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The Impact of University Writing Curriculum on Preservice Teachers' Praxis I Scores

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Abstract

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MA, University of West Alabama, 1984

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Until 2014, admission requirements for the educator preparation program at a university in the north central United States included a minimum competency level on the Praxis I basic skills writing test and completion of one general education writing course. However, evidence from the university's ETS reports showed that less than 60% of students as first-time test-takers met the required score. The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of the required writing course in assisting students to meet the Praxis I writing competencies. In 2014, the ETS Core Academic Skills for Educators test replaced the Praxis I. Because only 3 years of accumulated data on 88 examinees were available for the new test, the Praxis I writing test was used for this study. The learning theories of Albert Bandura, Jerome Bruner, John Dewey, and Lev Vygotsky guided the study. Utilization-focused program evaluation was used to investigate the problem. Data collected in this study were 5 faculty interviews, 2 student focus groups, and archival institutional data and national student engagement survey data. Data analysis was completed using curricular mapping and Atlas.ti 7 software. Findings indicated that the general education writing course did not provide students with the skills needed to meet minimum competency on Praxis I writing test. The study project, a curriculum plan for an education course, was developed to address test preparation and students' writing competency. The positive social change implications of this project are to increase the number of successful first-time test-takers on the writing test and to initiate collaborative discussions that would drive partnerships regarding the development of smooth transitions of writing expectations across K-16 institutions.

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Dedication

My decision to seek a doctorate was a defining step in my life. However, it was not a step I took by myself. I walked the path with my husband, Denis, who has been my support and my rock throughout this entire journey. I will be forever grateful for his unfailing belief in me and my abilities. Thank you for all the cups of tea you brought me as I worked on my study project and all those burdens, both large and small, you took upon yourself to free me to complete my doctorate. I could not have done it without you.

To my children, Daniel and Jaime, and my grandchildren, Devin, Zoe, and Zach – you have been my inspiration and drive to move forward in this journey. Whenever I felt disheartened, you were there to brighten up my day. Always remember that you can achieve anything you put your mind to with hard work and determination.

To my confidante and friend, Donna Durham, who began her doctorate journey at the same time, but who now has her angel wings, know that I could not have done it without you. I will be forever grateful and will miss you always. Also, to CoRinne Jordan and Brenda Buxton, two of my oldest and dearest friends, you have been and will always be "the wind beneath my wings" – you dreamed the dream with me and now it is a reality. Thank you for believing in me and supporting me throughout this journey.

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The Local Problem

Introduction

Graduation from an institution of higher learning generates an implied belief for the public that graduates are more than just adequately literate; however, given the diverse student population in higher education today, there is a wide range of factors that can impact the level of literacy that a student attains, including areas such as K-12 academic preparation, socioeconomic demographics, gender, age, self-efficacy, and family issues and challenges. Across the United States, college readiness is a critical issue. Students, including those interested in pursuing a career as educators, are transitioning from high school without the communication skills, both oral and written, needed for college/university success (Relles & Duncheon, 2018). One literacy component, the ability to write effectively, is considered one of the most important skills for success in today's world (Harris & Graham, 2016; Mascle, 2013; Shao & Purpur, 2016). Although there is argument that alignment between K-12 schools and institutions of higher education should be tighter, many incoming freshmen are required to take developmental courses (Relles & Duncheon, 2018; Schak, Metzger, Bass, McCann, & English, 2017). Over 30% of first year college students must enroll in developmental courses (Bragg & Taylor, 2014; Xu, 2016). In the area of educator preparation, 25.3% of all students enrolled have had to take at least one developmental course, and 14% of these students had to complete at least one developmental writing course (Sparkus & Malkus, 2013).

Even though students may have had passing grades or even good grades in English during high school and may have met college admission requirements, many university students do not possess adequate skills to complete required English general education core courses successfully (Lucenko, 2017; Perrin, 2013). They often must enroll in developmental courses or seek the assistance of their college or university tutorial services (Education Commission of the States, 2014; MacArthur & Phillippakos, 2013). Since many educator preparation programs use basic skills testing in reading, mathematics, and writing as part of the prescreening process, students must also be prepared to take these tests (Bennett, McWhorter, & Kuykendall, 2006; Gitomer, Brown, & Bonett, 2011). Educational Testing Service (ETS) developed the Pre-Professional Skills tests (PPST), known as the Praxis I basic skills tests or simply Praxis I, as tests to assess the level of test-taker competency of basic skills (ETS, 2013b). The ETS Praxis I writing test was developed to assess various writing skills, including grammar, mechanics, sentence structure, word choice, and essay writing (ETS, 2013b). In 2013, ETS restructured the Praxis I tests to align to the new standards of Common Core and renamed the tests as the Core Academic Skills for Educators tests, known as Core. During the 2013-2014 academic year, ETS provided both the Praxis I and the Core tests to allow time for the adoption of the new tests by educator preparation programs and state departments of education (ETS, 2013a). Across the nation, some students cannot meet the minimum level of competency for these tests even after successfully completing required general education courses (Falkenberg, 2010; Perna & Thomas, 2009). To meet the needs

of the diverse population of college students today, an institution must seek continually to improve the quality of its programs (Young, 2008).

This doctoral project study took place at a public open university in the north central United States. I conducted a qualitative, utilization-focused program evaluation (U-FE) of the alignment of the general education core writing course, WRIT 101-College Writing I, to the competencies of the ETS Praxis I writing test to seek ways to improve the writing skills of preservice teachers. WRIT 101 is the required general education writing course that all baccalaureate students at the local university must complete. The course usually is taken either in the first or second semester of a 4-year course of study. In the educator preparation program at the local university, freshman and sophomore students are considered preeducation students until they have completed all general education and prerequisite coursework. Students apply for admission to the teacher education program at the beginning of their third year of study. Prior to 2014, to be admitted, students must have completed all general education core coursework with a grade of C or better and met the set scores for the individual ETS Praxis I tests in reading, writing, and mathematics. The admissions and retention committee of the education department of the university reviews the application and all materials for each applicant and determines if eligibility has been met. If students do not meet the requirements for entry into the educator preparation program, the education department faculty and academic advisors assist students in setting up a plan and working to meet those requirements.

From 2009-2010 to 2013-2014, the education department utilized the ETS Praxis I tests in reading, writing, and mathematics as part of the requirements for admission into the educator preparation program. No set score was in place for the first 2 years that the Praxis I test requirement was in place so that score data could be collected to determine a level of proficiency for the tests. The set score of 173 for each of the three Praxis I tests was added in Fall 2011. In Fall 2013, the Praxis I score requirement was changed to include a composite score of 519 with no one score below 170. However, less than 1 year later in September 2014, ETS (2013a) fully adopted the Core tests to add more rigor and to align the tests to the new Common Core Standards. While the Praxis I tests were designed to evaluate the level of reading, writing, and mathematical skills that are "essential to a well-educated adult in a professional role," the redesign of the tests into the ETS Core tests provided a new measure of skills "identified as needed for career and college readiness in alignment with the Common Core State Standards for writing needed to prepare successfully for a career in education" (Educational Testing Service, 2013b, p. 2). After ETS piloted the new Core tests, the education department of the local university adopted the national set scores of 156 in reading, 162 in writing, and 150 in mathematics. However, because only 3 years of accumulated data on 88 examinees were available for the Core tests at the local university, the Praxis I was utilized for this study. It is important to note that Core test data for 2014-2015 to 2016-2017 indicates that a significant number of first-time test-takers, more than 44%, are still not achieving the set score for the required writing basic skills test.

U-FE is "a process for helping intended primary users select the most appropriate content, model, methods, theory, and uses for their particular situation" (Patton, 2012, p. 5). I approached the program evaluation through an appreciative inquiry (AI). While the changes that evaluation brings can enhance understanding and knowledge about a program, it is the personal interactions that provide the impact (King & Stevahn, 2013; Stavros & Torres, 2018). To accomplish this end, I sought to assess how the needs of students in terms of writing skills were being met to pass the Praxis I test so that an evidence-based project could be developed to assist students in improving their writing skills. The decision as to the best way to achieve this was determined after the collection and analysis of the data during the program evaluation. At the beginning of the study, the feasible delivery options that could be developed were considered to be either a credit-bearing first-year writing intensive course that aligns with the ETS basic skills writing competencies or a program available through the student support services that enables preeducation students to receive individual and group test preparation for the ETS basic skills test. The former would provide benefits not only for preeducation students but also for students in various programs of study throughout the university, while the latter would focus primarily on the needs of individual preeducation students who need assistance with preparation for the ETS basic skills test.

In the first section of the study, I define the problem of preeducation students as they attempt to meet the required competency level on the Praxis I writing test for admission to the teacher education program after completing the writing course that is part of the program's general education core curriculum. I address the purpose of and

rationale for the study at the local level and present a review of current literature that addresses the broader aspects of the problem. Lastly, I discuss the implications that could provide positive outcomes as a result of the evaluation process.

Definition of the Problem

Preeducation majors at an open-admissions, liberal arts university located in the north central United States have demonstrated poor basic skills competency in the area of writing as indicated in the test score results on the ETS Praxis I writing test, even though they had successfully completed a general education core writing course, WRIT 101, required of all education majors. Meeting the Praxis I test requirement for writing has presented an ongoing challenge to students with less than 60% of first-time test-takers submitting passing scores as reported by ETS in the university test reports. While it is clear that students do not perform well on the Praxis I writing test, there is no clear indication that the objectives and instruction within the general education writing course assist students in developing the level of competency needed to pass that exam.

<div align="center">

Rationale

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Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

Because of the increased accountability mandates from both state and federal levels, many university programs throughout the United States have admission requirements that students must meet. These mandates, including the highly qualified teacher requirement of the defunct No Child Left Behind Act (2001) and the highly effective teacher requirement in the current Every Student Succeeds Act (2015), require assurance that teachers are meeting levels of proficiency regarding state certification and

licensure requirements. The resulting changes in the admission requirements for the

teacher education program at the university in which I conducted my research include

basic skills testing of all students seeking admission to the program. The ETS Praxis I

tests in reading, writing, and mathematics have been used to meet this requirement.

Initially, in 2009, the education department mandated that students take the Praxis I tests

with no cut score being required; in 2011, the requirement changed, and students had to

meet or exceed a cut score of 173 for each of the ETS Praxis I tests. The implementation

of the cut score was the result of analysis of the average range of performance for

students during the pilot year for the Praxis I tests at the university. In September 2013,

ETS revised its basic skills tests into what are now known as the Core tests and provided

the choice of the Praxis I and the Core for use. In September 2014, the Praxis I tests were

phased out and only the Core tests were available. However, since there were no previous

Core test data available before the 2014-2015 academic year and at least 5 years of data

were needed to provide a credible basis for my research project, I used Praxis I data in

this research project.

Both the Praxis I and the Core writing tests measure similar types of content and

skills. They differ in the number of questions, allotted testing time, types of questions,

and the number and types of constructed essays (ETS, 2013b). Table 1 shows the

similarities and differences between the two ETS basic skills writing tests.

Table 1

Comparison of ETS Basic Skills Tests for Writing

	Praxis I Writing Test	Core Writing Test
Number of questions	44 multiple choice questions; 1 constructed response question	40 selected-response questions; 2 constructed response questions
Allotted time	38 minutes for multiple choice section; 30 minutes for the constructed response questions	40 minutes for the selected response questions; 30 minutes for each constructed response question
Content categories	4 categories of multiple-choice questions: grammatical relationships, structural relationships, word choice and mechanics, and essay	2 categories: text types, purposes, and production, and language and research skills for writing
Types of questions	Single-selection multiple-choice questions focused on usage and sentence correction; Constructive-response question in the format of an argumentative essay	Selected-response questions focused on usage, sentence correction, revision in context, and research skills; Constructed-response questions in the format of one argumentative essay and one informative or explanatory essay

Note. From PRAXIS PPST Writing and PRAXIS Core Academic Skills for Educators: Writing Comparison Chart by Educational Testing Service, 2013b, (https://www.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/PPST-CORE-Compare.pdf)

At the research site, ETS Praxis I writing test results collected over the period of 5 years from 2009-2010 through 2013-2014 for the teacher education program indicate that of the 251 preeducation students who took the Praxis I writing test, less than 60% were able to attain a score of 173 or better on the writing exam. A breakdown of the number of Praxis I writing examinees, pass rates, mean scores, and scores ranges by year is provided in Table 2 and shows a decline in pass rates over the 5 years.

Table 2

Local Praxis I Pass Rates and Score Ranges 2009-2013

Year	Number of Examinees	Pass Rate	Mean Score	Score Range
2009-2010	47	73.91%	172.54	165-180
2010-2011	54	60.00%	173.96	166-183
2011-2012	59	64.11%	173.82	165-186
2012-2013	56	48.20%	172.93	163-184
2013-2014	35	51.43%	172.77	166-180

Note. From *ETS Client Manager data for Praxis I paper delivered test 0720 and computer delivered test 5720* by ETS, 2016 (unpublished raw data).

All 251 initial test-takers successfully completed the required general education writing course with a C or better. Although only 28 students (11.2%) had been enrolled in any type of college developmental writing course, the mean test score for these students is 2.4 points below the required score for admission to the teacher education program.

ETS Core writing test results for the 3-year period of 2014-2015 to 2016-2017 show that of the 88 preeducation students who took the exam, less than 63% were able to achieve a score at or above the set score of 162. Table 3 provides a breakdown for the initial 3 academic years of Core writing test data for the local university.

Table 3

Local Core Academic Skills for Educators Pass Rates 2014-2016

Year	Number of Examinees	Pass Rate	Mean Score	Score Range
2014-2015	26	63.16%	163.47	134-180
2015-2016	39	53.85%	164.78	126-180
2016-2017	23	69.57%	164.78	134-192

From *ETS Client Manager data for Core Academic Skills for Educators computer delivered test 0722* by ETS, 2018 (unpublished raw data).

All 88 initial test-takers successfully completed the required general education writing course with a C or better. Of these test-takers, 14 (15.9%) were required to complete a college developmental writing course. As indicated in Table 4, students may be successful in completing the required writing course at a university level, but their ability to demonstrate writing proficiency above the minimum level does not appear to be supported by the coursework completed.

Table 4

Median Grades in Writing Courses of First-Time Test-Takers 2009-2016

	No Developmental Writing Course	At Least One Developmental Writing Course
Number of students	297 (87.6%)	42 (12.4%)
Mean grade in general education writing course	B	B⁻
Mean Praxis I writing score	174.3	170.6
Mean Core writing score	161.3	153.1

Note. Adapted from *ETS Client Manager data for Praxis I paper delivered test 0720 and computer delivered test 5720* by ETS, 2016 (unpublished raw data), *ETS Client Manager data for Core Academic Skills for Educators computer delivered test 0722* by ETS, 2018 (unpublished raw data), and *General education data for writing courses* by Montana University System, 2018 (unpublished raw data).

A significant number of students who initially took the Praxis I writing test between academic years 2009-2010 and 2013-2014 scored in the lowest two quartiles of the subcategories of the test. On the grammar section of the test, 47.2% of student scores in the lowest two quartiles as compared to 52.8% of students scoring in the highest two quartiles. The percentage of students scoring in each quartile by category is shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Praxis I Writing Scores by Category and Quartile 2009-2013

	Grammar	Structure	Word Choice and Usage	Essay
Quartile 1	16.5%	18.2%	15.0%	6.8%
Quartile 2	30.7%	22.9%	25.2%	41.2%
Quartile 3	33.2%	27.9%	28.4%	8.8%
Quartile 4	19.6%	31.0%	31.4%	43.2%

Note. Quartile 1 is the lowest quartile and Quartile 4 is the highest quartile. Adapted from *ETS Client Manager data for Praxis I paper delivered test 0720 and computer delivered test 5720* by ETS, 2016 (unpublished raw data)

For students who took the Core writing test between academic years 2014-2015 and 2016-2017, a significant number of students scored in the lower two quartiles on the usage and sentence correction multiple choice section of the test. On the essay section of the test, a larger percentage of students (65.7%) scored in the higher two quartiles as compared to the lower two quartiles. Table 6 shows the distribution of Core writing scores across the four quartiles.

Table 6

Core Writing Scores by Category and Quartile 2014-2016

	Usage and Sentence Correction	Essay
Quartile 1	25.0%	23.4%
Quartile 2	29.7%	10.9%
Quartile 3	25.0%	21.9%
Quartile 4	20.3%	43.8%

Note. Quartile 1 is the lowest quartile and Quartile 4 is the highest quartile. Adapted from *ETS Client Manager data for Core Academic Skills for Educators computer delivered test 0722* by ETS, 2018 (unpublished raw data).

According to du Preez and Fossey (2012), the ability to use language adequately is a basic element of proficient writing. The ETS score results indicate significant weaknesses in the understanding of English usage and writing proficiency among students who have taken the ETS basic skills tests to meet admission requirements of the teacher education program. The data found in Tables 3 through 7 appear to support the findings of du Preez and Fossey that while objectives that focus on improving student writing proficiency need to be integrated into university core curricula, these are not usually addressed.

In response to the difficulty students have had in meeting the required individual scores on the basic skills tests required for admission to Level I of the teacher education program, the education department provided workshops for the ETS Praxis I tests for students beginning in the Fall 2012 term. After the change of testing to the Core tests in 2014, similar workshops have been held. However, none of the workshops have been effective in raising the percentage of first-time test-takers meeting the writing set score,

mainly because the workshops have been poorly attended. The department also purchased

practice materials for student use, without cost, to prepare for the basic skills tests and

has worked with tutors from support services to assist students. Even with these measures

in place, initial test scores for students on the ETS basic skills writing test have not

improved significantly.

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

With the alignment of program requirements to New Teacher Assessment and

Support Consortium (INTASC) standards, educator preparation programs across the

nation have set in place rigorous requirements that must be met by those seeking

admission to their programs of study (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2011).

Teacher preparation in the 21st century is focused on developing a high-quality teacher

workforce, determined, in part, by standardized testing, such as the Praxis I (Lankford,

Loeb, McEachin, Miller, & Wyckoff, 2014). Federal and state policies are built upon this

focus (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2009; Little & Bartlett, 2010). The

goal, however, should not be just to have students pass the tests required for admittance

but to provide opportunities for them to develop the skills to the highest degree (Gitomer,

Brown, & Bonett, 2011; Palardy & Rumberger, 2008; Stronge, Ward, & Grant, 2011).

This emphasizes the need for colleges and universities to adjust or develop their

programs so that students are provided time to practice those skills. In preparing students,

institutions of higher learning need to be aware that while subject-area preparation and

readiness are important, students also need to be ready and motivated to engage

meaningfully in college coursework (MacArthur, Phillippakos, & Graham, 2016).

Previous research exists that focused on basic skills testing for educator preparation programs, but these studies have been directed toward equity, bias, and the perspectives of test-takers in their choice of responses (Bennett, McWhorter, & Kuykendall, 2006; Gitomer et al., 2011; Little & Bartlett, 2010). In addition, many researchers have studied the remediation of writing at various levels of the P-16 educational system (Kolb, Longest, & Jensen, 2013; Liang & Chen, 2011), but there have been a small number of researchers who have directed their studies to the writing process of college and university students in preparation for meeting the basic skills testing requirements for programs of study, such as teacher education. There appears to be a gap in practice that exists in the area of writing. At the university where this study was undertaken, there is not an adequate support system in place to assist students in overcoming their lack of proficiency in writing in relation to basic skills testing. To build writing proficiency at the college level, students must have opportunities to practice this skill building. This gap in practice is the area in which I focused my study because effective writing skills, while not taught in a teacher education program, are important attributes of a teacher. The abilities and knowledge that are needed in the teaching profession, if not learned in the teacher education program, must be in place prior to admission to the program (Falkenberg, 2010). If students need assistance in the honing of those skills, it is important that institutions of higher education study and evaluate ways to provide that assistance.

Definition of Terms

Accreditation: A method of assuring the quality of education at a university or

college and designed primarily to distinguish schools that adhere to a specific set of educational standards (AdvancED, 2013; National Council for Accreditation for Teacher Education [NCATE], 2008).

Appreciative inquiry (AI): A process of approaching organizational change by focusing on the strengths, rather than the weaknesses, within a system in order to create positive transformation (Conklin, 2009; Evans, Thornton, & Usinger, 2012)

College readiness: The ability of high school students to be successfully prepared to meet the challenges and rigors of the college/university coursework (Conley, 2012).

Core Academic Skills for Educators tests: A set of basic skills tests in reading, writing, and mathematics, also known as Core tests, developed by ETS and designed to assess the comprehensive knowledge of teacher preparation candidates and which are aligned to the Common Core standards. This set of tests replaced the ETS Pre-Professional Skills tests in September 2014 (ETS, 2013b).

Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP): A national accrediting agency for educator preparation programs that focuses on excellence in educator preparation through evidence-based accreditation that assures quality and supports continuous improvement to strengthen P-12 student learning (CAEP, 2015).

Developmental course: A course at the college and university level that builds student understanding and competence in a subject area, usually mathematics, reading, or writing, so that students can successfully complete higher-level courses in the same subject area or areas (Education Commission of the States, 2014).

Faculty Learning Outcomes Committee learning outcomes: A set of specific course learning outcomes, known as FLOC, developed by a committee of faculty representatives from 2-year, 4-year, and tribal institutions of higher learning for equivalency across all institutions (Montana University System, 2019).

Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE): An annual survey given to instructional staff who teach undergraduate students at institutions of higher education. The survey focuses on staff perceptions and expectations regarding student engagement in various educational practices that are linked to high levels of student development and learning (Indiana University, 2019a).

Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium Standards (INTASC): A set of standards for the preparation, licensing, and on-going professional development of teachers developed by a consortium of state education agencies and national educational organizations (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2011).

Meta-evaluation: A follow-up assessment of the program evaluation itself that focuses on the actual use and implementation of the findings by the client (Patton, 2012).

National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE): A performance-based system of accreditation of college/university programs to ensure preparation (NCATE, 2008).

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE): An annual survey of freshman and senior college students that focuses on the students' participation in programs and various activities at their institution of higher education for the purpose of learning and

personal development. Results are published and provide institutions with insights into effective practices and areas of improvement (Indiana University, 2019b).

Open-admissions: A policy at an institution of higher education that allows anyone with a high school diploma or its equivalent to take classes (Montana Board of Regents, 2010).

Preeducation major: An undergraduate student who has declared an education major but who is in the first 2 years of a baccalaureate education program (University of Oregon, 2019).

Pre-Professional Skills Test (PPST): A set of three tests, also known as the PPST or Praxis I tests, developed by the ETS designed to assess the ability to use grammar and language appropriately and the ability to communicate effectively in writing. The Praxis I writing test consists of a multiple-choice section designed to measure the ability of examinees to use standard written English correctly and effectively and an essay section designed to assess the examinees' ability to write effectively in a limited period of time (ETS, 2013a).

Preservice teacher: An undergraduate education major who has been accepted into a teacher education program to prepare to be a K-12 teacher (Kennedy, Boyer, Cavanaugh, & Dawson, 2010).

Situational responsiveness: Matching the design of the evaluation to the specific needs and restrictions of the setting of the evaluation (Rogers, 2009).

Utilization-focused program evaluation (U-FE): An approach to system evaluation that provides ongoing information to intended primary users from the onset of the evaluation until its conclusion (Mertens & Wilson, 2018; Patton, 2012).

Significance of the Study

For individuals to be successful within the context of community, nation, and the world, they must have the ability to use language effectively in both oral and written form (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 2006). Writers are required to understand how the choice of words, the structure of the sentences, and the implied meaning of the text interact together to transfer that meaning to the audiences that read the text. To gain proficiency in written communication, they must have the opportunity to practice and have feedback provided (du Preez & Fossey, 2012; Roscoe, Allen, & McNamara, 2018). Within the context of education, these opportunities are provided by teachers who need to be proficient writers themselves and who can analyze the writing of their students in order to help them improve their communication skills for their roles as adults in the 21st century (Washburn, Joshi, & Cantrell, 2011; Yagelski, 2012). According to Wilcox (2014), writing is an important part of K-12 content learning and has an immense impact on students' academic progress. In addition, the confidence that teachers have in themselves to perform the various actions that lead to student learning is one of the relatively few teacher characteristics that are reliable predictors of teaching practice and student outcomes (Poulou, Reddy, & Dudek, 2018, p. 2). Effective teachers must not only know how to guide students through the writing process, but they must understand that "language cannot be separated from what is taught and learned at

school" if they want all of their students to be successful (Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008, p. 362). For K-12 and postsecondary educational sectors, these facts have implications. In order to teach elementary and secondary students to be proficient writers, educators themselves must have more than adequate preparation in the theory and practice of written communication (Kaplan, 2008; Vue et al., 2016). In addition, they must feel that they are proficient writers and capable of guiding students through the writing process. According to Thomas and Mucherah (2016), effective teaching is built upon a teacher's self-efficacy. If teachers feel that they are not adequately prepared to teach students in any subject, including the components of written communication, they will lack the self-efficacy as a teacher, which could negatively impact student success as well as their own success (Corkett, Hatt, & Benevides, 2011; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014; Tatur & Buldur, 2013). Therefore, it is important that all students who are education majors have a solid personal understanding of the process of writing, foundational for the teaching and learning that will take place in their own classrooms.

Students whose K-12 classroom writing experiences have been guided by teachers who personally lack proficient writing skills will enter postsecondary education at risk of not having developed a level of proficiency to meet the rigor of college academic writing (Plakhotnik & Rocco, 2016). Because of admission requirements, such as basic skills testing or a writing competency exam, they may also fail to gain access to programs of study that will allow them to enter the career of their choice. As a result, teacher education programs are changing their format so that preservice teachers must be able to demonstrate that they not only know the content but are able to perform at a high level of

function the tasks required in areas such as literacy, which includes writing (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2012; Hiver, 2013). When postsecondary students, who have successfully completed the college admissions process and their general education courses are unable to pass a standardized writing exam geared to high school level proficiency, such as the Praxis I, it is important that universities and colleges seek ways to close the gap. Without a revision in university programs, teacher candidates who lack an understanding of the components of the writing process and sufficient writing skills will not be able to teach effectively and could become frustrated with their inability to serve as examples of competent models of writing literacy for the students (Plakhotnik & Rocco, 2016). According to du Preez and Fossey (2012), institutions of higher education have an obligation to prepare their graduates with the ability to work within the community and have the skills needed as "a pre-condition of employment" (p. 347). A program evaluation would provide an opportunity to examine the situational problem and point to ways to assist students to both meet the demands of the ETS basic skills writing test and improve their personal writing skills. This would assist the university in making decisions concerning effective ways to provide opportunities for students to gain the necessary proficiency in their written communication skills. For the university in the north central United States that is experiencing this situation, research undertaken in this area provides a knowledge base that could assist administration in making decisions so that graduates in the teacher education program and others are prepared to enter their professions proficient in their abilities, not only for the sake of the graduates, but for the

sake of the communities in which they live and the children they will impact through their teaching.

Institutions of higher education have a responsibility to meet the needs of their students, including teacher education admission requirements relating to the development of effective written communication skills (North, 2011; Tierney & Garcia, 2011). Education majors who pursued advanced degrees demonstrated the same writing deficits that they had prior to entering their baccalaureate program, indicating that the development of higher levels of competency was not supported at the undergraduate level (Fallahi, Wood, Austad, & Fallahi, 2006; Morales, 2009). Students enter the teaching profession and continue to teach with levels of personal writing performance that do not align with the expectations of writing subject mastery that they need to have to assist their own students with writing proficiency (Kaplan, 2008; Martin & Dismuke, 2017).

Research has shown that a prevalent feature of most writing courses at the university level is the number of written essays and research pages that students are required to produce rather than breaking down the written essay to analyze the problems that are found and addressing those problems in order to increase writing competence (NSSE, 2012). In addition, research studies dealing with basic skills testing for entrance into teacher education programs have not addressed ways to build those skills but rather addressed the equity issues of those tests, and a gap in practice exists between the teaching and learning that occur in university writing courses and the required level of proficiency needed for students to meet the requirements of the basic skills tests, specifically in writing (Gitomer et al., 2011; Henry et al., 2013; Stricker & Wilder, 2002).

The inability of many second-year college students to meet a required set score on a basic skills test that is geared to high school ability indicates that there may be a problem at the university level in meeting the needs of its students. An evaluation of the general education writing program may be able to ensure that preeducation students upon graduation will be better able to perform two important tasks: to prepare their students to be proficient writers and to effectively communicate the learning needs within their classrooms to all stakeholders.

Research Questions

I developed the following research questions to guide this program evaluation study:

1. How do the course objectives within the WRIT 101 (College Writing I) course align with the competencies of the Praxis I writing test?

2. What methods or strategies do participants note would need to be implemented to ensure that students receive the most effective writing instruction in the writing curriculum or in the university's writing assistance programs to meet the specific competencies for the Praxis I writing test?

3. What methods or strategies do participants note could be implemented to best address the building of an effective framework for the improvement of students' written communication skills?

Review of the Literature

In order to provide a background for the study I conducted, I completed a review of four areas of research. The four areas included the writing process, preparation of K-12

students for college, basic skills testing for admission to educator preparation programs, and the current reform movement for K-12 education and its impact on teacher education in the United States. Each area provided an integral link to the need for a curricular analysis through a program evaluation of the university writing curriculum, its alignment to Praxis I writing skills, and a study of student needs in terms of effective writing development.

Theoretical Framework

The framework that served as the theoretical foundation for this study was based on the theories of Bruner (1986), Dewey (1938), Vygotsky (1978), and Bandura (1986). Bruner's cognitive learning theory is based on the belief that learning is an active process and that previous experience and knowledge are the building blocks that the learner uses to construct new knowledge. Writing is a social process, and meaning is the result of communal interaction (Hudd, Smart, & Delohery, 2011). Because language is more than just written or spoken words, a successful writer must be able to write in a way that "makes sense and is appropriate to a particular context" and "effectively communicates meaning to a variety of people across a variety of contexts" (Vance, 2018, p. 1). Competence in written communication is learned over time as novice writers practice their writing and receive feedback about its effectiveness (Vue et al., 2016). According to Bruner, the mastery of the "knowledge-plus-skill-plus-tool integrity" of learning is based upon understanding a set of rules and procedures and the interaction with mentors and peers (p. 2). Adding to Bruner's research, the constructivist viewpoint holds that previous experiences, such as those in the writing process, scaffold learning so that a bridge is

constructed for the learner to acquire new knowledge (Jumaat & Tasir, 2016; Ogilvie & Dunn, 2010; Tomlinson, 2017). The stages of writing, the understanding of audience, mechanics and syntax, and vocabulary usage are learned, adapted, changed, and improved as a result of the construction of knowledge based on previous attempts of writing and feedback given to assist writers to improve.

