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TEACHERS TRANSFORM: DEVELOPING NEW UNDERSTANDINGS AND COMPETENCIES FOLLOWING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMON CORE WRITING STANDARDS

by

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A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Grand Forks, North Dakota

August
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This dissertation, submitted by Jennifer Lynn Wallender in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

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Jennifer L. Wallender
June 30, 2016

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To Grandpa Brian—
You were the kids' first babysitter when I began this journey, but you are no longer on this Earth as I end it. I know we will celebrate someday in heaven!

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand how elementary teachers have transformed and developed new writing understandings and competencies following the implementation of the English Language Arts (ELA) Common Core State Standards (CCSS). This was done by understanding teachers' perceptions and experiences, as well as how they have developed their understandings, with classroom writing. Participants were four elementary teachers from two public school districts in North Dakota—one single-school district and one multi-school district. Data were collected with interviews, observations, and artifacts throughout the school year. The data analysis was completed using the qualitative research program ATLAS.ti and included within-case and cross-case analyses.

The theoretical framework underpinning this study was Mezirow's transformative learning theory. This theory supported understanding how teachers have transformed following the ten phases from transformative learning theory. Four themes emerged from the analysis: Teachers Name Impacts with Implementing the Writing Standards, Systemic and Isolated Learning about Writing Practices, Personalized Learning to Pave the Way to Implement Classroom Writing, and Taking Risks and Transforming Perspectives. These themes led to three assertions.

The first assertion was "Left in isolation, teacher's ability to transform is hindered." Teachers from districts that did not offer systemic and collaborative writing professional development opportunities had to locate external sources for information.

The second assertion was “Teachers work through challenges when they value the change.” Although findings described impacts as obstacles for teachers to overcome, they were willing to work through these obstacles because they recognized that writing was important for their students.

The third assertion was “Experience as an integral factor with transformative learning.” In order to fully transform and develop new writing understandings and competencies, teachers needed to have experience teaching writing both prior to and following the implementation of the ELA CCSS.

Recommendations for teachers, teacher educators, and administrators included (a) using innovative solutions to overcome obstacles to developing writing understandings and competencies; (b) ensuring research on writing is based on best practices while developing teachers’ understandings and competencies; (c) training teachers on both procedural and declarative writing knowledge in teacher education programs or professional development opportunities; and (d) transforming teachers’ beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors regarding the importance of writing in today’s society.

Keywords: transformative learning, writing standards, ELA Common Core State Standards, classroom implementation, writing curriculum, writing instruction, writing assessment, North Dakota

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In July 2013, North Dakota (ND) public schools were mandated to fully implement the English Language Arts (ELA) Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in all K–12 classrooms (North Dakota Department of Public Instruction [ND DPI], 2015b). The ELA CCSS are composed of academic learning expectations in four different strands—Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers [NGA Center & CCSSO], 2010). Included in each strand are standards defining what students should know and be able to do by the end of each school year (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). Embedded within these standards is the goal that all students will be literate with the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in the 21st century in college or the workforce upon graduating from high school (Common Core State Standards Initiative [CCSSI], 2015; NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010).

Ensuring that students are literate in the 21st century is not a new concept in the United States. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 prompted teachers to focus on literacy, with an emphasis on understanding and developing understandings of the reading pedagogy, curriculum, instruction, and assessment (Applebee & Langer, 2009; Cutler & Graham, 2008). With this increased focus on reading knowledge and skills, teachers arguably have, at minimum, a basic understanding of the reading standards from the ELA CCSS. However, teachers are likely

apprehensive about implementing the writing standards. With the focus of literacy broadening to include enhancing classroom writing skills and knowledge, partially due to both the implementation of the ELA CCSS and the heightened appreciation and necessity for writing in K–12 education and beyond (Graham & Harris, 2013; Mo, Kopke, Hawkins, Troia, & Olinghouse, 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013), teachers have an ideal opportunity to transform and enhance their classroom writing practices by developing new writing understandings and competencies.

Background and Importance of Classroom Writing

Classroom writing, in some form or another, has been a part of the educational curriculum for decades (Yancey, 2009). In the past, most of the school day was spent instructing in the "three R's"—reading, writing, and arithmetic (Reese, 2011). However, as schools began to diversify the curriculum due to changes in society (Johnson, Musial, Hall, & Gollnick, 2014), time spent on writing in the classroom declined (National Commission on Writing, 2008). Additionally, teachers' beliefs that the writing curriculum, instruction, and assessment is time-consuming, as well not feeling prepared to teach writing, has resulted in minimal time spent on writing in today's classrooms (National Commission on Writing, 2008; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013).

The problem with marginal classroom writing curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices is the importance of writing throughout and beyond K–12 education for 21st century learners (Graham & Perin, 2007; Harris et al., 2013; Mo et al., 2014; National Commission on Writing, 2008; National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges, 2004; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Societal expectations in college and the workforce for 21st century learners emphasize writing knowledge and skills (Yancey, 2009). Coincidentally, the

ELA CCSS have an entire strand devoted to writing standards that are to be integrated throughout all academic content areas (CCSSI, 2015). It is necessary, then, that teachers transform and develop new understandings and competencies to implement the writing standards from the ELA CCSS into their classrooms.

Need for the Study

Even though the implementation of the ELA CCSS impacted many educational stakeholders, classroom teachers were directly affected (Calkins, Ehrenworth, Lehman, 2012). Classroom teachers were required not only to learn about and understand the details of the ELA CCSS, but they also needed the knowledge and skills necessary to implement these standards from a passive document on the bookshelf to one that actively benefits all classroom learners (Fisher, Frey, & Uline, 2013). While understanding and implementing the writing standards from the ELA CCSS, teachers must examine and alter their current writing beliefs and practices to reach these standards. Therefore, this study is important because it will help teachers to transform and develop new writing understandings and competencies—leading to more effective classroom writing practices that benefit their students.

Findings from this study will provide rich, descriptive data to many stakeholders in education. Classroom teachers will benefit from understanding potential transformations that may be needed to enhance their personal writing understandings and experiences. They may also benefit by understanding professional development opportunities and resources to help with this transformation as they implement the writing curriculum, instruction, and assessment into their classrooms. As stated by Mezirow (1997), “We learn together by analyzing the related experiences of others to arrive at a common understanding” (p. 7). Thus, findings will be

advantageous for teachers to improve their existing practices (Maxwell, 1996) in writing by understanding how and why other teachers have transformed.

Findings will also be useful for administrators and instructional coaches while they try to understand what is and is not helping teachers learn about and implement the writing standards from the ELA CCSS in their classrooms. By understanding how teachers are developing their understandings of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS, administrators and instructional coaches can support and guide classroom teachers by offering systemic professional development opportunities and resources.

Teacher educators will also benefit from the findings of this study because of their responsibility to help ensure that preservice teachers have learned the content of the ELA CCSS and have the pedagogical skills necessary to deliver that content to their future students. Specifically, teacher educators must focus on the writing standards from the ELA CCSS to better prepare preservice teachers due to the importance of writing both during and beyond K–12 education (Graham & Perin, 2007; National Commission on Writing, 2008; National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges, 2004; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Also, given that preservice teachers may not have experienced quality writing instruction when they were students, preservice teachers need to be explicitly taught the importance of writing and best writing practices in their teacher preparation program. Teacher educators could do this by focusing on teacher transformations and the perceptions and experiences from actual classroom teachers.

Teachers have "felt the world of writing shifting under them and have wanted to account for this change in their teaching" (Herrington & Moran, 2009, p. 2). Given the increased focus on the necessity of writing, partially due to the implementation of the ELA CCSS (Graham & Perin,

2007; National Commission on Writing, 2008; National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges, 2004; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013), it is an important time for teachers to transform and develop new writing understandings and competencies. This transformation is necessary for teachers to help ensure their students are competent and competitive after completing their K–12 education (Graham & Harris, 2013).

Conceptual Framework

Ravitch and Riggan (2012) stated that personal interest, topical research, and a theoretical framework are the three elements necessary to form a conceptual framework. Thus, I devised and organized my conceptual framework around my personal interest in the topic, topical research, and a theoretical framework to align with their notion. This section will discuss these three elements that together form this study's conceptual framework.

Personal Interest

In June 2010, I was a member of the ELA ND CCSS Adoption Team. Following a recommendation to the ND Department of Public Instruction by my principal, I was selected as a committee member because I had experience using the kindergarten through sixth grade 2005 ND ELA Content and Achievement Standards (2005 ND ELA Standards) as a fifth grade classroom teacher and an elementary Title One Reading teacher. Our team was comprised of 35 ELA educators from varying school grade levels and positions. We met to analyze the 2005 ND ELA Standards that were currently being used in ND against the proposed ELA CCSS and to decide if adopting the ELA CCSS would be the best option for ND schools (North Dakota English Language Arts Content Standards Writing Team, 2011). Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) facilitated the adoption process by providing expertise, guidance, and documents outlining content alignment and rigor between the 2005 ND ELA

Standards and the ELA CCSS (McREL, 2010a; McREL, 2010b). After numerous sessions of discussing, questioning, and analyzing, our team recommended to adopt the ELA CCSS in June 2011.

Although it took less than a year of discussion to adopt the ELA CCSS in ND, we realized that implementation would take much longer and cause unique changes for classroom teachers—both in beliefs and practices. My interest in understanding elementary classroom teachers' experiences with their writing curriculum, instruction, and assessment following the implementation of the ELA CCSS, as well as a curiosity for how they perceived and developed their understandings of the writing standards, directed me to this research topic. More importantly, I was interested in hearing the voices of practicing teachers to help others in education learn from those currently in the field.

Topical Research

I searched the ERIC (EBSCO) and the Academic Search Premier databases using search terms such as "writing standards," "Writing Strand," "Common Core State Standards," "elementary classroom implementation," "importance of writing skills," "professional development," "writing paradigms," and combinations of these words. I found several articles relevant to the topical research in *The Reading Teacher* and *School Psychology Review*. Also, the College Entrance Examination Board had set up different commissions to analyze writing practices in K–12 education and beyond, and their reports were useful. Lastly, studying the ELA CCSS and the 2005 ND ELA Standards were important when conducting topical research.

After finding articles relevant to the CCSS writing standards, I analyzed the reference pages to locate additional resources. I also used the same referenced search terms to locate relevant dissertations and theses. Upon researching, I noticed that there were articles focused on

understanding the importance of writing (e.g., Graham & Perin, 2007; National Commission on Writing, 2008; National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges, 2004; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013) and potential changes to classroom practices due to implementing the writing standards from the ELA CCSS (e.g., Graham & Harris, 2013; Mo et al., 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013), but I was not able to locate literature on how teachers actually perceive the writing standards from the ELA CCSS or how they have developed their understandings. I also could not locate literature on teachers' experiences with classroom writing practices following the implementation of the ELA CCSS.

Given the importance of writing knowledge and skills for students' future success in the 21st century (Graham & Perin, 2007; Harris, Graham, Friedlander, & Laud, 2013; Mo et al., 2014; National Commission on Writing, 2008; National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges, 2004; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013), research must fill the perceived gap in the literature and focus on teachers' understandings of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS writing standards and how they have developed these understandings. It must also seek to understand teachers' experiences with the writing curriculum, instruction, and assessment following the implementation of the ELA CCSS.

Theoretical Framework

In order to understand teachers' perceptions and how they have developed their understandings of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS, as well as their experiences with the writing curriculum, instruction, and assessment in their classrooms, I used Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory as a theoretical framework to collect the data and interpret the findings of this study. The essence of the transformative learning theory is adult learners use their past experiences to make meaning of the world (Mezirow, 1991; Mezirow, 1997). The

philosophical assumptions of the transformative learning theory are constructive in nature and include the beliefs that "meaning exists within ourselves" and "personal meanings that we attribute to our experience are acquired and validated through human interaction and communication" (Mezirow, 1991, p. xiv). Also important to the philosophical foundation is the idea that interpretations of our experiences are fluid and constantly changing (Mezirow, 1991). The constructivist assumptions of the transformative learning theory supported this study and helped to validate teachers' transformation regarding classroom writing perceptions and experiences.

According to Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory, we use meaning perspectives as "criteria for judging" (p. 44) different dichotomies in life, such as right and wrong, true and false, and good and bad. In turn, these meaning perspectives generate meaning schemes, or "the particular knowledge, beliefs, value judgements, and feelings that become articulated in an interpretation" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 44). Transformative learning, then, involves altering a meaning perspective. Although perspective transformation begins with understanding the psychological changes in one's self and changes of belief systems, it "is never complete until action based upon the transformative insights has been taken" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 56).

Mezirow (1991) outlined ten phases leading to altering a meaning perspective and, hence, transformative learning:

1. a disorienting dilemma;
2. self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame;
3. a critical assessment of assumptions;
4. recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation is shared;
5. exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions;

6. planning a course of action;
7. acquiring knowledge and skill necessary for acting on new meaning;
8. trying out new roles provisionally;
9. building competence and self-confidence in new roles; and
10. reintegrating the new perspective into one's life.

I used these ten phases to understand how the teachers in this study transformed and developed new writing understandings and competencies.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand how elementary teachers in grades three through six have perceived and developed their understandings of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS and to understand their experiences with the writing curriculum, instruction, and assessment in their classrooms following the implementation of the ELA CCSS in a single-school district and a multi-school district in ND. I wanted to understand how teachers have transformed and developed new writing understandings and competencies in order to effectively prepare our students to be successful, competitive writers equipped with 21st-century writing skills.

Research Questions

Three research questions guided this study:

1. What do teachers perceive are the impacts of the writing standards from the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards in their classrooms?
2. How have teachers developed their understandings of the writing standards from the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards?

3. How did teachers experience the impact of the writing standards from the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards on their curriculum, instruction, and assessment?

Delimitations of the Study

This study had several delimitations that must be considered. First, all the participants in this study were elementary classroom teachers from public schools in ND. Also, the participants had to teach writing to their students. This may have eliminated some teachers who departmentalize in their schools and may teach writing only in other content areas.

A second delimitation was that only two participants were selected from a single-school district, and only two participants from a multi-school district, resulting in a total of four participants. While this delimitation may lessen the generalizability of the study, it also made it possible to collect richer data by interviewing and observing each participant multiple times throughout the study.

Another delimitation of this study was the writing standards from the ELA CCSS were not adopted by all states in the nation. Although this makes the results from this study mostly applicable to states that have adopted the ELA CCSS, other states' newly implemented or revised ELA standards may be similar to the standards from the CCSS (Crawford, 2012). Furthermore, even as states adjust their standards in the future, individual standards may change, but it is unlikely that the content from the ELA CCSS is overturned (Crawford, 2012).

A final delimitation was the amount of data collected. Although observations, interviews, and artifacts were used to triangulate the data, it may be possible that additional opportunities to collect data could have been used. Given teachers’ busy schedules, three formal interviews, four

observations with follow-up interviews, and artifacts were collected when offered from August through March during the 2015–2016 school year.

Definitions

Common Core State Standards (CCSS): The CCSS are a collection of academic standards in mathematics and English Language Arts/Literacy that outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade in school. These standards were written by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center). State adoption of the standards is voluntary (CCSSI, 2015).

English/Language Arts (ELA): The ELA are the content areas in academics studying knowledge and skills pertaining to reading, writing, speaking, and listening (Merriam-Webster, 2015).

Experiences: Experiences are derived from participation in a particular activity and include practical knowledge, skills, and practices (Merriam-Webster, 2015).

Multi-school district: In this study, a multi-school district is defined as a school system in which there are two or more public elementary schools in its district.

Perceptions: Perceptions are the way you think about and understand something (Merriam-Webster, 2015).

Single-school district: In this study, a single-school district is defined as a school system in which there is only one public elementary school in its district.

Standards: Standards are learning goals that state what students should know and be able to do at each grade level (CCSSI, 2015).

Strands: Strands are divisions of the ELA CCSS document. The "K-5 and 6-12 ELA have Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language" listed as strands (NDCCSS, 2011, p. viii).

Transform: To transform is to change in condition or character, usually in a positive way (Merriam-Webster, 2015)

Organization of the Study

This qualitative dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter I described the context, purpose, and significance of this study by explaining the need to understand how ND public elementary teachers have perceived and developed their understandings of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS, as well as understand their experiences with the writing curriculum, instruction, and assessment in their classrooms following the implementation of the ELA CCSS. It also stated the research questions and discussed the conceptual framework that was used in this study. In addition, delimitations and definitions were outlined in this chapter.

Chapter II reviews the scholarly and professional literature on classroom writing and the ELA CCSS, including the importance of classroom writing, current classroom writing practices, and challenges to classroom writing. The review of literature also discusses the contents of the ELA CCSS and changes that occurred following the implementation of the ELA CCSS, with emphasis given to changes between the 2005 ND ELA Standards and the ELA CCSS. Lastly, it discusses different methods to develop teachers' understandings and writing transformations.

Chapter III outlines the methodology used in this study. It describes the qualitative methods and procedures that were used to select the bounded cases and participants, as well as collect and analyze data. This chapter also includes the various validity measures that were employed throughout the study.

Chapter IV presents the findings from this study. This chapter begins with a thorough description of the participants. It then presents the themes using the theoretical framework, raw data, and literature from Chapter II.

Chapter V states and discusses the study's assertions. It also lists limitations of the study and offers recommendations for educational professionals and for future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

All public schools in North Dakota (ND) implemented the English Language Arts (ELA) Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in July 2013 (North Dakota Department of Public Instruction [ND DPI], 2015b). Implementing these standards helped to amplify teachers' attention to the writing standards and classroom writing practices (Graham & Harris, 2013; Mo, Kopke, Hawkins, Troia, & Olinghouse, 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). The purpose of this case study was to understand how ND teachers have perceived and developed their understandings of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS, as well as to understand their experiences with the writing curriculum, instruction, and assessment following the implementation of the ELA CCSS in a single-school district and a multi-school district.

In order to understand teachers' perceptions, how they have developed understandings of writing, and their experiences with classroom writing practices following the implementation of the ELA CCSS, this literature review begins by examining the importance of writing for students in today's society and the state of writing practices in today's classrooms. Then, it focuses on the CCSS initiative and the composition of the standards. Also, comparisons between the 2005 ND ELA Content and Achievement Standards (2005 ND ELA Standards) and the ELA CCSS, including how teachers have developed their understandings of the ELA CCSS, are discussed.

Finally, this literature review addresses challenges to classroom writing practices and concludes with transformations that may be needed by classroom teachers to offer quality writing curriculum, instruction, and assessment to their students.

Importance of Writing in the 21st Century

"The pen is mightier than the sword" (Bulwer-Lytton, 1839) captures the influence and importance of writing (as cited in MacArthur, Graham, & Fitzgerald, 2008). Although this adage was coined over 150 years ago, the power of writing has endured throughout the centuries. As early as the 19th century, "Writing skill, understood as clarity, grammatical correctness, and preferred usage, became a social grace—a power button, as it were, a way of highlighting one's education, class affiliations, and upscale ambitions in an industrial economy" (Nystrand, 2008, p. 15). While writing continues its dominance into the 21st century, classroom writing curriculum, instruction, and assessment have gained heightened attention and interest as teachers prepare their students to be successful and competitive in today's world (Graham & Harris, 2013; Mo et al., 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013).

Writing can be defined as "the ability to say things correctly, to say them well, and to say them in a way that makes sense (i.e., grammar, rhetoric, and logic)" (National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges, 2004, p. 19). Some purposes for writing are communicating and persuading, conveying knowledge and ideas, maintaining order in a society, and expressing one's self (MacArthur et al., 2008; Parsons, 1991). Although the purposes for writing vary, writing is necessary in K–12 education and everyday life (Graham & Perin, 2007; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). It is not optional that today's youth write well; it is a necessity for them to be successful and competitive in the 21st century (Graham & Perin, 2007).

The following sections will discuss the importance of writing both throughout and beyond K–12 education.

Writing in Education

Arguably, classroom writing is necessary for many purposes in education (Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman, 2012; Herrington & Moran, 2009; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Daily, students and teachers write to communicate and convey information (MacArthur et al., 2008). Also, writing is used for persuasion and self-expression (MacArthur et al., 2008). While those are some of the well-known purposes for writing in K–12 classrooms, there are less common reasons why writing is important in education. For example, writing helps students deepen their understanding of topics (Calkins et al., 2012). Specifically, writing can help students gather and organize knowledge about a topic to explore and refine their ideas (Harris, Graham, Friedlander, Laud, 2013).

Additionally, writing is important for students to demonstrate their knowledge (Harris et al., 2013). In fact, writing helps students perform well on standardized tests (Herrington & Moran, 2009; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Given both the well-known and less common purposes, classroom writing is essential and should be integrated in all content areas throughout the school day, not merely in an English/Language Arts course or a block of time devoted solely to writing (Calkins et al., 2012; National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges, 2003).

Writing Outside of Education

Writing is necessary not only in K–12 education, but it is also important outside of the classroom (Boudette, City, & Murnane, 2005; Graham & Perin, 2007; National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges, 2004; Nelson, 2014; Troia &

Olinghouse, 2013). Writing can impact career selection and promotion, earning potentials, intrapersonal and interpersonal communication, and even physical health (Boudette et al., 2005; Harris, 2006; National Commission on Writing, 2008; National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges, 2004; Sloan & Marx, 2004).

When students graduate high school without strong reading and writing skills, their opportunities for economic earnings are lowered because of the importance of communication in today's society (Boudette et al., 2005). To illustrate the importance of writing skills in the workplace, the National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges (2004) created and mailed surveys to 120 corporation chief executive officers. Of those, 84 surveys were either mailed in or conducted on the telephone (53.3% response rate). Respondents reported that two-thirds of salaried employees have at least some writing responsibility, and between one-fifth and one-third of nonprofessional employees must have basic writing skills. When asked if their employees have the desired writing skills, the respondents stated that only one-third of their employees have "the writing skills companies value" (p. 13). In order to remediate writing skills, the commission found that some companies provide professional development in writing at a cost of about $950 per employee. Overall, The National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges (2004) found that writing is a foundational skill in employment, both in hiring and promotion, and they noted that writing appears to be a "gatekeeper" to higher-wage employment (p. 19).

In addition to careers, writing is necessary for out-of-school communication and reflection (National Commission on Writing, 2008). Posting to social network boards, writing text messages, and composing emails are some examples of how writing is used socially by

teenagers and adults (National Commission on Writing, 2008). Interestingly, writing may even be beneficial to an individual's physical health (Harris, 2006; Sloan & Marx, 2004).

Harris (2006) found that expressively writing about stressful experiences reduces health care facility visits. In a meta-analysis of randomized trials, Harris located 93 experimental writing studies and used 30 studies that satisfied the methodology and informational criteria of the study. Those 30 studies were then grouped into three categories of writers: healthy participants, participants with a psychological disorder, and participants with a pre-existing medical condition. After excluding one study as an outlier, Harris concluded that expressive writing does reduce health care visits in the healthy participant category.

Along those lines, Sloan and Marx (2004) reported that writing to reduce stress may positively impact physical health. They did note, though, that there may be confounding variables. They also stated that more research is necessary for the causation and determining the groups of people that writing to reduce stress may benefit.

Writing is "a predictor of academic success and a basic requirement for participation in civic life and in the global economy" (Graham & Perin, 2007, p. 3). Given the strong influence of writing in K–12 education and beyond, explicit teaching of writing must begin in early elementary classrooms and continue throughout high school. The following section will review the current state of writing practices in America's classrooms.

Current State of Writing Practices in K–12 Education

As described above, writing is necessary and important in K–12 education and beyond, so teachers must explicitly teach writing to their students (Collin, 2013; Graham & Perin, 2007). Is writing being taught in the classrooms, and what is the state of writing in today's K–12

classrooms? To answer these questions, organizations and researchers have tabulated statistics to speculate the degree and quality of current classroom writing practices.

As early as the mid-1970s, bleak outlooks on classroom writing practices were presented to society. Scheils's (1975) *Newsweek* article "Why Johnny Can't Write" blamed the U.S. educational system for the fact that students could not write proficiently at an appropriate level. Since then, organizations and researchers have continued to bestow a pessimistic view of K–12 classroom writing practices (e.g., Achieve, 2005; Graham & Perin, 2007; National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges, 2004; National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges, 2003). However, not all literature has confirmed that these negative portraits of classroom writing practices and literacy in the classroom are accurate (e.g., Graff, 1987; Nystrand, 2008).

Graff (1987) stated that proclamations of U.S. literacy crises have occurred at different times throughout history but became more pronounced in the mid-1970s with our country's heightened concerns with "national standing, international status, power, productivity, well-being, inflation, security, energy supplies, and confidence in leadership and institution" (p. 391). While admitting there were issues with students' skill levels, Graff (1987) noted the tests used to portray literacy declines may not have been relevant, reliable, or accurate. Similarly, Nystrand (2008) pointed out that there currently is not a writing crisis—just changes in demographics and economics that seem to occur in industrialized nations and usually lead to higher expectations of students' writing abilities.

Although students may be able to write, they may not be meeting grade-level expectations. The National Commission on Writing (2003) explained that students cannot write "with the skill expected of them today" (p. 16). According to the National Center for Educational

Statistics (2012), only about one-fourth of America's students can compose grade-level texts, leaving about three-fourths unable to do this. Analyzing long-term trends using information reported by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, Applebee and Langer (2009) found that student writing proficiency has not increased but has remained stable with small ups and downs. While this mostly flat line may be interpreted as a positive indication students' writing abilities have not significantly decreased, it can also be viewed as a need to improve to ascertain that more students become proficient writers.

Shifting the focus to postsecondary education, the Peter D. Hart Research and Public Opinion Strategies group interviewed 300 college instructors who teach freshman at two-year and four-year colleges and reported that these instructors believe about half of their students are not ready for college-level writing (Achieve, 2005). Also, the National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges (2004) stated that nearly three-fourths of interviewed college instructors rate their students as either fair or poor writers. Similarly, Graham and Perin (2007) noted that high school graduates cannot write at "basic levels required by colleges or employers" (p. 3).

Although the state of classroom writing practices remains unclear, it is obvious that today's students must receive instruction in writing and meet high standards of writing in K–12 classrooms (Applebee & Langer, 2009; Calkins et al., 2012; Graham & Perin, 2007; Herrington & Moran, 2009; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). One approach that many states have voluntarily taken to raise expectations and achievement levels in the ELA area, including writing, was to adopt the ELA CCSS (Common Core State Standards Initiative [CCSSI], 2015; United States Department of Education, 2015). The next section will describe the history leading to the creation of the ELA CCSS.

Underpinnings of the English Language Arts (ELA) Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

Although the ELA CCSS are a relatively new initiative, public education has not experienced a shortage of initiatives focused on improving K–12 schooling in the United States (Calkins et al., 2012; Wallender, 2014). Beginning in the late 19th century, many initiatives have been implemented in the United States with the goal of improving student academic achievement (e.g., National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; Russell, 1949; United States Bureau of Education, 1892; United States Department of Education, 2015). Unfortunately, the residual effects of many of these initiatives created an array of academic standards, with varying achievement levels, across the United States (Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2011).

One such initiative, the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, commonly known as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, required states to adopt and implement challenging academic and achievement standards in ELA and mathematic to improve the academic achievement levels for all students (United States Department of Education, 2015). However, by allowing individual states to implement their own student learning expectations and achievement levels, the ELA and mathematics standards were not consistent across America's public schools (Porter, McMaken, Hwang, & Yang, 2011). This inconsistency gave the impetus for a new initiative—common content and achievement standards.

In order to address the range of inconsistent content and achievement standards across public schools in the nation, members of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) organized and led the CCSS initiative (CCSSI, 2015). They organized teachers, researchers, and other

professionals from across the United States to begin collaborating, evaluating feedback, and designing the College and Career Readiness standards and the K–12 English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics CCSS (CCSSI, 2015; Drake, 2012; McLaughlin & Overturf, 2012).

The CCSS development team used research and evidence to design the Common Core (CC) standards. They also used international benchmarking by "analyzing high-performing education systems and identifying ways to improve our own system based on those findings" (CCSSI, 2015). By examining international assessments, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, the CC developers compared the academic performances of students from the United States against that of students from other top-performing countries. They also referenced content and achievement standards from top-performing countries (CCSSI, 2015). Although these internationally benchmarked standards will assist United States students to globally compete in college and careers beyond high school, specific to this study, Porter et al. (2011) stated that Finland's standards emphasize classroom writing more than the CCSS.

