WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

By

Katie Moles

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Committee Membership

Dr. Elizabeth Miller, Committee Chair

Dr. Tom Cook, Committee Member

Dr. Eric Van Duzer, Program Graduate Coordinator

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Abstract

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Academic writing is an undervalued practice in secondary education. Many teachers outside of the English Language Arts struggle to implement writing into their curriculum due to their lack of confidence in teaching different writing skills and the amount of time teaching and assessing writing can require. Writing is extremely beneficial to students developing content knowledge and discursive writing skills; however, because not many teaching emphasize the importance of writing, students do not develop necessary writing skills. In California, 49.88 percent of students in grades 3-11 who participated in the California Assessment of Students Performance and Progress (CAASPP) did not meet the standards in English Language Arts (Torlakson, 2018). This study researches secondary education teachers in Northern California to understand how they teach writing and areas where they need support to more successfully bring writing into their classrooms to promote student literacy.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Within the world of academia, writing is a skill and a craft that can be demonstrated, refined, and mastered by students, so long as writing is embedded within the curriculum of different areas of study. As a secondary education English Language Arts (ELA) teacher, it has always felt as though a majority of the responsibility of teaching academic writing has been placed upon those who teach ELA. The fact of the matter, however, is that there are a plethora of different styles, purposes, and strategies for writing, and not all of them can be encompassed in one class, with only one teacher for a very small fraction of an academic school year, and it is even stated within the Common Core State Standards that all teachers are responsible for teaching writing. Therefore, it is important for all disciplines to share the focus of teaching writing by treating it as a valued component of their classroom curriculum in order to teach students how to appropriate their writing skills for different purposes.

The main objective of this thesis is to understand what kinds of supports teachers need in order to have more inclusive writing practices within the classroom, as well as potential issues that warrant the absence of academic writing from different disciplines. Students will find that writing will always be an important skill in their everyday lives well into adulthood, so it is important to teach them the necessary skills in order to ensure that they are successful after high school, regardless if they have intentions of attending college, a trade school, or entering the workforce. Because not every student excels in the

realm of ELA, it is important for math, science, and other disciplines to incorporate writing in order to demonstrate to students how writing fits into every aspect of their lives.

With this sense of partnership and responsibility, I investigated how teachers within various districts of Northern California engage in writing across the curriculum in their secondary education classrooms. I surveyed high school teachers of all disciplines to learn more about their own teaching experiences such as how many years they have been teaching, the kinds of writing practices they incorporate into their classroom curriculum, and areas where they would like support to more successfully teach, implement, and assess student writing. The survey consisted of questions regarding their classroom curriculum and how often they require shorter formative writing tasks, as well as processed, summative writing-based assessments, and had participants rate their levels of comfort in teaching writing. From the results of the survey I have gained a better understanding of how writing practices trend among academic disciplines and have found areas where teachers need more support for teaching writing in order to make it a more inclusive component of a high school student's academic experience. The study is outlined in the following pages, beginning with a review of relevant literature on academic writing, followed by a description of the research methods, the results of the survey, and conclusions made about the participants' uses of writing assessments and their desires for more support in teaching writing.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Introduction

The act of writing is not merely an intimate pastime reserved as a form of self-expression, nor is its purpose in the classroom to be used as a tool where students recite facts about a variety of conventional topics. While writing for personal enjoyment is an optional way to utilize one's vocabulary, share opinions, and communicate experiences to readers, academic writing serves a different purpose. In order to promote student literacy, the responsibility of teaching academic writing must be shared among all disciplines, rather than being primarily relied upon by English Language Arts (ELA) teachers.

To determine the value of interdisciplinary academic writing, this literature review will explore the California State Standards and the depth of writing each discipline requires, how the inclusion of academic writing benefits students and teachers, and, lastly, how writing inclusivity is more attainable than it has previously been perceived.

Academic Writing Standards

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are a clearly articulated set of discipline-specific educational goals and expectations for K-12 grade levels in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics. These standards are designed for multiple disciplines to help prepare students to be successful in college, career, and life after high school (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State

School Officers [NGA Center and CCSSO], 2010). Currently 42 out of 50 states within the U.S. have adopted these standards and utilize them as learning goals and skills that are to be achieved through carefully selected curriculum that is determined by states, school districts, and individual teachers. The skills outlined by the CCSS resemble the spiral approach to teaching because each standard builds upon itself with each progressive grade level (California Common Core State Standards, 2018). For example, the second CCSS under ELA for Reading Literature in grade six states that students should be able to "determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; [and] provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments" (NGA Center and CCSSO, 2010, para. 2). The same ELA Reading Literature standard for the following, seventh grade year requires students to "determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; [and] provide an objective summary of the text" (NGA Center and CCSSO, 2010, para. 2). Between these two consecutive school years, students are practicing the same skills; however, the standards utilize more sophisticated and condensed language to articulate how students should be working towards mastery of the desired skills. When the standards are implemented as recursive practices, the learning processes of these skills are treated like a continuum of learning where students are continuously exposed to different types of texts, thinking practices, and writing strategies, emphasizing learning as a deeper, ongoing process, rather than approaching content as a master-and-move-on method (Morrow, 2012).

Along with ensuring the success and preparedness of each student for whichever pathway they choose after high school, another purpose of these widely used common standards is to make sure students are receiving the best, most cohesive education, regardless of where they attend school. These common goals often make it easier for students who change teachers mid-year, or those who transition between schools, whether they be moving from across town, to the next state, or from the other end of the country (Morrow, 2012). The CCSS precisely outline the skills and procedures students need to know from year to year, but it is up to individual teachers to design appropriate curriculum to help students develop the required skills (NGA Center and CCSSO, 2010).

English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics make up the two main sections of the state standards, with ELA sharing its Anchor Standards for College and Career Readiness with History, Science, and Technical Studies. The Anchor Standards contain supplemental content for learning core literacy skills and are designed to accompany and support the literacy standards in different subject areas (NGA Center and CCSSO, 2010). The Anchor Standards are designed to support the core skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language skills, while providing teachers of ELA, history, social studies, science, and technical subjects opportunities to utilize their "content area expertise to help students meet the particular challenges" (English Language Arts Standards, 2018, para. 3) of the CCSS. Because the standards include are also designed to prepare students for life after high school, the standards emphasize the importance of "critical-thinking skills and the ability to closely and attentively read texts, … [learning]

to use cogent reasoning and evidence collection skills, … [and] what it means to be a literate person" (English Language Arts Standards, 2018, para. 5).

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) suggest that teachers of all subjects must share the responsibilities of teaching reading and writing in their discipline-specific classroom curriculum (Morrow, 2012). At the high school levels, grades 9-12, the standards for mathematics has students writing and rewriting a handful of mathematical equations and expressions, but never requires students to engage in any form of academic writing that does not involve numerical digits (Mathematics Standards, 2018). ELA standards, however, are broken down into five categories: The Anchor Standards, Reading (Literature, Informational Texts, and Foundational Skills), Speaking and Listening, Language (Progressive Skills), and Writing, a category which has a combined 56 standards for grades 9-10 and 11-12 (NGA Center and CCSSO, 2010). These writing standards require that students master numerous skills, including the mastery of grammar rules, appropriately incorporating evidence into writing and proper in-text citation, and requires students to produce writing from the four different types of texts: expository, descriptive, persuasive, and narrative (NGA Center and CCSSO, 2010).

While the CCSS for History share the same Anchor Standards as ELA, these standards are much more limited in the amount of writing that is required of students with grades 9-12 sharing a total of 20 standards (NGA Center and CCSSO, 2010). These standards use terminology that promote reflection and critical thinking, concepts that require a student to break down a text in order to fully understand its content; however, the terms within the standards, such as compare, integrate, assess, comprehend, evaluate,

analyze, determine, integrate, and cite (NGA Center and CCSSO, 2010), insinuate that students must master these skills in writing. If these skills were assessed through other conventions, they would be ill-practiced and developed to a level of mediocrity at best. Because it is not explicitly stated that students are to demonstrate mastery of these standards through their own processed writing, it is up to individual teachers to develop appropriate and effective curriculum in order to help students successfully acquire all of the required skills as outlined by the state standards (Literacy Implementation Guidance for the ELA Common Core State Standards, 2015).

The CCSS for Science and Technical Subjects are very similar to the History standards; however, they require students to master the outlined skills using scientific and technical texts. As with the History standards, there is nothing explicitly stating that students need to engage in any form of academic writing, giving absolute freedom of curriculum and forms of assessment to the individual teachers of these subjects. All of the standards for both History and Science and Technical Subjects require students to read, comprehend, and engage with academic texts; however, unlike the ELA standards, there is no dictation requiring any sort of academic writing for the many different types of classes that fall into these categories (NGA Center and CCSSO, 2010).

