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Perceptions on the Essential Writing Skills of Entering First-Year College Students

Jennifer Lloyd
Walden University

Walden University

College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Jennifer Lloyd

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Review Committee
Dr. Jennifer Mathes, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. Shannon Decker, Committee Member, Education Faculty
Dr. Maureen Ellis, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

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Abstract

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MEd, American Intercontinental University, 2004

MBA, William Carey College, 1994

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Some students are entering college and graduating with the inability to write scholarly and professionally. The purpose of this instrumental case study was to examine the perceptions of college instructors and students about the essential writing skills of entering first-year college students within a Southwestern university. This study provided insight into strategies to engage students in the writing process, both before and after entering college. Vygotsky's social constructivism provided the framework for this study. The research questions included an examination of the perceptions of students' writing skills based on what instructors, students, and writing center personnel observed; what instructors and students believed to be essential writing skills necessary for entering first-year college students to be academically successful; and what the writing center personnel and students' perceptions were regarding writing resources that were deemed beneficial to entering first-year college students to help improve their writing skills. Data were collected through semistructured interviews with 12 participants: 4 instructors, 5 students, and 3 writing center personnel. Data analysis included theme identification based on key words from the interviews. According to study results, findings revealed factors that contributed to poor writing, common writing errors, required writing skills to be academically successful, and writing resources. These findings led to the development of a 3-day professional development (PD) workshop. Participation in the PD workshop may lead to modifications in the curriculum at local high schools and entry-level courses taught to entering first-year college students, resulting in positive social change.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate my project study to the memory of my mother, Richardlene, who made sacrifices for her children to ensure their success in life.

Acknowledgements

I thank God for his unfailing love, protection, healing hand, and power. I thank Him for giving me the ability to press forward in this educational journey, despite family issues, work challenges, and my personal life journey. During this time, I continue to face personal adversities; however, God has sustained me through it all and allowed me to press forward. Words cannot express how much I acknowledge Him first.

I am also grateful to my daughter, family members, and friends who were a part of this educational journey. I am looking forward to retirement from the federal service and the completion of this postgraduate degree to aid me in becoming a better educator. I am also looking forward to spending more time with my daughter and family.

I wish to thank my committee members who gave their guidance, expertise, and time to ensure my work was successful and also met the requirements of scholarly work. I would like to express a special thank you to my committee chair, Dr. Jennifer Mathes, for her diligence, presence, and immediate responses to my questions. Her presence in the classroom and through email made a difference, and she always displayed her willingness to see her students succeed. Thank you, Dr. Shannon Decker, for your assistance and feedback.

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

Universities and colleges have noticed that students are graduating and entering the workplace with an inability to write in a scholarly and professional manner (May, Thompson, & Hebblethwaite, 2012). Moreover, effective written communication is an aspect of educational disciplines. Martinez and Martinez (2003) described writing as a necessary skill for most modern jobs. Additionally, the role of higher education has been to make writing a part of courses across all disciplines, specifically writing across curriculum (WAC). There were several strategies available for instructors to employ to better equip students with essential writing skills (Huskin, 2016). These techniques include transforming a student's lower-level writing ability to a more scholarly level of writing. Hence, this qualitative study was designed to explore the perceptions of instructors regarding essential writing skills, perceptions of students regarding their writing skills, thinking critically when researching or preparing to write, linking reading comprehension to essential writing skills, and collaboration between learning communities and writing centers. I also provide insight, strategies, and best practices on how to ensure successful writing skills in a diverse student population.

Definition of the Problem

Entering first-year college students are faced with the challenge of not being sufficiently prepared to meet the demands of postsecondary education writing requirements (Booth et al., 2014). In an examination of literature into writing readiness for college students, I found several factors that were the basis for poor writing skills;

these factors have not been addressed over the last 30 years (Jameson, 2007). These concerns were noted within each literary review, and they formed the basis for this project study.

Although there is a problem with the writing skills of entering first-year college students, students do not deem writing skills as being important to their career; moreover, some students do not believe that their writing skills are problematic (Simkin, Crews, & Groves, 2012). Furthermore, instructors reveal that they feel unsure of how to advance students' writing skills. According to Blickenstaff, Wolf, Falk, and Foltz (2015), instructors perceive that effective written communication was an essential skill; however, the instructors felt they possessed low competency in their abilities to improve student writing. Likewise, grade school teachers also feel unable to teach and improve student writing skills. Grade school instructors perceived their level of competency to be lacking in revising and editing writing, motivating students to write, and not having enough time to teach writing (Bifuh-Ambe, 2013). Furthermore, instructors reported students perceived writing to be boring, a difficult chore, and required too much editing (Bifuh-Ambe, 2013). There is a gap between instructors' perceptions of students' essential writing skills and students' perceptions of their writing abilities both in academics and postgraduation (Fields, Hatala, & Nauert, 2014). This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge needed to address problems with essential writing skills by exploring the perceptions of instructors and students regarding writing skills required for entering first-year college students and writing skills needed to meet the demands of postsecondary education.

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

Poor writing skills have affected a large percentage of postsecondary students and "has been an ongoing concern in the United States since the 1970s" (Perin, 2013, p. 118). For Southwestern colleges and universities in the United States, poor writings skills of entering first-year college students have not been a new phenomenon. The state where this study took place ranked 47th in writing mean scores on the Student Aptitude Test (SAT), and more than 50% of students entering 2-year colleges were not considered college-ready (Texas Public Higher Education Almanac, 2014). Additionally, 55 of 100 surveyed students were enrolled in a writing developmental education course (Texas Public Higher Education Almanac, 2014). Students entering a Southwestern institution of higher education must have an essay writing score of 5 on the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) assessment to indicate college readiness. A score of 4 or below places the student at the developmental level (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2014). Southwest colleges are challenged with ensuring that students are sufficiently prepared, as certain Southwestern postsecondary schools lag behind high-achieving states in terms of college readiness (Texas Public Higher Education Almanac, 2014).

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of instructors and students regarding the essential writing skills of entering first-year college students. This study provided insight for institutions and educators on strategies to help improve the writing skills of entering first-year college students. A qualitative case study was used to explore the writing skills of entering first-year college students at a 4-year university in the Southwest region of the United States.

The Local Setting

The local setting for this project study was a 4-year university within the Southwestern region of the United States. Enrollment at the university was approximately 60,826 students, comprising 77.6% undergraduate and 33.4% graduate or doctoral students (Texas University Data and Research Services, 2016). The focus of this study was primarily on undergraduate students. More specifically, I examined entering first-year college students who were required to take a writing assessment exam or currently had problems with their scholarly writing. Additionally, the university's learning environment was a brick-and-mortar school that engaged in face-to-face student-instructor interaction as its primary mode of instruction. Face-to-face characteristics consisted of a traditional classroom setting with written assignments and library resources. Many students, though, used a form of online library resources to assist with their learning.

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

Although students are expected to become scholarly writers in postsecondary education, Leggette and Homeyer (2015) noted that effective writing is also paramount for success in the workforce. The Texas Higher Education Board (2012) understood both aspects of success in postsecondary education and the workforce and developed an initiative known as *Closing the Gap* to help improve a Southwestern university that was ranked between 45th and 49th states. Coupled with changes in demographics, policymakers feared the Southwestern university was headed toward further decline in students' ability to write well in postsecondary education. *Closing the Gap* was initiated

in 2000 and focused on several areas: percentage of students prepared and underprepared for successful completion of college-level reading, math, and writing; success of student graduation; and number of degrees conferred. In this study, I focused on the university's writing readiness that was about 52.5%. This number was based on a study of 840 students with 488 successfully completing the writing course (Texas Public Higher Education Almanac, 2016). Furthermore, the goal of *Closing the Gap* was to increase the successful degree completion from 40% in 2014 to 60% by 2030 (Texas Public Higher Education Almanac, 2016). The Southwestern university where this study took place provided an ideal place to explore the writing skills required for entering first-year college students.

Rationale

Entering first-year college students at some Southwestern colleges and universities struggle with essential writing skills. In this study, I highlight incorporating writing across all educational disciplines. The university study site had the following demographic makeup; approximately 18 educational disciplines were offered for its student population of 60,435 students. Of these students, 52.5% were male, 42.5% were female, 37,607 (62.2%) were between the ages of 18-21, and 9,696 (16.0%) students were first-year college students. Students entering a Southwestern institution of higher education must have an essay writing score of 5 on the TSI assessment. A score of 4 or below puts the student at a developmental level upon entering college. Saxon and Slate (2013) revealed that there was a decline in the number of students enrolled in developmental writing courses; however, this finding was misleading. In 2003, TSI

legislation allowed states to depict their own cutoff scores and offered students more options to avoid developmental courses. Students delayed enrollment in these courses and persisted to postsecondary education without a foundation in writing. Students who do not have a foundation in writing are at risk of college failure (Saxon & Slate, 2013). The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of instructors and students regarding the writing skills of entering first-year college students.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions and terms were used for this study:

Learning communities (LCs): LCs link two or more courses together and allow the instructor and students to collaborate to find integrative ways to approach assignments. Teachers use LCs to incorporate reading and writing as a means to help students with writing challenges (Parisi & Graziano-King, 2011).

Writing across curriculum (WAC): WAC is a movement to transform how teachers incorporate, use, and assign writing within their classes. The WAC movement ensures that writing occurs in other educational disciplines and not just in writing classes. The movement also involves students accomplishing writing as a social practice (Odom, 2013).

Writing center (WC): WCs are colocated within academic libraries and serve as a means to provide students with research and writing services. Additionally, WCs allow for the ease of referrals from a librarian to tutor and back (Zauha, 2014). Collaborative efforts between librarians, tutors, and educators ensure a common goal to support the writing challenges that students face.

Significance of the Study

This study added to the body of research on the required writing skills of entering first-year college students. Although emphasis was placed on entering first-year college students' writing ability, undergraduates and graduate students struggle with writing. Lee and Murray (2015) noted that innovation in writing starts early and that supervision of writing extends through high school, undergraduate, and graduate school years. Students face challenges when beginning to write. Coupled with these challenges are the knowledge and training needed for educators to model good writing skills. The findings from this study can provide insight on professional writing development training for instructors and grade school teachers to bolster their writing confidence and abilities to motivate students to write well to meet the demands of academic success and postgraduation career opportunities. To support professional development (PD) as an outcome from the study findings, Ferris, Jensen, and Wald (2015) speculated that effective teaching required ongoing PD. Forman (2016) also noted that teachers should attend PD classes to direct their attention to becoming experienced writers versus focusing solely on the mechanics of writing.

The findings of this study can also be used to develop writing skills in students across educational disciplines. The literature and findings in this study provide strategies to support the development of writing skills in students and to develop writing instructions for instructors, institutions, and WCs. Strategies include peer reviews, reflective writing, journaling, blog posting, and gaming activities.

In addition, the results of this study may bring awareness to diversity, writing challenges faced by students with disabilities, and writing challenges faced by international student writers. The research on required writing skills could assist universities and colleges with an increased awareness of how to make changes to several course curriculums. These changes can be implemented not only in English writing courses but also to curriculum changes within all educational disciplines. Examining the perceptions of instructors, students, and WC personnel could provide insight into secondary and postsecondary learning environments regarding factors impacting writing skills and strategies to help improve these skills.

Research Questions

The ability to write well is needed in all educational disciplines and is considered equally important for individuals pursuing a career after graduation. However, first-year college students have ongoing problems with essential writing skills. Educators have reported concerns that high school students are graduating without the skills to succeed in college, specifically, higher-level writing skills (Mongillo & Wilder, 2012). Institutions and educators must explore the reasons students are entering college without essential writing skills and whether an inability to write well contributes to unsuccessful completion of a course, degree program, or limited career possibilities. Moreover, there is a gap between what instructors perceive as essential writing skills and how students perceive their ability to write. In this study, I explored the perceptions of instructors and students regarding the essential writing skills required for entering first-year college students. The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1. What are instructors' perceptions regarding entering first-year college students' writing skills?

The following subquestion supported the first research question:

Subquestion. What are writing center personnel's perceptions regarding writing resources that could benefit entering first-year college students?

RQ2. What are instructors' perceptions regarding essential writing skills necessary for entering first-year college students to be academically successful?

RQ3. What are entering first-year college students' perceptions regarding essential writing skills necessary to be academically successful in entry-level courses?

The following subquestion supported the third research question:

Subquestion. What are entering first-year college students' perceptions regarding which writing resources could benefit entering first-year college students?

Review of the Literature

A review of literature was performed on the reasons entering first-year college students lack writing skills to persist in postsecondary education. I sought information in the library regarding instructors' perceptions of students' writing ability, attitudes of students' writing ability, students' critical thinking process before beginning to write, collaboration efforts between libraries and LCs, best practices of institutions and educators, and writing tools to assist college students with success in writing skills. Using the Walden University Library, I used the following electronic resources and databases in a variety of combinations to gather literature for this study: ProQuest, EBSCOhost, ERIC Educational, Education Research Complete, Google, and Google

Scholar. Multiple Boolean operators with the keyword searches (AND, OR, NOT) were used to broaden and then narrow the search to result in variations of the terminology and entered search terms with and without parentheses to combine key concepts. The following keywords were used: *writing readiness, higher education, basic skills in writing, LCs, instructor perceptions on writing, WC, WAC, students' perceptions on writing, writing assignments, writing skills, remedial instruction, higher education, postsecondary education, and conceptual framework theorists*. In addition, I used multiple resources to complete the literature review consisting of reviewing scholarly articles; peer-reviewed publications; primary research journals; dissertations; course books; official reports and publications of state, local, and federal government sites; education from Sage; Texas Public Higher Education Almanac; and the U.S. Department of Education. The literature review in the following section was a result of research addressing the following subheadings concerning a case study on entering first-year college students' poor writing skills: perceptions and attitudes of students, thinking critically, collaboration with WCs, and strategies and diversity assertion.

Conceptual Framework

Works by Vygotsky on social constructivism guided the conceptual framework of this study. According to Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory, knowledge is developed in an environment with others. Vygotsky proposed that individual learning occurs in the zone of proximal development (ZPD). The ZPD is defined as the "ability to learn through dialogue and interaction with others" (Churcher, 2014, p. 35). Vygotsky articulated that this zone occurs through language. Vygotsky stated that the achievement

of language provides the basis for the relationship between learning and development. Vygotsky noted that language occurs as the initial communication between the child and the individual within his or her environment.

Vygotsky (1989) believed that a child's first attempts at speech are to communicate and form social interaction. Everson (1991) noted that Vygotsky's ideas on communication and social interaction were fundamental to the early prewriting stages that later lead students to write fuller narratives, detailed descriptions, and clearer expositions based on the ideas discussed before they begin to write. Although speech functions are foundational to how children learn, Vygotsky associated language development to certain aspects of writing instruction developed in instructional practices (as cited in Everson, 1991). Vygotsky (1989) concluded that there are differences between written and oral speech. Vygotsky (1989) noted that psychological functions of written speech do not begin at the onset of written instructions.

Written speech, at best, is based on an "emerging immature process" (Vygotsky, 1989, p. 183). Everson (1991) noted that emerging immature processes plague teachers when they begin to read student writing assignments, only to discover sentence fragments, unrelated writing details, and muddled storylines. According to Vygotsky, in order to understand how to remove fragmented sentences and unrelated writing details, teachers need to maintain the integrity of young writers' ideas while encouraging editing skills to develop a finished writing product (as cited in Everson, 1991).

Vygotsky's (1987) ZPD theory provides a spectrum of how WC tutors engage in strategies to develop students' writing abilities. Nordlof (2014) pointed out that

Vygotsky's ZPD denotes that learning begins socially and is internalized. Nordlof believed ZPD allows tutors to support students' understanding by observing student writing skills, thus allowing tutors to adjust their intervention approach as needed. Additionally, by employing Vygotsky's ZPD theory, tutors can focus on what students currently know and then build on these attributes to transition or further develop their writing skills. Several strategies within the literature review as well as the interview findings for this study support using tutors to help develop first-year college students writing skills.

Why Write

Effective written communication is essential to various educational disciplines; thus, there are several thoughts regarding essential writing skills and its importance to education and careers. Leggette and Homeyer (2015) noted that writing skills are used to document and create a world that could not be just identified or learned overnight. Plakhotnik and Rocco (2015) also contributed to the thoughts regarding students' ability to write well. Specifically, Plakhotnik and Rocco (2015) noted that the 2003 National Commission on Writing identified writing as a powerful tool and posited that "American education will never realize its potential as an engine of opportunity and economic growth until a writing revolution puts language and communication in their proper place in the classroom" (p. 1). Plakhotnik and Rocco also speculated on whether a university could place de-emphasis on writing, give precedence to course content, and determine if students are expected to write well. Plakhotnik and Rocco concluded that unless universities change the culture of how students think about writing at universities,

students' writing will not improve. Thus, a study on perceptions of instructors, students, and WC personnel regarding factors impacting writing readiness could provide educators, institutions, and organizations with insight on needed writing skills for entering first-year college students in postsecondary education.

Perceptions and Attitudes of Students' Writing

Scholars have examined the reasons why students are enrolling in colleges and universities with poor writing skills. Ghandoura (2012) examined an introductory college writing course of approximately 11 students' attitudes about computer-assisted writing classes and noted that electronic literacy transformed writing instruction. Ghandoura provided insight into how electronic means could assist with writing readiness. Particularly, Ghandoura sought to identify students' attitudes and beliefs about the benefits and difficulties of computer-assisted writing classes. Ghandoura also noted that several universities had begun to integrate some form of e-learning into writing classes. Web-based writing classes afford students immediate feedback from their instructor, peer reviews, and accessibility to Web-related tools to aid in writing development.

I extracted data from Web-related tools to determine whether writing resources helped to improve entering first-year college students' writing skills. Based on Ghandoura's (2012) assertion, there are benefits to computer-assisted or Web-based writing classes. Web-based classes could assist students with the challenges they face in writing, specifically understanding how to use a Web-based design to correct spelling and grammar errors. Ghandoura concluded that future scholars wishing to expand these

findings should include other student variables, alternative research designs, and extend the findings to other courses.

Although Ghandoura (2012) examined students' attitudes toward Web-based writing tools, Simkin et al. (2012) identified students' perceptions about their writing skills based on two hypotheses: (a) "students do not believe writing skills will be important to them in their careers" (p. 81) and (b) students perceived that they were already good writers. Simkin et al. hypothesized that students do not believe writing skills are important to a career. Students perceive that they are already good writers; however, Simkin et al. stated that the assessments measuring students' writing abilities did not mirror the finding. Students' perceptions of their ability to write well could prevent them from seeking help with their writing skills.

Simkin et al. (2012) noted that many employers seek individuals with good writing skills and that writing assessments such as the SAT recognize the importance of writing skills. Simkin et al. further discussed factors that contributed to the decline of student writing skills, placing blame on the K-12 school systems, illiterate or uncaring parents, peer pressure to stray from the English dialect, and use of e-mail and text messages to formulate brevity in writing. Scholars also noted that writing deficiencies continue to plague students and have not improved over the last 30 years. In addition, many more students are entering higher education, resulting in an increase in the number of poor writers (Jameson, 2007). A further examination of how to develop strategies to help students develop essential writing skills is needed.

Examining the gap in writing. In this project study, I highlighted the thoughts, attitudes, and perceptions of instructors and students regarding essential writing skills. Berrett (2014) summarized survey findings and comments from instructors and students regarding the writing process and found that first-year college students believed that their writing skills were already developed. Instructors disagreed because they felt that students had not fully developed the writing process. Berrett noted that the gap between instructors' perceptions of student writing and the writing process could be overcome by instructors requiring students to use other conventional means to write: for example, class blogs, Twitter, and Facebook. Furthermore, Berrett illustrated that first-year students estimated writing about 25 hours a week; however, through conversations with students, instructors were told that less than half of the 25 hours of writing was informal (Berrett, 2014). Other purposes for writing were based on social changes such as policy decisions, opinion pieces, and online commentary.

The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (n.d.) echoed that writing is a process. Instructors believed that writing is a process and dispelled the thoughts that students believed they knew everything about writing and did not need to learn (Berrett, 2014). Instructors contributed this inability to learn more on writing to having to focus on what standardized tests require in elementary and secondary grade schools (Berrett, 2014). Students told the instructors that their writing was in preparation for tests. As such, Berrett concluded that a shift in the instructional approach to writing is needed. A change in the norm for instructors to accept writing in social media has benefits. Also, changing the norm for instructors to accept writing in social media could help students

see the benefits of how they could connect their social media approaches to writing to a more refined writing process. Students should be able to make a connection between formal and informal writing. Changing the norm could be a means for instructors to bridge the gap between instructors' and students' perceptions of essential writing skills in postsecondary education.

Writing doneness. Students are challenged to understand when writing is considered complete, or as McAlear and Pedretti (2016) noted students' perceptions of "doneness" when completing a writing piece. McAlear and Pedretti noted that a piece of writing is complete when it is submitted as an assignment or published as an article. Writing is perceived as a lifelong process; yet, teachers of writing need to help students cultivate productive writing. McAlear and Pedretti presupposed that writing doneness begins with understanding how students in early college writing classes determine when academic writing is complete. McAlear and Pedretti revealed that 57% of first-year students used one strategy, such as proofread and correct category, to decide that a paper is done. Forty-four percent of second-year students used only one other strategy, such as the process-criteria category consisting of argument, structure, and revision (McAlear & Pedretti, 2016). However, as McAlear and Pedretti probed more into the study analysis, the proofread and correct categories were separated. The percentages of first- and second-year students decreased to 48% and 40%, respectively. Furthermore, McAlear and Pedretti revealed that proofreading and nothing more to say were the most common strategies for first-year college students, and revision and meeting prompt criteria for writing were the most common strategies for second-year students. Students did not

indicate higher order strategies such as claims and evidence, rhetorical situation, or organization as a means of completion in writing. McAlear and Pedretti concluded that students only used one strategy to determine writing doneness. To help students reach self-efficacy beyond their thoughts on writing doneness, teachers could ask students to reflect on why they stopped writing and ended at the point that they did. Additionally, McAlear and Pedretti noted that understanding how students perceive writing doneness could help to build a set of resources students could use in writing classes and writing situations.

Perceptions and Writing Across Curriculum

Institutions seek WAC for all educational disciplines. The health administration is an example of a discipline that placed emphasis in writing (Fields et al., 2014). Fields et al. (2014) explored graduate students' perceptions of which writing skills were essential in an initial job and revealed a difference between the perceptions of preceptors and students; specifically, preceptors noted these writing skills as the most essential: convey information accurately, use correct grammar, and collect information from a variety of sources. Undergraduate students noted the following writing skills as most essential: to spell correctly, to convey information accurately, and the use of correct grammar (Fields et al., 2014). Both preceptors and students mentioned the importance of conveying information accurately as an essential writing skill (Fields et al., 2014). However, priority for this skill was not the same; faculty could use these results to determine the appropriate level of learning needed for the workforce while analyzing courses to determine which skills were being addressed within the curriculum (Fields et

al., 2014). There is a need to further research the differences between writing skills and postgraduation employment, as well as an evaluation of course assignments to ensure students were sufficiently prepared for health administration careers.