Overall, the CCSS were designed with internationally-referenced benchmarks to ascertain that all United States high school graduates were ready for college and career success in today's economy (CCSSI, 2015) by ensuring students have the skills that they "will need to succeed in the 21st century global economy" (Nelson, 2014, p. 16). The CCSS also offer students consistency in nation-wide learning expectations (CCSSI, 2015). At the time of this study, "forty-two states, the District of Columbia, four territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity" have voluntarily adopted the CCSS in both mathematics and ELA (CCSSI, 2015). North Dakota was one of those states that adopted the CCSS. The next section will describe ND's process leading to the adoption.

The ELA CCSS Adoption Process in North Dakota (ND)

Prior to the ELA CCSS, ND had state content and achievement standards in ELA (ND DPI, 2005). Twenty-six educators helped create the 2005 ND ELA standards as they referenced the *1997 North Dakota English Language Arts Content Standards* and standards from other states (ND DPI, 2005). Although in many states, education standards are selected by a five- or seven-member state board of education without the involvement of teachers or state citizens (Johnson, Musial, Hall, & Gollnick, 2014), ND involved educators and sought public opinion prior to adopting the ELA Content and Achievement Standards in April 2005 (Baesler, 2014; ND DPI, 2005).

North Dakota followed a similar inclusive process when considering the adoption of the ELA CCSS. Beginning in 2010, administrators from ND's private and public schools nominated educators with experience in the ELA content areas to participate on a committee that would consider adopting the CCSS (North Dakota English Language Arts Content Standards Writing Team, 2011). In June 2010, thirty-five ND educators representing various K–12 grade levels were selected by the ND DPI and began meeting in Bismarck, ND, to analyze similarities and differences between the current ND ELA standards and the proposed ELA CCSS. These educators compared the actual standards and analyzed documents compiled by Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) that "examined the alignment of the National Common Core State Standards to current North Dakota Standards" (North Dakota English Language Arts Content Standards Writing Team, 2010, p. i). Upon analysis, the committee "believed the revised standards define the higher expectations required to prepare our students for their next steps in life while also accurately reflecting North Dakota's needs" (Baesler, 2014).

The next step, and an important consideration for ND in the CCSS adoption process, involved seeking feedback from ND constituents (Baesler, 2014; ND DPI, 2015b). Although DiLascio (2014) found that some teachers were not pleased with the adoption of the CCSS because their voices were not heard in initial phases of adoption and implementation, ND provided many opportunities for teachers, as well as the general public, to analyze and comment on the CCSS prior to adoption (Baesler, 2014). From March 2010 through May 2011, the ND DPI released four statewide news releases seeking public commentary regarding the proposed CCSS (Baesler, 2014). Committee members considered tabulated remarks, and, along with their previous analyses, voted unanimously to adopt the ELA CCSS in June 2011 (Baesler, 2014). Given the fact that the CCSS impacted all aspects of the classroom curriculum, instruction, and assessment, the transition was immediate (Marrongelle, Sztajn, & Smith, 2013), and by the 2013–2014 school year, the ND DPI mandated full implementation of the CCSS in all ND public schools.

Moving forward, these current ELA standards will be reviewed in five to seven years following their initial adoption date, as has been the common practice in ND for the past 20 years (K. Baesler, personal communication, October 6, 2015). While there may be changes to the ELA CCSS during future reviews by ND or other adopting states, it is unlikely that the standards will be significantly altered or reversed (Crawford, 2012).

The road leading to the adoption of the ELA CCSS in ND was not autocratically chosen by an exclusive state board of education (Baesler, 2014). Rather, the process was lengthy and included feedback from ND teachers and constituents (ND DPI, 2015b). Although the committee mutually agreed to adopt the ELA CCSS, they recognized that there were discrepancies between the 2005 ND ELA Standards and the newly adopted ELA CCSS. The following sections will

provide an overview of the ELA CCSS document and highlight salient ELA similarities and differences between the 2005 ND ELA Standards and the ELA CCSS, with an emphasis on the writing standards.

Examining the ELA CCSS Document

The ELA CCSS document is divided into three sections: K–5 content standards; 6–12 content standards; and 6–12 standards in history/social studies, science, and technology (CCSSI, 2015). Both the K–5 standards and the 6–12 standards have four strands: Reading, Writing, Language, and Speaking and Listening. The 6-12 standards in history/social studies, science, and technology, however, only include two strands—Reading and Writing. Included in each strand are College and Career Readiness anchor standards that "define general, cross-disciplinary literacy expectations that must be met for students to be prepared to enter college and workforce training programs ready to succeed" (CCSSI, 2015). These anchor standards articulate the broad expectations of the ELA CCSS, and the grade-level standards outline what students should know and be able to do by the end of each grade (CCSSI, 2015). It is important to note that although there are standards to be met, the CCSS are not meant to be a checklist for teachers to quickly accomplish (Crawford, 2012).

All three sections of the ELA CCSS include standards in both reading and writing (CCSSI, 2015); however, given the emphasis on the writing standards in this study, specific features and analysis of the Writing Strand from the ELA CCSS will be discussed in the following sections.

Features of the Writing Strand

The Writing Strand is included in all three sections of the ELA CCSS (CCSSI, 2015). The Writing Strand includes grade-level writing standards and ten College and Career Readiness

writing anchor standards. Table 1 shows the College and Career Readiness writing anchor standards organized by the four writing categories. Together, these writing anchor standards help to ensure that students are writing at a proficiency level necessary for entering college or the workforce upon high school graduation (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010).

Table 1. College and Career Readiness Writing Anchor Standards.

Writing category	Writing anchor standard
Text Types and Purposes	1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. 2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content. 3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
Production and Distribution of Writing	4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. 5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach. 6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.
Research to Build and Present Knowledge	7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation. 8. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism. 9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
Range of Writing	10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Note. Adapted from ND DPI, 2015b.

In addition to the College and Career Readiness anchor standards in the Writing Strand, Appendix C in the ELA CCSS document contains annotated student writing samples (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). Samples of argument writing, informative/explanatory writing, and narrative writing, which are the three types of writing required by the CCSS, are included (NGA

Center & CCSSO, 2010). Teachers can reference Appendix C in the ELA CCSS document to analyze and compare their students' writing compositions to writing samples that are considered to meet that grade's writing standards (CCSSI, 2015). Understanding and using features of the Writing Strand, such as the writing anchor standards and writing samples, in tandem with the specific grade-level writing standards, assists teachers with creating, delivering, and assessing writing in their classrooms (CCSSI, 2015).

Analysis of the Writing Strand to Evidence-Based Practices

In order to evaluate the content of the Writing Strand from the CCSS, Troia and Olinghouse (2013) summarized an analysis that compared the writing and language standards from the ELA CCSS against evidence-based practices in writing. Evidence-based practices can be defined as "a prima facie mechanism for promoting positive educational outcomes because they are methods, programs, or procedures that integrate the best available research evidence with practice-based professional expertise in the context of student and family characteristics, values, and preferences" (Troia & Olinghouse, 2013, p. 344).

Troia and Olinghouse (2013) uncovered several weaknesses when comparing the CCSS to evidence-based practices. Some of those weaknesses were as follows: a lack of teacher feedback in writing after the primary grades; a lack of teacher guidance while teaching grammar beyond fourth grade; no mention of text transcribing skills; and no mention of motivational processes, such as goal setting and self-efficacy, for writing. On the other hand, they noted that the writing standards from the ELA CCSS were succinct, precise, covered a wide range of evidence-based practices, and had grade-to-grade consistency. Most importantly, the CCSS may prompt teachers to understand and use evidence-based practices in writing and, in turn,

strengthen the writing curriculum, instruction, and assessment in their classrooms (Troia & Olinghouse, 2013).

Although it is important for teachers to understand the features and evidence-based practices included in the Writing Strand from the ELA CCSS, successful implementation may require altering their existing classroom writing curriculum, instruction, and assessment from their state's former ELA standards to meet the newly-implemented writing standards from the ELA CCSS. To do this, teachers must recognize the alignment, or lack of alignment, between their state's former ELA standards and the ELA CCSS. Understanding trends in the content and quality between states' former ELA standards and the ELA CCSS will assist teachers with altering their curriculum, instruction, and assessment to meet the expectations of the CCSS.

Examining Trends between States' Former ELA Standards and the ELA CCSS

Although the actual similarities and differences between states' former ELA standards and the ELA CCSS cannot be pinpointed due to inconsistencies in the content standards, learning expectations, and achievement proficiencies across the nation, trends between states' former ELA Standards and the ELA CCSS emerged upon implementation of the ELA CCSS (Calkins et al., 2012; Carmichael et al., 2010; CCSSI, 2015; Collin, 2013; Fisher, Frey, & Uline, 2013; Porter et al., 2011; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Trends in the content and the quality between states' former ELA standards and the ELA CCSS are discussed below.

Trends in Changes

The CCSSI (2015) described three major shifts from states' former ELA standards that teachers should consider as they implement the ELA CCSS. First, teachers must move away from only emphasizing reading and writing skills. Instead, they need to use complex texts and increase students' academic vocabulary words. Requiring students to use text-based evidence

when defending claims and conducting analyses is a second shift from past practices of accepting students' opinions and experiences, and not evidence from the text, as primary evidence for a claim or analysis when writing, speaking, or reading. Finally, teachers must increase the use of informational and literary nonfiction texts to help students build their knowledge about the world and become independent learners. Accompanying this third shift is the notion that reading, writing, speaking, and listening are integrated into the entire school day, not just blocks of time set aside for ELA that may have occurred prior to the implementation of the ELA CCSS.

Specific to the writing standards, the implementation of the ELA CCSS moved the emphasis on reading practices from states' former ELA standards to the writing standards and practices in the classroom (Calkins et al., 2012; Fisher et al., 2013; Porter et al., 2011; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Additionally, the spiral design of the ELA CCSS requires that writing curriculum and instruction begin in the primary elementary grades and continue throughout high school (Calkins et al., 2012). The most significant change specific to writing, though, is the notion that many states' former ELA standards did not even offer clear writing expectations, so implementing the ELA CCSS provided writing standards for teachers (Williams, 2012).

Trends in Quality

To further examine the ELA CCSS, researchers at The Thomas B. Fordham Institute analyzed and compared the quality of the states' ELA standards with the quality of the ELA CCSS. Part of the mission of The Thomas B. Fordham Institute is to advance "high standards for schools, students and educators" (2011, para. 4). To align with that component of the mission, researchers at The Thomas B. Fordham Institute conducted a study that "examines the English language arts (ELA) and mathematics content standards of the fifty states and the District of

Columbia, and compares their rigor and clarity to those recently published by the Common Core State Standards Initiative" (Carmichael et al., 2010, p. 12).

They began by collecting the most current academic standards from each of the fifty states, plus the District of Columbia (Carmichael et al., 2010). Then, content experts examined the standards based on the content/rigor and clarity/specificity to formulate fair comparisons within and between the states and the ELA CCSS. Finally, researchers assigned the CCSS and the individual state's ELA standards an A to F letter grade, and they also summarized common shortfalls that occurred in the individual state's standards. Although both ELA and mathematics standards were studied by researchers at The Fordham Institute, this literature review will focus on results and conclusions regarding the ELA standards, especially in the area of writing.

The Fordham Institute presented the quality of the ELA CCSS based on content/rigor and clarity/specificity an overall grade of a B+. Concerning the clarity and specificity of the ELA CCSS, researchers stated that overall "the standards are fairly specific about the skills that students should master each year" (Carmichael et al., 2010, p. 23). However, they did note that in some areas "the language of the standards is a bit bloated or confusing" (Carmichael et al., 2010, p. 23). Specific content and rigor commentary was organized by the ELA strands. Regarding the Writing Strand, researchers stated:

> The Common Core Writing standards are somewhat repetitive, but they do include much essential content, especially by cross-referencing the Language standards for grammar, usage, and mechanics throughout. The rigor of the Writing standards is illuminated by student work samples that help teachers understand the kind of writing that is expected of students across the grades for the three genres they include: "arguments,"

"informative/explanatory texts," and "narratives." The writing samples are also annotated to help clarify the general expectations laid out in the grade-specific standards.

On the other hand, the Writing standards include too many expectations that begin with the phrase, "With guidance and support from adults…." For example, in grade 2:

> With guidance and support from adults and peers, focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing (grade 2)

Such standards are problematic because they fail to adequately scaffold or clearly delineate what *students* should be able to do. There are certainly revision and editing skills that students can master independently in second grade. For example, they could revise for word choice, or for capitalization and end marks. Unfortunately, by merely stating that students should revise and edit "with guidance and support," teachers themselves are left with very little guidance about what grade-appropriate skills they should be working to ensure students master.

One troublesome aspect of the writing standards is the persistently blurry line between an "argument" and an "informative/explanatory essay." Appended material seeks to clarify the distinction, and summarizes by saying that "arguments are used for persuasion and explanations for clarification." Yet not all explanations clarify ("because I said so!") and not all arguments must be persuasive. An argument merely introduces, develops, and establishes a claim by providing evidence to support the claim, as in a literary analysis. Here, however, a literary analysis is not an argument; it is categorized as an informative/explanatory essay, which is arguably another category altogether. Still, if arguments here are all persuasive, then they should include the essential characteristics of persuasive writing in their description, such as a recommendation or call to action—and

> the category should in fact be called "persuasion." As they are, these new definitions are likely to confuse teachers, curriculum developers, and publishers. (Carmichael et al., 2010, p. 26)

Altogether, researchers at The Fordham Institute stated that the ELA CCSS are exceptional compared to individual state's ELA standards (Carmichael et al., 2010). They found that only California, the District of Columbia, and Indiana had state standards that scored higher than the ELA CCSS, and eleven states had scores equivalent to the ELA CCSS. They further declared that the ELA CCSS are more rigorous for teachers and students than individual state's ELA standards and concluded that when the ELA CCSS are paired with "a properly aligned, content-rich curriculum, they provide K–12 teachers with a sturdy instructional framework for this most fundamental of subjects" (Carmichael et al., 2010, p.27).

Researchers at The Fordham Institute also noted five common limitations in individual state's ELA standards. The first limitation involved emphasizing metacognitive strategies in reading, such as prior knowledge, instead of essential content knowledge. The next limitation was weak genre-specific and grade-specific expectations. This occurred when the standards did not accurately describe the specific genre in reading and writing, or they merely provided an example like "narrative genres." A third limitation was the lack of American literature in the standards. Generally, they found that the use of American literature in the standards only occurred in eleventh grade. Presenting no reading lists that delineated grade-appropriate texts was a fourth limitation. Too often, the state standards referred to grade-appropriate texts without any examples of texts that may fulfill the expectations from the standards. A last limitation in states' ELA standards found by researchers at The Fordham Institute was uncertain expectations

for writing because the standards were vaguely written and merely listed genres of writing, not what students should know and be able to do in the area of writing (Carmichael et al., 2010).

The researchers concluded that these five limitations frequently occurred in the individual state's standards but were mostly avoided in the ELA CCSS (Carmichael et al., 2010). Although the CCSS did not include American literature until the eleventh grade and "fails to address the specific genres, sub-genres, and their characteristics for both literary and non-literary text" (p. 19), they do accentuate types of writing, offer annotated student writing samples, and do not overly emphasize metacognition in the early grades (Carmichael et al., 2010). Furthermore, the ELA CCSS include a list of sample exemplar texts for different grade levels. Taken altogether, the Fordham Institute found that the quality of the ELA CCSS to be better than or equal to 94% of the ELA standards in the United States and that limitations from states' former ELA standards were minimized in the ELA CCSS.

As described above, trends in changes and quality between states' former ELA standards and the ELA CCSS emerged as states began implementing the ELA CCSS. Given the diverse ELA learning standards and expectations from each individual state's former ELA standards, it is important to zoom in on ND to reveal actual changes for teachers to consider as they transitioned from the 2005 ND ELA Standards to the ELA CCSS.

Examining Changes between the 2005 ND ELA Standards and the ELA CCSS

Replacing the 2005 ND ELA Standards with the ELA CCSS triggered ND educational stakeholders to examine broad trends with the ELA CCSS adoption, but they also needed to understand trends specific to ND. This was one of the goals for the ND ELA Content Standards Writing Team while they considered adoption of the ELA CCSS (North Dakota English Language Arts Content Standards Writing Team, 2011). By studying the 2005 ND ELA

Standards and the ELA CCSS, as well as referencing the documents *Comparison of the Common Core State Standards for the English Language Arts to the North Dakota English Language Arts Content Standards, Grades K–12* (McREL, 2010a) and *Comparison of the North Dakota English Language Arts Content Standards to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts, Grades K–12* (McREL, 2010b), the team analyzed organizational differences, content alignment, and rigor between the ND and CC standards. See Appendix A for a detailed comparison between the 2005 ND ELA Standards and the ELA CCSS.

The team found that the ELA CCSS were more rigorous than the 2005 ND ELA Standards when comparing both the 2005 ND ELA Standards to the ELA CCSS and the ELA CCSS to the 2005 ND ELA Standards (McREL, 2010a; McREL 2010b; North Dakota English Language Arts Content Standards Writing Team, 2011). They also noted significant organizational differences between the two documents (McREL, 2010a; McREL 2010b; North Dakota English Language Arts Content Standards Writing Team, 2011).

When comparing the kindergarten through grade twelve content between the 2005 ND ELA Standards and the ELA CCSS, the team found that it was mostly similar (McREL, 2010a; McREL 2010b; North Dakota English Language Arts Content Standards Writing Team, 2011). However, an in-depth examination of the writing standards in grades three through six revealed several notable differences. In general, the ND ELA Standards in grades three through six offered specific examples of prewriting, revising, and editing (ND DPI, 2005). The grades three through six ELA CCSS mentioned prewriting, revising, and editing, but they did not include specific examples (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). Also, the 2005 ND ELA Standards included a standard to assess the research and writing process (ND DPI, 2005).

The CCSS were more specific than the 2005 ND ELA Standards when delineating characteristics of the types of writing, specifically opinion/argumentative, informative/explanatory, and narrative (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). The 2005 ND ELA Standards implied many characteristics of the types of writing (ND DPI, 2005). However, the 2005 ND ELA Standards gave examples of writing genres at each grade level.

Even though the 2005 ND ELA Standards in grades four through six included using grade-level vocabulary in writing, the CCSS emphasized the use of age-appropriate, domain-specific and general academic vocabulary to strengthen the written text (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010; ND DPI, 2005). On the other hand, the 2005 ND ELA Standards referenced using technology in writing, but the CCSS emphasized keyboarding skills as a requirement to compose written texts (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010, ND DPI, 2005). The CCSS also specified time frames to routinely write, mentioning both longer and shorter frames (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010).

Collaboration was a focus in the CCSS (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). In fact, using guidance and support from peers and adults to strengthen writing was emphasized in the CCSS beginning in kindergarten (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). Although the 2005 ND ELA Standards did mention peer and teacher conferencing, as well as sharing published works, the continuity of the collaborative statements in the CCSS emphasized the importance of working together.

Also, the continuity and organization of the CCSS document made vertical alignment between adjacent grade levels easier; the spiral curriculum of the CCSS ensured that students were continuously building on skills that have been mastered in previous years (NGA Center &

CCSSO, 2010). Neither the continuity, organization, or spiraling of the curriculum was evident in the 2005 ND ELA Standards (ND DPI, 2005).

When considering both the rigor and content of the standards, ND teachers seemed to believe that the CCSS were beneficial and superior to the 2005 ND Standards (Thompson, 2015). In a survey administered to ND teachers located in the South East Education Cooperative, Thompson (2015) reported that over half (56.3%) of surveyed teachers cited at least one benefit of the CCSS. On the other hand, Thompson found that 26.3% of surveyed teachers identified at least one non-benefit; however, the least cited non-benefit was the belief that the 2005 ND Standards were better than the new CCSS (Thompson, 2015). Additionally, Thompson stated that surveyed ND elementary teachers "were the most supportive" of the CCSS (2015, p. 34).

Undeniably, teachers must understand and analyze the writing standards from the ELA CCSS, including similarities and differences from their state's former ELA standards, to form their own perceptions about the writing standards and participate in professional development opportunities to develop these perceptions. The next section describes three of the most common professional development approaches used in education, as well as recommendations aimed at teachers as they develop their understandings of the ELA CCSS.

Developing Teachers' Understandings of the ELA CCSS

Developing teachers' understandings of the ELA CCSS was, and continues to be, essential for understanding and implementing the standards (Crawford, 2012; Liebtag, 2013; Marrongelle et al., 2013; McLaughlin & Overturf, 2012). According to Gulamhussein (2013) with the Center for Public Education:

> The Common Core State Standards that have been adopted by 46 states and the District of Columbia, represent a retreat from the traditional rote, fact-based style of instruction

> toward teaching that fosters critical thinking and problem solving. Even non-Common Core states are pursuing a college and career-ready agenda that calls for the development of these skills among students and holds schools accountable for doing so. To meet these new standards, teachers will have to learn new teaching practices. (p. 1)

Given the necessity for teachers to learn about the ELA CCSS and formulate their own understandings of the standards and how to best implement these standards in their classroom writing curriculum, instruction, and assessment, teachers need professional development opportunities. In education, there are three predominant approaches for professional development: self-regulated learning, collaborative learning, and workshop learning models (Joyce & Calhoun, 2010). Although researchers have attempted to compare and contrast the benefits and drawbacks of those three, Joyce and Calhoun (2010) stated that these approaches cannot be easily compared because different approaches are used for different learning goals and objectives. Although no approach is superior to the others, each has benefits and drawbacks while teachers develop their understandings of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS. These benefits and drawbacks are discussed below.

Self-Regulated Learning

One professional development approach in education is self-regulated learning, or self-study. During self-regulated learning, an individual teacher controls his or her learning by setting a goal, selecting strategies to achieve that goal, and evaluating his or her performance (Butler, Novak Lauscher, Jarvis-Selinger, & Beckingham, 2004). The teacher also must monitor his or her learning, evaluate the difficulty of the task, and make changes as needed (Butler et al., 2004). Hence, self-regulated learning promotes autonomous learning while an individual teacher constructs his or her own knowledge.

Teacher autonomy and individual knowledge construction are two benefits of self-regulated learning (Butler & Schnellert, 2012). Autonomy in self-regulated learning is important because teachers can learn at their own pace and control their learning through metacognition. Much like the autonomy that teachers want their students to demonstrate, they, too, must practice autonomy while learning. To illustrate, in a qualitative study, Kremer-Hayon and Tillema (1999) interviewed Dutch and Israeli teacher educators and student teachers about their perceptions of self-regulated learning. The researchers found that self-regulated learning resulted in a teaching and learning paradigm shift because learners are actively constructing knowledge instead of simply receiving it (Kremer-Hayon & Tillema, 1999). On the other hand, they also noted that although learners enjoyed the autonomy with self-regulated learning, one drawback was that the participants reported that they would prefer collaboration while learning (Kremer-Hayon & Tillema, 1999). Hence, self-regulated learning may be beneficial for teachers to become autonomous learners, but without collaboration, it does not allow teachers to share their knowledge and learn from one another.

Collaborative Learning

A second model for professional development in education is collaborative learning. Similar to self-regulated learning, knowledge is constructed rather than received from outside authorities (Kremer-Hayon & Tillema, 1999). The emphasis on collaboration differentiates this approach from self-regulated learning.

Collaborative learning occurs when a group of teachers share a similar goal and cooperate to achieve that goal (Joyce & Calhoun, 2010). Meetings generally occur outside of school hours (Joyce & Calhoun, 2010). Also, the goal of collaborative learning must focus on student learning, not just teaching methods (Bailey & Jakicic, 2012). Furthermore, evidence of

student learning must be used to improve student academic achievement (Bailey & Jakicic, 2012).

One benefit of collaborative learning is the creation of strong interpersonal relationships among teachers (Butler & Schnellert, 2012). These relationships help teachers learn from each other and construct knowledge together (Bailey & Jakicic, 2012; Butler & Schnellert, 2012; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Goswami, Lewis, Rutherford, & Waff, 2009; Joyce & Calhoun, 2010; Kremer-Hayon & Tillema, 1999; Schnellert, 2011; Schnellert, Butler, & Higginson, 2008; Wood, 2010). Schnellert (2011) stated that teaching and learning are social processes, so collaborative partnerships allow for multiple perspectives with diverse learners. Joyce and Calhoun (2010) added that the synergy of the group increases the learning of new knowledge or skills.

More than simply working cooperatively, one method of collaborative learning, the professional learning community (PLC), has defined characteristics, including a shared goal, collective inquiry, collaborative teams, action orientation and experimentation, continuous improvement, and focus on results (Bailey & Jakicic, 2012; Dufour, Dufour, Eaker, & Many, 2006; Dufour & Eaker, 1998). The teachers' shared goals or purposes, preferably not externally-mandated, drive the work in a PLC (Jones, 2010). Bailey and Jakicic (2012) contended that a PLC is not simply a discussion or book club meeting, but rather the PLC focuses on learning, not teaching, and uses evidence of student learning to improve student achievement while necessitating teacher collaboration. Dufour et al. (2006) agreed that PLCs are intended to share research and empirical knowledge, not merely opinions on topics.

There are barriers to collaborative learning (Butler & Schnellert, 2012; Schnellert, 2011; Wood, 2010). Given the notion that teaching has historically been an isolated profession (Wood,

2010), creating buy-in for collaborative learning presents a barrier for its effectiveness. Wood (2010) stated that teacher egos and competition can impede successful collaboration, and individual teachers must be open to criticism and advice during collaborative learning. Another barrier to collaborative learning is resources, such as time and money, for teachers to work together in a common place (Butler & Schnellert, 2012; Schnellert, 2011). Despite the barriers, though, collaborative learning in education remains an effective model for building on the social processes of learning.

Workshops

The third approach for professional development in education are workshops. Workshops follow a traditional model of education in which the learners are the recipients of knowledge rather than constructors of knowledge (Jones, 2010). Many teachers are familiar with this model because they have had the most exposure to this type of learning both in their own schooling and careers (Jones, 2010). Schnellert et al. (2008) pointed out that workshops are losing popularity as an approach for professional development in education because best practices in teaching and learning are moving towards collaborative models where teachers have autonomy and construct their own knowledge with other teachers.

The benefits for using workshops as professional development are few, yet they may be enticing to administrators. Workshops are useful in bringing a large group of teachers together to discuss new knowledge or skills (Joyce & Calhoun, 2010). Workshops, then, require less time and money from administration because only one venue needs to be planned to reach a large group of teachers.

The challenges of learning in workshop settings are profound (Dufour et al., 2006; Schnellert et al., 2008). Dufour et al. (2006) reiterated the fact that because collaboration is

important in the learning process, it simply cannot be taught or modeled effectively in a large workshop setting. Teachers are also not self-directed learners in a workshop (Schnellert et al., 2008). Lastly, Schnellert (2011) stated that workshop models for educator professional development are contradictory because even though teachers want their students to learn in a constructive method, teachers do not learn by inquiry, exploration, reflection, or collaboration during workshop professional development opportunities.

Whether learning in a workshop, collaborative approach, or self-regulated approach, professional development in education is necessary to help teachers understand the ELA CCSS and classroom writing. Regrettably, Applebee and Langer (2009) found that while ELA teachers believe professional development would benefit their classroom writing practices, many teachers are not offered these opportunities.

Recommendations to Accompany Teacher Professional Development

As described above, the most common approaches for professional development in education are self-regulated learning, collaborative learning, and workshops (Joyce & Calhoun, 2010). Professional development, however, is not effective without time, resources, and collaborative opportunities, not to be confused with collaborative learning, to study the CCSS (Crawford, 2012; Hall, 2014; McLaughlin & Overturf, 2012). These barriers have prompted researchers to offer recommendations for educators on effectively and efficiently developing their understandings of the ELA CCSS (Crawford, 2012; Jenkins & Joachim, 2013; Marrongelle et al., 2013, Valencia & Wixson, 2013).

Valencia and Wixson (2013) stated that success of the CCSS implementation is contingent on teachers' "ability to understand and implement the core vision and intent of the standards, and their ability to carefully craft instruction to meet the needs of their students" (p.

184). They believed teachers should understand the assumptions behind the CCSS and consider other contextual factors in the document, which requires time (Valencia & Wixson, 2013). In order to use time effectively while studying the CCSS, Valencia and Wixson (2013) offered suggestions on how to study the document. First, they stressed that teachers read the introduction on pages three through eight of the document while remembering that the standards are not an exact prescription (Valencia & Wixson, 2013). Teachers also must understand the standards are not intended to endorse strategies, programs, or assessments (Valencia & Wixson, 2013).