Student Benefits of Academic Writing

Everyday writing. The act of writing benefits students in many ways, and not all of them rely on following a specific outline or processed structure of writing. People engage in writing personally every day, such as writing shopping lists, letters, text

messages, etc.; publicly through social media posts, or filling out forms containing personal information; and at work or school where most writing is considered public and is usually for the purpose of communicating knowledge or an experience to someone else (Eastman, 1997). When academic writing is pigeonholed into one category with only one purpose and one expected outcome, students are deprived of finding other ways to develop their own skills of acquiring knowledge and communicative styles (Maxwell, 1996).

Freewriting. A processed piece of academic writing is the most prominent form of summative assessments in order to test the mastery of a predetermined skill as outlined by the state standards. This type of intricate writing faces the risk of students not providing an accurate depiction of their depth of knowledge of a topic as they may continuously feel preoccupied with making sure they adhere to the appropriate writing form, mechanics, and grammar that is expected of them (Majelan, 2014). It is important to provide students with opportunities to engage in different types of writing that diverge from the traditional, stale processed paper, like the five-paragraph essay, in order to more accurately gauge a student's understanding of a topic. Free writing and open-ended writing prompts provide suitable opportunities for students to experience writing where they are free to focus solely on thinking about the content they are learning (Maxwell, 1996). When students are able to freely engage in writing activities that allow them to explore their thoughts without the pressures of adhering to the rules of grammar, mechanics, word choice, or spelling, they increase their fluency and content knowledge, regardless of the disciplinary subject (social studies, math, science, etc.) by focusing their

energy into simply processing and synthesizing information while getting their words onto the paper (Eastman, 1997; Majelan, 2014).

Writing as discourse. Just as a piece of writing can be a continuously evolving expression of knowledge, it is important for students to understand that academic writing of any caliber is a form of working discourse. Before students can construct compelling arguments, embed evidence, and synthesize information, they must be well-practiced in more casual forms of writing in order to acquire the many benefits of writing, such as content knowledge, fluency in the fine motor skills that help a person's thoughts make their way onto the paper, and making personal connections with the content and the reader (Eastman, 1997). Consistently practicing writing provides students opportunities to engage with a reader while also practicing effective communication of their understanding, thoughts, or perspectives of a topic (Maxwell, 1996). These types of writing practices can be achieved through quick daily exercises that have students engage in organizing information into coherent written thoughts (Maxwell, 1996).

Receiving written feedback on writing is also advantageous in terms of helping students understand the next steps they need to take in order to extract more meaning of the subject and strengthen their overall writing skills. When students engage in written discourse, they are learning how to adapt their writing styles to different audiences, enhancing their abilities to recount and organize information, and begin to change their attitudes towards writing because it is writing that is being used for a different purpose than they are used to (Maxwell, 1996). Written feedback from an instructor is also a beneficial way to give individualized and constructive feedback students are generally

eager to receive. By providing this type of individualized attention, students are able to view constructive criticism or written validation as another form of valuable discourse.

Modeling and the writing process. Modeling a constructive writing process is another way to help young writers find their own ways of strengthening their comprehension, allowing them to further develop content knowledge (Literacy Implementation Guidance for the ELA Common Core State Standards, 2015). The writing process, "discovering, drafting, and revising" (Maxwell, 1996, p. 14; Raphael, 1989), begins with prewriting activities, like brainstorming, researching a topic, outlining, and note-taking, to help students generate ideas for writing, while also transferring information to the long-term memory; however, students cannot be expected to be fluent in these skills without first having the behaviors modeled for them (Majelan, 2014).

The second step of the writing process requires students to construct ideas into sentences and paragraphs to inform readers of their topic which is successfully achieved through modeling practices. Sentence frames and graphic organizers are a valuable form of modeling how to effectively demonstrate one's learning and helps students practice ways to coordinate and display essential information extracted from a source or about a topic (Maxwell, 1996). Students also benefit from using scaffolded graphic organizers because of how easily they can be adapted for different purposes or modified to build independence as students gain familiarity with using different types of writing structures (Maxwell, 1996). This point of the writing process allows students to stop writing, take more notes, and conduct brief revisions while the writer navigates their way towards the

end, at which point the final step of the writing process, rewriting, or post-writing, or revision, occurs (Eastman, 1997). It is important for young writers to understand that the writing process is a constantly changing system that reorganizes itself with every new piece of information that is acquired, and that revision happens often when the author revisits the writing with refreshed vision and new information about the subject (Maxwell, 1996).

It is through the writing process that students learn two important aspects of writing: audience and purpose (Raphael, 1989). It is essential for students to know who their readers are so they can ensure they are communicating all necessary aspects of the information they are relaying. For example, if students were to write to audiences other than their classroom teacher, they are more likely to engage in revision activities to establish enough information to more thoroughly articulate their knowledge to better inform their reader (Raphael, 1989). When students understand the purpose of a piece of writing, regardless if it is a list of items for a trip to the grocery store, an email to a peer, or a processed essay, writers must engage in prewriting activities to organize and fulfil all areas of a subject in order to make the information as relevant and thorough as possible (Raphael, 1989). Helping students develop an understanding of writing for different audiences and the purposes attributed with different writing occasions, encourages them to think more critically about how they display their knowledge to different readers, as well as the type of language to use to ensure it is appropriate for the outlined task and subject of discussion.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of cognitive development and the zone of proximal development. Twentieth century Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky founded the Sociocultural Theory of Cognitive Development, where he argues that a child's learning is guided through continuous social interactions that develop into habitual behaviors (McLeod, 2018). These continuous social interactions require that all children have a More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) to learn from, a role which may not always be fulfilled by an adult teacher but can often be students' peers as well (McLeod, 2018). Vygotsky's perspective on learning was cyclical in the sense that learners' thoughts are influenced by the activities they engage in, which help to develop meaningful learning strategies that are later applied to their participation in future activities (Thomas, 1999). This spiral-like perspective on learning and acquiring knowledge argues that learners often need guidance from someone who has the knowledge and experience to model how to effectively navigate their way through new and unfamiliar tasks (McLeod, 2018; Thomas, 1999). With opportunities for learners to receive help and guidance from MKOs, they are provided with the practice necessary to comprehensively handle similar future encounters with less help than before until they can eventually perform the task on their own. As they progress, a learner's understanding and perceptions are challenged and motivated with each activity, allowing them to successfully proceed through future endeavors of knowledge acquisition and skills-based tasks more independently (Thomas, 1999).

The structure of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) reflect Vygotsky's perspective on learning because both the standards and Vygotsky's standpoint are based

on the concept that achieving mastery of a skill is directly influenced by repetition and practice of the desired skill. Just as Vygotsky believed that learners were at the greatest advantage when having new skills modeled for them, then practicing those skills with the guidance of an MKO before they demonstrate their own mastery, the language of the CCSS progress and adapt to the next anticipated grade level of a student while still practicing the same skills they had previously learned, making learning resemble a circular, spiral-like learning concept (Morrow, 2012).

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) outlines a visual representation of the process of one's learning. The ZPD refers to what a child is capable of understanding on their own without any help from an MKO, and what they could achieve with the help of someone who is more experienced and knowledgeable (McLeod, 2018). The ZPD is broken down into three levels, the first level being what can be learned or tasks that can be completed independently; the second level is what can be learned from an MKO through modeling and scaffolding; and, lastly, concepts, skills, or knowledge that are unattainable to the learner at their current age or level of ability (McLeod, 2018). Each of these levels require learners to engage in critical thinking and problem-solving strategies in order to develop an understanding of the task at hand. Learners reach the ZPD when they are able to complete tasks or perform skills with limited amounts of intervention from the support and guidance of an MKO, making scaffolded lessons and repetitive practices some of the most influential learning procedures (Thomas, 1999).

The function of the ZPD is similar to the structure of the CCSS in that learners cannot immediately jump ahead to higher skill levels without having had scaffolded instruction. Referring back to the previously mentioned example of the second ELA Reading Literature standards for grades six and seven, students are expected to be able to perform the same task of writing a summary of a piece of literature that only portrays information from the text and is free from personal opinions; however, the actual language used for the standard greatly varies between the two grades levels (NGA Center and CCSSO, 2010). These two standards also demonstrate the importance of an MKO by providing an example of how teachers must scaffold the methods of learning the desired skills. It is conducive for teachers to be familiar with the standards in order to understand how they develop and expand year to year. Teachers can be a more functional MKO if they are aware of the skills their students are already familiar with, and if they know what skills their students will need to have for their next school year; therefore, it is beneficial for teachers to utilize the language within the standards when teaching the skills as they are outlined in the CCSS to further help to improve student literacy.

Cultivating knowledge and confidence through writing practices. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) include a vast amount of writing expectations, and because writing is often a neglected aspect of curriculum, it has become an under-practiced skill in many subject areas. Students become more confident learners when they continuously practice skills because they develop a better understanding of the necessary procedures to complete a task, allowing them to focus more on the content of a subject (Majelan, 2014; Yancey, Robertson, & Taczak, 2014). When students are free to engage

in different types of writing, their compositions have the potential to become richer in reflection because they are utilizing the information they have gathered, and must then reflect and recount their understanding while using key vocabulary used in the original source of their research (Yancey, et al., 2014, p. 5). When viewed as a theoretical framework for learning, writing is broken down into different strategies that focus on how information is manipulated through repetition, elaboration, organization, and monitoring one's learning process through metacognitive reflective practices (Petko, Egger, & Graber, 2014).