Judge (2013) noted the skill of writing among medical toxicologists. Judge (2013) stated, "polished writing skills remain vital to fulfilling our scientific mission of advancing the field" (p. 4). Judge recognized that writing was viewed as unpleasant and often times not easy. Writing serves many purposes, such as helping to unveil what individuals know or think about a topic, a case report, study, analysis, or presentation of data (Judge, 2013). Regardless of the approach to writing, it is important to be brief, clear, and passionate about writing, even if the ideas are not written down in a published document. Fields et al. (2014) and Judge supported the concept of adding formal writing instruction into curriculum. Judge noted that this could be as simple as adding writing workshops. Judge further noted that educators should develop and emphasize the importance of essential writing skills.

Writing skills are important in the journalism and mass communication careers. Universities responded to the demands of employers seeking skilled writing by adjusting coursework to help prepare students for the workplace (Lingwall & Kuehn, 2013). Lingwall and Kuehn (2013) noted several corporations and a 2006 Commission on Public Relations Education report indicating "dissatisfaction with the writing performance of entry-level public relations practitioners" (p. 365). Lingwall and Kuehn observed two theoretical approaches to students' perceptions on writing in journalism and mass communication studies: writing apprehension and writing self-efficacy. For this study,

the focus was writing apprehension. Writing apprehension involved students' fear of writing tasks and feelings about writing. As such, this apprehension led researchers to consider students' perceptions of social media writing.

Berrett (2014) also focused on areas of social media to change the norm in how instructors could approach writing skills of students. As noted by Berrett, Lingwall and Kuehn (2013) believed that the rise in social media is an opportunity to communicate in new ways, for example using Twitter and Facebook. Additionally, social media provide more technological advancement to writing skills within journalism and mass communication. There are new media influences that impact the skills, styles, and competency levels of writers (Lingwall & Kuehn, 2013). Instructors need to provide instructional methods to enhance and motivate students to move from writing apprehension to a more confident level of writing, even if the writing approach began with informal writing through social media formats.

Similarly, Blickenstaff et al. (2015) discussed a study within an agriculture discipline where faculty perceptions of student skills and possible barriers to improve teaching practices were discussed. A questionnaire was administered at the University of Idaho's College of Agriculture to gather data on faculty perceptions of valuable graduate skills, important teaching areas, and barriers prohibiting improvements to teaching. Although the study's primary focus was on faculty perceptions of what impacts promotion and tenure, the survey also revealed the skills faculty felt were important for graduate students to possess. The research data revealed that there were 3 of 18 skills that had a mean score of 5.5 or higher: problem-solving skills, ability to think critically,

and effective written communication (Blickenstaff et al., 2015). Moreover, the findings for this study emphasized that faculty valued those graduate skills that could help to ensure students success in an agricultural career. While this study was related to careers in agricultural, the 2009 National Research Council recommended that institutions prepare the next generation workforce by integrating skills throughout the curriculum versus through a separate course. Blickenstaff et al. (2015) concluded that although faculty may appreciation the idea of students having transferrable skills throughout college, the 2009 National Research Council did not clearly note whether these skills ensured students' success. Further research is needed to examine student learning to determine if students leaving college successfully gain the knowledge and skills for today's workforce.

Arneback, Englund, and Solbrekke, (2017) discussed the challenges students faced when trying to move between different academic disciplines. Arneback et al. (2017) ascertained that students tend to struggle when there are different requests in feedback patterns associated with these academic disciplines. Arneback et al. captured these differences through a study of student teachers' experiences in educational sciences writing. According to Arneback et al., educational sciences is one of the first disciplines students encounter in school. To further illustrate the challenges students faced between academic disciplines, the study identified a comparison between educational science, social science, and history. The data consisted of two years of teacher education extracted from a Swedish university, preschool, and upper secondary education. The Arneback et al. study focused on educational science with preschool teachers and

combined social science and history when examining educational practices of secondary education teachers. What appeared evident in the study was that although writing occurred in all of these academic disciplines, the students of preschool education were interrupted by options for students to take other courses such as art, music, or drama. These courses did not require writing; however, reflective writing was accomplished when students kept logbooks of their experiences in art education. The logbooks resembled the approach to perform writing in educational sciences.

The secondary teachers who were teaching social sciences and history viewed writing as perspective writing that allows "writing on a topic to develop and reach a validly argued conclusion" (Arneback et al., 2017, p. 278). Social science and history were combined in the study; however, Arneback et al. (2017) concluded that there are distinct differences in what is expected in these academic disciplines. Specifically, social science related to perspective writing while history related to cause and effect writing. Feedback from the teacher noted that the writing should be different. Nonetheless, the impetus of the study was to draw on the differences in writing when moving between academic disciplines. Arneback et al. concluded that the differences between disciplines indicates that student teachers need to be flexible and orient themselves to changing ideas for academic writing. This change should occur as student teachers progress to higher education and change from one course to another. This is when a shift in writing ideas forms the basis for academic development as writers (Arneback et al., 2017). A final thought from the study indicated that consideration should be given to how teacher programs are organized and the impact on teacher experiences in the writing process.

Morabito (2017) added to the body of literature that supports learning to writing across disciplines. Morabito noted that writing workshops in the science discipline enhanced students' literary learning; specifically, the use of science notebooks to engage in reflective reading and writing. Science notebooks served as a tool to engage students in literacy-based skills such as writing. The success of the science notebooks relied on teachers integrating new practices with those they already used (Morabito, 2017). Thus, a writing workshop was used as a framework to develop writing across grade levels and discussions of students writing in science. To ascertain science as an example of writing across disciplines, Morabito employed three primary components of a writing workshop from Fletcher and Portalupi (2001). These components consisted of whole group instruction (minilessons), time to write, and time for structured responses. Fletcher and Portalupi defined the writing components as follows:

- Minilessons—students gathered science data and recorded the information in their notebooks;
- Dedicated time to write gave students an opportunity to confer with peers and their instruction—collaboration to learn and exchange information to help develop writing activities; and
- Time for structured responses—students structured their responses based on feedback given during the workshop.

Morabito concluded from the science notebook activity that students refine literacy skills through science and instruction.

Ramos, Stobaus, Victoria, and Mosquera (2014) conducted a study of 150 students enrolled in education studies. Four categories of reading and writing emerged from the study: first contact, significant moments, expectations and feelings, and personal and professional sectors. This study primarily centered on the feelings of undergraduate students in reading and writing. Ramos et al. (2014) believed that the emotion to write stemmed from students given the freedom to write ideas from a choice in readings. Moreover, the ability to choose reading and writing was based on teachers developing and expanding the reading and writing of their students. After examining 150 students, Ramos et al. concluded that words of encouragement and empowerment from teachers helped to improve reading and writing and created a culture of reading. Through these efforts, improvement occurred with contextualizing, group activities, enjoyment in reading, and demonstrated improvements in writing.

Henry, Ka'alele, Shea, and Wiggins (2016) conducted a study to determine if a place-based writing course provided a liberal arts discipline with the required goals to achieve writing skills across the discipline. Goals of the liberal arts discipline involved relating facts to a unified whole, connecting to a higher purpose, and growing intellectually in writing (Henry et al., 2016). The intent was to garner a wide representation across disciplines versus individual classes. Several cases were used in the study. Each case consisted of one instructor and two students. Henry et al. (2016) began by analyzing instructor assignments and comments and tied these back to the liberal arts curriculum goals. The primary goal was to give students the ability to connect facts to the whole, thus allowing room for students to grow intellectually as writers in instances

of analytical writing, case studies, and research proposals. Instructors used collaborative review and revision to help students make these connections in writing. Overall, the intent of the study was to highlight an academic approach of how a liberal arts education, through place-based intensive writing provided foundations for students to make connections in writing and in developing these skills regardless of the educational disciplines. Arneback et al. (2017) also noted that writing across educational disciplines enhanced developmental writing of students.

The need for effective writing was not restricted to English courses. Thus far, research has provided evidence and identified challenges and strategies to support the importance of developing successful writing skills. Miller and Pessoa (2016) supported writing across disciplines through their examination of history essays written by multilingual students in an undergraduate history course. Their study focused on the challenges students faced when formulating thesis statements and topic sentences. Miller and Pessoa referred to thesis statements and topic sentences as macro-themes and hyper-themes, respectively. The data for the study consisted of 498 essays with a sample size of 60 texts. Out of these texts, 30 were high-graded essays (above 80% average) and 30 were low-graded essays (below 80% average) (Miller & Pessoa, 2016). Additionally, the study involved 83 students, Arab and South Asian backgrounds, who were enrolled in a world history course taught by the same professor of the history graded essays. Students were required to write in an essay format consisting of a one paragraph introduction, several body paragraphs, and a brief conclusion (Miller & Pessoa, 2016). Students were

expected to clearly state the macro-themes and hyper-themes and ensure connections between these.

Miller and Pessoa (2016) evaluated macro-themes and hyper-themes based on their location in the essay, specific details, relationships to the context of the essay, and dual function. Additionally, analysis entailed comparing higher graded and lower graded essays and changes overtime relating to the use of these. The analysis revealed the challenges students faced when organizing texts. Initially, there were irregularities with macro- and hyper-themes relevant to the content of the paragraph. Overtime, though, there were improvements in the students' understanding to develop an argument and provide supporting body paragraphs. Miller and Pessoa contributed this to a dual function: the ability for students to connect back to previous information in the essay and to connect forward to the content which followed. Miller and Pessoa concluded the study by suggesting several outcomes: instruction should focus on the location of hyper-themes, the cascade structure of the essay, genre-based learning, and learning connections between WAC and writing courses. The approach to write across curriculum could help students with the transfer from one subject to another. Henry et al. (2016) and Arneback et al. (2017) were among the authors who also noted that WAC or disciplines helped to develop writing skills in students.

Further consideration regarding perceptions of teachers and students related to a study conducted on PD to foster teachers' writing proficiency. Bifuh-Ambe (2013) asserted that a study on PD of instructors would in turn improve students' writing success. Specifically, the study examined teachers' attitudes toward writing instruction,

their perceptions of students' writing attitudes, and their feelings of writing competency after completing a 10-week PD workshop (Bifuh-Ambe, 2013). The significance within this study was PD workshops that were provided to elementary and secondary teachers with university partners' oversight. Bifuh-Ambe saw this as an opportunity to improve existing practices based on the following objectives: examine the purpose of writing in an effort to understand teachers' strengths and weaknesses; learn strategies to motivate teachers and students to become better writers; develop mini-writing lessons during the workshops; and learn effective ways to evaluate students' writing. Moreover, the study was conducted utilizing pre- and post-workshop surveys to capture the information based on the objectives. In total, 21 of 28 surveys were completed.

The findings from surveys revealed that teachers felt positive and confident regarding their performance in generating ideas and having control over the writing process. There was an overall positive increase in teacher performance from 88.87% to 93% (Bifuh-Ambe, 2013). However, a negative shift occurred in teachers' thoughts regarding their ability to accomplish revising and editing. The survey recorded a slight decrease in pre- and post-workshop results from 92% to 91.79% (Bifuh-Ambe, 2013). A small decrease in teachers' perception indicated a feeling of not being able to motivate or know how to motivate students to write. Bifuh-Ambe (2013) contributed this to teachers stating that students did not enjoy writing or felt writing was boring. Some teachers believed that students enjoyed writing because they enjoyed reading. Nonetheless, the conclusion from the study reinforced the idea that writing was a difficult process requiring development in many areas before one became a proficient writer. In order to

be proficient in writing students need to be able to generate ideas, communicate effectively, and practice writing habits such as revising and editing.

Remediation Efforts in Writing

Hassel and Giordano (2015) sought to answer questions related to disciplinary discussions on writing assessment, basic writing, and remediation efforts. They believed that institutions should spend more time on refining and making intellectual resources more effective. Although the push within this study was to look at the balance between college readiness and assessment placement, Hassel and Giordano reviewed the effectiveness of their own university's efforts to improve student writing. They noted that many institutions mandated remediation courses for students who fell short in achieving writing readiness for college. Additionally, the mechanisms institutions used to determine where remediation started, and degree credit began were not clearly addressed (Hassel & Giordano, 2015). Thus, Hassel and Giordano conducted a yearlong study to examine the relationship between placement test scores, writing assignments, and reading lessons for 54 students during the first year at the university. The data was derived from ACT and English placement tests. Once the data was collected and analyzed, the research revealed that the margin between college-ready and not college-ready was blurry, that standardized test have limitations, and that multiple-measure placements were critical to properly assess which students would or would not benefit from a remediation course or non-degree credit course work (Hassel & Giordano, 2015). Hassel and Giordano research suggested a closer look at placement exams were needed to better understand how to meet the writing development needs of students.

Hassel and Giordano (2015) noted that their university used multiple-measures placement processes to identify students who would benefit from developmental learning and changed the perception of instructors that students were misplaced in their first-year writing course. Hassel and Giordano (2015) tracked the students' grades in all courses and performed a thorough analysis of their placement information to determine if students were accurately "placed into an appropriate first-semester composition course with or without developmental reading and studio writing support" (p. 63). Hassel and Giordano summarized the results of the ACT and English placement tests and noted the assessment of students as either underplacement or overplacement in a writing development course. Using only the ACT test score, eight students were underplaced in a lower course than their writing suggested. Out of these eight, five should have been placed in remedial writing and three in first-semester composition courses. What was equally disturbing in the results were overplacement of students. Overplacement occurred when the focus was on the English placement test. Students were placed in writing sequences beyond their writing experiences and preparation. Overplacement also led to students being inappropriately placed in degreed-credit courses instead of basic writing (Hassel & Giordano, 2015). Hassel and Giordano concluded that a single-measure test does not adequately assess students' readiness for college-level writing and that this body of evidence should be portrayed to policymakers, academic leadership and institutional stakeholders. The use of multiple-measures should be employed to assess college readiness.

Meeting APA Guidelines

One style of writing for many students to learn is the American Psychological Association (APA). Landrum (2013) looked at the emphasis of the writing process in the psychology discipline and noted that researchers and scholars studied ways to develop writing skills. Specifically, the writing process fell into three categories: planning what to write, translating ideas into text (transcription), and reviewing and revision (De La Paz & McCutchen, 2011). In 2007, the APA published APA guidelines emphasizing writing skills. Psychology educators used these writing skills guidelines to assess and gather students' achievements in psychological literacy and noted that the writing samples were essential to evaluation (Landrum, 2013). Although emphasis was placed on psychological literacy, evidence of these guidelines was illustrated in the current study. Furthermore, Landrum believed that writing could serve other functions aside from critical thinking. It could also present an alternate measure for thinking like a psychologist. For example, proofreading for errors and omissions could correlate to verbal reasoning, general knowledge, and vocabulary understanding.

While emphasis was placed on APA guidelines, Landrum (2013) reflected on earlier studies supporting claims by business executives who felt that students were graduating without the required skills and knowledge for the workplace. One study noted 10 areas of preparedness. Among the top three were global direction, self-direction, and writing skills. Earlier studies illustrated that new college hires were disciplined or fired because of their inability to effectively communicate in writing (Gardner, 2007) and that writing success required attention to detail. As part of the APA writing guidelines,

Landrum noted ways the writing process could be improved. Among the ways to improve the writing process was an effective assignment targeting paraphrasing skills to help students avoid plagiarism (Estow, Lawrence & Adams, 2011). The significance of the paraphrasing assignment could help with the development of synthesizing articles for a literature review. Additionally, the examples for improving the writing process supported earlier discussion points for this study on ways to enhance or motivate students to write.

Strategies and Diversity Assertion

While WAC was one approach to help universities and colleges improve student writing skills, *Writing in the Discipline* was designed to "correct students' shortcomings in writing proficiency" (Huskin, 2016, p. 284). Huskin (2016) noted that students' writing correlated to engagement, the more the student wrote, the more active and collaborative learning took place. As such, many educational disciplines were involved in writing initiatives and instructor preparedness to support student writing activities. To enhance these writing activities, Huskin recommended that instructors modify their courses and assignments as well as implement engaging strategies to ensure students success in writing. Some of the strategies to help with engaging practices in writing were course design, peer review, and minute papers.

An example of changing the course design could be activities that build upon one another to allow students the ability to explore, learn, and build on concepts throughout the course and with writing assignments. A peer review could be designed to offer an exchange between students, for example students could listen to a draft being read by a

peer and then comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the paper. Huskin (2016) noted that small group peer reviews were effective because these increase writer's confidence in the writing process. Another example of writing strategies were minute papers. Minute papers helped students generate ideas (a form of brainstorming) and tied these ideas to the course content. To deepen students understanding of a topic, instructors followed activities such as minute papers with discussion. This afforded the student an opportunity to make a connection between their writing and learning (Huskin, 2016). These were only a few strategies supported through writing disciplines. Other strategies related to increased grammatical skills in writing.

Austria (2017) perceived peer responses as an effective strategy to teach college writing and supported this ideology based on the teacher being the sole receiver of the students writing and who is often inundated with a large class size. Furthermore, peer responses created a comfortable writing environment for students (Liu & Hansen, 2002). Based on this belief, Austria conducted a study of 155 students aimed at six different areas; however, for this discussion only three of the six areas were noted. These include assessing the dynamics of peer responses for writers and editors, identifying the most common writing problems, and noting the success and effectiveness of the peer responses. Austria divided the 155 participants into 30 student-editors and 125 student-writers. Peer responses had specific guidelines: a writer wrote not less than a five-paragraph article and the editor gave comments in the margin (Austria, 2017). Findings from the study revealed that there were dynamic experiences associated with peer responses: 86.7% for editors and 94.4% for writers believed that peer responses were an

effective teaching strategy (Austria, 2017). Additionally, the editor noted some common writing problems. These difficulties included defining the purpose in writing, sentence placement, vocabulary use, and surface errors. Austria (2017) summarized from the study that the writer was the first reader and editor of one's own work, student peer response was an effective way to train students to become good editors and readers, and dynamics of peer responses depend on the connection between editors and writers.

According to Bullard and Anderson (2014), college instructors stated that most students were not prepared for college writing and that the amount of time devoted to teaching basic writing and grammar skills was often argued. As such, instructors faced a challenge determining ways to help students develop good grammar and essential writing skills. There continued to be emphasis placed on strategies to enhance both grammar and writing skills. Bullard and Anderson also noted that examining the ability to write clearly was an important skill required of journalists and used this career as a basis to examine writing games. Specifically, Bullard and Anderson conducted a study to examine if playing writing games, as a strategy, would help journalist students grasp basic grammar. Specifically, the study consisted of journalist students in different sections of a Beginning Editing course who were taught basic grammar using a different learning method, namely by playing grammar games.

Approximately 25 questions, or a pretest, were administered before the grammar unit of a beginning editing course. In addition, another 25 questions were administered during the posttest. The average testing threshold was 70 for both the pretest and posttest. The grammar test scores were analyzed and revealed that there was no

significant difference between those who scored above or below on the pretest. Interestingly, those who scored above 70 on the pretest increased their scores by 7.69 points (no game was administered) and those who scored below 70 on the pretest increased their score by 7.04 (game was administered) (Bullard & Anderson, 2014). Although there was no major difference in scores during the pretest, the significance of the findings was that students believed that during game-playing sections, they could learn more and would remember what they had learned. The grammar game-playing approach made learning more interesting and kept the students motivated. As with Huskin (2016), Bullard and Anderson sought to find ways to motivate students to learn applicable writing skills.

Several strategies for writing improvement continued to be displayed in theoretical literature. Among these were reflection writing. Studies supported that reflection could be a tool used to prepare students for life-long learning. Thus, Boutet, Vandette, and Valiquette-Tessier (2017) contributed to this body of knowledge by examining the effectiveness of reflection writing. Boutet et al. (2017) noted the purpose of reflection writing was to impact learning experiences, enhance awareness of feelings and attitudes, and improve student-professor relationships (McDonald & Boud, 2003; Mezirow, 1990; Wong, Kember, Chung, & Yeng, 1995). To further support the effectiveness of reflection writing, Boutet et al. conducted a study of an exercise administered to 609 students in an entry level undergraduate psychology course. Students were required to write essays. The goal of the study was to extend the existing literature on reflection writing by implementing a reflection journal exercise and

investigating methods to determine whether writing exercises promoted reflection (Boutet, et al., 2017).

Once the essays were completed, these were imported into coding software and analyzed based on the frequency of word usage and word count. A sampling size was selected from the analyzed data. In cohort one, there were 51 students enrolled in a 12-week winter course. In cohort two, twenty-five percent of the students were enrolled in a six-week summer semester. Next, a codebook was developed from the extracted essay data and related to learning, emotions, and attitudes (Boutet et al., 2017). The overall intent of the study was to examine reflection exercises to promote reflection on learning and academic performance. The lifelong learning aspect was revealed from the instructors' experience and the feedback provided. As the study was concluded, Boutet et al. (2017) noted that there were some limitations based on students' statements being influenced by perceptions to reveal personal information and reluctance to have the instructor evaluate the text. Nonetheless, Boutet et al. (2017) concluded that journal writing could "promote reflection on the process of learning" (p. 10).

The lack of essential writing skills was an area of concern for institutions, teachers, and employers. Gruenbaum (2012) maintained the issue related to students' inability to write well and made the connection to poor comprehension in reading. Poor comprehension led to poor writing abilities because students were unable to apply appropriate strategies to correct or clarify comprehension issues (Thiede, Griffin, Wiley, & Anderson 2010). Gruenbaum suggested that a reciprocal teaching (RT) method could provide strategies to increase comprehension, summarizing, and questioning techniques.

The author also noted that RT involved a collaborative effort between instructors and students and peers and students. Instructors could use the RT method to help lead discussions or correct grammar errors identified during online discussions. Gruenbaum successfully tied a lack of reading comprehension to ineffective writing skills in students as well as provided strategies for corrective action.

Although a lack of reading comprehension contributed to students' ineffective writing skills, students also required higher-level reading, writing, and critical thinking skills to write an expository essay. Mongillo and Wilder (2012) conducted a qualitative study on at-risk freshmen college students using a game-like, online expository writing activity. Specifically, Mongillo and Wilder targeted descriptive writing, a type of expository writing. The results of the study revealed that students could successfully write descriptively and that their peers understood them; hence, the online activity was successful at improving at-risk students' literacy skills. The applicability of this study to successful writing skills was beneficial and provided instructors with another strategy of how to engage students, encourage them to write more, and think critically.

Dana, Hancock, and Phillips (2011) contended that there was a misconception that students should be able to write through osmosis. By having a built-in ability to write, this would enable students to take this to the workplace. Dana et al. (2011) revealed that one course, alone, could not provide the writing skills needed to prepare students for the workplace. The educators of the online university within this study believed that writing was a stepped approach to building knowledge and development of writing skills. Further, Dana et al. stated that educators should reinforce that the

students' future careers may depend upon their writing skills and that an awareness of the lack of student writing skills could make WAC an invaluable asset. Dana et al. concluded that there are factors that contribute to poor writing across disciplines, and noted that feedback from instructors tends to be more successful than the use of a WC. Thus RT, peer review, reflection writing, various online activities, and WAC were available strategies to assist students with their ability to write scholarly and professionally. Diversity assertion could be impacting to students' ability to write well.

Diversity assertion. As a part of the literature review on diversity assertion, Perin (2013) described 13 studies; however, only five studies substantiated information relating to literacy skills of underprepared students. Perin noted that several factors impact the preparedness of students including low reading and writing skills, insufficient K-12 preparation, and barriers with socioeconomic status, race, and ethnicity. Students who possessed these low skills could enroll in remedial education. Additionally, the author noted that reform or remedial developmental reading and writing skills could be placed within course instruction. Perin recommended integrating instruction in the courses related to three strategies: supporting reading and writing tasks, combining reading and writing instruction, and referring students to learning centers for tutoring assistance. Perin was one of many researchers who attempted to identify methods to improve the reading and writing skills of underprepared students.

