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Educators' Beliefs About and Approaches to the Evaluation of Student Writing

Vanessa Minick
University of South Florida

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Educators' Beliefs About and Approaches
to the Evaluation of Student Writing

by

Vanessa Minick

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Childhood Education and Literacy Studies
College of Education
University of South Florida

Major Professor: Jenifer Jasinski Schneider, Ph.D.
Susan Homan, Ph.D.
James King, Ed.D.
Jolyn Blank, Ph.D.

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Keywords: assessment, validity, authentic, rubrics, response

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family. I would not have been able to complete my program without their support and love. My husband, Matt, endured many nights alone with the children while I attended classes and patiently took them out of the house on weekends when I needed to write. My children, Brendan, Tristan, and Madison, have only known me as a doctoral student and have been filled with curiosity about what it is that Mom does while she works. Their smiles and hugs have kept me going when I was ready to take a break, and I am so happy that I had them with me throughout this journey.

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Abstract

The overarching purpose of this study was to describe educators' beliefs about the evaluation of student writing. The inquiry was guided by the following research questions: (a) what are the differences in the ways in which educators approach evaluating student writing? (b) how do educators evaluate the effectiveness of their evaluation methods for judging the quality of students' writing samples? and (c) what factors impact the evaluation decisions of educators? The following variables were considered: public and private school settings, evaluation methods, and educators' beliefs about evaluating writing. In order to gain perspective of the current status of the methods utilized by educators in their evaluation of and response to student writing, it is helpful to observe them during the teaching of writing and to talk with them about their process for evaluating samples of student writing. A mixed methods approach was undertaken during this study and included the collection of questionnaire responses, educator interviews, a classroom observation, and the collection of student writing samples. Interesting points in the findings included the noticeable absence of the notions of validity and reliability in the decision-making process of educators, the apparent impact of educators' self-efficacies on their selection of evaluation methods, and a focus by educators on writing factors perceived as impacting readability. Implications and future directions for research are discussed.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Introduction to the Study

The path to becoming an author begins early. Emergent literacy appears as children interact with their environment and come to understand that the symbols around them have meaning. That understanding evolves into attempts to communicate through scribbles, symbols, and pictures (Koenig, 1992; McGee & Purcell-Gates, 1997; Teale & Sulzby, 1986; Yaden, Rowe, & MacGillivray, 2000). Studies have focused on children's understanding of the functions of print and other symbols (Eeds, 1988; Goodman, 1986; Holdaway, 1979; McGee & Richgels, 1996; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998), knowledge of book handling (Clay, 1966, 1985, 1991; Pinnell, 1996), familiarity with formal, written language structures (Bigge & Stump, 1999; Clay, 1985; Martin & Brogam, 1971; Sipe, 2000), and the identification of letters and numerals (Clay, 1985; McGee & Richgels, 1996). Such abilities are no longer viewed as precursors to reading; rather, they are seen as true literacy behaviors evident in young children (i.e., emergent literacy) (Crawford, 1995; Hiebert & Raphael, 1998; Teale & Sulzby, 1986; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). The scribbles evolve into letters and/or pictures that represent people or things, then into combinations of letters, and finally into words – first formed with invented spelling and then, finally, into conventionally spelled words to express the thoughts of the young authors (Dyson, 1985). Ideally, as children mature, they will learn that they have

something to say and that making their voices heard through their writing comes first and that attention to grammar and conventions come later (Thomas, 2000). Writing is learned in this manner by all children regardless of socioeconomic status or race, and the only difference that may appear between populations of children is the speed at which they move through the writing development continuum (Mavrogenes, 1986). That speed is impacted by the differences that exist between the opportunities that children have to be immersed in communication and to engage in making meaning, a task limited by the materials that may or not be available to children in their specific environments (Kress, 1997). In a review of the research available on early writing development and behaviors, Row (2009) discovered that current research in the field of early writing is shifting to focus on those differences in order to provide a better understanding of the link between writing development and environment.