After analyzing the introduction, teachers should examine the anchor standards (Valencia & Wixson, 2013). This is necessary because if teachers do not understand the anchor standards and, in turn, follow the specific grade-level standards too literally, gaps and inconsistencies in the specificity and complexity of the standards across different grade levels are emphasized (Valencia & Wixson, 2013). Teachers should then read their grade-level standards across three or four grade levels to fully grasp the expectations above and below their grade (Valencia & Wixson, 2013). Finally, teachers must reference the anchor standards while they plan classroom instruction (Valencia & Wixson, 2013). By following these suggestions, Valencia and Wixson (2013) believed that teachers will use their time more effectively to understand the ELA CCSS and design curriculum for classroom implementation.

As well as using time and resources more efficiently, creating collaborative opportunities, not to be confused with collaborative learning, are crucial for teachers to implement the ELA CCSS in their classrooms. Thompson (2015) found that surveyed teachers in the ND South East Educational Cooperative reported needing more time to collaborate as the most frequently reported challenge with the CCSS implementation. These opportunities should occur with and between teachers from the same grade-level, as well as teachers from adjacent grades (Calkins et

al., 2012). Also, teachers must have opportunities to work with teachers from other school buildings and with educators in higher education (Calkins et al., 2012; Jenkins & Joachim, 2013; Marrongelle et al., 2013).

While it seems likely that teachers at different school buildings would have more inconsistency in CCSS-aligned curriculum than those teaching in the same school, Calkins et al. (2012) stated that the variance of CC-aligned lessons and content within schools may be greater than the variance between schools. To ensure teachers both at the same and different grade levels within the same school have continuity with CC-aligned curriculum, they need collaborative opportunities to analyze, discuss, and map curriculum that is aligned to the CCSS (Crawford, 2012). Teachers at each grade level or department should meet to ascertain that all domains of the CCSS are being addressed in their grade level or department, and they should design a scope and sequence of instructional objectives (Crawford, 2012). Also, collaborative opportunities with teachers from adjacent grade levels will help a school vertically align their ELA curriculum and ensure the skill progression is appropriate (Crawford, 2012). Grade-level or department consistency and vertical alignment within a school minimizes the variance in CC-aligned lessons and content, creating a more efficient learning experience for teachers and students (Crawford, 2012).

Additionally, teachers need collaborative opportunities with college and university educators (Jenkins & Joachim, 2013; Marrongelle et al., 2013). This is important because part of the reason behind the creation of the CCSS was to prepare students for college after graduation (CCSSI, 2015). Thus, K–12 teachers should have discussions with higher education faculty to examine and compare expectations for what students should know and be able to do upon high school graduation (Jenkins & Joachim, 2013). It is equally important for higher education faculty

to attend to K–12 classroom teachers' ideas and suggestions on how to better prepare preservice teachers to effectively implement the ELA CCSS in the classroom (Jenkins & Joachim, 2013; Marrongelle et al., 2013). This is critical to classroom writing considering that over a quarter (28%) of nationally-sampled primary elementary teachers self-reported that their preparation to teach writing in a teacher education program was inadequate (Cutler & Graham, 2008). Having collaborative opportunities between higher education faculty and practicing classroom teachers will help to shape teacher education programs and better prepare future teachers (Jenkins & Joachim, 2013; Marrongelle et al., 2013).

Summary of Approaches and Recommendations to Develop Teachers' Understandings

"Developing the kinds of thoughtful writers needed in business . . . will require teachers to understand writing as an activity calling for extended preparation across subject matters, from kindergarten through college" (National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges, 2004, p. 20). To help achieve this, professional development for teachers is important and necessary to develop teachers' understandings of the ELA CCSS (Crawford, 2012; Liebtag, 2013; Jenkins & Joachim, 2013; Marrongelle et al., 2013; McLaughlin & Overturf, 2012; Valencia & Wixson, 2013). When teachers attend professional development opportunities, Thompson (2015) found that teachers "who had received CCSS professional development training were significantly more likely to report being either somewhat or completely prepared to teach using the CCSS compared to teachers who had not received CCSS professional development training" (p. 42).

Self-study, collaborative learning, and workshops are the most common approaches used for professional development in education. Regardless of the approach, time, resources, and collaborative opportunities, not to be confused with collaborative learning, are also factors in

developing teachers' understandings of the ELA CCSS (Crawford, 2012; Jenkins & Joachim, 2013; Marrongelle et al., McLaughlin & Overturf, 2012, Valencia & Wixson, 2013). Also, it is necessary that professional development leads to transformative learning. The next section discusses how teachers can transform during professional development opportunities using Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory.

Transformative Professional Development

Cranton and King (2003) have applied the transformative learning theory to the educational setting by offering strategies for transformative professional development opportunities. They stated that professional development "helps educators understand what they do and why they do it" (Cranton & King, 2003, p. 34). Thus, professional development must include critically questioning and self-reflecting on teaching—including content, process, and premise reflections (Cranton & King, 2003).

Content reflection involves exploring the description of a problem by asking, "What happened here?" (Cranton & King, 2003, p. 34). Process reflection examines the problem-solving strategies that are being used and answers questions like, "How has my thinking gone wrong?" Lastly, premise reflection looks at the problem itself. For example, teachers might ask, "Why do I feel responsible for this situation?" (Cranton & King, 2003, p. 35). Using these three domains of reflecting helps teachers undergo transformative professional learning and positively impacts their students' learning.

Challenges regarding the writing curriculum, instruction, and assessment in the classroom may help teachers to transform or seek out opportunities to transform their understandings and competencies. The next section highlights some of these challenges.

Challenges Regarding Classroom Writing

Classroom writing is complex, challenging, and time-consuming for both students and teachers (Herrington & Moran, 2009; Hidi & Boscolo, 2008; McCutchen, 2008; National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges, 2004; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). As stated by Troia and Olinghouse (2013), "Teaching writing and learning to write are complex cognitive, linguistic, affective, and even sometimes physical acts that take place in socially constructed and constrained environments" (p. 345). While students must overcome physical and mental challenges when learning to write and composing written texts (Hidi & Boscolo, 2008; McCutchen, 2008), teachers must thoroughly understand writing skills and processes, and they must put this knowledge into practice during classroom instruction (Smith, Wilhelm, and Fredricksen, 2013). Additionally, teachers must design and assess meaningful classroom writing lessons (Crawford, 2012). Taken altogether, there are several broad barriers that make the teaching and learning of writing difficult (Herrington & Moran, 2009). Some of the notable challenges to classroom writing are described below.

Mental and Physical Requirements

For students, writing tends to be a difficult, convoluted process (Hidi & Boscolo, 2008; McCutchen, 2008). Beginning with planning, and continuing through revision and publication, many brain and body processes simultaneously occur when students are engaged in the writing process (Hidi & Boscolo, 2008; McCutchen, 2008; Torrance & Galbraith, 2008). Initially, while planning to write, students use executive functions and reflective cognitive processes (McCutchen, 2008). Then, while producing text, students must correctly use grammar, punctuation, mechanics, and physically handwrite or type the text using both working- and long-term memory (McCutchen, 2008). Lastly, students use critical reading processes, problem

solving, audience awareness, and topic knowledge to revise and edit their compositions (McCutchen, 2008). Throughout the entire writing process, students utilize significant processing and memory resources, with novice writers being further hindered by processing constraints, transient memory, and working memory capacities (McCutchen, 2008; Torrance & Galbraith, 2008).

Motivation, Self-Efficacy, Self-Regulation, and Interest

Not only does writing expend many brain and physical processes, but it also requires student motivation, self-efficacy, self-regulation, and interest (Cutler & Graham, 2008; Hidi & Boscolo, 2008). For example, when students possess self-efficacy, their stress and anxiety while writing is decreased (Hidi & Boscolo, 2008). Additionally, self-regulation helps students to persevere, often without immediate feedback, on the predominantly independent task of writing (Hidi & Boscolo, 2008). Thus, in addition to the other roles that teachers have in classroom writing, such as acting as a mentor to model writing, a supervisor to create assessment plans, and an editor to help students critique and review their work (Parsons, 1991), classroom teachers also must create meaningful writing activities that are interesting to their students.

Knowledge Necessary to Write

To add to the complexity of classroom writing, Smith et al. (2013) stated that writers use five different types of knowledge: declarative knowledge of form, declarative knowledge of substance, procedural knowledge of form, procedural knowledge of substance, and knowledge of purpose and content. By using a framework proposed by Hillocks (as cited in Smith et al., 2013), the authors differentiated between knowing the “what” (declarative knowledge) and knowing “how” (procedural knowledge) with writing. They also distinguished between the form and the substance of a piece of writing.

Specifically, declarative knowledge of form involves having knowledge of the characteristics of writing, such as knowing the punctuation rules and components of a writing genre (Smith et al., 2013). Declarative knowledge of substance, on the other hand, entails knowing the content that will be included in the writing (Smith et al., 2013). An example of declarative knowledge of substance occurs when students believe that the purpose of writing is to reiterate the knowledge that is already "known" (Smith et al., 2013). While procedural knowledge of form involves using different types of sentences and writing structures that are appropriate to the writing genre, procedural knowledge of substance consists of locating and using credible sources for writing (Smith et al., 2013). This may involve databases, surveys, or other research methods (Smith et al., 2013). Lastly, by understanding the audience and significance of writing, knowledge of purpose and content is used (Smith et al., 2013). Simultaneously utilizing these five types of knowledge while writing is, arguably, challenging for students.

Writing Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment

While difficult for students, seamlessly interweaving the five types of knowledge needed to create a quality classroom writing curriculum poses additional challenges to teachers (Smith et al., 2013). In the past, schools have emphasized declarative knowledge on the form and substance of writing (Smith et al., 2013). The CCSS, however, also requires procedural knowledge of writing, which is evident by analyzing the verbs in the writing anchor standards (Smith et al., 2013). Procedural knowledge verbs, such as "write," "produce," and "develop," rather than declarative knowledge verbs, such as "recognize," "identify," and "define," appear in the CCSS (Smith et al., 2013, p. 47). Thus, teachers must alter their classroom writing curriculum and instruction to diverge from the overreliance on declarative knowledge in writing

by, for example, moving away from merely responding to a generated writing prompt and participate in composing (Smith et al., 2013).

Similar to understanding the different types of knowledge necessary while writing, teachers must also recognize and use the five different types of composing in the classroom: composing to practice, composing to plan, first-draft composing, final-draft composing, and composing to transfer (Smith et al., 2013). While composing to practice, the teacher may break up the writing into components to practice for mastery (Smith et al., 2013). Composing to plan should extend beyond brainstorming on a topic and include teaching about how to find sources to write about (Smith et al., 2013). First-draft composing is important for students to begin their compositions, and students need many assignments throughout the school year to practice getting started with writing (Smith et al., 2013). After the first-draft is completed, students need to understand that final-draft composing involves revisions in punctuation, grammar, and content (Smith et al., 2013). Lastly, teachers must allow students to compose to transfer, or reflect on their writing, and understand the procedural knowledge used to compose new pieces (Smith et al., 2013).

Given the increased focus on student writing and classroom writing practices that resulted partially due to the implementation of the ELA CCSS (Applebee & Langer, 2009; Calkins et al., 2012; Fisher et al., 2013; Porter et al., 2011; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013), teachers must move beyond the traditional emphasis on using declarative knowledge in writing and also include procedural knowledge by using new models of writing curriculum (Yancey, 2009). To do this, teachers must understand the different types of knowledge and composing needed for a high-quality writing curriculum. (Smith et al., 2013). They also need writing resources that are aligned with the ELA CCSS to develop this curriculum (Thompson, 2015). However, while

understanding the content of writing is an immense undertaking, using this information to actually deliver writing instruction may be even more challenging for teachers (Fisher et al., 2013).

Writing instruction demands that teachers attend to the many details included in a high-quality writing curriculum, including physical and mental capacities used by students, motivation for students to write, and the different types of knowledge used by students. The best approaches to deliver writing instruction are unclear for many teachers (Applebee & Langer, 2009; Cutler & Graham, 2008). Writing instruction usually involves a combination of focusing on the writing process and focusing on the skills necessary to write, and Cutler and Graham (2008) found that 72% of 178 primary writing teachers in the United States reported using an eclectic approach to writing instruction. While Cutler and Graham (2008) recommended a balance between the time students are being instructed in writing strategies and skills with the time students are engaged in the writing process, teachers may find the details to enacting this balance to be arbitrary and vague, which presents yet another challenge.

Similar to writing curriculum and instruction, the assessment of writing presents barriers for students and teachers (Huot & Neal, 2008; Johnson, 2002; Parsons, 1991). Historically, the content area of writing was measured on report cards based on a student's handwriting (Yancey, 2009). Writing eventually began to mean much more than the physical act of producing letters, and it became necessary for schools to define and provide criteria for writing (Yancey, 2009). However, even when schools are able to agree on a definition and criteria for writing, teachers face issues with the assessment of writing. One such issue, interrater reliability, is threatened when teachers subjectively score individual student's writings (Huot & Neal, 2008). According to Johnson (2002), "When AP English teachers from Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho,

Montana, California, and Edmonton, Canada, compared their students' 'A' essays, they discovered that they held widely divergent notions of the content and writing characteristics of 'A' essays" (p. 156). Both determining definitions and criteria for assessing writing, as well as actually assessing students' writing, illustrates some of the barriers for teachers to overcome in the area of writing assessment.

Like teachers, students have issues with the assessment of writing (Parsons, 1991). One issue that students may face is a dichotomy between ideology and practice when having their writing assessed by teachers. For example, teachers oftentimes tell students that the writing process is valued and that writing is an individual endeavor, indicating that the process and product may not be graded (Parsons, 1991). However, students are then graded on both the writing process and product (Parsons, 1991). These mixed-signals can be difficult for students, as well as teachers, while they balance an appreciation for students' voices against objective writing criteria.

Time and Technology

There are also obstacles to classroom writing that are neither specific to students or teachers, yet impact both—time and technology (Applebee & Langer, 2009; Crawford, 2012; Herrington & Moran, 2009, National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges, 2003; Parsons, 1991). Writing in the classroom requires significant amounts of time for teachers to develop curriculum, instruct, and assesses writing (Crawford, 2012; National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges, 2003). Adding to the large amount of time required for writing is the role of technology, including how it has altered classroom writing (Applebee & Langer, 2009; Herrington & Moran, 2009; National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges; 2003; Parsons, 1991). Specifically, it is important

that all students have access to computers and other technology for composing, and students also must be able to use them throughout the writing process (National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges, 2003). To illustrate the importance, results from the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress writing assessment showed that when students had opportunities to use computers for drafting and revision in the classroom, they scored higher on the eighth grade and twelfth grade National Assessment of Educational Progress writing assessments (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Along those same lines, poor keyboarding skills and outdated equipment can negatively impact classroom writing practices (Parsons, 1991).

Summary of Challenges

As described above, classroom writing is challenging for both teachers and students for a plethora of reasons. Students need a vast amount of knowledge to write, as well as physical, mental, and psychological capacities, and teachers must consider this when they create a high-quality writing curriculum, deliver it with sound instruction, and assess both subjectivity and objectivity (Herrington & Moran, 2009; Hidi & Boscolo, 2008; McCutchen, 2008; National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges, 2004; Troia and Olinghouse, 2013). Time and technology also inhibit classroom writing practices (Applebee & Langer, 2009; Crawford, 2012; Herrington & Moran, 2009, National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges, 2003; Parsons, 1991).

With all of these challenges, implementing high-quality writing practices that align with the ELA CCSS may not be an easy endeavor for teachers (Herrington & Moran, 2009; Hidi & Boscolo, 2008; McCutchen, 2008; Troia and Olinghouse, 2013). Of course, these barriers can also be viewed as opportunities to change (Calkins et al., 2012; Yancey, 2009). With the

increased focus on classroom writing, partially due to the implementation of the ELA CCSS (Applebee & Langer, 2009; Calkins et al., 2012; Fisher et al., 2013; Porter et al., 2011; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013), teachers should reflect on how they were taught writing in their own classroom experiences (Lortie, 1975) and how they have been teaching writing in their classrooms to determine if it is necessary to undergo a writing paradigm by transforming. The last section of this literature review examines teacher transformations necessary to offer students quality writing experience in today's classroom.

Teacher Transformations

In the past 40 years, there have been many catalysts, including movements and legislation, aimed at driving positive changes in the classroom to increase student academic achievement (Calkins et al., 2012; Wallender, 2014). One such initiative, the adoption and implementation of the ELA CCSS, may have sparked an opportunity for teachers to change their classroom writing beliefs and practices to ensure that all of their students are ready for college or a career upon graduation from K–12 education (Calkins et al., 2012). However, any changes in classroom writing practices that transpire with the implementation of the ELA CCSS will be impacted by teachers' philosophical views and experiences with classroom writing, including what ultimately helps their students (Barrett-Mynes, 2013; Grant, 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Thus, exploring teachers' perceptions of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS and the development of these understandings, as well as their actual experiences with classroom writing, is necessary.

Troia and Olinghouse (2013) stated that "standards can and often do signal for educators particular ways in which the standards can be attained via instructional practice and . . . do appear to influence not only what is taught but how it is taught" (p. 348). Furthermore, the

"Common Core prompts us to take a hard look at our practice as we develop the deep and transferable knowledge about writing that students will need in college, in their careers, and in their lives as democratic citizens" (Smith et al., 2013, p. 48). To illustrate, in a survey administered to ND teachers in the South East Educational Cooperative, over half (61.2%) had some form of agreement that the CCSS would change their instructional practices as they incorporate new materials and new strategies (Thompson, 2015).

On the other hand, not all teachers may have needed the implementation of the ELA CCSS to transform. Herrington and Moran explained:

> Teachers, because they are working closely with young people, often see changes taking place in society before the rest of us. Though they may want to adapt their classroom practice to these changes, they may find adaptation difficult because of the nature of the school and classroom or because change is, for all of us, often difficult. (2009, p. 7)

Regardless of whether a teacher's transformation began with the implementation of the ELA CCSS, they need to recognize that they "are viewed as important agents of change . . . and thus are expected to play a key role in changing schools and classrooms" (Prawat, 1992, p. 354). By exploring their experiences, perceptions, and how they have come to develop these understandings of the writing standards following the implementation of the ELA CCSS, teachers will transform and develop new understandings and competencies to strengthen classroom writing practices. This will help to ensure that all students are successful, competent writers in today's society.

Summary of the Review of the Literature

Chapter II examined the importance of writing in today's society and the state of writing practices in classrooms. It also discussed the CCSS initiative, including comparisons between the

writing standards from the 2005 ND ELA Standards and the ELA CCSS. Additionally, literature was reviewed to understand how teachers develop their understandings during professional development opportunities, with a focus on developing understandings of the ELA CCSS. Challenges to classroom writing practices were highlighted, and writing paradigm shifts that may be needed by classroom teachers to transform and offer quality writing curriculum, instruction, and assessment to their students were also shared in this literature review.

In summary, this literature review showed that classroom teachers have many barriers to overcome when transforming and developing new writing understandings and competencies. While the implementation of the ELA CCSS may have provided a catalyst for teachers to change their classroom writing practices, there is a gap in the literature in understanding how teachers have transformed their perceptions and understandings of writing, as well as understanding their experiences with classroom writing. By interviewing and observing practicing classroom teachers, this study will help to fill this gap with descriptive data, and, in turn, propel classroom writing practices to ensure that every student is a successful, competent writer in today's society.

Chapter III will identify the methods and procedures of this study, beginning with the philosophical underpinnings of the study. Then, the research design, including the site selection, participant selection, and data collection and analysis, will be described. Also, validity methods that were used throughout the study will be explained.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this case study was to understand how public elementary teachers from a single-school district and a multi-school district in North Dakota (ND) have perceived and developed their understandings of the writing standards from the English Language Arts (ELA) Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and to understand their experiences with the writing curriculum, instruction, and assessment following the implementation of the ELA CCSS. It was guided by three research questions:

1. What do teachers perceive are the impacts of the writing standards from the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards in their classrooms?
2. How have teachers developed their understandings of the writing standards from the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards?
3. How did teachers experience the impact of the writing standards from the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards on their curriculum, instruction, and assessment?

This chapter outlines the methods and procedures used to answer these three questions. It begins with describing the philosophical underpinnings of the study; then, the research design, including the site selection, participant selection, and data collection and analysis, is explained. It concludes by describing the validity methods that were used throughout the study.

Philosophical Underpinnings

Central to understanding the methodology is explicitly outlining the study's philosophical underpinnings. This study was guided by the social constructivist framework (Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 1999; Merriam, 2009). Ontologically, this framework assumes there is not an objective reality; instead, multiple realities are gathered and understood, not discovered (Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 1999; Merriam, 2009). The epistemological principles are subjective and dependent in constructing a transactional truth with participants (Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 1999; Merriam, 2009). Given this social constructivist framework, qualitative research was used in this study.

Qualitative research focuses on meaning, understanding, and is richly descriptive (Merriam, 2009). The researcher, as the primary data collector, is responsible for collecting data in the natural research setting throughout a prolonged timeframe (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001). Finally, the analysis of qualitative research is both inductive and deductive and builds theories or assertions to explain perceptions and experiences in natural settings (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Newman & Benz, 1998).

Taken altogether, the underpinnings and principles for qualitative research supported this study's purpose and research questions. Even though qualitative research has not been the primary methodology used to study the field of writing, it can be both practical and beneficial to teachers because qualitative research stems from classroom teachers' perspectives (Schultz, 2008). Using qualitative research methodologies to help teachers may, in turn, "create opportunities for the education of our youth in and out of schools" (Schultz, 2008, p. 370). Therefore, while using qualitative research with a social constructivist framework, this study richly described and strove to understand teachers' perceptions of the writing standards from the

ELA CCSS, how they have developed these understandings, and their experiences with classroom writing practices. The research design is described below.

Research Design

Qualitative research encompasses numerous research approaches (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). The most common approaches used in qualitative research are ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, narrative research, and case studies (Creswell, 2013). Selecting a qualitative research approach requires the researcher to analyze the research purpose and questions, as well as the framework of the study (Creswell, 2013).

After analyzing this study's purpose, research questions, and philosophical underpinnings, a case study was chosen as the qualitative research approach. Merriam (2009) defined a case study as "an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (p. 40). Yin (2009) added that case studies can help a group or organization to advance a body of knowledge while using many forms of evidence. Therefore, a case study was a valuable qualitative approach not only to understand how teachers have perceived the writing standards from the ELA CCSS, developed their understandings, and experienced the writing curriculum, instruction, and assessment as a result of the implementation of the ELA CCSS, but it was also integral to help classroom teachers advance the knowledge of classroom writing practices.

In order to design a case study, a bounded system, either multi-site or within-site, must be selected (Creswell, 2013). For that reason, I chose a multi-site case study to understand the experiences of teachers in two school districts—a single-school district, the Springdale Public School District, and a multi-school district, the Lanark Public School District (both pseudonyms). Also, the researcher must be engaged in the natural setting for prolonged periods of time and collect many forms of data (Creswell, 2013). To accomplish this, I conducted

multiple interviews and observations from August 2015 through March 2016. In addition, I collected artifacts from the participating elementary classroom teachers when they were offered. Lastly, I analyzed the data by coding and categorizing to construct themes, which eventually led to assertions that answered my research questions. Figure 1 shows a visual representation of the research design.

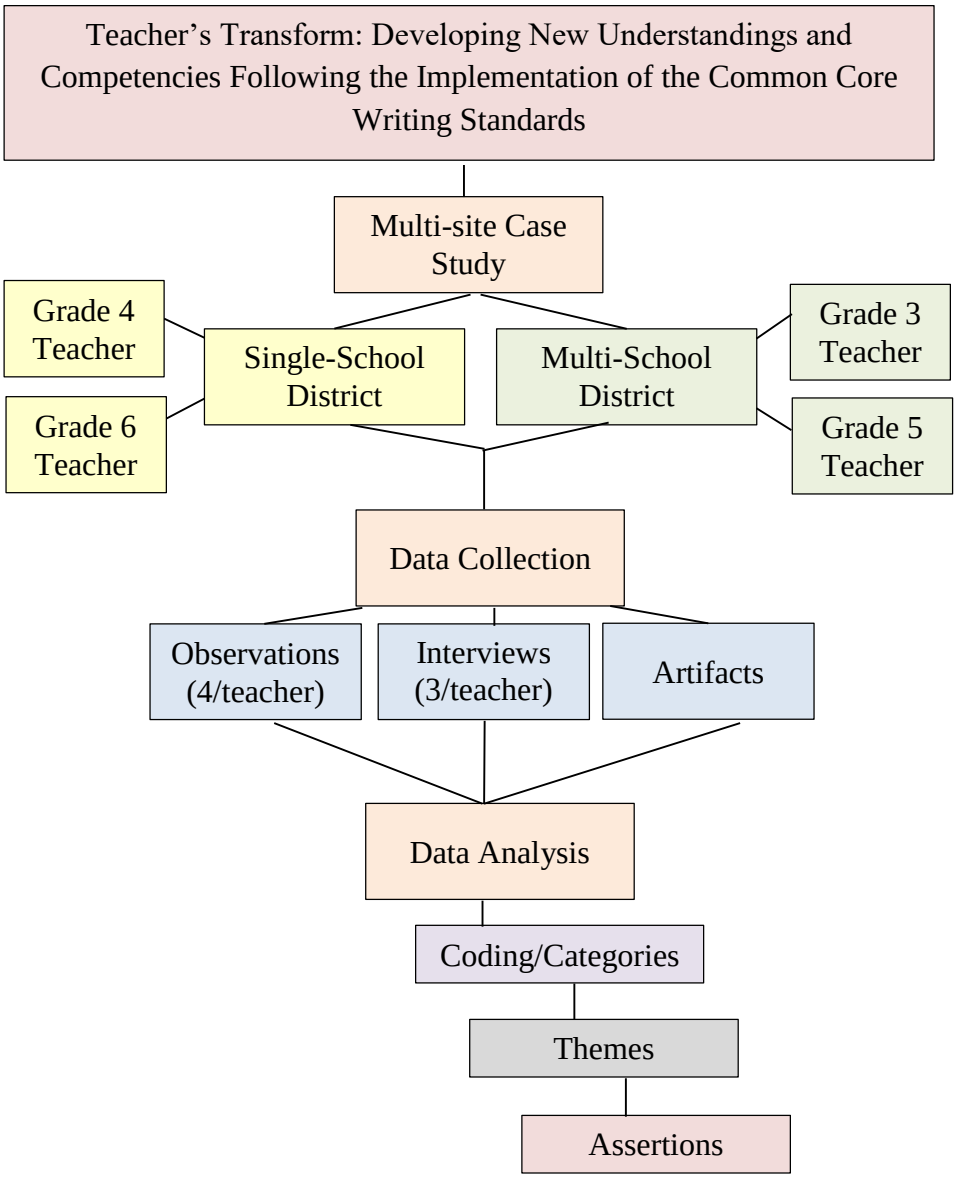

Figure 1. Research Design. This figure shows this study's research design.

Details on the methods and procedures used in determining the research sites, participant selection, data collection, and data analysis are described below.

Research Sites

Purposeful sampling establishes the criteria from which to select research sites (Merriam, 2009). I used purposeful sampling to select the bounded cases and the schools within each case. First, I purposefully selected two bounded cases—a public single-school district and a public multi-school district in ND. Although there were only about five public school districts in ND that had multiple elementary and middle schools, these multi-school districts served about 40% of ND students at the time of this study (ND DPI, 2015a). The remaining ND students were schooled in single-school districts that had only one elementary or middle school in each district. Thus, selecting schools from two separate bounded cases more accurately reflected the composition of the ND school districts.

Next, I used convenience sampling (Salmons, 2010) to select a district in each bounded case based on my relationship with the administration and their willingness to allow me to research in their schools. To do this, I contacted superintendents and principals, either face-to-face or via telephone and email. After receiving written permission from the administration at the Springdale Public School District and the Lanark Public School District, I had established the districts that made up each of the bounded cases and fulfilled the study's criteria.

The Springdale Public School District was selected as the bounded case for a single-school district because it had only one elementary, middle, and high school. The Lanark Public School District was selected as the bounded case for a multi-school district because it had seventeen elementary schools, three middle schools, and three high schools. These two districts are located approximately 80 miles apart from one another. Even though both the Springdale

Public School District and the Lanark Public School District served students in preschool through twelfth grade, Table 2 illustrates notable differences in student enrollment and employed staff members according to the most current published data available at the time of writing this chapter (North Dakota Department of Public Instruction [ND DPI], 2015a).