While writing challenges and diversity related to students with disability, educators also faced challenges with international student writers. Ferris et al. (2015) noted that University of California (UC) campuses experienced a five-fold increase in

enrollment of international students from 2005 to 2015. This was a significant climb from 700 students to more than 3,500 students (UC Berkeley Office of Planning and Analysis, 2014). Hence, there existed a requirement to have increased support for the international student population. This support came with challenges similar to entering first-year college students who were also first year composition (FYC) students. Instructors who were not familiar with the academic culture or the experiences of international students were teaching foreign students (Ferris et al., 2015). Moreover, this large influx of international students emphasized a need to consider changes in writing curriculum and required additional support for students and faculty. Based on this need, consultants from UC Berkley, UC Davis, and UC Los Angeles conducted a survey of writing instructors that focused on teachers' perceptions of the attendance, needs, and necessary classroom adjustments based on the increased number of international students in the classroom.

Although there were several areas noted in teachers' perceptions, the focus for this discussion related to the writing ability of international students. The study analysis revealed that overall grades for writing ability was about the same as other students and some international students did very well and others struggled. The areas of struggle were not just related to writing, both oral and reading skills were also areas of concern. The study also revealed whether instructors adjusted to the change in demographics of their classes. The responses were based on the amount of time spent with international students. This time varied from every office hour to students who did not come in at all for help. Surprising adaptations occurred: 68.5% of participants indicated that they

modified their writing instruction for international students based on presentation of information for assignments, instructions, and deadlines followed by 57% of the participants indicating that they used a careful eye to look out for those students who needed help (Ferris et al, 2015). Once the study was concluded, Ferris et al. (2015) noted that international undergraduate students were "misplaced or underprepared for university writing composition work…and grammatic policies were an issue because of placement" (p. 69). Additionally, even if writing instructors have high course loads, Ferris et al. speculated that effective teaching required ongoing PD. Ferris et al. saw this study as an initial attempt to determine the best approach to work with international undergraduate students. Much consideration, though, should be given to placement issues, course offerings, and teacher qualifications.

Although Ferris et al. (2015) focused on the challenges international undergraduate students faced, Thomas (2017) conducted a study to analyze the effectiveness of reflection journal/blog posts submitted by international students to improve writing skills. Thomas also noted that international students required support in the classroom and were often placed in FYC mandatory writing courses. The study was conducted at a mid-western university and consisted of 15 students (five groups of threes), 30 blogs posts, and 60 comments. Thomas noted from that blogging encouraged reflection and for students to write about their writing. As with essay coding noted by Boutet et al. (2017), Thomas summarized journal coding. Results from the codes indicated challenges in the areas of linguistic (grammar, mechanics, and semantics), process/strategy, and accomplishments (writing and researching). While valued

information was presented from journal/blog posts, Thomas concluded that the study provided instructors' perspective on international students' writing ability through instructor modification of course materials and created a bond of trust and understanding between student-teacher. Thomas suggested the need for a follow-up future study in the areas of assignments and corresponding journal entries, change in variables of who views the blogs, more teacher involvement to help ensure writer-growth, and maintain class size to relieve the burden on students and afford instructors the opportunity to focus on meeting needs of the international students.

Hyland (2013) also maintained that writing was central to aspects of university life, such as accomplishing research and teaching students. Hyland further contended that there was interest in writing because of the widespread of higher education across countries: increasing ethnic, class, and age diversity in the student body. Furthermore, Hyland stated that an interest in writing stemmed from audits on teaching quality and that most academics and students writing assignments were required to be completed in English. Hyland emphasized the following writing practice: the ability for one to not only create text, but to relay information which was readable and understandable. Hyland noted that a more culturally diverse population meant that learners brought different understandings and meanings to learning. There could not be an assumption that students had the same skills and learning experiences that would equip them with writing readiness. Although Hyland asserted that universities should devote attention to the process of teaching and learning and provide resources for training teaching staff,

noting a change in the student population and ability to teach to a more diverse body of students was paramount for writing readiness.

Thinking Critically

Although students' perceptions of their writing indicated no challenges, literature supported that writing challenges of students could be compounded by the ability to think critically when accomplishing writing assignments. Freeman and Lynd-Balta (2010) highlighted that there should be a separation between critical thinking to begin writing versus how a student conducts research on a computer. Freeman and Lynd-Balta also noted the use of technology for research did not indicate that students possessed literacy skills. Furthermore, literacy skills were an important education requirement. Both information literacy and integration into curriculum could be accomplished through collaboration efforts with a library (Freeman & Lynd-Balta, 2010). Jensen (2004) initiated thoughts on literacy skills and computer research. Jenson presumed that students search for literature lacked rigor and displayed a sense of false confidence in computer skills and sense of assurance that students could write well. Although Jenson (2004) added to the views on literacy skills and computer research, Freedman and Lynd-Balta (2010) noted the ability for students to think critically while describing how computer-based skills were used in the process of research. Freedman and Lynd-Balta devised ways to help students become literary scholars and avoid inadequate use of information gathered from sources. Understanding the use of computer based research provided an opportunity to explore strategies to help enhance writing skills of entering first-year college students and further supported a project study to examine essential

writing skills. Cavdar and Doe (2012) also supported the idea of examining the ability of students to think critically prior to writing.

Cavdar and Doe (2012) confirmed that students were surrounded by information through the use of online databases, websites, and social networks: the ability to critique and process information was lacking. Although online databases, websites, and social networks provided various source materials, there still existed a challenge for students to possess the skills needed to critique and analyze the information found. To illustrate the concepts to critique and analyze information found, Cavdar and Doe focused on a politics course and discerned the steps required for students to conduct research and develop, revise, and finalize a writing assignment. Cavdar and Doe also suggested that once an assignment was graded, if the educator did not encourage the student to reflect on writing errors, improvement was less likely to occur. Students needed more than just feedback from the instructor. The conclusion was drawn that this feedback could entail students' use of a two-stage writing process: a draft and a final paper (Cavdar & Doe, 2012). Accordingly, the instructor should engage critical thinking as the student begins to develop a written assignment for review. This is an aspect of essential writing skills needed for entering first-year college students.

Thinking critically and collaboration. In the body of literature, there was an emphasis on the importance of collaboration to ensure the success of postsecondary writing skills. O'Neill, Adler-Kassner, Fleisher, and Hall (2012) described a three-tier organization and noted the development of a Framework Task Force. They also indicated underlying beliefs associated with why students were coming to college with a lack of

essential writing skills. O'Neill et al., (2012) further stated that "drawing on these experiences was a best way for writing teachers to think through and articulate expectations for students entering college writing courses" (p. 521). The Framework Task Force articulated college and career readiness writing standards of complexity extending throughout K-12 education. These standards would later spread to college English, keeping intact comparable terms (O'Neill et al., 2012). One document of interest within the Task Force was the 2011 *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*. In this document, the task force indicated different approaches teachers could take to ensure the development of critical thinking and flexibility in the writing process. Among the ways to develop critical thinking through writing was for teachers to provide opportunities and guidance for students to read text, synthesize writing, evaluate sources for credibility, and generate questions to guide research (O'Neill et al., 2012). Although O'Neill et al. emphasized critical thinking, the information within the Framework Task Force was linked to the issue of students' lack of essential writing skills.

Collaboration with Writing Centers

In the current literature review, articles were primarily focused on a traditional classroom setting. Leaders from learning communities (LCs), libraries, and WCs collaborated to create best practices for student success in writing. Parisi and Graziano-King (2011) noted the purpose of LCs and observed that LCs consist of two or more courses linked and shared among a cohort of students, and that the teachers were a part of the collaboration to develop shared assignments. Collaboration between LCs and WCs relied on the tutors and their engagement with students. Parisi and Graziano-King

asserted that a gap existed when LCs and WCs were combined because of the tutor's role, specifically, with the perceptions of tutors and faculty on the roles of tutors in the classroom and WCs. Parisi and Graziano-King conducted a survey of both tutors and faculty and reported ambiguities surrounding the tutor's role in the classroom and WCs. Although tutoring fosters collaborative learning, Kail (1983) argued that a tutor's role could possibly undermine teacher instructional methods. Thus, Parisi and Graziano-King suggested that instructors and tutors look beyond traditional teaching methods and focus more on the students' ability to improve writing skills. Parisi and Graziano-King concluded that the lines between tutors, WCs, LCs, and instructors should not be crossed; instead, the focus should be on thoughts to implement best practices and the benefit of bringing together resources already in place to support writing readiness for students.

Ferer (2012) also noted the presence of collaboration efforts between libraries and WCs; specifically, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) sought trends in academic libraries and reasons for collaboration. These trends were sought largely due to decreased library budgets and an assertion for libraries to do more with less and to determine their significance on campus (ACRL Research Planning and Review Committee, 2012). Ferer indicated that many institutions continued to emphasize writing and literacy information within their courses and required students to take various writing courses. As such, Ferer asserted that the combined efforts of WCs and libraries could support the courses, strengthen their roles by uniting and supporting each other, and collaborate to assist with student success. Similar to Parisi and Graziano-King's (2011) overlapping concerns in LCs and WCs, Ferer observed that the goals of WCs and

libraries overlapped as well. In contrast, Ferer stated the overlap made the collaboration logical; staff could interact and exchange thoughts about research writing and assist faculty with assignment planning. Additionally, Ferer suggested that collaboration improved student services, retention, and success in higher education. Parisi and Graziano-King and Ferer both concluded that collaboration within WCs was logical and represented a best practice to engage writing skills within students.

Conversely, when looking at the benefits of going to WCs, Pistone (2010) determined that students felt that the tutors were more receptive and patient when they had questions about writing assignments. A caring tutor approach afforded one-to-one interaction, which built a solid tutor-tutee relationship (Pistone, 2010). However, comparing the caring tutor approach to a mother's role of nurturing and psychologist's consultation as an analogy to help ease students' frustration with teachers could lead to a new philosophical approach for WCs. As such, the tutor's role eased students' frustration while giving helpful tips on writing effectively. Moreover, Pistone provided theoretical support from Carl Rogers, a humanistic psychologist, as a basis for the research. Specifically, Pistone encouraged positive regard and actualizing theory. Pistone compared Rogers's actualizing theory to tutors caring approach to help students meet writing success, which enabled students to achieve success through graduation. While Roger's theory was relevant to the current literature review on essential writing skills, Pistone may have been biased toward the capabilities of teachers. Nonetheless, Pistone supported the position that assistance within WCs represented a best practice to engage writing skills within students.

Writing centers continued to be prevalent to assist students with essential writing skills. Specifically, Yeats, Reddy, Wheeler, Senior, and Murray (2010) described a study conducted on approximately 806 first-year students in a British college setting. Of the 806 students, only 45 went to the WC. The number of students who frequent WCs did not appear to fully support information or research already provided regarding WCs. Yeats et al. (2010) stated that WCs offered academic support in writing, allowed for access to other supported programs, and provided individualized tutor assistance to students. Yeats et al. identified two measurements for student success: student progression to the next course, and the student's grade or academic achievement. The results of the British college study revealed that students who attended WCs achieved higher grades and progressed to the next course. A lack of essential writing skills is not only a problem in American colleges, but is a global concern. Thus, Yeats et al. joined authors Parisi and Graziano-King (2011), Ferer (2012), and Pistone (2010) regarding thoughts on the importance of WC.

Writing centers, learning communities, and libraries are designed to assist college level students with writing skills. As such, the ACRL (2012) identified the top 10 trends impacting academic libraries: communicating value, data curation, digital preservation, higher education, information technology, mobile environments, patron drive e-book acquisition, scholarly communication, staffing, and user behavior and expectations. Specifically, three primary leaders in academic libraries and the ACRL membership noted a review of ACRL top 10 trends. The purpose of the ACRL was to look at trends within libraries as well as note trends in higher education. Additionally,

libraries were being charged to prove their value to the academic community and effectively communicate their ability to provide the tools that would help with the success of both students and instructors (ACRL Research Planning and Review Committee, 2012). Although libraries were competing against other forms of research venues, such as the Internet, libraries were the repositories for scholarly and published writing, setting them apart from other research venues. Another attribute proving the value of libraries is that these were set apart from non-traditional methods of research such as the ability to talk directly to a human source (ACRL Research Planning and Review Committee, 2012). The background information within this article enabled a connection to other articles within this literature review that related to collaboration between learning centers and libraries as well as LCs and libraries; thus, providing a means to further note the importance of collaboration efforts between libraries and WCs to help support challenges students face with writing.

Johnson and McCracken (2016) noted that ACRL fielded a new *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education (Framework)* and published *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies (NWWK)*. The *Framework* and *NWWK* provided threshold concepts which suggested how scholars and researchers in writing studies could use shared vocabulary and conceptual framework to collaborate on and revise existing curricula (Meyer & Land, 2003). Johnson and McCracken (2016) showed that library and writing program instructors needed to examine the *Framework* and *NWWK* in order for new integrations and partnerships to work. These two documents can be used to empower teachers with skill-focused writing and research instruction (Johnson

& McCracken, 2016). There was no set order of how these two documents worked together; yet, the combined concepts drove a particular field. Johnson and McCracken also noted that the collaboration between library and writing programs identified threshold concepts of information literacy and writing studies. The threshold concepts for the *Framework* consisted of six frames. Each frame included a definition and description followed by specific knowledge practices. One of the six frames titled "Scholarship and Conversation," was indicated in this study.

"Scholarship as Conversation" entailed communication, learning, and collaboration on context between scholars that occurred over time. Johnson and McCracken (2016) noted within the "Scholarship as Conversation" discussion, instructors needed to develop educational experiences that allowed students to work in a variety of disciplines and across communities. The concept derived from the "Scholarship as Conversation" related to students understanding that "Learning to Write Effectively Requires Different Kinds of Practice, Time, and Effort." Yancey (2015) recognized that this concept was difficult for students. Moreover, a misconception existed that students and instructors were good writers based on writing well in one genre leading to the success with writing in other genres. The concept was also difficult because it argued that effective writing required practice situated in communities and embedded within conversations (Johnson & McCracken, 2015). Thus, Yancey stated this argument suggested how complex writing was and how the activity spanned over a lifetime. To understand the concept of "Scholarship as Conversation" students must revisit conversations and reconsider how their work involved existing and ongoing research.

Johnson and McCracken concluded this threshold concept by noting that information literacy began with "Scholarship as Conversation." Students should see this as the driver and position themselves to understand the difficulties. Additionally, utilizing "Scholarship as Conversation" as the driver would enable educators to use the remaining five threshold concepts, as needed, to fit within the context of scholarly conversations investigated by students (Johnson & McCracken, 2015).

Implications

The implication for this study is related to awareness for universities, department chairs, and faculty to implement strategies (i.e. writing labs, Web-based tools to provide immediate feedback on written papers) to improve the writing skills of entering first-year college students. To be fully effective in their efforts to change the writing skills of incoming college students, there needs to be collaboration with local high school administrators and teachers who seek probable causes of why students are graduating without essential writing skills. As a part of the collaboration efforts with local high school administrators, information should be gathered on the courses being taught which place an emphasis on writing beyond high school. Additionally, any information obtained at the high school level should be shared with higher educational institutions to engage discussions on the changes required in the curriculum and used to establish writing skills for entering first-year college students. Ultimately, the implications of this study can lead to changes in curriculum at the local high school and entry-level courses taught to entering first-year college students. One final implication related to the findings

within the study as an indicator to researchers to provide effective feedback to new and current college students who are encouraged to reflect on their writing skills.

Summary

The ability to write well is vital to various educational disciplines, work environments, and careers. A problem exists with entering college freshmen students who are faced with the challenge of not being sufficiently prepared to meet the demands of postsecondary education writing requirements. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of instructors and students regarding the essential writing skills of entering first-year college students. As such, a literature review was conducted on issues and concerns related to entering first-year college students' poor writing skills and an examination of gaps in writing, what leads to academic success, and what is needed to meet the demands for career opportunities. As supported by literature, blame was placed in the K-12 education system. Through the literature review, I described articles, studies, and strategies related to the effectiveness of writing readiness of college students and noted how best to assist or improve students' writing skills. Authors and organizations highlighted that the role of higher education was to make writing a vital part of courses across all disciplines. Several articles supported the idea of WAC and were foundational to this study. *Writing in the Discipline* was also noted regarding strategies to help correct errors noted in students writing. Furthermore, the study provided information on various educational disciplines relating to health administration, medical toxicology, journalism and mass communication, agriculture, educational sciences, and liberal arts. Additional consideration was given to meeting APA guidelines in writing.

In Section 2, possible ways to accomplish a study on essential writing skills of entering first-year college students are described. The discussion points continue to highlight the purpose of this project study: examine the perceptions of instructors, students, and WC personnel regarding essential writing skills, and note the underlying factors impacting the lack of essential writing skills of entering first-year college students. Additionally, in Section 2, a description is provided of the research design used to examine the topic of essential writing skills for entering first-year college students. Discussed along with the research design are the participants, setting and sampling technique, data collection method, data analysis, and research accuracy and credibility.

The project rationale, review of literature, project description, implications, and reflections and conclusions are all discussed in Sections 3 and 4. Specifically, reflections and conclusions consisting of strengths and limitations, recommendations for alternative approaches, personal learning growth as a scholar, importance of the essential writing skills, and implications for future research are discussed.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of instructors and students regarding the essential writing skills of entering first-year college students. Additionally, through the lens of WC personnel, I considered the factors that impacted students' ability to write well, ascertained issues occurring during instructions and feedback on writing assignments, and determined areas requiring the most help in writing. The following sections of this study include the research design and approach, justification for the case study design, criteria and justification for participants, procedures to gain access to participants, protection and ethical considerations for participants, the data collection plan, and keeping track of data. Additional information outlined in this section includes access to participants, my role as researcher, data analysis, discrepant cases, and research accuracy and credibility.

Research Design and Approach

A qualitative, case study was chosen to examine entering first-year college students' poor writing skills impacting academic success in postsecondary education. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), researchers choose a qualitative research approach when data collection involves unstructured interviews. Additionally, within qualitative research, scholars use inductive reasoning to observe the phenomenon, search for themes, and perform interpretation from the analysis of these themes (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). Lodico et al. (2010) also noted that researchers use case studies to search for meaning, investigate processes, and gain awareness of a particular

group or situation. Additionally, a case study enables researchers to study the event, person, or group within its current environment (Bishop-Clark & Dietz-Uhler, 2012).

I chose an instrumental case study. I considered an intrinsic versus instrumental case study. Although an intrinsic case study is designed to learn about a phenomenon, scholars can use the instrumental case study to understand the specific issue (Stake, 1995). Both an issue and phenomenon have been discussed thus far in this study, and I conducted a study on the perceptions of instructors, students, and WC personnel on the essential writing skills required for entering first-year college students. A qualitative research approach using an instrumental case study design was appropriate for this study. This research design and approach led to the development of my RQs.

Justification for Case Study Approach

At the start of this study, I considered an exploratory design within a mixed methodology. Researchers use an exploratory design to conduct a study using both a qualitative and quantitative approach. The use of both interviews (qualitative) and survey questionnaire (quantitative) could strengthen the data collected and allowed for a more in-depth look at processes, perceptions, and attitudes. Although there is strength in using a mixed-methods approach, the disadvantages would be the knowledge to understand the mixed-methods approach and the time and resources required to conduct both approaches (Lodico et al., 2010). Moreover, a closer look at the quantitative data analysis would not fit well for this study because researchers using this approach compare variables (how one variable affects another), test hypotheses, and perform deductive reasoning (Lodico

et al., 2010). The research questions for the current study indicated no comparison between variables.

A qualitative phenomenological design was also considered. Although researchers use a case study to observe processes to gain insight and understanding of individuals or groups, phenomenological researchers seek to understand an individual's interpretation of his or her own lived experiences (Lodico et al., 2010). Lodico et al. (2010) also noted that phenomenological researchers observe and interact with the participants in order to select those most appropriate for the study. Furthermore, this design requires several initial interviews to gain insight into the development of questions for more in-depth interviews and involved collecting an extensive amount of data over time (Lodico et al., 2010). A collection of lived experiences would not provide the data necessary to understand the impact of WC strategies on incoming first-year college students' writing skills. Time-related challenges were not addressed in this study.

Participants

Criteria for Selection of Participants

There were three different categories of participants. A total of 12 participants were selected: five students, four instructors, and three WC personnel.

Students. The criteria for student participants was that the students were entering first-year college students. In addition, the students had to be enrolled in a writing discipline (such as English) or other educational disciplines. Five students were interviewed: two from writing disciplines and three from other educational disciplines. An additional criterion was based on the current perceptions of students regarding their

writing skills. Entering first-year college students perceived that there were no problems with their writing skills and that writing was not important to a career (Simkin et al., 2012). Furthermore, writing skills have not improved over the past 30 years (Jameson, 2007).

I had to ensure a good selection of student participants from other educational disciplines. Initially, the intended approach was to conduct a review of students' academic papers and note which factors contributed to students' challenges with writing. However, during the interviewing process, I discovered that the university's WC and Student Learning Assistant Center (SLAC) did not maintain student papers.

Instructors. Two instructors were selected from writing disciplines and two instructors from other educational disciplines. The selection of instructors was based on their experience to provide feedback and instructions for entering first-year college students as well as their knowledge and skills to write well and instructors' ability to model good writing skills. Mascle (2013) noted that modeling writing served as an approach to set a standard or achievement goal for students to obtain.

Writing center personnel. The criteria for WC personnel was based on their experience to review entry-level students' academic paper submissions. Writing samples were examined that identified issues occurring when instructions and feedback were provided on assignments and factors indicating areas that required the most help in writing. Participants within the WC were tutors. Some WCs depend on tutors and their engagement with students to help them develop as writers (Parisi & Graziano-King, 2011). Parisi and Graziano-King (2011) concluded that the lines between WCs, LCs, and

instructors should not be crossed; the focus should be on thoughts to implement best practices and the benefit of bringing together resources already in place to support writing readiness for students. The WC personnel provided insight into a possible gap between what instructors and students perceived to be factors impacting essential writing skills for entering first-year college students.

Setting and Sampling Technique

Instructors, students, and WC personnel are foundational to the writing readiness of entering first-year college students. The setting for the qualitative case study was a local university in the Southwestern region of the United States. The sampling methodology for this study was purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling allows for the selection of individuals or sites to understand the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). The purpose of the current study was to examine the perceptions of instructors and students regarding the essential writing skills of entering first-year college students.

Justification for the Number of Participants

When determining the sample for a qualitative study, the intent is not to generalize to a population but to select sites or individuals who can help to understand the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). Creswell (2012) noted that the researcher can study a single individual or single site and that the numbers will range from one or two to 30 or 40 participants. As researchers increase the number of individual participants or sites, the ability to provide in-depth analysis of data tends to diminish or become superficial (Creswell, 2012). Moreover, Charmaz (2006) stated that the purpose of the study drives the project design and sample size. I chose to interview five students, four

instructors, and three WC personnel based on those participants who could assist with the purpose of the study: to examine the perceptions of instructors and students regarding the essential writing skills of entering first-year college students.

According to Charmaz (2006), a small study might achieve saturation sooner; thus, data saturation could be a concern. Data saturation refers to the point where new data cannot provide any additional insight into the central phenomenon. Data saturation occurred during the interviewing process and was supported by the information in Table 1. Many of the responses began to overlap (i.e., common errors in writing and resources to help students obtain successful writing documents). Although it is important to ensure that qualitative samples are large enough to uncover the perceptions of the participants, it is equally important that the sample is not too large so that the data become repetitive or unnecessary. To remain consistent with the principles of qualitative research, I followed the concepts of saturation by ensuring that the number of participants was kept small for each category to lessen data saturation.