Once children have learned how to write, attention turns to how to help them learn to write well and how to do so effectively. Students' ability to write and to communicate their thoughts and ideas through writing is critical to their success in school and in life. This ability is fostered through authentic writing tasks in the classroom (Black, Helton, & Sommers, 1994; Thomas, 2000) and through helpful feedback from the teachers who evaluate their writing (Atkinson & Connor, 2008; Murphy & Yancey, 2008). There are a variety of other factors that influence the writing proficiency of children. In order to learn to become writers, children profitably observe writers in action through the modeling of their teacher, their caretaker, their parents, and their peers (Temple, Nathan, Temple, & Burns, 1993). Modeling includes a teacher sharing thoughts aloud and demonstrating steps taken by writers to complete a piece of writing while a

novice writer observes the process (Tompkins, 2008). Morrow (1997) and Temple et al. (1993) agree that some other factors that help children learn to write include exposure to a print rich environment, being encouraged to try new things in writing and to take risks in terms of spelling and conventions, being given many opportunities to write, having opportunities to share and to talk about their writing, being allowed to worry only about their handwriting being legible rather than perfect, and by being exposed to many examples of good writing. Another best practice in the teaching of writing involves scaffolding and differentiating instruction to meet the needs of every student at whatever level they are at any particular time (Berry, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978). These are all practices that can be used by teachers to help students become good writers.

Background of the Study

As a former high school English teacher, I readily admit that I love to teach reading and writing just as much as I love to participate in those activities in my personal life. I also admit that I was much more likely to see a love of reading among my students than to see them with a love for writing. Instead, many of my students shared that writing was a scary chore that they knew that they had to do but that they just wanted to finish as quickly as possible with a passing score. Even those students who loved to write and who shared their personal written narratives with me were nervous to do so because they dreaded my reaction to seeing their words on the paper. How could I celebrate their work while, at the same time, help them to improve their skills? That was the main question that often plagued me when I sat down to grade my stack of 140 student essays and narratives. I believe this question haunts most teachers of writing and which is only further complicated by the introduction of standardized testing rubrics into our

classrooms. Calkins (2005) concurs that such worries are on the minds of many teachers, even those with much experience, who sit with a student or with their papers and must decide how to evaluate their writing or their thoughts about writing. Calkins (2005) wondered if those observing teachers in action while conferencing or engaging in other evaluation practices thought that the process of evaluating writing was “No Big Deal” (p. 3). I share her curiosity and wonder if that was a view shared by my professors who, therefore, decided to focus their teaching more on writing instruction than on evaluation.

The teacher’s quandary becomes one of a tug-of-war. Should teachers respond as they would like to or as they are “supposed” to? In some schools, teachers are mandated to use the rubric that accompanies the scoring on the state’s standardized writing test for all writing assignments in their classrooms. In other schools, the use of such rubrics may not be mandatory, but it makes sense to the teachers to help the students get used to the scoring mechanism that will be used to determine their eligibility to be promoted to the next grade. In still other schools, the teachers attempt to standardize their authentic assessment evaluation methods with the hope that those methods will be accepted as a suitable alternative by the administrators who require the standardized methods to be used (Calkins, 1994). Through my own experiences with teaching and through my experiences with teaching undergraduates who grapple with assessment questions before stepping foot into a teaching position, I have wondered about the evaluation practices of current teachers of writing and whether those methods of evaluation are the result of best practices of writing evaluation as found in research, if they are the methods mandated by the schools where they teach, or if they are methods created by the individual teachers . This study aimed to answer some of my questions and to help foster a better

understanding of the choices teachers make when faced with the task of responding to and evaluating student writing.

Statement of the Problem

Once students have navigated all of these learning experiences and have produced writing, a new dilemma is formed. Teachers must then decide how to evaluate and respond to that writing, which would seem like an ordinary everyday task for teachers, but there is a wide array of evaluation methods available to educators. For example, educators can choose to respond orally or in writing (Beach & Friedrich, 2006) and can use process or product measures to formulate those responses (Asker-Amason, Wengelin, & Sahlen, 2008). One measure of assessment should not be used as the lone method in evaluating a student's writing because it is important for the chosen evaluation to be an appropriate match to the assigned writing task (Morrow, 1997). It is, therefore, important for teachers to be familiar and comfortable with a variety of different assessment techniques (Morrow, 1997). In order to determine the best way to approach evaluation, it is essential to review the goals of assessment. Rhodes and Shanklin (1993) share that assessment should guide and improve learning, it should guide and improve instruction, and it should help to monitor the outcomes of instruction. If an educator's goal is to meet each of these requirements of assessment, then it is necessary to build a solid repertoire of evaluation techniques.