Another theorist whose social learning theory influenced this study was Dewey. For Dewey (1938), the community in which learning takes place provides the experiences that enlarge the learner's knowledge and skills. According to Dewey, communal interaction creates a cycle in which the learner engages in an activity that allows the learner to both participate as an individual and observe the actions of others in the group, which affect changes to both the learner and the environment. A teacher must be able to provide learning activities in which the interaction between student and teacher enables the student to make sense of the concepts being taught and to see them in the context of the rules of the immediate social environment, otherwise the activities would have no meaning for the student (Burch, Burch, Bradley, & Heller, 2015; Wright & Hibbert, 2015). For preservice teachers at the undergraduate level, opportunities to make the same meaningful associations through the social interactions of the classroom are important because, upon graduation, it is not sufficient that they know language and its written and oral constructs; they must also be able to use that knowledge and understanding effectively to complete tasks that require high levels of skill (Yürekli, 2012).

According to the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky (1978), learning and the development of the individual are interactive social processes that cannot be separated.

Vygotsky developed the concept of the *zone of proximal development* based on the belief that learning is the shared responsibility of the learner and the teacher. Within the zone of proximal development, the learner's responsibility is for those tasks that can be successfully performed without assistance, and the teacher's responsibility is to guide the learner through the tasks that are more challenging for the learner (Iversen, Pedersen, Krogh, & Jensen, 2015). For Vygotsky, understanding is developed by translating thoughts into words (Imbrenda, 2016). Teachers play an important role in supporting students in the learning process, and teachers who can positively impact student writers are those who have developed communication skills that are highly effective and multimodal as well as allow for understanding to be sent and retrieved within familiar and unfamiliar contexts (Foo et al., 2011).

Vygotsky viewed writing as a way to increase knowledge and build new knowledge (Amiryousefi, 2017). Because language does not belong solely to the individual but is a social expression of interaction with others and the environment, when children enter school, they become aware of the *code shifting* between the language constructs of the school and that of the home or community environment (Aline & Hosoda, 2009). Because of their in-depth understanding of the active and interactive writing process, these teachers are able to provide tasks for students that are interesting to the individual student and make use of the various contexts of writing, such as journaling, story writing, and collaborative opportunities, that allow students to work together to build writing competency within the structure of standard English (Shabani, Khatib, & Ebadi, 2010).

The basis of Bandura's (1986) theory of observational learning is that learning occurs through the adoption of modeled behaviors that are valued by the learner. According to Bandura, children mimic the behaviors and actions of the adults that they perceive as role models, and they emulate the behaviors they believe the adults value. Through observation and practice of modeled behavior, children personally develop a sense of value in those behaviors. While teachers can model appropriate writing rules and skills that align with Standard English, they must reinforce the modeling consistently in order for children to see its value (Iverson, 2009). As a novice writer moves through the various levels of the writing process, previous knowledge and current learning activities form the basis for the construction of new knowledge as the writer uses accepted rules of word and sentence construction, vocabulary, and syntax and considers the appropriateness of the writing to the audience and genre to create effective meaning (Vue et al., 2016). According to Crossley, Roscoe, and McNamara (2014), writing is a process that evolves as the individual grows in experience and knowledge of various domains, discourse, and use of language (p. 187). Through the act of writing and the interaction with others during the process, writers expand their knowledge of self and the surrounding world, and the result is that through the active process of writing, students can find their identity and place in the world around them (Olsen, VanDerHeide, Goff, & Dunn, 2018).

K-12 Preparation and College Success

Much has been said about the disconnect between high school preparation and college readiness (Lee, 2012; Perna & Armijo, 2014; Rippner, 2014). According to

Mulvey (2008), the problem of underprepared students at U.S. colleges and universities

has existed since the 18th century when some students were in need of assistance with

Greek and Latin. In-depth rigorous and relevant study of the writing process has not been

the expectation in K-12 classrooms, especially in the high school setting, where the focus

is on writing in response to literary topics and genres and not on the process itself

(Lingwall, 2011; Paige, Sizemore, & Neace, 2013; Rivera-McCutchen, 2012). Teachers

work to prepare students for high stakes testing, not with providing them with adequate

writing assignments to prepare them for university coursework (Addison & McGee,

2010; Dennihy, 2015).

According to Yagelski (2012), although 80% of high school seniors achieve a

basic level of competence on National Assessment of Educational Progress writing exam,

only 25% attain a proficient level and "more than a third of high school juniors are not

prepared for college level writing" (p. 88). Writing skills are not developed adequately to

provide a baseline for success when students transfer to higher education (Lombardi,

Conley, Seburn, & Downs, 2013; McCormick, Hafner, & Saint Germain, 2013; Thurston,

Conley, & Farkas, 2011b). Although college expectations have been found to motivate

high school students, including those with low academic skills, without secondary

schools and institutions of higher education working to assist them, students may not be

successful at the college level (Thurston, Conley, & Farkas, 2011a). However, the

differences between those who are successful and those who are not are usually attributed

to personal choices students make in terms of taking action themselves to correct the

deficiency by seeking tutorial services or other institutional assistance (Próspero, Russell,

& Vohra-Gupta, 2012; Soric, 2009). The importance of having a support network in place for students' writing is a factor that cannot be overlooked by institutions of higher education.

While there is a need for institutions to provide support to students who do not have the required skills to be successful in coursework, there is often a lack of support that creates an imbalanced educational situation where equality of access does not equal equality of success (Webb-Sunderhaus, 2010). Researchers have indicated that students in the first 2 years of college report that the curriculum demands placed upon them in their courses require only minimal effort on their part with little or no rigor (Bielinska-Kwapisz, 2015; Graves, Hyland, & Samuels, 2010; NSSE, 2012). This situation lends credence to the need to conduct curricular analysis through program evaluation to ensure that engagement in instructional methods and delivery provides a high quality of learning for students. An important aspect of the relationship between an institution of higher learning and its students is that upon accepting a student, the institution is, in effect, entering into a contractual relationship with that student in which the institution is fundamentally saying that it will offer what is needed for the student to graduate (Chile & Black, 2015; Harrington, 2015). Regardless of the level of writing proficiency that a college student has at the time of entry into the university setting, it is the responsibility of the university to provide the student support needed for success.

Basic Skills Testing and Teacher Education Program Admission

With the demand for higher accountability in the educational sector, state and federal mandates have put basic skills testing in place for admission to teacher education

programs (Gebril & Eid, 2017). The accountability standards and testing policies are the

basis for determining not only what preservice teachers know but what they are able to do

(Kaufman et al., 2016; Sandholtz & Shea, 2012). The reasoning is that university

administrators and teacher education faculty have a responsibility to strengthen teacher

expertise in their candidates because it is teacher expertise that will drive the nation's

outcomes and position in the current, knowledge-based global economy (Darling-

Hammond, 2010; Goodwin et al., 2014). As a result, basic skills tests, such as the Praxis

I, are becoming an important part of both the admission process to teacher education

programs and the hiring process which is based partly on the written and verbal

communication skills of the candidate (Gitomer & Zisk, 2015). Previous research have

indicated that students who must take high stakes testing feel that they are not adequately

prepared for the tests but believe that collegial resources, such as practice test sessions

and test-taking skill training, would provide needed support in test preparation (Stricker

& Wilder, 2002; Zhan & Andrews, 2014; Zhan & Wan, 2016). Studies have shown that

there is a correlation between high school preparation, low college entrance exam scores,

low scores on basic skills tests, and the successful completion of a teacher education

program (Hebling & Little, 2011; Texas, Mundy, Varela, Ybarra, & Yuma, 2016). The

issues raised ultimately relate back to the point of preparation.

  The overarching skill of being able to communicate effectively through the

written word should be an integral part of the development of all students so that upon

graduation and in their future jobs, they are able to interact effectively with various types

of audiences (Jacob, 2011; Mroz, 2012; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2014;

Plakhotnik & Rocco, 2016). However, writing in education programs has been used for reflective practice, such as journals, work samples, and portfolios, to help preservice teachers make connections between theory and practice rather than, as Morales (2009) pointed out, to ensure writing competence. While it is evident that a connection needs to be made between the K-12 preparation and higher education expectations, the goal is not just to pass the tests required for admittance but to provide opportunities for students to develop their competency to the highest level (Gitomer et al., 2011; Kaufman, 2009). This emphasizes the need for colleges and universities to develop or adjust curricula so that students are actively engaged in activities, including writing activities, that allow them to activate prior knowledge, to engage in tasks on both the intellectual and emotional levels, and construct new knowledge as a result of engagement in the activities (Iverson, 2009; Lingwall & Kuehn, 2013).

The traditional lecture format for conducting classes is not conducive to providing students with opportunities to engage in reinforcement of writing skills (Bullard & Anderson, 2014). While content faculty may believe that writing is a critical skill, many believe that their disciplines of study do not include writing development, which they see as a study skill that falls under the directive of a developmental skills service (Ruane & Chappell, 2018). Transmitting information through passive learning does not allow for the building of knowledge from personal interaction, and faculty need to integrate both conversational and experiential learning, such as writing and other active learning strategies, to enhance students' knowledge construction (Gingerich et al., 2014). While

assisting in building knowledge within the discipline, these activities also can help to develop needed skills such as writing competency.

Because K-12 educators spend much of their time in written and oral dialogue with students, parents, administrators, and colleagues, their ability to understand the components of writing, including grammar, mechanics, and sentence structure, is an important facet in not only their success, but also in the success of their students (Gitomer & Zisk, 2015; Washburn et al., 2011). Graduates of teacher education programs need to be able to use not only research-based methodologies and strategies but also to have a solid grasp of the constructs of language. According to Wilcox (2014), writing is an important part of K-12 content learning and has an immense impact on students' academic progress. In addition, the confidence that teachers have in themselves to perform the various actions that lead to student learning is one of the relatively few teacher characteristics that are reliable predictors of teaching practice and student outcomes (Poulou et al., 2018). Therefore, it is important that teachers have a solid personal understanding of the process of writing, foundational for the teaching and learning that will take place in their classrooms. This understanding and knowledge enable teachers to move beyond basic instruction to meet the needs of diverse K-12 student populations (Washburn et al., 2011). Because K-12 students need continuous guidance from their teachers, those teachers must be experts in what they teach (Kunter et al., 2013). During instruction, teachers must be able to make split-second decisions about content and methodology without previous thought or consideration (Martin & Dismuke, 2017; Morales, 2009). Therefore, it is important that candidates in teacher education

programs demonstrate a high level of competence and understanding of written communication even though they may have been considered successful within the college setting itself. Because communities hire teachers with the expectation that those hired are competent communicators and experts in their fields, basic skills testing as part of an educator preparation program provides a level of consumer protection against hiring individuals who graduate from a teacher education program but lack the necessary skills and knowledge to teach (D'Agostino & Powers, 2009; Goldhaber & Hansen, 2010; Henry, Bastian, & Fortner, 2011; Shuls & Trivitt, 2015).

K-12 and Teacher Education in the 21st Century

Globalization and advances in the technology sector within the last 20 years have caused a shift in the United States from an economy that was labor intensive to an intellectual and knowledge based one (Walden University, 2010). Today's teachers are preparing students not only for jobs that exist today but for occupations that will come into existence in the future. To be effective in this preparation, teachers must understand today's workforce skills and provide opportunities for students to acquire and practice these skills. According to Wagner (2014), these skills include the following: (a) the ability to think through a problem to arrive at various solutions, (b) the utilization of collaborative processes and proactive communication, and (c) the mastery of technological innovations. While these skills emphasize collaboration, innovation, and creativity, a technologically advanced society still requires an in-depth understanding of English and mathematical content knowledge (Kereluik, Mishra, Fahnoe, & Terry, 2013).

Within K-12 schools, there has been and still is an emphasis on state mandated testing in language arts, reading, mathematics, and science, and the K-12 Common Core State Standards Initiative, which has been adopted by many states, provides a consistent set of learning goals to improve student outcomes (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2018). The Common Core Standards Initiative provides assessment tools to master the acquisition of skills, including written communication (Brown, 2010). According to Greene and Abbott-Shim (2014), the Common Core standards "require teaching practices and learning experiences to build intentionally and appropriately toward higher order thinking" (p. 23).

However, "student learning depends on the content and approaches teachers use in their teaching and that teaching depends on teacher knowledge, pedagogy, level of commitment, and the opportunities teachers have to increase their learning" (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 1013). Teachers must be able to create learning environments that use rigor and meaningful learning opportunities in order to develop highly literate, well-informed, lifelong learners who can make incredible impact on the future of their communities (LaCour, York, Welner, Valladares, & Kelley, 2017; Moore, 2012; O'Connor, McDonald, & Ruggiero, 2014). According to Curtis (2017), to accomplish this task, teachers must be competent in their understanding of the instructional content on both personal and professional levels.

Although preservice teachers come to their undergraduate programs with various levels of content knowledge competency, they need to enter the profession with a comprehensive understanding of the subjects and skills they are expected to teach (Martin

& Dismuke, 2017). Because literacy is one of the major components of both the Common Core standards and 21st century skills, preservice teachers must be able to convey the fact that there are acceptable standards that must be met and conformed to in order to be successful (Boone, 2010). As future educators, they need to understand that they will be required to provide continuous literacy support to students through "sophisticated instructional practice" and to accomplish this, they themselves must be highly competent in literacy practices (Kavanagh & Rainey, 2017, p. 905).

Licensure testing, including basic skills tests such as the Praxis I, strongly influences the academic and pedagogical content of undergraduate educator preparation coursework (Stotsky, 2009). It is important that undergraduate programs develop curricula that allow students to continue to improve their skills so that graduates are fully prepared as teachers. This will not be accomplished by randomly adding to existing course requirements or simply adding new courses to the program but rather through systemic analysis of university programs in order to transform them into learning opportunities required for the 21st century (Mayer, 2013; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2008; Rotherham & Willingham, 2009). The challenge is not just to do a better job than what institutions of higher learning are doing now, but also to initiate a directional change in curricula planning and design through program evaluation (Futrell, 2010; Sayeski & Higgins, 2014).

Implications

The project study I conducted can assist personnel at the local university to address the needs of preeducation majors in the area of writing skills in order to meet the

basic skills testing requirement for admission to the teacher education program. It can also help these and other students who are not prepared for the rigors of college writing. Also, it can assist faculty in making decisions concerning methods to strengthen the writing competencies of preservice teachers who will impact future K-12 students.

The information made available through the program evaluation, including personal insights shared by students and English faculty, can provide feedback to the university administrators and faculty that will deepen their commitment to and understanding of student needs in terms of written communication skills in order to improve learning outcomes. In sharing the findings of the program evaluation, not only within the university itself but also with the surrounding K-12 school districts, a dialogue may ensue that can promote the closure of the gap between the expectations of K-12 schools and institutions of higher education regarding student writing and may promote further research to promote student success.

Practical Implications

To meet student needs, an understanding of the nature of the problem is important. U-FE assisted in pinpointing the overarching reasons why a significant number of preeducation majors are not able to pass their initial Praxis I writing test, which include any of the following:

- An overall lack of writing preparation prior to students entering the university, which is supported by the research of Dennihy (2015), Lombardi et al. (2013), McCormick et al. (2013).

- A lack of student understanding of grammar, structure, mechanics or of the

actual writing process as supported by Crossley et al. (2014), Lingwall (2011), and Paige et al. (2013),

- A lack of support within the writing program itself to address the issue of poor writing competency among students, particularly preeducation students who need to prepare for the Praxis I writing test as supported by Thurston et al. (2011a) and Webb-Sunderhaus (2010).

- A lack of a support network within the university itself to assist students in developing their writing competency, especially in connection with the Praxis I writing test (Próspero et al., 2012; Soric, 2009).

The evaluation process provided findings that were used to develop a project that could be implemented to provide opportunities for students to develop strong writing skills that are comprehensive and meet the competencies required for the Praxis I writing test.

According to Offerdahl and Tomanek (2011), assessment to promote student learning provides opportunities to investigate instructor thinking and to support changes in programs which require the adoption of new strategies and methodologies. With the changes that are occurring across the nation regarding standards and practices in education at both K-12 and postsecondary levels, teacher education faculties and administrators at other institutions of higher learning may be able to use the evaluation findings to study the effectiveness of their current program in producing teachers who can effectively teach writing in today's classroom. Lastly, through the dissemination of the project study, other institutions of higher learning with similar demographics may be able to utilize the results to guide their program reviews and assist students to become

successful and effective educational practitioners who possess a clear understanding of the writing process on an individual basis and who can effectively teach their students to become proficient writers. According to Chile and Black (2015), it is important that institutions of higher learning meet their responsibility by providing support for students to develop to highest possible level, and institutions must undertake program review to determine the best approach to accomplish this task.

Other Implications

While previous research in the area of basic skills testing, such as Praxis I tests, have primarily concentrated on issues of bias, the goal of my project study was to determine the most effective framework for addressing the writing needs of preeducation majors in order to meet the competency level needed for the basic skills tests that are part of admission requirements of a teacher education program. An implication of my study is that it might serve as a starting point for more targeted studies to find ways of assisting students in other program areas that require competency-based testing for admission. As Darling-Hammond (2010), Goodwin at al. (2014), and Gitomer and Zisk (2015) pointed out in their studies, it is important that institutions of higher learning find ways to strengthen their students' knowledge and expertise. In addition, because my project study used student focus groups and faculty interviews, it encourages the development of new strategies to approach the writing process that could provide a more effective response to both the teaching and learning of writing skills. According to Stricker and Wilder (2002) and Zhan and Andrews (2014), listening to stakeholders is important to providing necessary assistance to students. In order to provide students with the opportunity to

improve their writing skills in preparation for basic skills testing, the direction of my study project was dependent on the analysis of data and findings. The study project could have been developed as a workshop or a university course that could serve as a requirement for preeducation students and become permanent part of the university curriculum. The design of the project was based on the need to assist education students in increasing their accuracy and range in English grammar as it relates to personal writing competency, the teaching profession and basic skills testing for educators. Topics had to include the review of grammatical structure, sentence structure, agreement, word choice and idioms. Activities and assignments had to be designed to increase students' ability to analyze grammar, including their own mistakes, through assigned readings, discussion, personal writing, and peer editing

Summary

The local problem discussed in this study is the inability of a significant number of preeducation majors at a university in the north central United States to meet the minimum level of competency on the Praxis I writing test on their initial attempt. The failure of any university student to demonstrate a level of writing competency required for the Praxis I writing test is problematic; however, for preeducation students, it is especially challenging because it is a barrier to admission to the teacher education program of the university. Preeducation majors are required to enroll in only one general education writing course, WRIT 101 (College Writing I) and complete the course with a grade of C or better. However, this course, in and of itself, seemingly does not assist students in developing the needed skills required for success on the Praxis I writing test.

The Praxis I writing score results of preeducation students demonstrate that a gap in practice exists between what the university is currently doing to assist students in becoming effective writers and the students' ability to demonstrate the competencies of the basic skills writing exam, an admission requirement for the teacher education program.

In Section 2, I discuss case study, U-FE, and the AI approach. I include an explanation of the evaluation process to illustrate the framework of evaluation objectives, data gathering tools, the program evaluation's timeline, and the alignment of the framework to include AI principles. In subsequent sections, I discuss the project, its development, and the connection between the research findings and theory. I also offer my reflections and conclusions, including implications, concerning the project study.

Section 2: The Methodology

Research Design and Approach

The methodology I selected for my doctoral project study was a case study approach to U-FE. According to Merriam (2014), the case study design provides an opportunity to study a bounded entity. For my study, the entity was the development of preeducation students in the area of writing competencies within a particular university. Because the focus of my study was to evaluate the writing curriculum in terms of meeting the specific writing needs of preeducation students, I chose to use U-FE.

Formative and summative evaluations serve specific purposes in all types of program evaluation. Formative evaluation is a continuous way to monitor how well a program is meeting instructional goals and objectives so that adjustments can be made in order to create the best environment for learning, while summative evaluation provides a summary judgment of whether the outcomes or goals of the program were met by the program (Guyadeen & Seasons, 2016; Patton, 2012; Spaulding, 2014). In U-FE, each provides specific types of information to both the primary users and the evaluator (Patton, 2012). According to Spaulding, the summative format is high stakes and usually involves key stakeholders who make major funding and program decisions; formative evaluations are intended for program administrators and staff to make adjustments or changes to enhance the learning that occurs within the program. Discussions between the evaluator and intended primary users during these steps can provide "a technical, political, and ethical rationality" to the evaluation design (Bryson, Patton, & Bowman, 2011, p. 7).

Praslova (2010) stated that evaluation of educational programs at the university level provides feedback that allows the institution to make decisions that can positively impact student learning. Program evaluation provides opportunities for using findings to improve curriculum and strengthen programs. According to Svensson, Szijarto, Milley, and Cousins (2018), there should be a continuous interlinking of design and an evaluation process. This provides opportunities for faculty and administrators to collect feedback about the impact of instruction and learning on student achievement of course goals and objectives; however, it is important that program evaluation is handled in a way that generates a positive atmosphere for those impacted by it (van der Knaap, 2017). Therefore, I incorporated an AI approach to the program evaluation. According to Stavros and Torres (2018), AI provides a way to investigate an organization and ask in-depth questions that can lead to positive changes by focusing on the strengths of the individuals within that environment and the work they do.

The research questions that formed the foundation for this project study were as follows:

1. How do the course objectives within the WRIT 101 (College Writing I) course align with the competencies of the Praxis I writing test?

2. What methods or strategies do participants note would need to be implemented to ensure that students receive the most effective writing instruction in the writing curriculum or in the university's writing assistance programs to meet the specific competencies for the Praxis I writing test?

3. What methods or strategies do participants note could be implemented to best

address the building of an effective framework for the improvement of

students' written communication skill?

According to Patton (2012), a critical part of any program evaluation is the understanding

of the relationship between what has happened in a program and the outcomes (p. 194). It

was important for me, as the researcher, to evaluate the requirement of only one writing

course for education students as the reason for the failure of a large number of first-time

test-takers in meeting the Praxis I writing set score. In conducting this study through a U-

FE evaluation lens, I was able to analyze the results of the practice on the desired

outcome. By working with the intended primary users through the evaluation process, I

was able to assist them in understanding the reasons for high number of students not

meeting the Praxis I minimum score requirement, which lent validity to the study.

The study did not lend itself to a quantitative or mixed-methods approach because

the focus of the study was a two-fold evaluation: (a) to evaluate the writing course

objectives in terms of alignment to the Praxis I writing competencies and (b) to evaluate

the needs of students in terms of the Praxis I writing competencies. I also examined the

perspectives of faculty and students regarding the overall student engagement across the

campus. Because the requirement of the Praxis I writing set score was part of the entry

process into the educator preparation program at the university where the study was

conducted, the intended primary users had a vested interest in the findings of the study.

As a result, U-FE was the most appropriate methodology for this study because the

evaluative findings could be used to bridge the gap in practice. The AI approach provides

an opportunity for intended primary users and participants to see change from a positive

exploratory viewpoint (Preskill & Catsambas, 2006, p. 33). I chose to use AI with the hope of opening a collaborative dialogue that would strengthen education students' writing proficiency.

By approaching program evaluation through a qualitative lens, I reviewed available institutional archival data, which included syllabi for WRIT 101 and WRIT 095, ETS annual reports, and the university's FSSE and NSSE surveys. I also examined the grammar and language competencies covered on the ETS Praxis I writing test. I used student focus groups to evaluate student writing needs and faculty interviews to assess faculty core beliefs concerning the development of student writing skills. This qualitative approach allowed the program evaluation to be constructivist in nature. I used curriculum mapping as part of data collection, which allowed for the investigation of the alignment of Praxis I topics and course outcomes and goals. Because curriculum mapping provides a graphic link between the overall course content and learning outcomes, it can be used to define course deficiencies and guide changes in curriculum (Soini, Pietarinen, & Phyältö, 2017; Uchiyama & Radin, 2009).

Throughout the evaluation process, I provided periodic updates concerning the progress of the program evaluation in the form of short, focused, narrative reports to the primary users, who included the university's provost; dean; and chair of the college in which both the education and English departments are housed. These progress reports provided primary users with the insight to make decisions throughout the evaluation process to better enhance the end product of the evaluation-the improvement of preservice teachers' writing skills. I uploaded the formative reports to a secure, password-

protected university network drive accessible only to me and the primary users. At the culmination of the program evaluation, I used the research findings to develop a project study in the form of curriculum plan of a course that would meet the needs of the students in terms of increasing writing competence and preparation for the Praxis I writing test.

Utilization-Focused Evaluation

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (2012), program evaluation is a purposeful, systematic investigation of a program within an organization in order to make judgments about a program's effectiveness and to provide meaningful recommendations to the organization for refining the future of the program. U-FE centers on the inclusion of intended primary users in making determinations about the use of the evaluation (Patton, 2012). Because U-FE is an evaluation approach that is situational, it focuses on the actual use of the evaluation by intended primary users in order to make decisions about the program (Patton, 2012; Ward, Maher, Marcynyszyn, Ellis, & Pecora, 2011). It is the situation in which the evaluation is conducted and the intended use of the evaluation by the primary users that drive U-FE methodology, and because of this, U-FE does not promote any specific content, theory, model, or data but uses situational responsiveness to drive the process (Patton, 2012). Including stakeholders in the evaluation process provides specific information that is detailed and fundamental regarding the perceptions of the intended primary users as to the program and its effectiveness; however, this inclusion may also limit the subjectivity of the evaluation (Augustsson, Richter, Hasson, & von Thiele Schwarz, 2017; Vandenbussche, Edelenbos,

& Eshuis, 2017). It is this specific inclusion of primary users and their interaction with the evaluator throughout the stages of the evaluation that makes the process itself dynamic and continually evolving to meet the exact needs of the users (Neuman, Shahor, Shina, Sarid, & Saar, 2013). In my study, the involvement of primary stakeholders was crucial to the success of the evaluation. Without their interest and involvement, no changes could take place.

Evidence-based practice is enhanced through U-FE because the methodology provides opportunities for stakeholders to receive new information that can be constructive to the decision-making process and to the development of new skills and techniques as well as assist in the compromise process and the lessening of adversarial entanglements (Honeycutt et al., 2016; Miranda, Wells, & Jenkins, 2017). U-FE follows a series of 17 sequential steps that, although linear in nature, require the evaluator to understand the interconnectedness of the steps (Patton, 2012). The U-FE checklist is the framework for the U-FE process, and it allows for flexibility in managing changes in the situational environment and adjusting to new constructs of knowledge that emerge as a result of the evaluation process while guiding the evaluation process (Patton, 2012; Rey, Tremblay, & Brousselle, 2013).

I used the U-FE checklist as a guide as I completed my evaluation, kept detailed notes as I moved through the steps, and shared my notes with the primary users throughout the evaluation process. As a member of the university staff, I have established working relationships with the primary users, faculty and staff, and students; however, as a U-FE evaluator, I needed to establish a sense of trust within those same groups of

people for me as an evaluator. In my study, I utilized the U-FE checklist to ensure that I

remained focused on the U-FE tasks for a successful completion of a valid and credible

evaluation. The timeline and 17 steps are presented in Appendix B.

Steps 1 through 6 in the U-FE process focus on situational analysis. During these

initial steps, assessment is made of the readiness of the organization and the evaluator to

undertake the evaluation process as well as the identification and engagement of the

intended primary users and their needs (Patton, 2012). The key to the completion of a

successful U-FE is the evaluator's clear understanding of the primary users' perceptions

of the evaluation process, their readiness to undertake such a process, and their level of

commitment to moving through the process (Patton, 2012).

In Steps 7 through 12 of U-FE, the design of the evaluation and the methods used

to collect and analyze data are determined and should be selected to lead to findings that

are useful, credible, and valid to the intended primary users (Patton, 2012). In this study, I

used archival data, student focus groups, and faculty interviews to collect data. From the

use of curriculum mapping, content analysis, and constant comparative analysis of data, I

was able to develop an understanding of the problem that drove my study. From data

collection in Step 13 to the submission of the report to primary users in Step 15, I kept

primary users informed, reported emerging and interim findings, and developed an

organized presentation of the data in ways that kept the users interested, facilitated their

understanding of the data in terms of the purpose of the evaluation, and encouraged

continued ownership of and commitment to the evaluation (see Patton, 2012). By keeping

the primary users engaged throughout the evaluation process, the evaluator has the

opportunity to follow-up with them after the evaluation report is submitted to complete a

meta-evaluation (Patton, 2012). The focus of Steps 16 and 17 was to determine whether

the evaluation was used by the primary users to drive decisions (Patton, 2012).

Stakeholder engagement is crucial to the effectiveness of any collaborative evaluation,

including U-FE, and to the actual use of the findings within any organization (Bryson et

al., 2011; O'Sullivan, 2012). In order to determine the effectiveness of the program

evaluation in my study, I followed up with the primary users regarding the intended use

of the evaluation results. I also conducted a meta-evaluation for the purpose of

accountability and improvement.

In my study, I began the evaluation process by holding meetings with the intended

primary users to determine the readiness of all parties to begin the evaluation process and

to review the priority questions that needed answers. Throughout the evaluation process, I

continued to meet with the primary users. All ensuing activities, including data

collection, analysis, and reporting of the findings, were guided and driven by the

association with the primary users, the users' expectations, and their identified needs

(English, MacDonald, & Connelly, 2006; Yang, 2009). Upon completion of the initial

situational analysis, prioritization of the purpose of the evaluation and the uses by the

primary users was the next step in the U-FE evaluation process (Patton, 2012). The next

step in the evaluation process was the prioritization of the purpose of the evaluation and

the uses by the primary users (Patton, 2012).

Appreciative Inquiry

AI is a tool that can be used in program evaluation to maximize the value of a methodology to intended primary users (Preskill & Catsambas, 2006). The AI process consists of four phases: discovery, dream, design, and destiny (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008; Preskill & Catsambas, 2006). AI draws on an organization's past success in order to create a vision of future success and is a paradigm shift in the approach to program evaluation (Conklin & Hart, 2009; Preskill & Catsambas, 2006). According to Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2010), program review and evaluation traditionally search for those things that are wrong within a program. This type of search can create a negative view among stakeholders and reduces the chances of having all impacted parties embrace the evaluation findings (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stravos, 2008). AI, as defined by Preskill and Catsambas (2006), is a collaborative process that asks questions about and identifies "the best of 'what is'" within an organization or program in order to improve outcomes (p. 1). Foundational to AI is the idea of affirmative questioning, which generates affirmative energy, dialogue, and motivation to create a shared future by discovering what is most effective and positive within the program or organization (Conklin, 2009; Dunlap, 2008). When using AI, a researcher does not ignore the weaknesses within a program but acknowledges them through a noncritical lens and allows participants to participate in gap analysis to solve problems (Preskill & Catsambas, 2006). AI provides a theoretical process and framework for decision-making within an organization (Evans et al., 2012).

AI aligns well with U-FE methodology. There are commonalities between AI and U-FE, which include dialogue among those people conducting the inquiry and those impacted by it, a structure for carrying out the process, and the belief that findings should be used in decisions and actions of the organization (Preskill & Catsambas, 2006). Using AI during the U-FE process when meeting with primary users can result in more in-depth information about the program and factors that surround it, increased levels of primary user commitment and understanding about the process of evaluation, and positive feelings about the process and future findings. Framing questions in the AI format for surveys, interviews, or focus groups can reduce the fear of participants regarding the future use of the information they provide. This can enhance the richness of the data and findings and provide the foundation for the development of stronger and more relevant evaluations used by an organization and its members to make decisions for improving programs (Dunlap, 2008; Flowers, 2010; van der Knaap, 2017).