The goal was to gain an understanding of why entering first-year college students had poor writing skills. This understanding was found in the perceptions of students, instructors, and WC personnel. Creswell (2012) and Charmaz (2006) provided flexibility in determining the sample size of participants and in ensuring enough data are collected. A case study sample size could range from one or two to 30 or 40 participants.

Procedure for Gaining Access to Participants

Prior to conducting the study, I sought approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB; approval #05-31-17-0400410). Upon receipt of the

approval, I sent a request to the study site university to conduct research and for access to participants (see Appendix B). I emphasized the confidentiality and protection of the privacy of participants by removing personal identifiable information (PII). The PII were pseudonyms so that information was not easily connected to any participant.

Additionally, I obtained permission to work with a gatekeeper or assigned administrator at the college (see Appendix B). The selected university identified this individual as a faculty sponsor. According to Creswell (2012), the gatekeeper (faculty sponsor) assists the researcher in getting access to the site and in locating individuals for the interviewing process. I sought to gain the trust of the faculty sponsor by ensuring that the sponsor knew why the research site was selected, the purpose of the study, how long it would take, and what was to be gained from the study. Furthermore, the faculty sponsor worked with me to schedule, set up an interviewing location, and establish contact with each category of participants.

Methods for Ethical Protection of Participants

Ethical considerations were maintained throughout the research process through guidance or approval from the IRB, approaches to protect the privacy of participants, and ensuring the validity and credibility (trustworthiness) of the data collected. According to Rossman and Rallies (2010), questions regarding how the researcher involves participants in a study fall under the authority of IRBs. The IRBs ensure that there are protection for human participants, and it serves as the policy oversight for researchers. Rossman and Rallies further indicated that ethical considerations encompass a set of rules for a discipline that dictates procedures to follow to ensure that the data collected are

reliable and valid. An additional training from the partnered university was required through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative, which emphasized ethical principles, assessing risk of human subjects, informed consent, and privacy and confidentiality. By adhering to the guidelines established by the IRB, I ensured that the requirements were met to protect the privacy of participants (consent forms were completed) and developing or gathering valid and reliable study data.

Because qualitative data could become sensitive during an interview, I addressed ethical concerns by ensuring that each participant was briefed on my role, purpose of the study, informed consent, and confidentiality. I ensured that participants were treated ethically and their rights were protected. Prior to the study, participants were given an informed consent form with my contact information for questions or concerns. Also noted were the researcher-participant alliance. Issues could be encountered that relate to information shared off the record for the participant and the researcher's possible personal experiences (Creswell, 2012). During the interviewing process, I refrained from biases. In anticipation of ethical issues, an interview protocol worksheet (see Appendix C) was developed and a letter (see Appendix D) was given to participants informing them of the study and participation in the study as being voluntary. These documents served to guide any ethical concerns, which may have arisen. There were no issues during the data collection shared off the record.

Data Collection

Data were collected after the number of participants and ethical concerns were addressed. According to Ghandoura (2012), researchers can use a qualitative approach to

collect data through field notes, interviews, assigned papers of students, and student diaries. In the current study, the data collection method was interviews.

Justification for interviews. According to Creswell (2012), advantages for conducting interviews include (a) the opportunity for the participants to provide detailed personal information, (b) better researcher control over the information received, and (c) the collection of participant information that the researcher cannot directly observe. Hatch (2002) also identified interviews as a qualitative data approach that researchers use to understand participants' experiences or interpretations of a phenomenon. Although I considered other data collection methods, such as focus group interviews, individual interviews enabled an understanding of the essential writing skills needed for entering first-year college students. Moreover, a focus group interview could impede the researcher's ability to take notes due to the presence of distractions, and transcription of data from the tape recorder could be unclear as to who was speaking (Creswell, 2012). For these reasons, individual interviews were conducted to collect data.

Document review. A second data collection method used was to review documents within the WC. As noted in the section for the criteria to select participants, I reviewed writing samples that identified issues occurring when instructions and feedback were provided on assignments and factors indicating areas requiring where the most help in writing was needed. Creswell (2012) noted that documents are a valuable source of information that supports the understanding of the central phenomenon. The documents aided in examining the perceptions of college instructors and students on the essential writing skills of entering first-year college students. However, neither the WC nor SLAC

maintained students' academic papers. Papers were reviewed online and in-person, and key issues were addressed during the same hour or day. Sufficient information was received from the interviews to support what issues were often noted in students' writing.

Interview and Data Collection Plan

Once the data collection methods were identified, the next step was to identify the type of interviews and the data collection plan to follow when conducting the interviews. Sample research questions were used to help guide the interviewing protocol.

Semistructured interviews. The interviews were semistructured. A semistructured interviewing process allows for flexibility when asking standardized questions to each participant with the opportunity to probe beyond those questions (Lodico et al., 2010). I developed open-ended questions based on the literature review and placed these questions on the interview protocol worksheet (see Appendix C). The protocol worksheet provided a form covering instructions, questions, and space for note taking (Creswell, 2012). Furthermore, Creswell (2012) noted the advantages for conducting interviews: it provides an opportunity for the participant to give detailed personal information, the researcher has better control over the information received, and it provides participants information that could not be directly observed by the researcher. The interviews were conducted face-to-face; however, one interview was conducted via Skype and still served as a face-to-face communication.

Data collection plan. The data collection plan followed standard interviewing procedures consisting of participants signing a consent form, ensuring the participants' right to anonymity, and explaining the purpose of the study. Once the participants were

selected, introductions, confidentiality, and general information about each participant were reviewed. The researcher must become a good listener, use effective follow-up questions, and record the information (Lodico et al., 2010). These procedures were followed in order to conduct the interviews with each student, instructor, and WC personnel.

Systems for Keeping Track of Data

Interviews were transcribed using an interview protocol document (Appendix C) to keep track of data. Initially, an iPad was indicated as a means to audio record the interviews and recommended as easily transportable; however, most participants were not amenable to being recorded. Only one of the 12 interviews was audio recorded. This interview was conducted via Skype and the participant agreed to the accommodations. Once the interviews were completed, I individually tracked and password-protected the data that was transcribed and reviewed. At the end of each interviewing day, the transcribed interviews were typed and stored within a computer file for later coding and classification of emergent themes. Coding provided an approach to analyze the data by identifying and recording passages of text from the interviews and indexing and categorizing this data into evolving themes (Gibbs, 2007).

Storing collected data. Once the project study was complete, all data, electronic files, and reference materials were maintained and protected with a plan for all to be retained for a minimum of five years after completion of research. Specifically, the following steps were taken to secure all study-related data:

- handwritten notes were transcribed into a Word document,

- one recorded interview was transferred to my desktop computer,
- scanned consent forms onto my desktop computer,
- destroyed all hard copies of interviewing materials, and
- ensured all transcribed, transferred, and scanned files were converted to an electronic format and password-protected.

Any study data, including pseudonyms used in the data collection coding process, which were not included in the prior steps, are maintained in a locked file cabinet in my study office and will be destroyed a minimum of five years after completion of this research study.

Access to Participants and Role of Researcher

The following approved procedures through the IRB process were used to gain access to participants. First, letters were sent to the university requesting permission to conduct the study. As stated earlier, I also worked with a faculty sponsor to schedule, set up an interviewing location, and establish contact with each participant category.

My role as a researcher. I have worked as an instructor for 11 years for an online university. Although I did not teach at the university where the study took place, being an instructor was an added benefit due to my knowledge of entry-level students' writing abilities. While the knowledge of entry-level students' writing abilities was a benefit, it could also be seen as a bias because there may be a tendency to lead the interview. Merriam (2009) noted that researchers should identify their biases and understand how they could shape the data collection and affect analysis of data. In order to ensure there were no biases in my approach to interview participants, individuals were

briefed on the intent of the study and I followed the interviewing protocol worksheet. I refrained from leading the responses and allowed the participants to provide their inputs and perceptions regarding essential writing skills. To lessen any formed biases and prior to performing this study, I did not have any interactions with the students, instructors, or WC personnel. Furthermore, my role in this study was a lone interviewer and transcriber; as such, I prepared all the documents and provided all the materials needed to collect and analyze the data.

Research Accuracy and Credibility

To establish credibility in this case study, rigorous methods and procedures were followed to carefully code and analyze the data, develop themes, and triangulate the data. Several methods existed to collect data for this case study design. For this study, interviews were the primary source of data collection. Two possible methods to validate or triangulate the data from interviews are member checking and transcription of notes. Stake (2010) noted that before data gathering, the researcher should inform the member what to expect at the end of the interview. Interviewees were given detailed information on what to expect at the end of the interview and the intent of the member to review and check the accuracy of the information gathered. Stake (1995) also noted that member checking provided the participant with the opportunity to evaluate the credibility of the researcher's interpretation. For this study, the triangulation process consisted of member checking and transcription of notes.

The transcription of notes was placed on a protocol sheet during the interviewing process. At the end of each interviewing session, handwritten notes on the interview

protocol worksheet were transcribed and typed. Once this step was completed, the worksheet was emailed to the participant and the individual was asked to verify the accuracy of the information. Stake (2010) noted that member checking is vital to qualitative research and often occurs slowly; sufficient time should be given to the participant to respond, driven by a date the researcher needs the information back. Based on the amount of information transcribed, participants were given sufficient time to respond while other interviews were being conducted. Two weeks was provided before final data analysis was accomplished. Responses remained as written if there were no changes to the transcription document. All participants reviewed their transcriptions, thus adding credibility to the accuracy of the data collected. There was great success in this step, no documents were returned from participants requiring changes. Credibility and accuracy were established through this process. Consideration was given to discrepant data as data was collected and reviewed.

Procedures for Dealing with Discrepant Data

During the validation process, I reviewed each interview and noted information or responses from participants to identify any discrepant evidence or data. Lodico et al. (2010) explained that discrepant information consists of data that is contradictory to an emerging category or theme and provides a varying perspective. There was a slight variation in the answers to the interview question relating to the perceptions of instructors regarding writing skills of entering first-year college students. Two instructors indicated that students wrote better than they did years ago and that they were prepared. This was based on students having style guides and taking a hybrid, mainstream course prior to

their first English course. I assessed any validity threats during data collection and analysis by testing these threats against existing data or data collected during the research process (Anderson & Aydin, 2005; Maxwell, 1996). There may have been an urge to ignore data which did not fit with prior theories or conclusions (Anderson & Aydin, 2005; Wolcott, 1990); however, if data did not appear to be relevant, the data was placed in a separate file and revisited as needed. A thorough examination of emergent themes from the interviews was conducted to help support the data analysis. Prior literature and data collected allowed for moving beyond these comments and to conclude that there were no significant discrepant cases.

Data Analysis

After data was collected and notes were transcribed, data was read and coded. As part of the coding process, concept maps were used as a preliminary draft to catalog data according to topics, emerging themes, and arising issues from the study (Stake, 2010). The concept maps were developed based on general themes emerging during the interviewing process. After each interview, notes were hand scribed to help form thoughts on the approach to take when coding the data. The concept maps were identified as instructors (see Figure 1), WC personnel who are tutors, (see Figure 2), and students (see Figure 3).

Figure 1. Instructors Concept Map

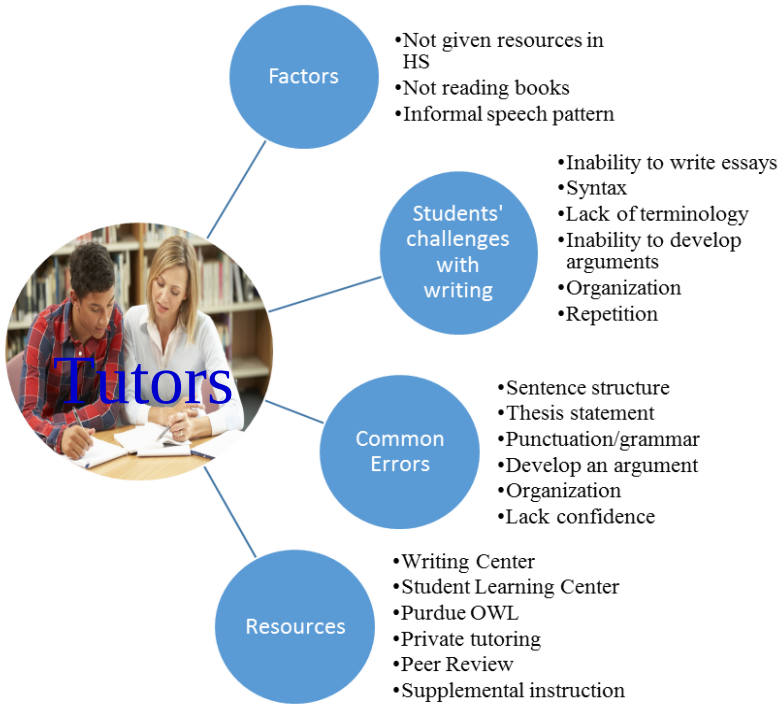

Figure 2. Tutors Concept Map

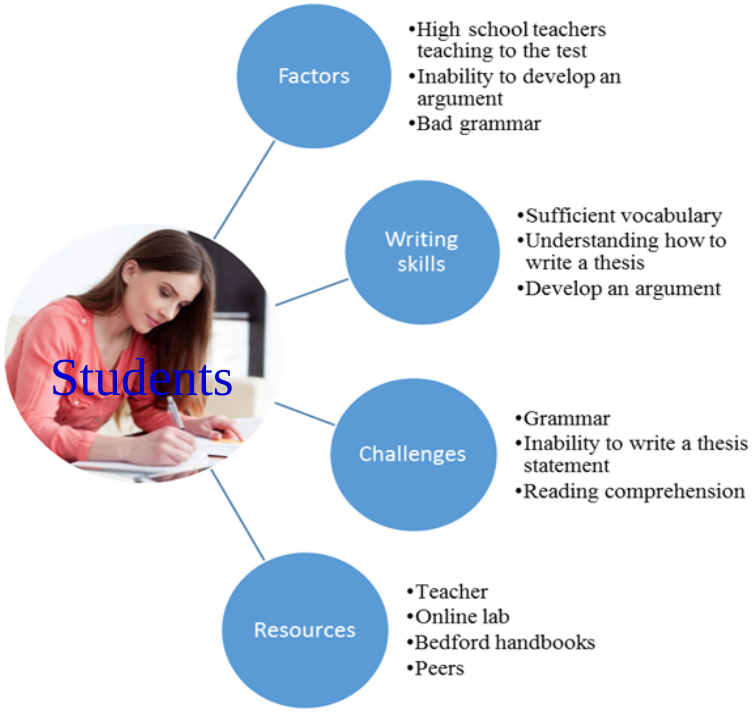

Figure 3. Students Concept Map

After preliminary cataloging of data, color-coding was used within each interview to formally organize, code, and analyze the data. Initially, the coding was accomplished by category of participants followed by an overall analysis and emerging themes from the twelve participants. A separate narrative analysis document was prepared and then merged into this project for an overall analysis summary.

Interview Findings

The interview data analysis began with each participant being informed that I would type the handwritten notes from the interviewing protocol worksheet, email the document, and give them an opportunity to review the information for accuracy. Also, as part of the interview data analysis, each interview transcript was read, similar concepts were color-coded, and specific comments were noted that were relevant to the research

questions. While the research questions were specifically covered, the additional probing questions gave insight into factors and challenges students faced when writing. During the interviewing process, I also made initial notes to keep track of my thoughts regarding concepts and emerging themes. As part of the transcription process, the handwritten notes were typed into a Word document, themes were color-coded, and individual responses to each research question and sub-questions were addressed. All files associated with the data collection process were placed in a folder and organized to indicate each category of participants in order to include consent forms and interview protocol worksheets. This allowed ease to color-code themes by category and then summarize the data based on all participants. Additionally, pseudonyms were assigned to each participant as follows:

- Instructors: Betty, Janice, Debbie, and Alice
- Tutors: Lisa, Vanessa, and Agnes; and
- Students: James, Angie, Jenny, Julia, and Sue.

Within each category of participants, the guided research questions were addressed.

RQ1: Instructors' perceptions of students' writing skills. An interview protocol worksheet was used to collect data to address the first research question: *What are instructors' perceptions regarding entering first-year college students' writing skills?* The subquestion to RQ1 fell under tutors' interview analysis. Four instructors were interviewed. Instructors provided detailed responses to each question on the interviewing protocol worksheet and provided insightful information regarding the challenges students faced when writing. To address RQ1, instructors' perceptions regarding entering first-

year college students' writing skills varied from mechanics to their confidence level to write. Two of four instructors noted that entering first-year college students who were three months out of high school, made more grammatical errors early in the course, tend to write the way they thought, had some distractions associated with cell phones, and had less care about the academic setting. Instructor Alice stated that "It is discouraging as to where students are in writing/casual writing: sentence fragments, write the way they talk, and less care of this being an academic setting." One comment from Instructor Janice even alluded to the fact that writing was no worse than it was 30 years ago. Specifically, Instructor Janice stated that "We have to find ways to get them up to higher order thinking; writing is no worse than it was 30 years ago. It appears to be the same and students come in that way based on a lot more distractions, continuity problems (even in their sentences), and more grammatical errors." After noting Instructor Janice's comments regarding 30 years ago, I was able to make this connection to Jameson's (2007) comments that an examination of literature into writing readiness for college students revealed several factors as the basis for poor writing skills. These factors have inundated students and have not improved over the last 30 years.

Conversely, information was revealed from the remaining two instructors. Instructor Betty stated, "Students performed as well or better in writing; they were locked into ways of writing, ready to learn, and had dropped bad habits." Instructor Betty felt that students were well prepared. Instructor Debbie was very pleased with the students' writing skills. She felt students were better writers than when she grew up and they had the ability to use citations and multiple style guides. Instructor Debbie shared a best

practice to help her students become better writers: “I relate the information to pop cultural as a means to get students motivated to write and with repetition of information.” One contributing aspect to help students become well prepared was the use of a hybrid, mainstream course which students took before their first English class. This approach aligned with earlier referenced literature supporting the requirement that students entering a Southwestern institution of higher education must have an essay writing score of five on the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) assessment to indicate college readiness. A score of four or below puts the student at a developmental level (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2014). If a score of five was not obtained, the student was then enrolled into a developmental course.

RQ1, Subquestion: WC personnel’s perceptions. The subquestion to RQ1 related to the participant category, WC personnel—tutors: *What are writing center personnel’s perceptions regarding writing resources that could benefit entering first-year college students?* Pseudonyms were used for all participants. As I began to analyze the data from tutors’ interviews, the same factors, challenges, and resources appeared. Central themes were color-coded based on the same approach used for instructors and students. Three tutors were interviewed. To address RQ1, subquestion regarding WC personnel’s perceptions regarding writing resources that could benefit entering first-year college students, the following resources were noted: online writing labs, supplemental instructions, private tutoring, SLAC, professors, and peers. Moreover, similar or same themes emerged relating to high school, mechanics in writing, students’ ability to develop a thesis statement or argument, and their ability to write an essay. One follow-up

question asked each tutor whether or not writing skills improved over time, and the answer was a resounding "yes." Specifically, the following comments were made. Lisa stated, "Writing is a skill that can be trained. Students need to get over their beliefs that they cannot be trained. Writing is putting the pieces together—it is a trainable skill." Vanessa added, "If a student is a repeat user during the same course, I am able to analyze the causes and find the correct resources to help the students with their writing problems." Finally, Agnes described writing skill improvement,

> Writing is a skill that can be improved if the effort is put in. Not every student puts in the effort needed to improve in writing. Some students do come in often and I enjoy when they come in more than once during the semester; I can see the writing skills developing.

The students' interviews revealed that they did not go to the WC as a separate location to receive help with writing. The students at the university where this study was conducted relied on tutors. Pistone (2010) noted that students felt that tutors were more receptive and patient when they had questions about writing assignments. A caring tutor approach affords one-to-one interaction, which builds a solid tutor-tutee relationship (Pistone, 2010). The one-to-one interaction was very evident when I visited and interviewed the tutors at the SLAC.

RQ2: Instructors' perceptions of essential writing skills. The second research question also related to instructors' perceptions: *What are instructors' perceptions regarding essential writing skills necessary for entering college first-year students to be academically successful?* Instructors noted that essential writing skills required for

students to be academically successful consisted of the following: ability for students to write a focused thesis statement, support the thesis statement with arguments, have an organized and structured paper, utilize critical thinking skills, have a strong grasp of grammar, an ability to follow punctuation rules, employ general mechanics (such as commas), and have an ability to read through scholarship writing to accomplish research. Three of four instructors responded that the required writing skills for students to be academically successful are organization, structure, critical thinking, and development of thesis statements. The response from Instructor Betty captured this aspect best: "Students need to be able to write a focused thesis statement, be able to support the thesis statement, have an organized paper, look at bigger things—overarching writing, and have critical thinking skills." One instructor focused on mechanics entailing a strong grasp of grammar and following punctuation rules. Instructor Alice stated, "Every semester I have to slow down and teach certain aspects of this." The required essential writing skills were similar to some of the common errors found in students writing and materialized from follow-on questions relating to factors contributing to poor writing skills.

Thus, a follow-on question from the instructor Interview Protocol Worksheet was relevant in helping understand the challenges students faced with writing skills. In particular, further questions aided in noting the factors, which contributed to poor writing skills. One factor that influenced poor writing skills of entering first-year college students was consistent in instructor responses and stemmed from how students were taught in high school. Comments from instructors noted the following:

- Students past experience with high school and their ability to retain information

- Students' loyalty to their teachers
- State test had a focused writing style
- High school teachers taught standardized test preparation.
- High school classes did not provide the preparation necessary for students to have good writing skills.
- Entering first-year students relied on what they were taught in high school and the first semester of college was primarily used to break this habit.

RQ3: Entering first-year college students' perceptions. The third category of participants, students, addressed RQ3 and a second subquestion: *What are entering first-year college students' perceptions regarding essential writing skills necessary to be academically successful in entry-level courses?* ***Subquestion:*** *What are entering first-year college students' perceptions regarding which writing resources could benefit entering first-year college students?* Five students were interviewed. The responses to RQ3 were varied; however, themes that emerged from the responses were similar to instructors and tutors. Students' perceptions of essential writing skills to be academically successful consisted of reading comprehension, good listening skills, being able to pick a point and explain it, ability to develop a thesis statement and have a counterargument, correct use of terms and vocabulary, development of sentence structure, and time management skills. Additional questions focused on factors contributing to poor writing skills, students' perceptions of their writing ability, challenges they faced when writing academic papers, and available resources in the WC to assist with composition challenges. Comments by students were brief regarding students' perceptions of their

writing skills. James viewed high school writing techniques as irrelevant to what is required of college composition. "I believe that the skills in high school did not apply to how we write in college. The writing style is different." Julia echoed similar comments of James, "I feel that high school education impacted poor writing skills because some teachers simply passed the students." Angie stated her thoughts regarding students writing skills as, "It is the worst; I often have someone else to proofread and edit my writing." Jenny briefly stated a challenge in writing due to "repetition and length of paper." Finally, Sue stated, "not understanding the topic as the main difficulty she faced when having to write."

