proficiency, and teaching MC students to answer the research question. Interview transcripts and the literature review provided detailed information from teachers at the local site as well as the broader educational setting. Throughout the interviews, many themes emerged. Teachers' perceptions included writing practices that could be used to develop best practices of writing instruction for MC students (Ciampa, 2016; Vaughan & Dornan, 2014).

Data analytic procedures included a three-step iterative process to ensure trustworthiness of the findings. Teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students were explored and detailed in-depth. Throughout data collection and analysis major themes emerged to answer the research question.

### **Discussion of Findings**

Overall, I found 4 major themes through the data analysis process. There were overlapping ideas within the themes, derived from the research question. Themes included Current Writing Practices, MC Students, Relationship Building, and PD Needs. Detailed information for the research question is included following Table 2.

#### **Themes from the Findings**

The research question was as follows:

- What are teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of military-connected students at Base Elementary School?

Findings indicated that current writing practices varied among participants, which implicated a lack of EBP. These variations of instruction included writing practices and tools, interventions, and writing practices and tools learned through teacher collaboration. Therefore, PD on EBP for writing is a need.

Participants reported dissatisfaction with state writing standards, which are used for curriculum development. This dissatisfaction appears to have resulted from a failure to deeply understand the writing standards and the relationship to the writing process for the target population. Teachers having a lack of clarity on connecting EBP for writing to state writing standards implicate a lack of EBP for writing and failure to implement a systemic writing process, which are possible contributing factors for the lack of student writing proficiency at BES (Alter et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2013; Raudenbush, 2015; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Therefore, connecting EBP for writing to state writing standards is a PD need.

Participants reported challenges and strengths of the target population regarding writing proficiency. It is imperative to student success for schools to train teachers on challenges associated with the diverse culture of MC students (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Alter et al., 2013; Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Astor & Benbenishty, 2014; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Kim et al., 2013; Raudenbush, 2015; Welsh, 2016). Therefore, training teachers on challenges associated with MC students is a PD need.



Participants expressed the need for relationship building practices, including inter-collaborative and intra-collaborative, which were described by participants as important aspects of writing for MC students. The expressed need to collaborate and build partnerships with other colleagues implies that teachers believe working together to address the needs of students is preferred over working in isolation, as was the current practice.

Lastly, all participants reported the need for collaborative PD focusing on writing instruction for the target population, connecting writing EBP to state writing standards, and training teachers on challenges associated with MC students through CRP. Data analysis for this area included coding and counting codes that represented occurrences within each interview transcript of descriptions of perspectives held by participants on writing practices for the target population, which were highlighted yellow in the Microsoft Word document. Table 2 lists the themes and subthemes that emerged from data analysis.

Table 2

*Themes and Subthemes*

Themes	Subthemes
Current Writing Practices	Collaboration Opinions on Standards
MC Students	
Relationship Building	
PD Needs	

Major themes emerged throughout data collection and analysis. The first major theme was Current Writing Practices. Within this theme, 2 sub-themes emerged

including Collaboration and Opinions on State Standards. The second major theme was MC Students. The third major theme was Relationship Building. Lastly, the fourth major theme was PD Needs.

**Theme 1: Current Writing Practices.** According to interview data, current writing practices lacked EBP, which may contribute to low student writing proficiency scores. It is imperative for student writing proficiency to consistently use EBP for writing (Harris, Graham, & Adkins, 2015; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013; Walpole & McKenna, 2012). The most commonly reported writing practices were imagery, write in response to text, and the writing process. The most commonly reported writing tools were paper and pencil.

The most commonly reported intervention was one-on-one instruction. The most commonly reported writing practice learned through teacher collaboration was collaborative writing. The most commonly reported writing tool learned through teacher collaboration was anchor charts. Table 3 lists current writing practices including tools and interventions that emerged from data analysis.

Table 3

*Current Writing Practices*

		No. of occurrences	% of occurrences
Practice	Imagery	12	100%
	Write in response to text	12	100%
	Writing process	12	100%
	15-20 min. daily instruction	8	67%
	Homework	7	58%
	Text structure	6	50%
	Journaling	5	42%
	Peer editing	2	17%
Tool	Paper and pencil	12	100%
	Notebooks	8	67%
	Computers	5	42%
Intervention	One-on-one instruction	12	100%
	Tutoring	10	83%
	Peer assistance	9	75%

***Sub-theme 1: Collaboration.*** Current writing practices learned through teacher collaboration included collaborative writing, peer editing, and write then read aloud. Teachers learn how to refine their expertise through regular, informal, and social interaction within the workplace, which achieves authentic and motivated learning (Vaughan & Dornan, 2014; Wenger et al., 2002). Sharing knowledge through cooperative learning enhances instruction, which are characteristics of COP (Gouvea, Motta, & Santoro, 2016). A successful writing practice resulted in 70% and above in student proficiency on lesson objectives with lesson assessment. Table 4 lists current writing practices including tools learned through teacher collaboration that emerged from data analysis.

Table 4

*Practices Learned Through Teacher Collaboration*

		No. of occurrences	% of occurrences	Success rate
Practice	Reported	10	83%	N/A
	Collaborative writing	6	67%	83%
	Peer editing	2	17%	0%
	Write then read aloud	2	17%	50%
Tool	Reported	9	75%	N/A
	Anchor charts	4	33%	100%
	Manipulatives	3	25%	67%
	Journaling	3	25%	100%

***Sub-theme 2: Opinions on standards.*** Participants reported dissatisfaction with state writing standards noting issues with connections to the campus curriculum and ease of use when teaching writing. This dissatisfaction appears to have resulted from a failure to deeply understand the writing standards and the relationship to the writing process for the target population. Teachers having a lack of clarity on connecting EBP for writing to state writing standards implicate a lack of EBP for writing and failure to implement a systemic writing process, which are possible contributing factors for the lack of student writing proficiency at BES (Alter et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2013; Raudenbush, 2015; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013).