The acquisition of knowledge through writing is considered a process that utilizes three steps: assemblage, remix, and critical incident (Yancey, et al., 2014). The first step of the assemblage model refers to when students engage in writing where they are integrating newly acquired knowledge (Yancey, et al., 2014). This step of the process allows students to receive new information and begin organizing it to determine meaning before they must recite the information to an audience. The second step of the knowledge acquisition process, the remix model, occurs when the new information is organized and integrated with their prior knowledge of the subject (Yancey, et al., 2014). The third and final stage, known as the critical incident model, is similar to Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development in that this occurrence refers to "where students encounter an obstacle" (Yancey, et al., 2014, p.5) that requires them to revisit previous steps in the process, or seek help from a More Knowledgeable Other in order to receive guidance to help them proceed with their intended task.

When learners gain confidence to conduct skills on their own, they begin to develop their own procedures for completing tasks (Majelan, 2014; Yancey, et al., 2014). In the case of using writing as a tool for constructing knowledge, students will use models of the writing process they have developed over time; however, they will adapt their writing process to fit a specific purpose for acquiring and articulating information, while also appropriating their writing strategies depending on the "academic genres" (Yancey, et al., 2014, p. 17) they are adhering to.

Teacher Benefits of Interdisciplinary Writing Curriculum

Interdisciplinary writing. Along with students, teachers also experience many benefits when they include writing into their classroom curriculum, regardless of the subject they teach. The inclusion of an interdisciplinary writing curriculum allows schools to provide students with more opportunities to engage in constructive writing practices while simultaneously learning within different subject areas, and does not treat the teaching of writing as "merely an enrichment or occasional activity" (Miller, 1992, p. 331), but utilizes the act of writing as a learning tool. If students are participating in different writing exercises more frequently and in multiple settings, their content knowledge and reading and writing skills have the potential to improve, making learning and producing work to display their knowledge a more manageable and enjoyable task.

Interdisciplinary writing can also breach the limitations of subject-specific curriculum by integrating real world experiences, such as data collection, personal responsibilities, social justice issues or current events, and other authentic learning

opportunities (Staats, 2014). Students can participate in interdisciplinary writing activities where they apply mathematical, scientific, or psychology-based, etc. knowledge to examine the world around them. University of Minnesota algebra teacher, Susan Staats (2014) designs final projects in her math classes to reflect interdisciplinary pedagogy by having students develop mathematical models which they use to discuss concepts from the perspectives of educational theorists, often focusing on current affairs, such as educational disparities, international children's issues, identity development issues among immigrants, and the culture of poverty. This type of interdisciplinary curriculum allows students to understand the relationship between different disciplines and the practices that are associated with them help, and how they can work simultaneously across a breadth of different areas of study.

Supporting student learning. Regardless of the discipline taught, teachers do not always have to rely on essay length samples of writing that have undergone a lengthy writing process that begins with brainstorming, analysis of information researched, synthesis, and thorough revision. Journal writing is a beneficial way to help students engage in writing exercises with lower emphasis and less pressure for accuracy of writing skills (grammar, spelling, etc.) that allows them to reflect on their thoughts and experiences while finding their own ways of connecting to the content of the curriculum (Eastman, 1997; Miller, 1992).

Providing opportunities to write reflectively allows many students to open up about their anxieties, confusions, or connections with the curriculum that teachers may otherwise never learn about if they were to only rely on oral classroom participation

(Miller, 1992). Many students, particularly "those with learning difficulties, may beneficiate from an explicit and repetitive training" (Stan, 2012, p. 1) that provides them with more opportunities to work with their prior knowledge they have already acquired, while continuing to work with their developing knowledge of a subject (Miller, 1992). Developing reflective writing as a regularly included aspect of curriculum provides students invaluable opportunities to metacognitively reflect on their learning the content and their vocabulary development of the content-specific language through continuous use and awareness of what they are learning (Stan, 2012). These samples of writing benefit teachers because they provide more intimate yet comfortable opportunities for students to communicate their understanding of the content, while also providing them with a chance to address aspects of the writing content that may cause them anxiety or confusion (Eastman, 1997; Miller, 1992). When students are presented with these types of communicative opportunities, teachers can gauge student learning while also providing insight to skills or content that might need reteaching in order to better support student learning and literacy.

Opportunities for teacher collaboration. One way for teachers to collaborate across different disciplines is to consider writing as a team-teaching process. Faculty members can communicate together to facilitate joint projects that are designed to effectively blend different skills, such as demonstrating a convincing use of rhetoric within their compositions while writing to a specific audience for the purpose of a science related lab report (Davis & Matlak, 1978).

Constructing courses or specific units within classes to function interdependently where more than one academic course can be paired with another discipline, helps students develop an understanding of a course's content and the academic skills necessary to engage in the curriculum in a more competently structured design. English Language Arts (ELA) and composition writing classes are some of the most flexible types of courses that be easily paired with different disciplines to enhance the learning experiences of students, even though they often require minimal alterations to course designs, curriculum content, and expectations of the work produced by students (Harriet Baylor Press, 1979).

When pairing two or more courses to function interdependently with one another, the best strategy is to design them with a "dual purpose in mind...to expand upon or reinforce [the] materials [being] taught" (Harriet Baylor Press, 1979, p. 311). ELA and composition classes often have the freedom to focus on different writing styles, techniques, and content, so it is generally easier for those classes to be more flexible and compatible with other disciplines. They have the ability to continuously teach reading and writing skills while implementing content and required texts to reflect and support topics that are concurrently taught in another discipline, helping students develop the desired reading and writing skills, while also providing them with supplemental information related to the topic (Harriet Baylor Press, 1979). Designing courses that have instructors communicating to develop cohesive interdisciplinary curriculum provides students with more opportunities to engage in course-specific content while also practicing literacy skills. This teaching design has the potential for students to produce

“more interesting and more literate papers and discussions” (Harriet Baylor Press, 1979, p. 312) through more frequent student engagement.

Making Writing Inclusive: Integrating Technology into the Classroom.

Technological literacy describes “one’s ability to use, manage, evaluate, and understand technology” (Technologically Literate Citizens, 2016, para. 1). Teaching students how to be technologically literate requires teachers across different disciplines to understand what their students need to know in order to be successful when using technology for different purposes. This type of literacy requires tech users to employ a variety of different learning strategies, including effective research and appropriate communication (Technologically Literate Citizens, 2016). A more recent initiative of the U.S. Department of Education promotes the idea of “Future Ready Schools” (Zygouris-Coe, 2016, para. 3) which utilize technology for the equity of all students to ensure that they are college and career ready by the time they finish high school. With this idea in mind, it is important for teachers of all disciplines to develop new pedagogies and adapt their curriculum to include the use of technology for multiple purposes of teaching and learning in a connected world (Zygouris-Coe, 2016).

Using technology to create a digital classroom provides more opportunities to engage more students, even when adding technology to preexisting instructional techniques that have been established as a classroom norm (Fuller, 2013). Having the ability to more frequently collect writing samples for the purpose of being able to quickly gauge student understanding also allows teachers to provide students with feedback in a

timelier manner without the struggles of having to read through various different forms of handwriting, which may not always be legible. While there are many apps and programs that "hold great value and undeniably enhance the learning experience in [a] classroom" (Fuller, 2013, para. 7), it is up to individual teachers to judiciously implement technology to benefit classroom instruction and increase student literacy.

Conclusion

The benefits of writing go beyond a student's life in academia as writing is an inclusive skill that serves an individual in a variety of different circumstances every day. During their developing years, students must practice writing in order to more effectively transcribe their ideas on to paper, construct clearly articulated arguments, and construct their thoughts into logically ordered statements.

To better serve students, it is desperately important for more teachers to include writing into their classroom curriculum so students can become more fluent in their written communicative abilities. Even during the development stages of learning to write, teachers can benefit from reading students' writing to gauge their levels of understanding of the course content and they can also use writing practices to personally connect with students to better support them through things they may be struggling with. Teachers can seize opportunities to collaborate and learn from their colleagues by designing interdependent courses or units within their classes so that students can get more exposure to the content while also practicing different literacy skills.

Technology makes writing more accessible for both students and teachers by providing students with the ability to develop technological literacy through research, analysis, and written communication. Another benefit of using technology to communicate with students through their writing is that teachers are able to provide more timely and thorough feedback without having to worry about physical copies of student work.

In order to better serve students and help them develop the necessary skills to be productive members of a technologically advanced 21st century, it is important for teachers of all disciplines to engage students in writing practices. While academic writing is not the only proponent of developing student literacy, it has many benefits that can help students learn information, adapt knowledge, and challenge the world around them.