The subquestion to RQ3 noted students' perceptions of writing resources that could benefit them. The responses revealed similar themes. For students, I color-coded resources as a theme and listed the categories as WC, SLAC, peer reviews, professors, and online writing labs. Students who indicated they were not good writers stated they needed assistance with editing, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and vocabulary. Some of these issues emerged as factors contributing to poor writing skills. One of five students was detailed in her response regarding a resource she could benefit from. Julia purported, "I need resources to help with the thinking process (critical thinking) and assistance with writing prompts, thesis paper, body paragraphs, and reviewing my paper. I use the SLAC two times a week." Concluding students' perceptions of their writing skills, three of five students felt they were good writers. Moreover, at the conclusion of the analysis for the three categories of participants, similar themes emerged. Table 1 depicts summarized themes and categories from the interviews.

Table 1

Case Study Themes and Categories

Theme	Category	Students	Instructors	Tutors
Factors	How taught in HS	X	X	X
	Developing an argument	X	X	
	Taught to write to the test		X	X
	Informal speech	X		X
	Bad grammar	X		
Common errors	Organization		X	X
	Comma issues		X	X
	Punctuation		X	X
	Grammar	X	X	X
	Sentence structure		X	X
	Develop an argument	X	X	
	Vocabulary		X	
	Develop a thesis statement		X	X
Required writing skills	Ability to accomplish research		X	
	Organization		X	X
	Think critically	X	X	
	Ability to write a thesis statement	X	X	X
	Strong grasp of grammar		X	
	Mechanics of writing	X	X	X
	Reading comprehension	X		
Resources	Writing Center (WC)		X	X
	Student Learning Center (SLAC)		X	X
	Bedford handbooks	X	X	
	Professors	X	X	X
	Peers	X	X	X
	Online writing lab		X	X

The themes in Table 1 were based on frequency of responses and trends noted in each category of participants. The category of participants (students, instructors, and tutors) is different than the theme category of responses. The first theme, factors, was derived from responses to question one in the interviewing protocol worksheet. This question pertains to what factors contribute to poor writing skills of entering first-year

college students. Particularly, how writing is taught in high school was the most frequent response, followed by developing an argument, teaching to write to the test, and informal speech. Students were the only category of participants who listed grammar as a factor. Grammar was later revealed in other themes.

The second emergent theme from the interviewing questions was common errors. Common errors in student writing were addressed in response to question two for students and question four for instructors and tutors. Question two addressed students concerns regarding perception of their writing ability as college students. Two areas emerged: grammar and developing an argument. Overwhelmingly, instructors indicated eight common errors, six of which emerged as trends in interviews with tutors. The prominent six common errors noted by instructors and tutors were organization, comma issues, punctuation, grammar, sentence structure, and developing a thesis. Again, grammar emerged as a trend for the three categories of participants.

The third theme, required writing skills of entering first-year college students, was in response to interview question two. Students, instructors, and tutors identified thesis and writing mechanics as required writing skills, followed by organization and thinking critically. Only student participants listed reading comprehension. Only instructor participants listed research and a strong grasp of grammar as required writing skills. Tutors' responses had emerging trends commensurate with instructors and students. No single category was noted.

The final theme concerned resources available to assist students with essential writing skills. Trending responses to student question four and instructor and student

question were collected from the interviewing protocol worksheet. Frequency of responses most noted for available resources were professors and peers, followed by the WC, SLAC, Bedford handbook, and online writing lab.

With the exception of the theme of factors, the frequency responses in instructor responses included three or four themes. The frequency of responses for both tutors and students were most prevalent in two of four themes.

- Instructors – common errors, required writing skills, and resources
- Tutors – common errors and resources
- Students – factors and required writing skills

While there were notable frequency responses for each of the themes, instructors' themes and categories overlapped with the other participants' responses. The emerging themes further supported the findings for this project study to develop a PD workshop titled, Does Success in Writing Start with Educators?

Concluding analysis. Although the questions were different in some areas, evidence showed that some factors, common errors, required writing skills to be academically successful, and writing resources overlapped. For example, students may have indicated that bad grammar was a factor that contributed to poor writing skills, but grammar was also a common error and a required writing skill for students to be successful. This same analysis was seen for developing a thesis statement and argument. The results of the survey revealed that the most used resources used to help entering first-year college students with writing challenges included the university WC, Student Learning Assistant Center (referred to as SLAC), professors, peers, and an online writing

lab. During the interviews, students did not indicate going to the WC as a resource because they had not yet used it. These students knew the WC existed; however, they primarily sought the help of tutors, professors, and peers. Also, after talking with the WC director, it was discovered that there were slight differences between the WC and SLAC. Specifically, the director stated that the WC was only to assist students with writing while SLAC was a tutoring environment for all subjects such as math, psychology, writing, etc. The goals, though, were the same. It is highly likely that SLAC tutoring was one of the reasons students had not visited the WC for assistance. According to instructors and tutors, SLAC was used because of the ability for students to have just-in-time assistance with writing.

The WC consisted of instructors who were a part of the staff to assist students with writing. Two of four instructors interviewed were a part of the WC and were not interviewed from a WC personnel perspective: rather from an instructor's role. The tutors were from SLAC fulfilled the role as writing center personnel. As a researcher, I had to separate the roles to ensure maximum understanding of how each interacted with the students and their knowledge level of essential writing skills of entering first-year college students. In either case, the location of personnel overlapped; however, there was a distinction in roles and application of the interviews to keep the categories of participants as originally identified for this study.

Conclusion

This section explained the research design and approach. Specifically, used was a qualitative research instrumental case study design to examine the perceptions of college

instructors and students on the essential writing skills of entering first-year college students. Justification was provided to support why a case study design was chosen versus other qualitative designs and other research approaches. It was identified why qualitative phenomenological design and mixed-methods approaches were not optimal for this study. Also noted was the time and resources required to conduct qualitative phenomenological and mixed-methods studies. In addition, participants were identified along with the criteria for selection, justification for the number of 12 participants, procedures for gaining access to participants, and ethical protection of participants. Several documents were used to ensure success in gaining access to the participants and conducting interviews. Initial documents consisted of using the following documents: letter of request, consent form, interview protocol worksheet, and cover letter to participants. Data was collected after establishing the project study design, number of participants, and initial documentation.

The method chosen to collect the data was semistructured interviews. A data collection plan was established and followed standard interviewing procedures consisting of participants signing an informed consent form. In addition, I assured anonymity and explained the purpose of the study to the selected participants. Furthermore, I stated how the data was collected, transcribed, and stored. As part of collecting data, it was noted that I was the solo interviewer and individually transcribed and prepared all the documents. Once the data was collected, it was analyzed and a means to validate the research resulted. The data analysis consisted of coding, cataloging, and noting similar themes within the interviews. Color-coding themes and categories were used to organize

the data. Research accuracy and credibility of the research was based on how the data was triangulated to ensure validity in the findings: Member checking and transcription of notes were used to ensure validity. A final consideration for this section was how to handle discrepant data. There was a slight variation in the answers to the interview question concerning to the perceptions of instructors regarding writing skills of entering first-year college students. This information was not overlooked, was noted, and set aside for use as needed. No major discrepant cases were noted. Overall, a thorough analysis of the data collected was conducted and the validity of the findings was ensured.

After completion of the analysis, the findings revealed factors that contribute to poor writing skills, common writing errors, required writing skills to be academically successful, and writing resources. The findings from the data collection and analysis indicated that a PD workshop would benefit both high school teachers and postsecondary educators. During this PD workshop, educators could discuss challenges students faced with writing in high school and college. Further collaboration could offer an opportunity to share experiences, discuss strategies, and provide support for writing resources. A 3-day PD workshop can be planned to focus on educators' collaboration of poor writing skills of students and strategies to help students be successful writers when entering college. Section 3 offers support for the findings, an outline, and presents the rationale to support the planning for a PD workshop.

Section 3 also describes the introduction of the final project, supporting rationale, review of literature to support the project genre, project description, evaluation plan, and implications. Finally, Section 4 describes the project reflections and conclusions. This

final section details the strengths and limitations, recommendations for alternative approaches, personal learning growth as a scholar, reflection on the importance of the essential writing skills of entering first-year college students, and implications for future research.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

Section 3 includes the project, including a description to address the main points of the findings, rationale for the project genre, and review of the literature related to writing skills. The purpose of the project was to address the findings from this study: Instructors, teachers, and educators need to help engage students in effective writing as well as methods to model good writing skills. To provide support for the chosen genre and content of the project, I reviewed literature on writing workshops as the primary means for PD. Following the literature review, a detailed description of the project's implementation, evaluation plan, and implications is provided.

In the findings from this project study, I found factors that contributed to poor writing skills, common writing errors, required writing skills to be academically successful, and writing resources, which led to the development of a 3-day PD workshop to be held for local Southwestern high school teachers and first-year-level college professors. Additionally, the 3-day PD workshop was designed to incorporate the ideas expressed by the research participants. The PD workshop is titled, Does Success in Writing Start with Educators? (see Appendix A). The PD workshop should begin each of the 3 days at 8:00 a.m. and end at 4:00 p.m. An administrator, department lead, or principal should supervise the workshop. These are preliminary aspects of the workshop.

Description and Goals

The primary goal of the workshop is to provide instructional strategies to secondary and postsecondary educators to improve essential writing skills of entering

first-year college students. Additionally, the workshop will highlight factors that contribute to poor writing skills of students and provide strategies, such as peer editing, revise feedback methods, and encourage teacher modeling to further equip secondary and postsecondary educators with the tools to empower students with good writing skills. Another goal beyond instructional strategies is to emphasize the importance of collaboration and support among secondary and postsecondary educators that can lead to changes in writing instruction or curriculum.

Prior to implementation, a proposal will be provided to my assigned university requesting funding support for a scholarship of the teaching and learning project. I will recommend that the workshop be considered as a course to meet recertification and PD requirements. The overall purpose of the workshop is to provide educators the opportunity to collaborate with their colleagues and local Southwestern high school teachers, create and shape resources, provide an examination of curriculum development to support writing skills and challenges, and provide a forum for participation in activities about strategies for teaching mechanics in writing. As a result of the workshop, the attendees will be able to discuss and develop strategies and resources to assist educators as they collaborate and engage in learning exercises. Handout materials will be provided and collected to help formulate and develop follow-on course materials for the PD workshop.

Rationale

Upon completion of the essential writing skills of entering first-year college students' research, a project was developed to address the factors that contribute to poor

writing, common writing errors, required writing skills to be academically successful, and writing resources. The project was selected as a result of the findings. I found that there should be more collaboration between high school and postsecondary educators on the best strategies and approaches to engage students in writing. This engagement could lead to further development of the essential writing skills for entering first-year college students in order for them to be academically successful. Grade school teachers need to be more experienced at teaching writing skills. Forman (2016) noted that teachers should attend PD classes to direct their attention to becoming experienced writers versus focusing solely on the mechanics of writing. Forman established writing workshops based on permission granted by the school principal. The principal agreed that the workshops could count toward recertification points. Working through the concept of recertification would also make this PD workshop optimal for grade school teachers.

Calkins and Ehrenworth (2016) also stated that school districts should support PD to improve writing skills. Grade school teachers must understand the importance of writing and not just to fill a check box for state testing, thus, removing this perception of entering first-year college students noted in the findings of this study. The PD could also be beneficial for postsecondary educators. The PD can include ways to best assist grade school teacher with expectations of college-level writing and to achieve academic success in the writing skills of college students.

Prior to the selection of a PD workshop genre, I considered other genres to support the findings from this study. Specifically, I examined the curriculum plan genre; however, before curriculum changes could occur, strategies should be reviewed and

collaborative efforts accomplished to determine where curriculum changes could occur. Odden, Archibald, and Fermanich, (2003) noted that PD should be organized based on groups of teachers from the same school, department, or grade level and should occur over time. Odden et al. also noted that PD should focus on improving the content knowledge of teachers, understanding the content that they teach, knowing common student problems with the subject, and linking successful instructional strategies to these content areas. Teachers would have the opportunity to be engaged in analysis of teaching and learning and lead to "perfecting a standard-based curriculum unit…PD opportunities should be a part of implementation of new curriculum and instructional approaches" (Odden et al., 2003, pp. 55-56). Changes in curriculum should be secondary or follow the outcomes from a PD workshop. Furthermore, the evaluation report and policy recommendation with detail genres did not apply because the study was not an evaluation study or present a position paper for a policy issue.

Review of the Literature

I found that an applicable genre would be a PD workshop for local Southwestern high school districts and postsecondary educators. Teachers should be aware that writing is a craft, and it should be a part of content throughout the day (Forman, 2016). Forman (2016) stated that there are challenges that grade school teachers faced when trying to instruct writing to students. Forman claimed that developing teachers' ability to write would equip them with understanding that writing goes beyond mechanics: Forman (2016) stated, "Without direct instruction and experience as writers, they have little else in their toolboxes to share with students" (p. 31). A variety of electronic databases

provided the references to support the literary review, including the Walden University Library, ERIC-EBSCOhost, ERIC and Education Source simultaneous search, Sage journals, and Google searches. Queries consisted of the following keywords and phrases: *PD and writing skills, PD, workshops and writing, postsecondary educators, and writing skills.* The keywords generated several peer-reviewed studies between the years 2013 and 2018. Reference pages within the sources provided additional avenues to support this literature review.

Professional Development Grounded in Theory

Shabani (2016) explained how Vygotsky's developmental theory, social mediation, could be applied to PD for educators; human activities are a sociocultural mediated process wherein language plays a role in the life of an individual. Moreover, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (SCT) has five underlying core views; however, only two will be stated in this study: learning precedes development and social interaction as the basis for learning and development. There is a connection between models of PD, developmental theories, and an understanding of PD in teachers (Shabani, 2016). As such, Shabani identified several professional models related to learning and development. Among these were Kumaravadivelu's (2001) and Oxford's (2001) thoughts on action research.

Action research is a tool to gain information about students' language and cultural background and to provide a tool for teachers to use practical knowledge as an active role to move closer to teacher independence (Kumaravadivelu, 2001; Oxford, 2001). Additionally, action research is a way to develop teacher's professionalism and serve as a

means for self-improvement. Shabani (2016) noted that guided activities allow the novice teacher to note expertise on an individual level and receive immediate feedback from students on the quality of their teaching. Shabani linked the interface between Vygotsky's theory and models of PD by stating that involvement in the development process allows teachers to acquire different skills and knowledge through collaboration with peers. Together, members can provide each other with remedies for instructional problems. Shabani noted the implications for designing and implementing PD and how teachers should participate in social activities and groups, that sufficient time should be allowed for the teacher-learner to gain PD, to provide external support or follow-up after experience with PD (continuous), and the mutual benefits of participation in a PD for the teacher and teacher-learner.

Educators Continuing Professional Development

Continuing PD helps educators to become more confident in their ability to develop strategies and best practices to propel their students to academic success. Forman (2016) described the decision to become an educator and a reading specialist. As a reading specialist, Forman surveyed teachers within an elementary school district only to discover that many had never taken a writing class. Forman noted that the need was clear: a PD class at the school or county level to bring awareness to teachers that writing is a craft. Forman stated that teachers' exclusive focus of mechanics did not give them sufficient tools to share with students the art of writing. Moreover, by offering PD workshops in writing, teachers could develop as writers in order to teach writing (Forman, 2016).

To carry out the development of the writing PD workshop, Forman (2016) met with the principal and developed a plan to teach six classes. The principal agreed that the workshop could apply to teachers' recertification points. The teachers' recertification points would be a bonus, ensuring that teachers were engaged in the development of their writing skills (Forman, 2016). Forman developed concepts and practices to be used in the classroom. Attendance of teachers was good and the majority attended all six classes. Forman's workshop appeared to be successful because employing work from prominent published authors regarding their writing process bolstered teaching points. Additionally, indication for the success of the workshop related to teachers being able to publish stories they developed in the school's literary magazine (Forman, 2016). Forman found the workshop to be a success because the teachers cared about developing their writing skills.

Fleischer (2017a) also noted that teachers' participation in workshops is a form of collaboration efforts for writing projects. Fleischer wrote about the importance to help advocate for teachers as a part of the political process for writing and initiatives that impact lives of educators. Fleischer stated that teachers are redefining their roles as professionals as those who are required to educate others and focused on smart, safe, and sustainable tools for educators. Although safe and sustainable methods are important to educators, being smart related to how educators respond to questions relating to pedagogical instruction (Fleischer, 2017a). Fleischer noted that "Working smart also means being aware of what we know well and acknowledging what we don't know quite as well" (p. 90). There are three ways educators could become smart and increase knowledge: immerse themselves in research as a means for PD; accomplish classroom

research, talking to administrators, parents, and decision makers; and join professional networks, such as National Writers Project (NWP; Fleischer, 2017a). Fleischer concluded by listing questions educators asked themselves: what problem keeps them up at night, what issues do they want to learn more about, and how do they prepare to answer a question from a colleague or parent on improvements to pedagogical instruction.

Fleischer (2017b) also noted that teachers are allies with other teachers and colleagues and share ideas, teaching practices, and student work to promote a way of writing as well as being proactive with parents and families. Fleischer saw these to be an advocate for changes in curriculum and writing instruction. The advocacy for writing could be shared in a workshop with parents and families to further involve them in extended writing activities outside the classroom. Fleischer mentioned that NWP provided a way for teachers to work together. The NWP also developed a family literacy initiative that offered workshops for parents and families to help them better understand writing instruction (Fleishcer, 2017b). The family literacy initiative illustrated the need to have a means to increase writing skills for students. Fleischer concluded that as a part of congressional advocacy, having allies among colleagues, parents, and community members is important. This then forms the basis for stakeholder involvement.

Many educators desire to have more PD. Zwart, Korthagen, and Attema-Noordewier (2015) ascertained some of the issues surrounding the ability of teachers to continue as educators. An approach was taken called Quality from Within (QfW), which focused on the development of teachers and students. Zwart et al. noted that when

teachers connected their inner strengths to colleagues and students, they could find effective approaches to education. Zwart et al. used the QfW approach to observe six schools. Teachers in the study reflected on their instructional styles as compared to the QfW approach. The QfW approach led to the development of an intervention program that was grounded in the following principles:

- Concerns of the participants was the starting point and principles of core reflection
- Core reflection methods were practiced with the students in the work environment
- Encourage personal reflection
- Apply what was learned with both students and colleagues
- Deepen reflections to promote team engagement and school level involvement (Zwart et al., 2015).

Teachers had an increase in self-efficacy in coaching. Teachers felt that they were more successful when coaching students or colleagues. Emotions played a role in teachers' strengths. Specifically, the way teachers deal with emotions could have an impact on their personal growth and the emotional support received from colleagues and their institution to further their development as a teacher (Cowie, 2011). The intent of the study was to help support teacher development as a means to sustain them in the career field. Teachers leave the profession at a higher rate than other professions. The QfW approach was one example of how institutions could engage their teachers and promote PD. Zwart et al. noted that QfW was not an easy approach to gain the information to support how best to retain teachers through PD. As such, the implications from this study

was to bring awareness to how PD could promote teacher learning and change the beliefs of responsible individuals to target projects for PD of teachers.

Secondary Educators Professional Development

Educators are challenged with writing or building skills within themselves in order to have a more confident approach to writing instruction. Gair (2015) developed an elementary writing course for a teacher certification program. The course was monitored over a 4-year period and consisted of a "capstone project for teachers to write and illustrate their own children's book" (Gair, 2015, p. 443). The course emphasized identifying language arts, developing good writing traits, and monitoring individuals' progress in writing. Gair chose a narrative format for the course assessment to yield transformational learning in reading and writing skills. Moreover, the course focused on a writing workshop approach that was used to support the writers through the writing process. The writing process began with group instruction to prepare minilessons focused on teaching one concept at a time and the craft of writing regularly (Gair, 2015). A minilesson was followed by an independent writing exercise. There was also a time set aside for the substantive writing process to prewrite, edit, revise, and collaborate with peers or the facilitator. Overall, Gair's intent was to create a learner-centered environment that promoted active learning much in the same way teachers would engage their students.

During the course, Gair (2015) discovered the fears of teachers and labeled these as *writing monsters.* The writing monsters consisted of reluctance to write, oppositions to peer editing, when feedback on written work caused immediate change in the direction

of the story, and the fact that the teachers did not like to write (Gair, 2015). Gair noted these patterns of behavior, allowing teachers to use writing monsters as a reason not to write; thus, giving teachers permission to fail. Coupled with the writing monsters, the writing assessment was too rigid. The proposed analytical rubrics caused resistance in writing and weakened the writing process. Therefore, Gair changed the assessment to a holistic rubric approach. The holistic approach was summative and afforded an opportunity for a chosen narrative to have building blocks in a genre consisting of a setting, characters, plot, climax, theme, and a conclusion (Gair, 2015). At the conclusion of the course, the final exam was the capstone project where published children's books were displayed. Gair concluded the paper with the results intended. It was validation of a 4-year project that a writer's workshop approach prepared teachers to be thoughtful writers and that collaboration with peers allowed for the removal of fears and perceptions of writing.

Levitt, Kramer-Vida, Palumbo, and Kelly (2014) contributed to the literary works on PD writing workshops. Levitt et al. (2014) noted that PD should focus on assisting teachers to teach their students' writing skills to communicate in the 21st century. The authors followed a yearlong partnership between a university and school district to focus on educators' ongoing learning practices. It should be noted that the professors from the university acted as consultants to provide the lessons and activities needed to support writing skills development and strategies for the teachers. Although the educators identified in this workshop were elementary teachers (grades one thru four), its significance related to PD of writing instruction for teachers. The consultants met once a

month for a period of one year and provided training materials for the grade school teachers to use.

When the teachers received the teaching models from the professors, they personalized these to meet the needs of their students (Levitt et al., 2014). The teachers also collaborated monthly with each other during the lesson-building activities. In order to enhance writing skills, the teachers used novels and books from different genres and also used writing as a part of their reading program. Additionally, and as part of the PD efforts, the professors provided insights into the writing process each month by helping the teachers move from school instruction materials to workshop methodology (Levitt et al., 2014). These efforts were also designed to help teachers move from teaching writing in isolation by employing steps in the writing process: specifically in prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing. Levitt et al. (2014) noted that the writing process allowed the consultants to demonstrate teacher-directed, student-centered minilessons. In essence, the development of a more interactive approach to writing was employed that involved engaging activities with peers or even group writing. The interactive approach did not negate the students from being taught mechanics; they were given prompts to allow elaboration on their writing (i.e., topics on sports and hobbies).

To measure the success of the year long PD workshop, a 15 question Likert-type survey was administered. Teachers commented that students participated in the mini-lessons and enjoyed the interactive activities. However, a negative aspect of the learning tools was time constraints and management issues. Some activities were too long and were difficult to track. This negative aspect did not deter the teachers from continued use

of the minilessons or the writing process provided by the consultants. In fact, the assistant principal noted during a meeting that the approaches helped teachers to be prepared for district writing (Levitt et al., 2014). The PD workshop also yielded collaboration amongst the teachers; they developed a skills-based curriculum map to use the following year. Levitt et al. (2014) concluded that by the end of the workshop, the grade school teachers reevaluated their thoughts and original concerns about a writing workshop and successful writing, enhanced students' skills, and their thoughts regarding their ability to write.