Study Design

According to Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2010), a qualitative case study allows the researcher to gain information about a bounded system; that is, a specific organization or situation. There was little research available about the alignment of general education writing course objectives and Praxis I writing competencies and their combined impact on preservice teachers' writing skills. Because of this, the use of a qualitative case study approach to U-FE allowed me to explore those factors that influenced the situation occurring within the specific university where I conducted my research. Because of the nature of qualitative research, including program evaluation, a

researcher can tap into the specific situation in carefully informative ways and, in doing

so, extract rich data that can help to produce positive outcomes for the client (Cronin,

2014; Cunliffe, 2011; Watkins, 2012). The selection of a case study was appropriate for

my study because this methodology allowed me to investigate what occurred within the

university learning environment that resulted in an outcome in which a high percentage

of students failed to meet the minimum level of competency on the Praxis I writing test

even after successfully completing the required general education writing course. Within

a bounded system such as a university, the participation of both faculty and students can

provide in-depth information for the case study program evaluation so that various

aspects of the situation can be investigated through multiple lenses (Baxter & Jack,

2008). Using U-FE with an AI approach within the case study provided an opportunity

for primary users and, ultimately, those impacted by the evaluation, faculty and students,

to embrace both the process and findings of the evaluation. Both groups were able to

view the evaluation process as a means of positively impacting student writing skills

across the college and, in turn, increasing preservice teachers' test scores on the Praxis I

writing test.

Participants

In qualitative research, the goal is to gain a deep understanding of the situation

that exists from the perspective of the emic, or participant (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016;

Olive, 2014; Turner et al., 2015). I used purposeful sampling because the study took

place within a bounded system of a university with a small population of 1,273 students

and 88 faculty members who have personal knowledge of the problem topic. I used

critical case sampling, a form of purposeful sampling, to select these participants. This type of sampling allowed for the selection of students who had passed the Praxis I writing test the first-time and those who had not and for those students who had completed both a developmental writing course and WRIT 101 and those who had taken only WRIT 101. Initially, I had planned to use four focus groups comprising of six to eight education students in each group. The commonalities within each group were their scores on the Praxis I writing test and their enrollment in only WRIT 101, the required general education course or in both WRIT 101 and WRIT 095, the developmental writing course. After I sent out invitations to participate and completed a follow-up to the initial invitation through a phone call to all nonresponding students, a total of 15 students agreed to participate. I provided participant consent forms to those students. Of the total participants, only four had not been successful as first-time test-takers in meeting the set score for Praxis I writing test. I decided to integrate these students between two focus groups. Group A consisted of seven student participants, with five students who had met the set score on their first attempt and two students who had not. Group B consisted of eight students, with six students who had been successful and two students who had not. Since I could not create the groups as I initially intended, I chose to distribute the students in a manner that would allow for opportunities for each group to take the discussion deeper regarding perceptions about initial preparation, tests, and results. Table 7 illustrates the variables used to determine the distribution of student participants across the two focus groups.

Table 7

Student Participant Variables for Focus Group Placement

Student	WRIT 095	WRIT 101	1st Praxis I Writing Score	1st Time Test Status	Focus Group
1	X	X	148	Not Pass	A
2	X	X	156	Not Pass	A
3		X	164	Not Pass	B
4	X	X	168	Not Pass	B
5		X	173	Pass	A
6		X	173	Pass	A
7		X	174	Pass	B
8		X	174	Pass	B
9		X	174	Pass	A
10		X	174	Pass	A
11		X	177	Pass	B
12		X	177	Pass	A
13		X	178	Pass	B
14		X	181	Pass	B
15		X	184	Pass	B

In completing the distribution of the 15 student participants into the two focus groups, I

attempted to approximate the initial groups I envisioned using at the start of the study.

The mean score of the Praxis I scores for Group A was 167.9 while the mean score for

Group B was 175. In looking at both groups holistically, Group A's mean score did not

meet the set score of 173 for the Praxis I writing test for writing while Group B's mean

score did. With the inclusion of both types of first-time test-takers and with mean scores above and below the set score, I attempted to reflect my initial groupings while maintaining the individuality of the student participants. Table 8 illustrates the distribution of student participants into the two focus groups.

Table 8

Distribution of Student Participants in Focus Groups

	Group A	Group B
WRIT 101 & achieved passing score as first-time test-taker	5	5
WRIT 095 & WRIT 101 & achieved passing score as first-time test-taker	--	--
WRIT 101 & did not achieve passing score as first-time test-taker	--	2
WRIT 095 & WRIT 101 & did not achieve passing score as first-time test-taker	2	--
Total participants in group	7	8

Because there were only six faculty members who taught the WRIT 101 course and WRIT 095 in the last 5 years, I had planned to include all six faculty members in the interview process. However, one faculty member retired before the start of the interview process. The remaining five faculty members agreed to be interviewed for the study. All faculty members have doctorates in the field of English and have taught WRIT 095 and WRIT 101 during the last 5 years.

Although the sample size for my project study was small, all participants had participatory knowledge of WRIT 101 course competencies, content, methods of

instruction, and assessment as well as knowledge of Praxis I testing in the area of writing. By including both sets of participants, students and faculty, I was able to explore the perceptions of two different types of stakeholders regarding various facets of the curriculum and instruction. The inclusion of this type of data allowed me to develop a deeper assessment of the current program, the needs of students in building writing skills, the views of instructors regarding writing instruction and student writing skills, and the connection that existed between the Praxis I competencies and the WRIT 101 curriculum.

Participant Protection and Confidentiality

As a researcher, I had an ethical responsibility to protect the participants in this study project. I received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (#06-20-16-0258870) from Walden University on June 19, 2016. Upon IRB approval from the university where I conducted my research, the provost of the university assigned an education advisor to act as the gatekeeper for university education data. At the beginning of data collection, I contacted the gatekeeper to request a list of names and contact information for all currently enrolled education students who had completed the Praxis I writing test. Because of the numbers of both the student population and the faculty, I sent out invitations to the entire sample pool

Through the invitational letter, I provided full disclosure of the evaluation procedures, participant rights, methods of ensuring confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of the study. I included a self-address stamped envelope for the return of the consent form with the letter. A 2 week interval between the initial invitation to participate and the follow-up phone contact allowed potential participants ample time to consider the

request to participate, review the information, and ask any questions that they might have had in order to make an informed consent decision. At the conclusion of the invitation process, five faculty members and 15 students had agreed to participate and submitted consent forms.

In this study, I also addressed other issues of ethics. To accomplish this, throughout the U-FE process, I adhered to and demonstrated the five evaluator principles developed by the American Evaluation Association (2004) which include systematic inquiry, competence, integrity and honesty, respect for people, and responsibility for general and public works. For the purpose of confidentiality, the study codes for individual participants were stored on a separate secured flash drive which was stored separately from the data flash drive. In keeping with research protocols, data will be stored for 7 years and then destroyed.

Relationship Building

According to Widding (2012), communication is important in establishing trust in a research project because it is necessary to emphasize the value of everyone's contributions. Throughout the study, I attempted to maintain open communication with the participants, who served as their own informal gatekeepers in sharing information, and I recognized their experience in dealing with the problem that was the focus of the study (Høyland, Hollund, & Olsen, 2015). It was also important that I maintained an open line of communication during the evaluation process when working with intended primary users.

According to Rinke and Mawhinney (2014), it is important to understand the fluid nature of rapport which is "dependent on the contest of the research, the needs of participants, and the comfort of researchers in adopting various roles" (p. 13). Participants came into the research project knowing me as a member of the education department as I worked with them as students and faculty members. As an employee of the university, I also worked with the intended primary users on a daily basis. This established a foundation for trust and rapport during the program evaluation. Overall, I felt that there was strong support and buy-in by everyone and that my relationships with everyone involved in the evaluation were built on mutual respect and trust.

In both faculty interviews and focus group sessions, I used an informal approach with participants at the start of the interviews and focus group sessions in order to set the participants at ease. In addition, I incorporated a semistructured approach for the scripted guides for the focus groups and faculty interviews with the intent to create an atmosphere of mutual collaboration in finding a solution to the problem upon which the research was founded. By utilizing an AI approach, there was a focus on a positive atmosphere conducive to building rapport between myself and the participants. Throughout the study project, I continually sought to further the development of rapport and trust needed for credible and trustworthy qualitative research.

Data Collection

According to Rey et al. (2013), there is a complexity to the use of requirements in any social context which does not adhere to a cause-and-effect logical model but is fluid due to the impact of unpredictable effects as people interact with one another in any

given situation. Qualitative research must take into account this complexity because the interaction of participants among themselves and with the researcher is based upon each participant's own lens of perception. For a qualitative researcher, the opportunity to seek out and investigate both what is hidden below the surface and alternative explanations of what the researcher can see is an important strength in the inquiry process (Glesne, 2015). In addition to the interaction of the researcher and participants, in U-FE, there is also the need to address the needs of the intended primary users in trying to construct a foundation to support the organization's decision-making process. The legitimacy of program evaluation is derived from its use in improving an organization's policy and programs, but the decision about an evaluation's use is based on the evaluator's ability to provide multiple types of evidence (Munter, Cobb, & Shekell, 2016; Newcomer & Brass, 2016). Therefore, it was necessary that I conduct in-depth research that provided thick, rich, descriptive narratives that were substantial and accurate in facts and details. To accomplish this task, I collected and analyzed data from three datasets: faculty interviews, student focus group discussions, and archival data. I also maintained a personal research journal and used my notes as a reference throughout the evaluation process.

Types of Archival Data

Archival data can assist a researcher in understanding the history and context of a particular situation or problem (Barnes, Dang, Leavitt, Guarana, & Uhlmann, 2018; Glesne, 2015). To answer the first research question of the study, how do the course objectives within the WRIT 101 (College Writing I) course align to the competencies of

the Praxis I writing test, I collected data from the university's public access documents and its non-public access resources. I downloaded the course descriptions for the two writing courses from the university's registrar website. Working with the assigned gatekeeper, I collected the following education department data:

- 19 syllabi for the developmental writing course, WRIT 095, for 7 academic years of 2009-2010 to 2015-2016

- 30 syllabi for WRIT 101, College Writing I, for 7 academic years 2009-2010 to 2015-2016

- ETS institutional reports for the Praxis I writing test for testing periods 9/1/2009-8/31/2010 to 9/1/2013-8/31/2014, including

   o 5 Year Performance Report for 2009-2010 to 2013-2014

   o Yearly Summary Reports for 2009-2010 to 2013-2014

   o Repeater Pass Rate Summary Reports for 2009-2010 to 2013-2014

Because institutional data for the overall institution is housed under the Office of Institutional Research, I worked with the interim director to locate the following data:

- NSSE reports for academic years 2010-2011 to 2014-2015

- FSSE reports for academic years 2010-2011 to 2012-2013

Although NSSE data were available for all academic years requested, no FSSE data were available after the 2012-2013 academic year because the university did not take part in FSSE surveys after 2012-2013.

I used curriculum mapping to create a visual overview of the both the WRIT 101 and WRIT 095 curricula and their alignment to Praxis I writing competencies. According

to Uchiyama and Radin (2009), curriculum mapping provides a visual representation of curriculum that allows for the development of a more integrated curriculum. I used this visual mapping to assist in the identification of any overlaps and gaps between what was taught and what was tested.

I investigated the alignment of participant perceptions of factors as seen as contributing to student success to those of the overall student and faculty campus populations through the use of the university's archived NSSE and FSSE survey reports. These types of reports provide information that can assist colleges and universities in creating campus environments that meet educational goals and encourage responsiveness to student needs (Price & Baker, 2012). I examined the data contained in the reports to see if trends existed that could impact the development of student skills and the decisions of the intended primary users in finding ways to support the students in gaining proficiency on the Praxis I writing test. As Draeger, Prado Hill, Hunter, and Mahler (2013) point out, the understanding of student engagement trends is important across various educational contexts. By including this archival data in conjunction with the student focus group and faculty interview data, I was able to gain an understanding of variables that might not be seen if one or more of the data sets were not included in this study.

Lastly, I used archival data from the university's ETS client database to investigate the overall performance rates of test-takers across the academic years included in this study, the proficiency levels across the four subcategories of the test and the repeater pass rates. I also examined the ETS document, *Test at a Glance*, to analyze

the alignment of the competencies required for the test and the learning outcomes for the

WRIT 101 and WRIT 095 writing courses. Examining various archival data along with

participant feedback provides clarity in a researcher's attempt to analyze the ability of a

program to meet the needs of its primary users (Praslova, 2010).

Focus Group Discussions and Faculty Interviews

To answer the second and third research questions, I used two additional data sets,

student focus groups and faculty interviews. I scheduled two focus group meetings and

five individual face-to-face faculty interviews between November and December of

2016. I allotted 1 hour for each meeting with the availability of additional time, if needed.

I used an AI approach with a guided script for questions that provided participants to

discover, dream, design, and create a destiny for innovative practices that could assist

students in developing their writing proficiency as suggested by Preskill and Catsambas

(2006).

For my study, I used eight focus group questions developed using the AI format

(see Appendix G). This method of data collection provided opportunities for student

participants to discuss among themselves their personal experiences within the WRIT

101 course and with the Praxis I writing test. According to Merriam (2014), focus groups

allow participants to talk about situations that occur in their normal, everyday life but for

various reasons are not expressed and, as a result, provide the researcher with data that

addresses the research questions. For the faculty interviews, I also used eight questions

delivered in the AI format (see Appendix H). Through the interview process, faculty had

the opportunity to share their personal perspectives about the student writing ability

overall, the impact of writing courses on student writing competencies, and the

preparation of students for the Praxis I writing test.

 With regard to the WRIT 101 course and the Praxis I writing competencies, the

use of student focus groups and faculty interviews provided data that illustrated both

similarities and differences in perspectives among participants. I used a semistructured

approach for both focus groups and faculty interviews with interview protocols in place

to serve as guides to initiate conversation and to provide opportunities for asking more in-

depth questions as warranted (Lodico et al., 2010). The focus group and faculty

interviews questions followed the AI approach and were designed to provide insight

regarding the overarching research questions of the study. Because AI is based on the

premise of storytelling, the questions were formulated to elicit the identification of the

successes that participants had within WRIT 101 that align to the Praxis I competencies

(Discovery phase of AI) and the vision of what success would look like to the

participants (Dream phase of AI). I used this type of questioning in order to discover the

positive framework of teaching and learning in the area of writing as it relates to the

Praxis I competencies needed by preeducation students. To accomplish this task, I

provided time during the focus groups and interviews so that I could listen carefully and

fully engage with the participants. I also allocated time for additional interactions, where

needed, to explore more deeply in some areas. Through this approach, the parallels and

variances in the data illuminated the gaps in practice that this study project hoped to

address. Morgan and Bottorff (2010) pointed to the use of these types of data in being

able to investigate the deeper levels of diversity within the experiences of the

participants. With permission from the participants, I recorded all interviews and focus group discussions to ensure verbatim transcription of all discussions and interviews.

All participants signed and submitted the Walden IRB approved consent forms before meetings for the student focus groups and the individual faculty interviews were scheduled. In working with the director of student activities, who handles campus usage reservations, I found that the Student Union Building rooms were not available for use during the times I needed. As a result, focus groups were conducted in the curriculum lab and were held on the weekend when no education faculty members were on campus. Students were comfortable being in the lab as it is a part of the overall campus area with which they are familiar. For the faculty interviews, I gave faculty members the option of meeting in their own offices or in my office. One faculty member chose to meet in the faculty's own office while the other four faculty members chose to have their interviews conducted in my office. I used audio recording for all focus groups and faculty interviews and transcribed them verbatim. During each session, I took observational notes in the research journal and then transcribed them for reference during data analysis. In all journal entries, I used the study codes I had assigned and did not include any personal identifiers such as names or other material that could potentially identify individual participants. I transcribed all interviews and focus group discussions myself.

While individual interviews provide insight into one person's perspective on any given situation, focus groups rely on the group's interactive dynamics to construct answers to the research questions (Lodico et al., 2010; Morgan & Bottorff, 2010; Rosenthal, 2016). In each case, according to Rossetto (2014), in order for research data to

provide deeper, richer insights into a problem, it is important that the participants in a study see the qualitative researcher as being:

- Nonjudgmental,

- Neutral,

- Empathic and respectful,

- An active listener, and

- Not intrusive or offering advice.

Because the focus of my research has been an ongoing problem since I came to the university and I have an intrinsic interest in finding a solution, it was important that I presented myself as a researcher in the manner that Rossetto (2014) suggested. Therefore, I conducted the focus groups and interviews with respect and empathy for the participants' experiences and as an active listener. It was important that I took notice not only of what was said but also of the moments of silence as participants gathered their thoughts and focused their attention, which provided insight into their perspectives on the probing questions.

Procedures for Participant Data Collection

I audio recorded all individual faculty interviews and student focus groups and transcribed each verbatim. I chose not to employ a transcriptionist as I wanted the opportunity to listen to each recording, so I could become immersed in each word and sound as they were translated from aural communication to the written word. Faculty involved in the interview process were coded as FI1 to FI5, and student participants in the focus groups were coded according to grouping as either FGA1 through FGA7 or FGB1

through FGB8. Transcripts alone provide a flat landscape for the story a qualitative researcher is trying to write, but informational notes provide depth and detail that, otherwise, would be missing (Gubrium & Holstein, 2013; Lodico et al., 2010). I used a research journal to take observational and reflective notes. Note taking allowed me to catch the nuances of each session with participants, think about questions that each session answered and also created, and reflect on my own ideas and thoughts as the researcher. I kept my session notes brief and expanded on them after each participant session. According to Glesne (2015), there are three types of field notes that can be used during research. I included the following types of notes in my journal:

- Descriptive Notes. During each interview, focus group session, and primary user meetings, I wrote clear, concise notes and recorded the date, and beginning and end times. I expanded these notes in the evening of each session.

- Analytic Notes. Prior to the end of each day of interviews, focus groups or interactions with primary users, I took the time to review the descriptive notes I had taken during each session. I thought about the insight the individual session provided into the research questions, what other questions were raised, and what emergent understandings came about as a result of the session. I also included notes about the evaluation process itself. I used these notes to record my observations of nuances of each session and searched for meaning and the possible connections to other data collected. I also kept track of emerging understandings.

- Reflective Diary Notes. I used this portion of my journal to write down my own reflections about myself and my thoughts as the researcher. I jotted down notes and questions about what surprised me in a session, how I reacted to the perceptions of the participants as well as the archival data, and how I felt the program evaluation was progressing for me, as the researcher, and the primary users.

Throughout the entire process of data collection and analysis, I continually took notes and reviewed them to gain insight into the problem of the study in its entirety.

Role of the Researcher

Currently, I am employed in the Education Department for the university where I conducted my study. I have been in this position for 8 years. During this time, I have also taught the English methods course for secondary English majors, the capstone course for education majors, and the Student Teaching Seminar for elementary; secondary; and K-12 education students. As a result of my job duties, I am familiar with the requirements for admission into the Teacher Education program, the state requirements for licensure, and the Praxis I writing competencies. I have a close working relationship with the dean of the College of Arts, Science, and Education, the chair of the college, and the education faculty. As a member of the Admissions and Retention Committee for Teacher Education, I also work with members of the Arts and Sciences Department who teach the required general education courses for education majors. Although I work with education students, faculty, and administration, during the time I conducted this study, I did not supervise any persons who were involved in my study. According to Patton (2012), in

order to produce a quality evaluation, it was important for me to maintain an internal researcher's voice within the university structure and look at the problem through the lens of practicality and rationality to discover solutions.

As an internal evaluator, it was important for me to address any possible biases I brought to the study and to ensure there was no conflict of interest in conducting my research project. Because I am employed by the university where I undertook the project study, I requested permission from the provost and the dean of the college to conduct research, submitted the university's Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement, and completed the university's IRB process. The completion of this process provided transparency as an internal evaluator.

According to Collins and Cooper (2014), while quantitative researchers are not impervious to having an emotional connection to their work, it is important that they maintain the highest level of emotional reflexivity or self-reflection as possible (p. 90). I used negative case analysis to accomplish this. Through this type of analysis, I was able to see my biases more clearly (Lodico et al., 2010). To accomplish this, I journaled during the entire research process in order to address my biases as they came to light. By being able to review my thoughts at given times through the evaluation, I was able to think more in-depth about the entire process and any changes that occurred in my thoughts as the study continued. Through the use of the peer reviewer, I was to locate any possibilities of bias because I had "another set of eyes" on the process. The peer reviewer was useful in helping me to see if any of my own preconceived ideas may have been brought into the study.

Due to my position within the university, I had to ensure that there was no coercion of participants regarding this study. To accomplish this, only students over whom I had no governance during the time of the study were included in the participant pool. I addressed the voluntary nature of participation and the freedom to withdraw from the study at the invitational stage of the study for both students and faculty.

I had to keep an open mind when conducting student focus groups and faculty interviews so that I did not discredit opposing views to my own. To minimize any potential bias, I had to be very careful not to inflect any unintentional meaning in my oral communication or body expressions. During both interviews and focus groups, I was congenial but was mindful not to place any stress or inflections of agreement or disagreement on discussions generated by the participants. In addition, I adhered to the U-FE checklist to keep protocols in place for the evaluation.

Data Analysis

Because the main purpose of program evaluation is to make a justified judgment about the quality of the program or intervention, findings must provide a valid and reliable foundation (Hurteau, Houle, & Mongiat, 2009; Patton, 2012). I analyzed the archival data using curriculum mapping to establish relationships among the data sets. I mapped syllabi alignment with the WRIT 101 and WRIT 095 learning outcomes and the ETS Praxis I writing competencies. I included textbooks, course content, course assignments, and course assessments in this mapping (See Appendix D). I also mapped the WRIT 095 course objectives in relation to Praxis I writing competencies (See Appendix E). I aggregated data horizontally by Praxis I competencies and vertically by

individual instructor and semester. I also mapped the NSSE and FSSE data (see

Appendix f). I employed peer review as a means of ensuring that the curriculum mapping

process was consistent and complete.

For two focus group discussions and five faculty interviews, I transcribed each of

the seven audio-recordings verbatim and provided opportunities for member checks to

ensure the accurateness. Due to the large amount of time data collection takes to

complete, I started the transcribing process as soon as data were available. When all

transcriptions were completed, I began the coding process. It was important to chunk the

data into meaningful segments (Creswell, 2014). This is an important step in qualitative

research as it helps to find emerging patterns that are necessary to finding answers to the

research questions. I needed to analyze the data from the student focus groups and faculty

interviews to see if there was evidence to support the findings from the archival data and

to determine if there were other variables that impacted the students' writing proficiency

and their ability to meet the required set score on the Praxis I writing test. All participants

reported that the transcription they reviewed was accurate.

Since I decided to use the Atlas.ti 7 software for data analysis, I spent 3 months

working through the online tutorials and practiced using the software. As a beginning

researcher, I knew that I was by no means proficient but could create codes and memos,

link quotations, memos, and codes together, utilize the code analyzer and concurrence

explorer across multiple uploaded documents. During the coding process, I began with

pre-determined codes that I developed from the actual AI scripted guides and added

emerging codes that came from the data presented in the archived documents, faculty

interviews, and student focus groups. I used the Atlas.ti 7 software for data analysis and also constant comparative analysis and content analysis to examine the collected data for similarities and differences to establish possible relationships within the data (Ko & Boswell, 2013). I added line numbers to the margins of each primary document in the Atlas.ti 7 project to find emerging themes. The patterns of themes that emerge through a coding analysis of transcribed documents can offer insight into the complexity of the issue being addressed in the research (Massey, 2011). During the coding analysis, five themes emerged: variables impacting student success, support for student success, variables as barriers to student success, and student attributes as contributing factors. As these themes were applied to the research questions, I was able to determine if there would be a need to conduct more in-depth focus group discussions or faculty interviews. As I analyzed the transcriptions of both focus groups and faculty interviews, I looked to see where the similarities, as well as the disparities, existed regarding assignments, activities, and strategies used in the WRIT 101 to assist in developing student understanding and clarification of the elements of writing. In relation to the curriculum mapping of the course components and the Praxis I competencies, I examined two specific areas: the effective practices that existed within the context of the coursework and the gaps that existed in practice. I made use of a qualitative codebook through the use of the Atlas.ti 7 software to ensure consistency existed as I analyzed the data for emerging themes. Since I used an intercoder agreement so that the peer debriefer was able to cross-check the data codes, I was able to increase credibility in my study.

Metaevaluation

According to Patton (2012), U-FE does not require summative reporting to
clients. However, I planned to provide a presentation to the administration of the
university where the study was conducted, following the reporting outline of U-FE, prior
to the implementation of the study project. I remained steadfast to the purpose of the
evaluation. In developing my presentation, I focused on intended user needs (students and
faculty), shared both positive and negative findings, provided an overview of the project,
and followed up to ensure that there was a plan for the dissemination and use of the
evaluation.

Evidence of Quality, Credibility, and Accuracy

I took several steps to complete a project study that was of high quality and was
credible and accurate. I used the U-FE checklist to keep my study on track. To minimize
the effect of researcher bias, I documented my thoughts regarding subjectivity in the
researcher journal. In addition, I used member checks to provide participants the
opportunity to review the transcribed documents and summaries of the study throughout
the process. I enlisted a peer debriefer, who was approved by the Walden IRB. After
having the peer debriefer sign an intercoder agreement, I meet with this person over the
entire course of the study, which enabled me to consider my possible biases, alternative
views of the data presented, and of the study as a whole. According to Creswell (2014),
the use of both a debriefer and intercoder agreement lends credibility to a research study.

I also maintained ongoing contact with the intended primary users throughout the
U-FE in a variety of formats, including face-to-face meetings, email, and telephone.

Information as outlined in the U-FE checklist also was made available to primary users throughout the evaluation in formative narratives. Since my research was conducted as a case study at a small rural university, I needed to describe the case in comprehensive detail so that readers could learn from the case and, if possible, determine whether the study might be applicable in similar situations and populations. To accomplish this, I had to pay close attention during data analysis and use thick, rich descriptive data to help make my study credible and trustworthy.

According to Maxwell (2012), discrepant data must be included in any research study undertaken to maintain credibility. For the current project study, participant experiences and perspectives provided insight into the needs of students in relation to their writing competence and ETS basic skills test preparation. I analyzed patterns in the faculty interview and student focus group data to find any discrepant patterns. These patterns were included in the study. In U-FE, the inclusion of discrepant data is important in providing balance to the study and adds to the study's validity (Patton, 2012).

<div align="center">**Limitations**</div>

Because this study took place at a small university with a small participant pool, the ability to generalize to a larger population is limited. There are other limitations that affect this study project. In completing the literature review for this study, a small number of research studies were found to provide a foundation for understanding the problem addressed in my study. Research studies that examined the Praxis I tests did not address the specific problem of writing competency that I focused on in my study. Most of the research focused on test bias in relation to certain populations, and research about writing

competency at the college level did not include preparation issues regarding basic skills tests.

Because I completed a qualitative study in which I used focus groups of students and faculty interviews, the actual data sets for this part of the study are considered self-reported data. Self-reported data can contain potential sources of bias that could limit the study, including selective memory, which cannot be easily verified (Rosenman, Tennekoon, & Hill, 2014). It is possible that some of the self-reported data from the interviews and focus groups could have an unknown limiting effect on the actual study

Data Analysis Results

I undertook this project study to find a way to assist teacher education students in meeting the basic skills testing requirement for entry into the educator preparation program. As a qualitative researcher, it was important that I approached data analysis in a reflexive and iterative manner that allowed me to see emerging patterns and make connections to an understanding of the situational problem. Using U-FE, I collected and analyzed three sets of data, including archival data, faculty interviews, and student focus groups. These three data sets aligned to the research questions for the study so that I could gain insight into possible solutions for the problem. The alignment of each data set with the research questions for this study is shown in Table 9.

Table 9

Alignment of Research Questions and Data Sets

Research Question	Data Set
1. How do the course objectives of the WRIT 101 (College Writing I) course align to the competencies of the Praxis I writing test?	• University catalog course descriptions, syllabi, WRIT 101 and WRIT 095 learning outcomes, and Praxis I writing test competencies
2. What methods or strategies do participants note would need to be implemented to ensure that students receive the most effective writing instruction in the writing curriculum or in the university's writing assistance programs to meet the specific competencies for the Praxis I writing test?	• Archival data, including NSSE Engagement Indicators and FSSE Engagement Indicators • Faculty interviews • Student focus groups
3. What methods or strategies do participants note could be implemented to best address the building of an effective framework for the improvement of students' written communication skill?	• Archival data, including NSSE Engagement Indicators and FSSE Engagement Indicators • Faculty interviews • Student focus groups

Results for Research Question 1

I began data analysis with the archival data to respond to the first research

question. The analysis of the archival data provided an opportunity for me to investigate

the patterns and relationships that existed in the types of archival data. The data included

the course descriptions from the university catalog, syllabi, WRIT 101 and WRIT 095

course learning outcomes, Praxis I writing competencies, annual ETS institutional Praxis

I writing summary reports, and the ETS *Test at a Glance* overview for the Praxis I

writing test.

Analysis of writing course learning outcomes and Praxis I competencies.

Curriculum mapping of the Praxis I writing competencies and the learning outcomes for

the two writing courses, WRIT 101 and WRIT 095, was completed using an Excel spreadsheet. In analyzing the 10 learning outcomes for WRIT 101 and the 10 Praxis I writing competencies. I determined that all WRIT 101 learning outcomes aligned to at least one of the Praxis I competencies, with the exception of the WRIT 101 research process learning outcome (See Appendix E). Of the seven learning outcomes for the developmental WRIT 095 course, all but the source citation learning outcome aligned to at least one of the Praxis I writing competencies. Four of the learning outcomes for WRIT 101 and three of the learning outcomes of the developmental WRIT 095 aligned to the Praxis I writing competencies that relate to use of grammar, structure, idioms, word choice, and mechanics. The Praxis I essay category competencies had the best alignment to the learning outcomes for both courses. The alignment of the WRIT 101 and WRIT 095 learning outcomes to the Praxis I writing competencies is shown in Appendix E.

In analyzing the course learning outcomes and the Praxis I writing competencies, I noted that 3 of the 4 Praxis I test categories do not require test-takers to perform an actual writing task but rather to identify errors in grammar, structure, word choice and idioms in a multiple-choice format. This task is dependent on the test-taker's ability to recognize and choose the correct forms of the basic rules of English grammar, structure, and word choice in a stand-alone sentence. The task of writing is only required of test-takers in the essay category of the test, and the identification tasks in the three other categories of the Praxis I test are not required tasks in the WRIT 101 course nor the WRIT 095 course. While competencies align, there is not an alignment of all tasks required for WRIT 101 or WRIT 095 and those of the Praxis I writing test.