CHAPTER III

Methods

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to discover how teachers of different high school disciplines in High Water County incorporate writing into their secondary curriculum, areas where they feel comfortable with teaching and evaluating writing, and asking teachers where they feel they need help in order to better support the development of students' writing skills.

Overview of Research Design

In order to examine how secondary teachers of different disciplines include writing in their classroom curriculum, I designed this research plan to survey high school teachers within the three traditional public high schools in pseudonymous High Water County: Red Bank High School, Courtfield High School, and Lower Mills High School (all names are pseudonyms). The survey was designed to have participants from each of the high schools respond to a series of prompts based on their knowledge and implementation of writing practices, rating their familiarity with different types of writing and the writing process, as well as the frequency in which they use them in their classroom curriculums. However, of the three traditional public high schools in High Water County who were invited to be part of the study, only two schools agreed to participate with nine total participants from six different disciplines. In the following section, I provide an overview of all three school sites.

School Sites and Participants

The three traditional public high schools in High Water County serving grades 9-12 vary in size of their student population and opportunities for students to advance their education. Red Bank is the largest town in the county with a population of about 14,000, in an otherwise very desolate agricultural landscape (United States Census Bureau, 2018). RBHS resides in Red Bank and often attracts students from the surrounding, more rural towns. Most students who attend RBHS reside in seven of the neighboring towns with a total population of roughly 2,300 people, where some students may have to travel 25 to 40 miles a day to and from school each day (United States Census Bureau, 2018).

RBHS employs 80 teachers and offers a wide variety of Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathways, including construction, auto shop, child development, health occupations, metal shop, and physical therapy (RBHS, n.d.). According to data from 2018, the student body of RBHS consists of 1,536 students, 60.4 percent (927 students) of whom are socioeconomically disadvantaged, and an English Language Learner (ELL) population of 3.1 percent (47 students) (California School Dashboard, 2017). According to the 2018 report of the California School Dashboard which is based on scores from the previous school year's performance on the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP), RBHS falls 9.9 points below standards in English Language Arts (ELA), with 50.3 percent of their class of 2018 graduates as college and career ready, an increase of 11.7 percent from the previous school year (2017). After extensive communication with the principal of RBHS, he did not wish to have the teaching staff participate in the research survey because they were beginning the

CAASPP for the 2019 school year.

Courtfield High School enrolls students from its surrounding areas, including roughly seven different rural towns up to 25 miles away. Many of these small, rural towns have a summative population of roughly 2,000 people, except for Courtfield which is home to about 7,000; however, because of the agricultural capital of the area, many of its residents are ranchers, orchardists, and migrant farm workers, as well as retirees who are attracted to the area's hot summers, mild winters, and lower than average cost of living in Northern California (United States Census Bureau, 2018). This type of environment is reflected in the types of opportunities students are presented with which can be shown through the CTE course options, which includes building and construction, business and finance, agriculture and natural resources, child development and family services, marketing and sales, and manufacturing and product development (Career Technical Education Programs: CUHSD, 2019).

Courtfield High School is the second largest traditional public high school in High Water County, employing 44 teachers for a student population of 947 students of which 71.3 percent (692 students) are socioeconomically disadvantaged, and 20.5 percent (194 students) are ELL (California School Dashboard, 2017). 2018 graduates of Courtfield High School rank 18 points below standard in ELA, an increase of 8.1 points from the previous year, with 26.6 percent (222 students) graduating as college and career ready, a 2.1 percent increase from the previous graduating class (2017). A total of six teachers (two ELA; two art; one mathematics; one special education) from CHS participated in the research survey.

Lower Mills is home of the last and smallest of the traditional public high schools in High Water County. Located in Lower Mills, a town of about 2,000 people, the high school attracts students from two small towns (a combined population of about 600 people), and Darnyville, a suburb of Lower Mills that is known to share students with RBHS (United States Census Bureau, 2018). Located just 10 miles from Courtfield, Lower Mills also consists of primarily elderly adults and ranchers, so they have a much smaller student body due to the extremely rural environment. LMHS employs 11 teachers for their 199 students, 69.8 percent (139 students) of whom are socioeconomically disadvantaged, with an ELL population of 5.5 percent (11 students) (California School Dashboard, 2017) LMHS is the only traditional public high school in High Water County that scores above standard in ELA, scoring 4.9 above average, an increase of 11 points from the previous school year, and has 40.8 percent of their graduates college and career ready, an increase of 16.5 percent from the 2017 school year (2017).

LMHS is much smaller in size, and, therefore, is not capable of providing nearly as many opportunities to their students. They do, however, offer a few CTE pathways, including food service and hospitality, ornamental horticulture, and agricultural mechanics (LMHS, 2016). Similar to CHS, these CTE pathways are a reflection of the prominent industries of High Water County. One mathematics teacher, one science teacher, and one history teacher participated in the research survey.

These three schools were selected for the similar demographics among their student body populations, as well as their access to outside resources, such as larger nearby cities in neighboring counties. These bigger cities provide High Water County

residents with exposure to more diverse populations, art, and culture, and while many students in the area go into trade worker jobs, there is access to higher education through multiple community colleges, a private university, and a California State University less than an hour both north and south of High Water.

Procedure

In the following section I outline my research procedures in order to begin the research project. I first contacted the principals of these three high schools via email on Monday, April 1st, 2019 (see Appendix A). After introducing myself and the purpose of my study, I clearly articulated my request of surveying all credentialed teachers on their staff with the respected surveys attached. I offered an incentive to the potential participants of each school site by offering an opportunity to win a $10 Amazon gift card. Once participants completed the research survey they were provided a link to a separate Google Form survey for each school where they had the option of submitting their school assigned email address to be entered for the random drawing.

Upon my initial request, I explained that the survey would be open for about two weeks, closing on the afternoon of Thursday, April 11th, and that winners of the random gift card drawings would be notified before the end of the following school day. Almost immediately, I received approval from the principal of CHS saying he was more than happy to send the research survey out to his English department, to which I had to clarify that I needed participation from all disciplines. The principal of LMHS responded the following day saying that he was more than happy to send the survey out to his teaching

staff, although their numbers are small.

Having had the survey open for five school days, I followed up with the principal of RBHS who did not provide any affirmation as to their willingness to participate in the research survey, so I contacted the administrative assistant by phone on the following Tuesday on April 9th. I forwarded my initial email to the administrative assistant who explained she would meet with the principal to discuss the school's participation in the research survey. The following day I noticed I still had not collected any data from RBHS and followed up with the administrative assistant by phone again who explained she had a meeting with the principal that afternoon as part of their weekly routine. By Thursday, April 11th, I had decided to keep the research survey open for an extra week with the new closing date falling on Thursday, April 18th, and the Amazon gift card drawing would take place the following day. I forwarded my initial email to the principal of RBHS with a message explaining that I was keeping the survey open for an additional week with the same opportunity for the gift card drawing. I also offered this extended opportunity to the other two high school who already had some teachers participating in hopes of collecting more data.

By Monday, April 15th, I still had not received any data from RBHS, so I contacted the administrative assistant by phone for my final attempt of recruiting the school's participation. Later that afternoon I received an email from the administrative assistant apologizing for the principal's decision to not allow the teaching staff to participate in the research survey as they were in preparations for testing for the CAASPP. My research closed on Thursday, April 18th with seven participants from two

schools (six participants from CHS and three from LMHS), for a total of two teachers of English Language Arts, two art teachers, two mathematics teachers, one science, one history, and one special education teacher.

Research Design

Using a survey approach, this research study is designed to gather data to determine how teachers of different disciplines in secondary education utilize different writing practices in their classroom curriculum. Teachers participating in the survey mark the frequency of use of different types of writing practices from formative assessments, such as warm-up exercises and exit tickets, to summative assessments like processed writing pieces and writing to express their knowledge and understanding of a topic. Survey participants were also asked to respond to a series of topics by rating their levels of comfort with a variety of writing related tasks. By using these two survey designs, I was able to better understand the ways in which teachers implement writing across different disciplines in secondary education and determine how teachers need to be supported in order to more effectively bring writing practices into their classrooms.

Instrument

The research survey is broken up into five different sections, the first of which is the informed consent form that outlines the purpose of this research study and requires a "yes" response for participants to progress to the rest of the survey. The second section asks participants about their teaching experiences, including how many years they have been teaching, how long they have been at their current school sites, and the discipline

they primarily teach. Participants are told to select the class subject that occupies most of their school day if they teach more than one subject.

The third section focuses on writing inclusion in secondary classrooms where participants are asked to rate the frequency in which they include different types of writing practices into their classroom curriculum. Here participants respond with daily, weekly, once a quarter, once a semester, or once a school year or never to describe how often they have students participate in formative assessments (warm-up activities, exit tickets, short answer responses etc.), summative assessments (research essays, analytical reviews, lab reports, etc.), writing assignments to conduct in-process student learning (note taking, field notes, journal tracking, timed writing, etc.), and the types of writing they assign to students (descriptive, persuasive, expository, or narrative).