Kissel and Miller (2015) addressed how pre-K and kindergarten teachers could bring learning workshop practices into a resistant environment of structured curriculum. Kissel and Miller described the efforts made by a teacher who was given the pseudonym name, Shannon. Shannon went against the odds of an administrator to bring into the pre-K classroom a writers' workshop. Shannon used the ideas from attendance at a PD writers' workshop. The students were allowed to write stories on a topic of their choice and display these in the hallway; the hallway bulletin board was required by all teachers to display writing progression in their courses. Outsiders, such as colleagues and administrators, were skeptical that this teaching method would not work at such an early age; however, Shannon built on the students' stories by posting sticky notes and note cards of their accomplishments (Kissel & Miller, 2015). Shannon's teaching techniques allowed others to see how the students' writing was developing. Shannon's students were encouraged and framed the bulletin board to indicate that pre-K writers' performed well (Kissel & Miller, 2015). Once this approach continued, other teachers began to ask

Shannon about the approach used. This became an even more powerful tool to help deter the administrators' objection to the non-standard teaching method. Moreover, the writers' workshop was an opportunity for students to choose a writing topic and genre, where to write, and who to write with; thus, giving decision making power to the students to direct their writing (Kissel & Miller, 2015).

Calkins and Ehrenworth (2016) cited historical research on various initiatives used nearly 30 to 50 years ago to support an awareness of the level of writing across secondary schools and their districts. Calkins and Ehrenworth noted that the writing process is a learned skill that entails writing often, having a certain mindset, and knowing what you will write about. Calkins and Ehrenworth described how Murray's (1968) work sparked a revolution and a global achievement gap to assist student learners in the development of writing globally (Wagner, 2008). Of particular note, Wagner's (2008) research was presented in the 2003 National Commission on Writing that also called for a writing revolution. The 2003 National Commission on Writing's report stated that students needed to double the amount of time spent writing in the classroom (Calkins & Ehrenworth, 2016). While Wagner (2008) discussed the 2003 National Commission on Writing, Murray's (1968) historical information related to three elements to sustain writing: time to write, choice in writing, and feedback. Thus, Calkins and Ehrenworth (2016) summarized Murray's thoughts on writing by emphasizing that schools need to set aside quality and valued time to write. To support time being set aside to write, developing an ideal writer entails 10 minutes of class instruction, 30 minutes of writing, and five to ten minutes of time to share the results of writing (peer feedback) goals

(Calkins & Ehrenworth, 2016). In order to relate to a choice in writing, students should be allowed to choose the topic to write about. Choosing one's own topic increases students' passion about their writing and enables them to be more engaged in the writing process.

The third element to sustain writing is feedback. This is one of two effective methods to increase learning (Hattie, 2009). Calkins and Ehrenworth (2016) used Hattie's research regarding feedback and noted that when time is set aside to give feedback, value is added when the student is mastering the writing process. In other words, feedback is valued when given while the student is going through writing as a part of his or her class. Although these three elements of writing instruction are prevalent, writing well has not changed. According to Graham, Harris, and Chambers (2016), 21st century writers can flourish when given time to write, have a supportive writing environment, and feedback. What was also added was the need to have clear and detailed instructions. These elements have been previously noted in the development of a writer's workshop and include the use of minilessons, conferences, and small work groups. The writer's workshops are designed for shared writing genre and teaching the craft of writing as well as supportive writing and feedback (Calkins & Ehrenworth, 2016).

After noting historical research on writing, other aspects of writing success were noted such as goal setting and developing teachers as writers. Goal setting was an extension of feedback or a means to reduce the gap between where the student is and where he or she may end up at the end of feedback on writing (Hattie, 2012; Calkins & Ehrenworth, 2016). Calkins and Ehrenworth (2016) further illustrated that a teacher's

own writing can be used to model good writing skills for students. Moreover, Calkins and Ehrenworth concluded their research by noting that leadership involvement plays a large role in the development of teachers as writers. Professional development was the backbone of any school and was seen as the first step to raise the knowledge level of students. Professional development also has other benefits because it will help reduce teachers' fears of their writing abilities, gain new knowledge of writing content and skills, shared experience of writing, and raise student achievement in writing (Calkins & Ehrenworth, 2016).

Several authors have conducted research to determine the value of writing workshops to prepare educators to write: Forman (2016), Fleischer (2017), Gair (2015), and Levitt et al. (2014). To add to this body of research, Locke (2015) conducted a study on the impact of an intensive PD writing workshop for secondary teachers. The study consisted of six teachers over a period of six days. The foundation for the study emerged from a two-year project conducted during the years 2010-2011 at the University of Waikato. Locke (2015) designed a participatory and collaborative action research study yielding qualitative and quantitative results. Locke (2015) focused on self-efficacy to improve writing skills and teacher's instructional writing and whether or not the results from this study would have a positive impact on students' writing performance.

Once the study on the intensive PD writing workshop was completed, a questionnaire was administered and data was analyzed to reveal emerging themes (Locke, 2015). The questionnaire revealed that the following features enhanced teacher confidence: learning about the writing process, writing related to a childhood memory,

sharing writing with a group, and teacher sharing of stories (Locke, 2015). Emerging themes from the qualitative data analysis revealed actual writing, peer response groups, modeling writing, prewriting activities, and guided revision. Locke reflected on the workshop findings and surmised five primary themes. Three of those themes are mentioned in this project study. Specifically, Locke (2015) noted that teachers welcomed discussions on writer apprehension and fears, the value of peer evaluations, and content knowledge of writing practices such as sharing stories about writing and teaching writing. As with Forman (2016), Kissel and Miller (2015), and Gair (2015), Locke's study added to the research relating collaboration to share stories about writing and fears or apprehension from teachers regarding writing.

Authors, Lingwall and Kuehn (2013) and Zwart et al. (2015) showed that writing self-efficacy evolves from mastery experience. Additionally, Locke (2015) and Calkins and Ehrenworth (2016) provided insight that writing confidence is demonstrated through modeling, feedback, and writing instruction. Mascle (2013) provided information indicating that mastery experience is gained through writing with value and purpose; it is a means to help students grow and develop as writers. Mascle also noted the importance of modeling writing and comparing these experiences to serve as an approach to set a standard or achievement goal for students to obtain. Mascle added to the thoughts on modeling, and provided insight regarding feedback and the value of a writer's workshop. Feedback helps to sustain writing confidence and a writer's workshop allows for comparable experiences of peers (Mascle, 2013). Mascle ended with thoughts that

treating students as writers, teachers managing classroom experiences, and using writing workshop contribute to writing self-efficacy.

Continuing the discussion to support the value of a PD workshop for teachers is emphasized in the works of Li and Zhang (2015). Li and Zhang (2015) conducted a study of 22 K-12 teachers to examine whether a process-based writer's workshop could assist them with the challenges they faced in writing instruction. Li and Zhang laid the foundation for this study and noted that teachers were not very good writers; specifically, teachers were not taught how to write as a PD, and the tools/materials they were provided were done so with minimal writing instruction or barely scratched the surface of what was required for writing. Participants consisted of graduate students in a master of arts education program and were all secondary educators. The participants were enrolled in a six week summer course that implemented strategies of a process-based writer's workshop and in such a manner that the course would be a part of the teachers' capstone project (Li & Zhang, 2015). Li and Zhang (2015) noted that as part of the requirements for the workshop, teachers submitted nine written assignments based on daily reflections and the process-based approach, and students were required to submit the assignments within the course via Blackboard, an online learning platform. Data collection for the process-based writer's workshop study was from interviews, daily reflection, written assignments, and instructor field notes. The data collection documents from the workshop, along with member checking, were used to triangulate the data (Li & Zhang, 2015). Once the data was collected and analyzed, the findings revealed five phases of the workshop. Instructor molding was in phases one and two and included generating ideas

and synthesizing. The remaining three phases were drafting, peer mentoring (revising and editing), and publishing (sharing) (Li & Zhang, 2015). The 2014 National Writing Project sanctioned the process-based writing approach. At the conclusion of the findings, several recommendations were provided for writing instructors and students. Among these recommendations were synthesizing sources, modeling the writing process, and increased teacher involvement in professional writing within their school district (Li & Zhang, 2015). Calkins and Ehrenworth (2016) also showed that feedback, peer revising, editing, and modeling were a valuable part of a writer's workshop to help increase writing skills.

Postsecondary Educators Professional Development

The findings from this project study yielded an opportunity to further research about how PD can support postsecondary educators. Teras (2016) noted that PD is often accomplished at the grade school level but that higher education is going through changes and the requirements for PD for university educators is becoming more prevalent. Emphasis should be placed on developing self-regulation skills and more collaborative learning. Teras (2016) conducted a study of an online PD (oPD) program called *Twenty-first Century Educators* (21stCE). The 21stCE was a fully online certification postgraduate program involving 32 participants out of which 22 completed the certification program. The focus was to assign small teams of six to eight participants per facilitator; thus, the focus for this literature review was a small group consisting of seven participants. Teras (2016) used a narrative qualitative research design that allowed the participants to tell their stories about their learning experience in the oPD. Additionally,

21stCE employed a variety of social technologies as a part of the learning environment; one such technology was the use of blogs (Teras, 2016). The analysis consisted of writing in a third person narrator voice. Teras (2016) summarized what the participants were thinking and discussed their collaborative online learning experience and its impact on PD.

Collaborative learning experience. At the onset of the oPD, development of a community did not go well. Four educators felt the course was chaotic, lacked understanding of how the course was structured, the online environment was messy and hard to navigate, and they did not know how to start a blog. One educator even stated they did not know who the facilitator was. Of the seven educators, only one felt comfortable with the structure of the course and worked to help others by creating screen cast videos and explaining the technical issues (Teras, 2016). The remaining two educators focused on their self-development and self-learner strategies to develop their own teaching skills. They were less concerned with the collaborative efforts of the oPD. Teras (2016) felt that flexibility in the timetable and submission deadlines could relieve some of the frustration that occurred and that perhaps there should be a balance between collaborative and individual tasks. Teras (2016) concluded that conflict existed when there were different preferences and goals.

Impact on PD. Teras (2016) determined the impact from this study related to changes in classroom practices and perceptions of teachers. The educators discovered it was easier for them to think creatively and bring new learning ideas to the classroom. Some of the methods and tools the educators used had an impact on the students and was

successful. Among the tools used were flipped classroom and social networking. Other classroom practices consisted of a breakdown of difficult concepts into understandable terms, more interactive approaches, and reflective learning. The change in perception was largely due to the stories told by the educators and their reflection of experiences in the oPD learning environment. They reflected on what happened and how things could be done differently next time. Teras (2016) noted that the 21stCE had a significant impact on professional growth and identity and concluded that PD programs should not be one-time workshops "but collaborative and reflective long-term developmental endeavors that are seamlessly integrated in teaching practice" (p. 273). Despite the study's limitations, this study offered insight into experiences and strategies of a collaborative oPD program.

Innovation in writing starts early; however, it is known that supervision of writing extends through high school, undergraduate, and graduate school years (Lee & Murray, 2015). Lee and Murray (2015) focused on supervising writing at the postgraduate level consisting of the following areas: supervising students during research, approaches to teaching academic writing, framework for supervising writing, and theoretical assumptions for the framework. For this literature review and focus of the project study, only the aspect of approaches to teaching academic writing will be discussed. The framework was identified as a holistic approach to writing. The writing supervisors can give more attention to students writing by utilizing these strategies and approaches: pointing students to writing as problem solving efforts and using feedback to develop critical thinking. These efforts can encourage writing supervisors as well as academic

developers to help students become successful researcher writers. While the importance of this article focused on writing supervisors for postgraduate work, Lee and Murray (2015) noted that PD is needed for doctoral writing supervisors and that workshops could use the framework from writing supervisors regarding the difficulties they encountered with students' writings.

Cremin and Oliver (2017) noted that the ability to write is a crucial 21st century life skill and supported their opinions with several studies relating to teachers as writers. Cremin and Oliver (2017) purported that teachers as writers have been debated for a long time. Additionally, Cremin and Oliver (2017) surmised that little was known about teachers' attitudes regarding writing, their writing abilities, and whether their writing instruction had an impact on students' success in writing. As such, Cremin and Oliver (2017) took a systematic approach to reviewing studies spanning a period from 2004 to 2015. During this timeframe, findings related to teachers' attitude toward writing, their personal writing practices, consequences of themselves as writers, and teacher's sense of themselves as writers and how this impacts students (Cremin & Oliver, 2017). To answer these findings, teachers did not consider themselves as writers, some were fearful and reluctant writers, attributed their feelings to personal experience writing in school, did not practice or write often, and there existed an inability to reconcile the differences between personal and school writing or personal and professional writing (Cremin & Oliver, 2017).

Gair (2015) also noted the fears teachers experienced when beginning to write and labeled these as *writing monsters*. There was not enough evidence to support whether

personal attitudes or teachers' sense of themselves as writers impacted students writing skills. Moreover, the review indicated that teachers had a narrow focus on what constituted writing and being a writer. After the findings, Cremin and Oliver (2017) noted that more research was needed to ascertain the effects of teachers' writing on the disposition for students to write. However, what was evident from the findings was that training programs play a role in developing teachers' attitudes and sense of themselves as writers.

A supporting reference for this project study came from Duchardt, Furr, and Horton (2016) on the challenges undergraduate and graduate educators face with students' writing. Duchardt et al. (2016) noted that very little writing was occurring at secondary schools. Additionally, Duchardt et al. cited Graham's 2009 National Survey on teaching writing to high school students, noting that 30% of elementary teachers and 70% of high school teachers stated that preparatory programs did not provide them with the tools needed to teach students to write. As such, Duchardt et al. conducted a study of five writing samples each from three online undergraduate and graduate courses. The measurement instruments were Sentence Score Sheet and Error Monitoring Score Sheet. Duchardt et al. indicated that the study was a follow-up to a 2006 longitudinal study and that only a small sampling was used. The findings from Duchardt et al.'s follow-up study on the five writing samples for the online undergraduate and graduate courses indicated that a more comprehensive analysis was needed to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the graduate students and what factors contributed to the struggles they faced with writing. Findings also showed that students were poor writers in complex sentences,

punctuation, grammar issues, and ineffective in editing their own work (Duchardt et al., 2016). Some writing strengths were displayed such as writing complete sentences, using appropriate capitalization, and ability to properly format paragraphs. Duchardt et al. (2016) felt mastery level for writing of undergraduates and graduates should be between 90 and 100 percent. To increase writing proficiency, Duchardt et al. (2016) proposed the following recommendations for students and instructors.

The following recommendations were listed for students:

- Employ peer review and feedback
- Use cue cards when completing written assignments
- Use grammar and spell check
- Proofread carefully
- Check sentences of 25 or more words
- Take advantage of online WCs and tutors

The following recommendations were listed for instructors:

- Allow peer feedback and review on first drafts
- Evaluate student writing early and provide insight into their writing ability
- Assist students to transition from K-12 environment to postsecondary studies
- Provide examples and resources
- Model excellent writing examples to students
- Dispel negative thoughts about receiving writing feedback; designed to help improve their writing

Durchardt et al. (2016) concluded, as others have, that instructors should be aware of students' writing level, provide individual support to help students meet an acceptable writing skills level, and collaborate in a program to determine acceptable writing standards.

Thomas Warren (2015) wrote about an educator's technical writing journey and supported the belief that educators should be well versed in writing in order to teach others. Warren (2015) starts with the challenges to develop an undergraduate and graduate course in technical writing. Warren needed a PhD in order to be competitive in his field and began the pursuit of a PhD, only to find out that the requirements had changed. Specifically, Warren (2015) was not hired as a professor of technical writing as initially planned. Awaiting an opportunity to infiltrate the writing career field, Warren attended various conferences, reviewed sample writing letters, and read books on business writing. Warren also became a member of various organizations, wrote book reviews, and offered papers at different conferences. Ultimately, Warren was self-taught, using various readings in books, reviewing sample writings, and attendance at conferences to develop technical writing courses.

After receiving a PhD and through diligence and work-related experiences, Warren (2015) successfully established 19 courses in technical writing and communication. These courses were taught at the undergraduate and graduate level and consisted of information in editing and style, writing for professional publication, and project management (Warren, 2015). Although Warren was self-taught, emphasis was placed on the need for educators to use a combination of tools to be able to teach writing

such as reading textbooks, giving presentations at conferences, collaborating with other practicing communicators, and accomplishing research. Because of coursework and degrees, Warren (2015) concluded that what one knows and learns sets the precedence for opening doors.

A different type of PD consisted of a partnership between writing across curriculum (WAC) and civic engagement (CE). While WAC existed in this forum, WAC was later created or changed to writing across communities (WAC). This is a concept that was repurposed by Kells (2007) to cultivate an awareness of how literary practices are molded by economics, culture, and linguist factors. Savini (2016) discussed the essence of a partnership between WAC and CE and used this as a basis to develop a writing retreat. The retreat consisted of faculty and community members who came together to focus on collaboration with stakeholders with the aim of establishing learning goals for students, writing, and peer reviews and to attend workshops (Savini, 2016). There were 17 participants who were divided into small groups based on their stage in the writing process. Cross discussion occurred to determine the best approaches for developing instructional teaching methods. Savini perceived that a successful WAC involved two things: PD for instructors who are engaged in teaching writing and reinforcement of writing skills through a student's college career. Furthermore, the partnership between WAC and CE can bring awareness to literacy practices shaped by culture and linguistic factors (Kells, 2007).

Some of the initiatives gained from the WAC/CE partnership include instructors being enthusiastic about alternative pedagogy instruction, an opportunity to develop

writing assignments for different forums (i.e. letters to representatives), and an opportunity to promote reflective writing practices. Savini (2016) built on these initiatives and noted that the goals for a writing retreat would be to support educators' writing, share peer practices, and foster collaboration across disciplines. In order to measure the success of the writing retreat, Savini administered a post-event survey. Fifteen participants noted that the retreat improved their teaching style, while 90% indicated that the writing process focus impacted how they plan to teach classes in the future (Savini, 2016). Savini concluded that the writing retreat was an opportunity for reflective writing assignments developed through journaling, telling a story, and journaling prompts. Additionally, as educators push students to go beyond just writing inclusive of other areas (i.e. cultural and linguist diversity), they are more apt to recognize the value of writing assignments.

Stong (2015), a theatre art professor at Concordia University, explained how shared experiences could transform writing into a powerful tool. Stong described several life writing scholars and used this to be foundational to his narrative writing and development of an innovative writing workshop. Stong used a significant life experience, a car accident at the age of 18, to help form narrative writing and described the incident in the form of a best-selling novel. After Stong's car accident and what transpired later, methods of writing began to improve and grow. Stong continued writing for various theatre plays and news columns and the narrative stories began to translate into writing experiences. The accounting of various stories on something of interest is an example of choice in writing. Through these life writings, Stong developed curriculum to support

workshops for all ages. This helped others to break through writer's block, connect to deeper narratives, and share a powerful experience of writing. Stong used this talent as the basis to become a facilitator with the Quebec Repertoire and offered writing workshops to schools; the activities inspired writing.

Stong's (2015) workshop was titled Identify Writing. The activities consisted of participants writing three things relating to a flash moment in their lives when something changed. The instructions were specific and participants were given one minute to think and five minutes to write without reading, editing, revising or stopping (Stong, 2015). The intent of the writing exercise was to help transform their writing habits. Stong was able to bring the activities from the workshops to both secondary and postsecondary schools. The information relates to a writer's choice, brings awareness regarding activities associated with a writing workshop, and reveals that facilitators "cannot be fixed; they have to engage in personal change for themselves…be thought of as students" (Mason, 2002, p. 16). Kissel and Miller (2015) and Calkins and Ehrenworth (2016) also believed a writer's choice to write on a topic of interest help to improve the writing process. This is a strategy used in writing workshops.

Teachers Reflection after a PD Course

A recent study was conducted at a university in northeast China and involved a teacher PD project aimed at developing writing teachers' professional knowledge (Teng, 2016). The study was comprised of two writing teachers and the measurement device used was interviews. Findings from the study revealed that there was a drastic change in the teachers' belief about writing theories and strategies. One participant regarded

herself as knowledgeable in writing instruction and attributed this to looking through writing samples of the student to help improve linguist competence. Conversely, the second participant was not comfortable with being a writing teacher because it was difficult. The second participant also felt that the responsibility to correct form and test-taking skills and spend hours assessing students' writing was arduous (Teng, 2016). Although there were two perspectives on writing instruction, both participants acknowledged that they would embrace the writing strategies presented in the project.

Overall, the project promoted the teachers' willingness to use the new approaches, apply these to their teaching style, and reflect on their position in the classroom (Teng, 2016). The teachers would move from their usual impetus to have an active role in the teaching process to allowing students to be more engaged in the writing process versus passive recipients of knowledge; thus, affording students more interaction with peers and choosing a writing style which fits them best (Teng, 2016). Concluding the study, Teng (2016) noted that the project increased the teachers' understanding of writing theories, how to integrate strategies into their writing courses, and shifted their thoughts of a teacher's role in teaching practices. Zwart et al. (2015) also noted teachers' reflection of instructional strategies as a quality from within, based on what they obtained through PD. This small study provided the overall reflection that a PD course for teachers is beneficial.

Strategies to Support Writing Skills

As noted in sections two and three, writing has not improved over the past 30 years. These comments continue to be echoed; in fact, it has been stated that writing is

mediocre, at best, and declining. Carter and Harper (2013) discussed results of a recent Scholastic Assessment Test II writing test and noted that evidence showed a downward trend in writing skills. Along with undergraduate downward trend in writing skills, Carter and Harper (2013) also noted that graduate students do not write any better than they did when initially enrolled in college. Carter and Harper (2013) supported these beliefs by noting causes of declining writing abilities and providing recommended strategies for educators to improve these. As such, this article will be included as a reference for the PD workshop for this project study to further highlight the challenges faced with writing skills of secondary and postsecondary students. As has been noted in this study's literature review, some of the issues and concepts from the PD writing workshops allude to various strategies to assist with writing and how teachers can become more involved in the writing process. The remaining articles will address causes of declining writing skills and expand on strategies to improve writing skills.

Causes of declining writing skills. Carter and Harper (2013) deduced that changes in academic writing related to budget cuts and emphasis on national standards. Among the changes impacting academic writing were testing, multiple choice versus essay style tests, and grade inflation or awarding decreasing performance by simply passing the student and failing to hone in on poor writing skills (Carter & Harper, 2013). Additionally, Carter and Harper (2013) noted a decline in standards relating to reduced reading and writing requirements and supported the fact that reading more widens students' vocabulary and affords an opportunity for greater assimilation of writing. Other factors contributing to poor writing related to changes in society. Technology stifles

students' writing ability due to automatic correction and the amount of time spent on media entertainment (Carter & Harper, 2013). Social media and the Internet are also contributing to poor writing skills; social media consist of jargon that allows for quick conversations, and the Internet poses an issue of whether the information researched is valid and reliable (Carter & Harper, 2013).

Increasing students' writing skills. Some of the ways to increase students' writing skills have already been noted in the PD workshop literature. Carter and Harper (2013) noted that peer editing is a viable option to large classes and could be burdensome for instructors. Carter and Harper (2013) also believed that peer editing could help supplement instructors' feedback but not replace it. Other ways to improve students writing entailed an examination of the intensity of an entry-level writing course; more emphasis placed on reading and writing requirements, thorough instructor feedback, and revised grading rubrics. Carter and Harper (2013) felt that through editing and specific comments from instructors could improve students' writing skills. The belief was that the revised grading rubrics could provide the information to discern the differences in students' writing abilities. Overall, Carter and Harper (2013) felt that the strategies, once implemented, could ensure students development of their writing skills.