Dissatisfaction included the opinions that there were an excessive amount of writing standards and that writing standards exceeded student comprehension. Therefore, teachers expressed the opinions that they were required by state writing standards to cover too much content and the content was too difficult for the grade level. Table 5 lists opinions of participants on state writing standards that emerged from data analysis.

Table 5

*Opinions on Standards*

Opinion	No. of occurrences	% of occurrences
Excessive amount	5	42%
Exceed comprehension	4	33%
No opinion	3	25%

**Theme 2: Characteristics of Military-Connected Students.** Based on interview data, participants believed characteristics of MC students influenced writing proficiency. Participants reported challenges and strengths of the target population regarding writing proficiency. The most commonly reported challenge was varying ability level among students. Participants reported student effort as the primary strength.

It is imperative to student success for schools to train teachers on challenges associated with the diverse culture of MC students (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Alter et al., 2013; Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Astor & Benbenishty, 2014; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Kim et al., 2013; Raudenbush, 2015; Welsh, 2016). Challenges to student writing proficiency reported by teachers included varying ability levels, learning gaps, content retention, and stress level. Strengths of student writing proficiency that teachers reported included effort and motivation. Table 6 lists characteristics of MC students that emerged from data analysis.

Table 6

*Characteristics of Military-Connected Students*

	Characteristic	No. of occurrences	% of occurrences
Challenge	Varying ability levels	10	83%
	Learning gaps	9	75%
	Content retention	8	67%
	Stress level	7	58%
Strength	Effort	10	83%
	Motivation	9	75%

**Theme 3: Relationship Building.** Based on interview data, teachers believed that relationship building was an important aspect to effectively teach writing. Teachers expressed that positive inter-collaborative practices between teacher and student are necessary for relationship building. Participants described patience and persistence as positive inter-collaborative practices. Participants expressed that positive intra-collaborative practices among teachers are also necessary for relationship building. Participants described collaborative opportunities for teachers as important for effective writing instruction.

Teachers learn how to refine their expertise through regular, informal, and social interaction within the workplace, which achieves authentic and motivated learning (Vaughan & Dornan, 2014; Wenger et al., 2002). Research by Gouvea, Motta, and Santoro (2016) expanded on this finding by explaining that sharing knowledge through cooperative learning enhances instruction, which are characteristics of COP. Table 7 lists relationship building practices that emerged from data analysis.

Table 7

*Relationship Building Practices*

	Practice	No. of occurrences	% of occurrences
Inter-Collaborative	Positive relationship with students	12	100%
	Awareness of student culture	12	100%
	Patience	10	83%
	Persistence	9	75%
	Holistic approach	7	58%
Intra-Collaborative	Teacher collaboration	12	100%

**Theme 4: Professional Development Needs.** Based on interview data, teachers believed that they would benefit from PD on EBP for writing and teaching MC students, which may help writing assessment scores increase. Effective instruction requires knowledge of diverse communities including MC students, which is an implication of the need for PD on CRP (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Alter et al., 2013; Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Astor & Benbenishty, 2014; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Kim et al., 2013; Raudenbush, 2015; Welsh, 2016). Therefore, PD needs include writing EBP and CRP. Table 8 lists PD needs that emerged from data analysis.

Table 8

*Professional Development Needs*

Need	No. of occurrences	% of occurrences
EBP for writing	12	100%
Teaching MC students	12	100%

**Summary.** Regular practices for writing instruction varied among participants according to the research study findings. These variations of practice showed a lack of EBP, which may contribute to low student writing proficiency scores. According to Furey et al. (2016), Graham et al. (2012), and Troia and Olinghouse (2013), teachers must use EBP for students to achieve writing proficiency. The first major theme was Current Writing Practices. Within this theme, 2 sub-themes emerged including Collaboration and Opinions on State Standards.

During the review of scholarly literature, several important factors related to elementary writing instruction were identified. Writing proficiency of elementary students is directly related to their reading ability, reading comprehension, literacy predictors, letter/print knowledge, phonological awareness, and oral language abilities (Catts et al., 2015; Graham & Hebert, 2011; Kent et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2014; Padeliadu & Antoniou, 2013). Phonological awareness is the ability to manipulate sounds into speech (Saygin, 2013). Decoding and fluency are the basis of reading and writing comprehension (Padeliadu & Antoniou, 2013). Decoding includes knowledge of letter-sound relationships and letter patterns to process a printed word into a sound, which and is critical to comprehension (Kim et al., 2016; Padeliadu and Antoniou, 2013). Write in response to text is a literacy/ writing practice used to teach students to carefully read a text and provide a brief response, which also improves comprehension (Troia, 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Therefore, teachers may benefit from PD on connecting



literacy and writing practices throughout the curriculum to enhance instruction and strengthen the writing process.

Low-quality student writing is an ongoing challenge for teachers nationally (Morrow et al., 2012; Ritchey & Coker, 2013). Effective writing instruction is critical to writing proficiency of elementary students (Bifuh-Ambe, 2013; Dombek & Al Otaiba, 2015; Kent et al., 2014). EBP for writing are essential for elementary students to achieve writing proficiency (Furey et al., 2016; Graham et al., 2012; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Effective instruction also requires knowledge of diverse communities, which includes MC students (Alter et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2013; Raudenbush, 2015). Therefore, teachers would benefit by PD on CRP.

According to the research study findings, the most commonly used writing practices of teachers included imagery, write in response to text, and the writing process. Teachers reported that daily writing instruction typically lasted 15-20 minutes, which is the national average according to Gilbert and Graham (2010) and Graham et al. (2015). The time and resources spent on writing instruction and practice should be at least doubled to achieve writing proficiency nationwide (Graham et al., 2015; National Commission on Writing, 2003, 2004; Puranik et al., 2014; Walpole & McKenna, 2012). According to the National Commission on Writing (2003, 2004), it is necessary for teachers to focus more attention on writing instruction to support the academic success of students. The amount of time dedicated to classroom writing instruction directly relates to student writing assessment scores (Applebee & Langer, 2006; National Commission on Writing, 2003).