The fourth section asks participants to rate their levels of comfort of different components that make up the writing process. This section asks teachers to respond on a Likert scale in order to describe themselves as “not at all comfortable,” “a little uncomfortable,” “comfortable,” or “very comfortable” with different aspects of the planning, writing, and revision stages of the writing process. The planning section addresses developing a writing prompt and rubrics on your own, as well as teaching students how to break down and address a prompt, construct a thesis, and how to provide students with effective research plans and graphic organizers for beginning research. Within the writing phase of the writing process, teachers are again asked to rate their levels of comfort with different types of graphic organizers for producing writing, how to embed evidence in writing, constructing paragraphs within the essay structure, and

teaching how to write on a word processor. The revision phase is the final step in the writing process, which has teachers consider their levels of comfort in effective peer review practices and teaching students how to self-check for errors, as well as grade themselves on a rubric.

The final component of the research survey asks participants to answer “yes,” “no,” or “not applicable to my discipline” in order to convey their needs and desires for more support in teaching writing. The topics include opportunities for teachers to collaborate to learn about new ideas for formative assessments or writing prompts based on specific disciplines, as well as opportunities to learn more about writing strategies, such as developing rubrics, graphic organizers, and learning how to more effectively teach the basic essay structure.

Limitations

Limitations of this survey prohibit me from learning about specific types of writing assignments teachers use in their curriculum, and the expectations they have for the quantity and quality of student writing. Teachers who claimed to assign paragraph responses at least once a week could consider two to three sentences as a healthy paragraph response, whereas another teacher might consider five or seven sentences a more thorough and structured response. Another limitation of this study is determining how different teachers assess writing, and whether they focus more on the content of what students are trying to say or if they are equally focused on the grammar and mechanics of a student’s response.

The range of participants are another limitation to this research. There was a very small population of participants compared to the size of the initial target population, and the few teachers represented in the data cannot speak for many of their colleagues. Some participants may create other limitations within the research by having subjective perspectives as to what qualifies as the different types of writing assessments mentioned in the surveys.

CHAPTER IV

Results

Purpose of Study

The survey results have been categorized by different concepts related to the process of teaching writing, beginning with participants' years of teaching experience, the types of writing and the frequency of formative and summative assessments in their classroom curriculums, self-assessing their levels of comfort of teaching different components of the writing process, and areas of teaching and grading writing where they would like more support. Similar topics, assignment types, and other ideas have been condensed into analogous categories to more comprehensively synthesize and demonstrate data.

Teaching Experience of Survey Participants

A total of nine participants completed the survey: two teachers of ELA, two art, two math, one science, one history, and one special day class (SDC) teacher who emphasizes life skills, communication skills, and transitional skills for students who participate in mainstream classrooms (see Table 1). Combined, the nine teachers have 107 years of experience of working and studying education, and a combined 49 years at their current school sites. They youngest teacher possessed three years under their belt, while, the most veteran teacher has been teaching for 31 years. The special education, SDC, teacher has been teaching all five years at their current school site. There are only nine years combined between the two ELA teachers (one has been teaching for six years,

and the other one has been teaching for three). With over a century of amalgamated involvement in education, there is a lot of knowledge and practical experience to be considered for this survey.

Table 1: Participating teachers from research survey

	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	COMBINED NUMBER OF YEARS TAUGHT	COMBINED NUMBER OF YEARS AT CURRENT SCHOOLS
ELA	2	9	5
Art	2	35	30
Math	2	30	4
Science	1	11	2
History	1	17	3
Special Day Class	1	5	5
Total	9	107	49

Writing Inclusion Across the Curriculum

The nine teachers surveyed claim to engage in different types of daily formative assessments to conduct in-process evaluations of student learning. While these types of writing exercises do not indicate that students are engaging in activities of written discourse, complete sentences, or a demonstration of knowledge of a subject, there was a large number of teachers who have their students engage in consistent daily and weekly formative assessments. The following results are based on multiple responses from the nine different teachers surveyed.

Formative assessments. Short, quick formative assessments occurred more frequently on a daily or weekly basis (see Table 2). 78 percent of participants said they use warm-up activities daily, whereas 67 percent use closing activities weekly. 67 percent of participants claim to assign both short and paragraph-length responses for formative assessments on a weekly basis. Tracking journals are rarely used as 56 percent of participants claim to use them once a year if ever in a school year. 44 percent of participants claimed to assign timed writing assignments where students are expected to write a short response happens once or not at all during a school year, and 33 percent claim to use them weekly. 78 percent of participants claim to assign a timed in-class essay maybe once a school year if at all.

Table 2: Frequency of formative assessments

	DAILY	WEEKLY	ONCE A QUARTER	ONCE A SEMESTER	ONCE A YEAR / NEVER
Warm-Up Activities	78%	22%			
Closing Activities	11%	67%	22%		
Short Responses	22%	67%	11%		
Paragraph Responses		67%	22%	11%	
Tracking Journals	33%	11%			56%
Lecture Notes	33%	22%	22%	11%	11%
Timed Writing: Short Responses		33%	11%	11%	44%
Timed Writing: In-Class Essay		11%	11%		78%

Summative assessments. Summative assessments are used to evaluate student learning at the end of an instructional unit and will often measure mastery of the desired skill or demonstration of knowledge acquired from the instructional unit. Many teachers use summative assessments almost sparingly because they often require more instructional time before students can engage in an activity that requires them to share their accumulated learning from a teaching unit (see Table 3). Of the six disciplines participating in the survey, 44 percent of teachers said they never have students write research essays, 56 percent never have students compose any processed writing or an annotated bibliography, and 44 percent of participants claim they never have students write any lab or observational reports.

At least once a quarter, 22 percent of teachers have students write research essays, annotated bibliographies, and processed writing compositions, and only 11 percent have students write an analytical review. Having students write summative assessments once a year is the second more common occurrence of writing practice. 33 percent of teachers claim to have students write research essays once a year, 22 percent assign analytical reviews, and 22 percent assign annotated bibliographies, which may or may not be an additional required component of research essays.

Table 3: Frequency of summative assessments

	DAILY	WEEKLY	ONCE A QUARTER	ONCE A SEMESTER	ONCE A YEAR	NEVER
Research Essay			22%		33%	44%
Analytical Review	22%	11%	11%	11%	22%	22%
Annotated Bibliography			22%		22%	56%
Processed Writing			22%	22%		56%
Lab Reports		33%		22%		44%

Types of writing. Of the four different types of writing (descriptive, persuasive, expository, and narrative) all disciplines engage in expository writing, also known as informational writing, including special education (SDC) which claims that expository writing is the only type of writing that is assigned in their curriculum. Persuasive or argumentative writing is the second most occurring type of writing being used by all disciplines except SDC. Descriptive writing containing language that appeals to the five senses is writing that is assigned by ELA, art, history, and science. And, lastly, narrative writing that requires authors to recount a story or experience is utilized by ELA, history, and science teachers.

Teaching the Writing Process

The following section is broken down into different steps in the writing process: the planning phase, the writing phase, and the revision phase. Here participants rate their

level of comfort as either “not at all comfortable,” “a little uncomfortable,” “comfortable,” or “very comfortable” when considering their confidence in both developing writing tasks, and teaching writing and revision strategies. Some categories have been combined based on similarity of the topics.

The planning phase. The planning phase focuses on developing thorough writing prompts that are elaborate enough to have students demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of a topic, then teaching students how to break down, understand, and address prompts in order to demonstrate mastery of content and skills. The final components of the planning phase include thesis construction, research plans, and graphic organizers for students to help them organize their information for their compositions (see Table 4).

67 percent participants rate themselves as feeling comfortable and 33 percent feel very comfortable when it comes to developing writing prompts. 11 percent of participants claim to feel not at all comfortable when it comes to teaching students how to breakdown and directly address a writing prompt, whereas 11 percent of participants feel only a little uncomfortable, 33 percent feel comfortable, and the remaining 45 percent feel very comfortable. There is a wide discrepancy in peoples’ levels of comfort in constructing a thesis with 33 percent of teachers feeling not at all comfortable, 22 percent feeling a little uncomfortable, and 45 percent feeling very comfortable. For the most part, teachers across the disciplines feel rather comfortable providing students with graphic organizers for research as only 11 percent of participants feel a little uncomfortable.

Table 4: Levels of comfort in teaching the planning phase

	NOT AT ALL COMFORTABLE	A LITTLE UNCOMFORTABLE	COMFORTABLE	VERY COMFORTABLE
Developing a Writing Prompt			67%	33%
Developing a Writing Rubric	11%	11%	33%	45%
Teaching How to Break Down a Prompt	11%	11%	33%	45%
Constructing a Thesis	33%	22%		45%
Developing Graphic Organizers for Research		11%	56%	33%

The writing phase. The writing phase contains many components of teaching students how to piece together compositions. The writing phase includes graphics organizers to help them structure their research into paragraph form, including evidence and in-text citations into evidence-based writing, the basic essay structure (including the introductory, body, and concluding paragraphs), and teaching students how to use a word processor to type, revise, and modify their writing (see Table 5).