Analysis of catalog course description of writing courses. I also reviewed the university catalog course descriptions for WRIT 101 and WRIT 095 to examine whether an alignment to the Praxis I writing competencies existed. Both course descriptions included the requirement that students write and revise essays. For WRIT 095, the type of writing required was persuasive essays while the requirement for WRIT 101 was argumentative and research writing. The similarity found to exist between the course descriptions and the Praxis I writing test was the requirement to effectively communicate through writing. This similarity was only found in the Praxis I essay section which assessed "the examinee's ability to write effectively in a limited period of time" (ETS, 2011, p. 1). Neither course description addressed a test-taker's ability to identify errors in a multiple-choice format. However, in the multiple-choice section of the Praxis I writing test, "examinees are asked to recognize errors in mechanics, in structural and grammatical relationships, and in idiomatic expressions or word choice and to identify sentences that have no error" (ETS, 2011, p. 1).

Analysis of ETS institutional report data. I examined the Praxis I performance data provided in the university's archived ETS institutional reports for academic years 2009-2010 through 2013-2014. This data detailed the number of students scoring across quartiles for each category of the Praxis I writing test. The analysis of this data provided a view of the areas where test-takers struggled and where they had a good understanding of the Praxis I topics.

Both the Praxis I *5 Year Performance Report* and the summary reports for academic years 2009-2010 through 2013-2014 indicated that a high number of students

did not perform well in any of the four subcategories. Although the number of students who performed in the 3rd and 4th quartiles across all categories of the test were higher than those performing in the lower 1st and 2nd quartiles, the difference was not substantial. Table 10 shows the distribution of Praxis I test-takers across the quartiles.

Table 10

Distribution of Praxis I Test-Taker Scores Across Quartiles 2009-2014

Praxis I Writing Test Subcategories	Students Quartiles 1 and 2: Low	Students Quartiles 3 and 4: High
Grammatical relationships	119	132
Structural relationships	103	148
Word choice and mechanics	100	151
Essay	121	130

Note. Adapted from *ETS Client Manager data for Praxis I paper delivered test 0720 and computer delivered test 5720* by ETS, 2016 (unpublished raw data),

The data analysis revealed that across both sets of quartiles, the largest difference between the two groups occurred with the grammatical relationships, followed by structural relationships, and then word choice and mechanics. The analysis of the essay data showed that many students had problems with the essay section of the test. Although 121 students struggled with the essay, the subcategory had a difference of less than 10 students between the two groups.

The CORE *5 Year Performance Report* and the summary reports for academic years 2014-2015 through 2016-2017 indicated that a higher number of students did not perform well on the multiple-choice section of the Core writing test. Although the

number of students who performed in the 3rd and 4th quartiles for both categories of the

test were higher than those performing in the lower 1st and 2nd quartiles, the difference

was not substantial. Table 11 shows the distribution of test-takers across the two sets of

quartiles in each of the subcategories of the Core writing test.

Table 11

Distribution of Core Test-Taker Scores Across Quartiles 2014-2016

Core Writing Test Subcategories	Students Quartiles 1 and 2: Low	Students Quartiles 3 and 4: High
Multiple Choice Section	48	40
Essay	31	57

Note. From *ETS Client Manager data for Core Academic Skills for Educators computer delivered test 0722* by ETS, 2018 (unpublished raw data).

The analysis of the Core data revealed that students continue to struggle with the

multiple-choice section of the ETS test. With the inclusion of two writing prompts in the

Core writing test, it appears from the data that a higher number of students did not

perform as well on the essay section of the Core writing test as had previous test-takers

on the Praxis I essay section.

Archival data reviewed in response to Research Question 1 indicated that there

was a high level of alignment between both the Praxis I and the learning outcomes for

WRIT 101 and WRIT 095. However, there were differences in the performance tasks

required for the tests and the university courses. According to Richards and Reppen

(2014), grammatical knowledge refers to the understanding of the isolation collections of

rules of grammar while grammatical ability refers to the ability to use grammar for the

purpose of communication-two distinct facets of grammar (p. 6). Identification tasks

which are required for the writing tests require grammatical knowledge rather than grammatical ability. These tasks are neither practiced nor required as part of the two writing courses. The task of writing is a performance task that requires a linear, recursive process in response to particular purpose and results in the transformation of thought into the written word. An understanding of grammar and structure for logical flow, which is a competency, is required but the repetitive practice of regular grammar exercises, a practice task, is not required. According to Fastré, van der Klink, Amsing-smit, and van Merriënboer (2014), performance tasks are expected to be more beneficial to novice students than competency tasks "because they do not require the prior knowledge that is indispensable for the correct interpretation of competency-based criteria" (p. 974). Because the Praxis I writing test gauges writing competency, the identification tasks required in the multiple-choice subcategories of the tests create a gap in the tests' ability to measure actual proficiency in the act of writing which the general education writing course does measure. For students needing to take either of the ETS writing tests, there are gaps in time and coursework for responding well to tasks requiring identification of errors in a multiple-choice format. However, students entering the university's WRIT 101 course are expected to be competent in the use of grammar, structure, and mechanics in the writing process. There is a minimum of at least 6 years during which there has been no repetitive practice exercises similar to those required in the multiple-choice subcategories of the tests. This is a significant barrier to student success on the ETS standardized writing tests.

Analysis of course syllabi to Praxis I competencies. In analyzing the curriculum

mapping of syllabi learning outcomes to Praxis I competencies, I found that of the 30

WRIT 101 syllabi that were examined, no syllabi across the 5 academic years provided

specific learning outcomes except for the ability to write cohesive and logical arguments.

The syllabi did not address any of the Praxis I competencies relating to identifying

correct grammar, structure, mechanics, or word choice/idioms in a multiple-choice

format. None of the WRIT 101 syllabi that were reviewed contained an explanation of

how student writing would be assessed. No syllabus addressed basic relationships of

grammar or structure as part of the writing process required in the course. Similar to the

analysis of the WRIT 101 syllabi, the 19 syllabi examined for the developmental WRIT

095 course did address the learning outcome for producing argument papers but did not

address the Praxis I competencies required for identification tasks in the multiple-choice

sections of the tests. In addition, no grammar textbook was listed in any WRIT 101

syllabi and only two of the nineteen syllabi for WRIT 095 listed a grammar textbook.

Regarding Research Question 1, how do the course objectives within the WRIT 101

(College Writing) course align to the Praxis I writing competencies, results of data

analysis showed that the syllabi for both WRIT 095 and WRIT 101 did not address

specific learning outcomes that aligned to the Praxis I competencies that require

identification of errors in grammatical, structural, word choice and idioms. None of the

syllabi provide assistance to students for successfully completing all sections of the either

writing test (See Appendix D).

  Results of the analysis of the syllabi for WRIT 101 and WRIT 095 showed no

alignment of the course learning outcomes and the Praxis I competencies except for the

requirement to write an essay. Since there was a lack of specified learning objectives, descriptions of required assignments and grading, and a clear list of expectations in both writing courses, there was no conclusive evidence of alignment of the course syllabi to the Praxis I test except for the ability to produce an essay. As a result, a significant barrier exists for success on the standardized writing tests required for admission to the educator preparation program.

Results for Research Question 2

Research Question 2 was developed to investigate strategies and methods that participants noted would need to be implemented to ensure that students receive the most effective writing instruction in the writing curriculum or in the university's writing assistance programs to meet the specific competencies for the required basic skills test for admission to the educator preparation program. To accomplish this task, I examined both archival data and qualitative data. Archival data included the university's NSSE and FSSE data. Qualitative data included both student focus groups and faculty interviews.

Analysis of archival data. NSSE and FSSE data provided 60 indicators that explored overall student engagement across the institution and faculty instructional practices. I analyzed data from 16 indicators that aligned to Research Question 2. The data from the available NSSE and FSSE surveys showed that while there was a wide difference in student and faculty perceptions regarding classroom practices, the perceptions concerning the overall campus environment were similar. The overall NSSE and FSSE indicator and response data are available in Appendix F. In relation to writing practices and support in the classroom and across the campus, the data indicated that

students felt that they did not receive prompt feedback on assignments. Students also indicated that courses did not emphasize the development of written communication skills, critical and analytical thinking skills, or the skills necessary to learn effectively on one's own. Faculty, however, indicated that there was substantial emphasis on those areas in university courses. Regarding the writing process, the data showed that, for most courses, students completed two or more drafts prior to turning in a written assignment and that written assignments did require integration of diverse perspectives and ideas.

The results of the NSSE and FSSE analysis indicated that while perceptions of faculty and students were similar regarding the overall campus environment, there was a wide difference regarding classroom practices. In relation to writing practices and support in the classroom and across campus, data indicated that students felt they did not receive prompt feedback on assignments, that courses did not emphasize the development of writing competency, critical and analytical thinking skills, nor the skills required to learn on their own. Faculty, however, indicated that there was substantial emphasis in those areas but that many times students did not prepare well. While both faculty and students agreed that the university provided support for students to thrive academically and that there were positive relationships across all levels of the campus, data showed students were not self-motivated to take advantage of the services or of assistance provided by faculty.

Analysis of faculty interview and student focus group data. The analysis of the qualitative data from faculty interviews and student focus groups provided deeper insight into the local problem. In the analysis of student focus groups and faculty interview data,

I found that faculty and student participants identified a number of methods and strategies that were important to student success in Praxis I test preparation and in college writing courses. These aligned to the five themes that emerged from data coding.

Variables impacting student success. Both faculty and students felt that taking the time to engage and work on a writing assignment was important to overall success. One faculty member (FI1) stated, "I think for a level of success to be met there are a number of things that have to happen, and the first one is student engagement." Both faculty and student participants agreed that students need to immerse themselves in the writing process. Another faculty member (FI2) in describing the process stated:

> My main thing, I think, about how you get success, or potential success, with any student is you make them understand that…with process and revision, they are going to be successful, whether that success means they are going to get a C because they did not know anything at the beginning of the semester or they are going to get an A because they hit the ground running. I mean any kind of success...it is student effort.

One of the student focus group participants (FGA1) explained the process as, "just getting your thoughts to paper, I guess. Sometimes you have really good thoughts, but you do not know how to put them in words and getting them on paper. Just persistence." The idea that success is founded on application and persistence was also reiterated by another student (FGB4) who stated, "When I look back, it was because I was working towards it and the more that I had started really applying myself."

Being able to practice writing prompts and receive assistance from the instructor

were identified as two other major factors in developing writing proficiency as well as in Praxis I preparation. In discussions held with both focus groups, students expressed this belief. One student (FGA5) described interactions with the writing instructor in this way:

> I remember not being so proficient at that at the beginning, and I spent some time one on one with the teacher also, which was really helpful in trying to get it to where it was a piece where I could hand it in and expect to get a good grade out of it. It did not happen right away, but it definitely was a success at the end and was worth the time putting into it.

Another student (FGA6) stated,

> Then he [the teacher] would tell you what your grade was at the beginning and then what you worked your grade up to. So that was success. So you could get a better paper by the end of the semester. You know, the help was the biggest key.

Describing the major factors in successfully course completion, one of the student focus group participants (FGB2) stated, "The classes where they let us practice helped me most…and my professors for those classes always had their door open. If I needed to ask a question, they were willing to explain whatever I needed help with." Another student participant (FGB8), when speaking about being able to respond quickly to Praxis I writing prompt, commented:

> I liked the classes that had writing prompts or something like that. So, you got experience in kind of writing off the top of your head without knowing anything. Then you are like, "Oh, yeah, I can do it".

Other students in Focus Group B agreed as did members of Focus Group A. According to

one Focus Group A participant (FGB5):

> This is just one of the most valuable things I learned and really helped me in my
>
> Praxis I endeavors I took on after WRIT 101 was how to quickly come up
>
> with a thesis you can actually write about, and I learned through that. That
>
> ultimately led to success in any sort of writing test I took afterwards because, I
>
> mean, that is the bones, the building block, of it.

Support for student success. Another area that student focus groups and faculty emphasized was the supportive network in place for students within the university community. One student (FGA4) indicated that by being able to draw on different resources helped to resolve any problems that occurred in a class:

> I guess I would say the availability of the teacher, and not just one teacher, but
>
> you can see another teacher and receive help from the, because of interpretation of
>
> words. I can be understood differently from people, so hearing it from another
>
> really helped.

A student from the other focus group (FGB8) remarked:

> There is nothing at the campus except for support. There is so much support.
>
> There are support services up top. There is tutoring in the library. Even going to
>
> your professor. [The university] is just filled with very good support, and I know
>
> that is what made me successful…how much and how easy it is to find support on
>
> this campus.

Faculty agreed with the student perceptions regarding student support from faculty and support services. One faculty member (FI5) provided an overview of the commitment of

faculty to student support:

> I would say that there is a large number of faculty which are committed to
>
> Working with students, and I know the English faculty does, and I think, overall,
>
> we do a good job. And I think other faculty are engaged in that. I know a lot of
>
> education faculty require a lot of writing and work with students. And I think the
>
> personal attention the students can get here through tutoring is excellent. It is
>
> available, but not all the students make use of it. I think that is promising, and I
>
> think there is a real sense among the faculty that they are here for the students.
>
> They want them to succeed. And, so I see faculty, the whole time, going out of
>
> their way for students.

Besides faculty support, faculty also believed that tutoring and support services provided a network of support for students. Believing that an important part of an instructor's job is helping students find the right tutors, one faculty member (FI2) stated, "I am as helpful as I can possibly be, and then I teach outside my class…like I will help with papers in other classes. I will edit papers. I will help them edit papers. I get them to the right tutors." Another faculty member (FI1) commented, "Another thing that I think is promising is the Student Support Services Center…some of the help that they offer."

Support for Praxis I preparation. While none of the focus group participants indicated that English faculty assisted them in preparing for the Praxis I test, they did speak about the overall writing preparation in classes, education department assistance, and skills that they personally had developed as things that assisted them in test preparation. In speaking about the education faculty and their commitment to Praxis I

preparation, student participants in both focus groups voiced their belief that the

Education faculty had provided some assistance to them. According to one student

participant (FGB5),

> Oh, I received I received quite a bit. I know there are practice tests available at
>
> times. There were resources at the library, and just having the fact that talking to
>
> my professors…they would tell me strategies and give me ideas of how to write
>
> the essay clear and easy. That is why I made it. There was a lot of support on that.
>
> And if I needed to ask anybody, I know for a fact that somebody on campus
>
> would be willing to help me out with it.

Another student (FGB4) stated,

> The only thing that I can speak from for this question was that a lot of the
>
> education department here say, "We need to look at this. We need to work on
>
> this because it is going to be on your test. You need to need to know about
>
> these concepts, these ideas, because you are going to need them. They remind you
>
> that you are going to have to take that test.

Agreeing with other students, another student participant (FGB3) commented,

> Yeah, I think they basically asked if we felt ready and, I mean, they care.
>
> They are, like, how do you feel about your Praxis test coming up? Do you
>
> feel ok or should we go over some things. I mean I did not say I needed help but I
>
> think if I said I needed help they would have helped me, but I was kind of at the
>
> point where I was, you know, either I can write, or I cannot.

However, most students indicated that their preparation for the Praxis I writing test was

done independently, with no specific direction provided by faculty or university support. One student participant (FGA1) stated the following:

> So, I went to the library and used the Praxis book in the library. I read the questions that they'd be asking you because so many questions they ask you, you do not talk about every day. I mean my friends do not talk about it at all…it is not just normal conversations…how do I argue with that…I mean there are questions that I do not know how I was going to answer them so I read the difficult questions in there. And I also downloaded apps on my phone to go through review questions which also helped and they are timed. So that was good stuff.

Another student participant (FGA4) used the strategies learned in a high school AP English class:

> OK, so I took an AP English class in high school, and every Wednesday throughout the entire year we were given a topic and we had to write a 500 word essay on it in 30 minutes. So, I just used methods I learned from that and put them into the Praxis, and it came out well.

Barriers to student success. Analysis of qualitative data revealed impeding areas to student success, both in writing and Praxis I performance. In terms of Research Question 2, these areas impact strategies and methods that could be useful in implementing strategies and methods to assist students in being successful. Although not addressed by the student focus groups, faculty felt that one major barrier to student success in writing was the university's upper administration's focus on vocational

education. One faculty member (FI5) stated:

> I think the university is much too vocationally focused. And so when they think
> about writing tasks or writing, they are thinking about the most narrow kind of
> writing-resumes, job letters, writing a manual, and some type of technical record,
> and they are not thinking about all the things that educated citizens do to
> write…are the broad range …doing some kind of artistic writing …which is a
> whole range of writing, [that] is just not pursued because the focus is so
> extraordinarily narrow. And I think the way the university could achieve that
> would be to rethink its vocational focus which I think is anti-intellectual and it is
> really destructive of education…and to have a much broader and much more
> integrated and comprehensive general education program which is, I think, far too
> narrow [and] to celebrate writing in ways that we do not.

Another faculty member (FI2), in speaking about university administration's commitment
to improving student writing success across the years, indicated that there was no clear
understanding of that commitment:

> I do not know what the commitment is toward any of this stuff. I do not know
> what commitment the administration has made. I could do a lot...and we could do
> a lot. We have…You cannot design exceptionally promising things that will help
> students with their writing skills without administrative support, and there is
> none.

The faculty also spoke about the overall loss of emphasis on writing, the changes
in the ways society approaches writing, and the results of those changes as inhibiting

factors in later success in writing at the college level. Expressing views on the current culture's view of writing, one faculty member (FI3) spoke about technology and its impact on the way people approach writing:

> The Internet has brought us texting on the phones…and, by the way, most students text rather than call people with the phone. Go figure. So, there are more opportunities…everybody tries to communicate more frequently with text than they ever did in the past and they're worse at it. I mean I think I can see how that happens with the smart phones because there is pressure from peers to use those truncated abbreviations like LOL and so on. Some of that was pressure from various applications and programs like Twitter that used to have a 140 character limit. So, there was some pressure to abbreviate. Well, there is not that pressure anymore. So, I think peers expect there to be that kind of abbreviation in the various messages because it really is. And if you look this up on the Internet, the abbreviations like LOL and there are hundreds, well, that forces people to decode. You know, it is more work for them than if they just wrote out to. Then, perhaps when all these digital assistants become better and you can just dictate the words…maybe that will be different. But I suspect not. Anyway, that is what I learned-that my students are less prepared to write than they were 20 years ago. I think it is from lack of the constructive kind of practice, and I would not call texting a constructive kind of practice because as I just explained, it is not. It is something they undertake to fit into their peer groups.

Another faculty member's (FI2) stated, "In the millennial culture, writing has been devalued and it is partly our fault as educators too because instead of trying to figure out what is going on, a lot of times you just gripe."

Faculty and student participants also talked about the differences in K-16 theories of teaching writing and the higher education's expectation that students entering any entry level college writing course had already gained a level of writing proficiency to successfully complete the course. Furthermore, that level of competency extended to the ability to meet any basic skills writing set score. Although coming from different perspectives, both faculty and students were of the same consensus concerning these two variables.

In addressing the differences between K-12 theories of writing and that of higher education, one faculty member (FI1) commented that "I would wish for better preparation before college." Another faculty (FI2) stated:

I wish that when they were 5 years old somebody had started telling them how important writing is and they needed to own their writing and be involved in writing...understanding that writing is, in in terms that a 5 or 6 year old would understand, you get do overs and stuff and there would be more writing taught in the schools. I think it is being de-emphasize.

This was reinforced again by the comments of another faculty member (FI3),who stated:

I wish that they would start them in like third or fourth grade writing a certain sort of journal...but, you know, by that time kids are able to write. So they write just about what happened on the playground or does it really matter what. Just as long

as they get into the habit of writing...It can be different year to year, but it should

it should never be easier, and it can become a little more complex than the things

that you're asking them to put in the journal, but fourth grade and beyond. By the

time they get to us, they would have had least eight grades where they have

written regularly all the time, so it would not seem like a job.

Focus group participants spoke about their experiences in the K-12 setting and in the

WRIT 101 course. One focus group participant (FGB1) commented:

I think from my experience…from elementary and junior high, for example, I was

always told I had a really good writing voice and everything, but I did not know

how to do it in a research paper format. You know, I was really good at telling a

story, but I could not put it so much into proper wording so that it sounded better,

more professional, like doing L1s, L2s, and L3s and put them in good order so it

flowed nicely.

Another focus group member (FGA4) stated, "I already knew about the elements of the

writing process. It is just "honing in" on the skills and trying to master them." One

faculty member (FI3) made the following statement regarding college preparation:

For the most part, students seem to be less prepared now than 20 years ago to

organize their thoughts and then write about them in complete sentences in a

paragraph or multiple paragraphs. And I really do not have an answer for why that

should be the case.

A focus group participant's (FGB5) comment affirmed the faculty member's statement:

> Well, truthfully, writing was one of my worst subjects. When I graduated high
> school, I was not very proficient in writing. I did not really know always where to
> put a comma. I mean I was decent at it, but I was not really good either.

In speaking about the expectations of college writing, one student focus group member
(FGA4) said, "I think one thing was in WRIT 101, it was expected that you had already
mastered the basics. So, you should of already had a mastery of the sentence fluency and
the clauses and you would know perfect punctuation and they just wanted to build on top
of that." This was reaffirmed by another student in Focus Group B (FGB4) who stated,
"The biggest think was the challenge of being presented with something different and
getting there because that was frustrating in itself, being shifted towards a whole new
direction." In speaking about student perceptions towards writing prior to taking WRIT
101, a faculty member (FI1) made the following statement:

> I have had a number of students who began by believing that the standardized
> version of a five-paragraph essay was the only type of writing that they were
> allowed to do, that they did not have a sense of their own voice, that all they could
> do is say these are my three main points and now I am going to back up my three
> main points and their conclusion never truly concluded something. It just restated
> something.

Another student participant (FGB3) said, "I learned how to write longer papers because I
have not really been exposed to writing, like a seven-page paper, before in high school,
and I did in that in class [WRIT 101]." One faculty member (FI4) indicated that without
an understanding of writing as a thinking process, most students view it only as a

mechanical series of events:

> Well, the biggest to me…the most problematic thing is the students have a wrong idea of writing, and the schools have done this through things like grammar courses-students have kind of a mechanical idea of what writing is…that it is a matter of mastering something like-ok, I will learn to write a sentence, then I will learn to write a paragraph, then I will learn to write this, and they do not. We have not been very successful on teaching that writing is really about thinking.

Another faculty member (FI2) also commented on the perceived differences between the way teachers at the K-12 level and those at the college level approach the teaching of writing:

> You teach them that writing is a recursive process...we go through a process of brainstorming, prewriting, and then so writing as a process is important and when a student gets that, that helps a lot. And then revision is also important. If they hand in a paper...if they follow the process and the product is below standards, instead of getting something back that has been slashed to ribbons, they get editing with suggestions for a revision, and that is not an endless loop. They usually get with my input.

The statements by faculty and student participants showed a definitive alignment among the variables of precollege writing preparation, mastery expectations of writing basics at the college level, and the differences between K-12 and high education theories about the writing process.

Student focus groups discussed the differences among the English faculty towards

the writing assignments, including grading and differences in teaching styles. The

perceptions indicated that these differences could hamper writing success for students.

One focus group participant (FGA7) said:

> There is a lot that goes into WRIT 101. I mean there's so much that they cram
>
> into one semester class. I mean they are [professors] very similar, but their
>
> teaching styles were different. The syllabus was pretty close to the same, but what
>
> some professors concentrate on is not necessarily what another professor would.

Another student in the same group (FGA5) added, "And, you know, the strengths that

they look for in their writers, in their students, might be two totally different evaluations

as well." A student in Focus Group B (FGB3) also addressed the problem and stated,

> I do not think any professor should read your work and just give you a grade. But
>
> for English-I guess I do not really understand how English or how grammar
>
> and sentence structure is not important in a writing class. I think if you hit on
>
> content-I mean-that's good, but if it is a writing class and you do not have correct
>
> grammar and spelling and punctuation and sentence structure, then what are you
>
> writing for?

When speaking about grading and levels of instructor expectations regarding writing

assignments across various courses, another Focus Group B participant (FGB2) stated:

> I think there needs to be a higher expectation across the board. Some of the
>
> classes are so, so easy and there is grade inflation. There are some professors that
>
> as long as you wrote something and turn it in on time, they were, like, "Yeah, I
>
> will give that an A for effort."

After this statement was made, all members of Focus Group B, in unison, agreed.

The differences among the faculty participants' views about writing assignments in departments other than the English department indicated that writing assignments are not being utilized by many instructors across the campus. One faculty participant (FI2) stated that "I do not think that enough writing is taught in any other or all other classes." Another faculty member (FI4) expressed the same perception:

> We want growth over a 4-year period, and we are typically not seeing it. I have had seniors in the college writing course, WRIT 101, the basic course, who tell me, "These are the most challenging writing assignments I've had," and these are seniors. That's ridiculous! Well, that means that in other courses, and I do not know what they are asking for, well, sometimes I do, but in other courses either they are not being asked to do any serious writing or they are not being asked to do any challenging writing, and without that you cannot grow."

Differences in the way English faculty perceived various components of the WRIT 101 course and their different approaches to grading assignments could hamper student writing success. Also, the overall lack of quality writing assignment usage across the campus also could be detrimental in providing students opportunities to practice writing and increase their proficiency and competency.

Another barrier to writing success as well as the Praxis I writing test that emerged as I was completing the data analysis of student focus groups was the students' perceptions about the lack of formal grammar instruction. While some student participants said that their WRIT 101 instructors did assist them one-on-one with

grammatical, mechanical, and structural errors, other student focus group participants

indicated that a more formal approach to the teaching of grammar and basic writing was

important to writing success. One student participant (FGA1) stated:

> I do not know about anyone else, but I feel like when I was in WRIT 101, we
>
> did not really work on that stuff. I still struggle with those things today. Probably
>
> spend more time, probably the course needs to spend a little more time on
>
> grammar and punctuation. I mean I think that would help out quite a bit with
>
> some stuff. I still struggle with the sentences and fragments.

Another student participant (FGB2), expressing the need for a basic writing class, stated,

"I think there should…be an introduction course to the…basics of writing and English."

Only one faculty participant (FI5) indicated that a grammar course would be beneficial:

"I might also include a required course in grammar for all students, you know, some kind

of formal study of grammar." All other faculty members indicated that requiring two

writing courses would be sufficient to address the problem.

One topic that arose during the first faculty interview I conducted that I had not

anticipated was the differences faculty members had concerning the definitions of writing

success and writing proficiency. As a result, I asked for faculty participants to provide

their own definitions as I continued the interview process. In speaking about these

differences, the faculty also brought up reading as foundational to writing success. The

differences in the perceptions of the various faculty members provided an insight I had

not anticipated at the beginning of my research.

According to the first faculty member I interviewed (FI4), writing success is

"learning to analyze, synthesize, research-learning to handle ideas. What I see as the

success is the student who, in the course, becomes better at just those aspects, those

aspects of thinking, you know, a demonstration of thought." Another faculty member

(FI1) defined writing success as "anytime a student has to use words to express an idea in

a sustained argument" and writing proficiency as "coherence, sustained discussion of a

topic, whether it is via argumentation or something informative like a report on

something-so sentence level readability and a sustained description or way of presenting

information." According to another faculty member (FI5), writing success is "an essay

that is articulate, organized, thoughtful, sophisticated to some level, you know, in the

proper format, expressions, grammar-then I call that successful" while writing

proficiency is "a piece of writing which, number one, says something which is important

and serious and which follows the conventions of modern English grammar, punctuation,

usage, and so on, and is well-organized and articulate, and thoughtful." Writing success,

as defined by another faculty member (FI3), is "the ability to organize thoughts in the

thought unit for English which is the paragraph and do it in complete sentences of

standard edited American English," and writing proficiency is

> essentially, being able to organize your thoughts in complete sentences in an
>
> organized or written fashion that when you give it to somebody else to read, you
>
> would not have to walk them through it step by step to see what you mean.

These differences among faculty members as to writing success and writing proficiency

relate to focus group discussions regarding faculty differences in evaluating writing

assignments and student perceptions about the need for standardization regarding the

WRIT 101 course.

In terms of reading as being foundational to good writing, one faculty member (FI3) commented about the link among reading, building vocabulary, and improving writing:

> You cannot become a better writer … to a barely measurable extent, in my experience, if you are not also reading. And we run into a lot of students whose vocabularies are stunted. So, they need practice with vocabulary, and yet, despite the age of smartphones and internet access, including dictionaries, they do not look at the words unless I say, "Right now, look up the word." Even then, you have to give them instructions about how to determine the actual definition. They have got to read them all and then figure out which one applies in the context of that word as being used. They are not very good at that."

Another faculty participant (FI4) concurred and stated:

> Probably the biggest obstacle that I see are students who cannot read. You know, when I look at it, we have a lot of students coming in who cannot read very well, and to deal with most of what someone like me thinks should be dealing with in college writing, you really have to be able to read pretty well. We do not have a course teaching people to read. It is difficult to, and I am not an expert in that area, but it is simply difficult to address that very basic need in that course [WRIT 101].

In speaking about reading and its importance to writing, one faculty participant (FI5) voiced it in this way:

If we did no instruction whatever in writing and simply required students to read a hundred good books and to write in response to them, and if we just asked them to do that seriously with no instructions at all, they would become much better writers.

Focus groups did not specifically address the alignment of writing skills and reading ability. However, a Focus Group B student participant (FGB1) stated, "I was confident in the reading aspect of the test because reading and writing, in a way, go hand in hand, and, basically, if you can write well for the most part, you should be able to read well."

Specific barriers to Praxis I proficiency. While some barriers to student success in writing and Praxis I overlapped in the focus group discussions and the faculty interviews, two specific areas that were addressed focused solely on the Praxis I writing test:

- The lack of a link between standardized testing itself and teaching and

- The lack of student understanding regarding Praxis I test preparation.

According to one faculty participant (FI4), "A lot of the Praxis typically is asking for, or maybe correlated to, but is not identical to the goals of any college writing course, and that is a problem right there." Another faculty member (FI2) confirmed the same perception about standardized testing and teaching by stating, "Again, I cannot emphasize enough writing process and revision, which is not what standardized tests emphasize. I mean standardized testing and the way to teach writing successfully have nothing to do with each other. Just nothing." In a specific reference to the Praxis I writing test and teaching, one faculty member (FI5) stated:

I think one of the reasons why students are not as successful as they could be on

the Praxis test is they are not studying in classes the same activities that are on the

test. So here, if a grammatical test of individual sentences where we have to judge

whether they are correct or not or what the correct version of the sentence is, if

students do not have a course or course of study in which they do hundreds and

hundreds of those sentences, of course, they are not going to be successful on the

test. Now, with the writing prompt, that is something we can do something about.

Although not directly stated, student focus group members also spoke about

differences between the Praxis I writing test and what they had learned in the WRIT 101

course. One student in Focus Group A (FGA1) stated, "So I went to the library and used

the Praxis book in the library. I read the questions that they would be asking you because

so many questions they ask you, you do not talk about every day." This met with

agreement from the remaining members of the focus group. Focus Group B participants

also indicated that there was a difference. One student participant (FGB4) commented, "I

suppose the skills that are needed to be successful on the Praxis I writing test should

probably be part of how you design what you are going to teach for WRIT 101. So yes,

the grammar and punctuation."