Paper and pencil were the most common writing tools. According to Alves et al. (2016), Graham et al. (1997), and McCutchen (1996), text transcription skills utilizing a word processor/ computer are successful in the development of writing proficiency. Only five teachers reported regular use of computers for writing instruction. Therefore, text transcription utilizing a word processor/ computer is an evidence-based writing practice that teachers at the local site do not regularly implement. Consistent practice of text transcription skills utilizing a word processor/ computer support the improvement of writing and the development of writing proficiency (Alves et al., 2016; Graham, et al., 1997; McCutchen, 1996).

During the review of scholarly literature, EBP for writing were identified. Elementary students' writing skills benefit from a cycle of continuous practice, instruction, assessment, and modification of instruction (Dombek & Al Otaiba, 2015; Kent et al., 2014). The primary elementary EBP for writing is the writing process, which includes four steps: plan, draft, revise, and edit (Graham, 2010; Graham et al., 2010; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). A word processor/ computer is a successful writing tool for developing writing proficiency (Alves et al., 2016; Graham, et al., 1997; McCutchen, 1996).

Effective practices for writing instruction that engage students, decrease challenging behavior, and directly influence student writing proficiency scores include allowing multiple opportunities to respond, varied learning activities in different environments, responsiveness of teachers, and varying speech and intonation during instruction (Alter et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2013). According to Kim et al. (2013), the

responsiveness of teachers during writing instruction directly influences student writing proficiency scores. EBP for writing include imagery, text structure, text transcription, sentence combining, write in response to text, peer collaboration, and self-regulation (Graham, 2010; Graham et al., 2012; Troia, 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013).

Therefore, text structure, text transcription, sentence combining, peer collaboration, and self-regulation are EBP for writing that teachers at the local site do not regularly implement.

One-on-one instruction was the most commonly reported intervention. Teachers also reported regularly using tutoring and peer assistance as interventions. Effective interventions for MC students promote well-being, healthy development, and academic success (DePedro et al., 2015; Murphy & Fairbank, 2013). Therefore, teachers need professional development focusing on writing interventions.

During the review of scholarly literature, writing interventions were identified. Interventions for struggling writers are vital in early grades for students demonstrating risk factors for writing and reading difficulties (Kim et al., 2015). Writing interventions that result in statistical improvement include the self-regulated model, peer assistance, product goals, prewriting activities, and word processing (Graham et al., 2012; Rohrbeck et al., 2003). Writing interventions for students in elementary grades also include one-on-one instruction and peer-assisted learning (Arnold et al., 2017; Bowman-Perrott et al., 2013; Rohrbeck et al., 2003). Therefore, self-regulation, product goals, prewriting activities, and word processing are Writing interventions that teachers at the local site are not regularly implementing.

A lack of teacher collaboration was evident when exploring writing practices and tools learned through teacher collaboration. Ten teachers reported regularly using writing practices learned through teacher collaboration and nine teachers reported regularly using writing tools learned through teacher collaboration. Collaborative writing was the most common writing practice learned through teacher collaboration.

Writing practices and tools learned through teacher collaboration were varied and success rates were reportedly low, which implies a need of opportunities for teacher collaboration. Teachers expressed that they would benefit from sharing strategies and experiences with other teachers. According to Gouvea et al. (2016), sharing knowledge, cooperative learning, and collaboration result in the improvement of instruction and working processes.

Teachers expressed dissatisfaction with state standards due to excessive and difficult content. PD is needed for teachers to effectively develop curriculum and instruction based on state writing standards (Alter et al., 2013; Kim et al. 2013; Raudenbush, 2015). Further, state writing standards do not equip teachers with enough information to prepare students for writing proficiency as measured by the state writing assessment, which is an implication of a PD need to connect the state standards to EBP for writing (Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Table 9 lists the summary of findings for teachers' perceptions on current writing practices that emerged from data analysis, which consists of research data from theme 1. Evidence-based writing practices that could be implemented to fulfill the identified need are also listed.

Table 9

*Current Writing Practices*

	Implemented	Not Implemented
Practices	Imagery Write in response to text The writing process 15-20 minutes per day	Text structure Text transcription Sentence combining Peer collaboration Self-regulation 30 minutes per day min.
Tools	Paper and pencil	Text transcription utilizing a word processor/ computer
Intervention Practices	One-on-one instruction Tutoring Peer-assistance	Self-regulation Product goals Prewriting activities Word processing
Teacher Collaboration	Varied with reportedly low success rates	Opportunities for teacher collaboration
Opinions of Standards	Dissatisfaction Excessive content Difficult content	Professional development training to effectively develop writing curriculum and instruction based on state writing standards

The second major theme was MC Students and included characteristics of MC students regarding writing proficiency reported by participants. The most common strength among students was effort and the most common challenge among students was varying ability levels. Varying ability levels is a common challenge associated with military-connected students' due to high mobility according to DePedro et al. (2014), Jacobson (2013), and Welsh (2016). Other challenges of writing proficiency for students that were reported by participants included learning gaps, content retention, and stress level. According to DePedro et al. (2014), Hosek and Wadsworth (2013), Milburn and

Lightfoot (2013), and Sullivan et al. (2016), the military lifestyle is stressful for children due to frequent relocation and parental absences during training and deployment. Blasko (2015) and Welsh (2016) explained that high mobility results in childhood stress due to constantly adjusting support systems including peers, family members, teachers, coaches, and neighbors. However, only seven teachers (58%) reported stress level of students as a major challenge for student writing proficiency.

Table 10 lists the summary of findings for teachers' perceptions on professional experiences that emerged from data analysis, which consists of research data from theme 2. EBP for writing that could be implemented to fulfill the identified need are also listed.