When it comes to providing graphic organizers to help students transfer information from notes into a cohesive written structure, 11 percent of teachers claims to feel not at all comfortable, 23 percent feel a little uncomfortable, while 33 percent teachers feel comfortable, and the remaining 33 percent feel very comfortable. 67 percent

of participants claim to feel comfortable or very comfortable with teaching students how to include evidence in writing and 55 percent feel comfortable or very comfortable teaching in-text citations. The responses for participants' levels of comfort in teaching the structure of an essay include how to teach the introductory paragraph, body paragraphs, and the concluding paragraph. The same 11 percent of participants claim to not feel at all comfortable teaching all three types of paragraphs in the essay structure, and the same 22 percent claim to feel only a little uncomfortable teaching the introductory, body, and concluding paragraphs. The remaining 67 percent of participants claim to feel comfortable or very comfortable teaching the structure and purpose of introductory, body, and concluding paragraphs. Most participants feel comfortable teaching students how to use a word processor with 56 percent of teachers claim feeling very comfortable and 33 percent feeling comfortable.

Table 5: Levels of comfort in teaching the writing phase

	NOT AT ALL COMFORTABLE	A LITTLE UNCOMFORTABLE	COMFORTABLE	VERY COMFORTABLE
Providing Graphic Organizers	11%	23%	33%	33%
Including Evidence in Writing	11%	22%	11%	56%
In-Text Citations	11%	33%	11%	45%
Introductory Paragraph	11%	22%	22%	45%
Body Paragraphs	11%	22%	22%	45%
Concluding Paragraph	11%	22%	22%	45%
Writing on a Word Processor		11%	33%	56%

The revision phase. The revision phase occurs after students have researched their topic and have all of the information in paragraph form in a typed document. During this phase students engage in activities where they carefully read over their work to check for information they may have missed or areas where they need to more effectively flesh out their analysis or argument while reading to make sure what they are saying makes sense. This phase is an important phase to teach students as it is a way to check over one's' work by understanding how to search for areas of weakness and how to self-check

to find mechanical and grammatical errors. The revision phase includes teaching students how to engage in effective peer reviews, self-checking for errors in their writing, and how to self-evaluate their own work on a grading rubric (see Table 6).

Only 11 percent of participants claim feeling a little uncomfortable teaching students how to peer review writing, 67 percent feel comfortable, and 22 percent participants feel very comfortable. 33 percent of participants feel a little uncomfortable teaching students how to self-check their writing for errors, while 45 percent feel comfortable, and 22 percent feel very comfortable. A total of 78 percent of participants feel comfortable or very comfortable teaching students how to evaluate their own work on a grading rubric.

Table 6: Levels of comfort in teaching the revision phase

	NOT AT ALL COMFORTABLE	A LITTLE UNCOMFORTABLE	COMFORTABLE	VERY COMFORTABLE
Peer Review		11%	67%	22%
Self-Checking for Errors		33%	45%	22%
Self-Evaluation on a Rubric		22%	56%	33%

Support for Teaching Writing

The final component of this survey asks participants to consider areas where they would like more support when it comes to teaching writing and bringing writing into their classroom curriculums. Participants answer “yes,” “no,” or “not applicable to my

discipline" to a variety of different topics related to writing, including ideas for discipline-specific writing prompts, exercises, and strategies, support to better understand how to teach essay structure, developing graphic organizers for research and writing, developing rubrics for grading writing, and whether or not they would like opportunities to collaborate with colleagues to calibrate how to teach and grade writing (see Table 7).

At 56 percent, a majority of participants are interested in finding new ideas for unit-specific writing prompts within their disciplines, with 22 percent claiming these types of writing assessments are not applicable to their disciplines. 78 percent of participants are interested in learning about discipline-specific writing exercises and only 22 percent responding with an uninterested no. 67 percent of participants are interested in learning how to develop rubrics for more effectively grading writing with the remaining 33 percent responding with an uninterested no. Teachers are very interested in opportunities to collaborate with other teachers on teaching and assessing writing. 78 percent of participants are interested in opportunities to calibrate strategies for teaching writing, only 11 percent are not interested, and the remaining 11 percent claim the opportunity is not applicable to their disciplines. 56 percent of the participants are interested in opportunities to calibrate assessing student writing, with 11 percent claiming to not be interested, and 33 percent claiming it does not apply to their disciplines. Overall, 67 percent of the responses express positive interests in receiving support for teaching writing, 20 percent of responses are not interested in learning opportunities, and 13 percent of the opportunities are not applicable to some of the disciplines.

Table 7: Areas where teachers desire more support for teaching and assessing student writing

	YES	NO	N/A
Ideas for Unit-Specific Writing Prompts	56%	22%	22%
Discipline-Specific Writing Exercises	78%	22%	
Developing Rubrics for Assessing Writing	67%	33%	
Opportunities to Calibrate Teaching Writing	78%	11%	11%
Opportunities to Calibrate Assessing Writing	56%	11%	33%

CHAPTER V

Discussion

This study focuses on how teachers across the disciplines in secondary education include writing practices into their classroom curriculum, and areas where they would like support in order to incorporate more writing strategies and teaching practices to more effectively develop students' writing skills. The following discussion is based on the results of a survey taken by nine teacher participants from English Language Arts (ELA) (two participants), mathematics (two participants), art (two participants), science (one participant), history (one participant), and a special education teacher who facilitates a special day class focusing on teaching students life skills and communication methods.

The Teaching Writing Survey

The survey was designed to have participants first respond with how frequently they employ different types of formative and summative assessments in terms of daily use, weekly, quarterly, once a semester, once a school year, or never. These formative assessment items range from daily warm-up activities, short answer and paragraph responses, different styles of journal keeping, note taking, and timed writing practices. Summative assessments include research essays, analytical reviews, annotated bibliographies, processed writing that undergoes a revision process, and lab reports or experimental write ups.

The second component of the survey has participants rate their levels of comfort when considering the different components of teaching writing where they can respond

with feeling "not at all comfortable," "a little uncomfortable," "comfortable," or "very comfortable." The first part of teaching the writing process is the planning phase where participants are asked to consider how feel towards developing writing prompts, developing grading rubrics, teaching students how to break down and understand a writing prompt, teaching students how to construct a thesis, and developing research plans and graphic organizers to help students get started. The second step in the writing process is the teaching writing phase. In this section teachers rate their levels of comfort in developing graphic organizers for constructing the essay, teaching how to include and embed evidence with in-text citations, teaching the essay structure with an introductory paragraph, body paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph, and, lastly, how comfortable they are teaching students how to use a word processor. The third and final part of teaching writing is the revision phase. This is an important phase where students are taught how to self-evaluate their work to make sure it addresses all of the required aspects of a writing prompt and if their writing is written in a way that makes sense, as well as how to check their own writing for errors. In this section teachers use the same scale to rate their levels of comfort in teaching students how to engage in constructive peer reviews of other students' work, self-checking students' own work for mechanical and grammatical errors, and teaching students how to self-evaluate their own work on a grading rubric.

The last section of the survey focuses on participants desires for more support in teaching writing so they can find new ways to approach writing topics and strategies, and find more ways to bring writing into their classrooms, as well as feel more comfortable

and confident in their abilities to more successfully teach their students good writing skills and habits. In this section participants answer “yes,” “no,” or “not applicable to my discipline” when asked about specific areas where they would like more support for how to include more writing practices in their classroom curriculum. The first section encompasses how to include more writing into a curriculum through discipline-specific writing prompts, exercises, and strategies, support to help them better understand teaching essay structure, how to develop graphic organizers for research and writing, how to develop rubrics for grading writing, and opportunities to collaborate with colleagues to calibrate how to teach and grade different types of writing.

Interpreting the Survey Data

The participants. The nine participants from their six respected disciplines have a collective 107 years of teaching experience. The newest teacher being in their third year of working in education, and the most veteran teacher having taught for 31 years, 29 of them at their current school site. This vast amount of experience indicates that many of these teachers have had a plethora of different classroom experiences that have influenced the ways they design curriculum, the learning objectives they strive to attain for each unit, and the effectiveness of their teaching practices.

Using formative assessments. Participants rely heavily on having their students complete warm-up activities as bell work at the beginning of each day. These types of practices can be used to get students physically placed in their seats and their minds in gear for their academic class but can also be used as a way to communicate with students

through quick and to the point means of conveying their thoughts or understanding of a topic. Most participants claim to use short answer and paragraph responses at least weekly in their curriculum, which indicates that time might be a factor in preventing daily writing habits from developing. This is understandable considering reading dozens of paragraphs per class each day can be very time consuming, in which case finding alternatives ways to engage students in formative writing assessments on a more consistent basis that do not require the immediate attention of the teacher in order to assess student learning.