Research in the field of the evaluation of composition (Cooper & Odell, 1999; Huot, 1990; Odell, 1980) reveals that there are many challenges facing educators even when they are able to select an assessment method. Which methods they choose also depends, at least to some degree, on their orientation to teaching. In examining the

research on the evaluation of writing, I found my orientation to teacher preparation is of the academic/personal nature (Feiman-Nemser, 1990). I believe that teachers must first know the academic area that they are teaching before they can be effective teachers of that material, but I also believe that it is important for teachers to create an environment in which their students are able to learn and grow independently (Feiman-Nemser, 1990). For example, if teachers decide to use written feedback as a method of evaluation, they must be careful to contain their remarks to only the most important areas needing attention so as not to hinder their students in their attempts to practice self-evaluation skills (Graves, 1983). In order to practice a more holistic view of evaluation, teachers may choose to have their students complete writing portfolios (Camp, 1985; Elbow, 1986), or they may utilize informal assessment measures using observations and anecdotal notes as a record of student progress in writing (Newkirk & Atwell, 1988). Regardless of the selection that educators make when evaluating a writing selection, it is important that the assessment be valid, it measures what it intends to measure, and it is reliable, it produces the same results upon retesting (Murphy & Yancey, 2008). Some researchers (Huot, 2002) focus on reliability, but others (Williamson, 1993) stress that validity is a more important construct to uphold in writing assessment. Teachers must decide for themselves what they hold to be more important when selecting the methods of evaluation that they will use in their classrooms.

Another way to guide the decision-making process of an educator who is attempting to select a method to use in evaluating writing would be to follow the principles of authentic assessment (Ruddell & Ruddell, 1995) as that framework for evaluation encompasses all types of assessment methods and helps to give the teacher a

full picture of the students' abilities through frequent assessment using a variety of methods that are deemed to be appropriate to the tasks at hand. Whether current educators choose to follow the advice of one researcher or another, they have many options of different evaluation tools (Beach & Friedrich, 2006; Newkirk & Atwell, 1988; Ruddell & Ruddell, 1995). Essentially, these researchers have shown educators what to do in terms of the evaluation of writing and have supported those suggestions with research showing that the methods are useful. What is lacking, then, is knowledge of whether or not practicing educators are actually implementing these research-supported evaluation methods. This study will examine whether the educator participants are putting this assessment research into practice during their evaluation of student writing samples.

Rationale for the Study

Standardized writing assessments are part of the classroom and often influence the instructional decisions of the teacher (Hillocks, 2003; No Child Left Behind, 2003). Within this context, a clear picture of the evaluation of writing and of how teachers approach the task of evaluating and responding to student writing samples is needed. Additionally, the validity of writing assessments is often questioned (Huot, 2002; Yancey, 1999), and there is a need to identify if teachers are choosing methods of writing assessment that are considered to be valid measures. Huot (2002) stresses the importance of everyone in the field of education coming to agree on a definition for the term validity that extends beyond the one cited by other researchers (Yancey, 1999) who simply state that if an evaluation measures what it is supposed to measure, then it is valid. Huot maintains that we need to broaden our requirements used in determining validity to

include a look at the methods and theories used to guide the creation of the measurement. His argument is that any measure can be valid, but that the designation of being so does not mean that the information gained from the use of the measure is actually valid or useful (Huot, 2002). If it is important to educators that their evaluation of students' writing be valid, then they should be searching for effective methods of evaluating writing that are valid. What, then, can help to determine whether or not a measure is actually valid?

While reliability, the agreement of independent readers, is another indication of a measure's validity, that in and of itself cannot establish validity (Cherry & Meyer, 1993). Williamson (1993) insists that an instrument may be a valid measure, but the results do not necessarily provide an accurate reflection of the knowledge being tested. Moss (1994) believes that reliability is a necessary component of validity. In an effort to create a better test of validity, Guion (1980) established a tri-fold test of validity involving criterion validity (the relationship of a measure to outside criterion), content validity (the domain of knowledge or ability being measured), and construct validity (the construct of the skill that is being measured). The idea was that having to meet three tenets of validity would ensure more valid measurements in education. Huot (2002) shares that a problem became apparent, however, when measures were being called valid even though they displayed only one of the three types of validity. Such claims were often touted in the justification of the use for multiple choice tests covering grammar and mechanics (Camp, 1993). A measurement of the actual construct of writing is missing in such tests, and that makes it difficult to say that the measure actually tells us anything about the students' writing abilities (Huot, 2002). Moving towards another view of validity, Messick (1989) required

proof that the development of a measure included the consideration of theory, and evidence that the instrument was valid needed to be provided. Moss (1998) suggests that educators can ensure the validity of measures only when they constantly and consistently monitor the results and revisions of those evaluative tools.