Table 10

*MC Students*

	Implemented	Not Implemented
Challenges to Student Writing Proficiency	Varying ability levels Learning gaps Content retention Stress level	Evidence-based writing interventions PD for teaching highly mobile military-connected students
Strengths of Student Writing Proficiency	Effort	N/A

The third major theme was relationship building. Based on interview data, teachers believed that relationship building was an important aspect to effectively teach writing instruction for MC students. Teachers stated that positive inter-collaborative and intra-collaborative practices are necessary for relationship building.

Teachers stated that it is important to build a positive relationship with each student. Teachers also expressed the importance of awareness of the unique culture of

students when teaching highly mobile military-connected elementary students.

Participants described patience and persistence as positive inter-collaborative practices.

Teachers also stated that teacher collaboration is an important aspect of effective teaching. According to Raudenbush (2015), collaborative PD opportunities directly influence teacher quality. Teachers described collaborative opportunities among teachers as important for effective writing instruction. Lastly, teachers stated that they would benefit from sharing strategies and experiences with other teachers, which implicates the need for collaborative PD opportunities for teachers. Table 11 lists the summary of findings for teachers' perceptions on relationship building that emerged from data analysis, which consists of research data from theme 3. EBP for writing that could be implemented to fulfill the identified need are also listed.

Table 11

*Relationship Building*

	Currently Implemented	Not Implemented
Inter-collaborative Practices	Building a positive relationship with each student Awareness of student culture Patience Persistence	Evidence-based writing interventions PD for teaching highly mobile military-connected students
Intra-collaborative Practices	N/A	Collaborative opportunities Sharing strategies with other teachers Sharing experiences with other teachers Professional development opportunities

The last major theme was PD needs. Based on interview data, teachers stated that they would benefit from collaborative opportunities for PD focused on EBP for writing and teaching MC students. All schools must provide effective professional development for teachers that result in improved classroom practices according to the federal requirements of No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top (Helterbran, 2012; Hopkins et al., 2012). However, traditional PD does not effectively translate into classroom practice (Goddard et al., 2007).

Providing authentic learning experiences for teachers requires targeted PD, which is collaborative, goal-directed, and teacher-directed (Gallagher Browne, 2010; O'Brien & Jones, 2014). Traditional PD does not effectively translate into classroom practice (Goddard et al., 2007). Alternately, targeted PD creates professional learning communities/ communities of practice and provides a systemic structure for continuous improvement that supports the development of innovative experimentation, practice towards mastery, and increased efficacy, which improves school culture and student achievement (Gallagher Browne, 2010; O'Brien & Jones, 2014). Therefore, teachers need targeted PD, as opposed to traditional PD.

During the review of scholarly literature, several important factors related to PD for effective writing instruction were identified. Teacher instruction is enhanced through PD on EBP for writing according to Graham et al. (2012) and Walpole and McKenna (2012). Teachers are underprepared to teach writing, which may explain the lack of focus on writing instruction and the lack of writing proficiency (Gilbert & Graham, 2010; Graham et al. (2015). According to Alter et al. (2013), Kim et al. (2013), and



Raudenbush (2015), effective instruction requires knowledge of diverse communities, which includes MC students.

Quality PD opportunities directly influence measures of teacher effectiveness (Raudenbush, 2015). PD is enhanced by input from teachers on successful instructional practices (Alter et al., 2013; Bifuh-Ambe, 2013; Gouvea et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2015; Raudenbush, 2015). COP also promotes PD through sharing of knowledge, cooperative learning, and consequently the improvement of instruction and working processes (Gouvea et al., 2016).

During the review of scholarly literature, several important factors related to MC students were identified. Every school district in the United States has MC students enrolled in their schools (Esqueda et al., 2012). High mobility rates are a common challenge associated with MC students, which negatively influence classroom environments by reducing student engagement and instructional continuity (DePedro et al., 2014; Jacobson, 2013; Welsh, 2016). MC students may change schools an average of every three years or nine times before high school graduation (Esqueda et al., 2012; Milburn & Lightfoot, 2013; Welsh, 2016). Challenges associated with the diverse culture of MC students also include constant relocation, varying ability levels, learning gaps, content retention, and stress (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Astor & Benbenishty, 2014; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Welsh, 2016).

It is imperative to student success for schools to train teachers on challenges associated with the diverse culture of MC students (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Alter et al., 2013; Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Astor & Benbenishty, 2014; Griner & Stewart,

2013; Kim et al., 2013; Raudenbush, 2015; Welsh, 2016). Training teachers on the diverse culture of MC students is an implication of the need for PD on culturally responsive practices (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Astor & Benbenishty, 2014; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Welsh, 2016). Effective instruction requires knowledge of diverse communities including MC students, which is an implication of the need for PD on CRP (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Alter et al., 2013; Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Astor & Benbenishty, 2014; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Kim et al., 2013; Raudenbush, 2015; Welsh, 2016).

CRP is an inter-collaborative practice and reflective pedagogy that focuses on honoring and celebrating student cultural diversity (Ford et al., 2014). CRP is effective in addressing achievement gaps (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Vazquez-Montilla, et al., 2014). Writing instruction is shaped by beliefs about cultural diversity (Gay, 2013). Implementing CRP motivates students, reduces behavioral problems, and improves student achievement (Rychly & Graves, 2012). Table 12 lists the summary of findings for teachers' perceptions on PD needs that emerged from data analysis, which consists of research data from theme 4. EBP for writing that could be implemented to fulfill the identified need are also listed.

Table 12

*Professional Development Needs*

	Currently Implemented	Not Implemented
PD Needs	N/A	Targeted EBP for writing Connecting standards to EBP CRP for teaching MC students Regular input from teachers on PD needs

In conclusion, several problems (needs) associated with student writing proficiency at the local site were identified in the research study findings from Section 2 of this research study. Teachers are not:

- spending enough time on writing instruction and practice;
- collaborating with other teachers (intra-collaborative practices);
- receiving targeted PD;
- regularly implementing writing EBP (text structure, text transcription utilizing a word processor/ computer, sentence combining, peer collaboration, product goals, prewriting activities, and self-regulation);
- clear on how to connect the state writing standards to writing EBP;
- connecting literacy and writing to enhance instruction throughout the curriculum;
- trained on challenges associated with MC students (constant relocation, varying ability levels, learning gaps, content retention, and stress); or
- trained on CRP for teaching MC students (inter-collaborative practices).