Table 2. District Information from the 2014–2015 School Year.

School district (pseudonym)	Total students	Classroom teachers	Other teachers	Licensed staff
Springdale	704	41.4	11.4	9.5
Lanark	12,337	610.8	199.1	158.1

Note. Data from ND DPI, 2015a.

After determining the two bounded cases, I used purposeful and convenience sampling (Merriam, 2009; Salmons, 2010) to select schools where I had a relationship with a gatekeeper and employed classroom teachers in grades three, four, five, or six. In the Springdale Public School District, I emailed both the elementary and middle school principals to select a grade four and a grade six teacher. Both principals agreed to allow me to select a teacher at their schools. In the Lanark Public School District, I emailed the principals at Washington Elementary School and Justice Elementary School (pseudonyms). Again, I received permission from both principals to allow me to select a teacher at their schools. Table 3 displays each selected school's demographic data, including total students, classroom teachers, other teachers, and licensed staff according to the most current published data available at the time of this study (ND DPI, 2015a).

Springdale Elementary School is the only elementary school in the Springdale Public School District, the single-school district in this study. It serves about 275 students in kindergarten through grade four, and it also accommodates a private preschool. Springdale Elementary is a well-maintained, updated building. Also in the Springdale Public School

District, Springdale Middle School educates approximately 220 students in grades five through eight. It is the only middle school in the study's single-school district of Springdale Public School District. Similar to Springdale Elementary, it is a well-maintained building.

Table 3. School Demographic Information from the 2014–2015 School Year.

School (pseudonym)	Total students	Classroom teachers	Other teachers	Licensed staff
Springdale Elem.	275	16	4.5	2.4
Springdale Middle	221	11.42	3.7	3.3
Washington Elem.	400	20.0	7.9	5.6
Justice Elem.	466	24.5	6.1	5.0

Note. Data from ND DPI, 2015a.

In the Lanark Public School District, the multi-school district in this study, Washington Elementary and Justice Elementary were selected from the 17 district elementary schools. Washington Elementary School is a kindergarten through grade five public elementary school. Built in 1979, Washington Elementary grew rapidly and has been renovated twice with additional classrooms and space. With about 400 students, all classrooms and spaces are full of learners. Justice Elementary School also serves students in preschool through grade five. Justice opened its doors to students in 1969 and has added three additions to accommodate the growing population. Justice Elementary is the largest elementary school in this study with over 460 students.

Participant Selection

After determining the bounded cases and selecting schools within each case, I established a sample size and criteria to select classroom teacher participants. To determine the sample size, I followed two principles of qualitative research. The first was the sample size in qualitative

research should allow the researcher "to collect extensive detail about each site or individual studied" (Creswell, 2013, p. 157). The second was the idea that the overarching goal of qualitative research is not to generalize information, so deeply studying fewer participants is advantageous in case study methodologies to thoroughly understand and describe the case (Creswell, 2013). Hence, selecting four classroom teachers, two from each bounded case, satisfied the principles embedded in qualitative research.

Next, I defined the criteria used for selecting a sample of elementary classroom teachers. Given the fact that ND ELA standardized assessment begins in grade three (North Dakota Legislative Council, 2015), teachers needed to be at least a grade three teacher to have experience with the standardized writing assessments. Also, elementary teachers' licenses allow them to teach up to grade six (North Dakota Education Standards and Practices Board, 2013), so participants in this study were purposely selected (Merriam, 2009) if they were a classroom teacher in grades three through six. In order to make the study more comprehensive, I selected four classroom teachers—one in each of the grades three, four, five, and six—to fulfill the sample size and criteria.

I began the participant selection by asking school principals or district instructional coaches in the Springdale and Lanark Public School districts for recommendations of grades three through six classroom teachers who may be interested in participation. Beginning in the fall of 2015, I used that information to contact the teachers with an informative email invitation that was approved by the Institutional Review Board (Appendix B). This email not only described the study, but it also outlined the fact that participation included three semi-structured interviews, four observations of the classroom writing block with debriefing interviews, and a collection of

writing artifacts (such as lesson plans, sample worksheets, sample assessments, pictures of writing posters) from August 2015 until March 2016.

Altogether, I contacted eight teachers, and four agreed to participate in the study. From the Springdale Public School district, Mrs. Allison Smith and Mrs. Shelly Thomas (pseudonyms) were selected and agreed to participate. In the Lanark Public School District, Mrs. Mary Johnson and Mrs. Jessica Miller (pseudonyms) were selected and willing to participate. Table 4 outlines the school district, grade level taught, and years of teaching experience for each teacher.

Table 4. Participant Demographic Information.

Teacher (pseudonym)	School district	School	Grade level	Experience (years)
Mary Johnson	Lanark	Washington El.	3	30
Allison Smith	Springdale	Springdale El.	4	9
Jessica Miller	Lanark	Justice El.	5	1
Shelly Thomas	Springdale	Springdale Mid.	6	17

As shown in Table 4, most of the teachers (Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Smith, and Mrs. Thomas) had several years of teaching experience. Mrs. Miller, however, was only in her second year of teaching and did not have teaching experience before the implementation of the ELA CCSS.

To protect the participants, this study was reviewed and approved by the University of North Dakota's Institutional Review Board. Teachers who participated in the study were informed of the purpose of the research, the time commitment requested from them, and risks and benefits from participation. Prior to the interview at our first meeting, the teachers and I reviewed the consent form (Appendix C). I emphasized to the teachers that they may withdraw from this study at any time or not answer any questions that may cause discomfort during

interviews. Upon answering any questions that they may have had, the teachers signed the form and were given a copy for their records.

Data Collection

Creswell (2013) stated that the "data collection in case study research is typically extensive, drawing on multiple sources of information" (p. 100). Oftentimes, data collection sources, such as interviews, observations, and artifact collection, are used together in a case study (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). To comply with these notions, interviews, observations, and artifact collection comprised the data set in this study. While interviews were the primary source for data collection, I also observed classroom writing blocks and collected artifacts to triangulate the data. Table 5 organizes the dates of the interviews and observations for each teacher to highlight the volume and timespan of collected data.

Table 5. Data Collection Dates by Teacher.

Data source	Mrs. Johnson	Mrs. Smith	Mrs. Miller	Mrs. Thomas
Interview 1	10/6/15	8/20/15	11/10/15	9/17/15
Observation 1	10/6/15	11/16/15	12/8/15	9/30/15
Observation 2	11/10/15	11/18/15	12/15/15	11/24/15
Interview 2	12/2/15	12/3/15	12/15/15	12/1/15
Observation 3	2/17/16	2/9/16	1/27/16	2/11/16
Observation 4	2/24/16	2/18/16	2/2/16	2/18/16
Interview 3	2/24/16	3/1/16	3/7/16	3/10/16

As shown above, I formally met with the teachers from August through March by distributing the three interviews to allow time for reflection and growth by both the teachers and myself. Also, I divided the school year into two semesters, with January 15 as the semester break, so I observed two classroom writing blocks per semester for each teacher. During all the

visits, I collected student writing samples, posters and displays on the writing process, rubrics, and graphic organizers that were offered to me. Altogether, the data collection included approximately eight hours of interviews, sixteen hours of observations, and twenty-seven artifacts.

Interviews

Interviews for data collection are "necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them" (Merriam, 2009, p. 88). In this study, the primary sources of data were collected with multiple structured, semi-structured, and informal in-depth interviews. See Appendix D for the interview questions.

The first interview occurred in the fall of 2015 and included both structured and semi-structured questions. The structured questions consisted of the basic demographic information, and the semi-structured questions included open-ended questions that allowed the participant to lead the direction of conversation in the interview (Merriam, 2009). After at least four weeks had passed, I conducted the second interview. While this interview also included structured and semi-structured questions, teachers had more freedom to lead the interview based on what was actually occurring with writing in their classrooms. To allow for further reflection and growth, I interviewed the teachers a final time with semi-structured questions. After building a relationship and understanding each teacher's specific issues and concerns, this final interview was mostly participant-led, although I asked each teacher similar questions. I also asked any questions that were needed to clarify previous interviews or fill gaps in the collected data.

In addition, I conducted an open, informal interview (Merriam, 2009; Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001) after each planned observation of classroom writing instruction. The purposes for these interviews were to discuss and analyze the writing curriculum, instruction, and assessment that I

observed in the classroom with the teacher. These informal interviews helped verify my perception of the observation with the teachers' perceptions and experiences of their writing curriculum and instruction. Although these interviews were informal, the teachers and I discussed similar topics, such as the alignment to the ELA CCSS, as well as how the teachers perceived and experienced the instruction and assessment (formal and informal) of the writing instruction after each observation. These open, informal interviews occurred as soon as possible after the lesson was observed to keep the observation fresh in our minds. Even though my goal was to engage in a face-to-face interview after each observation, on two occasions, two teachers asked to write out and email their responses to the open, informal interview questions because they wanted more time to reflect. Therefore, of the sixteen observation interviews, four were collected via email.

Structured, semi-structured, and informal interviews were used for collecting data to understand teachers' perceptions, how they have developed their understandings, and their experiences with the classroom writing curriculum, instruction, and assessment following the implementation of the ELA CCSS. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim to increase validity. Also, both the audio files and transcribed interviews were saved on a password protected computer.

Observations

Observations are also an important data collection method in case studies (Merriam, 2009). Observations occur in the natural setting and allow the researcher to gain a "firsthand encounter with the phenomenon of interest rather than a secondhand account of the world obtained in an interview" (Merriam, 2009, p. 117). At times, observations provide a more "accurate indication" of the phenomenon (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001, p. 436). First, I made an

informal visit to the schools and classrooms to become familiar with the context, people, and daily schedules (Merriam, 2009). Following the informal visit, I set up dates and times to observe the writing block in each teacher's classroom.

There are different positions that a researcher can take while observing. Gold (1958) identified four positions: complete participant, participant as observer, observer as participant, and complete observer. My position was fluid and fluctuated between the participant as observer and observer as participant when it seemed necessary in the classroom. My focus, however, was on the writing curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Both during and after the observation, I composed field notes. I used rich, complete descriptions and observer comments in these notes (Merriam, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Then, the field notes were typed and included "descriptions, direct quotations, and observer comments" (Merriam, 2009, p. 137). Similar to the transcriptions, observation documents were stored on a password protected computer.

Artifacts

Collecting artifacts is important in case studies because they were likely not created solely for the purpose of the research (Merriam, 2009). Also, artifact collection does not interrupt the setting like the presence of the researcher in observations (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, student writing samples, posters or displays on the writing process, rubrics, and graphic organizers were collected to further triangulate the data.

Although I mostly collected artifacts only when they were offered to me, I did, at times, request a copy of an artifact if I thought the benefit of it was worth the request. I took photographs and made copies of each artifact, which I uploaded and saved on my password protected computer. I was given copies or allowed to take pictures of student writing samples by

all four teachers in this study. I also received copies of graphic organizers from Mrs. Smith from the Springdale district and Mrs. Miller from the Lanark district. I took pictures of writing posters and visuals in Mrs. Smith's and Mrs. Thomas's classroom from the Springdale district. Mrs. Miller from the Lanark district allowed me to take pictures of her classroom writing posters, and she also let me take pictures of professional development books and district rubrics. No lesson plans were offered to me, and I did not feel that the intrusion of asking for lesson plans would be beneficial to this study. Altogether, I collected 27 artifacts from the teachers.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was ongoing from the onset of the study. According to Merriam, "Without ongoing analysis, the data can be unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming in the sheer volume of material that needs to be processed. Data that have been analyzed while being collected are both parsimonious and illuminated" (2009, p. 171). Miles and Huberman (1994) also suggested early analysis to strategically collect new data. Therefore, the analysis began while I was collecting data and continued through the write-up of findings.

Memoing is an important component for qualitative research analysis, and both Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Charmaz (2006) stated that memos are integral for many purposes: defining codes, processing data, comparing codes and data, filling in gaps in analysis, reflecting on the research, recording a new property that was not previously recorded, and guiding future research. Miles & Huberman (1994) further stated that memoing is useful to link different pieces of data into themes or clusters. I used memoing throughout my study and found that it assisted me with coding and theme construction. For example, on November 12, 2015, I had recorded the following memo.

> I had an idea for pattern coding when I was almost asleep last night. I realized that the codes corresponding to more nonfiction writing and less personal/fiction writing all related to "experiences" that the teachers have had in the classroom while implementing the ELA CCSS.

On February 19, 2016, I had written the memo below that later helped with a theme and assertion.

> While analyzing what I thought was missing data today, I actually had a hunch for a finding—I am not sure what will come of it, but it seemed interesting. I noticed that teachers in multi-school districts do not talk about the ambiguity of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS as much as the single-school district teachers due to district guidance and support that is happening in multi-school districts more than single-school districts!

As well as using memos, I organized the data with Attribute Codes. According to Saldana (2009), "Attribute Coding is the notation, usually at the beginning of a data set rather than embedded within it, of basic descriptive information" (p. 55). The Attribute Codes that I used were as follows: name of the teacher, bounded case (single- or multi-school district), date of collection, and type of data (interview, observation, or artifact). Next, I uploaded copies of all transcriptions, field notes, and artifacts to the qualitative research computer program ATLAS.ti to further organize and analyze the data. I then read through the transcriptions, field note write-ups, and looked over the artifacts many times. This helped me to become close with the data and prepare for further coding.

In the ATLAS.ti program, I created Primary Document Families that corresponded with the Attribute Codes. Specifically, I created Primary Document Families containing the single-

school and the multi-school district data. I also created families containing only the interview, observation, or artifact data. Later on in the process, I created Primary Document Families containing data from teachers with experience teaching writing both prior to and following the implementation of the ELA CCSS and from the teacher with experience teaching writing only after the implementation of the ELA CCSS. Using these Primary Document Families as Attribute Codes was useful for data analysis to uncover similarities and differences, as well as hierarchical structures, between and within participants, sites, and data formats (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This was important to validate findings by analyzing all possible connections among classroom teachers' perspectives and experiences with classroom writing practices following the implementation of the ELA CCSS.

Next, I began Initial Coding (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Initial Coding involved "breaking down qualitative data into discrete parts, closely examining them, and comparing them for similarities and differences" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 102). I read through the transcribed data and documents and highlighted significant statements. I then coded these statements using In Vivo Coding, Process Coding, and Descriptive Coding (Saldana, 2009). In Vivo Coding helped to preserve the participants' voices, which increased the validity of the data analysis (Saldana, 2009). Process Coding signified actions of both activities and concepts, and Descriptive Coding summarized the topic of the statement (Saldana, 2009). Using In Vivo, Process, and Descriptive Coding during Initial Coding helped identify salient concepts, ideas, and processes, as well as their properties and dimensions (Saldana, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Oftentimes, I used two or more codes on the same significant statement, and upon gaining understandings and new data, I had to revisit the significant statements and edit the codes. For example, if a code did not appear often in the data,

I revisited the code and either merged the code or dropped the code. After analyzing all the data, I had created a total of 66 codes. See Appendix E for a list of all the codes with the descriptions of those code. These were reduced to 46 codes that were relevant and useful to answer the research questions.

After Initial Coding all the interviews and documents with several passes, I began the second cycle of coding to "develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organizations" (Saldana, 2009, p. 149). Specifically, I used Pattern Coding (Saldana, 2009) to connect the codes and organize them into categories. These categories were descriptive and conceptually similar (Merriam, 2009). Three categories were used to answer the study's research questions. Table 6 shows the 46 codes and their groundedness, or number of significant statements linked to that code, organized by category. The middle column also shows the phases from Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory that aligned with each category.

Table 6. Categories with Transformative Learning Phases, Codes, and Groundedness.

Category	Transformative learning phases	Codes and groundedness (in parenthesis)
Impacts	phases 1, 2, 3	Ambiguity (38) Beliefs-Writing (110) Confidence (30) Giving kids a purpose for writing (43) Motivating (83) Obstacles (136) Time (119) Transformative Learning Stage (95)
Developing Understandings	phases 4, 5, 6, 7	Expectations (30) Guidance (31) Independent Research (75) Professional Development (118) Resources (63) Specific Writing Gurus (27) Specific Writing Programs (78)

Table 6. cont.

Category	Transformative learning phases	Codes and groundedness (in parenthesis)
Experiences	phases 8, 9, 10	Assessment (128)
		Changes (114)
		Conferencing (23)
		Curric., Instruct., Assess. (94)
		Experience (23)
		Formal Writing (13)
		Grammar/Mechanics (43)
		Imagination in writing (10)
		Informal Writing (69)
		Informative Writing (25)
		Management (53)
		Modeling (65)
		Narratives (47)
		Nonfiction Writing (15)
		Obstacles (136)
		Old ND Standards (48)
		Opinion Writing (22)
		Overwhelming (14)
		Peer editing (18)
		Persuasive Writing (17)
		Plagiarism (24)
		Poetry (5)
		Reflection (58)
		Required Writing (52)
		Revising/Editing (34)
		Rubrics (66)
		Scaffolding (59)
		Self-assessment and direction (78)
		Spelling (5)
		Spiral Curriculum (42)
		Standards (56)
		Text-based evidence (11)

When I completed the Pattern Coding, I created a code co-occurrence table with the three categories and the bounded cases using the analysis tools in the ATLAS.ti program (Appendix F). I used this table to drive the within-case analyses to look at each bounded case individually, but I also used cross-case analyses "to enhance *generalizability*" and "deepen *understanding* and

explanation" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 173). Creswell (2013) warned that it can be difficult to move an analysis to the creation of inferences leading to themes and assertions because the researcher has become too close to the data and cannot see how the study is significant. However, the within-case and cross-case analyses enabled me to construct themes that described rules, causes, and explanations (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Analyzing the co-occurrences between the categories and the bounded cases allowed me to see similarities and differences within and between the cases. It is important to point out that the data from the code co-occurrence table could not be taken at face value because they were only indicative of the fact that the code was mentioned in the data. Thus, although the code co-occurrence table was a good starting point, I had to revisit the significant statements associated with the code to understand how the code was used and its relation to the single-school district or the multi-school district bounded case. Specifically, I found the codes in the "Developing Understandings" category had several co-occurrences worth exploring. This led me to analyze the data between the two bounded cases to find similarities and differences in how teachers developed their understandings of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS. I noticed the codes "Ambiguity," "Confidence," and "Overwhelming" in the other categories also had notable variances between the cases and correlated to the "Developing Understandings" category. As I did with the codes and linked significant statements in the "Developing Understandings" category, I analyzed those additional three codes within and between the two bounded cases. Table 7 lists the selected codes and the occurrences of those codes in the multi- and single-school district that further helped with the data analysis.

Table 7. Selected Code Co-Occurrence in the Multi-School and Single-School District.

Code	Multi-school district occurrence	Single-school district occurrence
Ambiguity	2	36
Confidence	20	10
Expectations	13	17
Guidance	15	16
Independent Research	29	46
Overwhelming	3	11
Professional Development	74	44
Resources	18	45
Specific Writing Gurus	27	0
Specific Writing Programs	42	36

Upon completing the within- and cross-case analyses, four themes emerged through data analysis. These themes were as follows:

- teachers name impacts to implementing the writing standards,
- systemic and isolated learning about writing practices,
- personalized learning to pave the way to implement classroom writing, and
- taking risks and transforming perspectives.

As described above, the data analysis was both an inductive and deductive process (Merriam, 2009). Specifically, the data analysis began as an inductive process while I coded and connected the codes into categories. I then used deductive processing to determine how these categories endured additional data and to construct the themes. Data analysis was also ongoing, beginning during data collection and continuing until the write-up of the findings.

Validity

Validity is a series of claims and not absolute truth (Carspecken, 1996); I used multiple validity methods to strengthen these claims. Newman and Benz (1998) stated that the more validity-ensuring components included in a study, the higher its truth value. Therefore, I conscientiously employed several validity methods both before and throughout the research process. These are discussed below.

Before the Research

Prior to beginning the study, I considered the design of the study as an initial validity technique (Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001). I sketched out basic design decisions, including data collection procedures, and used design templates and questions from Maxwell (1996). I also used reflexivity (Robson, 2002) to determine any biases by memoing and disclosing my personal interest (Ravitch & Riggan, 2012) that I had in the ELA CCSS as part of my conceptual framework. These memos and personal interests were important for data collection and analysis to help eliminate my own biases.

During Data Collection and Analysis

In order to increase validity during data collection, I spent prolonged time at each research site (Carspecken, 1996; Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 1999; Merriam, 2009; Robson, 2002). Given that it is essential to accurately and thoroughly describe each case in case study methodologies (Creswell, 2013), studying the classrooms at each school for an extended time period helped me deeply understand each classroom and teacher. In addition, prolonged time at each site increased the probability that the participants behaved naturally (Merriam, 2009).

Other validity techniques that I used during data collection were to be anticipatory and to assume a naïve position (Glesne, 1999). While interviewing, I was anticipatory by allowing the

teacher to guide the direction of the topics while following a semi-structured interview. Also, I assumed a naïve position by bracketing prior ELA CCSS knowledge with memos and reflections in the conceptual framework. This allowed me to fully absorb the teachers' statements and understandings in the interview. It also made me aware of possibly skewing the data with my prior ELA CCSS perspectives during data collection and analysis.

Using the computer program ATLAS.ti to organize and analyze large amounts of raw data was another method used to increase validity. Though data can be organized and analyzed without computer software, there are concerns with the researcher as a sole analyst (Robson, 2002). Many of these concerns stem from researcher biases (Robson, 2002). Thus, using ATLAS.ti allowed for a more systematic approach to data collection and analysis, increasing the validity.

Upon analyzing and synthesizing the findings, I used member checking (Robson, 2002) by giving the teachers a copy of interview transcriptions, field note write-ups, and construed themes and assertions. I allowed and encouraged them to read through all of their collected data. Even though there were no objections or corrections, I would have taken any objections or concerns by teachers seriously (Glesne, 1999). At the end of the study, all four teachers confirmed the themes and assertions.

Lastly, in order to counteract any self-report bias by the teachers, I used triangulation during data collection and analysis to compare the collected data sources, including classroom artifacts with observations and interviews. I found positive alignments between the data sources, confirming that teachers were actually doing what they reported in their classroom writing practices.

Throughout the Research

Two important validity techniques were used simultaneously and continuously throughout the research process—peer debriefing and maintaining an audit trail. The validity technique of peer debriefing was used by engaging in general discussions with my advisor, former colleagues, professors, and scholars to understand salient issues in classroom writing curriculum, instruction, and assessment with the implementation of the ELA CCSS. These discussions helped me to form my open-ended questions for the follow-up semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, I discussed the findings of this research with my peers who are knowledgeable in the ELA CCSS and writing to confirm the data analysis leading to the themes and assertions.

Maintaining an organized and thorough audit trail was integral throughout the research process. I maintained an audit trail with rich, thick descriptions of all data, including memos, field notes, interview transcripts, organizational charts, and writing artifacts. For example, Whittemore et al. (2001) listed verbatim transcriptions as a demonstration of validity. Therefore, I transcribed the interviews exactly as stated, including utterances and nonverbal behavior (Ochs, 1999). All data were stored on a password protected computer and saved in multiple locations, including the ATLAS.ti program, which I backed up every three to four days. Additionally, I kept a research journal to write down my thoughts on the research process.

Validity is critical in any qualitative research study. In this study, validity was explicitly employed both before and throughout the research process. By purposefully ensuring many validity methods, including the study design, bias analysis, prolonged time at each site, being anticipatory and naïve during interviews, member checking, triangulation, peer debriefing, and maintaining an audit trail, this study's findings are more dependable.

Summary

This chapter identified the methods and procedures of this study. Beginning with the underpinnings of this qualitative study, the research design, including the site selection, participant selection, and data collection and analysis, was described. Additionally, various validity methods used throughout the study to increase the truth value of the findings were explained.

Chapter IV will begin by thoroughly describing the participants in this study. The themes with supporting raw data will then be discussed and related back to the literature and theoretical framework.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this case study was to understand how public elementary teachers from a single-school district and a multi-school district in North Dakota (ND) have perceived and developed their understandings of the writing standards from the English Language Arts (ELA) Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and to understand their experiences with the writing curriculum, instruction, and assessment following the implementation of the ELA CCSS. Three research questions guided this study:

1. What do teachers perceive are the impacts of the writing standards from the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards in their classrooms?
2. How have teachers developed their understandings of the writing standards from the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards?
3. How did teachers experience the impact of the writing standards from the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards on their curriculum, instruction, and assessment?

This chapter begins by thoroughly describing the participating teachers' background, beliefs, practices, and college training with writing. The four themes, organized thematically, are then described with supporting raw data and related back to the literature and theoretical framework.

Participants

To answer the research questions, four public ND elementary teachers in grades three through six were selected to participate in this qualitative case study. To protect anonymity, all research sites and participants were given pseudonyms. Mrs. Mary Johnson (third grade) and Mrs. Jessica Miller (fifth grade) were participants from the multi-school district of the Lanark Public School District. Mrs. Allison Smith (fourth grade) and Mrs. Shelly Thomas (sixth grade) were selected from the single-school district of the Springdale Public School District. These teachers participated in three formal interviews, four observations of their classroom writing block with accompanying interviews, and shared classroom writing artifacts from August 2015 through March 2016. Each participant's teaching experiences, personal and professional writing practices, recollections of writing in her own K–12 schooling, and reflections on preparation to teach classroom writing after attending a teacher education program are described below.

Mrs. Mary Johnson

Mrs. Mary Johnson brings a lot of experience to her classroom as a third grade teacher at Washington Elementary School. After spending five years teaching second grade, Mrs. Johnson has been in the third grade classroom ever since, and she is now in her twenty-sixth year as a third grade teacher. Mrs. Johnson reported that retirement is "around the corner in about five years."

Mrs. Johnson considers herself a "big writer." She believes that writing is her strength as a means of communication. Every week, Mrs. Johnson handwrites a personal letter to each of her students, complete with the five parts of friendly letter. The weekly newsletter that she composes also includes "a lot of writing." She laughed while adding that she has tried to shorten those newsletters but has been unsuccessful. In addition to the letters and newsletters, Mrs. Johnson

described the four to five page detailed narratives that she composes about each student's progress in all the subject areas to accompany his or her report card.

Outside of the classroom, Mrs. Johnson writes lists, hand-written thank you letters, Christmas letter poems, and keeps a journal. While attaining her Master's degree a few years ago, Mrs. Johnson chose to write a thesis studying the decline of pleasure reading for her capstone project. Her advisor pushed Mrs. Johnson to try to publish her thesis, and she reported that she has "always regretted that but, um, I was so burnt out by the end of it [so] I didn't want to [publish]."

In her own K–12 schooling, Mrs. Johnson recalled being able to use her imagination with "a lot of fiction writing" and "a lot of stories." Regarding nonfiction writing, she remembered writing "old school research reports with the bibliographies" in high school. To conduct research for those reports, Mrs. Johnson stated that "using the library [and] learning how to use the library was the key to success" because there was no Internet. Along those lines, she discussed using the typewriter to compose the final project. While admitting that there are now new ways to find information, Mrs. Johnson revealed that the decline in the use of the library by today's students "kind of breaks my heart."

Throughout her teacher education program in college, Mrs. Johnson could not remember any formal training to teach writing in the classroom. However, as a teacher in the Lanark Public School District, she has sought out and taken many professional development opportunities to continue improving her classroom writing practices.

Mrs. Allison Smith

For as long as she could remember, Mrs. Allison Smith wanted to be a teacher. Upon finishing her elementary education degree, an opportunity to teach knocked—just in a different

department and level. Mrs. Smith received a request to be a long-term substitute high school special education teacher because the contracted teacher was ill. Mrs. Smith agreed, and after working and having her interest piqued by the special education field, she decided to obtain a Master's degree in Special Education. Ironically, after receiving the advanced degree, she is now back where she planned to begin—in the elementary classroom. With four years in special education and four years in third grade under her belt, Mrs. Smith is in her second year as a fourth grade teacher at Springdale Elementary School.

Mrs. Smith loves writing notes and lists. She even stated that her house is "covered in notes." She even creates weekly written menu plans for her family, complete with lists for the grocery store. Additionally, she shared that she prefers to use a paper-form of a calendar instead of the electronic versions because she likes "to visually see it written down on a calendar." The one form of writing that she thought she should do, but does not, is journaling.