Most faculty members agreed that students did not know how to prepare for the

Praxis I writing test or for tests in general. One faculty member (FI3) stated,

A surprising number of them [students] surprisingly have not understood that

there is a way to prepare for tests. I mean, the thought seems to be new for them,

and a number of them on multiple chose questions, for example, do poorly. It

does not seem to have occurred to them to do those sorts of things necessary to

prepare in a certain way.

Another faculty member (FI5) commented:

I have students and they talk about tests, and they misunderstand. They think,

"Well, I am just going to take this test," and it is just sort of out of the ether as to

whether they will do well or not. Absolutely not, because all tests have to be

studied for.

Student focus group participants stated that test preparation was difficult as they did not

know how to prepare for the test. As one Focus Group A student participant (FGA1)

stated:

I mean I felt like I was being thrown to the wolves because, I mean, even after

having reviewed it for a few days, you really do not know what you are doing.

You do not know what they are going to ask from you.

Another student participant in Focus Group B (FGB4) commented:

I wish I understood how much preparation was needed to go into that test because

 if you freak out, you are not going to do too well. There is a lot of stuff that you

do not know until you get in there.

Test anxiety was one barrier to Praxis I success that was discussed in the student

focus groups. However, no faculty member discussed it. In student discussions, students

only stated that test anxiety played a role in test preparation but did not indicate any

strategies or methods that were implemented in courses or support services to provide

students with ways to alleviate the anxiety. As one student (FGB1) stated:

I am one of those people who has stupid test anxiety…no matter what the test is.

So…I just had to go for it and hope for the best because sometimes you cannot

even prepare yourself…you just have to go with it and the hope that you know

your stuff.

Student attributes as contributing factors. While extrinsic variables were

discussed in both faculty interviews and student focus groups, there were also intrinsic

student attributes that participants felt were contributing factors to student success in

writing and on the Praxis I writing test. These included the following:

- Time management and organizational skills

- Effort and motivation

- Confidence levels in relation to writing and test-taking

Because the Praxis I writing test is timed, both student focus groups discussed the need

for students to have adequate time management and organizational skills. According to

one student participant (FGB2), being able to organize an essay quickly as well as

developing supportive evidence were important because "those are the biggest things on

those tests." As another Focus Group B student (FGB3) stated, "I either have the skills by

this point or I do not, and we are just going to have to see where I am at. It should have

been enough." One organizational skill that Focus Group A participants spoke about was

being able to develop an outline. As one student participant (FGA4) stated, "Having a

plan, like a very broad plan, about what do you want to write about and how to stay on

track while writing. That helped a lot." Another student participant (FGA6) compared not

being organized when writing as "going off into a rabbit hole pretty fast."

While time management was not discussed during the faculty interviews, two closely connected intrinsic variables were. These were effort and motivation. All faculty members interviewed agreed that without student motivation and effort, students would not have success in writing. One faculty member (FI5) expressed the belief that "There is a kind of self-selection that goes on. Students who are serious and do the work and make an effort are generally successful." In speaking about the persistence of a student as a factor contributing to improvement in writing, one faculty member (FI4) stated that "the student, for whatever reason…was motivated to stick at the task long enough, to accept the frustration of being asked to do this or that over and over again till it got somewhere. Both student focus groups also discussed personal effort and motivation as contributing factors to their individual success as writers and, ultimately, in their success on the Praxis I writing test. One focus group member (FGB4) stated that one factor was "making time to write a quality paper. You have to know the material, your rough draft, and then going back over it. I put time and effort into it." Another focus group participant (FGB1) spoke about making an effort to have various people to read a writing assignment in order to get feedback:

> We have more people on campus that could look at your work too because it is always nice to get different perspectives from people because one person can, maybe, catch something in your writing that the other person missed and then you just have all the different pieces of information from them.

While this statement speaks about assistance in the writing process, it reinforces the idea that students must be motivated and make an effort to seek that assistance.

While discussing motivation and effort, one faculty participant (FI1) also discussed student interest in the writing topic as a factor in writing success:

> I think the most important aspects are that in some way I have to either benefit from their interest in learning or compel some sort of feeling that they want to get better and then use that by making sure they stay engaged in the material their writing about.

Motivation and effort coupled with topic interest also was addressed by another faculty (FI5) as contributing to writing improvement and success:

> Well, two things. I think just that the students who show up make an effort, which is not all of them, of course, but the ones that do are generally successful. And then, there are a smaller number who are very successful because they connect with either some talent they have, or they are given the permission by the class or by me [the instructor] to just kind of run with their ideas. I think they are the more successful.

One student focus group participant (FGA4) also introduced the topic of interest into the discussion as a building block for self-confidence:

> Ok, so for the research paper, we were given a very short list of topics, like, maybe four different topics that you could choose from and those are what you are "stuck" with, no changing it, and "get to work on it" kind of thing. And I feel like that kind of limits what we are capable of. If we are given a topic that we can really put our passion into, I feel like that would be a more successful, not only for the teacher but for ourselves. We would feel more confident about our writing

then, and building confidence is such a key factor when it comes to writing. Faculty and student participants agreed that students must be motivated to put in the effort to improve their writing. The participants also agreed that motivation and effort need to be reinforced by student interest in the subject given in a writing assignment. Finally, the three intrinsic variables of motivation, effort and interest build individual student self-confidence in the overall writing process and in the approach to the Praxis I writing test.

From my analysis of data for Research Question 2, I found there were several areas regarding strategies and methods that participants noted could be implemented to ensure that students receive the most effective writing instruction in the writing curriculum or in the university's writing assistance programs to meet the specific Praxis I writing competencies. First, university expectations are that students have mastery of writing competencies prior to enrolling in WRIT 101 and when taking the Praxis I writing test, rather than meeting students at their individual points of need. This finding is supported by the research of Ruane and Chappell (2018) which found that a gap exists in this area and mastery is expected without any support for the development of this literacy. In addition, the research of Vue et al. (2016) found that the development of grammar skills was important to the development of writing competence. Second, opportunities to practice writing are not provided across local campus as a whole. Third, the utilization of the WRIT 101 course as a means of ETS basic skills writing test preparation is insufficient. Fourth, there is no formal support available to students for specific basic skills writing test preparation in any course or specific student support

service. Fifth, since performance tasks required for the ETS basic skills writing tests are predominately different from those of any writing course, specific test performance task competency of students needs must be addressed separately. Lastly, improvement of test scores could come from the implementation of a required second writing course, a formal grammar course, a formal ETS test preparation workshop, a designated ETS tests preparation tutor, or a combination of these.

According to data collected, there is no specified ETS basic skills test preparation available to students. Most times, students prepare for the test by working alone or with friends, using practice tests. Although findings aligned to Research Question 1 show that the Praxis I competencies and WRIT 101 and WRIT 095 learning outcomes align, there is no actual support within the WRIT 101 course that prepares students to take the Praxis I writing test, except for the practice of writing garnered from assignments. The writing support that is provided does not include comprehensive test review, especially in the areas of grammatical, structural, and mechanical relationship subcategories of the Praxis I test. The need for a designated ETS basic skills writing test preparation program has been shown to be of importance by students in addition to having adequate preparation for a variety of writing experiences across courses taken at the university. While faculty indicated the need for basic skills test preparation, their focus was on overall writing improvement for students so that there is growth from freshman to senior year. The overall finding with regard to Research Question 2 is that students are required to understand how to perform certain tasks on the ETS basic skills writing test that are not required as part of the actual writing process, including those required in the WRIT 101

course. As a result, no structured methods or strategies are employed currently by the university or its faculty that specifically address the needs of students in relation to basic skills writing test preparation other than assignments in WRIT 101 that relate to essay construction.

Results for Research Question 3

The focus of Research Question 3 was on the methods and/or strategies that participants noted that could be implemented to best address the building of an effective framework for the improvement of students' written communication skills, especially in view of the basic skills test requirement. The analysis of data for this research question included university archival NSSE and FSSE data and qualitative data from faculty interviews and student focus groups.

Analysis of archival data. In analyzing NSSE and FSSE archival data, I found that some of the data overlapped with that used for Research Question 2 (See Appendix F). I approached the data analysis for Research Question 3 from the perspective of how well students and faculty felt methods and strategies needed for student success were implemented in courses and across campus. The data indicated that students felt that overall faculty classroom practices were not strong enough to support academic success. Faculty, however, felt that the reason students were not successful was because they frequently did not commit to doing their best in participating in class or in completing assignments. Both the NSSE and FSSE data regarding student motivation in seeking academic assistance showed that students were not proactive in seeking assistance, even when it was suggested to them by faculty members or peers.

NSSE and FSSE data showed a discrepancy between high academic standards set by the university and those set by individual faculty across the campus. In relation to indicators relating to the development of writing skills, critical and analytical thinking skills , organizational and time management skills, and learning on one's own, faculty indicated that they were doing well in providing students with emphasis in these areas in courses. However, students had the opposite viewpoint.

Analysis of faculty interview and student focus group data. In the analysis of the student focus group and faculty interview data for Research Question 3, there was overlap again from the data used for Research Question 2 since some responses provided insight into both questions. Looking again at the five themes that emerged from data analysis, I sought to find the ways students and faculty felt would provide the best implementation of methods and strategies for student success in writing and in preparation for basic skills testing.

Variables impacting student success. In speaking about success in writing, one faculty member (FI1) described the process as "how you get success or potential success, with any student is you make them understand that...I mean when I get students to understand that with process and revision, they are going to be successful." Students talked about persistence as being important to success. As one student (GFA1) explained, "Just persistence." A student in the other focus group (FGB4) also talked about persistence and said that "When I look back, it was because I was working towards it and the more that I had started really applying myself." Having instructors provide time to work one-on-one with students, provide time to revise papers, and provide timely

feedback also were important to students. One student described one-on-one time with the instructor as "…really helpful." Another student (FGA6), speaking about the process of revision and practice, stated:

He [the teacher] would tell you what your grade was at the beginning and then what you worked your grade up to. So that was success. So you could get a better paper by the end of the semester. You know, the help was the biggest key.

Faculty also commented about providing students with opportunities to improve their writing. One faculty (FI1) stated, "…I will help with papers in other classes. I will edit papers. I will help them edit papers." In discussing the practice of writing, another faculty member (FI3) pointed out, "I learned…that my students are less prepared to write than they were 20 years ago. I think it is from lack of the constructive kind of practice." Talking about the millennial culture, a faculty member (FI2) pointed out that "writing has been devalued and it is partly our faculty as educators too because instead of trying to figure out what is going on, a lot of times you just gripe." Faculty agreed that providing students with opportunities to practice writing are important to student success. One faculty member commented, "So they just write…it does not really matter what…just as long as they get into the habit of writing…it should never be easier, and it can become a little more complex." Students in both focus groups felt that providing writing prompts in a course was an important method of preparing students to be able to respond quickly. However, they went further by saying that timed prompts provided better preparation, especially in terms of basic skills testing in writing. One member of Focus Group B

(FGB5) commented that learning to respond quickly to a timed prompt was "…one of the most valuable things I learned and really helped me out in my Praxis I endeavors."

Support for student success. Students and faculty both emphasized the supportive network that existed across the campus for students. One student (FGA4) indicated that by being able to draw on different resources helped to resolve any problems that occurred in a class:

> I guess I would say the availability of the teacher, and not just one teacher, but you can see another teacher and receive help…and then student body help and working with your friends or going to see a tutor is very helpful as well.

Another student exuberantly stated that "There is nothing at the campus except for support. There is so much support. There is support services up top. There is tutoring in the library. Even going to your professor." While all faculty agreed with the students that the support for students was in place, one faculty member (FI1) felt that the services at the university did not function as well as they could:

> We have services, those support services. What is unfortunate is we have virtually no coordination between the support services and the faculty. So often, the support services are not particularly helpful. We also…have the wrong idea about what is really needed…we have people in support services for writing or who help people fix the writing, repair the damage. That is not the point, you know! So, I am not sure our support services in writing are very effective.

Support for Praxis I preparation. With regard to preparation for the Praxis I

writing test, except for one faculty member, the English faculty indicated that they did

not have experience with specifically assisting students in preparing for the Praxis I

writing test. The faculty member who did assist with Praxis I preparation worked with

education faculty during one Praxis I workshop. As one faculty (FI5) stated:

> I can honestly say that in the 27 years I have taught here, I think I have, maybe,
>
> talked to, maybe, one or at the most two students who ever brought up the Praxis
>
> test. They simply do not come to me for that specific thing.

No student in either focus group indicated that English faculty assisted them with basic

skills test preparation. They did, however, state that they received assistance from the

education faculty and found resources in the library to assist with test preparation. One

student (FGB4) stated,

> The only thing that I can speak from for this question was that a lot of the
>
> education department here say, "We need to look at this. We need to work on
>
> this because it is going to be on your test…they remind you that you are going to
>
> have to take that test.

Another student participant (FGB5) agreed and said,

> Oh, I received…quite a bit [of help]. I know there are practice tests available at
>
> times. There were resources at the library, and just having the fact that talking to
>
> my professors…they would tell me strategies and give me ideas.

In both focus groups, most students indicated that they did not received specific

assistance with test preparation but studied independently by either purchasing study

guides or using those available in the university library. As one student stated,

So, I went to the library and used the Praxis book in the library…I mean my friends do not talk about it at all…I mean there are questions that I do not know how I was going to answer them so I read the difficult questions in there. And I also downloaded apps on my phone to go through review questions which also helped, and they are timed. So that was good stuff.

Barriers to student success. One topic that was discussed in the student focus groups centered around the expectation of the university that students entering the university all have a mastery of the basics of grammar, punctuation, mechanics, and sentence structure. Students indicated that this was one area in which they needed assistance in developing competency. As one student (FGA4) stated, "I think one thing was in WRIT 101, it was expected that you had already mastered the basics…and they just wanted to build on top of that." This was reaffirmed by another student in Focus Group B (FGB4) who stated, "The biggest think was the challenge of being presented with something different and getting there because that was frustrating in itself, being shifted towards a whole new direction." Faculty viewed the basics as part of a mechanical process of writing taught in K-12 schools, not as part of the thinking process of writing taught at the university level. As one faculty member (FI4) explained:

> Well…to me the most problematic thing is the students have a mechanical idea of writing, and the schools have done this through things like grammar courses-students have kind of a mechanical idea of what writing is….We have not been very successful on teaching that writing is really about thinking.

Although students understood that at the university level instructors were looking for content, one student commented about it and stated,

> I do not think any professor should read your work and just give you a grade…
> I think if you hit on content-I mean-that's good but if it is a writing class and you do not have correct grammar and spelling and punctuation and sentence structure, then what are you writing for?

In discussing grading and instructor expectations regarding assignments, students agreed that there needed to be similar expectations from all instructors. Focus Group B participant (FGB2) stated:

> I think there needs to be a higher expectation across the board. Some of the classes are so, so easy and there is grade inflation. There are some professors that as long as you wrote something and turn it in on time, they were, like, "Yeah, I will give that an A for effort".

During both faculty interviews and student focus group discussions, the disconnect between standardized testing and teaching became apparent as a barrier to student success. According to one faculty member (FI4), "A lot of the Praxis is typically asking for or maybe correlated to but is not identical to the goals of any college writing course. And that is a problem right there." Another faculty member (FI2) agreed by stating, "Again I cannot emphasize enough writing process and revision which is not what standardized tests emphasize. I mean standardized testing and the way to teach writing successfully have nothing to do with each other. Just nothing!" One student focus group member (FGA1), commenting about the questions found in a Praxis I preparation

book, stated that "…so many of the questions they ask you, you do not talk about every day." Another student observed that "…the skills that are needed to be successful on the Praxis I writing test should probably be part of how you design what you are going to teach for WRIT 101. So, yes, grammar and punctuation."

Another barrier discussed was the lack of preparation of test skill building. As one faculty member stated:

I have students and they talk about tests and they misunderstand. They think that they are just going to take the test. It is sort of out of the ether as to whether they will do well or not. Absolutely not, because all tests have to be studied for.

One student participant (FGB4) reinforced the faculty's belief by saying that "I wish I understood how much preparation was needed to go into that test.." Another student (FGA1) felt "…I was being thrown to the wolves because, I mean, even after having reviewed it for a few days, you really do not know what you are doing. You do not know what they are going to ask you."

Student attributed as contributing factors. Intrinsic student attributes were also discussed by faculty participants as well as student focus group members. These included the ability to manage time, the ability to organize thoughts and construct an essay with supporting evidence, motivation to complete a task, and persistence. One student (FGA4) compared not being organized when writing as "going off into a rabbit hole pretty fast." According to another student (FGB2), being able to organize and effective essay quickly was important because "those are the biggest things on those tests." One faculty member expressed the belief that "There is a kind of self-selection that goes on. Students who are

serious and do the work and make an effort are generally successful." Another faculty

member also commented on the motivational factor and persistence. According to this

faculty participant (FI4), "the student, for whatever reason, … was motivated to stick to

the task long enough to accept the frustration of being asked to do this or that over and

over again till it got somewhere." According to one faculty member (FI5), student

persistence leads to success because the student can connect "…with some talent they

have or they are given the permission by the class or by me (the instructor) to just kind of

run with their ideas. Faculty and student participants agree that students must be

motivated and effort needs to be reinforced. According to one student participant

(FGA4), "building confidence is such a key factor." Both faculty and students indicate

that the development and inclusion of strategies and methods for student growth in

writing competency and in basic skills testing preparation are important.,

    Addressing improvement. From the data analysis for Research Question 3, a fifth

theme, Addressing Improvement, emerged. I was looking to find suggestions from

students and faculty members, as those immediately impacted by the results of this

program evaluation, for ways to build on the structural framework for student success

already in place at the university. Using this foundation, I focused on the implementation

of specific methods and strategies to best support the improvement of student

competencies in the areas of writing and basic skills testing. The coding process resulted

in the following categories addressed in this theme:

- Writing-across-the curriculum

- Inclusion of in-class timed writing

- Increased writing practice

- Variance of writing assignments

- Formal standardized competency test preparation

Student focus group members believed that grammar and sentence structure were important but also agreed that these were areas they struggled with as college students. As one student (FGA1) stated:

> I think that grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure would be the three needed most. This is what I struggled with the most. I do not know about anyone else, but I feel that when I was in WRIT 101, we really did not work on that stuff and even through high school we never did any of it. I think maybe junior high was probably the last time we went through that stuff.

Faculty perspectives on how to raise writing proficiency levels, including basic skills test scores were focused, for the most part, on writing across the curriculum at the university. However, while all faculty firmly believed in the need for a campus-wide writing-across-the-curriculum program, they were also highly skeptical that such a program would occur at the university. One faculty member (FI2) summed up the feelings of all faculty interviewed:

> Design a writing across the curriculum. It is not going to happen…You cannot design exceptionally promising things that will help students with their writing skills without administrative support, and there is none.

In speaking about a campus-wide writing-across-the-curriculum program and the problem of its inception, a faculty participant (FI4) also indicated that the university

should incorporate a year-long writing requirement for students.

> I think all students should receive 1 year of college writing in their first year. I would like to see a college level writing requirement in all college courses. For that to happen would really require a cross campus writing across the curriculum effort with the writing faculty involved in teaching other faculty how to do that. The most promising thing is when people require writing. It is requiring the student to discover something while writing. If we want our seniors to be better writers than our freshmen, we would have to agree on what that means. We would really have to find a way of making sure that we have some common agreement among faculty, and at this university, that would be especially problematic. What would be most helpful here would be a serious and expensive writing across the curriculum, I mean, for the faculty.

Regarding additional writing course requirements, one faculty member interviewed believed there needed to be consistency in the structure of instruction in the writing course and that the approach to writing instruction should also change. According to the faculty member (FI1),

> I think we need more consistency amongst those of us who teach WRIT 101 as far as how we have students prepared and, also, a higher-level essay writing class. I also think that different types of multimodal writing help students think more about what they are saying and less about the form and then they can go back to writing a more academic essay.

During the focus group discussions, this idea of more consistency in the structure of the

writing course and the need for a formal grammar course were brought up by

participants. As one focus group member (FGB3) stated,

> I think if the instructors were all on the same page with how they were going to
>
> grade essays and assignment, it would help students improve at an earlier stage in
>
> their college career. If it was all consistent…it would improve the writing
>
> proficiency. It would be good to probably have a course that would spend more
>
> time on grammar and punctuation. I mean, I think that would help out quite a bit.

When speaking about variety of writing assignments, another focus group participant

(FGA6) explained,

> To me, I think we need to vary what is being assigned for writing assignments…I
>
> mean I probably wrote seven to 10-page essays and then quite a few chapter
>
> reviews, but probably 75% of my writing was three-page essays and chapter
>
> reviews.

The implementation of a campus-wide writing-across-the-curriculum program, additional

writing course requirements, and varying of writing assignments were the most

recommended ways to improve writing proficiency, not only for education students, but

for all students. Student focus group members also discussed the possibility of allowing

for in-class practice and time writing as ways to improve writing proficiency. Although

most focus group participants agreed that these two suggestions would be promising, one

focus group member (FGA2) disagreed, "I think I would disagree with allowing class

time to do that, kind of like teaching for the test. I think practice sessions should be

offered, but I do not think they should take up class time."

In speaking about formal grammar instruction at the university level, the development of formal Praxis I writing preparation was also a topic that faculty, but more importantly, students felt would be an important avenue to explore to raise Praxis I writing scores. Both student focus groups addressed various ways that a formal approach to Praxis I preparation could be constructed. One focus group member (FGA7) stated:

> I would say a class just dedicated to preparing for the Praxis, especially for the writing session, so that way you can get prompts, and even if it is not a class, maybe a study session at the library for students who are going to take the Praxis so you can do it together. They can also have a teacher available to go through the practice with them.

Another focus group participant (FGA3) suggested the employment of a Praxis I preparation tutor whose sole purpose was to develop ways to work with students preparing for the test:

> Maybe, have someone that just specializes in helping people write for the Praxis and having one paraprofessional or whatever you want to label it. But it would not hurt to have one in the library and one in Student Support Services and that person is specialized in helping you prepare for the Praxis so they have all the resources we had been talking about earlier. Their only goal would be to help you pass the Praxis I writing test and they have all the tools to help you do that. Then you would not have to make a course change. I mean it could be done really easily, I think.

As a member of Focus Group B (FGB2) also explained, "It would totally benefit

everyone because if there was a teacher tutoring that, the teacher tutoring is also going to benefit."

The perspectives of both faculty and student participants were aligned regarding suggested methods for improving writing proficiency among students and raising basic skills writing tests scores. Although the improvements suggested were supported by all faculty and student participants, an understanding existed among faculty about the minimal feasibility of having some of those improvements implemented due to variables beyond their control. Two indirect findings for this research question that could impact successful improvement of students' writing proficiency and basic skills writing test scores relate to the university administration:

- There is a feeling among faculty that upper administration lacks a balance in supporting both technical and vocational areas with academic areas of the university.

- Faculty feel that upper administration does not understand nor supports the implementation of needed, though sometimes expensive, support for students to improve writing skills.

This scenario is a hinderance to student success in academic areas, including student writing competency.

Overall faculty classroom practices were not seen as strong enough to support academic success. In addition, both NSSE and FSSE data showed a discrepancy between high academic standards set by the university and those set by individual faculty across the campus. However, in reviewing both faculty and student focus group data, the

indication was that faculty support was strong regarding the development of student writing competencies. However, while strong faculty support and effective classroom instructional practice may not be prevalent across all courses and departments on the campus, there exists strong support from the English faculty for student writing success.

With specific regard to writing competency, findings for Research Question 3 provided insight into the methods and strategies that provided students with opportunities for finding success in improving their writing skills. Students have the most writing success when they are engaged in the writing process, receive timely feedback, and have a network of support. In addition, tutoring services are available, and when used, provide additional assistance in a variety of ways to support students' overall success. However, although tutoring services and support are available, students do not always make use of them This was corroborated by data from both the archival NSSE and FSSE data as well as the qualitative data from faculty interviews and student focus groups. Although some students do seek help from instructors or support services, many students do not. According to faculty and student focus group perspectives, student support is available and provides quality assistance. However, without students taking advantage of the support, overall student success, as well as success in specific courses, is impacted negatively.

Summary of Findings

The reason I chose a U-FE approach for this study was due to an ongoing problem at the open admission university where my study took place. The university's 8 years of ETS basic skills test data indicated that a large percentage of preeducation students who

had already completed the required WRIT 101 course, College Writing I, could not meet the ETS basic skills writing test set score as first-time test-takers.

The literature review provided insight into research that showed that students do not feel that they are adequately prepared for high stakes testing such as the ETS basic skills tests but do feel that collegial resources could provide needed support for test preparation. The project study I conducted supports the past research as student focus group participants agreed they were not prepared for the ETS Praxis I skills test in writing. Also, all faculty members interviewed never addressed the ETS basic skills test when teaching WRIT 101 and felt that the writing course and the ETS basic skills test were very different in nature and purpose.

The analysis of the three datasets, including archival data, the faculty interviews, and student focus groups, clearly showed that the required WRIT 101 course provided opportunities to assist students in improving the performance task of writing, which is only one subsection of the ETS Praxis I writing test. The course, however, did not provide assistance for students to acquire an understanding of the basic writing concepts of grammatical relationships, structural relationships, and word choice and idioms needed for three of the sections on the ETS Praxis I writing test. The analysis of the archival data, including NSSE and FSSE surveys, syllabus mapping, and WRIT 101 learning outcome mapping in relation to Praxis I writing competencies, and student focus group data and faculty interview data support for this finding.

The methods and strategies that emerged from both archival and qualitative data of my study support the collegial resources shown in previous research to be helpful to

students. The past research also found that the simple addition of requirements within a course is not sufficient, and my research supported past research findings. The strategies and methods utilized in developing resources at the university level need to be active learning strategies that include personal interaction and experiential learning so that student knowledge construction is enhanced. Results from my study indicated that when students actively engage, they are able to gain the knowledge needed to be successful and that active engagement is needed as part of any resource provided by the university.

The findings from my study helped to develop a project that is discussed in Chapter 3. The project will provide preeducation students with the resources needed to build their knowledge and ability to be successful first-time test-takers on the ETS basic skills writing test. This project can foster positive social change at both a local and global level by assisting in the development of effective teachers.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

According to Patton (2012), U-FE is a process used to find solutions to a local

problem and to support intended users' decisions about what will work best by focusing

on their intended uses of the evaluation. As a result of the overall U-FE evaluation, I

concluded that a curriculum plan in the form of a course in which a learning-centered

approach would be used would be the best solution to the problem. The course could

provide preeducation students with increased writing proficiency on a personal basis with

an emphasis on the editing and revision process while also providing students with an

increased understanding of how that proficiency translates into their future teaching.

Rationale

As a result of the analysis of data, I found that the WRIT 101 course was not

sufficient to prepare education students to be successful in meeting the Praxis I writing

set score. The data also indicated that both student and faculty participants believed that

additional support was needed in the form of an additional writing course, a test

preparation workshop, a university-wide writing across the curriculum initiative, or a

specific grammar course for education students. However, in reviewing the data relating

to students' proactiveness in seeking assistance on their own, I found that many students

did not actively seek assistance in any type of support services provided. Based on these

facts, the development of a workshop would not sufficiently meet the needs of education

students since it would be dependent solely on the individual student's proactiveness to

attend a workshop that intended primary users felt could not be made mandatory. In

addition, the implementation of a university-wide writing across the curriculum initiative would be prohibitive due to the budget cuts in place for the next academic year. The requirement of a grammar course would be of some assistance to students but would not be adequate in helping them to prepare for the writing test.

From the study findings, I concluded that a curriculum plan in the form of a course would serve to increase student understanding of grammar on a personal level as well as prepare students for the basic skills writing test. In addition, students completing the course might achieve a higher level of proficiency and self-efficacy in their personal writing. Because the course could be designated as an education special topics course, the course could be piloted for 3 semesters before having to go through the curricular process. In addition, because the course would be identified as an education course, the objectives of the course would need to be aligned with the state's Professional Educator Preparation Standards (PEPPS; 2015). In looking at impacting variables, including finances and resources, faculty load, timeframe for implementation, and potential impact on test scores, I decided that a recommendation to develop a course for education students that focused on individual student grammar needs and preparation for the basic skills writing test would have the most impact. I used the Understanding by Design (UBD) curriculum planning design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) as the approach for developing the course.

Review of the Literature

I conducted a search for evidence in previous research that would support my study project. I used the following search terms: *active learning, adult learning theory,*

andragogy, collaborative learning, curriculum design, learning community learning design, mastery learning, planning theory, problem-based learning, and *understanding by design*. In locating literature, I used the Academic Search Complete, SAGE Journals, and Taylor and Francis Online databases accessible through the Walden University Library to find peer-reviewed literature published within the last 5 years that related to my project study.

Curriculum Development

In 21st century planning, there is an emphasis on collaboration, relationship building, and active participation by stakeholders (Eizenberg & Shilon, 2016, p. 1118). According to Figueredo, Leite, and Fernandes (2016), the focus of any curriculum development should be on promoting lifelong learning, ensuring the quality of teaching and learning, encouraging equity and social interconnection, and fostering creativity. In developing new curriculum, designers must take into consideration both the content required for the course and the methods and strategies used within the course to promote participant success (Biesta, Priestley, & Robinson, 2015).

Although the original foundation of curriculum design was built on behavioral and cognitive psychology, educators have used constructivist theory in developing curriculum in all educational environments from K-12 to postgraduate (Hrivnak, 2019). The reason for increased use of constructivism as a base for building curriculum is because constructivist learning design provides various learning experiences in which students are challenged and guided during active engagement (Mensah, 2015). The development of this study project was based on experiences that draw on the

metacognitive and problem-based activities, collaborative learning, higher order thinking, and learning experiences that are authentic rather than theory-based. Using constructivist theory as the basis for the development of the course, I used a design that incorporates teaching and learning strategies that promote student motivation and engagement, uses scaffolding and collaboration to build knowledge and skills, and fosters positive student-to-student and student-to-teacher relationships will provide opportunities for student success.

In developing this study project as a curriculum plan for a college level course, I also needed to include andragogical adult learning theory as part of the framework for the curriculum plan. According to Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2015), the model of andragogy underscores four basic principles regarding adult learning:

- Adults are self-directed and should have input into the content and the way they learn.

- Adults have a large pool of experiences from which to draw; therefore, the focus should be to add to what they already know instead of dwelling on the knowledge they already have.

- Adults want to focus on learning what is practical in their lives; therefore, content should focus on issues that relate to their personal or professional lives.

- Learning should be centered on problem-solving rather than memorizing content.

According to Błaszczak (2013), in the andragogical model, the instructor institutes procedures that allow for involvement of the learners in a collaborative and transformative way by focusing on procedures and resources that help the individual learner to assimilate information and skills. The learning model also reinforces the prevailing cognitive psychology theory that the goal of instructional delivery should be to encourage elaborative rehearsal, that is transferring information into long-term memory rather than maintenance rehearsal, which stores learning in short-term memory, which is limited in capacity and duration (Khalil & Elkhider, 2016, p. 147). According to Fowler-Amato and Warrington (2017), it is important that educational designers view students as being capable and knowledgeable in order to build on the resources that students bring with them into a course (p. 359) The constructivist approach aligned with the adult learning theory provided the most suitable foundation for curriculum development of a course designed for students facing a high-stakes test and a profession that requires them to have effective written and communication skills.