My solutions to the identified problems are as follows. Teachers need:

- to dedicate one hour per day to writing instruction and practice;

- collaborative opportunities to share strategies and experiences with other teachers (intra-collaborative practices);
- targeted PD on writing EBP;
- targeted PD on how to connect writing standards to writing EBP;
- targeted PD on how to connect literacy and writing;
- targeted PD on challenges associated with MC students; and
- targeted PD on CRP for teaching MC students (inter-collaborative practices).

Recommendations to address the problems and solutions include targeted PD focusing on:

- writing EBP,
- writing standards,
- connecting literacy/ writing, and
- CRP.

Table 13 lists problems/ needs associated with writing proficiency at the local site and my corresponding solutions/ recommendations.

Table 13

*Recommendations*

Problems/ Needs	Solutions	Recommendations
Teachers are not spending enough time on writing instruction and practice	Teachers need to dedicate one hour per day to writing	Teachers need to dedicate one hour per day to writing
Teachers do not have collaborative opportunities	Teachers need collaborative opportunities	Targeted PD
Teachers are not implementing writing EBP	Teachers need PD on implementing writing EBP	Targeted PD on Writing EBP
Teachers are not clear on how to connect writing standards to EBP	Teachers need PD on connecting standards to EBP	Targeted PD on writing standards
Teachers are not clear on connecting literacy and writing	Teachers need PD on how to connect literacy and writing	Targeted PD on connecting literacy/ writing
Teachers are not trained on challenges of MC students	Teachers need PD on challenges of MC students	Targeted PD on CRP
Teachers are not trained on CRP for teaching MC students	Teachers need PD on CRP for teaching MC students	Targeted PD on CRP

The conceptual framework that served as the foundation for this research study was communities of practice (COP) proposed by Lave and Wenger (1991). According to Lave and Wenger (1991), COP is summarized as a grouping of people with a common interest learning how to refine their expertise through regular interaction. In this research study, the community of the communities of practice framework was teachers of MC students at Base Elementary School. The practice was effective writing practices for MC

students at Base Elementary School. The summary of the findings through the lens of the conceptual framework is illustrated in Figure 2.

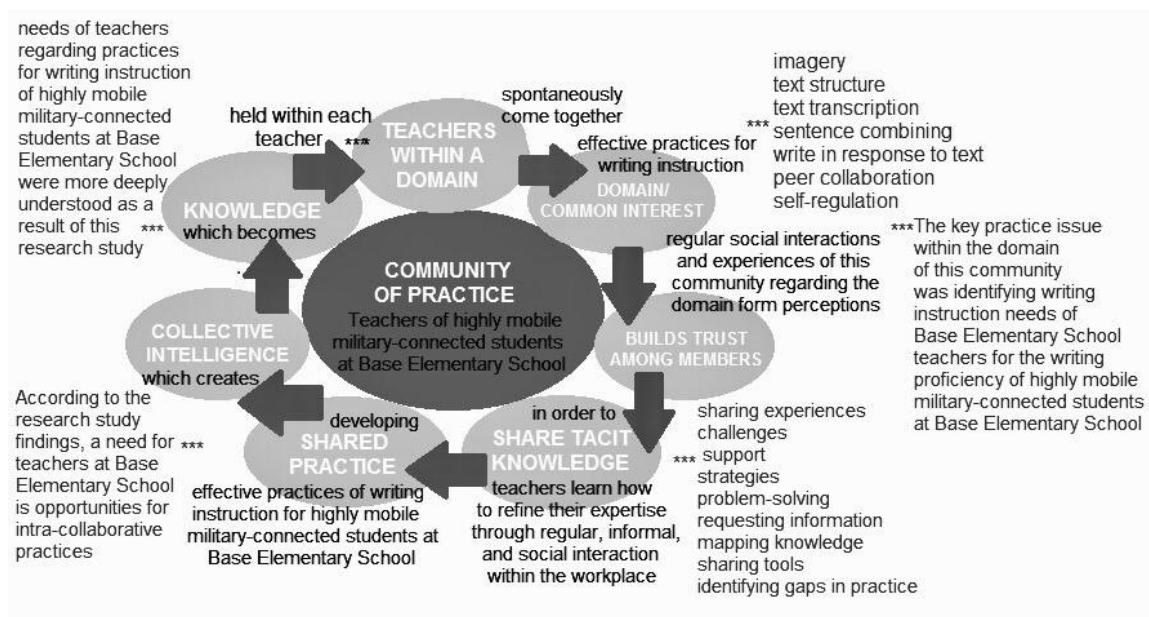


Figure 2. Framework summary.

The common interest, or domain, in this study was effective writing practices (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vaughan & Dornan, 2014; Wenger et al., 2002). The key practice issue within the domain of this community was identifying writing needs of MC students (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vaughan & Dornan, 2014; Wenger et al., 2002). According to the literature, effective writing practices include imagery, text structure, text transcription, sentence combining, write in response to text, peer collaboration, and self-regulation.

The most commonly used writing practices by teachers at the local site included imagery, write in response to text, and the writing process according to the research study findings. Text structure, text transcription, sentence combining, peer collaboration, and

self-regulation are EBP for writing that teachers do not regularly implement. Paper and pencil were the most commonly used writing tools and only five teachers reported regular use of computers for writing practice according to the research study findings. Therefore, text transcription utilizing a word processor/ computer is an EBP for writing that teachers at the local site do not regularly implement.