When looking at the data depicting the frequency of longer, more detailed formative writing assessments, it is clearly shown that the higher the quality and the more details that are required for a writing activity, the less often these types of writing assignments appear in classroom curriculum. This shows that the time teaching, assigning, and assessing writing requires may be a factor as to why teachers do not use it as a form of assessment. Teachers may not feel as though they have enough time to devote to teacher the process of writing, or they feel as though having students write occupies too much class time. 67 percent of teachers claim to have students write paragraph responses weekly; however, a combined 61 percent of participants say that when it comes to assigning students with timed writing assignments (either short response or an in-class essay), they may only do it once a year or not at all.

This shows that although teachers may use some types of formative assessments frequently, because the length of the types of assessments being used are more often very

short pieces of writing, students are rarely engaging in writing practices that require students to formulate demonstrations of learning and understanding.

Using summative assessments. The data show that most teachers do not engage in summative writing activities at any point in the school year. Analytical reviews and lab reports are averaged as never being used by 33 percent of teachers. They are types of writing assessments that can be utilized in all disciplines but are types of assignments that are not the most conducive ways for students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of a topic, such as subjects like ELA and history. 56 percent of teachers claim to never assign a piece of processed writing, and the two ELA participants both claim to employ processed writing only once a semester, whereas one art teacher and the one history teacher assign processed writing once a semester. It is interesting to consider that if ELA teachers primarily teach reading and writing skills that they are not engaging in nearly as much processed writing, or formative writing assignments that require students to go into more detail than brief warm-up activities or short paragraph responses. When considering how often teachers claim to use short answer and paragraph responses, the teachers rely on extremely short formative writing assessments to have students articulate their knowledge on a subject, rather than having students construct larger, more in-depth examinations of topics or research.

Annotated bibliographies and research essays share similar traits and are very compatible writing assignments to use as a cumulative writing project, so it makes sense that the number of annotated bibliographies do not outnumber the amount of research essays being assigned throughout a typical school year. Teachers claim to employ

expository writing in their classrooms where they expect students to demonstrate knowledge of a subject using evidence and reasoning for their readers; however, the amount of research-based writing assessments employed in classrooms is used so infrequently that students may not be producing thoughtful and in-depth depictions of their research and learning.

Persuasive writing is the second most occurring type of writing utilized by teachers where students are expected to make claims about a topic and use evidence and reasoning from outside sources in order to back up their argument. Without knowing the specific types of writing assignments teachers employ for this type of writing, it is plausible that teachers often have their students engage in persuasive writing after having them engage in formative writing practices, such as field notes or tracking journals, where students are able to argue a position on a topic using their own observational research. While this type of writing practice is beneficial to the development of students' writing and organizational skills, the amount of research teachers require does not equate to the frequency in which they assign his type of writing. This suggests that teachers utilize writing practices and assessments as forms of convenience, rather than areas of study in order to master desired skills.

Levels of comfort in teaching writing. A majority of the participating teachers consider themselves to feel comfortable or very comfortable in the planning phase of teaching writing; yet, not very many teachers conduct writing assignments that could be brief in preparation, class time used to complete the activity, and the length of time it takes to grade student assessments. All teachers feel at least comfortable with developing

writing prompts yet are less comfortable in teaching students how to understand and break down all aspects of a writing prompt. This suggests that teachers tend to feel very confident in what they are asking students to write about but are less confident when it comes to guiding student thinking in terms of how to address a question or writing prompt. Even fewer people feel comfortable when it comes to teaching students how to construct a thesis yet are mostly comfortable when teaching students how to develop research plans and graphic organizers. Before students can begin a research plan or fill out a graphic organizer, they must have a clear thesis in order to know what areas of a topic to address and how to organize their research. The problem with a weak introduction to the research and planning process is that it creates a weak follow-through when students begin organizing their arguments and structuring their composition.

In the writing phase participants consider themselves to feel mostly comfortable with providing graphic organizers to help students construct essays, embedding evidence into writing, the basic structure of an essay, and teaching students how to write on a word processor. While not all participants feel comfortable understanding and teaching the essay structure of introductory, body, and concluding paragraphs, there is very little writing occurring in classrooms to reflect these self-proclaimed stances of how well teachers feel they can teach students to write.

The revision phrase has participants consider how comfortable they feel when teaching students revisions strategies such as peer reviewing the work of other students, teaching students how to check their own work for mechanical and grammatical errors, and teaching students how to evaluate their own written work on a grading rubric in order

to see how thoroughly they have completed the writing assignment. This section of the teaching writing portion of the survey had an overwhelming number of participants feeling comfortable with teaching revision strategies. Participants appears to feel comfortable teaching students healthy revision practices to help them understand how to review their own work and to look for areas of improvement before settling for a final grade on what could be an initial completion of a written work. Helping students develop these skills into working habits allows them to be more proactive about the quality of the content of their writing while making grading for the teacher a less time consuming and tedious process.

Desired supports for teaching writing. The final section of the survey asks participating teachers what kinds of supports they would like in order to bring more writing into their classrooms. The survey addresses teachers' needs for more ideas for discipline-specific writing prompts and exercises, how to better understand essay structure, ideas for developing graphic organizers for research and writing, developing rubrics for grading writing, and if they would like opportunities to collaborate with colleagues to calibrate teaching writing practices and grading writing.

Most participants want support in one form or another in order to bring more writing into their classrooms. There are several responses from teachers of math, art, and the special day teacher who find that certain aspects of a writing curriculum are not applicable to their disciplines, and are therefore omitting a "yes" or "no" response as to whether or not they would like support in developing new writing strategies for use in their classrooms. These participants also do not find it necessary for them to further their

understanding of essay structures, and because writing is not a prominent aspect of their curriculum, graphic organizers for research or writing, and opportunities to collaborate and calibrate how to teach and grade writing are also of no interest to them.

Many participants are interested in finding new ways to incorporate writing into their classrooms through the modes of different unit-specific or discipline-specific writing activities; however, very few teachers would like more support in developing a deeper knowledge of how to teach writing. From these responses, it appears as though teachers are more interested than not in learning new ways to bring different writing activities into their classrooms, and they are very welcoming to the idea of working with other teachers to learning how to teach and assess student writing.

It must be noted that there are some discrepancies among teachers within the same disciplines. For example, the two art teachers answer yes to a majority of the topics in terms of whether or not they would like to learn more about teaching writing. One art teacher who has been teaching for 31 years said yes to everything except for wanting help developing graphic organizers, whereas the other art teacher who has been teaching for four years claims that understanding essay structure, graphic organizers, and calibrating grading are areas of teaching writing that are not applicable to the discipline of teaching art. It is not expected that all participants of the same disciplines answer the same way; however, this is one example of differing views of what discipline-specific curriculum could consist of.

Conclusion

The results from this survey have validated my feelings as an ELA teacher and that a majority of the responsibility of teaching writing fall upon this discipline. Because teachers lack the time and, in some cases, abilities to effectively teach students writing, they do not prioritize the skill as a part of their classroom curriculum. In order to promote student literacy and encourage teachers to find ways to incorporate writing into their classrooms, teachers need to understand that everyone is responsible for teaching writing. The Common Core State Standards vary in the amount of writing they require each discipline to engage in; however, they clearly state that each subject area has targeted writing goals for each grade level.

Collaboration among teachers is a valuable way to get teachers to include more writing in their classroom curriculum; however, there needs to be more emphasis on the requirements and expectations of teachers over time. New teachers can benefit from more appropriate beginning teacher education programs. If beginning teacher education could focus more on developing interdisciplinary studies and the requirements of the state standards, newer teachers would be more confident in their teaching abilities and would be more capable of designing curriculum to be more writing inclusive.

Teachers can also benefit from classroom observations and evaluations, especially after they have exited a beginning teacher education program and have been teaching independently for a few years. Teachers can become stagnant in their practices, curriculum, and expectations of student work, especially regarding the development of technology and its access within classrooms. Teachers must be evaluated on their

curriculum and the strides they make to keep their materials current and goal oriented, just as they need to be observed and evaluated on their performances in front of the classroom. If teachers are required to adapt their teaching practices they will more successfully utilize writing within their classrooms.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Letter of Introduction

Hello, (Principal's name)

I am Katie Moles, a high school English teacher and current graduate student with the School of Education at Humboldt State University. I am currently researching the importance of writing literacy and writing across the curriculum at the high school level.

For my master's thesis, I would like the opportunity to survey your teaching staff to gather data on how they include writing in their classroom curriculum, their levels of comfort in teaching different writing practices, and areas they feel they could use more support in the development of their writing curriculum.

Because my research focuses on writing practices across all different disciplines a high school education has to offer, I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to collect data from all credentialed members of your teaching staff. After completing the survey, participants from (SCHOOL NAME) are eligible to enter a random drawing for a $10 Amazon gift card as a thank you for their participation.

Please feel free to contact me for any further information.