In planning any curriculum, decisions need to be reflective and intentional in order for the course to lead to successful student outcomes (Georgetown University, 2019). According to Wiggins and McTighe (2005), when designing curriculum, it is important to focus on developing an understanding of desired results and move backwards to incorporate content, methods, and strategies that will be most effective in achieving those results. There are several areas to consider when developing curriculum (Carnegie Mellon University, 2019; Georgetown University, 2019; Stanford University, 2019); these areas align with UBD curriculum planning and include:

- Identification of any situational constraints (Stage 1: Desired Results),

- Articulation of goals and learning objectives (Stage 1: Desired Results),

- Logistical and timing considerations (Stage 1: Desired Results),

- Identification of potential assessments (Stage 2: Evidence and Assessment),

- Knowledge of potential students (Stage 3: Learning Plan),

- Identification of appropriate and effective instructional strategies and methods (Stage 3: Learning Plan),

- Development of content and schedule (Stage 3: Learning Plan), and

- Construction of the syllabus (Stage 3-Learning Plan).

Approach to Course Construction

In developing the curriculum plan for the course, I used educational theory, the overarching educator preparation standards, and UBD curriculum plan as guides in creating a student-centered approach in the development of goals, objectives, activities, assignments, and assessments. The adoption of this approach to course construction will provide opportunities within the course for student interaction and collaboration in which experiences and ideas are shared, active participation in class activities is encouraged and expected, and a reduction of feelings of anxiousness is felt by students (Kolarski, Danalev, & Terzieva, 2018; Lee & Hannafin, 2016). Collaborative course development (CCD) is a student-centered approach that builds an educational safe zone in which student commitment is more important than enrollment and students are actively engaged rather than passively compliant within the structure of the course (Aiken, Heinze, Meuter, & Chapman, 2016, p. 57). In CCD, there is direct student involvement in the overall

development of the course, including discussions and selections of individual outcomes, activities, examinations, and assignments that are agreed upon by both students and instructor. According to Lac and Mansfield (2018), student voice can provide data to inform instruction and increase student self-efficacy. Because students would be taking the basic skills test after the completion of the course, the creation of a safe zone within the course could provide a positive environment in which students would be motivated to engage in course content that would result in positive outcomes for them. As Fowler-Amato and Warrington (2017) pointed out, allowing participants to have an active voice in the direction of the course creates a course that is "open-ended and continuously co-configured" and allows for an appreciative rather than a deficit approach to student learning (p. 370). Using this approach in the development of the study project will allow for a flexible approach to meeting student needs while maintaining the requirements for the course within the educator preparation standards.

When determining the most effective strategies for inclusion in the course, it was important to consider student needs on three levels of engagement, including the affective, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions (Ben-Eliyahu & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2015; Parsons, Nuland, & Parsons, 2014). Students must feel a sense of community in the learning environment, actively participate in the learning activities, and believe that they can meet the objectives and goals of the course (Ben-Eliyahu & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2015). When designing a writing course, it is important to consider strategies and methods that will motivate students' self-determination in their approach to their own writing and the work they do (Johnson, 2019; MacArthur et al., 2016; Wehmeyer,

Shogren, Toste, & Mahal, 2017). For the curriculum plan of the course, the strategies

included in the design of the course needed to be personalized for students, provide a way

for students to practice concepts and skills, and allow students to take conscious control

of their learning.

With regard to curriculum models for writing, the revision stage is the most

important part of the writing process, but the models currently in practice do not assist

students in determining how to revise (Law & Baer, 2017; Panero, 2016). Lack of writing

confidence as well as competence increases the risk of failure that extends beyond the

classroom, especially since many times instructional practices have been limited to rote

memorization, drill and practice, and straight lecture formats (Harris & Graham, 2016).

As a result, many times students skip the revision process because of misconceptions

about the writing process, which increase writing apprehension (Kim, 2013). Providing

time for revision in the writing process was important in the curriculum plan for the

course.

According to Daffern, Mackenzie, and Hemmings (2017), the level of

understanding of punctuation and spelling can predict overall written composition

achievement (p. 75). For students who must take a basic skills writing test, the ability to

master these language conventions is of great importance. Therefore, in addition to

providing opportunities for students to work within the stages of the writing process, any

course developed to help students improve their own writing and meet the requirements

of basic skills testing must include strategies and methodology that allow students to

increase their comprehensive understanding of grammar, structure, and punctuation because these are visible quality indicators of writing (Daffern et al., 2017).

In developing a course that focused on the problem at the local level, the curriculum plan for the course needed to address the revision process and basic language conventions on three levels of engagement. For student success to occur in a course, there is a responsibility required on the part of both the student and the teacher. The instructor, as facilitator or guide, is fundamental to the effectiveness of a course designed to allow students to take ownership of their work and their achievement (Iversen et al., 2015; O'Connor et al., 2014). As a means of increasing student success within a course, students must have opportunities for positive interaction among other active participants in the classroom; current trends place positive value on the interaction so that mistakes are seen as a means of exploring solutions through engagement in the learning process (Loh, Andrews, Hesketh, & Griffin, 2013; Weinzimmer & Esken, 2017). Melding strategies that increase student understanding of the ways to correct their own writing errors with those that nurture students' writing self-efficacy and reduce writing apprehension can provide opportunities for increasing writing success (MacArthur, Philippakos, & Ianetta, 2015).

According to Druckman and Ebner (2017), the best opportunity for learning occurs when the following are in place:

- There are guided and scaffolded tasks and activities that are in place;
- Activities require explanations from students based on their own ideas with instructor feedback provided that is timely;

- Tasks and assignments provide examples to students on how to be successful in completing them.

According to Tomlinson (2017), the inclusion of scaffolding in the development of the course is an important strategy as it provides three levels of instruction:

- Instructional scaffolding, which provides instruction on how to proceed in a specific task;

- Cognitive scaffolding, which provides structured support and prompts metacognition to find answers to specific problems so that students can develop their own ideas and take ownership of the task;

- Motivational scaffolding, which helps to increase student engagement and confidence in completing the task at hand.

Scaffolding allows students to think deliberately and critically about the choices they make and will help them to understand the conventions of writing and of test taking that they can anticipate seeing in the course, in basic skills test-taking situations, and in both professional and personal real-life scenarios. As students work through the activities and assignments in a course, sufficient resources and effective strategies will need to be in place for any learning gap to close (Coombs, 2017; Kelley, 2018; Pierce, 2017; Relles & Duncheon, 2018). Therefore, students would need to have external classroom resources made available to them, whether through online sources or university support areas in conjunction with instructor support.

One of the important outcomes of the course was to assist students in achieving success on the required basic skills test in writing required for admission to the educator

preparation program of the local university. Within the context of the course, I needed to include strategies that could help students reduce test anxiety. Student test anxiety may be brought on by the social context as well as through environmental situations, such as the expectation of performance and testing situations (Segool, von der Embse, Mata, & Gallant, 2014; Sommer & Arendasy, 2015). Throughout a course, it is important that students are focused on the belief that they can reach the goal, rather than on the fear of negative consequences or outcomes (von der Embse, Schultz, & Draughn, 2015). According to Butzlaff, Gaylle, and Kelley (2018), it is important that there are opportunities during the course for students to think about their personal test strategies, both before and after taking a test. This would allow students to investigate the gaps in their preparation, redefine their test preparation approach, and reduce any test anxiety. Strategies such as the use of metacognitive wrappers and collaborative testing can be helpful for students for personal reflection and collaborative interaction. Metacognitive wrappers provide opportunities for students to think about the choices they made on a test and review the reasons for those choices (Poorman & Mastorovich, 2016). According to Green, Worthey, and Kerven (2018), collaborative testing is a strategy designed to allow students to work together in a testing scenario in order to increase content knowledge, to foster discussion concerning choices and understanding of material, and reduce test anxiety. For the course construction, the inclusion of metacognitive wrappers and collaborative testing within the classroom provided students with a better understanding of the content and test preparation.

To prepare quality teachers for the field, today's educator preparation programs have a duty to prepare preservice teachers to have an in-depth knowledge of the relationship between personal knowledge and the transfer of that knowledge into the content and pedagogy for student learning (Ballock, McQuitty, & McNary, 2017; Goodwin et al., 2014). In the development of any course for education students, this focus is important to take into consideration. The use of problem based learning (PBL) activities allow instructors to guide students through the investigative process, integrate other perspectives, and arrive at a solution, all of which increases the ability of the individual student to develop flexible knowledge that allows them to transfer knowledge and skills acquired in an academic setting to the real-world environment of work (Bernat-Carles & Alsina, 2018; Lin, 2017). Working through a problem using PBL requires students to follow a five-step process: identifying the facts and determining the important details, generating hypotheses, identifying gaps in knowledge and searching for necessary information, going back to the problem and applying the formulated ideas, and reflecting on solutions to the problem (Blackwell & Roseth, 2018, p. 57). Novice teachers who have gained a high level of personal knowledge of the subject they will teach as well as the grade level pedagogical knowledge are flexible in differentiating their instruction to address the needs of the learner when preparing and delivering lessons (Parsons, Dodman, & Burrowbridge, 2013; Scales et al., 2017). In order to foster the requisite skills needed to meet the test requirements and solidify the knowledge and pedagogy foundational for quality teaching in the future, it is important to develop a way to build on the solid writing skills and knowledge preeducation students already have while

providing opportunities to foster those skills and understandings they lack (Shaughnessy & Boerst, 2017). As Tulley (2016) points out, "a course that could address theory, practice, and how these intersected with the teacher's own writing had a better chance of transference to future pupils (p. 25). The self-efficacy of education students generated as a result of personal writing competency and the ability to transmit those understandings to the planning, instruction, and assessment practices in a future K-12 classroom will directly impact not only their future students' academic outcomes but their teacher quality and effectiveness (Li & Zhang, 2015; Poulou et al., 2018; Zee & Koomen, 2016). According to Blackwell and Roseth (2018), in the development of activities and assignments for a course for education students including PBL "may be a viable method for developing flexible problem solving skills, positive attitudes toward learning, teaching confidence, and course engagement…and may help students feel more prepared as they enter the profession" (p. 67).

Because the project focus was on raising competency levels of students in writing and basic skills testing, a constructivist approach to course development that provided activities that foster scaffolding, social interaction and collaboration, self-reflection, positive motivation, and self-efficacy would provide the best outcomes for students facing a high-stakes test and a profession that requires them to have effective written and communication skills. A flexible model for course design, such as CCD, that is structured to meet the needs of students within a given semester would allow for active rather than passive student engagement in the activities and assignments of the course. Lastly, the inclusion of strategies in the course that meet the needs of adult learners and integrate

affective, behavioral, and cognitive self-regulation would help students with their personal writing competencies and as they prepare for the required basic skills writing test and their futures as educators.

Project Description

The goal of the course will be two-fold, providing grammar review for education students and providing test preparation. As a result, my determination was that the education department should have oversight of the course. This was an important determination as English faculty interviewed for this study indicated they had no specific knowledge of ETS basic skills writing test competencies nor had they assisted any students with test preparation. With the recommendation that the course be placed under the direction of the education department, the department would be able to utilize English faculty to teach the class or adopt a coteaching model for the class. As the course would be under the direction of the educator preparation program, the course objectives needed to align with the state Professional Educator Preparation Standards (2015), which require that education preparation candidates must be able to do the following:

- Demonstrate understanding of the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline that make the discipline(s) accessible and meaningful for learners to assure mastery of the content, and include the instruction of reading and writing literacy in all program areas;

- Work with others to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning and that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation;

- Demonstrate understanding of how to connect concepts and use differing perspectives to engage in critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem solving related to authentic local and global issues;

- Engage in ongoing professional learning and use evidence to continually evaluate one's own practice, particularly the effects of candidate's choices and action on themselves other professionals, and the community.

The following objectives would support the state PEPPS standards:

- Students will be able to identify and analyze the functions of grammatical categories in English, such as parts of speech and sentence elements, and different sentence structures and clause combinations, as they relate to the ETS basic skills test writing topics and the writing process.

- Students will develop a critical approach to grammatical proficiency as a student and as a prospective teacher candidate, including the ability to formulate concise, correct, and well-structures sentences.

- Students will be able to apply content knowledge of English grammar when writing by recognizing and correcting errors in grammar and punctuation in their own writing as well as in others' writing.

- Students will be able to reflect on their own test preparation strategies and be able to develop an individual plan to meet their needs.

- Students will be able to utilize effectively the strategies presented in the course in their own writing and for test taking purposes.

- Students, as prospective teacher candidates, will be able to demonstrate an

understanding of the importance of writing competency as it relates their own

writing and that of K-12 students.

- Students will demonstrate commitment to continuous growth and

    improvement in personal and professional practice through self-reflection and

    the reflective process regarding performance and feedback opportunities

    throughout the course.

- Students will demonstrate collaboration with peers, tutors, and instructors to

    enhance their personal and professional growth.

- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the roles that teachers play

    within the classroom and the school environment to improve their teaching

    practice and K-12 student learning.

These objectives will serve to meet the needs of education students in their personal

writing, basic skills testing, and professional career preparation. Students who enroll in

the course would need to have completed the general education writing course, WRIT

101, with a grade of C or higher.

For the course, a 2-credit course delivered in a face-to-face format will be the best

option. This format would allow students to meet in a structured class 2 hours a week for

the semester and allow time for students to complete out-of-class assignments. Each class

meeting would be divided into three sections and provide as much student engagement as

possible:

- Section 1-Introductory Discussion: This short lecture and interactive

    discussion will focus on the introduction of new topics to be covered in the

day's class and a review of assignments due that day. Rather than being led by the instructor, the discussion will be focused on an interactive approach with dynamic conversation occurring between instructor and students and among students.;

- Section 2-In-Class Activities: These activities would include collaborative practices and problem-based learning. Large and small groups and pairing during this part of the class would focus on practice activities and test preparation activities that would provide opportunities for investigation and solution development. The collaborative practices would allow students to share their perspectives on the specific topics and allow them to gain insight regarding the topics from other students' perspectives. This section of the class would also provide opportunity for in-depth questions for clarification of topics, reflection on the collaborative process and changes in personal approaches to writing and test preparation;

- Section 3-Share the Writing: This section would include sharing of written work and peer editing opportunities and feedback. During this part of the class, the instructor will also offer time for conferencing.

Throughout all three sections of the class, it will be important that students are immersed in an appreciative approach to discussion, sharing activities, and instructor feedback.

In exploring textbooks that could be utilized in this university course, I found that many writing textbooks provide limited reference to grammar and structure issues. Grammar textbooks, for the most part, are constructed as reference handbooks and, for

students, would be cumbersome to navigate. In researching the type of textbook that

would be most useful to students, I found two textbooks that fit the objectives of the

course. The first is the student edition of Anker and Aitken's *Real Writing with Readings:*

Paragraphs and Essays for College, Work, and Everyday Life, (6th ed.)*,* published in

2012. The textbook is divided into eight chapters. The first three chapters are directly

related to writing paragraphs and various types of writing projects. The remaining five

chapters focus on errors most writers make in terms of grammar, sentence structure, and

punctuation. According to Anker and Aitken (2012), the textbook assists students in

making connections between their personal writing and the expectations of the world in

which they live and work (p. xv). The second textbook I included for the course is *Praxis*

Prep-2017-2018 by Kaplan, Inc, published in 2017. The book is a test preparation book

that is customizable for the individual student and introduces the current ETS basic skills

tests, provides strategies for preparing for the tests, discusses common errors made by

test-takers, and provides practice materials, both hard-copy and online. According to

Kaplan, Inc., the purpose of the book is to provide "the tools and strategies you need to

feel calm and confident on test day" (p. vii).

Although a course description, objectives, and outline have to be developed to

move the course to implementation within the education program, the first two days of

the course need to be dedicated to providing students a voice in the direction of the

course. Resources, supports, potential barriers, and solutions to those barriers need to be

explored, a timetable for course implementation has to be developed, and the roles and

responsibilities of those who participate actively in the implementation process also must

be addressed.

Resources

The implementation of a university course requires several resources, including administrative and faculty support, input from faculty regarding the course structure and objectives, budgetary allocations, decisions as to classroom requirements and course instructors, implementation timetable, piloting the course and evaluating its effectiveness in meeting the local need. Also, if the course is found to be effective in providing a viable solution to the local problem, the completion of the university system's approval process, revision of the university catalog, education program sheets, and uploads required on the university's website would need to be completed.

Existing support. As active participants throughout the U-FE, the three academic administrators who oversee the education program, have expressed their support for the possibility of a potential course to assist education students in preparing for the basic skills writing test, required for the educator preparation program. These administrators include the provost as the chief academic officer for the college, the dean of the college, and the chair of the college. In addition, the English faculty have been part of the U-FE for this study project. Through their individual interviews, all five faculty members spoke about a potential course dedicated to test preparation and writing competency. However, because the education department, as a cohesive group, is responsible for instruction in the education programs, and the topics covered on the basic skills writing test, including grammar; sentence structure; and word choice, are part of the writing process, a meeting with the education faculty and English faculty needs to be scheduled to introduce the

curriculum plan for the course and solicit faculty feedback and support. Additional meetings would be needed to finalize the course for inclusion as a pilot course for the next academic year. Upon a faculty approval vote, the pilot course would be placed on the academic calendar.

Budgetary concerns. Aside from the time involved in curriculum development, the budgetary cost includes the review and selection of textbooks and supplemental materials. This cost is $520.47. This is the only budgetary cost for the course.

Potential barriers and solutions. There are potential barriers that exist with this study project. For the course to be in place as a pilot course for the next academic year, the education faculty need to approve the pilot course and the finalized curriculum plan for the course must be ready by August 1, 2019. I would need to work with the education department to set up the needed meetings in a timely fashion to be sure that the deadline for approval of the finalized course is met. I would need to work with a subcommittee of faculty members to make adjustments to the course within one week of the receipt of the suggested changes. In addition, after the three semester pilot course offerings, I would need to provide the education department with the information needed for the proposal of including the course as an ongoing course within the education program. To avoid any rejection of the documents required for submission for the new course proposal, it is important that I work with the education faculty to complete and submit a comprehensive overview of the course as it relates to the university and education department's mission and vision statements and the college, university and educator preparation standards.

Because the approval process cannot be altered and meeting times of certain committees and organizations are already determined for the academic year, it is important that a timetable be outlined at the initial submission of paperwork so that the proposal can be tracked across all levels of the approval process, both through internal committees and external entities. A barrier could occur during the approval process at any of the three external organizations. Therefore, it is important that at each level of the process, I follow up with the person charged with handling the proposal to ensure its timely submission to the committee or organization.

Implementation Timetable

The timetable for implementation has four distinct stages: design of the course, approval of the curriculum plan for the course by education faculty, piloting the course, and moving the course through the approval process of the university system. The first phase, designing the course, needs to be completed during the Summer 2019 academic semester. The following three phases of the implementation process for the project need to follow the timetable below:

- Prior to the end of the Spring 2019 academic semester, plan initial meeting with the education and English faculties to present the curriculum plan for the course and request a subcommittee of faculty members to work with researcher to design the course;

- Within 2 weeks of initial meeting, work with faculty subcommittee to complete a timeline for the course design

- During the Summer 2019 academic semester, assist the faculty subcommittee to complete the design of the course, using the UbD curriculum planning template and the university's required education syllabus template;

- Within 2 weeks of the completion of the curriculum design, set up a second meeting to review the course and a vote on approval for piloting the course in Fall 2019 and a determination of the instructor of record;

- Within 1 week of faculty approval to pilot the course, work with instructor of record to complete the special topics form and finalized syllabus and submit the paperwork to the interim dean, college chair, and the provost for approval;

- Within one week of final approval for the special topics course by the provost, work with the education faculty, college chair, and registrar to include the pilot course on the Fall 2019 schedule of classes;

- During the Fall 2019 academic semester, gather and analyze practice test data, course evaluations and university institutional ETS comprehensive performance data of first-time test-takers;

- Prior to the end of the Fall 2019 academic semester, meet with education faculty and administrators to discuss initial semester findings regarding the effectiveness of the initial implementation of the pilot course;

- Continue to collect data of the established sets for the next 3 semesters in which the pilot course will be offered;

- At the end of the third semester in which the pilot course will be offered, conduct an analysis of the 3 semesters' of collected data;

- Prepare an outcome-based evaluation report to present to the local university's education faculty, interim dean, and provost.

Because the course will be initial designated as a special topic course, the education department needs to be able to offer the course for three semesters before it must move through to approval process or be eliminated as a course. If the course is found to be effective in meeting the situational needs of the local university, implementation of the final phase of course adoption would need to be put into action. At any public institution of higher learning in the state where I conducted the study, the development of any new course requires approval from various areas within the university itself and from external sources, including the state Board of Regents, the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, and the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. At any time in the year-long approval process, the course could be disapproved for implementation. To implement the course in a timely fashion, the approval timetable based on preset dates for the various internal committees and external agencies must be followed closely. The approval process includes the completion of the following forms: intent to plan, curricular proposal, and program revision. Figure 1 is a flowchart of the s curricular approval process for the local state's institutions of higher learning.

Figure 1. Curricular approval process.
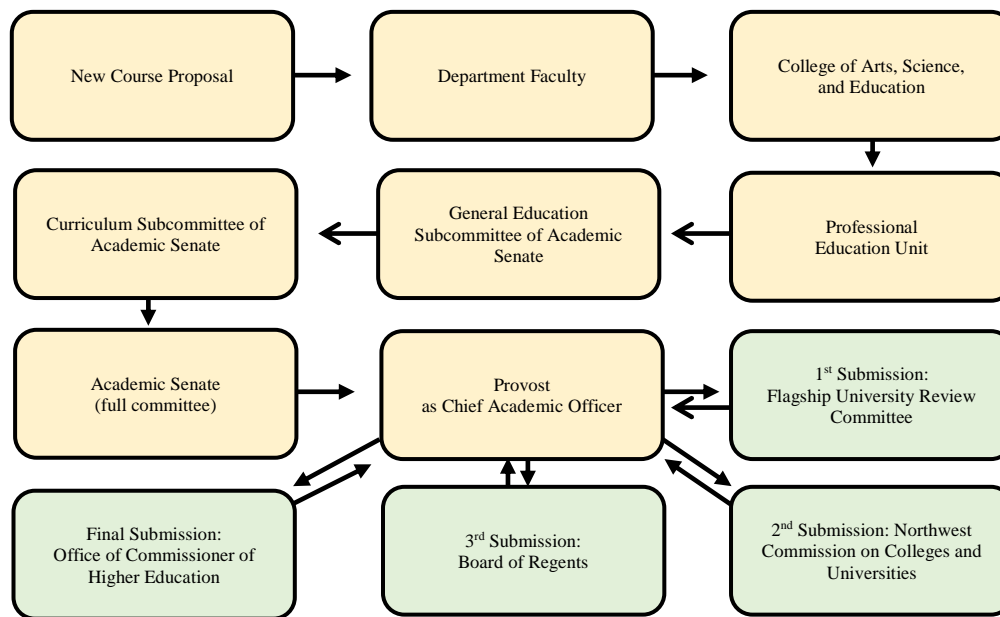
The timetable for internal committee and unit meetings is set up as follows:

- Education faculty meetings are held bi-weekly;

- Academic Senate meetings are held on the first Tuesday of every month, with subcommittee meetings called as needed;

- College meetings are held on the first Monday of each month;

- Professional Education Unit meetings are on the first Thursday of each month.

The four external organizations hold meetings for decisions about college and university course and programs as outlined below:

- Flagship university review committee meetings are called as needed;

- State Board of Regents and the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education meet jointly on the 17th of each month;

- The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities holds its executive

  meetings in January and June of each academic year

Failure to submit required forms in a timely manner by anyone overseeing collection and

distribution of the forms can result in delay or disapproval of course implementation.

Roles and Responsibilities

My role as researcher is to "champion the use of the findings" (Patton, 2012, p.

383). For the project, I need to develop an initial plan for the course, provide an overview

of the resources and budget needed to implement the course, conduct an evaluation of the

project's effectiveness, and prepare a summary report for the local university education

department, dean, and provost. Upon completion of the summary report, I need to prepare

copies of the report to be distributed to all stakeholders during the presentation of the

findings of the project evaluation. The provost will determine the actual data and time of

my presentation of the summary report. Another part of my role is to ensure that the

development of the course follows the findings of the evaluation and adheres to the

appropriate state PEPPS standards required for educator preparation courses.

While the role of the administrators will be to support the development of the

course, the education department faculty's role is to assist in guiding the development of

the course and the navigation of the required paperwork through the approval process.

Because the course covers topics that are part of the writing process and focus on

increasing competency in those areas as they relate to personal writing and classroom

teaching, English faculty need to provide guidance and support in the areas of the course

relating to the writing process. Education and English faculty who will serve as

instructors for the course need to have an open mindset, agree to use an appreciative lens when working with students, and support and agree to use the methods and strategies included as part of the course. Students play an important role in the project as the course will be developed to meet their needs. They need to come into the course with open minds, agree to participate actively by engaging in all aspects of the course, and provide honest feedback when called upon, both within the classroom environment and in overall course evaluation.

Project Evaluation Plan

For my study project, I have decided that an outcome-based evaluation that includes analysis of three data sets will provide insight into how effectively the study project addresses the needs of the local university's students in meeting the ETS basic skills writing set score required for admission to the education preparation program. The genre for the project is a curriculum plan for the development of a course to address the student need. Evaluation of the effectiveness of any course requires measuring student performance against objectives for the course. To evaluate the effectiveness of the project study, I would need to analyze direct measures including practice test pre- and post-assessments and the overall comprehensive first-time test-taker writing score data from the university's ETS database. To measure overall effectiveness, I would also need to include a review of the student course evaluation, an indirect measure, as part of the evaluation process. The universities within the state where I conducted my study use a system-wide student course evaluation each semester. The evaluation measures student attitudes, perceptions, and experiences in a course as they relate to instructor

performance, course content, assignments, and outcomes. By analyzing both direct and indirect data, I would be able to gain insight into the effectiveness of the project. However, to have a higher level of statistical significance, data collection would need to continue over the three academic semesters in which the course is be piloted. When a measurement of whether a program is effective in meeting its goals, researchers should use outcome-based evaluation (Patton, 2012). Because the evaluation of the project would assess the effectiveness of the course in assisting students in meeting the ETS basic skills writing set score requirement for the education program, I would need to conduct an outcome-based evaluation of this study project. Upon completion of the evaluation of the course, I would provide the results to the local university's education department members, the dean, chair of the college, and the provost.

Evaluation Justification

The use of outcome-based evaluation provides clarity and determine the usefulness and the impact and worth of a program, course, or framework (Alexandrov & Sancho, 2017; Shen, Liu, Ma, Qi, & Zheng, 2018). For my study project, I would use an outcome-based evaluation that includes analysis of three data sets to provide insight into how effectively the study project addresses the needs of the local university's students in meeting the ETS basic skills writing set score required for admission to the education preparation program. The evaluation of student scores from practice test pre- and post-assessments scores included in the course would focus attention on the individual student and group needs within the course. This data set would provide insight into the effectiveness of the course regarding student application of content knowledge and test

skills. Actual ETS basic skills writing scores would show whether students are able to transfer the skills and knowledge from the classroom to the test structure. The end-of-term course evaluation required by the state university system would provide a comprehensive overview of individual student perspectives and feelings across multi-dimensions of the course. It would provide an overview of group results as well. The results of the analysis of these three data sets would provide information regarding the overall impact of the course on student needs in relation to the ETS basic skills writing test scores.

Outcomes Statement

The U-FE I conducted provides recommendations to intended primary users for increasing first-time test-taker scores on the ETS basic skills writing test. The project was a direct result of one of the recommendations. The project design was a course to assist students in increasing their accuracy and range in English grammar as it relates to basic skills testing for admission to the educator preparation program at the local university as well as in increasing their personal writing competence. The goal of the outcome-based evaluation for the project would be to determine the effectiveness of the project based on an analysis of the practice test scores of students enrolled in the course, the end-of-semester student course evaluations, and the comprehensive first-time test-taker data from the institutional ETS database regarding the basic skills writing test.

Key Stakeholders

There are three sets of key stakeholders for this project: preeducation students, members of the education department of the local university, and the university

administrators. Students who have the desire to become professional educators must meet several requirements to become certified teachers. As students move through the educator preparation program and into the professional ranks of teachers, they must demonstrate proficiency in content knowledge and pedagogy. The desire to produce these results are evident as students begin the first step in the process by taking basic skills tests to be admitted to the teacher education program; however, if skills or knowledge is lacking, high levels of stress can be produced. Providing a means to assist students to gain the required knowledge and skills is the duty of the educator preparation program so that their graduates can enter the classroom as competent and effective teachers. Teacher preparation programs have seen a steady decline in enrollment in recent years, while the need for teachers in K-12 schools increases. It is important that educator preparation programs find ways to assist students who have the desire and ability to become teachers. Providing opportunities in which students can increase their knowledge and skills will help recruitment and retention rates in educator preparation programs and in overall rates at the university. Lastly, K-12 school districts need competent and effective teachers for their students and rely on their local and state educator preparation programs to provide those needed teachers. Although K-12 districts provide professional development for the teachers they employ and national and state organizations also work with districts to bring those professional development opportunities, it is the responsibility of educator preparation programs to provide graduates who enter the classroom knowledgeable professionals with the highest level of competency.

Project Implications

The aim of any research is to add knowledge to the existing base and apply that knowledge to improving the social condition (Walden University, 2017). In educational research, the hope is to improve the teaching and learning for students so that they become the most productive they can be in the global social structure. The focus of my research was to assess the effectiveness of the required general education writing course in assisting students in meeting the ETS Praxis I writing competencies. Basic skills testing is a requisite of many educator preparation programs in the United States, and the ETS set of basic skills tests are often used. The current study and the accompanying project could impact social change by providing a university course that could assist students in meeting the required level of competency on the ETS basic skills test in writing. In addition, the study could assist preservice teachers in solidifying their own writing proficiency and teacher instructional self-efficacy in working with basic writing elements.

Producing effective and competent educators is a global need. The social implications of this study project are not only localized but extend beyond the locality, state, and nation. There is a high demand for teachers who can meet the rigors of the classroom and the accountability mandates of local districts and state and national agencies; however, one deterrent to meeting the teacher shortage is the high stakes testing requirement in some educator preparation programs and in overall teacher certification requirements of individual states. In addition, educators must be competent communicators, in both the oral and written processes. This project could assist in

ensuring that future educators are able to meet the required set scores for the standardized

test requirements and can demonstrate a personal understanding of the basic writing

principles of grammar, structure, and punctuation and their impact on the overall writing

process. In addition, the project could add to the research knowledge about course

development in providing better outcomes for students, particularly in areas that are seen

as individual processes, such as writing and test taking.