She also spoke about writing throughout her graduate program. As a final project to graduate from the Master's program, Mrs. Smith completed the portfolio option, which required a lot of writing. She stated, "I never considered myself a very good writer . . . so when I got to Sunnysville University [pseudonym] I thought—whoa! I have to step up my game." Mrs. Smith thought it was probably due to all the writing with the portfolio and other assignments in her graduate program that caused her to witness the improvement of her own writing.

Mrs. Smith vividly recalled positive and negative experiences with writing in her own K–12 schooling. A positive experience was journal writing during her freshman English class, and she remembered that one day a week, the English teacher would assign a topic to journal about. She loved journaling and thought she may still have those journals saved somewhere. However, Mrs. Smith also talked about composing the "dreaded" research papers on the typewriter and

“getting frustrated because I had a correction tape, and I couldn’t get it to work!” Aside from those two forms of writing—journals and research papers—Mrs. Smith only partially remembered being taught how to write. The one instance she could recall was her high school English teacher showing the class how to use recipe cards as notecards to cite sources.

Even in her undergraduate college experience, Mrs. Smith does not remember being taught how to write or how to teach writing. Interestingly, she stated, “I think we just kind of assumed that [the students are] going to learn how to write.” She added that she did not even think about classroom writing practices until a couple of years ago.

Mrs. Jessica Miller

Working at a daycare and being an elementary school instructional aide prompted Mrs. Jessica Miller to go back to college and become a teacher. After taking a semester off to student teach, Mrs. Miller continued to be an instructional aide for one more year at Justice Elementary School while job hunting. Her work paid off when Mrs. Miller landed a fifth grade teaching position last year. While this is only her second year teaching, Mrs. Miller foresees many years in the fifth grade classroom.

Mrs. Miller stated that she writes formal papers, informal discussion posts, and other assignments for her Master’s degree program, which she began last summer. With those writing assignments, she referenced the importance of understanding and using the American Psychological Association format. She also talked about writing for Individualized Education Program meetings, though she does not usually have to write the formal report.

Mrs. Miller could not recollect a lot about writing from her own experiences in elementary, middle, and high school. Mrs. Miller assumed that she had done some kind of journaling, and she also faintly remembered a research paper. She thought that the research paper

probably was assigned in high school. Altogether, though, Mrs. Miller said that she did not have a lot of memories about writing in her own K–12 experience.

Mrs. Miller stated that she thought she would remember if her teacher education program prepared her to teach writing, and she did not think it did. She pondered with the idea that perhaps writing was integrated into a course on reading pedagogy, but she does not specifically remember. Mrs. Miller does, however, recall aligning lesson plans to standards in her college courses.

Mrs. Shelly Thomas

Mrs. Shelly Thomas has experience teaching in almost every elementary grade level. After teaching first, second, and third grade during her first five years at Springdale Elementary School, Mrs. Thomas moved into Springdale Middle School. There she taught fifth grade for seven years and has been in sixth grade for the last five years. In addition to her Bachelor's degree, Mrs. Thomas holds middle school endorsements in English, social studies, and mathematics. She also has the general middle school endorsement and credentials in reading and mathematics. Out of all the grade levels that elementary teachers are certified to teach, Mrs. Thomas believes "sixth grade really is the lost grade" because the curriculum and expectations align more closely with grades seven through twelve rather than grades one through five.

Due to time constraints, Mrs. Thomas stated that she does not engage in a lot of personal writing:

> Unfortunately, I don't have the time . . . if I do any writing, it would be for school purposes—basically if I'm taking notes on something that I am going to use in class or pre-do something that I want the kids to write.

However, she referenced that she does write emails and texts to communicate in her personal life.

Mrs. Thomas does not remember writing often in her own K–12 experience. Even when looking back at artifacts that were saved from her schooling, Mrs. Thomas said that she does not see many writing pieces. She also does not recall any formal instruction in writing from her teachers. Mrs. Thomas revealed that she had "never written a research paper all through high school." While she seemed shocked by this admission, Mrs. Thomas wondered if there was a change in English teachers while she was attending high school that caused what she believed to be an important piece of the curriculum—writing a research paper—to be left out.

In college, Mrs. Thomas did not feel she was prepared to teach classroom writing. Regarding her lack of preparation and why it may not have occurred, Mrs. Thomas stated,

> I would say I was not prepared at all—bottom line. I don't think we ever went through how to teach writing because, again, when I graduated, there wasn't the push for writing . . . there wasn't any [need to prepare teachers to teach writing] in fact.

Mrs. Thomas proposed an idea to overcome the lack of preparation to teach writing in elementary education programs. She thought that in order to prepare elementary teachers to teach writing for the wide variety of grade levels that they may teach, teacher education programs must create courses for teaching the different types of writing in both the lower grades and the upper grades.

Summary of Participants

As described above, grade three teacher Mrs. Mary Johnson and grade five teacher Mrs. Jessica Miller were the teachers in this study from the multi-school district. From the single-school district was Mrs. Allison Smith in grade four and Mrs. Shelly Thomas in grade six. Of the

participating teachers, Mrs. Miller was the only teacher who did not have experience teaching writing both prior to and following the implementation of the ELA CCSS.

Even though the participating teachers reported using writing differently in their personal and professional lives, all four teachers in this study shared vague memories of writing in their own school experiences. The memories that they could recollect about writing in their K–12 classroom experiences revolved around fiction writing and possibly composing one research paper in high school. Also, all the participating teachers could not recall being adequately prepared, or even prepared at all, in their college teacher education programs to teach writing. This lack of college preparation is consistent with other studies. For example, Cutler and Graham (2008) reported that more than a quarter of surveyed elementary teachers self-reported they were not adequately prepared to teach writing in their teacher education programs. Along those lines, Graham and Harris (2013) pointed out that there is a need to understand how to prepare teachers to teach classroom writing.

Next, the findings from this study will be discussed. Four themes were constructed to answer the research questions and align with the theoretical framework from this study. Each theme will be shared with raw data and related back to the literature and theoretical framework.

Theme One: Teachers Name Impacts with Implementing the Writing Standards

Theme One answered the first research question, which sought to understand what teachers perceive as the impacts of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS in their classrooms. This theme aligned with three phases from Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory. The implementation of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS presented a disorienting dilemma (phase one) for teachers to think about and name the impacts that they perceived and experienced. Teachers also underwent self-examination and critically assessed

their assumptions (phases two and three, respectively) because these impacts did not align with either how they had been teaching writing prior to the implementation of the ELA CCSS or with how they were taught writing as a student. Findings from this study revealed that the teachers in this study named three major impacts, two of which acted as obstacles, resulting from the implementation of the writing standards. The following impacts were named by the teachers

- finding time in their school schedules to increase the time already allotted for the writing curriculum, instruction, and assessment;
- constantly motivating and giving students a purpose to write; and
- the writing standards and practices are important and necessary.

The third named impact was not seen as an obstacle. Also, this perception seemed to engulf the two obstacles and further helped to answer research question one. This perception possibly occurred as the teachers self-examined and critically assessed their assumptions about writing, which are phases two and three from Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory. The following sections further discuss each of the impacts.

Impact One: Time

Finding time in their school schedules to increase the time that they had already allotted for the writing curriculum, instruction, and assessment was one of the impacts named by the teachers in this study with the implementation of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS. All four teachers perceived that they needed more classroom time than they had already allocated for writing. To explain why they needed to increase their classroom writing time, teachers explained that the writing process is time-consuming for their students. They also said the writing standards from the ELA CCSS require students to compose a minimum of three different writing types, which requires significant amounts of time.

Mrs. Thomas, the grade six teacher from the Springdale district, talked about how the writing process requires a lot of classroom time. As stated by Mrs. Thomas, "It just takes a lot longer. That is one of the downfalls of writing, and I think everybody will tell you the same thing. It just takes so long!" This illustrates how Mrs. Thomas, and she thought possibly other teachers, thought the writing process is lengthy, so teachers must increase time spent on classroom writing to give their students ample time to create compositions. Mrs. Thomas even offered evidence for these perceptions by the way of an experience she had on the day of the second interview.

> Because even today, we had ninety minutes we were writing. We wrote our introduction paragraph, and then we started writing the three paragraphs for the reasons. And I wanted to have them done because I know what happens as soon as they leave this classroom—it's just not the same quality . . . I wanted to have those four paragraphs done in class—did it happen? No, because there just is not enough time, and so in my mind I'm going, 'Okay, do I pull this off another day?' . . . And is it going longer? Yeah, I wanted only Monday/Tuesday with this; now we're going to be doing this tomorrow.

This suggests that Mrs. Thomas was concerned about the large chunk of classroom time that she had set aside for her students to write quality paragraphs, yet the writing process took even longer than she had anticipated. Mrs. Thomas's experience parallels what the literature expresses. For example, the National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges (2003) stated a large amount of time is required for students to learn about writing skills and knowledge, as well as to actually write.

Trying to fit all the required subjects into the school day, including the increased time devoted to classroom writing, was also perceived as an impact by Mrs. Smith, the grade four

teacher from Springdale. She posed the question about writing, “How am I going to fit this subject in now?” Mrs. Smith also asked, “How do I incorporate even more writing than I did [in the past]?” Along those lines, Mrs. Johnson, the grade three teacher from the Lanark district, stated, “There’s just not enough time” regarding all of the different writing practices, such as one-to-one writing conferences, that she would like to include in her school day following the implementation of the writing standards. On the other hand, Mrs. Johnson pointed out a positive change that has occurred because of the impact of time. “I even have a specific block for writing that before the Common Core, I really don’t think I did. I did a lot of writing, but I didn’t have a specific block for it and now I do.”

While the teachers themselves perceived the writing process as lengthy and thought they needed to increase classroom time spent on writing, Mrs. Johnson noted that the Lanark district was also pushing for teachers to make this increase. She explained, “I believe the district would like us to do forty minutes a day, which is nearly impossible to find that [time] unless our day was longer.” She added that completing a writing project in third grade “probably takes five to six weeks before you get that finished product” and each individual writing project takes “forever.” This shows that teachers, either on their own or mandated by someone else, felt the push to increase their classroom time spent on writing because writing requires a lot of classroom time.

While the teachers in this study recognized that students need a lot of time to write, the push to increase classroom time spent on writing was also found in the literature. The National Commission on Writing in America’s Schools and Colleges (2003) recommended that teachers at least double the amount of time that they spend with writing in the classroom. With the amount of time required to allow students to produce writing, as well as the internal and external

pushes to increase the classroom time spent on writing, teachers named time as an impact with implementing the writing standards from the ELA CCSS.

Impact Two: Motivation and Purpose

All four teachers in this study named how they constantly motivate and give their students a purpose to write because most students do not enjoy writing for various reasons. This was found to be another impact resulting with the implementation of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS. Literature also confirmed that writing requires students to stay motivated and understand their purpose for writing in order to hold their interest (Cutler & Graham, 2008; Hidi & Boscolo, 2008). Thus, this named impact aligned with the literature.

Giving context to why teachers perceived the necessity of constantly motivating and giving students a purpose for writing, Mrs. Johnson stated, "Writing is laborious for kids; there's no doubt about it." Mrs. Miller confirmed, "The writing is hard; they, like I said, hate writing." Mrs. Smith said, "They just have such an attitude with writing, and it's not an enjoyable thing. They don't see the purpose in it." Lastly, Mrs. Thomas agreed and said students "don't necessarily like to do it." This illustrates how the teachers believed the majority of their students do not enjoy writing, which is consistent with literature by Harris, Graham, Friedlander, and Laud (2013) stating that writing is challenging to students for many reasons—one of those being that it is a multifaceted task.

To overcome the negative feelings and challenges that students have with writing, all four teachers in this study discussed how they must constantly motivate and give their students a purpose for writing. Mrs. Smith mentioned that she works hard to "get out of their minds that writing is so negative." Similarly, Mrs. Miller reiterated that she is always trying to both excite her kids about writing and help them enjoy it. According to Mrs. Miller, "Since they hate it so

much, too, it is almost kind of a—you strive to get them to like it." She added, "They don't like it and so teaching it is—they get bored, so it's like, to me, finding ways to get it out where it's interesting to them." This describes how teachers integrate motivational techniques into their writing instruction and curriculum to overcome students' negative feelings regarding writing.

Mrs. Johnson shared how she must make writing "real" to her students by giving them a purpose to write about meaningful events in their own lives. Mrs. Miller agreed that "trying to keep them interested in the writing is very hard." One way to overcome this that Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Smith, and Mrs. Miller shared was having their students create a page in their journals composed of things that they love. Students can then use this page when they must think of a topic or event to write about. This strategy helped to both motivate and give students a purpose for writing about meaningful topics.

The struggle with motivating students and giving them a purpose to write while implementing the writing standards from the ELA CCSS was paralleled in the literature. Graham and Harris (2013) stated that motivation is a key factor for students when they are writing, and motivation and other affective factors necessary for writing were overlooked and not included in the ELA CCSS writing standards. Troia and Olinghouse (2013) agreed that some areas of writing, such as motivation, are not addressed in the ELA CCSS.

Mrs. Smith summarized this perceived obstacle when she said, "You know, I want them to enjoy writing, too." This shows that Mrs. Smith, as well as the other teachers in this study, were continuously trying to motivate their students and give them a purpose to write and enjoy writing while implementing the writing standards, even without being required to do so by a state standard.

Impact Three: Importance of Writing

Despite these two named impacts that acted as obstacles, the teachers in this study perceived the writing standards and practices resulting from the implementation of the ELA CCSS as important and necessary to prepare students for writing competently in the 21st century. Mrs. Thomas stated the new writing standards and classroom writing practices were "good," and she believes they are of "utmost importance." She also said that despite the obstacles, she sees the importance of the writing standards. According to Mrs. Thomas, "When you look at the big scheme of things, [classroom writing following the implementation of the writing standards] is better."

Mrs. Miller also shared that writing is "important." While she was unsure if all of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS would be useful in her students' future, she believed that the conventions and grammar standards were imperative. Mrs. Johnson also thought that mastering the conventions and grammar writing standards from the ELA CCSS were especially integral for her students. Mrs. Johnson stated she "can see the merit" in the writing standards from the ELA CCSS.

Not only did Mrs. Smith state that the writing standards were important, but she also shared this perception with her students. "You know, everybody has to write, and [the students and I] talked about, 'Can you think of a job that you don't have to write?'" This illustrates how Mrs. Smith wanted her students to understand and share the perception that writing is important for their future careers.

The teachers' perception that the writing standards were important was supported by literature stating that classroom writing is important for students to succeed both in school and following graduation (Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman, 2012; Collin, 2013; Graham & Perin,

2007; Harris et al., 2013; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). This perception was also supported by literature stating that the implementation of the ELA CCSS will help to develop teachers' perceptions that writing is important and necessary for today's 21st century students (Graham & Harris, 2013; Mo, Kopke, Hawkins, Troia, & Olinghouse, 2014; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013).

Theme Two: Systemic and Isolated Learning about Writing Practices

Theme Two helped to answer the second research question, which was understanding how teachers have developed their understandings of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS. Theme Two aligned with four phases from the theoretical framework in this study. Phase four of the transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991) stated that there must be a recognition that one has discontent. This discontent came from classroom writing practices that did not help meet the writing standards from the ELA CCSS. Thus, teachers sought out professional development opportunities on writing because they recognized and needed new understandings of writing to integrate into their classrooms to meet the ELA CC writing standards. Then, teachers explored the available options, phase five from the transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991), to develop their understandings. After the exploration, teachers planned a course of action, which is phase six, based on these options. Finally, the teachers acquired the knowledge and skill necessary for acting on new meaning. This is phase seven of the transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991).

In this study, the teachers from the multi-school district were offered systemic and collaborative professional development opportunities, as well as guidance and resources; however, the teachers from the single-school district developed their understandings individually and were isolated from organized professional development opportunities because their district did not offer systemic professional development, guidance, or resources. The following sections

describe the divergence between the opportunities, guidance, and resources offered to the teachers in this study from the multi-school district from those teachers in the single-school district.

Multi-School District Opportunities, Guidance, and Resources

Mrs. Johnson's and Mrs. Miller's multi-school district, the Lanark Public School District, offered systemic and collaborative writing professional development opportunities, guidance, and resources to help their teachers develop their understandings and implement the writing standards from the ELA CCSS throughout the 2015–2016 school year. Even prior to the timeframe of this study, the Lanark Public School District had offered writing professional development opportunities, guidance, and resources, and the two teachers from this district talked about future offerings from their district in the area of writing.

The Lanark Public School District offered systemic writing professional development in the form of workshops and collaboration in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). PLCs are collaborative learning groups with defined characteristics, including a shared goal, collective inquiry, collaborative teams, action orientation and experimentation, continuous improvement, and focus on results (Bailey & Jakicic, 2012; Dufour, Dufour, Eaker, & Many, 2006; Dufour & Eaker, 1998). Although schools in the district may have been offered different writing opportunities throughout the year based on whether a school had piloted certain programs, all of the district schools were offered "lattes" with writing topics salient to the writing standards and implementation of those standards. These "lattes" were short professional development offerings that fall somewhere between a workshop format and a collaborative discussion. Along those lines, teachers new to the district were offered different sessions of professional development in their first several years, and they were able to select topics, including writing, that were

interesting and helpful to them. Lastly, at any given time, a PLC book study focused on writing may have been developed and offered by a school: Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Miller stated that if the district teachers expressed a need for a specific book study topic, such as writing, the district was open to forming a PLC around that topic.

Mrs. Johnson, the grade three teacher from the Lanark district, stated that she actively seeks these district opportunities and has participated in all the writing courses that are available and align with her schedule. She noted that this year, though, she has not been involved in as many writing professional development opportunities. This was because over the past few years, Mrs. Johnson's school, Washington Elementary, was deeply involved in writing and had many opportunities in the past that other schools were receiving this year. However, Mrs. Johnson believed that there were writing professional development opportunities always available in her district, with new ones being offered continuously.

As a new teacher, grade five teacher Mrs. Miller took advantage of the professional development opportunities specifically designed for teachers new to the Lanark district. She believed that the systemic and collaborative writing sessions that she selected were integral to developing her understandings of the ELA CC writing standards by giving her curriculum and instructional writing resources, including making her aware of the *Writer's Workshop* program. She was also introduced to work by writing specialist Kelly Boswell during those sessions. Mrs. Miller stated that she plans to follow-up and enhance this knowledge by taking more sessions on writing as they are offered to her.

As well as offering more writing professional development opportunities, the Lanark Public School District distributed district-wide writing resources that transmitted their district writing expectations to each elementary teacher. Binders of writing curriculum expectations and

timelines, as well as rubrics, were given to every teacher in the district, and teachers were required to use them. These resources contained “power standards” within the writing standards from the ELA CCSS. “Power standards” are the standards that the administration and specialists from the Lanark District consider the most important to meet, and they dictated what writing standards must be accomplished in each grade throughout the school year.

Not only were the district resources distributed to teachers, but the district expectations of the writing standards were also shared with the teachers. Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Miller mentioned the “required writings” that were told to them by the administration in their district. Mrs. Johnson said, “We’re also told in the first trimester, you will teach narrative. In the second trimester, you will teach this.” Additionally, Mrs. Miller said that she teaches “opinion, narrative, and persuasive” writing pieces because those types of writing are required by her district and show up on the report cards.

Additionally, administration, ELA coaches, and curriculum specialists offered writing guidance and specified expectations to the teachers in their own grade levels. They also facilitated systemic collaborative opportunities where groups of teachers work together to vertically align the curricular expectations with adjacent grades. Also, the teachers in the Lanark district could request resources and help from the ELA coaches, such as having the coach co-teach or observe a writing lesson to offer constructive feedback and curriculum and instructional resources for improvement. Both Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Miller had utilized the services offered from the district instructional coaches to help develop their understandings of the writing standards and implement them into their classrooms. According to Mrs. Miller, “They have resources. A lot of teachers do rely on those instructional coaches, and then the people—our district—they’ll come up with classes . . . like writing workshop classes where instructional

coaches teach those." This describes how instructional coaches in the multi-school district played an integral role in helping teachers to develop their understandings about the writing standards and practices.

Both Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Miller sought out and used the Lanark district opportunities, guidance, and resources to clarify the writing standards and expectations from the ELA CCSS, which helped them to develop their understandings of and implement the writing standards. The literature also stated that teachers need continuous, abundant, and purposeful professional development to successfully implement the CCSS (Graham & Harris, 2013; Jenkins & Joachim, 2013; Marrongelle, Sztajn, & Smith, 2013; McLaughlin & Overturf, 2012). The teachers from the multi-school district in this study were offered many systemic and collaborative writing opportunities to explore and acquire knowledge and skill for acting on their new meaning of classroom writing.

Single-School District Opportunities, Guidance, and Resources

Mrs. Smith's and Mrs. Thomas's single-school district, Springdale Public School District, had limited professional development opportunities and no district-wide writing guidance or resources for their teachers to develop their understandings of and assist them with the implementation of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS. Instead, these teachers had to individually seek out opportunities, guidance, and resources outside of the district.

The Springdale Public School District offered only one writing professional development workshop throughout the 2015–2016 school year, and only teachers in kindergarten through grade four were aware of and attended it. Grade six teacher Mrs. Thomas thought that teachers in fifth through eighth grade were going to have a writing professional development session in February, but she reported that it never came to fruition. While both Mrs. Smith and Mrs.

Thomas said they were interested in attending writing professional development opportunities, their district did not offer any district-wide writing professional development opportunities. This was similar to findings by Thompson (2015) that participating in professional development helped prepare teachers to implement the CCSS in their classrooms, yet many teachers were not offered these opportunities.

The Springdale Public School District also did not provide any writing resources or guidance to their teachers. This appears to have resulted in uncertainty about the expectations for the writing standards, and even writing instruction and curriculum, for both Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Thomas. This uncertainty with the expectations contradicted Williams's (2012) statement that the ELA CCSS provide well-defined expectations for writing. As Mrs. Thomas pointed out about writing:

> It's challenging, and I don't think that we have the direction that we need because there's no one that has come and said, 'Okay, this is how it should be taught.' I think everyone's just assuming that you know what you're doing, but I think everyone is just swimming in this same boat. I don't think, you know, that there's anything formal, even how to write an informal-type, or a five-page, or a five-paragraph essay. You know, you can look at some examples, but they're not all done the same way. And granted, there are different ways to write different things, but what is the right way? What is the *right* way?

Mrs. Thomas further generalized that "our English language is just tough" because of the irregularities in English. This shows Mrs. Thomas's uncertainty while trying to decipher and implement the writing standards from the ELA CCSS without systemic and collaborative opportunities, guidance, or resources from the district.

Similar to the single-school district teachers' frustration, Drake (2012) referenced the fact that the ELA CCSS are ambiguous. Also, Carmichael et al. (2010) specifically noted that the writing standards from the ELA CCSS contained imprecise expectations and unclear vocabulary. Without systemic professional development, guidance, or resources offered by the district, the teachers from the single-school district –the Springdale Public School District—were left without clear expectations on the details of the writing standards and end-products that would meet and exceed the writing standards.

On a related note, fourth grade teacher Mrs. Smith talked about the uncertainties of writing expectations across different grade levels within her school.

> I don't think there is a lot of consistency, like I say—what I consider to be a good paragraph, when they get to fifth grade may be—that's not at all, you know, considered [good] . . . I really don't know what the fifth grade teachers want them to come into fifth grade knowing.

This shows that not only did Mrs. Smith not know what writing end-products were expected at her own grade level, but she also was not always certain what was expected at grade levels above or below her without guidance from the district. This is similar to Drake's (2012) suggestion that schools should map the curriculum vertically to understand how the standards and expectations build throughout the years in the K–12 education system. Valencia and Wixson (2013) also recommended analyzing the standards across three or four grades to understand the expectations at each grade level. Again, without this work being done or facilitated by administration in the Springdale district, the teachers from the single-school district were isolated while they were trying to develop their understandings of the writing standards and implement them into their classrooms.

Both Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Thomas talked about how they used the content on standardized tests to help drive their writing instruction while they tried to individually decipher the standards. Mrs. Smith said that she liked to use a lot of peer editing in her classroom because many questions on the ND State Assessment asked students to "find the error" in a reading passage. Thus, by focusing on finding errors in peers' writing compositions, she hoped she was setting them up for success on the test.

Mrs. Smith also thought the writing terminology used in the ELA CCSS was unclear because different words could be referring to the same concept, so she questioned which terminology she should be exposing her students to in order to prepare them for the state standardized assessment. She said, "I need to really focus on exposing them to the different, you know, just the different terms. Like the opinion piece—I'm not even sure honestly—is that what that's even called?" Mrs. Smith went on to describe her experience with the terminology from the ND State Assessment from last year. Mrs. Smith said that since she was not teaching the writing terminology that the students encountered on the state assessment, many of her students were not able to correctly respond to certain questions because they had not been exposed to that particular terminology. This shows Mrs. Smith not only questioned her own knowledge of the terminology used in the writing standards from the ELA CCSS, but she also believed she must use the writing terminology that appears on the state standardized test to help her students succeed because she had limited guidance from her district. In the literature, Herrington and Moran (2009) also stated that standardized tests may define for teachers what writing instruction and curriculum might look like in the classroom.

The Springdale Public School District offered limited writing professional development opportunities and no district-wide writing guidance or resources for their teachers to develop

their understandings and implement the writing standards from the ELA CCSS. Without guidance from their district, the teachers in the single-school district had to individually seek outside sources to acquire new writing knowledge and skills.

Theme Three: Personalized Learning to Pave the Way to Implement Classroom Writing

Theme Three answered the second research question asking how teachers have developed their understandings of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS. This theme also aligned with phase seven, acquiring knowledge and skill for acting on new meaning, from the transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991). All four teachers in this study described the independent time and resources, outside of their school commitments, that were necessary to understand and implement the writing standards in their classrooms, possibly in conjunction with formal professional development when those opportunities were offered. In the literature, Marrongelle et al. (2013) stated that there was not ample time devoted to transition to the CCSS, so teachers needed to learn about the standards on their own time. This helped to explain the findings that formed the third theme.

The independent research conducted by the teachers in this study was similar to self-regulated learning that was discussed in the literature review as one of three predominant professional development approaches in education (Butler, Novak Lauscher, Jarvis-Selinger, & Beckingham, 2004). However, the self-regulated learning in this study was not required by administration or another external source; it was actually brought on by the teachers themselves to help them develop their understandings of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS and writing classroom practices. Self-regulated learning requires individual teachers to set a goal, select strategies to achieve that goal, and evaluate their performance (Butler et al., 2004). They must do this while simultaneously monitoring their learning, evaluating the difficulty of the task,

and making changes as needed (Butler et al., 2004). These steps, however, were not followed as rigorously by the teachers in this study because this independent form of self-regulated learning was implicit and internally-driven.

While all four teachers in this study developed their understandings of the writing standards in the form of independent, self-regulated learning, the goals for the teachers to conduct their own research, as well as how they accomplished these goals, varied. Regardless, they all referenced using resources that were created by other practicing teachers to help implement the writing standards from the ELA CCSS into their classrooms. These resources came from websites such as *Pinterest* and *Teachers Pay Teachers*, and the resources came from reading other teachers' blogs on the Internet. The literature also referenced locating and using resources, including research from peer-reviewed journals and materials developed from colleagues, to help teachers develop their understandings of the CCSS (Crawford, 2012; Hall, 2014). Even though the teachers in this study used materials developed from colleagues, none of the teachers referenced using peer-reviewed journals as a resource that they independently researched to develop their understandings of writing.

Although third grade teacher Mrs. Johnson from the Lanark Public School District claimed to not be a fan of *Pinterest*, she said that she still used it as a way to find classroom writing resources. "You know, I'm not really big on *Pinterest*, but I'm always looking. I try not to spend my life on there, but I do get caught up in that—looking for other ways." This illustrates how Mrs. Johnson continuously used her independent time to strengthen her classroom writing practices. Rather than using *Pinterest*, Mrs. Johnson said that she mostly uses books by writing experts, such as Kelly Boswell and Linda Hoyt, to learn about the writing process and how to teach writing effectively to meet the writing standards from the ELA CCSS. In addition, Mrs.

Johnson talked about independently researching specific writing programs, such as *Guided Writing*, as another way to understand how to meet the writing standards. Interestingly, Mrs. Johnson was introduced to the writing experts and writing programs from formal professional development opportunities offered and enacted by the Lanark Public School District. Nonetheless, she found these books to be essential to independently research the writing standards and to continually improve how she implements writing in her classroom.