While the validity and reliability of writing evaluation methods are certainly important, teachers seem to be most concerned about finding the methods of evaluation that effectively allow them to identify their students' areas of proficiency and areas where improvement is needed (Beach & Friederich, 2006; Cooper & Odell, 1999). I expected with this study to learn more about the conflict between choosing methods designated as being reliable and valid and those perceived to be the ones most effective for identifying the strengths and weaknesses of their students. There is a myriad of options in evaluation methods available to teachers of writing, so their primary goal should be to select those methods that best match the goals of their curriculum and that allow them to further individualize the evaluation process for each of their students (Beach & Friederich, 2006).

In order to gain perspective of the current status of the methods utilized by educators in their evaluation of and response to student writing, it is helpful to question and observe them during the teaching of writing and to talk with them about their process for evaluating samples of student writing. It is also helpful to examine their responses from the interview and their actions during the observations with respect to their responses on the questionnaire to see if their shared beliefs were consistent across all of the phases of data. The cooperation of a pair of fifth grade teachers at a private school provided a context in which I was able to gain a snapshot view of the evaluation practices

currently in use by local teachers of writing, and I was also able to learn more about the beliefs regarding the evaluation of writing as shared by those educators.

Theoretical Framework

In order to assess students' writing, it is important to understand the ways in which students become literate. A sociocultural view of literacy is used to guide this study. Stemming from Vygotsky's (1962) social development theory and his belief that student's interactions with their environment and with the people around them shape their learning, sociocultural theorists believe that students do not learn and grow in isolation. Nor do they learn simply by receiving sets of rules and guidelines that govern the way that they should learn, read, or write (Prior, 2006). Students come to school with a wealth of knowledge and experiences already in their repertoire from which they draw upon as they negotiate (or mediate) their way through the school day and through their assignments and relationships (Englert, Mariage, & Dunsmore, 2006; Prior, 2006). Students are learning socialization skills as they grow and are also learning to assimilate their cultural influences with each new experience that they encounter, and the key is to recognize that while all children are having a similar growth experience as they navigate school and life, they are "individuated" as they process their experiences in their own ways (Prior, 2006, p. 55). Essentially, students can process their learning and living in such a way that allows them to grow as individuals even when they are learning in a group setting.

According to Vygotsky (1978), in order to be an effective teacher of children, it is important for teachers to share their knowledge with the learners. To put his views into perspective with relation to writing, he did not mean for teachers to simply tell students

how to write with lists of rules and conventions to follow. Instead, he contended that the best way to foster the act of writing with children was by showing them how to write through explicit and extensive modeling practices from brainstorming all the way to revision. Englert et al. (2006) and Hillocks (1984) share the view that teachers are charged with the responsibility of sharing their knowledge as an expert with their students in order to assist their development as young writers. In order to effectively share their knowledge of writing with their students, that means that educators need to be able to focus on meeting their students' needs in terms of writing proficiency and to challenge them to grow on an individual basis (Beach & Friederich, 2006). This study will explore the evaluation options that are in use and available to help educators identify students' points of need.

Teachers, however, are not the only source of information for children. Therein lies the challenge for educators. For assessment to be effective, sociocultural theory suggests that it cannot occur in isolation. Assessment of writing is optimal when occurring in situations within each student's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978) and when students are allowed to write with access to tools (i.e., related texts, peers, language clues, etc) (Englert et al., 2006; Gee, 1992). Another view within the sociocultural perspective suggests that the assessment process is further complicated by the fact that teachers are often the dominant authors of students' writing assignments in that they are the ones in charge of telling the students what, when, and how to write, yet the students are the ones who are held wholly accountable for the resulting writing (Prior, 2006). While there are challenges when it comes to implementing school practices that are responsive to the sociocultural philosophy, it is important to value the "everyday

life-worlds” of students and to find ways to take advantage of any connections between those worlds and the school environment in order to fully support students in their literacy development (Prior, 2006).