The rural nature of the local community and state can create a hardship for small

rural communities in finding teachers. This project may assist the educator preparation

program at the local university in increasing the number of producing more teachers to

fill needed positions within those communities. By providing a course such as the project,

the local university may see an increase in cohort numbers as prospective education

students may feel more confident about working toward an education degree and teacher

licensure. Increasing the number of students enrolled in the university's education

program will result in the stabilization of elementary and secondary programs and

continued employment of needed faculty. With higher student retention and completion

rates, the local university will be able to receive 100% of its performance funding

allocation. For students, benefits will include being able to complete a degree and find

meaningful employment in their chosen profession. With a higher self-efficacy in both

their personal writing skills and in the role as an educator, the number of beginning K-12

teachers who remain in the profession may increase.

Previous research studies, including Bissessar (2010); Gitomer et al. (2011);

Richardson, Hawken, and Kircher (2012) regarding basic skills testing have focused

mainly on issues of bias, equity, or perspectives of test-takers regarding response choices. I conducted an evaluation using U-FE and developed the accompanying project to find a way to meet students at their point of need and move them towards success in meeting teacher education admission requirements. Although the project, the course, is localized in context, being able to focus instruction to strengthen individual students' knowledge and skills and provide a means of support in basic skills testing preparation could assist other teacher preparation programs within and outside of the United States in developing their own models. The project incorporates innovative strategies and methods in the course structure and could add to the knowledge base for best practices for effective teaching across the K-16 learning environment and beyond.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

This doctoral study was derived from my view of students struggling to meet the ETS basic skills writing test requirement for entry into the teacher education program at the local university. In completing a review of previous research, I could not find any reference to extant research having been conducted locally in an attempt to find a solution to the problem. While it was evident that the overall study would be useful on both a local level and a larger scale for a number of reasons, it is the study project that could play a more substantial role in finding a solution to the problem. Receiving permission from the university to conduct a U-FE gave me the opportunity to develop a project that could assist students in their desire to become teachers, to provide needed information to the university to assist in increasing student retention, and to help future teachers to feel confident in stepping into the K-12 classroom.

Project Strengths and Limitations

Project Strengths

One strength of the study project is the level of saturation I achieved in searching for peer-reviewed studies to support the development of the course, including learning theories, approaches to instruction, and, more specifically, to methods and strategies regarding the writing process; student motivation; anxiety issues; and support resources. According to Ackerman and Arbour (2016), the literature review provides an opportunity for informed learning which results through "evolving and transferable capacity to use information to learn" (p. 613). The use of multiple databases accessible through the Walden University Library and the local university library, including both online and in

print, provided an opportunity for an exhaustive literature review that robustly supported the project. An in-depth literature review exposes the researcher to diverse perspectives and allows the researcher to learn from both the successes and failures of previous researchers (Nwanzu & Mbanefo, 2017). Through the literature review I conducted, I added to my knowledge base of learning theory and curriculum development, which allowed for better decision-making in the construction of the course.

Because writing is a communicative process, learning through a social context is important to success (Relles & Duncheon, 2018). I approached the development of the project for this study on a theoretical framework based on constructivist approach to adult learning. According to Knowles et al. (2015), when building curriculum, it is important to determine which learning theory will be the most effective for the educational situation and will provide the best chance of achieving the desired results (p. 7). For this project, the foundational theories needed to connect the goals of the project and course development in a way that will be flexible and responsive to student needs. The theories of Dewey (1938), Bruner (1986), Knowles (1970), and Vygotsky (1978), which are well-known and grounded in research, provide the overall foundation for the development of the project. These theories strengthen the development of the course and provide strong support for the outcomes of the project.

Another strength of the project is that methods and strategies included in the course construction and delivery were based on best and innovative practices regarding cognitive, behavioral, and affective aspects of learning. According to Danielson (2012), effective teaching practices are based on solid research that demonstrates their use

improves student learning. A classroom in which all three levels of need are addressed

and allows for student voices to be heard creates a safe environment for students that is

effective in motivating them to take ownership of their learning, in reducing anxiety

issues, and in developing social collaboration and trust building (Parsons, S., Nuland, &

Parsons, 2014). The course draws on educational theory and methods and strategies

shown to be effective in meeting student needs. According to Tulley (2016), when an

interconnectedness is created between teaching and learning that focuses on students,

there is increased opportunity for positive results

Project Limitations.

One potential limitation for this study project will be time management. Failure to

complete any one of the various implementation stages for the pilot course in a timely

manner could result in a delay in getting the course ready for the upcoming academic

year. Also, once the course has been piloted for 3 semesters, any recommendation by the

Education Department of the local university to add a new course to the education

program will require the approval of internal and external committees and organizations.

Being able to move through the process in a timely manner requires support from the

college faculty and administration as well as cooperation from personnel who are

mandated to handle the paperwork. At any time, this could be a limitation to the inclusion

of the course into the education program.

There has been a steady decline in the number of students enrolling at the local

university over the past few years, especially in the area of teacher education. At the local

university, over the past few semesters, the average number of students declaring their

intent to major in teacher education has been less than 23 students per semester. Although the small number of preeducation students at the local university were the focus of my study project, generalizing to a larger population will not be realistic and may be limited only to other institutions with similar demographics.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

As the researcher, I chose to use U-FE as the methodology for this doctoral study because it provided an in-depth visualization of the problem of low ETS basic skills writing test scores for first-time test-takers at the local university. The qualitative approach to the U-FE allowed for the inclusion of faculty and student perspectives of the problem as well as for collaboration with intended primary users throughout the evaluation. The strength of U-FE drew on the inclusion of these perspectives.

There are several alternative approaches that could be considered to address the problem. One alternative approach could be carrying out a quantitative study. This type of approach could utilize a survey of students regarding test preparation. Another approach could focus on quantitative data, including high school grade point average and English grades, admission scores for ACT; SAT; or the state writing assessment, college developmental and required writing course grades, and ETS basic skills writing test scores of students and graduates of the teacher education program. A mixed methods approach that would focus on available support services and how they are being presented to and used by students to increase writing competency and meet the ETS writing test score requirement is another alternative to the U-FE used for this study.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

The focus of any educator, regardless of the level of involvement with teaching and learning, is the student. Assisting students to achieve the goals and objectives set before them requires that educators be lifelong learners. Keeping current with evidence-based instructional practices is part of this process. Undertaking this doctoral study deepened my understanding of what that process entails. Being able to focus on a problem that students have and finding a way of working with administrators to alleviate that problem has made me a better teacher, mentor, and member of an educational team.

Scholarship

The structure of the doctoral process taught me to always be aware of the multiple layers that exist in a problem and in finding a solution to that problem. Learning to navigate the extensive wealth of scholarly articles to the saturation level required for this study taught me to fully appreciate the need for different perspectives to find a solution to a problem. Navigating the doctoral process was tedious and frustrating at times, but the experience has made me a better teacher and mentor for my students as well as fellow member of the Education Department in the university where I work.

Writing in the professional format of a doctoral study was a new experience for me. As a student, I had a good command of the English language and well-developed writing skills, and my professional teaching experience began as a secondary English teacher. When I entered the doctoral program, I was not worried about my ability to write at the level required for a dissertation; however, it was an experience that was both frustrating and wonderful. I learned that I needed to be to the point and avoid wordy,

flowery language. I am still learning, but I am appreciative of the opportunity to grow in this area.

The opportunity to complete the research for this doctoral study was also part of the scholarship. It allowed me to add to the knowledge base regarding educator preparation. Being able share the findings of this study with faculty and administrators at the university, local school districts, and other organizations is a wonderful opportunity to help others who are working to improve their own programs.

Project Development

The development of the project began long before I attended the required residency. I had planned on focusing on a technology issue I saw at the time I was teaching in a junior high school; however, when I exchanged teaching at the K-12 level for a position in higher education, I encountered a different problem that required me to change the direction of my study. As I began the prospectus process, I wanted to undertake a quantitative study and had no desire in doing a qualitative one. However, after meeting with an advisor during my residency and shedding more than a few tears, I found that a qualitative approach would be the best way to study the problem of first-time test-taker scores on the ETS Praxis I writing test. Under the guidance of my doctoral chair, I researched various types of evaluation methodologies and chose U-FE. The development of the research questions for the study was truly a learning experience as I tried to condense what I believed needed to be asked into the questions that would drive the study. One important thing I learned over the course of the process was to always go

back to the research questions. This allowed me to remain focused on the topic throughout the study.

As Preskill and Catsambas (2006) pointed out, while organizational growth comes about through asking questions, it is important that those questions build on successes rather than deficits in order that those involved see the positive vision of possibility. I decided to incorporate AI into the scripted questions for faculty interviews and student focus groups. The U-FE process allowed me to focus on both faculty and student perspectives of the issue as well as archival data to see other perspectives of the problem. Including intended primary users in the evaluation process was a great asset to the study as it allowed them to actively participate in decisions throughout the process regarding the use of the evaluation and its findings. The development of the research study from beginning to end was a major learning experience, which I found to be truly enlightening and which reiterated for me the importance of constant and candid reflection, open and sincere communication, and perseverance in any human capacity.

Leadership and Change

One of the most important things I learned by undertaking this study project was that leadership that effects change considers, respects, and supports those involved in that change. Support of senior faculty members and my administrators was important in sustaining and keeping me motivated throughout the doctoral process. Through them, I found that empowerment of each individual stakeholder is key to raising the level of any program, department, or organization and that I always want to strive to be a transformational educator. As an educator, I always have been a firm believer in the use

of the standardized test to assess knowledge. Through this study, I have learned that the structure of a standardized test can create major barriers for determining ability and knowledge. Listening to the participants tell their stories and discovering important characteristics about the required writing course and student support services provided clear evidence that something needed to be developed to meet student needs in relation to the local education department's ETS basic skills writing test requirement. The project that emerged from the research study provides a way of accomplishing that for the local education department and its students. Overall, as an educator tasked with preparing teacher candidates for the K-12 classroom, I will always stress to my students, fellow faculty members, and administrators the need to assess the whole student and meet all students at their point of need.

I learned a lot about myself as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer throughout the research study. I found that I emerged from the study with an in-depth understanding of both the Praxis I and Core writing tests and preparation. I also gained much insight into student views of high stakes standardized testing, university support services, and instructor assistance. Although I have a wealth of knowledge about the K-12 environment and its structure, I have become more knowledgeable about the nature of higher education program design and change.

Overall, this process has reinforced my understanding that educational change is data driven. Although I have knowledge and expertise in educational areas, I will always be sure to use data to support my statements and beliefs to effect change. The development of the project for this study taught me to focus on the larger scope of the

project but also to understand the importance of the intricate details. I have always been a contributor of ideas in the development of a curriculum change but never the person who developed the plan. I found that it is important that I stay current on educational topics and reflect on education strategies and practices so that I can provide my students with the best approaches to teaching and learning. It is also vital that I provide a model of a scholar and practitioner for my students because they will become the future scholars and practitioners in the field of education.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

Writing competency is a skill required in the today's global world (Kereluik et al., 2013). For teachers, that competency is needed on a personal basis and in the self-efficacy of transferring that knowledge and skill to students in the K-12 classroom. At local, state, and national levels, there is an ongoing demand that teachers demonstrate writing competency through basic skills testing in educator preparation programs and, in some states, at licensure. When students falter in their ability to meet a minimum score on basic skills writing tests, such as the Praxis I or the Core tests, it is important that institutions of higher education develop methods of reaching out to those students and help them to gain the required level of proficiency (Gebril & Eid, 2017). Because educators are committed to lifelong learning, one of the areas in which educators can broaden their knowledge base is by undertaking research. According to Castellanos Castellanosa and Rios-González (2017), opportunities that allow educators to explore areas of concern through research allow for "continuous and comprehensive training…[and]…a veracity of knowledge based on evidence" (p. 19).

Understanding motivation and persistence regarding preeducation student writing needs is important in the design of any project to improve writing competency and basic skills testing preparation. Making a design align with projected professional needs and interactive, collaborative practices can help students embrace the need to proactively take ownership of learning that occurs. As the study project, the course may serve as a beginning to meet student needs regarding ETS standardized test preparation and overall writing competency.

One last area of concern is that a college syllabus provided to students by instructors serves as a contract that encompasses the expectations and requirements for successful completion of a course. Failure on the part of instructors to provide a well-rounded syllabus creates a barrier for student success and should be of major concern to the university. It is important that a standard for syllabi construction be developed and required by the university.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The inability of a large percentage of students to meet the ETS basic skills writing set score required for admission to the educator preparation program at a local university was the focus of this research study. The successful implementation of the education course developed to increase first-time test-takers' scores, writing proficiency, and teacher self-efficacy will assist students in their journey to become effective and competent teachers. The structure of the course also can be amended to meet the writing needs of other programs across the university, creating a far-reaching impact than just a singular program

Future research can lay in multiple directions. For this study, only the ETS Praxis I basic skills writing test was examined. Since there will be sufficient data within the next year to conduct a more in-depth study of the ETS Core writing test, it is important to research the level of student proficiency for that writing test and to see if the changes made to the basic skills test by ETS created any significant impact on the ability of first-time test-takers to meet the required set score. To provide overall assistance to education students, similar investigations could be conducted regarding the other basic skills tested areas, reading and mathematics. An extended study could be conducted to explore the perspectives of graduates employed as teachers regarding personal writing competency, preparation to teach writing, and teacher self-efficacy regarding writing instruction in the K-12 classroom. These studies might reveal new information that can assist in improving writing proficiency of students in education programs and of university students overall.

From the study I conducted, one of the findings for Research Question 1 was that a discrepancy exists in the actual alignment of the performance tasks of the actual writing process and those of the subcategories of the ETS basic skills writing tests that are in a multiple-choice format. This discrepancy demonstrates a gap in test usage regarding whether it provides a clear understanding of a test-taker's actual ability to write. Undertaking a study that focuses on whether a standardized test provides a clear understanding of a student's writing competency could provide information to address a possible reason for students not performing well on certain areas of the standardized test. In addition, the findings for Research Question 1 also demonstrated a gap in practice that exists in relation to syllabi for the WRIT 101 course due to missing components that are

needed to provide clear insight to students of the learning and performance requirements for the course. Further research could be conducted to ascertain the degree of impact a syllabus has on student success in a course.

Because findings indicate that faculty perceive a lack of interest regarding academics at the upper administrative level, it is important that the administration clarifies its stance regarding academic success, including writing competency. This would allow the faculty to find common ground with the administration and seek to move forward ideas about improving student success. In addition, a comprehensive review of faculty practice regarding instructional support for students and the use of effective strategies in understanding how to meet the needs of learning might be an important undertaking to increase student success. While some individual faculty utilize practices that are supportive of students and meet their academic needs, this is not true across the local campus. Professional development that focuses on best practices might provide insight to faculty and student support services about raising student success in all areas of the campus, including writing competency. The professional development may also promote on-going collaboration among faculty and support services which would assist in the development of a stronger and more effective network of student support.

Conclusion

Writing is a social process that requires an in-depth knowledge of content and skill. It begins at an early age and continues throughout life. However, when a break in that content or skill occurs, it is important that teachers are there to assist in providing competent and effective instruction to close the gap. At the college level, it is assumed

that students have acquired the skills and knowledge necessary to construct written assignments at the level of complexity their instructors require. However, in today's college classroom, that assumption is false. It is important, therefore, to re-evaluate the instructor's level of assistance to close the gap. It is equally vital that students understand that asking for assistance is not a sign of weakness and that support services are there for them and provide a means for students to engage in productive, successful course completion.

Although this study focused on raising ETS basic skills test scores in writing for education students, the project that came from the research is a means of meeting students at their point of need while respecting them as students and future professional educators. Being able to take this study from a thought to a deliverable outcome was transformational for me on a personal and professional level, and the project, I hope, will allow for education students to engage in their own transformational process of becoming proficient writers and instructors of writing in their respective classrooms.

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363-376. doi:10.1177/0033688216631174

Appendix A: The Project

Curriculum Plan for Course Development	
Stage 1 – Desired Results	
ESTABLISHED GOALS	***Transfer***
	Students will be able to independently use their learning to… • Identify and analyze the functions of grammatical categories in English, such as parts of speech and sentence elements, and different sentence structures and clause combinations, as they relate to Praxis I writing topics and the writing process. • Develop a critical approach to grammatical proficiency as a student and as a prospective teacher candidate, including the ability to formulate concise, correct, and well-constructed sentences • Apply content knowledge of English grammar when writing by recognizing and correcting errors in grammar and punctuation in their own writing as well as in other's writing. • Demonstrate, as prospective teacher candidates, an understanding of the importance of writing competency as it relates to teacher preparation standards. • Demonstrate commitment to continuous growth and improvement in personal and professional practice through self-reflection and the reflective process regarding performance and feedback opportunities throughout the course. • Demonstrate collaboration with peers, tutors, and instructors to enhance their personal and professional growth. • Demonstrate an understanding of the roles that teachers play within the classroom and the school environment to improve their teaching practice and K-12 student learning. .
	Meaning
	UNDERSTANDINGS *Students will understand that…*	ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS • What is the purpose of applying grammar,

	• Correct use of basic concepts of writing will increase competency skills in writing and on standardized tests. • Writing is a multi-stage process. • Writing is a reflective process.	sentence, and mechanical rules in writing? • How can an understanding and the ability to apply the basic concepts of writing improve a person's writing? • How do our experiences affect the way in which we create meaning through writing? • How does each step in the writing process impact our writing?
	Acquisition	
	Students will know… • To analyze grammatical structures, sentence structures, and word choice and idioms for correctness. • To formulate their personal philosophy regarding the importance of using the conventions of standard written English in their personal and professional lives.	*Students will be skilled at…* • Applying the correct use of basic concepts of writing, including grammatical structures, sentence structures, word choices and idioms in their personal writing. • Analyzing multiple choice questions to determine the correctly written grammatical and sentence structures, word choice and idioms. • Participating in formal and informal discussions and peer reviews to improve personal writing competency.
Stage 2 – Evidence and Assessment		
Evaluative Criteria	*Assessment Evidence*	
	PERFORMANCE TASK(S): Students will demonstrate standards by:	

| | Writing standard English accurately, including the basic concepts of writing (grammar structure, sentence structure, word choices and idioms). Analyzing Praxis I practice test questions relating to the basic concepts of writing Participating in formal and informal discussions regarding writing competency. Participating in peer reviews, guided practice and independent practice relating to personal writing and practice tests. Charting personal progress Working with the instructor and other members of the class to develop a final course syllabus after being provided a draft syllabus |
| | **OTHER EVIDENCE:**

Pre-assessment and post-assessment tests Group discussions Quizzes Online ETS test preparation Observations Academic prompts from assigned readings Student reflections |

Stage 3 – Learning Plan

Summary of Key Learning Events and Instruction

1. The instructor will provide students with a draft of the course syllabus and an overview of the Collaborative Course Development (CCD) process.
2. Working collaboratively, the instructor and students will develop a final course syllabus.
3. Students will determine their learning style
4. Students will assess prior knowledge using a Praxis I practice writing test (pre-assessment).
5. The instructor will lead students through the sections of the daily course structure: Discussion, Individual Activity, and Share the Written Word Activity (peer group).
6. Students will display knowledge of lesson through their performance during each section of the daily course structure.
7. Students will show cumulative understanding and mastery using a Praxis I practice writing test (post-assessment).

Note. Adapted from Understanding by Design Template (version 2.0) by G. Wiggins and J McTighe, 2005.

Course Number:
Writing & Editing for Professional Purposes
Semester/Year

Instructor:
Class Time/Days/Location:
Instructor's Office:
Office Hours:
Instructor's Contact Information:

SECTION I
(Any changes in Section II require PEU program approval)

COURSE DESCRIPTION
Semester Credits: 2
This course is designed to assist education students in increasing their accuracy and range in English grammar as it related to the teaching profession and basic skills testing for educators. Topics include the review of grammatical structure, sentence structure, agreement, word choice and idioms. Activities and assignments are designed to increase students' ability to analyze grammar, including their own mistakes, through assigned readings, discussion, personal writing, and peer editing.

COURSE PRE-REQUISITES
Successful completion of WRIT 101-College Writing I or WRIT 191-College Writing I PLUS Lab or equivalent.

COURSE DETAIL AND RATIONALE
The purpose of this course is to assist students in the further development of their personal writing and revising skills in relation to the subcategories of basic skills writing test requirements. In addition, it also provides insight to prospective education students of the professional practice of teaching and learning as it relates to writing skills.

TEXTBOOKS
Instructor Reference Texts:

Anker, S. (2013). *Real writing with readings: Paragraphs and essays for college, work, and everyday life* (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's. ISBN: 978-1457623967

Heard, G. (2014). *The revision toolbox: Teaching techniques that work,* (2nd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Publishing. ISBN: 978-0325056890

Kaplan, Inc. (2017). *Praxis Prep 2017-2018*. New York, NY: Kaplan, Inc. ISBN: 978-1506228761

Kennedy, X., Kennedy, M., & Muth, M. (2016), *The bedford guide for college writers*

With reader, research manual, and handbook, (11th ed.). Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's. ISBN: 978-1319039592

Smith, B. (2003). *Proofreading, revising, & editing skills success in 20 minutes a day.* New York, NY: Learning Express, LLC. ISBN: 978-1576854662

Straus, J., Kaufman, L., & Stern, T. (2014). *The blue book of grammar and punctuation,* (11th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. ISBN: 978-1118785560

Student Texts:
Anker, S., & Aitken, N. (2012). *Real writing with readings: Paragraphs and essays for college, work, and everyday life* (7th ed.). Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's. ISBN: 978-1457601996

Kaplan, Inc. (2017). *Praxis Prep 2017-2018*. New York, NY: Kaplan, Inc. ISBN: 978-1-5062-2876-1

OTHER RESOURCES & MATERIALS
- ETS Interactive Tests: https://www.ets.org/praxis/prepare/materials

- Indian Education for All: http://opi.mt.gov/programs/indianed/IEFA.html

COURSE OBJECTIVES
Course objectives are aligned to the state's Professional Education Preparation Program Standards (PEPPS) and the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) standards.

- Students will be able to identify and analyze the functions of grammatical categories in English, such as parts of speech and sentence elements, and different sentence structures and clause combinations, as they relate to the Praxis I writing topics and the writing process.

- Students will develop a critical approach to grammatical proficiency as a student and as a prospective teacher candidate, including the ability to formulate concise, correct, and well-structured sentences.

- Students will be able to apply content knowledge of English grammar when writing by recognizing and correcting errors in grammar and punctuation in their own writing as well as in others' writing.

- Students, as prospective teacher candidates, will be demonstrate an understanding of the importance of writing competency as it relates to the teacher preparation standards.

- Students will demonstrate commitment to continuous growth and improvement in

personal and professional practice through self-reflection and the reflective process regarding performance and feedback opportunities throughout the course.

- Students will demonstrate collaboration with peers, tutors, and instructors to enhance their personal and professional growth.

- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the roles that teachers play within the classroom and the school environment to improve their teaching practice and K-12 student learning.

CANDIDATE PORTFOLIO CONNECTIONS

Candidates will integrate technology to collect artifacts (critical assessments) demonstrating fulfillment of program requirements. These artifacts (critical assessments) will be collected throughout the program and will reflect the candidates' best work.

- *Any work intended for inclusion in the candidate's portfolio as an artifact for the course or project opportunities that the instructor may want the candidate to upload in addition to any artifacts should be included here in bulleted format.*

INITIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM'S CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Teacher preparation is central to the Initial Education Program's mission statement, and the emphasis is on "discipline mastery," on "critical inquiry," and on "social responsibility" which resonate with the unit's expectations of its candidates. It is the expectation of the Initial Teacher Education Program faculty that candidates for initial licensure will demonstrate a *Commitment to Content*, a *Commitment to Pedagogy*, and a *Commitment to Diversity.* In addition to the commitment to these three areas, the expectation also exists that candidates demonstrate an understanding of the *Cross-Cutting Theme of Technology* as it applies to its integration across all facets of the teaching and learning continuum. The Initial Teacher Education Program is committed to program review to ensure that these four areas remain the focus of each
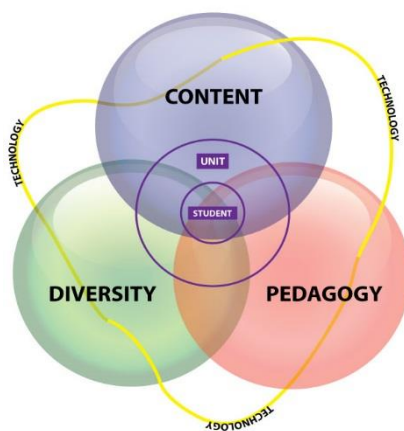
elementary, secondary, and K-12 program across courses and field experiences in order to assist its candidates in becoming effective educators that can meet the needs of diverse

students in the 21st Century classroom.

COMMITMENT TO CONTENT KNOWLEDGE: Candidates must learn to appreciate what is problematic in our disciplines and gain the skills to explore those questions, we need the kind of multiple measures from testing, observation of discussion, labs and projects which add up to classroom grades in our content courses. Finally, if we agree that **content knowledge** is in some sense inextricably linked to teaching and learning, we will also want to measure how well our candidates demonstrate content mastery through their own teaching.

COMMITMENT TO PEDAGOGY: Candidates understand that good teaching is made through pedagogy; our program must allow candidates to learn the art of teaching (**pedagogy**) as they build their content knowledge. "Researchers of different traditions accept the idea that instruction and learning interact and should be studied in concert," (Schunk, 2000), supporting our unit's practice of connecting pedagogy and content knowledge. Additionally, the unit strives to meet the diverse needs of every candidate, according to Gardner (2006), "Good teachers have always realized that different approaches prove effective with different kinds of students. Such sensitivities to individual differences can become part of the teacher's competence and can be drawn on in the course of regular instruction."

COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY: Candidates must understand diversity is about embracing one another's' uniqueness**. Diversity** is a critical element and unifier for our mission in three important ways. First, the unit believes culturally, socially and intellectually rich environments assist future teachers' growth (Golnick & Chinn, 2006). Second, the unit believes the university is the academic center of the local geographic area, serving as a hub of educational opportunities for the region and southern Canada, and, as such, makes every effort to develop partnerships with local area communities, tribal schools, schools, businesses, and industry. Third, the unit understands and delivers a curriculum with a variety of offerings, approaches, philosophies, and assessments for its teacher education candidates.

CROSS-CUTTING THEME OF TECHNOLOGY: Candidates understand that technology plays an important role in both teaching and learning in the 21st century and requires the ability to use technological resources as tools for productivity and efficiency and for creativity and criticality. The unit believes that "Education should always be about preparation for the future," which will require that a teacher has an understanding of and ability to use multiple types of technological resources to construct opportunities for K-12 students to interact and learn beyond the confines of the K-12 brick and mortar classroom (Burden, Aubusson, Brindley, & Schuck, 2015).

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COURSE POLICIES

Focus on Diversity: The professional education programs emphasize and focus on *Diversity* to increase and help develop candidates' skills with different cultural groups. Experiences are provided to expand awareness of diversity and promote synthesis of the impact candidates' and faculty's own unique backgrounds have upon our practices. This course presents content which prepares our candidates to enter local-area schools with an understanding and recognition of the distinct and unique cultural heritage of the local area Indian Tribes, and also the challenges of serving students with intergenerational poverty.

Academic Misconduct: The following statement which comes from current academic year's Student Handbook/Datebook, published by the university, will be used in this course as a guide: *The faculty, administration, and students believe that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental to the mission of higher education. The university has a responsibility to promote academic honesty and integrity, and to ensure the highest ethical and professional standards and behavior in the classroom. Accordingly, the University has developed procedures to address instances of academic dishonesty.* Initial Education Program candidates who violate these standards commit academic misconduct and will be subject to academic and /or disciplinary sanctions.

Additional policies and updates of the following polices can be found on the university's Policies and Procedures webpage. When in doubt, candidates should contact their instructor and attempt to document sources as accurately and completely as possible. **Candidates should be advised that any act of plagiarism and/or academic dishonesty will lead to a failing grade on the assignment in that particular course, with the possibility of further sanctions imposed by the college and university**.

Disability Statement: If candidates have a disability that qualifies under the Americans with Disabilities Act and requires accommodations, they should contact Disabilities Coordinator, who can be contacted by email or by phone. Candidates who qualify for the program are encouraged to enroll with Student Support Services.

PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS FOR CANDIDATES

The quality of a candidate's work in courses is evaluated by course instructors based on

the university's policy and the grading system for the Educator Preparation Program. Each semester, program faculty review candidates' academic progress and demonstration of appropriate dispositions. Evaluation of all work will be based on thoroughness, quality of content, and technical presentation. Academic progress is determined by cumulative GPA; dispositions are assess using the education department's professionalism rubric. In addition, candidates should understand that a grade of "A" is reserved for exceptional performance in all areas of the course.

INITIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS GRADING SCALE		
Grade	Numeric Range	Designation
A	96-100	Excellent
B	90-95	Above Average
C	80-89	Average
D	70-79	Below Average
F	69 and below	Failing

SECTION II
(Any changes in Section II require approval through the Education Department)

CRITICAL ASSESSMENT PIECES
- **Artifact Reflection Sheet** (a reflective written analysis)
- **Pre-test and Scoring Sheet**
- **Post-test and Scoring Sheet**

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION PREPARATION STANDARD 10.58.501(d)
All programs require that successful candidates demonstrate understanding of the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline that make the discipline(s) accessible and meaningful for learners to assure mastery of the content and to include the instruction of reading and writing literacy in all program areas.

InTASC STANDARDS
The Interstate New Teachers Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) Standards can be found on the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) website located at http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Publications/InTASC_Standards_At_a_Glance_2011.html

InTASC Standard 4-Content Knowledge
The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) that he or she teachers and
creates meaningful experiences that make these aspects of the discipline accessible and meaningful for learners to assure mastery of the content.

INTAC Standard 9-Professional Learning and Ethical Practice
The teacher engages in ongoing professional learning and uses evidence to continually evaluate his/her practice, particularly the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (learners, families, other professionals, and the community), and adapts practice to meet the needs of each learner.

<div align="center">

SECTION III
(Subject to modification as necessary)

</div>

This is a tentative schedule of assignments and activities for the semester. After collaboration with students, I will make adjustments to meet the needs of the class.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS
Assignments:
Assignments are due as outlined. <u>No late work will be accepted for full credit</u>. Late work may be turned in up to ONE week late for ½ credit.

Expectations:
- Students are expected to treat this course in the same manner that they would any professional position. Review and be aware of the requirements for this course as outlined and explained in the course syllabus.
- Be on prompt in completing reading, activities, assignments, and quizzes.
- If you experience problems, have concerns, or have questions, contact me immediately so that we can discuss the situation and together arrive at a solution that will assist you in being successful in the course. Contact can be by email, phone call, or office visit.
- Be prepared to participate meaningfully in every assignment and activity;
- Treat your classmates and your instructor with respect.
- Organize and manage your time each week in order to afford your studies adequate time to complete.

ASSIGNMENT REQUIREMENTS
- All assignments must be computer generated.
- Points will be deducted from any late work.
- Students are responsible for completing assignments as directed in the instructions that accompany the assignment and for knowing when assignments are due and submitting them in a timely manner as outlined in the syllabus.
- **<u>Written Format:</u>**
  - Times New Roman 12, double spaced, one page or more;
  - Be sure that you format your electronic document so that you 'remove space" before and after paragraphs to eliminate large sections of "white space.
- Content: Follow assignment instructions.
- Clarity: Express points and ideas clearly.