Similarly, Mrs. Miller, fifth grade teacher also in the Lanark district, referenced using books about writing written by experts and books about specific writing programs. She stated that she first encountered these writing experts and books during formal professional development opportunities offered by the Lanark Public School District when trying to independently understand the writing standards from the ELA CCSS. Mrs. Miller also shared that she found writing curriculum and instruction resources to help her meet the standards on *Pinterest*.

Fourth grade teacher Mrs. Smith from the Springdale district also talked about independently researching specific writing programs, such as *Writing A to Z*, that were already being used in her school, Springdale Elementary School. One of her goals for independent research was to learn more about these programs to better utilize them in her classroom. She also said that teacher-created resources were important to her because she liked to find "ideas" that have been used by other teachers in the classroom.

Sixth grade teacher Mrs. Thomas, without having any writing programs purchased or implemented by Springdale Middle School, spent much of her own time developing writing curriculum aligned to the ELA CCSS and trying to understand those writing standards. She found writing curriculum and instruction resources from *Scholastic Scope* to be useful because

they contained teacher-created lessons and resources, but she felt they also had justifications from research backing them. Mrs. Thomas also discussed how she needed to limit her time on the Internet browsing teacher-created resources because she was always trying to improve her classroom writing practices, and hence, she said that she spends too much time on websites like *Teachers Pay Teachers*. Mrs. Thomas also mentioned that she now spends most of her time researching how to make the writing lessons that she already has used in the past better. Regardless, Mrs. Thomas stated that she uses much of her personal time to improve her classroom writing practices.

All four teachers in this study reported that they spent significant amounts of their own time engaged in independent research to help them develop their understandings of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS and implement them into their classrooms. This form of self-regulated learning was not required by any external source; rather, the teachers chose to devote this personal time to reach self-selected goals revolving around understanding and implementing the writing standards into their classrooms. To accomplish these goals, the findings from this study revealed that teachers preferred to use books written by writing experts and books about specific writing programs, but they also liked to use teacher-created resources that were located on websites and teachers' blogs.

Theme Four: Taking Risks and Transforming Perspectives

Theme Four answered the third research question asking how teachers experience the impact of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS on their curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Phases eight, nine, and ten from the transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991) were found in the fourth theme. Phase eight is trying new roles provisionally. Building competence and self-confidence is phase nine. Lastly, phase ten is reintegrating the perspective

into one's life. The teachers in this study reported changing their classroom writing practices to meet the standards. They also shared how they were beginning to feel more comfortable with the writing standards and meeting those standards in their classroom. As they continued to transform and build confidence, the teachers are reintegrating these new writing understandings and competencies in their classrooms. One caveat to this theme is it is mostly relevant to teachers with experience teaching writing prior to the implementation of the ELA CCSS. While this is a truism, it is necessary to point out that a teacher without this teaching experience could not fully transform. In this study, Mrs. Johnson from the Lanark district and Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Thomas from the Springdale district had experience teaching writing prior to and following the implementation of the ELA CCSS. Thus, those three teachers tried new roles, built competence and self-confidence, and transformed by reintegrating their new perspectives into their classrooms. Interestingly, though, the changes to the writing curriculum and instruction experienced by Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Smith, and Mrs. Thomas were also experienced by Mrs. Miller—she just did not have to change her classroom writing practices from before the CCSS, rather just her experiences from her own schooling.

Specifically, following the implementation of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS, the teachers with experience teaching writing prior to and following the implementation of the CCSS (referred to as "teachers with pre/post-CCSS teaching experience" from this point forward) have taken risks by increasing their use of modeling and scaffolding during writing instruction. Also, these teachers have explicitly planned a writing curriculum that aligns with the writing standards from the ELA CCSS. Lastly, the teachers with pre/post-CCSS teaching experience have focused on objectively assessing writing and empowering their students to enhance and critique their own and their peers' writing following the implementation of the

writing standards from the ELA CCSS. These changes to the writing curriculum, instruction, and assessment are described below.

Curriculum and Instruction

The teachers in this study stated that they have increased their use of modeling and scaffolding as two useful instructional practices while teaching classroom writing following the implementation of the ELA CCSS. The teachers with pre/post-CCSS teaching experience stated that this change has been instrumental in effectively teaching the writing skills and processes necessary to achieve the writing standards. As mentioned, although this was a change for Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Smith, and Mrs. Thomas, Mrs. Miller also reported using modeling and scaffolding frequently as important writing instructional practices.

Mrs. Smith, the fourth grade teacher from the Springdale district, talked about using modeling and scaffolding in her classroom when preparing a writing lesson. “You know, I’m thinking about [how] we’re going to jump right into an interview, and I need to take a step back and think about . . . I need to back up and even just [break it down to] how do writers even come up with ideas. You know? And it starts simple.” Mrs. Smith also shared that prior to the implementation writing standards from the ELA CCSS, she would give students a prompt or idea to write about for a specific writing type or genre. She reported that now she breaks the writing down into many mini-lessons and focuses on modeling each step of the writing process to her students. This was also evident in her practice because in one observed lesson, Mrs. Smith used direct instruction, group work, and modeling and scaffolding to teach students declarative knowledge on opinion writing prior to the students writing an opinion paper. To begin that lesson, Mrs. Smith directly defined and shared writing terminology specific to opinion writing with her students. Then, she modeled how to provide supporting evidence by modeling to the

students how she would like a new a car, but first she must convince her husband. Mrs. Smith then brainstormed different claims to persuade her husband to allow her to buy a new car, and she modeled how she thought through and determined if these were strong or weak claims. Then, she talked about how each claim must be justified with evidence. The students were then grouped into three and given index cards with different opinion statements, such as "What is the best age to get a cell phone?" In their groups, the students talked about these statements, including if that statement was meaningful to him or her and what evidence could be used to persuade a reader. Lastly, as a whole group, the class discussed the group work and information about opinion writing. This writing lesson, as reported by Mrs. Smith, was only one lesson in a ten-day unit leading to writing an opinion paper.

Mrs. Smith also reflected that since she has increased her modeling and scaffolding as a result of implementing the writing standards, she questioned why she had not done it before.

> I almost feel embarrassed as a teacher because I *know* they need to see this. I *know* I need to break it down, but I, you are kind of standing there, and we're like, 'Okay do this.' I take for granted that the students don't even know what I'm talking about.

However, now that she reported frequently using modeling and scaffolding in her classroom, she shared that she believes modeling is a significant instructional practice that contributes to her students' success with learning about the writing process. "So [I do] a lot of that modeling for them so that they can see exactly what it is." She also reflected on a successful writing lesson, "I think the modeling part of it was really big."

Similar to Mrs. Smith, sixth grade teacher Mrs. Thomas, also in the Springdale district, referenced using scaffolding and modeling in her writing lessons by "picking apart" different pieces of the writing process when modeling and starting large writing projects with "something

small." Also, during a classroom writing observation in Mrs. Thomas's room, the following field observation was recorded, "Mrs. Thomas said that she had trouble with the word 'crashed' and used it over and over again. Then she used self-talk to state that she tries using the word 'smashed' in her writing and that it didn't sound good." This observation field note from Mrs. Thomas's writing lesson illustrates how she modeled writing in her classroom.

Even though the teachers usually did not tell their students that they were using the pedagogical practice of modeling, during one observation, third grade teacher Mrs. Johnson asked her students, "Are you ready to watch me model?" This shows the prevalence of modeling as a writing pedagogical practice because Mrs. Johnson even used the terminology with her students. Regardless of whether students were aware that modeling was being used as a pedagogical practice, all four teachers in this study experienced increasing the use of it in their classrooms.

Increasing modeling and scaffolding following the implementation of the ELA CCSS is justified by the literature. For example, Fisher, Frey, and Alfaro (2013) discussed the importance of teachers modeling writing to students as an important instructional strategy when implementing the ELA CCSS into their classrooms. Along those lines, Fisher, Frey, and Uline (2013) stated that using the gradual release of responsibility model, which includes modeling as one of four components to scaffold students' learning, is effective for teachers to follow when helping students to achieve the standards.

All four teachers in this study also stated they explicitly plan writing curriculum that aligns to the writing standards from the ELA CCSS. This denoted a significant change from past practices with the writing curriculum and instruction for the three teachers with pre/post-CCSS teaching experience. Interestingly, in the literature, Sheppard (2013) pointed out that

implementing the writing standards without teachers changing their instruction will not impact student achievement.

Prior to the ELA CCSS, third grade teacher Mrs. Johnson from the Lanark district, fourth grade teacher Mrs. Smith, and sixth grade teacher Mrs. Thomas, both from the Springdale district, stated that they did not know, understand, or reference the writing standards from the 2005 ND ELA Content and Achievement Standards (2005 ND ELA Standards) while they incorporated writing into their classrooms. When asked about her familiarity with the 2005 ND ELA Standards, Mrs. Smith answered, "You know, I honestly probably was not very familiar with them at all." Mrs. Johnson also admitted, "I probably couldn't even tell you what they were. I don't even think I knew what they were—we just covered grammar." Mrs. Thomas stated, "I think you were—I was comfortable as I needed to be. There wasn't the focus so much on it, so you just did what you had to do—get by maybe." This shows that prior to the implementation of the ELA CCSS, aligning the writing standards from the 2005 ND ELA Standards to their writing curriculum was not a priority for the teachers.

In addition to not aligning standards, Mrs. Johnson talked about how she did not even plan an explicit writing curriculum prior to the implementation of the ELA CCSS; instead, she stated that she would allow students to write for holidays or informally in journals. She also shared,

> They were given an assignment, and off they'd go and write it, and you know, even if you saw it to fruition was rare. You know, some kids finished, some didn't. It wasn't a piece of our—it didn't feel like it was a piece of the curriculum.

While this shows that prior to the implementation of the ELA CCSS, writing did not require significant time to plan or align the curriculum to any standards, Mrs. Johnson said that

she currently aligns her writing curriculum to the standards and does not do any writing projects from her past writing curriculum that do not align. “I have to plan something every day for that [writing] time.” This illustrates that Mrs. Johnson has increased her time and effort devoted to the writing curriculum. This was closely related to literature by Barrett-Mynes (2013) stating that teachers have changed their planning and materials with the implementation of the CCSS. Along those lines, McLaughlin and Overturf (2012) stated that teachers must now plan and instruct using the standards. Also, Troia & Olinghouse (2013) reported that the implementation of the CCSS may improve classroom writing practices because teachers will increase their focus to meeting the writing standards.

In opposition to both the data and literature, Mrs. Miller, fifth grade teacher from the Lanark Public School District with no experience teaching prior to the implementation of the ELA CCSS, did not feel the writing curriculum was challenging to prepare and implement. “Math is my hardest [to prepare and implement] . . . I would probably say the next would be—maybe writing.” This shows how Mrs. Miller, as the only teacher without pre/post-CCSS teaching experience, stated mathematics, not writing, was harder to prepare and implement.

Another change the teachers in this study reported was teaching less fiction writing in order to teach more nonfiction writing in their classroom. Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Smith, and Mrs. Thomas stated that they have nearly eliminated fiction writing to make time for nonfiction writing in their writing curriculum and instruction as a result of the implementation of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS. Mrs. Miller, who did not have experience teaching prior to the implementation of the ELA CCSS, also reported that most of her classroom writing curriculum and instruction is nonfiction.

To illustrate this curricular change, Mrs. Johnson stated,

> Years ago, I would have done more *creative* writing and not taught the lessons as thoroughly as I do today. . . . We did a lot of fiction writing [prior to the implementation of the ELA CCSS], and we didn't do very much nonfiction writing. That was scary for us, you know, to embark on something like that. If we did something at our level, it was an animal report in the spring, and we tore our hair out because we had—everybody wanted to do an animal that started with 'a.' And we had one encyclopedia, you know, that started with 'a' so that was a—trying to sit with 25 kids and make sure their animal reports [were completed]—I think there was a couple—lot of plagiarism.

When asked if she integrates fiction writing in her current writing curriculum, Mrs. Johnson pointed out, "I'm still really tied to the nonfiction writing." This shows Mrs. Johnson has significantly decreased her fiction writing curriculum to explicitly teach nonfiction writing in order to meet the writing standards from the ELA CCSS.

To further illustrate how teachers with pre/post ELA CCSS teaching have changed their curricular and instructional changes following the implementation of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS, Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Smith, and Mrs. Thomas stated that they would not have taught the observed writing lessons before the implementation of the ELA CCSS. On the other hand, when Mrs. Miller was asked how an observed lesson was different from what may have been taught prior to the implementation of the ELA CCSS, she responded, "Since it's only my second year, I don't know anything besides the CCSS."

Also, the teachers with pre/post ELA CCSS teaching experience had pre-CCSS writing curriculum that seemed to mirror their own K–12 writing experiences because they did not recollect experiencing a lot of nonfiction writing in their own K–12 schooling. As discussed in the participant descriptions, none of the teachers recalled an emphasis on the research process in

their own schooling, except for maybe one research paper in high school. Hence, the teachers in this study did not have a lot of exposure to the skills and processes required of nonfiction writing and did not bring these experience into their own classrooms.

Thus, the teachers may have used their own school experiences to plan their writing curriculum prior to the implementation of the ELA CCSS, but then they began using more nonfiction writing to meet the writing standards. This phenomenon could be explained by Lortie's (1975) "apprenticeship of observation," stating that teachers may be influenced in their classrooms by their own experiences as a student. Changing the writing curriculum to focus more on nonfiction writing, then, deviated from how they were taught and may explain why they mentioned teaching less fiction writing and more nonfiction writing as significant writing curricular changes. Additionally, even though the teachers in this study stated that their current writing curriculum is mostly nonfiction writing, they all reported that they allow their students time to write informally in a journal, either nonfiction or fiction. Even Mrs. Miller, the teacher without teaching experience prior to the implementation of the ELA CCSS, included some fiction writing in her classroom, which was a writing practice that all four teachers recalled from their own schooling.

The curricular and instructional changes experienced by the teachers in this study with pre/post ELA CCSS teaching experience can be explained partially by examining the ELA CCSS document (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). The ELA CC writing standards revolve around and better delineate the characteristics of opinion/argumentative, informational/explanatory, and narrative writing types (see Appendix A for a detailed comparison) than did the 2005 ND ELA Standards (ND DPI, 2005). Also, two-thirds of the specified types of writing required by the ELA CCSS, specifically opinion/argumentative and informational/explanatory writing, are

mostly nonfiction writing (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). The last type of writing required in the ELA CCSS, narrative writing, can also be nonfiction writing, so the reported change of teaching more nonfiction and less fiction writing by the teachers in this study paralleled the expectations of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010).

Assessment

Lastly, objective assessment of writing following the implementation of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS was discussed by all four teachers in this study. The teachers mentioned the use of rubrics to help them reliably assess writing. Assessing writing objectively, as well as using rubrics to do this, has been a significant change for the teachers with pre/post-CCSS teaching experience.

Third grade teacher Mrs. Johnson shared her writing assessment practices prior to the implementation of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS. “We didn’t really assess writing. I mean that was more—we used the term ‘free-writing,’ so we really didn’t assess writing. You know, we used to take the red pen and make all the corrections, hand it back to them and ask them to fix it.” Sixth grade teacher Mrs. Thomas also talked about assessing writing, “Most of the time, it wasn’t graded. Yeah, I mean, I don’t remember grading a whole lot of writing because it was difficult.” These past practices reported by Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Thomas show that assessing writing was not a focus for them, nor was it objectively assessed.

In order to objectively assess writing, which the teachers believed was no longer optional following the implementation of the ELA CCSS, all four teachers in this study used rubrics. Mrs. Thomas talked about how she was aware of rubrics in the past, but she stated that using rubrics was not a common assessment practice. “The rubric kind of has been—it was there, but it—you didn’t use it. You probably used it for projects or that kind of thing, but I think it’s become [a]

full force thing [with] the writing now." This shows how she appears to believe that using a rubric to assess writing was a change that came about with the implementation of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS.

Even though fifth grade teacher Mrs. Miller has only taught following the implementation of the ELA CCSS, and thus, has always been held accountable to objectively assess writing, she, too, shared that rubrics are an important component when assessing writing. Mrs. Miller talked about how she finds writing easier to assess and less time-consuming because the Lanark district provided writing rubrics for each of the writing types. "We have the rubrics of what [criteria are required] for each of them. . . . I'm glad that we have the rubric." Rubrics appeared to help Mrs. Miller objectively assess her students' writing compositions.

Springdale district teachers Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Thomas stated that they do find rubrics useful to assess writing, but they have uncertainty with the reliability of rubrics given the fact that teachers may have different preferences for the components in their students' writing products. According to Mrs. Thomas, "I use a rubric and all of that, but still, I struggle with that because it's my opinion of what I think should be there versus what actually should be there . . . [The rubric is] very subjective." Mrs. Smith reiterated some of those same ideas. "That's one thing I struggle on with writing. It is so—you know, if I read it and score it [using a rubric], and somebody else reads it and scores it [using a rubric], [the scores] can be completely different." Their concerns are justified with literature by Huot and Neal (2008) who stressed threats to interrater reliability are an obstacle for teachers when using rubrics to grade students' writing.

Findings also revealed that the teachers were not the only one using rubrics to assess writing. All four teachers in this study reported requiring their students to use rubrics to learn about and understand writing expectations, self-assess, reflect, revise, and edit their peers' and

their own work. As well as rubrics, the teachers discussed empowering their students with other tools to be self-sufficient writers. Mrs. Thomas talked about why she wanted her students to self-assess.

> [Students] need to go figure it out . . . because I'm not going to go through and make all the corrections for you because you're not learning anything from that. You need to recognize that something isn't quite right here, and then hopefully the next time, you'll do it, you know, correctly.

Mrs. Johnson shared how her students independently use a "reference binder" to help them write. "Their binder's full of resources they've put together . . . everything from homophones to punctuation to transition words, and we just keep adding in the sleeves." Additionally, in at least one of the four observations, all four teachers in this study showed or reminded their students how to use a rubric to self-assess. This shows the teachers wanted their students to be self-sufficient, as well as how they empowered their students with different tools to be independent writers following the implementation of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS.

Summary

Chapter IV began by richly describing each of the four teachers who participated in this study. Then the four themes were described and supported using the theoretical framework and raw data, and these findings were also related back to the literature. Together, these four themes aligned with the ten phases from Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory. The themes describe the transformation of teachers as they develop new writing understandings and competencies following the implementation of the ELA CCSS.

Chapter V will share and discuss the assertions from this study. It will also list the limitations of this study. Finally, recommendations for professionals and future research will be offered.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this case study was to understand how public elementary teachers from a single-school district and a multi-school district in North Dakota (ND) have perceived and developed their understandings of the writing standards from the English Language Arts (ELA) Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and to understand their experiences with the writing curriculum, instruction, and assessment following the implementation of the ELA CCSS. It was guided by three research questions:

1. What do teachers perceive are the impacts of the writing standards from the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards in their classrooms?
2. How have teachers developed their understandings of the writing standards from the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards?
3. How did teachers experience the impact of the writing standards from the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards on their curriculum, instruction, and assessment?

The theoretical framework of this study was Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory. Findings from this study revealed four themes. Theme One was teachers name impacts with implementing the writing standards. Systemic and isolated learning about writing practices was Theme Two. Theme Three was personalized learning to pave the way to implement classroom writing. Finally, Theme Four was taking risks and transforming perspectives.

In this chapter, three assertions from this study are stated and discussed. Then, limitations of the study are given. Lastly, recommendations for teachers, teacher educators, and administrators, as well as for future research, are offered.

Assertion One: Left in Isolation, Teachers' Ability to Transform is Impacted

When teachers do not have systemic and collaborative professional development opportunities, their ability to transform and develop new writing understandings and competencies is impacted. According to phases five and seven from Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory, teachers must explore their options to acquire knowledge and skill for acting on a new meaning. When these options are limited or not available, as was the case for the teachers from the single-school district, teachers must spend more time independently researching the writing standards and curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices in isolation. Also, teachers with limited professional development options must seek external sources to develop their writing understandings and competencies.

As described in Theme Two, having systemic and collaborative professional development opportunities appeared to help third grade teacher Mrs. Johnson and fifth grade teacher Mrs. Miller from the multi-school district, Lanark, develop their understandings of the writing standards and writing practices. This, in turn, seemed to help them feel less uncertain about those writing standards and expectations from the ELA CCSS. Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Miller also had an abundance of information available to them through their district. They did not have to go out on their own to acquire writing knowledge and skills.

Fourth grade teacher Mrs. Smith and sixth grade teacher Mrs. Thomas from the single-school district of Springdale, expressed frustration with understanding the writing standards and how to meet those standards in their classroom. Extra frustration led to more work while they

tried to acquire knowledge and skill by seeking external, not district-provided, guidance. For example, Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Thomas, both referenced using the state assessment to clarify the expectations from the ELA CC writing standards. They also wanted to know the correct way to teach writing and what a final writing product should look like to meet the standards. Overall, their ability to transform was hindered because of the isolation from systemic and collaborative professional development opportunities, guidance, and resources. Therefore, left in isolation, teachers' ability to transform is hindered.

Assertion Two: Teachers Work through Challenges when They Value the Change

Despite the impacts that the teachers both perceived and experienced as obstacles while implementing the writing standards from the ELA CCSS, all four teachers in this study appeared to share the belief that the positives from implementing the writing standards outweighed the negative impacts to overcome. This optimism was not only found in teachers' attitudes but also in their practices. As they self-examined their current beliefs and tried new roles provisionally while teaching classroom writing, phases two and eight of Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory, teachers seemed to value the changes in their writing practices, and hence, they worked through these challenges.

The teachers in this study never questioned the reasoning behind or the need for the ELA CCSS. Even though teachers had the opportunity to share any comments or questions that were not addressed or left lingering in their minds at the end of the three interviews, they did not express any concerns about why the ELA CCSS were even implemented in the first place. This seems to indicate that although the ELA CCSS likely caused many challenges for teachers, they recognized the writing standards are important; hence, they worked through these challenges and accepted the ELA CCSS.

Also as discussed in Theme Two, one impact named by the teachers from the implementation of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS was the perception that writing is important for their students' future. The importance of writing in education and beyond was also found in the literature (Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman, 2012; Collin, 2013; Graham & Perin, 2007; Harris, Graham, Friedlander, & Laud, 2013; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Not only did the teachers share this belief, but they also altered their thinking to make negative obstacles become positive opportunities. For example, even though time was found to be an obstacle in the first theme, third grade teacher Mrs. Johnson stated that she had devoted more time to teaching writing because of that obstacle. In the literature, Calkins et al. (2012) stated that the CCSS can either be viewed pessimistically, or they can be viewed as an opportunity. In this study, teachers worked through the challenges because they valued the change.

Teachers needed to develop their understandings of classroom writing practices that would meet the writing standards from the ELA CCSS. This posed a challenge because the teachers recognized that they needed more knowledge and skill than the professional development time required and compensated by their school district. In Theme Three, it was discussed how teachers devoted their own personal time to developing their understandings. The teachers in this study overcame time and location barriers that oftentimes occur when teachers try to collaborate (Butler & Schnellert, 2012; Schnellert, 2011) by engaging in a new model of collaborative learning. Collaboration as a method for professional development was explored as early as 1938 by John Dewey when he examined collaborative communities in which teachers shared knowledge (Dewey, 1938). Collaboration back then, as well as now, usually entails groups of teachers working together at a common time and place (Joyce & Calhoun, 2010). However, the teachers in this study found different ways to collaborate with other teachers. By

finding and sharing resources on the Internet using websites such as *Teachers Pay Teachers*, *Pinterest*, and teachers' blogs, teachers engaged in independent collaborative professional development.

This independent collaborative professional development occurred when teachers collaborated while never meeting together, or when they shared resources without physically handing over a resource. This non-collaborative collaboration was a revised, and important, method for teachers in this study to develop new writing understandings and competencies following the implementation of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS. It also shows how teachers worked through challenges because they valued the change.

Also, the teachers in this study did not show opposition to the implementation of the ELA CCSS. This may indicate that the teachers in this study have accepted the adoption of the ELA CCSS because they value the changes that those standards bring to classroom writing. Also, the teachers in this study were optimistic about obstacles and seemed to believe the positives outweighed the negatives. Lastly, teachers independently developed their writing understandings by engaging in an independent form of non-collaborative collaboration.

It is likely that there will continue to be perceived and experienced challenges with classroom writing that will vary from year-to-year, including teachers' classroom schedule, their students, and the revision of the writing standards; however, because the teachers value the change, they will continue to work through these challenges regarding classroom writing.

Assertion Three: Experience as an Integral Factor with Transformative Learning

In this study, having experience teaching both prior to and following the implementation of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS was found to impact teachers' perceptions and experiences in the classroom. In this study, Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Smith, and Mrs. Thomas had

experience teaching writing before and after the implementation of the ELA CCSS, but Mrs. Miller had only taught after the implementation. This left her to oftentimes describe different perceptions and experiences than the other three teachers. Several times in Theme One and Theme Four, Mrs. Miller described slightly different perceptions and experiences, and sometimes she was even in disagreement of understandings that were shared by Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Smith, and Mrs. Thomas.

Given her lack of teaching experience with the writing standards from the 2005 ND ELA Standards, Mrs. Miller did not describe any changes that she had to make to her writing curriculum, instruction, and assessment with the implementation of the ELA CCSS. Interestingly, though, Mrs. Miller did have experiences with classroom writing practices while using the writing standards from the ELA CCSS that were similar to the other three teachers, but she obviously did not have changes or alterations to her writing curriculum, instruction, and assessment because she did not teach prior to the implementation of the ELA CCSS. Without changing any beliefs or practices, Mrs. Miller had not truly transformed regarding classroom writing because she did not have any experiences to change. She did, however, still complete phases one through nine from the transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991). Mrs. Miller's transformative learning was just not as deep or profound with teaching experience.

On the other hand, Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Smith, and Mrs. Thomas had transformed and developed new writing understandings and competencies while going through all ten phases of the transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991). Those three teachers were able to list and describe many changes that they have made to their writing curriculum, instruction, and assessment to ensure that they were meeting the writing standards from the ELA CCSS. They

also felt the implementation of the ELA CCSS as a reason to begin transforming, yet Mrs. Miller had said in Theme Four that she had only taught under the CCSS and knew nothing different.

Taken altogether, it can be inferred that having experience teaching both prior to and following the implementation of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS impacted teachers' ability to transform and change their writing perceptions and experiences in the classroom. Of course, Cranton and King (2003) stated that professional development can be transformative in and of itself. This supports the notion that Mrs. Miller did undergo the phases from the transformative learning theory. However, experience teaching writing prior to and following the implementation of the ELA CCSS helped those teaches reintegrate their new writing perspectives into their classrooms, which is phase ten from Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory. Therefore, experience teaching writing was found to be an integral factor, much like age or gender, when transforming teachers.

Limitations

This study had several limitations. One limitation was that the two bounded cases in this case study involved only four ND public elementary schools. Each bounded case was comprised of one school district with two schools from that district. This is just a small representation of the schools in the state and can make generalizing challenging within ND and in states other than ND.

Along those lines, only two teachers from each of those bounded cases were selected—totaling four teachers as participants. Again, this small number of participants may mean that saturation of data was not achieved and data that further align with or negate the findings may have been missed. Within that sample of teachers, only one teacher did not have experience

teaching prior to the implementation of the ELA CCSS, so generalizability to other less-experienced teachers is, again, lessened.

Since this study focused on the writing standards from the ELA CCSS, states that did not adopt the ELA CCSS may find that their teachers are not experiencing these same perceptions and experiences, and possibly not transforming. Although writing standards across the nation are arguably becoming more rigorous and similar to the ELA CCSS (Crawford, 2012), if those are not the actual standards used by a state, this study may be of limited use to readers in non-CCSS states.

Also, this study focused only on classroom writing perceptions and experiences of teachers in grades three through six following the implementation of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS. Obviously, teachers at other grade levels have perceptions and experiences that may be similar or different from these teachers, and the findings may have been different had those teachers been included.

A last limitation important to mention was my personal interest in the ELA CCSS. Although I was cognizant to this potential bias and bracketed my personal experiences to view the topic from a fresh viewpoint (Moustakas, 1994), my participation in the ND ELA CCSS Adoption Team may have impacted the data and findings in this study. Teachers may have responded to questions favorably—even when they did not feel that way—if they knew that I was a member of the adoption team, or I may have inadvertently led them to answer interview questions in a different way than they wanted. All of these limitations must be considered when interpreting and using the findings from this research.

Recommendations

Given the findings and assertions described in this research, recommendations for teachers, teacher educators, and administrators transpired and are presented below. These recommendations are followed by recommendations for future research.