Purpose

The overarching purpose of this study was to describe educators’ beliefs about the evaluation of student writing. The following variables were considered: public and private school settings, evaluation methods, and educators’ beliefs regarding the evaluation of writing.

Research Questions

Specifically, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What are the differences in the ways in which educators approach evaluating student writing?
2. How do educators evaluate the effectiveness of their evaluation methods for judging the quality of students’ writing samples?
3. What factors impact the evaluation decisions of educators?

Delimitations

The sample used in this study was a convenience sample that utilized volunteer educators who attended a local university-sponsored writers’ conference with their students or who helped select their school’s student participants for the conference. Because of this factor, the results of this study will not be generalizable to a larger population. However, by focusing in-depth on a couple teachers, I was able to provide rich descriptions of the enactment of evaluation that may be transferable to other studies.

Limitations

There are several threats to the internal validity of this study that may have occurred during the course of the project. The History Effect (Johnson & Turner, 2003) may have occurred during the study if the educators were exposed to any professional development workshops, university classes, etc. between the time that they received the questionnaire about writing and when they actually completed it or between receipt of the questionnaire and the interview and observations. The exposure to any new information about the evaluation of writing between the beginning and end of the study could have caused the teachers to answer the questions on the questionnaire or in the interviews in the way that their educational background and professional development experiences taught them that they should respond rather than responding in a manner that reflected their true behaviors. They may also have had difficulty articulating their personal beliefs, so they may have, then, resorted to giving the answer that they believed was correct. It is, therefore, possible that the self-reported data may not be accurate, but at the same time, the answers that they chose to give may allow a glimpse of what those individuals see as being valued in the educational setting even if that varies from their personal preferences (Johnson & Turner, 2003). I reassured the participants that their responses would remain anonymous to everyone except for me. This is a slight threat as it is expected that the professionals involved in the study answered truthfully as guided by the questionnaire's instructions relating to their current practices. However, because it is possible that the data provided may not be accurate, that possibility was considered during data analysis of the results.

Another possible threat to internal validity would be related to instrumentation. Because a portion of the data relies on my remaining consistent over time and across all observations and all participants, it is possible that I and, therefore, the instrument, could have changed slightly from one observation to the next. I closely monitored this threat to be sure that each stage of the study and each observation and interview was as close to identical to each other as possible. Video/audiotaping the observations and interviews allowed for additional reassurance of whether or not my goal of keeping the instrumentation the same was met. I may also have added to the threats to internal validity with expectancy effects. If I “saw” something because I expected to see it rather than actually seeing it, then that false data could impact the results of the study. Again, careful field notes as well as voice and video recorded observations and interviews clearly showed the events as they occurred. A review of those notes and recordings allowed me to double check the accuracy of the data used for interpretation.

Additionally, there are other possible threats to the internal validity of the study. The Hawthorne effect could be an issue as the educators in the observed lessons and the educator respondents to the questionnaire may have acted or responded differently knowing that they were part of a study than they would normally (Hunter & Brewer, 2003). Additionally, mortality became an issue, which threatened internal validity because all of the participants who were selected to participate in the observations and interviews along with the questionnaire did not complete all components of the study. Any threats to internal validity will be addressed in the analysis of the results.

The external validity of the study was also threatened. Because of the convenience sample and the specificity of the topic studied, the results of this study are

not generalizable to other populations or situations. Only replication of the results of this study can resolve the threat to external validity. This threat will be addressed again in the results section.

Operational Definition of Terms

Assessment - The process of gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop an understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences.

Authentic assessment – A type of assessment in which students must perform real-world tasks (in this case, writing-related tasks) in order to demonstrate the meaningful application of essential knowledge and skills.

Authentic audience – The readers of a writing selection that are actually invested in the piece in some way. Having an authentic audience in mind during the writing allows students to have a purpose for the task.

Belief – Something believed or accepted as being true.

Educator – For this study, the term educator will encompass all teachers, administrators, reading coaches, curriculum specialists, etc. who are either involved in the selection of the participants for the authors' conference or who attend the conference with the children as chaperones and are, therefore, eligible to complete the questionnaire.