- Citations and References: Follow APA (6th edition) format
- Conventions: Check spelling, grammar, and sentence structure. <u>However, do NOT rely solely on spell check; re-check your product before turning it in</u>.

ATTENDANCE
It is the <u>student's responsibility</u> to be in attendance for all class meetings.

- Absent is defined as "not available for <u>whatever reason</u>";
- It is the student's responsibility to check the course schedule and calendar for due dates of all assignments at the beginning of the semester and entering those times and dates in their personal calendars.

Attendance and participation are critical elements to the understanding of the information presented in this class. Students are expected to participate in class discussions, assignments, and quizzes.

USE OF TECHNOLOGY

- Students are expected to have a flash drive for this class. All course assignments will be uploaded to this flash drive.

- Students will utilize lab computers during class times.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS
Students are expected to complete all course assignments in a timely manner and according to the requirements outlined by the instructor. Course assignments are listed below. Students are to review the assignment list which includes dues dates and grading points assigned. If a student has a question or concern about an assignment, it is the student's responsibility to speak with the instructor about the assignment prior to the due date and with enough time to complete the assignment by that date. All assignments are to be submitted into the appropriate online classroom dropboxes. Students are <u>not</u> to submit an assignment to the instructor through email.

<u>Sample Course Assignments for First 4 Weeks of Class:</u>

Week	Session	Time	Name of Assignment
1	1	60 mins	**Introduction to the Course;** • Review of Constructed Syllabus (10 mins) • Overview of Collaborative Course Development (CCD) process (10 mins)) **Discussion** (35 mins)**:** How do you see your role in this course? The role of the instructor? What is important to you as a student in this course? Based on your own personal experiences and needs, what are the important elements of this course? What outcomes do you hope to gain personally from this course? How will the following assist you in test preparation and increasing your level of

			writing competency? • collaboration with your peers • the types of activities and assignments • collaboration and feedback from the instructor **Assignment** (Directions-5 mins)**:** Prepare a set of notes for Class 2 regarding your final ideas about the CCD aspect of this course. **(students will bring their personal notes to class for Week 1-Session 2 to use as they prepare to develop a collaborative set of peer suggestions for the course for this semester)**
1	2	60 mins	**Discussion** (20-30 minutes)**:** Referencing personal notes prepared as the assignment for the first class, students will participate in a whole group discussion of the five questions in the assignment for today. **Group Sharing** (20-30 minutes)**:** Students will divide into groups of 4 to discuss their personal sets of notes and develop a collaborative set of suggestions for the course to meet the personal needs and overall needs of the members of the class. At the end of the class, each group will submit the list to the instructor.
2	1	60 mins	**Course Review;** • Review of Revised Syllabus (10 mins) • Overview of Basic Skills Test in Writing (10 mins) **Discussion** (30 mins)**:** What is grammar? Structure? Is an understanding of each of these important to success as an individual? as a writer? as a teacher? **Assignment** (Directions-10 minutes)**:** Complete the *How Do I Learn* assignment **(students will bring the score grid to class for Week 2-Session 2)**
2	2	60 mins	**Pre-Assessment:** • Completion of Pre-assessment (30 mins) • Completion of Score and Analysis Chart (10 mins) **Discussion:** What does the pre-assessment tell you about your grammar needs in relation to the basic skills test for writing? **Homework:** *Reflection Essay-*Students will write a two-page essay describing their expectations and desired outcomes for this course as both a preeducation student and future teacher. They will explain how they expect to use this course to increase their own writing proficiency and prepare them for the basic skills test they will need to

			take. **Students will bring three copies of the reflective essay to class for Week 2-Session 2**
3	1	60 mins	**Discussion:** Results of the pre-assessment and learning styles inventory: • What do the results of the pre-assessment analysis and learning styles inventory indicate to you as an individual? As a class? • How can you use the results to improve your own writing and prepare yourself to be a teacher? **Individual Activity:** Students will complete the *Goals Worksheet* **Sharing the Written Word Activity (Peer Group):** Students will work in assigned groups to do the following: • Share their written reflection assignments from Week 1 • Provide peer editing feedback to group members (*Peer Review Form*) • Choose one of their reflection essays to revise (if not completed in class, complete for homework) **Assignment:** *Reading Assignment- Prescriptive versus Descriptive Grammars* by Jack Lynch (handout)
3	2	60 mins	**Discussion:** 1. Using grammar in our lives: • What is the difference between prescriptive and descriptive grammar? • How do we use grammar in our personal lives? in the academic setting as a student and as a teacher? 2. Parts of speech and parts of a sentence **In-class Activity:** 1. Using the grammar cards provided, students will work in assigned groups to do the following: • Categorize the words into groups and determine how the words are similar to each other and how they are different from the other groups of words • Using the parts of speech grid, the group will determine which part of speech identifies each group of words • Using the words provided to the group, construct five sentences

			• Share sentences with the whole class 2. As a class, discuss how the parts of speech and parts of a sentence work together for communicating ideas. **Assignment:** Students will complete the following in the textbook: Practice 1, pages 330-331; Practice 2, page 333; Practice 3, page 336; Practice 4, page 337 (Students need to come to the next class prepared to discuss any problems or concerns they had with completing the assignment)
4	1	60 mins	**Discussion:** Review sentence structure and parts of speech; introduction of basic sentence patterns (S-V, S-LV-N, S-LV-ADJ, S-V-ADV, S-V-DO, S-V-DO-IO). **In-class Activity:** • Review of Week 3, Session 2 assignment (Practice 1, pages 330-331; Practice 2, page 333; Practice 3, page 336; Practice 4, page 337) • Work in Pairs: complete Practice 5, 6, and Chapter Review (pages 338-340) • Class discussion of responses to the practice sets and chapter review **Assignment:** • Complete the Chapter Test on page 340. • Read Hope Swedeen's blog post, *Grammar in the Workplace: Why It Affects Success* (handout provided in class). Upon completion of the reading, review the sentence structure in the article and write a review of the article in terms of the following questions • How does the use of grammatical structure and sentence structure add to the overall understanding of the article? • How do you, as the audience, respond to the article? Why do you believe your response is what it is? **Students will bring three copies of the reflective essay to class for Week 4-Session 2.**
4	2	60 mins	**Discussion:** • Overview of the six most repeated errors in student writing (fragments, run-ons, subject-verb agreement, verb tense, comma splice, pronoun-antecedent error)

			- Types of fragment errors
			Group Activity: Students will work in assigned groups to do correct *Justina's Email* (page 341-342).
			Sharing the Written Word Activity:
			1. Whole class discussion of the assigned reading of Jack Lunch's article, *The Road Most Taken*.
			2. Group Work: Students will work in assigned groups to do the following:
			   - Share their written reflection assignments from Week 3, Session 1
			   - Provide peer editing feedback to group members (*Peer Review Form*)
			Assignment: Students will complete Practice 2 (even numbers) and Practice 3 through Practice 6 (pages 346-353); Prepare for quiz in next class session on fragments

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Appendix B: Utilization-Focused Program Evaluation (U-FE) Timeline

Week	Description	Alignment to U-FE Checklist
Weeks 1-2	• Upon receipt of participation consent forms by student and faculty participants, hold informational meetings with the participants • Meet with primary stakeholders (Chancellor, Provost, Dean, and Chair, education faculty) • to clarify perceptions of U-FE process and readiness to undertake the evaluation process	Step 1: Assess and build program and organizational readiness for U-FE Step 2: Assess and enhance evaluator readiness and competence to undertake U-FE
Weeks 3-4	Conduct an evaluator readiness assessment by conducting the following reviews: • personal evaluator strengths and weaknesses in conducting U-FE evaluations, • alignment of personal values and philosophy to the U-FE evaluation process • collaboration and conflict resolution skills as an evaluator • discussion with chair regarding the handling of the evaluation	Step 2: Assess and enhance evaluator readiness and competence to undertake U-FE
Week 5	Conduct second meeting with primary stakeholders (Chancellor, Provost, Dean, and Chair, education faculty) • to analyze the environment and persons impacted by the evaluation process • to develop initial priority questions • to discuss intended uses of evaluation	Step 1: Assess and build program and organizational readiness for U-FE Step 2: Assess and enhance evaluator readiness and competence to undertake U-FE Step 3: Engage intended primary users Step 4: Situational analysis Step 5: Focus on intended findings uses

		Step 6: Focus intended process uses Step 7: Prioritize evaluation questions
Week 5	Meet with institutional researcher and administrative assistant to the dean to collect syllabi, and NSSE and FSSE surveys for use in curriculum mapping	Step 13: Gather data with ongoing attention to use
Weeks 5-8	Complete curricular mapping drawn from syllabi objectives and course descriptions	Step 13: Gather data with ongoing attention to use
Week 8	Meet with stakeholders as selected at first meeting for ongoing discussions • to discuss curriculum mapping results and implications for evaluation • to provide ongoing review of the progress • to provide a discussion of simulated findings • to develop a framework for ongoing evaluation process • to review evaluation questions • to discuss interview and focus groups for data collection	Step 3: Engage intended primary users Step 4: Situational analysis Step 5: Focus on intended findings uses Step 7: Prioritize evaluation questions Step 8: Check that fundamental issues are sufficiently addressed Step 9: Theory of change or intervention model Step 10: Negotiate methods Step 11: Methods debate Step 12: Simulate use of findings
Week 9	• Complete selection of purposeful sampling process for student interviews •	Step 13: Gather data with ongoing attention to use
Weeks 9-11	• Set up and complete student focus groups and faculty interviews	Step 13: Gather data with ongoing attention to use
Week 12	• Complete transcriptions of focus group sessions and faculty interviews • Begin coding process	Step 13: Gather data with ongoing attention to use
Week 12	Meet with intended primary users to discuss the progress of the evaluation and review intended uses of findings	Step 3: Engage intended primary users Step 4: Situational analysis

		Step 5: Focus on intended findings uses
Weeks 13-16	• Work to complete coding process of transcriptions • Analyze coded data	Step 13: Gather data with ongoing attention to use
Week 14	• Meet with intended primary users to discuss progress of evaluation • Provide opportunities for participants to review transcription documents for accuracy (member checking)	Step 3: Engage intended primary users
Weeks 17-19	• Use curriculum mapping data and coded data to develop findings • Complete initial report of findings • Meet with participants to disclose findings and collect consent to disclose forms • Discuss findings with initial primary users	Step 3: Engage intended primary users Step 14: Data presented for user engagement
Weeks 20-21	• Complete final report • Meet with all primary users (chancellor, provost, dean, and chair, education faculty)	Step 14: Data presented for user engagement Step 15: Final report produced Step 16: Follow up with users to facilitate use
Week 22	Meet with intended primary users to discuss the implementation of findings to create viable choices for ongoing efforts to support writing competencies of students	Step 17: Metaevaluation of use for accountability, learning, and improvement

Appendix C: Samples of Archival Data

Archival Data-University Catalog Course Description for WRIT 095 Course

WRIT 095. Developmental Writing. 3 Credits.
This course is intended for students who are not fully prepared to meet college writing expectations. Activity requirements may differ from one student to another because of differences in developmental needs. However, all students will be expected to write and revise essays, of varied length, from various prompts. To complete Developmental Writing satisfactorily, students must demonstrate the ability to write a persuasive essay. Placement will be by University System Writing Assessment, ACT or SAT examination. Students who make progress but do not complete all requirements in their first semester will receive a grade of In Progress (IP) and may be repeated as necessary.

Archival Data-University Catalog Course Description for WRIT 101 Course

WRIT 101. College Writing I. 3 Credits.
Emphasizes argumentation and research writing. Students will write at least six essays and a significant research paper including a thorough bibliography. Students will be introduced to library research methods, the avoidance of plagiarism, and formal documentation. Prerequisite: Completion of WRIT 095 or in accordance with Board of Regents Policy 301.16. See page 6 of this catalog.

Archival Data-Learning Outcomes for WRIT 101

Learning Outcomes:

1. Use writing as a means to engage in critical inquiry by exploring ideas, challenging assumptions, and reflecting on and applying the writing process (WC1);
2. Read texts thoughtfully, analytically, and critically in preparation for writing tasks (WC2);
3. Develop multiple, flexible strategies for writing, particularly inventing, organizing, drafting, revising, and copyediting (WC3);
4. Demonstrate an understanding of research as a process of gathering, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing appropriate primary and secondary sources (WC4);
5. Integrate their own ideas with those of others (WC5);
6. Formulate an assertion about a given issue and support that assertion with evidence appropriate to the issue, position taken, and given audience (WC6);
7. Demonstrate proficiency in the use of the conventions of language and forms of discourse, including grammar, syntax, punctuation, spelling, and mechanics (WC7);
8. Use conventions of format and structure appropriate to the rhetorical situation and audience (WC8);
9. Develop and organize logical thoughts as a means of building evidence that results in

a persuasive argument (WC9);

10. Understand how to self-edit and appreciate its importance in creating a professional document (WC10).

Archival Data-Learning Outcomes for WRIT 095

Learning Outcomes:

1. Use writing to enhance thinking skills and assess effectiveness of one's own writing (DWC1);
2. Use texts as a springboard for writing (DWC2);
3. Develop strategies for pre-writing, organizing, drafting, revising, and editing (DWC3);
4. Cite sources correctly (DWC4);
5. State and support a position on an issue with some elaboration or relevant explanation (DWC5);
6. Demonstrate basic competency of the use of the conventions of language, including grammar, syntax, punctuation, spelling, and mechanics (DWC6);
7. Use well-controlled sentences, express ideas clearly, and choose words appropriate to the topic and audience (DWC7)

Archival Data-ETS Praxis I Writing Competencies

The Pre-Professional Skills Test in Writing assesses the ability to use grammar and language appropriately and the ability to communicate effectively in writing; these abilities are essential to a well-educated adult in a professional role. The Writing test has two separate timed 30-minute sections: 38 multiple choice questions on the use of standard English and a writing sample based on an essay topic.

The multiple-choice section is designed to measure examinees' ability to use standard written English correctly and effectively. This section is divided into two parts: usage and sentence correction. In the usage questions, examinees are asked to recognize errors in mechanics, in structural and grammatical relationships, and in idiomatic expressions or word choice, and they are also asked to identify sentences that have no error and that meet the conventions of standard written English. The sentence correction questions require examines to select, from the choices presented, the best way to restate a certain phrase or sentence using standard written English; in some cases, the phrase or sentence is correct and most effective as stated. Examinees are not required to have a knowledge of formal grammatical terminology.

The essay section assesses examinees' ability to write effectively in a limited period of time. The essay topic invites examinees to draw from personal experience and observation for information, examples, and generalizations.

The topics attempts to present situations that are familiar to all educated people; no topic will require any specialized knowledge other than an understanding of how to write effectively in English.

Examinees should write only on the topic in the test book, address all the points presented in the topic, and support generalizations with specific examples. Before beginning to write, examinees should read the topic and organize their thoughts carefully.

Experiences teachers read and evaluate each essay holistically (that is, with a single score for overall quality) under carefully controlled conditions designed to ensure fair and reliable scoring. Acknowledging that writing comprises a number of features that are not independent of one another, scorers base their judgments on an assessment of such features as quality of insight or central idea, clarity, consistency of point of view, cohesiveness, strength and logic of supporting information, rhetorical force, appropriateness of diction and syntax, and correctness of mechanics and usage.

Representative descriptions of topics covered in each category are provided below:

I: Grammatical Relationships (PGR1)
- Identify errors in
    - Adjectives
    - Adverbs
    - Nouns
    - Pronouns
    - Verbs

II: Structural Relationships (PSR1)
- Identify errors in
    - Comparison
    - Coordination
    - Correlation
    - Negation
    - Parallelism
    - Subordination

III: Idiom/Word Choice, Mechanics, and No Error (PWMN1 and PIWMN2)
- Identify errors in
    - Idiomatic expressions
    - Word Choice
    - Capitalization
    - Punctuation
- Identify sentences free from error

IV: Essay

- Write an essay that is appropriate for the assigned task and for the intended audience (PE1)
- Organize and develop ideas logically, making clear connections between them (PE2)
- Provide and sustain a clear focus or thesis (PE3)
- Use supporting reasons, examples, and details to develop clearly and logically the ideas presented in the essay (PE4)
- Demonstrate facility in the use of language and the ability to use a variety of sentence structures (PE5)
- Construct effective sentences that are generally free of errors in standard written English (PE6)

Appendix D: Mapping of WRIT 101 and WRIT 095 Syllabi Components

WRIT 101 Syllabus Components (2009-2010 to 2016-2017)								
Semester	Instructor	All Learning Outcomes Clearly Listed	Assignments Included	Alignment to All Praxis I Writing Competencies	Grading Information Included	Grammar Textbook Included	New Syllabus	Revised Syllabus
2009-2010								
200970	RIA	X					X	
200970	FI3	X	X				X	
200970	FI4						X	
200970	FI5		X				X	
201030	RIB						X	
2010-2011								
201070	RIA						X	
201070	FI2						X	
201070	FI4							
201070	FI5		X					
201130	B							
201130	FI2						X	
2011-2012								
201170	A	X						
201170	FI2							
201170	FI4							
201170	FI5							X
201230	RIB							X
201230	FI2							
201230	FI3							
2012-2013								
201270	RIA	X						
201270	FI2							
201270	FI4							
201270	FI5							X

Semester	Instructor	All Learning Outcomes Clearly Listed	Assignments Included	Alignment to All Praxis I Writing Competencies	Grading Information Included	Grammar Textbook Included	New Syllabus	Revised Syllabus
201330	RIB							
201330	F12							
201330	F13							
2013-2014								
201370	RIA	X						
201370	FI3							
201370	FI5	X						
201430	RIB	X						X
201430	FIA	X						X
2014-2015								
201470	FI2	X						
201470	RIC					X		
201470	FI5							
201530	FI2	X						
201530	FI4							
201530	FI5	X						
2015-2016								
201570	FI2							
201570	FI3							
201570	FI5	X						
201630	FI5	X						
2016-2017								
201670	FI1	X	X				X	
201670	FI2	X						
201670	FI3							
201730	FI1	X	X					

WRIT 095 Syllabus Components (2009-2010 to 2016-2017)

Semester	Instructor	All Learning Outcomes Clearly Listed	Assignments Included	Alignment to All Praxis I Writing Competencies	Grading Information Included	Grammar Textbook Included	New Syllabus	Revised Syllabus
2009-2010								
200970	RI2					X	X	
201030	FI4					X	X	

ID	Code								
201030	FI5						X		
2010-2011									
201070	RI2								
201070	F12								X
201130	FI4								X
201130	FI5								
2011-2012									
201170	RI2								
201170	FI2								
201230	FI4								
201230	FI5								
2012-2013									
201270	RI2								
201270	FI2								X
201330	FI4								
201330	FI5								
2013-2014									
201370	RI2	X					X		
201370	FI2	X							X
201370	RI4				X		X		
201430	FI5	X							X
2014-2015									
201470	FI2	X							
201470	FI5	X							
201530	FI5	X							
2015-2016									
201570	FI2	X							
201670	FI5	X							X
2016-2017									
201670	RI5	X					X		
201670	FI1	X	X				X		
201730	FI5								

NOTE: Adjunct faculty are coded AI, interviewed faculty are coded FI, and retired faculty are coded RI for de-identification purpose

Appendix E: Alignment of Course Learning Outcomes and Praxis I Test Competencies

Alignment of Course Learning Outcomes and Praxis I Test Competencies										
Praxis I Competencies	**WRIT 101 Learning Outcomes**									
	WC1: Use writing as a means to engage in critical inquiry by exploring ideas, challenging assumptions, and reflecting and applying the writing process	WC2: Read texts thoughtfully, analytically, and critically in preparation for writing tasks	WC3: Develop multiple, flexible strategies for writing, particularly inventing, organizing, drafting, revising, and copyediting	WC4: Demonstrate an understanding of research as a process of gathering, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing appropriate primary and secondary sources	WC5: Integrate their own ideas with those of others	WC6: Formulate an assertion about a given issue and support that assertion with evidence appropriate to the issue, position taken, and given audience	WC7: Demonstrate proficiency in the use of the conventions of language and forms of discourse, including grammar, syntax, punctuation, spelling, and mechanics	WC8: Use conventions of format and structure appropriate to the rhetorical situation and audience	WC9: Develop and organize logical thoughts as a means of building evidence that results in a persuasive argument	WC10: Understand how to self-edit and appreciate its importance in creating a professional document
PRG: Ability to Identify Errors in Grammatical Relationships							X		X	X
PSR: Ability to Identify Errors in Structural Relationships							X	X	X	X
PIWCP: Ability to Identify Errors in Idioms, Word Choice, Capitalization, and Punctuation							X		X	X
PSFE: Ability to Identify Sentences Free from Errors							X			
PE1: Ability to write essay appropriate for task and intended audience	X	X	X			X				

PE2: Ability to organize and develop ideas logically, making clear connections between them	X		X			X				
PE3: Ability to provide and sustain a clear focus or thesis	X		X		X					
PE4: Ability to use supporting reasons, examples, and details to develop clearly and logically ideas presents in essay	X		X		XX			X		
PE5: Ability to demonstrate facility and use of language and the ability to use a variety of sentence structures			X					X	X	X	X
PE6: Ability to construct effective sentences that are generally free of errors in standard written English			X						X	X	

Praxis I Competencies	Writ 095 Learning Outcomes							
	DWC1: Use writing to enhance thinking skills and assess effectiveness of one's own writing	DWC2: Use texts as a springboard for writing	DWC3: Develop strategies for pre-writing, organizing, drafting, revising, and editing	DWC4: Cite sources correctly	DWC5: State and support a position on an issue with some elaboration or relevant explanation	DWC6: Demonstrate basic competency of the use of the conventions of language, including grammar,	DWC7: Use well-controlled sentences, express ideas clearly, and choose words appropriate	

						syntax, punctuation, spelling, and mechanics	to the topic and audience	
PRG: Ability to Identify Errors in Grammatical Relationships						X	X	
PSR: Ability to Identify Errors in Structural Relationships						X	X	
PIWCP: Ability to Identify Errors in Idioms, Word Choice, Capitalization, and Punctuation						X	X	
PSFE: Ability to Identify Sentences Free from Errors								
PE1: Ability to write essay appropriate for task and intended audience	X	X			X			
PE2: Ability to organize and develop ideas logically, making clear connections between them	X		X		X			
PE3: Ability to provide and sustain a clear focus or thesis	X		X		X			
PE4: Ability to use supporting reasons, examples, and details to develop clearly and logically ideas presents in essay	X		X		X			

PE5: Ability to demonstrate facility and use of language and the ability to use a variety of sentence structures			X			X	X	
PE6: Ability to construct effective sentences that are generally free of errors in standard written English			X			X	X	

Appendix F: NSSE and FSSE Indicators

Percentage of Faculty and Student Responses (Frequently or Always)										
	2010-2011		2011-2012		2012-2013		2013-2014		2014-2015	
	Faculty	Student	Faculty	Student	Faculty	Student	Faculty	Student	Faculty	Student
Indicators Regarding Classroom Practices										
1. Frequently comes to class without completing readings or assignments	32%	--	24%	8%	93%	12%	--	22%	--	41%
2. Frequently works harder than they usually do to meet standards	47%	17%	27%	19%	41%	5%	--	6%	--	4%
3. Have class discussions or writing assignments that include diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.)	54%	22%	26%	26%	67%	21%	--	26%	--	26%
4. Receive prompt written or oral feedback from instructor on academic performance	93%	14%	29%	29%	80%	26%	--	28%	--	36%
5. Preparing two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in	58%	24%	21%	21%	58%	17%	--	23%	--	23%
6. Work on a paper or project that requires integrating ideas or information from various sources	77%	38%	36%	36%	91%	26%	--	29%	--	33%

7. Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments	66%	18%	28%	28%	72%	30%	--	27%	--	24%
8. Tutor or teach other students (paid or voluntary)	37%	8%	25%	11%	55%	19%	--	22%	--	30%
9. Examine strengths and weaknesses of their views on a topic or issue	68%	21%	17%	21%	84%	22%	--	32%	--	32%
10. Learn something that changes the way they understand an issue or concept	93%	23%	21%	27%	82%	26%	--	33%	--	34%
11. Faculty emphasis on analyzing basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory	91%	28%	31%	38%	93%	32%	--	35%	--	37%
12. Faculty emphasis on synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences	91%	24%	28%	31%	76%	22%	--	36%	--	37%
13. Faculty emphasis on making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods	79%	30%	32%	33%	71%	28%	--	38%	--	36%
14. Faculty emphasis on applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations	89%	30%	32%	38%	81%	34%	--	39%	--	39%
15. Course emphasis on skill development	65%	25%	21%	33%	53%	24%	--	32%	--	29%

to write clearly and effectively										
16. Course emphasis on skill development to speak clearly and effectively	67%	20%	28%	30%	45%	14%	--	29%	--	27%
17. Course emphasis on skill development to think critically and analytically	93%	38%	28%	38%	89%	34%	--	37%	--	37%
18. Course emphasis on skill development to learn effectively on own by student	84%	37%	23%	36%	72%	13%	--	19%	--	23%
Indicators (I) Regarding Perceptions of Campus Environment										
19. Acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills	70%	61%	89%	80%	76%	46%	--	32%	--	37%
20. Requiring students to spend significant amounts of time studying and on academic work	51%	26%	46%	13%	46%	37%	--	36%	--	37%
21. Providing students the support they need to help them succeed academically	71%	33%	23%	12%	89%	21%	--	27%	--	35%
22. Helping students cope with non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)	42%	7%	35%	13%	56%	12%	--	12%	--	18%
23. Positive relationships with other students	98%	76%	89%	80%	19%	11%	--	26%	--	29%
24. Positive relationships	82%	73%	75%	83%	19%	7%	--	21%	--	29%

with faculty members									
25. Positive relationships with administrative personnel and offices	30%	56%	24%	60%	7%	15%	--	25%	--	23%

Appendix G: Scripted Focus Group Discussion Guide

OPENING STATEMENT:

Thank you for agreeing to be participants in this student focus group as part of a study

project looking at the possible needs of students for improving their writing proficiency,

especially in terms of meeting the Praxis I writing test requirement for admission to the

teacher education program.

I will be conducting interviews and other focus group discussions using what is known as

the "appreciative inquiry approach". This approach is different from most evaluation

approaches where you are asked to give information about what is broken or needs to be

fixed. With appreciative inquiry, I am looking for what you see as the BEST things – the

successes – so that I can find out what is working and how to do more of the same. I will

be asking participants to tell their own stories about things that they see as being the

BEST within the university to help students improve their writing proficiency.

 The goal of this group is about being in agreement but having a discussion – a

conversation – about the questions within the evaluation.

The time for this discussion should be about one hour.

Before we begin, do you have any questions?

Question 1 (Icebreaker):

Does everyone know each other?

Question 2 (Discovery):

The course, College Writing I, is a required course for education majors. According to

the course description in the catalog, students write essays and a research paper, and the course emphasizes argumentation and research writing.

Thinking back to the time you were enrolled in WRIT 101, as a student there were probably frustrating times and successful times in the course. What stands out for you as a time of success?

- If you would, please tell the story of that success.

- What made the experience a success for you?

- Who was involved in making that experience a success and how did the person or person(s) help you?

- What contributed the most to the success of your experience?

- What did you learn about the elements of the writing process as a result of the experience?

Question 3 (Discovery):

The vision statement for the university states that the environment of the university is supportive of its students and seeks to promotes student success. Can you think of a story in regard to your writing skills during your coursework here at the university that demonstrates the supportive guidance you needed to improve your writing proficiency?

Question 4 (Discovery):

Will you talk about the time you were preparing to take the Praxis I writing test?

- What methods/strategies did you use that you feel best prepared you for the test?

- What support did you receive from faculty or other areas of the university that helped in test preparation?

- What happened to help you build your confidence in preparing for the test?

- What areas did you feel the most prepared for on the Praxis I writing test? Why?

Question 5 (Dream):

If you were given three wishes that you could use to improve students' writing competency and raise student scores on the Praxis I writing test at the university even higher than they are now, what would those wishes be?

a.

b.

c.

Question 6 (Design):

As you reflect on the best practices (methods/strategies in teaching and learning) used here at the university in various areas of the campus and in courses, what are some of the things that stand out as exceptionally promising in assisting students to improve their writing skills?

Question 7 (Design):

In what areas do you feel that university effort and engagement could have even more impact on improving the writing proficiency of students?

Question 8 (Destiny):

What steps could the university put in place right now that would really help students to increase their writing proficiency and prepare for the Praxis I writing test?

Appendix H: Scripted Faculty Interview Guide

OPENING STATEMENT:

Thank you for agreeing to be a participant in the interview process for this study project

looking at the possible needs of students for improving their writing proficiency,

especially in terms of meeting the Praxis I writing test requirement for admission to the

teacher education program.

I will be conducting interviews and other focus group discussions using what is known as

the "appreciative inquiry approach". This approach is different from most evaluation

approaches where you are asked to give information about what is broken or needs to be

fixed. With appreciative inquiry, I am looking for what you see as the BEST things – the

successes – so that I can find out what is working and how to do more of the same. I will

be asking participants to tell their own stories about things that they see as being the

BEST within the university to help students improve their writing proficiency.

The time for this interview should be about 45 minutes.

Before we begin, do you have any questions?

Question 1 (Discovery):

The course, College Writing I, is a required course for education majors. According to

the course description in the catalog, students write essays and a research paper, and the

course emphasizes argumentation and research writing.

Thinking back to the time you taught WRIT 101, there were probably frustrating times

and successful times when working with students. What stands out for you as a time of success?

- If you would, please tell the story of that success.

- What made the experience a success for you?

- Who was involved in making that experience a success?

- What contributed the most to the success of your experience?

- As a result of the experience, what did you learn about how student approached the elements of the writing process?

Question 3 (Discovery):

The vision statement for the university states that the environment of the university is supportive of its students and seeks to promotes student success. Can you think of a story in regard to a time when you were teaching writing here at the university that demonstrates the supportive guidance you provided to help improve the writing proficiency of your student(s)?

Question 4 (Discovery):

Will you talk about the time you assisted a student in preparing for the Praxis I writing test?

- What methods/strategies did you use that you feel best helped the student prepare for the test?

- What support did you receive from other areas of the university that helped in test preparation?

- How did you help the student to build his/her confidence in preparing for the test?

- What areas did you feel the student was the most prepared for on the Praxis I writing test? Why?

Question 5 (Dream):

If you were given three wishes that you could use to improve students' writing competency and raise student scores on the Praxis I writing test at the university even higher than they are now, what would those wishes be?

a.

b.

c.

Question 6 (Design):

As you reflect on the best practices (methods and strategies in teaching and learning) used here at the university in various areas of the campus and in courses, what are some of the things that stand out as exceptionally promising in assisting students to improve their writing skills?

Question 7 (Design):

In what areas do you feel that university effort and engagement could have even more impact on improving the writing proficiency of students?

Question 8 (Destiny):

What step could the university put in place right now that would really help students to increase their writing proficiency?