Plakhotnik and Rocco (2016) contributed to the research and perceptions that graduate students across all disciplines have poor academic writing skills. Plakhotnik and Rocco (2016) also noted that poor academic writing skills increase the responsibility for colleges of education to prepare teachers through PD to instruct writing. To assist in these PD efforts, a college of education was selected from a southeastern research

university to develop what was known as writing support circles (WSCs). Writing support circles are service workshops designed to increase writing abilities in educators. Plakhotnik and Rocco (2016) described WSCs as stemming from Vopat's 2009 WSCs wherein children learn how to write by collaboration with others in small groups and receive instructor support while learning different writing and editing processes. Plakhotnik and Rocco (2016) could apply these WSCs concept to help graduate students learn academic writing skills and described the WSCs in context research that related to two different programs that the graduate students would complete. Participants in the study were identified as cohort 1 and cohort 2. The purpose of cohort 1 was to ensure that students received transferrable writing skills that could be used on projects. Cohort 2 related to helping students with writing assignments and issues relating to academic writing (Plakhotnik & Rocco, 2016).

Once the WSCs were completed with each cohort, there were lessons learned. Plakhotnik and Rocco (2016) noted that teaching and learning practice for children is not always like adult learning, in-service teachers are not aware that they are poor writers, and in-service teachers do not always make a "connection between writing a class paper and their practices as teachers" (p. 165). For in-service teachers, good writing is not a part of PD, good writing is not connected to any other skills teachers should have, and teaching writing is someone else's responsibility (Plakhotnik & Rocco, 2016). Plakhotnik and Rocco (2016) determined that students' poor writing can be attributed to improper guidance. Instructors may not have been taught appropriate guidance or how to

give quality feedback. To effect change in students writing, instructors have to be concerned about the quality of students' writing.

Reading and writing connections. Studies continue to support reading-writing connections. Lee and Schallert (2016) conducted a study involving how reading and writing were interrelated in the development and design of language arts curriculum. The study revealed that reading and writing were interdependent and accepted by researchers and educators to influence the development of reading and writing instruction in a language setting (Lee & Schallert, 2016). The language setting for this study was a middle school in South Korea. Initial discussion from the study deduced whether extensive reading and writing, with little instruction, would produce development in one or the other. Students were given liberty to engage in pleasure reading or writing essays on topics, and to include the selection of a genre of their choice.

Lee and Schallert (2016) were able to support their study through theoretical connections of reading and writing as well as supporting literature. The study consisted of two pretests on reading and writing at the beginning of the school year and administered in 45-minute class sessions (Lee & Schallert, 2016). Posttest followed the same construct at the end of the year. Participants consisted of middle school students who were developing literacy in a new language. Results from the study indicated that students in a reading group improved in writing performance and those who received regular writing instruction did not display growth. Additionally, students achieved significant growth in reading comprehension, which was largely attributed to the amount of reading students accomplished during the school year. While there was an

improvement in the students' reading and writing skills, the study had limitations. One limitation of the study related to participants primary language as Korean, and that the participants were from low-socioeconomic backgrounds (Lee & Schallert, 2016). Another limitation of the study related to the possibility that regular English classes and private English instructions were given concurrently. Lee and Schallert (2016) concluded that although there were limitations, the study supports a reading-writing connection. Extensive reading improved writing skills and extensive writing enabled the development of reading skills. Furthermore, this study provided insight into writing practices for a foreign-language learning environment and supported earlier thoughts regarding teachers' training in teaching writing and students' motivation to write.

Reading and writing intervention should occur early, particularly in grades three to five to reduce the risk of reading and writing difficulties (Toste & Ciullo, 2017). Toste and Cuillo (2017) also noted that these difficulties are compounded if the student has a learning disability (LD). Thus, Toste and Cuillo summarized strategies from five articles on reading and writing intervention methods that are unique to students with LD but could benefit all students. The first instructional method related to phonology or decoding skills that could break down an understanding of sound-symbol knowledge. While decoding was an approach to phonology, decoding also applied to multisyllabic words. An instructional approach to use related to reading development was mainly by "affixing learning, word-building, word-reading and connected text reading" (Toste & Cuillo, 2017, p. 260). Toste and Cuillo noted that these instructional approaches increased fluency in word reading skills.

Inference instruction and the ability for students to improve reading comprehension was another best practice or intervention method for LD. Students were expected to make inferences based on central themes, analyze how events develop and interact, and determine ways that purpose shapes content and style (Toste & Cuillo, 2017). However, students with LD require a different approach: inferences would need to be adjusted. Students with LD need to identify key words, activate background knowledge, and generate questions (Toste & Cuillo, 2017). Thus, Toste and Cuillo (2017) support writing in upper elementary grades related to teaching paragraph and essay planning as well as the use of self-regulation across writing genres, revising, editing, and note-taking skills. Levitt et al. (2014) and Carter and Harper (2013) also noted revising and editing practices as ways to help develop students' writing skills. While these are well known writing strategies, a final writing intervention was motivational process and self-regulated learning. Motivational process and self-regulated learning are important because students tend to lack motivation as they progress to upper elementary and beyond (Toste & Cuillo, 2017). Toste and Cuillo concluded that these tools are necessary to empower teachers to support transitions period in upper elementary schools.

Large class sizes impact PD. A term often associated with large classes is massification. Massification is defined as a "rapid increase of students attending higher education institutions in the latter part of the 20th century and into the 21st century" (Mangram, Haddix, Ochanji, & Massinglia, 2015, p. 57). Mangram et al. (2015) believed strategies are often accomplished in PD workshops; however, the possibilities of

implementing these in a class size of about 400 students could be challenging and had not been accomplished or was considered something new. Nonetheless, Mangram et al. pressed forward with developing a PD workshop focused on learning in a large classroom setting and displayed the results in an expository paper.

Mangram et al. (2015) used an expository paper to discuss large class sizes and the challenges teachers face in teaching instruction. The expository paper was on massification in a Sub-Saharan Africa higher education institution. The context for this expository paper was co-sponsors from Kenyatta University and Syracuse University and involved 20 workshop participants. The focus was to build teacher education through collaborative research projects, improve teacher preparation and development, and provide PD of educators at Kenyatta University with the specific aim to develop active learning strategies in a large classroom setting (Mangram et al., 2015). First person narratives were used to capture the learning strategies in three categories: questioning and reflection strategies, writing strategies, and technology-supported strategies. For this project study, the focus was on the PD aspect of writing strategies. Among the writing strategies were note checks, focused listing, and literacy skills such as writing to learn and visual literacy (Mangram et al., 2015).

Note check. This strategy required that students partnered with someone and compare notes. Masinglia's (2015) narrative indicated that this strategy would allow students to fill in gaps that may have been missed in the lecture (Mangram et al., 2015). Note checking could also be implemented in two to three minutes, thus indicating a time that would not be over burdensome for the teachers. The workshop participants felt this

was an easy strategy to implement because students were expected to take notes and were held accountable for each other (Mangram et al., 2015).

Focused listing. Teachers asked students to recall what they had learned about a topic and to create a list of terms (Mangram et al., 2015). The focused listing would allow students to analyze readings and could also be implemented in two to three minutes. Again, participants felt that this strategy could be easily implemented because it could complement the note checking strategy. Participants also felt they could encourage the students to generate questions from their notes and ask these questions among themselves and their peers. The thought would be to implement this strategy at the beginning and end of each class session.

Writing to learn activities. Haddix's (2015) narrative noted that writing to learn activities would help students develop a deeper understanding of new concepts and to make connections with ideas being presented in class (Mangram et al., 2015). Writing to learn activities also develops independent thinking and allows students to be in charge of their own learning. The activity consisted of a two-minute paper based on a question or visual prompt, for example a PowerPoint slide. The two-minute writing strategy would be to encourage summarizing skills and organization of prior knowledge (Mangram et al., 2015). The workshop participants felt this strategy was beneficial because writing to learn strategies increased comprehension skills of students and visual images enhanced teaching large lecture class settings (Mangram et al., 2015). The downside to writing a two-minute paper was possible expectations from students regarding feedback on their writing but time and resources were not available to support this. However, the overall

objective of writing a two-minute paper was to encourage students' independent learning. Mangram et al. (2015) concluded that the context of the PD workshop was to bring awareness that massification impacts not only higher education but also primary and secondary educational institutions. Additionally, institutions need to model their teaching methods in a way to help teachers engage large classroom settings and employ a more student-centered approach.

Matsumura, Wang, and Correnti (2016) added to the research supporting strategies to increase writing skills. Matsumura et al. (2016) surmised that "cognitively demanding writing tasks increase students' ability to compile evidence and organize ideas in writing" (p. 347). Additionally, Matsumura et al. discussed that only 25% of writing assignments of fifth grade classrooms had a high level of cognitive demand. As such, Matsumura et al. decided to accomplish a review of upper elementary grades and assist teachers in the methods of developing content supporting cognitive demanding writing; thus, increasing writing skills as a basis for college readiness. Matsumura et al. noted that content should consist of: (a) choosing rich text which allowed students to problem solve in writing, (b) writing dilemmas to think through complex problems, (c) writing prompts which required students to generate new ideas, and (d) guiding students to make links to their text in writing. As with Locke (2015), Matsumura et al. (2016) concluded that mastery of these skills depended on modeling instructional practices used by readers and writers to comprehend text, holding rich classroom instruction, and engaging development of writing including drafting, editing, and revising. The intent of the strategies listed here is to ensure college readiness of students.

Project Description

A general review and restatement of the problem was necessary to ensure that it captured the intent for social change: Essential writing skills of entering first-year college students. Conducting a study that addressed this problem could give institutions, educators, local high school teachers and administrators, and employers an awareness of the reasons students are entering college with poor writing skills. Before implementing the PD workshop, the planner would identify needed resources, stakeholders, an agreed upon timetable and location; note anticipated challenges and barriers; and determine how to record the training to meet recertification and PD requirements. Additionally, information should be provided regarding the roles and responsibilities of the researcher and others involved.

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

Program planners are responsible for ensuring that their planning process goes well. As such, planners need to understand the context of the planning process and the human element. According to Odden et al. (2003), PD requires a certain amount of financial support, administration, materials, and supplies.

Needed resources. The planner could present to their assigned university and/or stakeholders a need to support a scholarship of learning and teaching (SoTL) effort and note any existing funding streams that promote SoTL. Another possible resource for the implementation plan would be grant funding. Miller (2018) noted that grants could be used to apply for non-repayable monies to support an activity, program, or project. The SoTL funding or grant would afford an opportunity for the planner to reach out to

colleagues and reflect on best practices in a discipline. Additionally, stakeholder support will be valuable because it could provide funding insight and review of the project before implementation.

Stakeholder support. As part of the stakeholder support for this project, consideration was given to the overall PD process and individuals who could provide the most support. When describing the stakeholders for this project, the following should be noted: educators at secondary and postsecondary schools and staff personnel will be included in the PD workshop and department chairs, administrative supervisors, and senior level management will be involved in the implementation process. Additionally, those who would benefit from this project program would be students, colleges and universities, grade schools, and surrounding communities.

Faculty, administrative supervisors, staff personnel, and institution (university or college). These were grouped together to illustrate how they would collectively work together to ensure the success of students' writing skills. A faculty member should be able to recognize challenges with writing, both personally and professionally. Thoughts should be ascertained on best practices and writing strategies to engage students. Consideration should also be given to the level of experience of educators. The administrative supervisors and university staff personnel could be individuals who often assist students with writing challenges, for example, WC personnel and tutors. The institution's mission would be to ensure PD opportunities are available to prepare their educators to meet writing challenges that continue, even after 30 years. Collectively,

these stakeholders would collaborate and ensure that educators are prepared to teach writing and engage students in to successful write academically.

Senior level management. The role of the senior level personnel is to build and allow flexibility for attendance at PD workshops. Department chairs and school principals will be responsible for working closely with the project planner and serve as the liaison between planner and primary stakeholders.

Student learners. Through review of literature and as an educator, it is understood why these learners would be a primary stakeholder. This project provided the challenges students face when beginning to write and how the institutions can support educators in PD and employing strategies to improve writing skills of students.

Parents. There is not much to add as to how parents can become a stakeholder, only to the extent that they could view how secondary and postsecondary schools are improving the writing skills of their children. This can be revealed on the statistical websites supporting schools. Additionally, parents could serve as peer reviewers of students work and look closely at the challenges their children may be facing with writing.

Potential challenges and barriers. The first potential challenge relates to implementing the project, or simply getting started. The reason this poses a challenge is because this will be the first time I will be implementing a scholarly project impacting other educators. I will need to keep in mind the approach to not implement before allowing someone (a colleague or department chair) to review the proposed project, any ethical considerations (not divulging information which may be impacting the university

or school district), and ensuring that the goal to implement in a certain timeframe is met. To overcome this challenge, I will work closely with the university on options, internally and externally, to support the project. Additionally, I will do small setting presentations to receive feedback from colleagues on how best to implement the project.

There are other challenges planners often face when developing a proposed project. Among these are time dedicated to the project, tying the project into current teaching and learning environment, funding, and publishing the project (Bishop-Clark & Dietz-Uhler, 2012). As it relates to time dedicated to the project, the challenge I may encounter is planning and preparation activities. Currently, as an educator, my teaching obligations would continue to run concurrently with this project implementation. There may be occasions where I have a large course load and it may slow the progression of time dedicated to planning and preparing the course materials. I will have to work diligently to balance the time needed for the project and accomplishing my course load. I feel confident that I will be able to accomplish this because I am familiar with conference planning; all aspects, from funding to location.

A second challenge relates to tying the project to current teaching and learning to have sponsorship from my assigned university. Third, funding could be a challenge since there could be competing project proposals. The assigned university sponsors two initiatives a year. It will be my responsibility to have a solid presentation to tie this project to current teaching and learning. Thus, the goal would be to clearly state the challenges seen with first-year students' writing and provide supporting literature as well

as the findings for the project study. As an educator, this should be an easy task to justify the need for funding. A final challenge relates to overall participation in the workshop.

There existed the possibility that there may be competing certification requirements for secondary teachers during the summer months and perhaps reluctance on their part to even want to discuss writing issues. As has been noted in this study, teachers feel they are not good writers or simply do not like the idea of writing. Teachers may fear opposition on their perceptions of writing. The possibility also exists that teachers may feel writing requirements are being met as dedicated by the state. My approach would be awareness of certification requirements as outlined by the state, when these should be accomplished, and ensure the standards are met.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

After consideration for needed resources, stakeholder support, and potential barriers and solutions, the next step is to follow through and implement the project (Bishop-Clark & Dietz-Uhler, 2012). The PD workshop will be a 3-day session offered three times during the primary down time (usually summer) for high school teachers. Because of the school schedules within colleges and universities, this timeframe would be flexible for post-secondary educators as well. To ensure the success of the PD workshop, an established timetable will be used to track the required preparation activities. Preparation activities would begin the end of the summer (in August) and a year prior to hosting the workshops. As a planner, I would avoid hosting a workshop at the beginning of June. At that time, teachers are finishing high school graduation activities. It is also recommended to avoid the month of August when new school year

preparation and registration for the upcoming year takes place for high school and universities. Table 2 provides a timeline of months required for preparation activities.

Table 2

Proposed Timetable for PD Workshop

Planning	Preparation Activities
2 months, Aug – Sep	Gain stakeholder support Provide a proposal for funding approval
5 months, Oct - Feb	Determine the dates to conduct the PD workshop Work logistics for downtown location Develop schedule Develop handouts/workshop materials Develop slides
1 month, Mar	Double check any last minute items
2 months, Apr - May	Advertise the workshop dates to local high schools and universities (send invite information) Preliminary registration - begin collecting information on number of attendees for each session
3 months, Jun - Aug	Host three separate workshops - One at the end of June - Two during the month of July

The location would be a central place easily accessible by educators and staff personnel. An ideal place would be a downtown hotel with a conference facility, restaurant availability or surrounding restaurants all within short walking distance of the hotel.

Roles and Responsibilities

It will be my role and sole responsibility to contact the assigned university to gain approval for funding to support this project. Once approval is obtained, I will follow the proposed timetable (see Table 2) for project implementation. Activities consist of determining dates to host the PD workshop, planning logistics (hotel, conference room,

availability for lunch), and developing agenda, handouts, and slides. Due to the amount of planning and logistics associated with the 3-day PD workshop, graduate students will be employed for assistance. Bishop-Clark and Dietz-Uhler (2012) noted that students could be employed to assist with the SoTL efforts. Bishop-Clark and Dietz-Uhler (2012) recognized there could be challenges to using students such as time away from class. However, students can look at the SoTL as an opportunity toward their educational discipline or career goals. I recognize that assistance from students or educators could relate to the same issues. For this reason, graduate students would be employed based on the student's availability. Finally, it will be my sole responsibility to develop and ensure that all workshop materials are available such as PowerPoint slides that will guide the workshop (see Appendix A).

Project Evaluation Plan

The project evaluation plan will be goal-based. A goal-based evaluation addresses changes in individual participants and practices for education or training (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013). The overall goal of the PD workshop will be to provide instructional writing strategies to secondary and postsecondary educators to help improve essential writing skills of students. Goal-based evaluations can be formative or summative. Lodico, et al. (2010) also noted that summative evaluation focused on whether a program's goals were met and were designed to elicit participant responses to summarize their experiences. For this PD workshop the evaluation will consist of a summative evaluation that all participants will complete at the end of day three of the workshop. The summative evaluation will be a short questionnaire to capture feedback,

comments, or suggestions to help the facilitator evaluate the effectiveness of the PD workshop in reaching the objectives of the seminar (see Appendix A). This summative evaluation will be important to help facilitate any additional training requirements, assess how well collaboration works between secondary and postsecondary educators, and allow an opportunity for the facilitator to share the results of the PD workshop with educators, administrators, and staff personnel (i.e., tutors). Finally, the context from the evaluations could serve as source information for needed adjustments to training materials, activities, amount of time allocated for the workshop, or location.

Project Implications

The implication for this project relates to awareness for universities, administrators, school districts, and educators to ensure strategies are implemented to help improve the writing skills of entering first-year college students. Among the strategies presented in this project were teachers modeling good writing skills, students' choice in writing, peer editing, thorough teacher feedback, and inference instructions such as the ability to read, infer central themes, and analyze content in writing. Moreover, after completion of the first year for the PD workshop, information from the evaluation can serve as feedback to educators and encourage them to reflect on their writing skills and how best to support 21st century students' writing skills. Society-at-large could also benefit from this project because of the opportunity to share strategies and instructional writing practices with other educators. Depending on the extent of the strategies and instructional writing practices these could lead to positive social change

through modifications in the curriculum at local high schools and entry-level courses taught to entering first-year college students.

The project could allow for continued collaboration among educators. This partnership alone could have far reaching implications in the writing success of students, administrators, staff personnel, and institutions. Other stakeholders who would receive benefits from the project could be parents and the community. Hopefully, these entities would see an improvement in the reading-writing connections of students and see how southwestern school districts can move to a higher ranking in writing for college preparedness. Finally, social change could develop through the sharing of published materials and continued workshops to assist educators in other states to gain knowledge of writing strategies to improve student academic success in writing.

Conclusion

This section discussed findings from the current study. The discussion led to the development of a 3-day PD workshop based on the data analysis and themes connected to the research questions. The project genre and purpose were introduced, a rationale was provided for the project, literature was reviewed, the project was described, the project was evaluated, and implications were discussed. Section 4 provides reflections on the project and offers a conclusion that looks at the strengths, limitations, personal learning growth as a scholar, and implications for future research.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

Entering college first-year students face the challenge of not being sufficiently prepared to meet the demands of postsecondary education writing requirements (Booth et al., 2014). However, some students do not perceive there to be a problem with their writing skills, and instructors do not feel they are sufficiently prepared to improve students' writing skills. There are challenges with students' writing in postsecondary education. There are many factors that contribute to poor writing skills. In the findings from the case study and in the second literature review, I found support for PD training.

An instrumental case study design was used to examine the knowledge and experience of 12 participants: five students, four instructors, and three WC personnel (tutors). Each category of participants contributed comparable information during interviews, which served as the data collection process. Although the participants revealed writing challenges, resources, and ways to improve writing skills, the participants also claimed that writing well begins with the educator. Hence, it was important to develop, plan, and implement a 3-day PD workshop.

Project Strengths

Educators, students, and tutors at the university's WC revealed that writing challenges still exist. Moreover, online writing labs and WCs are not yielding success in students' writing. The majority of writing challenges reside in secondary education. Collaboration between secondary and postsecondary educators could be optimal in targeting the writing issues. Thus, the primary strength of this study was for secondary

and postsecondary educators to come together in a PD setting and collaborate on writing challenges and strategies to enable students' success in writing. The project study was grounded in Vygotsky's SCT. In the SCT, Vygotsky indicated a connection between models of PD, developmental theories, and an understanding of PD in teachers (as cited in Shabani, 2016). Additionally, models of PD allow teachers to acquire different skills and knowledge through collaboration with peers (Shabani, 2016).

A second strength of this project study is the timeframe required to conduct the workshop. The PD workshop sessions will be conducted at a time that is conducive to all attendees, the summer months. Most secondary educators take leave during the summer months and may seek to complete any certification requirements. Based on my personal experience as an educator, postsecondary educators usually have a lesser class load during the summer months, and student registration is usually less. It is proposed that three workshops be offered during late June-July timeframe. These dates do not interfere with May-June graduation or school and college registration that usually occurs mid- to late August. An added strength is to ensure that the PD workshop meets certification requirements. Another possible strength is facilitator's approval of funds to implement the initial PD workshop and to provide a no cost fee for attendees. If the initial workshops are successful, this could indicate ongoing PD training and a registration fee charged for subsequent workshops.

Project Limitations

This project was based on the findings from interviews and supporting literature regarding writing skills of entry-level college students. The limitation for this project

study related to information being gathered from a specific region within the United States, a Southwestern university. A second limitation related to the study is the involvement of only first-year college students. Writing challenges exist for all grades as well as for university undergraduate and graduate students. A third limitation could be that the Southwestern, secondary school district may not allow the workshop to count toward teacher certification. As a result, other training may take precedence. The PD workshop needs to be structured to meet annual secondary teacher certification requirements. A final limitation is related to funding. If the first offering of PD workshops are not seen as value-added, then future workshops requiring registration fees may not be supported. To overcome these limitations, I will need to ensure that support is garnered from primary stakeholders and to socialize the importance of the workshop.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

A collaborative PD workshop was designed to support understanding of the challenges contributing to poor student writing skills and to develop strategies to improve students' composition skills. The goal of the PD workshop is to provide instructional writing strategies to secondary and postsecondary educators to help improve essential writing skills of students. I found that there were still challenges in the writing skills of entering first-year college students. In the data, I found central themes relating to factors, common writing errors, and resources needed to support academic success in writing. Limitations were related to location of the workshop, participation of attendees, availability of facilitators, and funding. An alternative approach to solve these limitations would be to offer the training online.

Teras (2016) noted that an online PD is a way to use technology and employ a full certification program to help develop self-regulation skills and more collaborative learning among educators. Using online PD training could reduce the cost: the infrastructure is already in place and educators would have the flexibility to come in and out of the classroom at their leisure. The PD training would have a discussion forum and a collaborative area where educators could discuss writing challenges and strategies. Additionally, the facilitator would have more time to consolidate and provide participants a list of challenges and strategies revealed from the training.