Evaluation – The way in which a reader responds to a piece of writing with the intent to give the writing an assessment of quality on its own or as compared to other selections of writing.

Grading – The process of assigning a numerical or letter score, based on a pre-determined scale, to a student's work.

Narrative writing – Writing that tells a story with a beginning, middle, and end

Private school – Parents pay tuition costs for their children to attend these schools, and the schools are not bound by law to administer the FCAT.

Public school – Schools that receive funding from the state of Florida to provide a free education for children. These schools may include charter schools.

Rubric – A form of evaluation used for writing that lists characteristics sought by the evaluator and presents a scoring system for each of those characteristics.

Standardized test – A test given to a population that is administered and scored in a consistent manner.

Writers' conference – A local, university-sponsored authors' conference where children's authors and illustrators offer presentations on writing to the children who attend. All local schools are invited to attend and to bring their students. A fee is charged for each participant.

Writing sample – For this study, the writing sample will be the narrative story that the students submitted to their teachers. The samples were requested so that the educators could evaluate them and choose the best ones for those authors to attend the authors' conference.

Importance of the Study

The evaluation of writing is a complex task. The current educational climate is one in which all students are required to write for standardized tests. With the increased use of assessment measures to monitor the progress of students and their writing ability, teachers are being asked to make instructional and evaluative decisions that are responsive to the current assessment-driven climate (Conca, Schechter, & Castle, 2004).

Conversely, it is also necessary for students to be able to write in the “real world” for authentic audiences and authentic purposes. With these dual goals being present for our students, it is important that educators be fully aware of all of the evaluation methods at their disposal and for them to be able to select the method of evaluation that best fits the writing task at hand. Having a large repertoire of evaluation methods at their disposal means that teachers will be able to evaluate all types of writing done by the students and will, therefore, be better-equipped to show their students how to make improvements in all of the different genres of writing that they do while also learning where their instruction can be altered in order to reach all of their students at their point of need.

Unfortunately, much of the current available research centers on evaluating writing that results from a standardized test, and there is, therefore, a gap in our understanding of the best way in which to meld the techniques of evaluation of writing done for a standardized test with those to evaluate writing done for authentic purposes. More research is needed to help us understand the struggle that educators face in attempting to wrestle with the variety of evaluation methods for writing that are available to them and to help us understand the factors that influence the evaluation decisions that they make. The overarching purpose of this study was to describe educators’ beliefs about the evaluation of student writing. The inquiry was guided by the following research questions: (a) what are the differences in the ways in which educators approach evaluating student writing? (b) how do educators evaluate the effectiveness of their evaluation methods for judging the quality of students’ writing samples? and (c) what factors impact the evaluation decisions of educators?

Chapter 2

A Review of the Literature

In order to better understand how teachers feel about the myriad methods available to them to use in the evaluation of their students' writing, and it is necessary to explore the current and seminal research related to that field. The overarching purpose of this study was to describe educators' beliefs about the evaluation of student writing. In reviewing the available literature, my inquiry was guided by the following research questions: (a) what are the differences in the ways in which educators approach evaluating student writing? (b) how do educators evaluate the effectiveness of their evaluation methods for judging the quality of students' writing samples? and (c) what factors impact the evaluation decisions of educators?

Introduction

This chapter begins with clarification of the concept of evaluation and moves to explore the history of the evaluation of writing as well as the important constructs of validity and reliability, both generally and as they apply to writing. Next, I examine the available research on teachers' beliefs about the evaluation of student writing as those beliefs are the skeleton of this study. Understanding the research on teacher beliefs (Pajares, 2003) will assist in the analysis of the related data for this study. I then move on to review empirical research across the field of writing assessment in order to come to an increased understanding of the current state of educators' practices in the field of writing

evaluation. This review was conducted over a four-month period and was limited to research which addressed teachers' beliefs about the evaluation of writing, the research that detailed the evaluative options available to teachers of writing, and that which explored different factors that may influence the evaluation process of educators. Seminal works referenced by many (more than ten) researchers or those that were recommended by university professionals were included in this review along with current research in order to gain an understanding of where the fields of writing evaluation and teacher beliefs began as well as of where they stand in today's educational settings.