Thank you,

Katie Moles

Appendix B:

Informed Consent Letter

Online Informed Consent Form
Master's Thesis:
Writing Across the Curriculum

My name is Katie Moles, and I am a graduate student at Humboldt State University in the School of Education. I am conducting this research study to understand how teachers across the curriculum are supporting writing in secondary classrooms. If you volunteer to participate, you will be asked to complete a survey explaining the types of writing assignments you use in your classroom curriculum, and how you might like to be supported in further developing the inclusion of writing in your classroom. Your participation in this study will last roughly 10 minutes as you complete a survey asking questions regarding your teaching practice.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right not to participate at all or to leave the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no possible risks involved for participants. There are some benefits to this research, particularly that benefit my study in learning how local teachers are supporting writing literacy in their secondary classrooms.

Participants from each school site who complete the survey by answering all of the questions will be offered an opportunity to enter a drawing for a $10 Amazon gift card as incentive for their participation. The participant must answer all questions in order to be entered into the drawing and must provide all of the required information for the drawing. Participants who wish to be entered in the drawing will be directed to a new survey where they will be required to provide their name, their school-issued email address to be contacted if they are selected, and the name of the school where they teach. There will be one drawing per school that participates in the survey. Participants of this survey are eligible for the random drawing until the survey period closes on Thursday, April 4th, 2019. The winners will be notified of their selections, and the $10 Amazon gift card will be delivered electronically to the provided email addresses of the winners by Friday, April 5th, 2019.

It is anticipated that study results will be shared with the public through presentations and/or publications. Information collected for this study is anticipated to be completely anonymous and cannot be linked back to you. The anonymous data will be maintained in a safe, locked location and may be used for future research studies or distributed to

another investigator for future research studies without additional informed consent from you. Raw data will be destroyed after a period of three after study completion.

If you have any questions about this research at any time, please call or email me at klm1123@humboldt.edu. If you have any concerns with this study or questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at irb@humboldt.edu or (707) 826-5165.

Your participation in this study indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, and that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Please print this informed consent form now and retain it for your future reference.

○ I have read and understood this consent information and agree to participate in this study.

Appendix C:

The Research Survey

Teaching Writing Survey

Online Informed Consent

Master's Thesis: Writing Across the Curriculum in Secondary Education

My name is Katie Moles, and I am a graduate student at Humboldt State University in the School of Education. I am conducting this research study to understand how teachers across the curriculum are supporting writing in secondary classrooms. If you volunteer to participate, you will be asked to complete a survey to explain the types of writing assignments you use in your classroom curriculum. Your participation in this study will last roughly 10 minutes as you complete a survey asking questions regarding your teaching practice.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right not to participate at all or to leave the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no possible risks involved for participants. There are some benefits to this research, particularly those that benefit my study in learning how local teachers are supporting writing literacy in their secondary classrooms.

Participants from each school site who provide their consent and participate in the survey will be offered an opportunity to enter a drawing for a $10 Amazon gift card as incentive for their participation. The participant must provide consent to participate in the collection of data and must also provide all of the required information in order to be contacted if selected for the gift card drawing. Participants who wish to be entered in the drawing will be directed to a new survey where they will be required to provide their name, their school-issued email address to be contacted if they are selected, and the name of the school where they teach. There will be one drawing per school that participates in the survey. Participants of this survey are eligible for the random drawing until the survey period closes on Thursday, April 18th, 2019. The winners will be notified of their

selections, and the $10 Amazon gift card will be delivered electronically to the provided email addresses of the winners by Friday, April 19th, 2019.

It is anticipated that study results will be shared with the public through presentations and/or publications. Information collected for this study is anticipated to be completely anonymous and cannot be linked back to you. The anonymous data will be maintained in a safe, locked location and may be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without additional informed consent from you. Raw data will be destroyed after a period of three after study completion.

If you have any questions about this research at any time, please call or email me at klm1123@humboldt.edu, or my committee chair, Libbi Miller at erm81@humboldt.edu. If you have any concerns with this study or questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at irb@humboldt.edu or (707) 826-5165.

Your participation in this study indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, and that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Please print this informed consent form now and retain it for your future reference.

* Required

1. **I have read and understood this consent information, and I agree to participate in this study.** * *Mark only one oval.*

    ◯ Yes

Your Teaching Experience

The following section will ask you questions regarding your education and experiences in teaching.

2. How long have you worked in the teaching profession? (Include all education and work relating to teaching.)

____

3. How many years have you taught at your current school site?

____

4.What discipline or subject do you currently teach?
If you teach more than one, please select the discipline you primarily teach.
Mark only one oval.

- ○ English (ELA or ELD)
- ○ Mathematics
- ○ Natural Sciences (Biology, Chemistry, Earth Sciences, Physics, etc.)
- ○ Social Sciences (Economics, Political Science, Psychology, etc.)
- ○ History
- ○ Physical Education
- ○ Foreign Language
- ○ Art (Visual Arts, Performing Arts, etc.)
- ○ Career and Technical Education
- ○ Other: ______________________________

Writing Inclusion

The following section will ask you questions based on how you include writing within your classroom curriculum.

Please answer the following questions based on your primary teaching discipline.

5. Use the following scale to describe the frequency in which you include the following formative assessments in your classroom curriculum in order to

conduct in-process evaluations of student learning.
Mark only one oval per row.

	Daily	Weekly	Once a Quarter	Once a Semester	Once a School Year / Never
Warm-up Activities					
Closing Activities					
Short Responses					
Paragraph Responses					

6. Use the following scale to describe the frequency in which you include summative assessments in your classroom curriculum in order to evaluate student learning at the end of an instructional unit. (Please notice options have changed.)
Mark only one oval per row.

	Weekly	Monthly	Once a Quarter	Once a Semester	Once a Year	Never
Research Essay						
Analytical Review						
Annotated Bibliography						
Processed Writing						
Lab Reports						

7. Use the following scale to describe the frequency in which you include the following formative assessments in your classroom curriculum in order to conduct in-process evaluations of student learning. *Mark only one oval per row.*

	Daily	Weekly	Once a Quarter	Once a Semester	Once a School / Never
Tracking Journals					
Reflective Journals					
Note Taking (Lectures)					
Note Taking (while reading or researching)					
Case Studies, Observations					
Timed Writing: Short Responses					
Timed Writing: In-Class Essays					

8. Considering the various different assignments you use throughout a school year, what types of writing do you include in your classroom curriculum? Select all that apply. *Check all that apply.*

- Descriptive Writing: Writing that uses descriptive language to appeal to the five senses.
- Persuasive Writing: Opinion-based writing that includes reasons and examples to influence readers to action or thought.
- Expository Writing: Writing that demonstrates knowledge and understanding of a topic.
- Narrative Writing: Fictional or non-fictional writing that clearly recounts an experience by elaborating on sequential details of the event.

Teaching the Writing Process

The following section will discuss steps within the writing process, including prompt development, outlining, and revision practices.

9. Please rate your level of comfort in relation to the following aspects of the planning phase in teaching writing.

Mark only one oval per row.

	Not at All Comfortable	A little Uncomfortable	Comfortable	Very Comfortable
Developing a Writing Prompt (Developing the prompt yourself)				
Developing a Writing Rubric				
Teaching how to understand, breakdown, and address a prompt				
Constructing a Thesis				
Developing a Research Plan or Outline				
Providing Graphic Organizers for Research				

10. Please rate your level of comfort in relation to the following aspects of the writing phase in teaching writing.

Mark only one oval per row.

	Not at All Comfortable	A little Uncomfortable	Comfortable	Very Comfortable
Providing Graphic Organizers for the Essay Composition				
Including Evidence in Writing				
In-text Citations				
Essay Structure: the Introductory Paragraph				
Essay Structure: Body Paragraphs				
Essay Structure: Concluding Paragraph				
Writing on a Word Processor				

11. Please rate your level of comfort in relation to the following aspects of the revision phase in teaching writing.
Mark only one oval per row.

	Not at All Comfortable	A little Uncomfortable	Comfortable	Very Comfortable
Peer Review				
Self-Checking for Errors				
Self-Evaluation on a Rubric				

Support for Teaching Writing

Consider areas where you think you would need support in order to more effectively teach writing or implement writing practices into your classroom curriculum.

12. Answer "Yes" or "No" to the following topics depending on your needs or desires for support in order to incorporate writing into your classroom curriculum. If a type of writing assignment does not apply to your primary discipline, please answer "Not Applicable to my Discipline."
Mark only one oval per row.

	Yes	No	N/A to my Discipline
Ideas for Formative Assessments			
How to Develop Writing Prompts			
Ideas for Writing Prompts Based on Units			
Discipline-specific Writing Exercises			
Understanding Essay Structure			
Developing Graphic Organizers for Research			
Developing Graphic Organizers for Writing			
Developing Rubrics for Grading			
Opportunities to Calibrate Teaching Writing			
Opportunities to Calibrate Grading Writing			

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