After reviewing the Southwestern state certification process, I discovered that another alternative approach to the problem could be the reading-writing connection. According to the Southwestern school district certification process, writing falls into the realm of English language arts and reading standards. The Texas Education Agency (2018) stated, "English language arts teachers in grades 8-12 know how to design and implement instruction appropriate for each student that reflects knowledge and integrates all components; i.e. writing and reading, based on continuous assessment" (Standard I). Lee and Schallert (2016) revealed that reading and writing are interdependent and accepted by researchers and educators to influence the development of reading and writing instruction in a language setting. Reading and writing instruction in a language setting could lead to an alternate solution to ensure writing skills are addressed, an opportunity to collaborate on reading comprehension, and an approach to enhance or improve writing skills. This approach will only be used as an alternative if findings, the PD workshop development, and hosting of the PD training do not reveal positive results.

The intent is to ensure that the perceptions of efficient writing skills will not be overshadowed by language arts or reading. Nonetheless, there is a significant connection between reading and writing.

Scholarship

Universities and colleges noted that students were graduating and entering the workplace with an inability to write scholarly and professionally (May et al., 2012). This study was more than I had anticipated. As a part of my reflection, I focused on what it meant to accomplish scholarly writing or to write as a scholar. First, I accomplished learning and acquired knowledge through formal research. In Sections 1, 2, and 3, I illustrate that scholarly writing is grounded in study/research and an ability to apply the knowledge gained. Working on a doctoral degree over the past 6 years gave me a greater appreciation of the topic chosen. Second, there have been challenges with learning to write scholarly. I work as an instructional system specialist supervisor as well as an online educator, and I have found an increased awareness of my personal and professional writing style as well as the writing style of others. I also learned that modeling good writing skills should be displayed in all aspects of writing. The focus of this project was to build teacher education through collaborative writing strategies. Research projects help to improve teacher preparation and development (Mangram et al., 2015). Collaboration activities can lead to scholar development.

Project Development, Leadership, and Change

Professionally, I have worked as a federal employee for more than 30 years and have been a part of and led several projects. As of the completion of this project study, I

am also enrolling in an additional project management course. I gathered information through research, asking questions, and benchmarking. Benchmarking documents, requests, and simple writing requirements all play a part in developing a project. This is not to overlook any requirements for current and out year budget planning—I have this experience as well and currently serve as the budget manager for the division. Project development also entails planning and logistical requirements (scheduling, location, cost, refreshments, developing training materials, and tracking attendance). During the formation of this project, I averaged logistical planning for one conference a year. I also developed and briefed slides for a new course, which I taught for the first time. As such, I feel confident that I will be able to accomplish all logistical planning and implementation for the proposed 3-day PD workshop. My primary strengths in project development are course material development (PowerPoint slides), budget planning, and all aspects of logistical planning. I can bring these skills with me to help facilitate my scholarship of teaching and learning project to other educators.

These skills display leadership as an educator and can bring about change relating to writing readiness of entering first-year college students. One possible change, which could be revealed from the collaborative efforts of this project, is modification in curriculum within school districts and entry-level college courses. A change could also be prevalent in secondary certification, such as unmasking writing from the reading language arts certification standards. This change would require further research to understand whether a need exists to separate the reading-writing standard set by the state.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

Developing essential writing skills to be successful academically as well as professionally was the focus of this work. Writing is a reflection of the individual and how well the skill is learned. Although I have faced critical evaluation of my own writing in this project study, I take this same approach with my students in entry-level and businesses communication classes. Writing has not improved over the last 30 years. Technology is evolving. I was under the assumption that it enhanced or enabled better writing skills; however, certain aspects of technology such as social media and auto correct have hindered writing. Carter and Harper (2013) noted that social media and the Internet contribute to poor writing skills. Social media consists of jargon allowing for quick conversations, and the Internet poses an issue of whether the information researched is valid and reliable. Technology, such as online writing labs, grammar checkers, and plagiarism checkers are available to support writing challenges; students need only to use these. Technology, alone, cannot make better writers. Teachers, educators, and facilitators involvement is important to ensure the objectives of writing are being met. I believe continued emphasis in PD, supported by school districts and universities, can provide the required approach to change the 30-year paradigm and improve essential writing skills of entering first-year college students.

Project's Impact on Social Change

Findings from this project study revealed that PD training could enhance educators writing self-efficacy and improve students' writing skills. Research also supports different learning strategies to effect social change in writing skills. Educators

being firm in their thoughts that writing is a process can greatly impact social change. This can be done at the same time as dispelling students' perceptions that they know everything about writing and do not need to learn this important skill (Berrett, 2014). Berret (2014) also noted that a shift in instructional approaches to writing is needed. Thus, the impact on social change relates to changes to policy decisions and awareness to school districts and universities to ensure strategies are implemented to help improve writing skills of entering first-year college students. Evidence from the research and literary review revealed that good writing skills begin at the secondary school level. Bringing secondary and postsecondary educators together in PD training could propel writing self-efficacy forward. This collaborative effort can extend beyond educators. There could also be an opportunity for local high school administrators and department chairs to gain knowledge on the reasons students lack essential writing skills. Information sharing from the PD training would be paramount. Again, depending on the extent of the strategies and instructional practices from the PD training, these could lead to positive social change through modifications in the curriculum at local high schools and entry-level courses taught to entering first-year college students, and adjustments to secondary teacher certification requirements.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Writing is an essential skill for all grades, colleges, and universities. Writing is also a preferred skill in the workforce; thus, the implications for this study are far-reaching. The study had limitations because it was based on research in a Southwestern university. Future research could entail looking at other state requirements in school

districts and universities. Moreover, research on PD training for educators has global implications. For example, study information was gathered from universities in Quebec and Africa; however, the studies were limited and supported information already seen in studies within the United States. Specifically, Stong (2015) stated that he was able to build on a collection of stories based in Quebec to break through writer's block, connect to deeper narratives, and share a powerful experience of writing. Mangram et al. (2015) also noted that class sizes could impact teaching instruction for educators. I believe future research could be conducted globally to determine if there are other strategies that may have been missed in the United States. Once the PD has been implemented, future research could extend beyond the United States and perhaps involve perceptions, issues, and instructional strategies regarding writing skills as seen globally by other educators.

Conclusion

Writing is an essential skill needed throughout secondary and postsecondary education. Writing well also extends into the workforce. As I began thinking about a topic for study, the need to examine writing was apparent. Impressed by other topics from colleagues, I began to doubt that the current topic would warrant or rise to the level of doctoral research as seen by others. Two reasons propelled me forward to select writing as a project study. First, my personal experience with entry level college students and seeing the struggles they face with writing. Second, research indicated that writing has not improved over the last 30 years. Writing the prospectus, proposal, and project study also confirmed the decision to choose a topic on writing as well as my personal challenge to write scholarly.

This project study examined the problem that students were graduating and entering the workplace with an inability to write scholarly and professionally. The purpose for the case study focused on perceptions of instructors and students to further examine a gap between instructors' perceptions of essential writing skills of students and students' perceptions of their writing abilities both in academics and post-graduation (Fields et al., 2014). The resulting PD training focused on writing confidence in educators and providing them with instructional strategies to help improve students' academic success in writing through a collaborative environment. I plan to present this project study to my assigned university with the hopes and desires to receive approval and funding support for a SoTL effort.

Although PD training was revealed in this study, research and data collection indicated factors that contributed to poor writing skills. The study focused on the perceptions of students and instructors and, today's resources available to support writing readiness. One perception from students indicated that they saw themselves as good writers. As an educator and student enrolled in a doctoral program, I perceived that I was able to write well. After researching the topic on writing, there is an opportunity to improve one's writing skills. This really begins with the educator modeling and leading the way. I believe the project will address the problem and provide a PD training opportunity to secondary and postsecondary educators to increase their current knowledge to provide instructional practices and strategies in writing to effect change in academic success of students' writing. Writing ***is*** a critical skill. This planned PD workshop should help bring educators together in a collaborative environment to help

achieve the goal of this project study, improved writing skills of entering first-year college students.

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Appendix A: The Project

Title: *Does Success in Writing Start with Educators?*

Goal: To provide instructional writing strategies to secondary and postsecondary educators to help improve essential writing skills of students.

Objectives:

- To provide participants in the workshop with current resources and strategies to improve writing skills of students.
- To give opportunities for educators and staff (i.e. tutors) to collaborate and share best practices to ensure academic success of students' writing.
- To help educators gain confidence in their own writing abilities and provide modeling practices to their students.
- To build a network of experts who can provide information and discussions on writing strategies.

Daily Schedule:

Day 1	
8:00 - 9:30 a.m.	Registration
9:30 - 10:00 a.m.	Opening remarks from facilitator and expectations
10:00 - 11:30 a.m.	Individual and team building exercise to identify challenges with writing
11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch and time to network
1:00 - 4:00 p.m.	Session 1: Small group sessions to discuss current strategies
Day 2	
8:00 - 10:00 a.m.	General class session
10:00 - 11:30 a.m.	Individual and team building exercise (instructions provided)
11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch and time to network
1:00 - 4:00 p.m.	Session 2: Writing assignment (draft, edit, revise, peer review)
Day 3	
8:00 - 9:30 a.m.	General class session
9:30 - 11:30 a.m.	Individual and team building exercise (instructions provided)
11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch and time to network
1:00 - 2:00 p.m.	Session 3: Collaboration on strategies and best practices (turn in)
2:00 - 3:00 p.m.	Closing session and evaluation

Breaks will be taken as needed

Reference materials: As part of handout materials, the following references will be listed and included in the slide presentation.

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Slide Presentation:

Does Success in Writing Start with Educators?

Date
Facilitator's Name
Organization

Overview

- Introductions
- Workshop Schedule
- Workshop Goal
- Workshop Objectives
- Statistical Information – Writing Success
- Causes of Poor Writing Skills
- Team Building Exercises
- Writing Strategies
- Closing and Evaluation
- References

Introduction

- Facilitator
- Participants
  - Name
  - School District or University
  - Expectations from the workshop
  - Identify one writing challenge you have with teaching students

Workshop Schedule

Day 1	
8:00 - 9:30 a.m.	Registration
9:30 - 10:00 a.m.	Opening remarks from facilitator and expectations
10:00 - 11:30 a.m.	Individual and team building exercise to identify challenges with writing
11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch and time to network
1:00 - 4:00 p.m.	Session 1: Small group sessions to discuss current strategies
Day 2	
8:00 - 10:00 a.m.	General class session
10:00 - 11:30 a.m.	Individual and team building exercise (instructions provided)
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11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch and time to network
1:00 - 2:00 p.m.	Session 3: Collaboration on strategies and best practices (turn in)
2:00 - 3:00 p.m.	Closing session and evaluation
Breaks will be taken as needed	

Workshop Goal

- To provide instructional writing strategies to secondary and postsecondary educators to help improve essential writing skills of students.

Workshop Objectives

- To provide participants in the workshop with current resources and strategies to improve writing skills of students.
- To give opportunities for educators and staff (i.e. tutors) to collaborate and share best practices to ensure academic success of students' writing.
- To help educators gain confidence in their own writing abilities and provide modeling practices to their students.
- To build a network of experts who can provide information and discussions on writing strategies.

Statistical Information Writing Success

- SAT Testing
  - Rank 47th in writing mean score
- 50% of students entering 2-year colleges – not ready
- Essay writing score of 5 – no developmental education
- Essay writing score of 4 or below – required developmental education

Causes of Poor Writing Skills

- Testing
- Grade Inflation
- Technology
- Social Media
- Mechanics – grammar, punctuation, etc.
- Instructor Feedback
- Instructions for written assignments

Writing Strategies

- Peer editing
- Revising grading rubrics
- Thorough instructor feedback
- Collaboration with peers/educators
- Teacher modeling

Writing Strategies cont'

- Reading and writing connections
- Inference instructions
- Note checking
- Focused listing
- Writing to learn activities

Session 1: Team Building Exercise

- List at least three writing strategies you currently use within your classroom instruction.

  - Attendees separate into groups of three – four to exchange current strategies.
  - Open discussion in class.
  - Compare current strategies.
  - Collect at the end of Day 1.
  - Facilitator provides consolidated writing strategies list at the end of the workshop.

Session 2: Team Building Exercise

- Given a prompt, complete two separate writing exercises.
- Writing exercise 1 – attendees choice, genre-topic
- Writing exercise 2 – facilitator provides the topic; a childhood memory

  - Choose an individual to peer review the writing exercise
  - Reflect on the writing to learn process
  - What challenges did you face

Session 3: Team Building Exercise

- Identify new strategies you learned over the past two days.
- Discuss best practices.
- List at least two strategies you plan to use when you return home.

Closing and Evaluation

- Closing comments
- Turn in team-building exercise documents
- Provide consolidated list of strategies
- Attendees complete evaluation form
- Certificate

QUESTIONS

References

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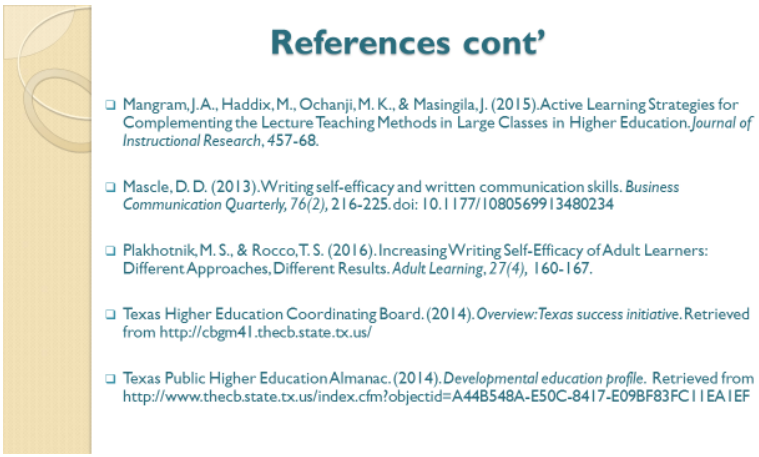

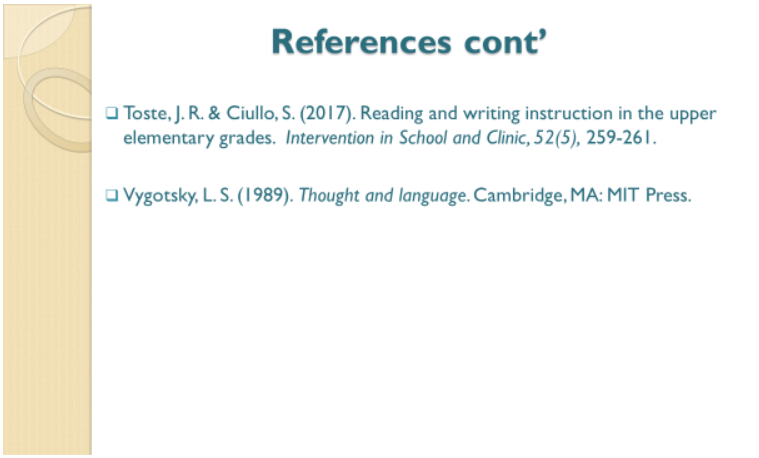

End of PowerPoint slide presentation.

Evaluation Form:

Workshop Evaluation Form

Your feedback is critical to ensure we are meeting your educational needs. Please take a few minutes to share your opinions with us so we can serve you better.

Please return this form to the instructor or organizer at the end of the workshop. Thank you.

Workshop title: _____

Date:_____Instructor:_____

	Strongly agree				Strongly disagree
1. The content was as described in publicity materials	1	2	3	4	5
2. The workshop was applicable to my job	1	2	3	4	5
3. I will recommend this workshop to other educators	1	2	3	4	5
4. The program was well paced within the allotted time	1	2	3	4	5
5. The instructor was a good communicator	1	2	3	4	5
6. The material was presented in an organized manner	1	2	3	4	5
7. The instructor was knowledgeable on the topic	1	2	3	4	5
8. I would be interested in attending a follow-up, more advanced workshop on this same subject	1	2	3	4	5

9. Given the topic, was this workshop: ❑ a. Too short ❑ b. Right length ❑ c. Too long

10. Which topics of the workshop did you find most useful?

_____
_____
_____

11. Which writing practices do you feel will be implemented in your classroom?

_____
_____
_____

12. Comments and suggestions (including activities or initiatives you think would be useful in the future.

_____
_____
_____

Your Background

13. Which of the following **best** describes your current position?
    - ❑ a. Secondary Teacher
    - ❑ b. Postsecondary Teacher
    - ❑ c. Staff Support (tutor, writing center personnel)
    - ❑ d. Administrator
    - ❑ e. Other:_____

14. How many years of professional experience do you have in the profession?_____years

Future Needs

15. I would be able to do my work better if I knew more about
    _____

16. Please describe the top two topics you would like to learn more about in the next 12 months:

Topic 1:_____

Preferred level: ❑ a. Introductory ❑ b. Intermediate ❑ c. Advanced

Preferred format:
- ❑ a. Seminar/workshop (how many days?_____)
- ❑ b. Self-study materials
- ❑ c. Interactive distance learning (i.e., Web-based)
- ❑ d. Other:_____

Topic 2:_____

Preferred level: ❑ a. Introductory ❑ b. Intermediate ❑ c. Advanced

Preferred format
- ❑ a. Seminar/workshop (how many days?_____)
- ❑ b. Self-study materials
- ❑ c. Interactive distance learning (i.e., Web-based)
- ❑ d. Other:_____

Thank you!
Please return this form to the instructor or coordinator at the end of the workshop.

Appendix B: Letter of Request

Letter Requesting Cooperation

June 2, 2017

To: [redacted] University

Dear Sir or Ma'am:

I am writing in regards to a research study I would like to perform as part of my course of study in my doctoral studies through Walden University. The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of instructors regarding essential writing skills of entering freshman college students. The study involves addressing issues or concerns relating to entering freshman college students' writing skills.

I would like to obtain permission to interview the students and instructors from English and non-English courses as well as Writing Center personnel. These interviews would be part of a research study examining the perceptions of instructors regarding essential writing skills of entering freshman college students.

The participants would be asked to volunteer for the interview and will have the option of refusing to answer questions or ending the interview at any time. A recording and a transcription will be made of the interview for documentation purposes only and will not be shared outside the parameters of the research guidelines.

At no time will students or instructors be asked to provide samples of writings; however, Writing Center personnel will be asked to provide samples of written assignments submitted to the Writing Center. This request would be to provide documents which do not have identifiable information associated with any student or instructor. The rights and privacy of all participants will be guarded at all times. No names of participants or participating university will be used in the research study.

Please accept my sincere thanks for your time and consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Lloyd

Jennifer Lloyd

Appendix C: Interview Protocol Worksheet

Interview Protocol - Instructors

Project: Case Study – Perceptions on the Essential Writing Skills of Entering First-Year College Students

Time of Interview: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Interviewer: Jennifer Lloyd

Interviewee: _____

Position of Interviewee: _____

Steps to Take

The purpose of this interview is to look at a study which examines perceptions of essential writing skills of entering first-year college students. Any data or information collected will relate to your responses to each question. The information from the questions will be tied to the approach and analysis of how the interviewing session went, the steps I took, and how the data was collected and transcribed. Additionally, your name or any revealing information about you will not be attached to my analysis.

So to begin, the interview will take about one hour and will be audio-recorded. The information which is audio-recorded will only be between you and me and will be used as part of the data collection process. I do have a consent form for you to read and sign confirming your understanding. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interviewing Questions

1. List possible factors which contribute to poor writing skills of entering first-year college students.
2. What are your feelings and attitudes regarding the writing skills of entering first-year college students?
3. Do you believe that writing skills improve over time; specifically, what changes have you noted in students' writing between the first and last day of the class?
4. What do you believe are some of the common errors noted in first-year college students' writing?
5. What resources are available to help entering first-year college students with writing challenges?
6. Do you have best practices to help ensure successful writing skills of entering first-year college students?
7. What do you believe are some of the common errors noted in first-year college students' writing?
8. Do you believe that writing skills improve over time; specifically, what changes have you noted in students' writing between the first and last day of the class?

Interview Protocol - Students

Project: Case Study – Perceptions on the Essential Writing Skills of Entering First-Year College Students

Time of Interview: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Interviewer: Jennifer Lloyd

Interviewee: _____

Position of Interviewee: _____

Steps to Take

The purpose of this interview is to look at a study which examines perceptions of essential writing skills of entering first-year college students. Any data or information collected will relate to your responses to each question. The information from the questions will be tied to the approach and analysis of how the interviewing session went, the steps I took, and how the data was collected and transcribed. Additionally, your name or any revealing information about you will not be attached to my analysis.

So to begin, the interview will take about one hour and will be audio-recorded. The information which is audio-recorded will only be between you and me and will be used as part of the data collection process. I do have a consent form for you to read and sign confirming your understanding. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interviewing Questions

1. List possible factors which contribute to poor writing skills of entering first-year college students.
2. What are your thoughts regarding your writing ability as a college student?
3. What challenges do you face when writing academic papers?
4. What resources are available in the Writing Center to assist college students with essential writing skills?
5. What resources have you used in the past to assist with your writing?
6. If used, have you noticed an improvement in your writing after using writing resources or the Writing Center?

Interview Protocol – Writing Center Personnel

Project: Case Study – Perceptions on the Essential Writing Skills of Entering First-Year College Students

Time of Interview: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Interviewer: Jennifer Lloyd

Interviewee: _____

Position of Interviewee: _____

Steps to Take

The purpose of this interview is to look at a study which examines perceptions of essential writing skills of entering first-year college students. Any data or information collected will relate to your responses to each question. The information from the questions will be tied to the approach and analysis of how the interviewing session went, the steps I took, and how the data was collected and transcribed. Additionally, your name or any revealing information about you will not be attached to my analysis.

So to begin, the interview will take about one hour and will be audio-recorded. The information which is audio-recorded will only be between you and me and will be used as part of the data collection process. I do have a consent form for you to read and sign confirming your understanding. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interviewing Questions

1. List possible factors which contribute to poor writing skills of entering first-year college students.
2. What are your feelings and attitudes regarding the writing skills of entering first-year college students?
3. Do you believe that writing skills improve over time; specifically, do you if a student is a repeat user during the same course?
4. What do you believe are some of the common errors noted in first-year college students' writing?
5. What resources are available to help entering first-year college students with writing challenges?
6. What do you believe are some of the common errors noted in first-year college students' writing?

Appendix D: Cover Letter

_____
DATE

TO: _____

FROM: Researcher, Jennifer Lloyd

SUBJECT: Interview – Essential Writing Skills of Incoming First-Year College Students

Hello _____

My name is Jennifer Lloyd and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. I would like to invite you to participate in a research study on essential writing skills of entering first-year college students. The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of instructors regarding essential writing skills of entering first-year college students.

If you agree to be a part of this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form before the interview. I will coordinate with you a day and time for the interview. The interview will last one hour and will be recorded. If a follow-up interview is necessary to clarify any statement, you will be contacted to schedule a second interview. This interview can be done in person (by exception, it can be conducted by phone). The recordings and any written documents will be kept private and confidential.

One other aspect of this interview is to have you verify the accuracy of the notes I have taken; member checking. We can accomplish this on the spot by your initialing the interviewing protocol worksheet I used to transcribe notes. The hour identified in the previous paragraph will consist of 25 to 30 minutes of the actual interview and 30 minutes to review transcribed notes.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want to participate in the research study. Participation or non-participation will have no bearing on your role as an instructor. No one will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. You may skip any questions that you feel are too personal.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me by phone.

Jennifer Lloyd
Doctoral Student
Walden University