The community of practitioners, teachers at the local site, had a common interest of refining their practice over time through discussion (Ciampa, 2016; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Teachers have a collective competence through experience with teaching and learning from each other through discussion and collaboration (Ciampa, 2016, Vaughan & Dornan, 2014; Wenger et al., 2002). Regular social interactions and experiences of this community regarding the domain form perceptions (Vaughan & Dornan, 2014; Wenger et al., 2002). Regular interaction within the community includes sharing experiences, challenges, support, strategies, problem-solving, requesting information, mapping knowledge, sharing tools, and identifying gaps in practice (Ciampa, 2016; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Teachers learn how to refine their expertise through regular, informal, and social interaction within the workplace, which achieves authentic and motivated learning (Vaughan & Dornan, 2014; Wenger et al., 2002). According to the research study findings, a need for teachers is opportunities for intra-collaborative practices. Teachers at the local site are a support group to each other when allowed opportunities for collaboration. Therefore, teachers are empowered through learning together and sharing

strategies. Consequently, when teachers are empowered, they can better meet the needs of students (Dierking & Fox, 2012).

Through targeted PD, teachers at BES may be better prepared to implement EBP for writing for MC students, which may lead to writing proficiency and the campus goal of meeting proficiency standards on state writing assessments (Ciampa, 2016, Vaughan & Dornan, 2014; Wenger et al., 2002). According to the research study findings, teachers need targeted PD (intra-collaborative) focusing on: implementing EBP for writing, connecting state writing standards to EBP for writing, and culturally responsive practices for teaching MC students (inter-collaborative practices). Implications for the project deliverable as an outcome of the results of the research study include the development of a white paper detailing findings from the research study and subsequent recommendations, which will be presented to stakeholders, including the principal of the local site and the school district office, via email, as a proposed form/plan of distribution. Needs of teachers regarding writing instruction for the target population were more deeply understood as a result of this research study.

### **Recommendations**

In response to data findings, I recommended targeted PD delivered systemically within an integrated and coherent framework to promote collaboration, dialogue, and understanding within and across content areas for the target population. Targeted PD, as opposed to traditional PD, is collaborative, goal-directed, teacher-directed, and providing authentic learning experiences for teachers (Alter et al., 2013; Bifuh-Ambe, 2013; Ciampa, 2016; Gallagher & Browne, 2010; Goddard et al., 2007; Gouvea et al., 2016;



O'Brien & Jones, 2014; Kim et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2015; Raudenbush, 2015; Vaughan & Dornan, 2014; Wenger et al., 2002). Targeted PD also creates professional learning communities/ communities of practice and provides a systemic structure for continuous improvement that supports the development of innovative experimentation, practice towards mastery, and increased efficacy, which improves school culture and student achievement (Alter et al., 2013; Bifuh-Ambe, 2013; Ciampa, 2016; Gallagher & Browne, 2010; Goddard et al., 2007; Gouvea et al., 2016; O'Brien & Jones, 2014; Kim et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2015; Raudenbush, 2015; Vaughan & Dornan, 2014; Wenger et al., 2002). Therefore, teachers need targeted PD to address the collaboration need identified through the data findings.

PD recommendations include Writing EBP, Writing Standards, Literacy/ Writing, and CRP. The Writing EBP PD should include best practices, tools, and interventions. EBP include cycles of practice, the writing process, imagery, text structure, text transcription, sentence combining, write in response to text, peer collaboration, and self-regulation (Bifuh-Ambe, 2013; Dombek & Al Otaiba, 2015; Furey, et al., 2016; Graham, 2010; Graham et al., 2012; Johnson, 2008; Kent et al., 2014; Morrow et al., 2012; Ritchey and Coker, 2013; Troia, 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Text transcription using a word processor/ computer is the most effective writing tool (Alves et al., 2016; Dombek & Al Otaiba, 2015; Graham, 2010; Graham et al., 2010; and Kent et al., 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Interventions include one-on-one instruction, self-regulated model, peer assistance, product goals, prewriting activities, and text transcription (Arnold

et al., 2017; Bowman-Perrott et al., 2013); Cozza, 2014; Graham et al., 2010; 2012; Kim et al., 2015; Rohrbeck et al., 2003).

The Writing Standards PD should include elementary writing standards including mastery of purpose, production, research, and range (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2017). Training should also include demonstrating and differentiating between genres of writing and following different rules for each genre (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2017). Grade level appropriate writing samples consist of an opinion piece, informative text, descriptive narrative, and creative writing piece (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2017). Lastly, training should include connecting state writing standards to EBP (Alter et al., 2013; DeLuca & Bellara, 2013; DeLuca, Chavez, Bellara, & Cao, 2013; DeLuca, Chavez, & Cao, 2013; Greenberg & Walsh, 2012; Kim et al., 2013; Raudenbush, 2015; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013).

The Literacy/ Writing PD should include decoding, fluency, literacy predictors, and connecting literacy and writing throughout the curriculum to enhance instruction (Alter et al., 2013; Bryant et al., 2016; Catts et al., 2015; Graham & Hebert, 2011; Kent et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2014; Padeliadu & Antoniou, 2013; Saygin, 2013). Training should also include reading and writing comprehension, letter/print knowledge, phonological awareness, and oral language abilities, which are directly associated to writing proficiency of elementary students (Catts et al., 2015; Graham & Hebert, 2011; Kent et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2014; Padeliadu & Antoniou, 2013). Also, write in response to text is a literacy/ writing practice used throughout the curriculum to teach students to

carefully read a text and provide a brief response, which also improves comprehension (Troia, 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013).

The CRP PD should include components of CRP to enhance teacher responsiveness and address challenges associated with MC students, which include constant relocation, varying ability levels, learning gaps, content retention, and stress (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Alter et al., 2013; Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Astor & Benbenishty, 2014; Esqueda et al. 2012; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Kim et al., 2013; Raudenbush, 2015; Welsh, 2016). Training teachers on culturally responsive practice may reduce challenges associated with MC students and enhance instruction (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Alter et al., 2013; Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Astor & Benbenishty, 2014; Ford et al., 2014; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Kim et al., 2013; Raudenbush, 2015; Welsh, 2016). CRP is also effective in (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Rychly & Graves, 2012; Vazquez-Montilla, et al., 2014). Further, writing instruction is shaped by beliefs about cultural diversity, which proves that writing instruction and CRP are complimentary methods (Gay, 2013). Therefore, an implication for PD is implementing CRP with writing instruction for MC students.