For Teachers

Teachers must continue to work at overcoming obstacles to implementing the writing standards from the ELA CCSS. Although scheduling is, at times, out of teachers' control, with creativity and thinking outside the box, teachers should try to include an uninterrupted block of time solely devoted to writing. Within that block of time, teachers must explicitly plan curriculum and instruction that align to the writing standards. Along with that planning, they must understand that even though writing may not have been a priority in their own K–12 schooling experience, it is necessary for today's students. Hence, it must be a focus in their classrooms.

Teachers also should continue trying to motivate their students and giving them a purpose to write. This recommendation is supported by literature from Cutler and Graham (2008) stating student motivation and interest are important for classroom writing. Motivating and giving students a purpose to write will help teachers begin to break down negative attitudes that may inhibit students from enjoying writing. While recognizing and appreciating that writing is hard work for students (Hidi & Boscolo, 2008; McCutchen, 2008), teachers must act as a coach, encouraging their students along by offering instruction and support. Literature by Parsons (1991) stated that there are numerous roles a teacher needs to take on regarding classroom writing. One of those that teachers should recognize is being a coach.

Continuing to model and scaffold the writing process, including sharing a genuine love and purpose for writing in the teacher's own life, will help to turn students' attitudes around. Continuing to model is supported by literature from Fisher, Frey, and Alfaro (2013) as they stressed that modeling is an important strategy when teaching writing. Also, Fisher, Frey, and Uline (2013) referenced using modeling as a stage in the gradual release of responsibility model during writing instruction.

Teachers should continue to learn about the writing standards from the ELA CCSS from one another. This will help them transform and develop new writing understandings and competencies. Although it is not always possible to collaborate face-to-face, which is discussed in literature by Butler and Schnellert (2012), teachers can share ideas and resources on social networking sites, blogs, and other nontraditional ways. Finding and sharing ideas and resources that were actually successful in the classroom is useful, and recognizing the importance of collaboration will help teachers further develop their understandings of the writing standards and writing practices. Therefore, teachers must devote research time to learning about best practices stemming from research. Troia and Olinghouse (2013) stated that teachers should be familiar with and use evidence-based practices in writing to develop their classroom instruction. Not only does this enhance and drive the professionalism of teaching, but using best practices in writing also creates a scholarship of teaching and learning that will propel the profession forward.

For Teacher Educators

Teacher educators have several important roles regarding preparing preservice teachers to teach writing. First, they must provide explicit writing instruction to preservice teachers. As early as 2003, the National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges recommended that teacher education programs require all preservice teachers to be exposed to writing theory

and practice. This recommendation should only be gaining strength and weight considering the implementation of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS in many states. Instruction at the college level should not only include best practices in teaching writing, such as evidence-based practices discussed in literature by Troia and Olinghouse (2013), but writing instruction should also include foundational knowledge about writing. Teacher educators should ensure preservice teachers understand the five different types of knowledge for writing—declarative knowledge of form, declarative knowledge of substance, procedural knowledge of form, procedural knowledge of substance, and knowledge of purpose and content (Smith, Wilhelm, & Fredricksen, 2013). Using this comprehensive knowledge will help preservice teachers become stronger writing teachers in the classroom.

It is possible that many preservice teachers were not exposed to strong writing curriculum and instruction in their own K–12 schooling, so they may not have the declarative knowledge, let alone the procedural knowledge, to understand the details of the different writing types required by the ELA CCSS. The "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975) helps to explain how teachers' behaviors, values, and beliefs in their classrooms may be impacted by their own experiences in school, so to overcome the fact that many did not receive quality writing instruction, teacher educators must fill this gap. They can do this by helping to instill the value of writing to their preservice teachers. Again, because writing may not have been a focal point of the preservice teachers' own K–12 experiences, they may not value or understand why writing is important to today's 21st century students. Just as practicing teachers must recognize the affective factors, such as motivation and interest, needed by their students to write (Cutler & Graham, 2008; Hidi & Boscolo, 2008), so too must teacher educators motivate preservice teachers and try to change their writing behavior, values, and beliefs. Teacher educators may

have the last formal opportunity to help preservice teachers understand why they cannot let writing "just happen on its own" in the classroom.

Teacher educators should also tailor the writing methods courses to specific grade bands for elementary preservice teachers—ensuring they eventually receive instruction on how to teach writing to first through sixth grade students. Arguably, teaching sixth grade writing is significantly different than teaching first grade writing, yet an elementary teaching license in North Dakota, for example, allows a teacher to teach this wide span of grades (North Dakota Education Standards and Practices Board, 2013). Thus, teacher educators, again, must ensure their preservice teachers are competent to teach writing to first through sixth grade students by facilitating writing methods courses that ascertain preservice teachers have the knowledge and skills necessary to teach writing at every grade level to which they are licensed.

For Administrators

Administrators have a lofty job of ensuring that their teachers are reaching the writing standards from the ELA CCSS with every student. Administrators must support their teachers by offering professional development opportunities, resources, and guidance that may be needed by their teachers. They should start by surveying their teachers, either informally or formally, to see what their teachers need to diminish frustrations and uncertainties while implementing the writing standards, and hence, increase student writing achievement. After interpreting the results of a survey, they can begin to seek out and facilitate professional development opportunities. This would help teachers with exploring their options, planning a course of action, and acquiring knowledge and skill for acting on new meaning, phases five through seven in Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory. Having administrators offer these opportunities would also

ensure systemic and collaborative professional development, which was found to be helpful in this study.

That being stated, direct guidance may be appreciated by teachers, so administrators must find ways to offer this guidance. Money usually seems to be a barrier to professional development (Butler & Schnellert, 2012; Schnellert, 2011), so just as teachers need to think outside of the box to overcome obstacles, so too must administrators. Whether they offer internal book studies or gather a group of teachers to vertically align writing curricular expectations across the school, administrators need to be proactive and stay on top of best practices in writing because, as stated by Applebee and Langer (2009), the best ways for delivering writing instruction are unclear for teachers. Thus, administrators must facilitate and offer guidance on how to effectively teach writing.

While developing professional development opportunities, administrators should consider resources written by experts in writing, such as Kelly Boswell and Linda Hoyt. Along those lines, administrators must stay current with research on writing. This is supported by literature from Hall (2014) who mentioned the importance of using peer-reviewed journals as sources for writing information. While teachers can independently find resources using non-collaborative collaboration, administrators must stress the importance of empirical research and share salient articles with teachers in their building.

Administrators also may want to consider offering time for the aforementioned non-collaborative collaboration model to help teachers develop their understandings and implement the writing standards from the ELA CCSS. Teachers can share and receive “tried and true” resources and knowledge on the writing standards and writing practices by using the Internet as a

tool, and although teachers do seem to be doing this on their own time, having time offered from their administrators would be an appreciated, as well as helpful, gesture.

Another recommendation is for administrators to observe or participate with teaching several writing lessons, and perhaps even assess writing, to directly experience obstacles to implementing the writing standards from the ELA CCSS. While it is easy to read or hear about obstacles, it is another thing to experience them. Not only will this help with a school's morale, it will hopefully create buy-in that writing is valued and important. It may even ensure that administrators have the opportunity to experience different phases from Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory. For example, by actually participating in classroom writing lessons, administrators may examine their own beliefs about writing and critically assess their assumptions (phases two and three). This may also be a disorienting dilemma (phase one) for them, just as the implementation of the ELA CCSS was for many teachers. From there, they can continue by exploring options and creating plans to gain knowledge (phases five and six), as mentioned earlier. This will lead to an entire school of educators acquiring new knowledge (phase seven) while supporting and valuing classroom writing to ensure that every student in their building is a competent writer.

Future Research

Future research should seek to further understand the similarities and differences of writing perceptions and experiences between teachers with experience teaching writing prior to and following the implementation of the ELA CCSS and teachers with experience teaching writing only following the implementation. This research could examine each case individually to see if the teachers in these two groups share similar perceptions and experiences, or if these groups also share discontent in current writing practices, which is phase four from Mezirow's

(1991) transformative learning theory. Findings would be useful for administrators to offer guidance, resources, and professional development opportunities that are helpful to both teachers with and without experience teaching prior to the implementation of the ELA CCSS because arguable, both groups teach in most schools.

Also, future research should try to understand teachers' perceptions and experiences with newly implemented mathematics standards, science standards, or standards from another content area. This may shine light on whether teachers found it necessary to transform their thinking about other content areas when those standards are implemented, or if writing was unique in that teachers had to transform given the increased focus of proficient writing skills to 21st century students (Graham & Perin, 2007; Harris, Graham, Friedlander, & Laud, 2013; Mo, Kopke, Hawkins, Troia, & Olinghouse, 2014; National Commission on Writing, 2008; National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges, 2004; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013).

Another area for future research is focusing on transformative learning and writing professional development. Research could evaluate different professional development opportunities and determine if and how they align with transformative learning. This could be done by looking for content, process, and premise critical questions and self-reflections on teaching (Cranton & King, 2003) in writing professional development opportunities. Findings would be useful to administrators, as well as teacher educators, as they offer quality professional development.

Lastly, research should be designed to understand the writing perceptions and experiences of other educational stakeholders, such as administrators and teacher educators, as the writing standards from the ELA CCSS were implemented. This would give a comprehensive

picture of writing from an educational lens to focus on if changes are being made by many people involved, or if classroom teachers are the ones transforming due to their direct work with the writing standards and writing practices (Calkins et al., 2012) in their classrooms.

Final Thoughts

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand how elementary teachers have transformed and developed new writing understandings and competencies following the implementation of the ELA CCSS. This was done by understanding teachers' perceptions and experiences, as well as how they have developed their understandings, with classroom writing using phases from Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory. Findings led to four themes, and this chapter discussed the three assertions. Chapter V also shared the limitations of this study and offered recommendations to teachers, teacher educators, and administrators, as well as directions for future research.

Classroom writing, as well as writing standards, will not be disappearing in the future. In fact, it is highly probably that writing standards will continue to be more rigorous as time passes. Teaching writing the same way that it was taught prior to the implementation of the ELA CCSS is not an option, nor is it acceptable to teach writing the same way that teachers were arguably taught in their own schooling. Students will not become proficient writers if teachers do not transform. Albert Einstein is said to have stated that insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. Teachers cannot expect different writing results without transformation. Not only does that idea not make sense, but it is also could be a disservice to students—somewhat of a breach of practice with teachers' professional obligations to teach following their state standards.

Understanding how teachers have perceived, experienced, and developed their understandings of the writing standards from the ELA CCSS, as well as how they have transformed to develop new writing understandings and competencies following the implementation of the ELA CCSS fills a gap in the literature with the voices from the field—teachers. It is essential that educational research includes teachers' perceptions and experiences to help other practicing teachers. While these findings may be useful to other educational stakeholders, the most important group that will be affected by teacher transformation regarding writing is a subgroup that can transform the future—our students. The hope is that this study will support teachers as they transform to effectively prepare our students to be successful, competitive writers equipped with 21st-century writing skills. After all, musician and actress Nia Peeples reminds us, "Life is a moving, breathing thing. We have to be willing to constantly evolve. Perfection is constant transformation."

APPENDICES

Appendix A
Detailed Comparison between the 2005 ND ELA Standards and the ELA CCSS

One of the goals for the ND ELA Content Standards Writing Team was to understand similarities and differences between the 2005 ND ELA Standards and the ELA CCSS as they considered adoption of the ELA CCSS (North Dakota English Language Arts Content Standards Writing Team, 2011). By studying the 2005 ND ELA Standards and the ELA CCSS, as well as referencing the documents *Comparison of the Common Core State Standards for the English Language Arts to the North Dakota English Language Arts Content Standards, Grades K–12* (McREL, 2010a) and *Comparison of the North Dakota English Language Arts Content Standards to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts, Grades K–12* (McREL, 2010b), the team analyzed organization, content alignment, and rigor between the ND and CC standards.

To begin, the team analyzed and identified the grade levels and benchmarks in which the 2005 ND ELA Standards were more rigorous than the ELA CCSS; they also analyzed and identified the grade levels and benchmarks where the 2005 ND ELA Standards were less rigorous than the ELA CCSS (North Dakota English Language Arts Content Standards Writing Team, 2011). Next the team evaluated the content alignment of the 2005 ND ELA Standards and the ELA CCSS using a “strong,” “partial,” and “weak” alignment coding system (North Dakota English Language Arts Content Standards Writing Team, 2011). Given the fact that the ELA CCSS and the 2005 ND ELA Standards were organized using different topics and benchmarks, analysis was multifaceted and involved making comparisons from both the ELA CCSS to the 2005 ND ELA Standards and from the 2005 ND ELA Standards to the ELA CCSS.

Summaries of the organization differences between the ND and CC standards, as well as the rigor and content analyses of the 2005 ND ELA Standards and ELA CCSS, are described below. Accompanying this is a section describing significant differences between the writing standards from the 2005 ND ELA Standards and the CCSS in grades three through six.

Organization Differences between the 2005 ND ELA Standards and the ELA CCSS

Even though both the 2005 ND ELA Standards and the ELA CCSS were subdivided into conceptual topics, the organization of topics and subtopics in the documents was different (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010; ND DPI, 2005). The ELA CCSS strands (Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language) and clusters within the strands (i.e., the four CCSS clusters in the Writing Strand are: Text Types and Purposes, Production and Distribution of Writing, Research to Build and Present Knowledge, and Range of Writing) remained consistent as topics and subtopics throughout the K–12 benchmarks (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). Furthermore, if a standard was not addressed under a specific cluster at a grade level, it was indicated under that cluster's heading (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). The 2005 ND ELA Standards, on the other hand, did not consistently organize the standards using subtopics (ND DPI, 2005). At times in the 2005 ND ELA Standards, a subtopic was missing from a grade level; at other times, the phrase "No benchmark expectations at this level" (e.g., ND DPI, 2005, p. 68) was found under a subtopic.

Specific to this research, the Writing Strand from the ELA CCSS in grades three through six consistently included the following subtopics, which were referred to as "clusters" in the CCSS document: Text Types and Purposes, Production and Distribution of Writing, Research to Build and Present Knowledge, and Range of Writing (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). The 2005 ND ELA Standards that pertain to writing in grades three through six included both Standards 1

and 3. Standard 1 stated, “Students engage in the research process,” and Standard 3 stated, “Students engage in the writing process” (ND DPI, 2005). Some or all of the following subtopics appeared under ND Standard 1: Planning Research, Accessing Information, Evaluating Research Information, Organizing Research Information, and Presentation (ND DPI, 2005). Additionally, some or all of the subtopics appeared under ND Standard 3: Evaluation, Prewriting, Drafting, Revising, Editing, Final Draft, Publication/Presentation (ND DPI, 2005). Thus, there was little consistency with the inclusion of subtopics in ND’s 2005 ELA Standards (ND DPI, 2005).

A second difference in organization was the banding of grade levels by the ELA CCSS (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). Both the 2005 ND ELA Standards and the CCSS were written for the K–12 grade levels; however, the 2005 ND ELA Standards were written for each of the K–12 grade levels while the ELA CCSS grouped the 9–12 high school standards into two bands: grades 9–10 and grades 11–12 (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010; ND DPI, 2005). Although this presented an organizational difference, the banding of the high school grade levels did not impact the focus on grades three through six that was specific to this study.

As described above, the 2005 ND ELA Standards and the ELA CCSS were both organized with topics and subtopics for each of the K–12 grade levels, but there were differences between the two (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010; ND DPI, 2005). Although these differences did not impact the content or rigor of the standards, it was important to highlight them as teachers continue to understand and implement the ELA CCSS into their classrooms.

Rigor Analysis between the 2005 ND ELA Standards and the ELA CCSS

The 2005 ND ELA Standards and the ELA CCSS varied in the relative rigor of their expectations (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010; ND DPI, 2005). To understand the differences, the English Language Arts Content Standards Writing Team (2011) compared the relative rigor of

the 2005 ND ELA Standards with the ELA CCSS in grades K–12. According to the *Comparison of the Common Core State Standards for the English Language Arts to the North Dakota English Language Arts Content Standards, Grades K–12* and *Comparison of the North Dakota English Language Arts Content Standards to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts, Grades K–12* documents (McREL, 2010a; McREL 2010b) that were used for analysis by the team, "A benchmark was counted more rigorous over the other when higher demands are made of students, either because mastery of content is expected at an earlier grade, or the expectations regarding the content are significantly more challenging, or both" (p. i).

Overall, Tables 8 and 9 show that the ELA CCSS was found to be more rigorous than the 2005 ND ELA Standards when comparing both the 2005 ND ELA Standards to the ELA CCSS and the ELA CCSS to the 2005 ND ELA Standards (McREL, 2010a; McREL 2010b).

Table 8. Rigor Analysis Comparing the North Dakota (ND) and Common Core (CC) Standards by Grade Level and Percentage of Rigor—ND to CC.

Grade level	% ND more rigorous	% equal or N/A	% CC more rigorous
K	22	78	0
1	17	72	11
2	27	57	16
3	8	61	30
4	10	72	18
5	16	66	18
6	10	64	26
7	8	61	31
8	23	50	27
9	12	36	52
10	15	52	33
11	0	55	45
12	1	56	43

Note. Data from McREL, 2010b.

Table 9. Rigor Analysis Comparing the North Dakota (ND) and Common Core (CC) Standards by Grade Level and Percentage of Rigor—CC to ND.

Grade level	% ND more rigorous	% equal or N/A	% CC more rigorous
K	3	73	22
1	10	72	18
2	14	57	29
3	24	49	27
4	7	61	32
5	8	68	28
6	13	41	46
7	8	43	49
8	10	46	44
9	21	53	26
10	21	53	26
11	36	60	4
12	36	60	4

Note. Data from McREL, 2010a.

As shown above, when comparing the 2005 ND ELA Standards to the ELA CCSS, ND was more rigorous in kindergarten, grade one, and grade two (McREL, 2010b). However, when looking at the ELA CCSS to the 2005 ND ELA Standards, ND was only more rigorous in grade 12 (McREL, 2010a). Specific to this study, the ELA CCSS were found to be more rigorous in both analyses in grades three through six.

Content Alignment between the 2005 ND ELA Standards and the ELA CCSS

The English Language Arts Content Standards Writing Team (2011) also compared the content match between the 2005 ND ELA Standards and the ELA CCSS in grades K–12. Content alignment was determined with the *Comparison of the North Dakota English Language Arts Content Standards to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts, Grades K–12* document (McREL, 2010b) as follows:

> A *Strong* match indicates the Common Core standard fully addresses the content of the North Dakota benchmark. A *Partial* match is assigned when the Common Core content

> either does not offer the same level of *Specificity* as the North Dakota benchmark, does not cover the complete *Scope* of the North Dakota benchmark, differs importantly in its *Emphasis and Phrasing*, or provides only an *Implied* coverage of the content. If more than one of the issues just described characterizes the coverage of North Dakota content by Common Core, the alignment is identified as *Weak*. Finally, if a North Dakota benchmark could not be aligned to any Common Core standard, it is marked as *Not Addressed*. (p. i)

Tables 10 and 11 show that when comparing both the 2005 ND ELA Standards to the ELA CCSS and the ELA CCSS to the 2005 ND ELA Standards, the ELA standards mostly partially or strongly aligned (McREL 2010a; McREL 2010b). When comparing the 2005 ND ELA Standards to the ELA CCSS, seven of the thirteen grade levels (kindergarten, one, two, three, seven, nine and ten) were strongly aligned in over half of the content (McREL, 2010b). However, in the ELA CCSS to the 2005 ND ELA Standards comparison, none of the grade levels were strongly aligned in over half of the content (McREL 2010a). It is important to note that in both comparisons, only 11% or less of the content was weakly aligned in all grade levels (McREL 2010a; McREL 2010b). Thus, the content is mostly similar between the 2005 ND ELA Standards and the ELA CCSS.

Table 10. Content Alignment between the North Dakota (ND) and Common Core (CC) Standards by Grade Level and Percentage Aligned—ND to CC.

Grade level	% strongly aligned	% partially aligned	% weakly aligned
K	57	37	6
1	57	40	3
2	51	44	5
3	50	41	9
4	47	45	8
5	35	57	8
6	46	45	9
7	55	37	8
8	41	52	7
9	60	37	3
10	50	46	4
11	49	48	3
12	34	57	9

Note. Data from McREL, 2010b.

Table 11. Content Alignment between the North Dakota (ND) and Common Core (CC) Standards by Grade Level and Percentage Aligned—CC to ND.

Grade level	% strongly aligned	% partially aligned	% weakly aligned
K	39	52	9
1	40	52	8
2	32	59	9
3	30	67	3
4	20	66	14
5	33	57	10
6	23	66	11
7	20	72	8
8	26	66	8
9	22	68	10
10	22	68	10
11	28	63	9
12	28	63	9

Note. Data from McREL, 2010a.

When considering both the rigor and content of the standards, ND teachers seemed to believe that the CCSS were beneficial and superior to the 2005 ND Standards (Thompson, 2015).

In a survey administered to ND teachers located in the South East Education Cooperative, Thompson (2015) reported that over half (56.3%) of surveyed teachers cited at least one benefit of the CCSS. On the other hand, Thompson found that 26.3% of surveyed teachers identified at least one non-benefit; however, the least cited non-benefit was the belief that the 2005 ND Standards were better than the new CCSS (Thompson, 2015). Additionally, Thompson stated that surveyed ND elementary teachers "were the most supportive" of the CCSS (2015, p. 34).

Comparing the Writing Standards between the 2005 ND ELA and the CCSS

Given the focus of this research on the classroom writing standards and practices of ND elementary teachers in grades three through six, it was necessary to review the differences in the writing standards between the 2005 ND ELA Standards and the ELA CCSS. Since there was no published literature focused on actual differences, I analyzed the writing standards in the 2005 ND ELA Standards (ND DPI, 2005) against the ELA CCSS writing standards (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010) using the documents prepared by McREL (2010a; 2010b). While this type of analytical content may not traditionally be included in a literature review, it was included due to the necessity of a deep analysis between the writing standards from the 2005 ND ELA Standards and the ELA CCSS to the purpose of this study.

Overall, I found that even though the 2005 ND ELA Standards and the CCSS did strongly align on several writing standards, there are notable differences in the research process, writing process, and writing genres. Although I organized these differences topically, it is important to point out that many of the differences could be placed under more than one topic. Also, it is interesting to note that while the CCSS were found to be more rigorous in grades three through six, when reviewing the 2005 ND ELA Standards to the CCSS, the rigor gap was smaller than when comparing the CCSS to the 2005 ND Standards (McREL 2010a; McREL

2010b). Differences in the grade three through six writing standards between the 2005 ND ELA Standards and the ELA CCSS are explained below, broken down by grade level.

Differences in Grade Three Writing Standards

While comparing the ND and CC grade three standards, the CCSS were found to be more rigorous than ND in cross-analyses (McREL, 2010a; McREL 2010b). Also, half (50%) of the content was strongly aligned when comparing the grade three ND ELA Standards to the CCSS, and 30% of the content was strongly aligned when comparing the CC to ND. Below are other differences in the grade three writing standards between the ND and CC standards.

Research. Both the CC and ND standards referenced the research process in grade three. While the CCSS referenced conducting "short and sustained research projects that build knowledge about a topic" (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010, p. 21), the 2005 ND ELA Standards on planning research were more specific (ND DPI, 2005). The 2005 ND ELA Standards broke down the research planning process into topic selection, question generating, and developing a plan to research a topic. (ND DPI, 2005).

To locate relevant materials to use in research, the 2005 ND ELA Standards mentioned dictionaries, encyclopedias, videos, interviews, cassette recordings, and the Internet as specific resource tools (ND DPI, 2005); however, the CCSS broadly referenced print sources, digital sources, and experiential recollections for collecting information. Along those lines, resource materials from varied media or formats that were given as examples in the grade three ND ELA Standards were not found in the CCSS until grade six (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010; ND DPI, 2005).

The 2005 ND ELA Standards included discerning accurate information about the research topic, but this was not addressed in the grade three CCSS (NGA Center & CCSSO,

2010; ND DPI, 2005). While the organization of research information is similar in both sets of standards, only the 2005 ND ELA Standards included assessing and evaluating the research process and presentation with peers and teachers (ND DPI, 2005). The CCSS also did not address assessment of the research process, and it was not until the grade six Speaking and Listening Strand that evaluating a speaker's claims was mentioned (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010).

The writing process. As with research, both ND and the CC include standards on the writing process in grade three. The 2005 ND ELA Standards, however, were more specific because they offered webbing, listing, gathering information, and taking notes as examples of prewriting strategies (ND DPI, 2005). The 2005 ND ELA Standards were also more specific about how to review and strengthen writing with elaboration, description, and syntax, but the CCSS were more rigorous by stating expectations for peer collaboration and adding details to strengthen written work beginning in kindergarten. Also, using proofreading marks for editing was specified in the 2005 ND ELA Standards, yet the CCSS included using digital tools and peer collaboration to create and publish writing beginning in grade 1 (ND DPI, 2005; NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010).

Other writing process differences in the grade three ND and CC standards occurred in the areas of technology integration and writing duration. Integrating technology, specifically keyboarding skills, into the production and publication of writing were stated in the CCSS in grade three (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). Keyboarding skills, however, were not mentioned in the 2005 ND ELA Standards in grade three (ND DPI 2005). Furthermore, the CCSS specified writing routinely and over prolonged time to work on research, reflection, and revision; they also included writing for different periods of time to reach goals and purposes in grade three (NGA

Center & CCSSO, 2010). While the 2005 ND ELA Standards mentioned writing over a longer time period to produce more complex texts beginning in grade two, they were not as specific about time frames or duration (ND DPI, 2005).

Writing genres. Both the 2005 ND ELA Standards and the CCSS included composing opinion, informative/explanatory, and narrative genres of writing in grade three, but the CCSS were more detailed about the characteristics of each genre. The 2005 ND ELA Standards broadly stated, "Use characteristics of different genres in writing i.e., narrative, expository, traditional tales, poetry" (ND DPI, 2005, p. 61) to persuade, entertain, or inform.

To illustrate the specificity, the CCSS for opinion writing included topic introduction, stating an opinion with supporting reasons, organization, using linking words and phrases, and including a conclusion (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010), yet many of these characteristics were implied in the 2005 ND ELA Standards. Also, the use of linking words and phrases between properly formatted paragraphs was not addressed in the 2005 ND ELA Standards until grade five (ND DPI, 2005).

Additionally, in informative/explanatory writing, the CCSS were more specific about topic development with facts, definitions, and details; they also included using visual aids in informative/explanatory writing when necessary for comprehension (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). The 2005 ND ELA Standards, however, did not reference the use of visual aids until grade six (ND DPI, 2005).

Lastly, narrative writing traits and goals were specified in the CCSS. The CCSS included composing narratives "to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences" (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010, p. 20). Also included in narrative writing in the grade three CCSS was the use of dialogue. Dialogue,

used as a story element, was not actually referenced until the eighth grade 2005 ND ELA Standards (ND DPI, 2005).

Differences in Grade Four Writing Standards

In grade four, the CCSS were again found to be more rigorous than ND in cross-analyses (McREL, 2010a; McREL 2010b). Similar to grade three, about half (47%) of the grade four content was strongly aligned when comparing the 2005 ND ELA Standards to the CCSS, and 20% of the content was strongly aligned when comparing the CC to ND. Important differences in the grade four writing standards between the ND and CC standards are highlighted below.

Research. As in grade three, both the ND and CC standards included the research process in grade four. While the CCSS again required a short research process, the 2005 ND ELA Standards stated, "Organize a research topic or issue in a specific area of study using a research strategy" (ND DPI, 2005, p. 17). The 2005 ND ELA Standards also gave examples of research resource materials, specifically dictionaries, encyclopedias, newspapers, magazines, videos, interview, cassette recordings, and the Internet (ND DPI, 2005); the CCSS included the broad categories of print sources, digital sources, and experiential recollection as means to access research information (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010).

The grade four CCSS required that a list of sources used in the research (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). It was not until grade seven that the 2005 ND ELA Standards required arranging sources in "bibliographical format" (ND DPI, 2005, p. 21). The 2005 ND ELA Standards did, however, include using "criteria to evaluate the accuracy of information e.g., factual versus fictional text (ND DPI, 2005, p. 17), but the CCSS did not include assessing the credibility and accuracy of information until grade seven (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010).