Expertise for support of this systemic PD initiative should include experts in the areas of: writing EBP, state writing standards, CRP, teaching MC students, literacy, and the reading and writing processes. I recommended that implementation of targeted PD based on the data findings occur systematically, regularly, and frequently to maximize change. However, the effectiveness of the project to bring about substantial change will

rely solely on the appropriate stakeholders (Graham, 2010; Kemp, 2005; Mattern, 2013). The audience must understand the problem, the research study findings, and areas needing improvement for real change to result from the project (Graham, 2010; Kemp, 2005; Mattern, 2013).

Based upon the participant responses and the literature review regarding writing proficiency of highly mobile military-connected students, I offered recommendations to school and district administrators regarding research study findings of PD needs of teachers of MC students at the local site (Graham, 2010; Kemp, 2005; Mattern, 2013; Purdue, 2017). Further, I recommended that implementation of targeted PD based on the research study findings occur regularly and frequently to maximize writing EBP. The promoted solution that this white paper focuses on is targeted PD focusing on writing EBP for MC students, as illustrated in Figure 3.

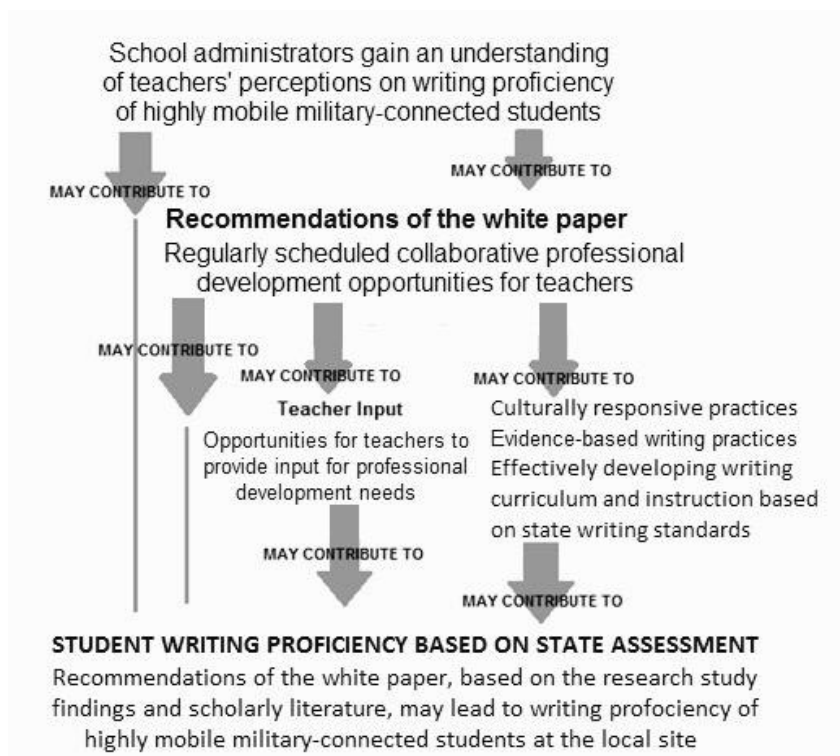


Figure 3. Recommendations.

### Conclusion

This white paper addressed declining state writing assessment scores among the campus population of MC students at the local site, which may have attributed to the lack of data on elementary teachers' perceptions of writing proficiency for MC students prompted the research study. The findings of the research study outlined in this white paper provided the data that was lacking. There was a lack of understanding regarding teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of MC students at BES, which was the collected data of the research study.

The data findings indicated the need to inform professional practice and provide evidence to stakeholders to inform decisions. Research data results provide evidence to

stakeholders to inform decisions regarding PD for educating MC students. The research study findings also inform stakeholders on understanding the needs of this specific population. Lastly, the research study findings inform stakeholders on writing EBP that support this specific population and culture of students.

The goal of this white paper is to promote a certain solution to a specific need and to influence the decision-making processes of the appropriate stakeholders (Graham, 2010; Kemp, 2005; Mattern, 2013; Purdue, 2017; Spaulding, 2008). In this case, the specific need or problem this white paper focuses on was derived from the research study findings and includes the lack of collaborative opportunities and PD regarding writing EBP for MC students. The promoted solution that this white paper focuses on is targeted PD focusing on writing EBP for elementary MC students. Further, I recommend that targeted PD based on the research study findings occur regularly and frequently, once a week is optimal, to maximize writing EBP for the target population (Kretlow et al. 2012; Martin et al., 2010; Mundy et al., 2014; Pancsofar & Petroff, 2013; Schrum & Levin, 2013). The effectiveness of this project to bring about substantial change relies solely on the appropriate stakeholders (Graham, 2010; Kemp, 2005; Mattern, 2013).

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through the literature.

## Appendix B: Introductory Email

## Introductory Email

Dear Teacher,

I would like to invite you to participate in my doctoral research project entitled “Elementary Teachers’ Perceptions on Writing Proficiency of Highly Mobile Military-Connected Students in the United States”.

If you agree to be part of this research project, I would ask that you:

- participate in an individual interview in a private room via telephone on a mutually agreed upon time and date.
- participate in a second telephone interview for clarification if needed.
- verify your interview transcript via email.

Participation is entirely voluntary. Participants reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Identity of participants, the location of the study, and all data collected will remain entirely confidential. Your participation in this study will provide data on teachers’ perceptions on writing proficiency for highly mobile military-connected students. If you would like to participate in this research study or would like more information please contact me via email or telephone. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kerrin Weatherwax  
kerrin.weatherwax@waldenu.edu  
(253) 514-7906



## Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Interview # \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

## Interview Protocol

*Script*

Welcome and thank you for your participation. My name is Kerrin Weatherwax and I am a doctoral student at Walden University conducting my research study in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The purpose of this study is to examine teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of highly mobile military-connected students at [REDACTED]. This interview will take 45 - 60 minutes and will include 80 questions regarding your perceptions on writing proficiency of highly mobile military-connected students at [REDACTED].