Finally, the 2005 ND ELA Standards included assessing the research process and presentation with peers or a teacher conference (ND DPI, 2005). In the ELA CCSS, there was no mention of assessing the research or writing process, and assessing the research presentation did not occur until grade six in the Speaking and Listening Strand (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010).

The writing process. Although the writing processes in the ND and CC standards were similar in grade four, the 2005 ND ELA Standards emphasized the prewriting strategies of webbing, listing, graphic organizers, and taking notes, as well as categorical areas for revision, specifically revising for organization, elaboration, description, clarity, syntax (ND DPI, 2005). They also listed dictionaries, thesaurus, word walls, classroom libraries, and word processors as reference tools that can be used to edit writing (ND DPI, 2005). Likewise, the ELA CCSS covered prewriting, revising, and editing by stating,

> With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of one page in a single setting. (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010, p. 21)

In addition, both the CC and ND standards included incorporating vocabulary words in writing. While ND leaves the standard as that, the CCSS further specified that students use grade-appropriate, precise words that are domain-specific, and the CCSS included using sensory details with precision (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010).

Finally, the 2005 ND ELA Standards specified three paragraphs as a standard length for written texts in grade four (ND DPI, 2005). The CCSS used a one-page minimum length and specified that it was composed in one setting with command over keyboarding skills (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). The 2005 ND ELA Standards did not address keyboarding skills, yet

the 2005 ND ELA Standards included an evaluation of the writing process and product with assessment tools that was not included in the CCSS (ND DPI, 2005).

Writing genres. Both sets of grade four standards included the composition of opinion, informative/explanatory, and the narrative writing genres, but the 2005 ND ELA Standards also included factual and personal persuasive, informational, poetry and fantasy writing as examples of genres to compose to "inform, entertain, persuade a specific audience" (ND DPI, 2005, p. 62). Also, the 2005 ND ELA Standards did not delineate writing characteristics of the different writing genres, yet they were specified and generally more rigorous in the CCSS (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). For example, in the grade four CCSS informative/explanatory writing, developing details, including by using quotations, was included in the standards (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). The 2005 ND ELA Standards did not include using quotations until grade eleven (ND DPI, 2005). While the 2005 ND ELA Standards mentioned organizing writing in paragraphs with topics sentences and details, the CCSS included organizing the writing by sections, linking ideas with phrases, and using visual aids in informative/explanatory texts (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). Using transitions between paragraphs was a grade five ND standard, and including visual aids was a grade six ND standard (ND DPI, 2005).

Differences in Grade Five Writing Standards

Similar to grades three and four, the grade five CCSS were found to be more rigorous (McREL, 2010a; McREL 2010b). A little over one third (35%) of the grade five content was strongly aligned when comparing the 2005 ND ELA Standards to the CCSS, and about one third (33%) of the content was strongly aligned when comparing the CC to ND. Though only strongly aligned about one third of the time, the grade five content analyses were the closest between ND

and the CC and between the CC and ND. Below are some of the key differences in the grade five writing standards between ND and the CC.

Research. The grade four CCSS required students to "conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic" (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010, p. 21). Although this standard was similar to the ND Standard stating, "Plan and use a research strategy" (ND DPI, 2005, p. 18), it was more specific. Conversely, the 2005 ND ELA Standards were more specific with listing examples of resource material, such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, newspapers, magazines, videos, interviews, cassette recordings, electronic databases, and the Internet to use in research (ND DPI, 2005).

To organize research information, both the ND and CC standards required students to summarize and paraphrase information with notes, but the 2005 ND ELA Standards also stated that students will "create charts, outlines, and graphs to organize and record information in a simple format from a variety of sources" (ND DPI, 2005, p. 19). The CCSS did not include the creation of visuals in grade five (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010).

Although the CCSS did not include assessing credibility and accuracy of information until grade seven, the ND standard stating, "Use criteria to evaluate the accuracy of information e.g., factual vs. fictional text, persuasive vs. informational" (ND DPI, 2005, p. 19) was found in grade five. The CCSS did, however, state that information used in research must be relevant (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010).

As in grades three and four, the 2005 ND ELA Standards included assessing both the research process by peer or teacher conferences, but the CCSS did not include assessing the research process. The closest standard in the CC to assessing the research process was evaluating

a speaker's claims, which did not occur until grade six in the Speaking and Listening Strand from the CCSS (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010).

The writing process. Grade five standards in both ND and the CC referenced the writing process. The 2005 ND ELA Standards were more specific about prewriting, revision, and editing, but the CCSS did include those three broad categories without examples. For example, the 2005 ND ELA Standards provide a list of prewriting techniques: webbing, listing, graphic organizers, and taking notes. They also offered examples of reference tools, such as a dictionary, thesaurus, word wall, classroom library, word processor, to use in the writing process (ND DPI, 2005). Also, the 2005 ND ELA Standards offered elaboration, description, clarity, and syntax as criteria to review and monitor the organization of writing, with emphasis on the use of proofreading marks to edit (ND DPI, 2005). Although similar, the CCSS included "planning, revision, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach" (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010, p. 21) as a general suggestion to improve writing.

The 2005 ND ELA Standards in grade five specified that a writing composition should be at least five paragraphs (ND DPI, 2005). On the other hand, the CCSS specified time frames—both long and short—to write and included command of keyboarding skills to compose a two-page minimum text in a single setting (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). Furthermore, both the CC and ND standards mentioned incorporating vocabulary words in writing, but the CCSS specified that students use grade-appropriate, precise words that are both domain-specific and general academic vocabulary (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). As in the grade four ND standards, the 2005 ND ELA Standards in grade five stated, "Incorporate vocabulary in writing" (ND DPI, 2005, p. 65) without further specifications on the level or type of vocabulary.

Lastly, the 2005 ND ELA Standards included assessing the writing process using various assessment tools, but the CCSS did not address assessing the writing process in grade five (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010; ND DPI, 2005).

Writing genres. Both the 2005 ND ELA Standards and CCSS in grade five addressed opinion, informative/explanatory, and narrative writing. The 2005 ND ELA Standards offered memoir, factual, persuasive, poetry, and narrative writing as examples to "inform, entertain, or persuade" (ND DPI, 2005, p. 64). Though the 2005 ND ELA Standards gave examples, the CCSS highlighted characteristics of the genres that were implied in the 2005 ND ELA Standards. For example, in opinion writing, more emphasis was placed on persuasion in the CCSS (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). Also, the CCSS were more specific than the 2005 ND ELA Standards about the parameters of writing informative/explanatory texts, including specific ways to develop the topic with supporting details (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). Along those lines, the CCSS included more specificity about narrative writing characteristics and techniques, with several narrative techniques not occurring in the 2005 ND ELA Standards until grade 8 (ND DPI, 2005; NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010).

Differences in Grade Six Writing Standards

While the 2005 ND ELA Standards in grade six were organized more similar to the CCSS than the grades three through five standards, the CCSS were still found to be more rigorous than ND in cross-analyses (McREL, 2010a; McREL 2010b). Similar to grades three and four, a little under half (46%) of the grade six content was strongly aligned when comparing the 2005 ND ELA Standards to the CCSS, and 23% of the content was strongly aligned when comparing the CC to ND. Interestingly, the grade six strongly aligned content between ND and

the CC and between the CC and ND was the most deviant than in grades three, four, or five. Key differences between the ND and CC standards are discussed below.

Research. The focus on selecting a relevant research question to answer a question using information from several credible sources was highlighted in both the 2005 ND ELA Standards and the CCSS (ND DPI, 2005; NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). Both sets of standards also required the students to compose a research report. However, the CCSS in grade six included using multiple sources, assessing the credibility, quoting or paraphrasing without plagiarism, and including bibliographic information (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). Although the 2005 ND ELA Standards included knowing about plagiarism and its consequences in grade six, bibliographies, avoiding plagiarism, paraphrasing, and using quotations did not show up until the 2005 ND ELA Standards in grades seven, nine, ten, and eleven, respectively (ND DPI, 2005).

The 2005 ND ELA Standards in grade six, much like the grades three through five standards, included assessing the research process and evaluating a research product with a rubric (ND DPI, 2005). Evaluation of the research process and product was not addressed in the grade six CCSS (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010).

The writing process. As in the grades three through five standards, ND was more specific with offering the prewriting strategies of brainstorming, graphic organizers, and outlining in grade six (ND DPI, 2005). Also, the 2005 ND ELA Standards specified using multiple drafts and editing for grammar, mechanics, usage, and spelling (ND DPI, 2005). The CCSS, though, included developing and strengthening writing with “planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach” (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010, p. 46). The CCSS also elaborated on producing “clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to the task, purpose, and audience” (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010, p. 46),

while the equivalent ND standard vaguely included writing for different purposes and audiences with a variety of strategies (ND DPI, 2005).

Similar to the grades three through five standards, the CC and ND standards varied in their expectations for vocabulary. The CCSS mentioned using precise, grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, as well as sensory language (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). The 2005 ND ELA Standards in grade six merely stated, "Incorporate grade-level appropriate vocabulary in writing" (ND DPI, 2005, p. 67).

Keyboarding skills were again referenced in the grade six CCSS, specifically by composing a minimum of three pages in one setting (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). The equivalent grade six ND standard included using technology that aligned with the district's policy and did not reference keyboarding skills (ND DPI, 2005). Along those same lines, writing over various time frames and for specific tasks were addressed in the CCSS, but the 2005 ND ELA Standards did not address any ranges of writing in grade six (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010; ND DPI, 2005).

Writing genres. Opinion, informative/explanatory, and narrative writing genres were included in both the grade six ND and CC standards, with the 2005 ND ELA Standards offering examples of each genre. To illustrate, the 2005 ND ELA Standards included examples of opinions, essays, and business letters for persuasive writing. Research-based reports and instructions were examples of informative writing, and narrative writing included short stories, descriptive plays, and poetry as examples (ND DPI, 2005).

In opinion writing, supporting claims with clarity and credible sources were specified in the CCSS (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). Whereas using words, phrases, and clauses to clarify relationships among claims in opinion writing was a grade six standard in the CC, using

transitional devises in a clear, coherent composition did not occur until grades eleven and twelve in the 2005 ND ELA Standards (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010; ND DPI, 2005). Using formal style was another standard in the grade six CCSS, but similar 2005 ND ELA Standards referencing style did not show up until grade eight (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010; ND DPI, 2005).

The CCSS were also more specific about the characteristics of informative/explanatory writing by offering strategies to develop the topic (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). Some of those strategies, such as effective quotation usage, did not show up in the 2005 ND ELA Standards until grade eleven (ND DPI, 2005).

Lastly, as in the lower grades, the CCSS were more specific about the characteristics of narrative compositions, including the use of pacing, signal shifts, and structure in grade six narratives (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). The 2005 ND ELA Standards referenced many of these story elements in grade nine, with transitional devices appearing in the grade eleven standards (ND DPI, 2005).

Appendix B
Informative Email Invitation to Participants

Hello!

I would like to ask you to consider participating in a study about your experiences with the implementation of the writing standards from the Common Core State Standards in English/Language Arts. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of North Dakota.

This study will take place during the 2015–2016 school year with three interviews (outside of the classroom day) and about four observations (with a debriefing interview) of your classroom writing block. With your permission, I also may collect documents or take pictures of artifacts affiliated with writing. No student work will be collected to ensure their anonymity.

Specifically, your participation would involve:

- About four scheduled observations of your classroom writing lessons (by me) for about an hour (give or take) based on a scheduled time and date of your convenience. These would be set up throughout the year. Following that, we will either talk or email and discuss the observation. This informal interview will probably take 15 minutes of talking or writing.
- Three interviews outside of the school day about your experiences with the implementation of the writing standards of the Common Core State Standards in English/Language Arts in your classroom—including how you have learned about and experienced changes in your writing pedagogy, curriculum, instruction, and assessment. This, again, would last an hour and would be set up at a time/date of your convenience. One interview would occur in the fall of the 2015–2016 school year; the second interview would be mid-school year (winter), and the last interview would be in the spring of 2015–2016 school year.

Participation is completely optional. Also, anonymity is my utmost priority, so I will be using pseudonyms and allowing you to view and reflect on any collected materials from you (notes, transcriptions, lesson plans). There are no foreseeable risks to you, aside from taking your time. Benefits, though minimal, may be increased insight into your writing practices and the knowledge that you may help other teachers to implement the writing standards. There is no compensation for participating.

If you would like to participate (or have questions), please respond back via email or phone to me (jennifer.l.wallender@my.und.edu or 748-2000 and we will set up a time, location, and date (at your convenience) to begin with an interview. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Pamela Beck, at pamela.beck@email.und.edu or 777-6173 for questions about the study.

Thank you for so much for your consideration…I do look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Jen Wallender

Appendix C
Consent Form

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

TITLE: *Teachers Transform: Developing New Understandings and Competencies Following the Implementation of the Common Core Writing Standards*

PROJECT DIRECTOR: *Jennifer Wallender*

PHONE # *xxx-xxx-xxxx*

DEPARTMENT: *Teaching and Learning*

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH
A person who is to participate in the research must give his or her informed consent to such participation. This consent must be based on an understanding of the nature and risks of the research. This document provides information that is important for this understanding. Research projects include only subjects who choose to take part. Please take your time in making your decision as to whether to participate. If you have questions at any time, please ask.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?
You are invited to be in a study about your experiences with implementing the writing standards of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) because you are an elementary classroom teacher in a public school.

The purpose of this research study is to explore how you have learned about and experienced changes in your classroom writing curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL PARTICIPATE?
Four teachers will be participating in this study.

HOW LONG WILL I BE IN THIS STUDY?
Your participation will be for the 2015–2016 school year. Specifically, your participation in the study will last about one hour during three separate interviews outside of the school day. I will also set up observations of your classroom writing block (about an hour) with a brief (15 minute) interview following the observation (face-to-face or email). We will arrange meeting times and dates that are convenient to you. In summary, your time in the study will be about 8 hours.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS STUDY?
If you decide to be in this study, we will begin by finding a good time and place to set up an initial interview. The interview lasts about an hour. We will then set up different times and dates for me to come and observe your writing lesson. After the observation, we will either talk briefly or email briefly about the observation (15 minutes). Sometime in the winter, we will set up a second interview that will last about an hour. We will then set up a third and final interview in

the spring, which will also last about an hour. I also may collect samples of writing documents and artifacts (posters, lesson plans, professional development hand-outs, etc.).

You may choose to not any questions you would prefer not to answer during the interview and have the opportunity to review all materials, including transcripts and documents that I collect.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THE STUDY?
There may be some risk from being in this study. Though I will take many steps to ensure secrecy, the loss of confidentiality may occur. This may cause embarrassment or discomfort.

Some of the questions I ask you about your experiences and opinions might cause worry, embarrassment, discomfort, or sadness. You may choose not to answer such questions.

Referrals to counseling will be available should you experience bad feelings, but no money is available from the study to pay for such services.

Another drawback for you might include the amount of time spent in the interviews.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?
You may not directly benefit from being in this study. However, I hope that in the future, other educators, administrators, and kids might benefit from this study by learning about changes needed to the writing pedagogy, curriculum, instruction, and assessment as a result of implementing the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts experienced by actual teachers in the classroom. Also, through reflection, you may gain insights about your classroom writing practices.

WILL IT COST ME ANYTHING TO BE IN THIS STUDY?
You will not have any costs for being in this research study.

WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATING?
You will not be paid for being in this research study.

WHO IS FUNDING THE STUDY?
The University of North Dakota and the researcher are receiving no payments from other agencies, organizations, or companies to conduct this research study.

CONFIDENTIALITY
The records of this study will be kept private to the extent permitted by law. In any report about this study that might be published, you will not be identified. Your study record may be reviewed by Government agencies, the UND Research Development and Compliance office, and the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board.

Any information found in this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential. It will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.

You should know, however, that there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require us to show your information to a court or to tell authorities if we believe you have abused a child or pose a danger to yourself or someone else.

Confidentiality will be maintained by several ways. Interviews, notes, documents, and any audio recordings will be stored in a locked file when not in use. Any information from the data that could identify you will be removed and made-up names will be used.

If I write a report or article about this study, I will describe the study results in a summarized manner so that you cannot be identified.

Only the researcher will have access to the interview recordings, and they will be erased when this project is over. You also have the right to review and edit our recordings.

IS THIS STUDY VOLUNTARY?
Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of North Dakota.

CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS?
Jennifer Wallender is the researcher of this study. You may ask any questions you have now.

If you later have questions, concerns, or complaints about the research, please contact Jennifer Wallender at xxx-xxx-xxxx anytime. You also may contact her advisor, Dr. Pamela Beck, at xxx-xxx-xxxx.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact The University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board at **xx-xxx-xxxx**.

- You may also call this number about any problems, complaints, or concerns you have about this research study.
- You may also call this number if you cannot reach research staff, or you wish to talk with someone who is independent of the research team.
- General information about being a research subject can be found by clicking "Information for Research Participants" on the web site: http://und.edu/research/resources/human-subjects/research-participants.cfm

I give consent to be audiotaped during this study.

Please initial: ____ Yes ____ No

I give consent for my quotes to be used in the research; however, I will not be identified.

Please initial: ____ Yes ____ No

Your signature shows that this research study has been explained to you, your questions have been answered, and you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Name of Subject: _____

_____ _____

Signature of Subject Date

I have discussed the above points with the subject or, where appropriate, with the subject's legally authorized representative.

_____ _____

Signature of Person Who Obtained Consent Date

Appendix D
Interview Questions

Interview I (Fall of the 2015–2016 school year):

1. Please tell me about your background in teaching.
2. What types of writing do you engage in personally? Professionally?
3. What types of writing do your students compose in the classroom, both formally and informally?
4. In your K–12 schooling, how was writing taught, and what types of writing was emphasized.
5. Tell me about how you were prepared to teach writing in your teacher education program.
6. What are your beliefs about classroom writing practices?
7. How are you feeling about the implementation of the writing standards of the CCSS?
8. How comfortable and knowledgeable were you with the old ND writing standards?
9. Tell me about your writing pedagogy, curriculum, instruction, and assessment in your classroom prior to the implementation of the ELA CCSS.
10. Tell me about your writing pedagogy, curriculum, instruction, and assessment following the implementation of the ELA CCSS.
11. Describe some of the training (both at a college and professional level) you have had to familiarize yourself with the writing standards in general.
12. What professional development activities have you been involved in with learning about the changes to the writing standards as a result of the implementation of the ELA CCSS?
13. Were there other opportunities that were offered to you that you have or haven't attended?
14. Have you had to do a lot of independent work or research on the writing standards or process?
15. What have been the most meaningful and/or influential learning experiences to understand the changes to the classroom writing practices with the implementation of the ELA CCSS.
16. What changes have you made, if any, to your writing pedagogy as a result of the ELA CCSS?
17. What changes have you made, if any, to your writing curriculum as a result of the ELA CCSS?
18. What changes have you made, if any, to your writing instruction as a result of the ELA CCSS?
19. What changes have you made, if any, to your writing assessments as a result of the ELA CCSS?
20. What has been your experience thus far in teaching writing in the classroom after the implementation of the ELA CCSS?
21. What are some good or positive things that have changed in your writing pedagogy, curriculum, instruction, and assessment as a result of implementing the ELA CCSS?

22. What are some bad or negative things that have changed in your writing pedagogy, curriculum, instruction, and assessment as a result of implementing the ELA CCSS?
23. What do you believe teacher education programs need to do to prepare preservice teachers for teaching writing?
24. Are there other issues related to the Writing Strand from the ELA CCSS that you would like to discuss?

Interview II (Winter of the 2015–2016 school year)

25. Based on the observations of the lessons I have experienced, what standards from the ELA CCSS Writing Strand are you most comfortable with addressing?
26. Based on the observations of the lessons I have experienced, what standards from the ELA CCSS Writing Strand are you least comfortable with addressing?
27. What have been some good or positive things that have occurred with your classroom writing so far this year?
28. What have been some bad or negative things that have occurred with your classroom writing so far this year?
29. Have you engaged in any independent research of writing since the beginning of the year?
30. Have you engaged in any professional development of writing since the beginning of the year?
31. Have you tried anything new in your writing pedagogy, curriculum, instruction, or assessment thus far this year?
32. What are your plans for your writing curriculum for the rest of the year?
33. How confident have you been with teaching the CCSS Writing Strand?
34. What are some areas that you would like to work on regarding teaching the CCSS Writing Strand?
35. Are there any other issues related to the Writing Strand from the ELA CCSS that you would like to discuss?

Interview III (Spring of the 2015–2016 school year)

36. Based on all the observations of the writing lessons that I have experienced, what standards from the ELA CCSS Writing Strand did you feel that you addressed?
37. What standards do you feel most of your class is proficient or advanced in?
38. Based on all the observations of the writing lessons that I have experienced what standards from the ELA CCSS do you feel that you did not address as well?
39. What standards do you feel that your class may be partially proficient or a novice in?
40. Overall, what were some good or positive things with classroom writing this year?
41. Overall, what were some negative or bad things with classroom writing this year?
42. Since our last interview, have you engaged in any independent research of writing?
43. Since our last interview, have you engaged in any professional development of writing?

44. Do you have plans to attend any future professional development or do independent research regarding writing practices? If so, on what specific topics?
45. Since our last interview, have you tried anything new in your writing pedagogy, curriculum, instruction, or assessment?
46. How do you feel your classroom practices in writing went this year?
47. How confident have you been this year with teaching the CCSS Writing Strand?
48. What are some areas that you would like to work on regarding teaching the CCSS Writing Strand?
49. What are your plans for the upcoming school year about your writing pedagogy, curriculum, instruction, or assessment?
50. How confident are you in the classroom writing pedagogy, curriculum, instruction, and assessment?
51. What has helped you to build confidence and competence in your classroom writing pedagogy, curriculum, instruction, and assessment?
52. As you reflect on your teaching practices in writing from the beginning of your career until now, what, if any, changes have you made?
53. Are there any other issues related to the Writing Strand from the ELA CCSS that you would like to discuss?

Big ideas to talk about during informal interviews after observing a lesson (at least four times throughout 2015–2016 school year):

- What writing standard(s) were you trying to meet in this lesson?
- How about for the unit? What standards will you meet?
- How and why did you plan the curriculum, instruction, and assessment for this lesson? For the unit?
- What pedagogical practices did you use during this lesson? For the unit?
- Did you try any new practices for this lesson? Unit?
- How do you believe this lesson and unit is different from what you may have taught prior to the implementation of the ELA CCSS?
- How confident do you feel that your students met your writing standard(s), why?
- If you reteach this lesson/unit, what, if any, changes will you make?

Appendix E

List of Codes with Descriptions

1. "There is not enough"—“In-Vivo” Code that there is not enough time
2. "Work in progress"—“In-Vivo” Code that teachers continue to work on teaching writing
3. Ambiguity—Uncertainty in the expectations, standards, or writing practices
4. Application—Applying writing skills across the curriculum or outside of education
5. Assessment—Standardized Assessment or assessment practices
6. Background in teaching—Teachers’ background and experience in teaching
7. Beliefs-writing—Teachers’ beliefs about the writing standards or practices
8. Changes—Referencing any changes experiences since the implementation of the ELA CCSS
9. Coaching—A teacher who acts as a reference and offers guidance in a curricular area
10. Collaboration—Working together with other teachers
11. Conferencing—Meeting with students, usually one-on-one
12. Confidence—The belief of abilities to teach writing
13. Consistency—Other teachers doing the same things within a grade level or school
14. Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment—Any of the curriculum, instruction, or assessment practices related to classroom writing and the writing standards
15. Developmental Issues—Beliefs about the alignment between the ELA CCSS and a child’s ability
16. Direct Instruction—Pedagogical method when a teacher offers instruction to the whole class
17. Expectations—What is required or meets the ELA CCSS, either from students or teachers
18. Experience—Using past occurrences to help in the future
19. Formal Writing—Writing that has a purpose or is required by the standards or a teacher/district
20. Giving kids a purpose for writing—The act of telling students why or what they are writing about to help motivate them to write
21. Grammar/Mechanics—Issues related to grammar and mechanics
22. Guidance—Offered by people, resources, or other external factors
23. Imagination in writing—When students are allowed to be creative while writing
24. Independent Research—Research performed by the teacher that is not required by any outside entity
25. Informal Writing—Writing that is not required by the standards or a teacher/district
26. Informative Writing—Writing to inform
27. Journaling—A type of informal writing in which the student free writes, with or without being assigned a topic
28. Kids who are good writers/enjoy writing—The idea that some kids enjoy writing and/or are good at it
29. Management—Related to classroom management positive and negative issues
30. Modeling—Pedagogical method when a teacher shows a class how to do something, usually by doing it with the class
31. Motivating—Related to the ways that teachers must motivate kids to write or why they think kids need motivating to write
32. Multi-school district—A district which has more than one elementary school

33. Narratives—Writing to tell a fiction or nonfiction story
34. Nonfiction Writing—The broad category of writing informational text
35. Obstacles—All the issues that may be a barrier when implementing the ELA CCSS
36. Old ND Standards—References to the 2005 ND ELA Standards
37. Opinion writing—Writing to take a stand, based on evidence
38. Overwhelming—When it seems too hard or too challenging
39. Peer editing—Having a students' peers edit and revise their work
40. Personal/Professional Writing Teacher Engages In—Self-claimed purposes for writing by the teacher
41. Persuasive Writing—Writing to persuade the reader, usually backed with evidence
42. Plagiarism—Related to stealing another's written work
43. PLC—Professional learning community organized around learning
44. Poetry—A genre of writing in the classroom
45. Professional Development—All the methods that teachers can develop their understandings
46. Reflection—The act of thinking of a past event
47. Required Writing—Writing that is required by the standards, teachers, or a district
48. Resources—Any tool or document that helps a teacher to understand the ELA CCSS
49. Revising/Editing—The act of revising and editing one's written work
50. Rubrics—Guides to score writing consisting of criteria and numerical ratings
51. Scaffolding—Pedagogical method where the teacher breaks down the learning into smaller parts of a whole
52. Self-assessment and direction—When students are able to be independent with their writing and assess their own written work
53. Single-School District—A district which has only one elementary school
54. Specific Writing Gurus—People or researchers that have impacted the field of writing
55. Specific Writing Programs—Programs that teachers may use either as or to supplement writing in the classroom
56. Spelling—Discussing ideas related to spelling in the classroom
57. Spiral Curriculum—The idea that the ELA CCSS occur repeatedly throughout a grade or series of grades
58. Standards—Referencing the ELA CCSS
59. Teacher preparation to teach writing—The teacher education program that a teacher attended
60. Technology—Related to the ways that technology has possibly impacted writing
61. Text-based evidence—When students use evidence from the text to support their writing
62. Time—References to time and writing, either impacting a teacher or student
63. Transformative Learning stages—References to Mezirow's Transformative Learning stages
64. Workshops—A method of professional development in which a facilitator presents information to a group of teachers
65. Writing in different Subject Areas—When writing in different subject areas is mentioned
66. Writing in teacher's schooling—Teachers' memories of their K–12 writing experiences

Appendix F
Code Co-Occurrence in the Multi-School and Single-School District

Table 12. Code Co-Occurrence in the Multi-School and Single-School District.

Category and codes	Multi-school district occurrence	Single-school district occurrence
Impacts		
Ambiguity	2	36
Beliefs-writing	58	52
Confidence	20	10
Giving kids a purpose	29	14
Motivating	38	45
Obstacles	57	79
Time	61	58
Transformative Learning	49	46
Developing Understandings		
Expectations	13	17
Guidance	15	16
Independent Research	29	46
Professional Development	74	44
Resources	18	45
Specific Writing Gurus	27	0
Specific Writing Programs	42	36
Experiences		
Assessment	65	63
Changes	43	71
Conferencing	19	4
Curric., Instruct., Assess.	45	49
Experience	11	12
Formal Writing	10	3
Grammar/Mechanics	24	19
Imagination in writing	8	2
Informal Writing	41	28
Informative Writing	16	9
Management	32	22
Modeling	51	14
Narratives	41	6
Nonfiction Writing	13	2

Table 12. cont.

Category and codes	Multi-school district occurrence	Single-school district occurrence
Experiences cont.		
Obstacles	57	79
Old ND Standards	34	14
Opinion writing	12	10
Overwhelming	3	11
Peer editing	5	13
Persuasive Writing	17	0
Plagiarism	9	15
Poetry	3	2
Reflection	11	47
Required Writing	28	24
Revising/Editing	22	12
Rubrics	45	22
Scaffolding	16	43
Self-assessment and direction	48	30
Spelling	3	2
Spiral Curriculum	34	8
Text-based evidence	3	8

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