I would like your permission to audio-record this interview, so I may accurately document the information you convey. If at any time during the interview you wish to discontinue the use of the recorder or the interview itself, please feel free to let me know. Your responses are entirely confidential. Your responses will remain confidential indefinitely using pseudonyms and will be used to develop a better understanding of teachers' perceptions on writing proficiency of highly mobile military-connected students at [REDACTED]. You have also been asked to read through your interview transcript at a later date to confirm or clarify your responses.

At this time, I would like to remind you of your written consent to participate in this study. I, Kerrin Weatherwax, am the responsible researcher, specifying your participation in the research study: Elementary Teachers' Perceptions on Writing Proficiency of Highly Mobile Military-Connected Students in the United States. You have received a copy of the informed consent form via email, certifying that we agree to continue this interview. You have agreed to the informed consent form by replying "I consent" via email.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. If at any time, you need to stop or take a break, please let me know. You may also withdraw your participation in this research study at any time without consequence. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin? (If the participant wishes to discontinue the interview, I will ask if they would be willing to share why.) Then with your permission, we will begin the interview.

1. How would you describe elementary writing proficiency?
  - i. Standards
    - a. Purpose - Opinion piece
    - b. Production - Informative/explanatory text
    - c. Research - Descriptive narrative
    - d. Range - Creative writing
2. What challenges do you experience regularly with your students regarding writing proficiency?

- i. High mobility
  - ii. Military-connected
  - iii. Ability level
  - iv. Confidence level
3. Describe for me your typical daily classroom writing instruction?
  - i. How much time do you spend each day on writing instruction?
  - ii. How much time do your students spend on writing assignments?
  - iii. How much time do allot for your students to practice writing?
  - iv. How much time do students spend on writing assignments for homework?
  - v. What tools do you use for writing instruction?
    - a. Word processor or keyboard for text transcription
  - vi. What tools do your student's use to practice writing?
4. Describe for me how being a highly mobile military-connected elementary student may impact writing proficiency.
  - i. High-mobility
    - a. How do you perceive high mobility?
  - ii. Military-connected
  - iii. Ability level
  - iv. Confidence level
5. What specific concerns do you have regarding your students in relation to:
  - i. Writing proficiency

- ii. High mobility
  - iii. Military-connected
  - iv. Ability level
  - v. Confidence level
  - vi. Standards
    - a. Purpose - Opinion piece
    - b. Production - Informative/explanatory text
    - c. Research - Descriptive narrative
    - d. Range - Creative writing
6. Describe for me the most challenging experience you have had regarding your students' achieving writing proficiency?
- i. High-mobility
  - ii. Military-connected
  - iii. Meeting lesson objectives
  - iv. Making adequate progress
  - v. Meeting state standards
7. Tell me about a positive experience you have had regarding your students' achieving writing proficiency.
- i. High-mobility
  - ii. Military-connected
  - iii. Meeting lesson objectives
  - iv. Making adequate progress

- v. Meeting state standards
8. What specific writing strategies do you use when teaching for writing proficiency?
  - i. The writing process
  - ii. Imagery
  - iii. Text structure
  - iv. Text transcription
  - v. Sentence combining
  - vi. Write in response to text
  - vii. Peer collaboration
  - viii. Self-regulation
9. What specific writing intervention strategies do you use when teaching for struggling students?
  - i. One-on-one instruction
  - ii. The self-regulated model
  - iii. Peer assistance when writing
  - iv. Product goals
  - v. Prewriting activities
  - vi. Word processing
10. Which strategies have you adopted from other teachers?
  - i. Which strategies were successful?
  - ii. Which strategies were not successful?

- iii. Which tools have you adopted from other teachers?
    - a. Which tools were successful?
    - b. Which tools were not successful?
11. What have you done to learn more to help your students achieve writing proficiency?
- i. Share experiences and strategies with other teachers
  - ii. Professional development
  - iii. Military resources
12. What modifications have you made to your instruction to achieve writing proficiency of your students?
- i. What prompted these changes?
  - ii. How did you learn about the new technique?
  - iii. What was the outcome of that specific curriculum modification?
13. Describe for me your idea of the best day teaching writing to highly mobile military-connected elementary students.
- i. How much time is spent
  - ii. High-mobility
  - iii. Military-connected
  - iv. Meeting lesson objectives
  - v. Making adequate progress
  - vi. Meeting state standards
14. Before we conclude this interview, what else would you like to share?

Would you be available and open to a second interview to offer a deeper discussion or clarification on points if needed? I will transcribe your interview and email it to you in one week so that you can confirm that I have accurately represented your discussion. Please respond to my email within two business days confirming that your interview transcription is accurate or detailing additional or corrected information. If you would like to read my research study I will email you the link when it is published by Walden University in ProQuest. Thank you very much for your participation.

## Appendix D: Color Key

Category	Color	Code
Descriptions of setting and context	Yellow	Teachers' views of daily writing instruction for highly mobile military-connected students
Descriptions of processes	Bright green	Teachers' views of writing strategies used for writing instruction
Descriptions of activities	Turquoise	Teachers' views of tools used for writing instruction
Descriptions of strategies	Pink	Teachers' views of typical writing interventions used during instruction
Descriptions of participants' ways of thinking about people and objects	Red	Teachers' views of strengths and challenges associated with writing instruction for highly mobile military-connected students
Descriptions of relationship and social structure	Gray	Teachers' views of adopted writing strategies from teacher collaboration
Descriptions of perspectives held by participants	Violet	Teachers' views on professional development needs associated with writing instruction for highly mobile military-connected students