Evaluation Defined

In reviewing the research related to the evaluation of writing, it becomes apparent that a definition of what the evaluation process involves is a necessary component of this endeavor. Evaluation should not be confused with grading. Grading assigns a specific number or letter to a completed selection of writing when the assignment comes to an end while evaluation can be an ongoing process that may or may not result in a letter or numerical grade (Cooper & Odell, 1999). The assessment of writing, then, is a multifaceted process. It is one that should be done authentically and which should include a myriad of practices including observations and collaboration while being responsive to the needs of both the students and the goals of the curriculum (Ruddell & Ruddell, 1995). According to Cooper and Odell (1999), the aim of evaluation is to pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses of a writing sample, and in order to share the perceived strengths and weaknesses with the students, teachers need to be comfortable describing their response to the writing and need to be able to do so before a final draft is written. Once teachers

are comfortable with responding to writing, then they are better equipped to assist their students in improving the writing.

In order to determine whether or not their current evaluative practices are effective, teachers and others involved with education must consider three questions. First, “What assumptions are implicit or explicit in our evaluation procedures?” Next, “Are those assumptions consistent with current discourse theory?” Finally, “Will the result of using these procedures help us with the problem of improving students’ writing?” (Odell & Cooper, 1980, p. 35). Unfortunately, many teacher candidates do not feel prepared to answer those questions as they feel that they are either not good enough at writing themselves or that they are not strong enough writers to be able to effectively teach and evaluate the writing of their future students (Gallavan, Bowles, & Young, 2007). How, then, do they go about the process of evaluation once they are teachers in their own classrooms? This review of the literature in the field of writing evaluation seeks to establish an increased understanding of the field through a look at its history as well as the present status of those who are involved in the evaluation of writing on a regular basis. Knowing what options today’s teachers have available to use in the evaluation of writing and what the available research can tell us about the current state of writing evaluation in the schools will help increase understanding of the educators participating in this study and the evaluative decisions that they make when evaluating the writing of their students.

History of the Evaluation of Writing

The root of writing assessment in the United States appears to be a written examination that Harvard University implemented in 1873 in order to gauge the writing

ability of the university candidates (Lunsford, 1986). That writing test was the catalyst for other schools to design their own writing assessments, and those efforts led to the establishment and first meeting of the National Conference on Uniform Entrance Requirements in English, which was followed by the creation of the College Entrance Examination Board in 1901 (Lunsford, 1986). A further examination of the history of the research of the evaluation of writing finds that assessment followed three trends. From 1950-1970, writing evaluation focused on objective tests while the focus then shifted to holistically-scored essays from 1970-1986 and then again shifted to portfolio and programmatic assessment from 1986 through Yancey's review of evaluation research in 1999. Before the 1950's, there was little research available on the evaluation of writing because the majority of research focused on the teaching of literature with little regard given to how to assess the learning that occurred as students responded, in writing, to their lessons (Cooper & Odell, 1977). Even though some research was available (see Starch & Eliot, 1912), it was not a full body of research.

A seminal work in the field of the evaluation of writing was published by Godshalk, Swineford, and Coffman (1966) and described a method that could be used in order to achieve agreement among independent raters as the evaluators were, at that point in time, attempting to make a move from being concerned with reliability to increasing the validity of writing assessments (Murphy & Yancey, 2008). After that point, most publications that focused on evaluation in writing were concerned with ways to maintain the current methods of the time (Huot, 2002). When the evaluation of writing was discussed, it was done so from a "practical stylist" rhetoric in which the focus was on the grammar, conventions, and style (Cooper & Odell, 1999, p. xii), or it was in the field of

educational measurement, which conceptualizes writing as one small area of all educational evaluation (Huot, 2002). The practical discussions matched the methods of the time, which were mostly multiple-choice tests focused on conventions (Yancey, 1999). Later, in the 1990's, there was an increased interest in writing evaluation, and two new journals, *Assessing Writing* and *The Journal of Writing Assessment* were born with much of the writing in the journals focusing on how to design evaluation methods for the assessment of writing (Huot, 2002).

Huot (2002) believes that the field of writing evaluation still suffers from the negative impression that was formed when the field first appeared during the late 1800's as a way to determine not who was a skilled writer but rather who was taught by an ineffective teacher and was unable to write coherently. Instead of focusing on that negative impression, it is possible to move forward by finding a common ground upon which a majority of writing teachers can agree. One possible foundation can be found in the seven beliefs about the teaching of writing that Cooper and Odell (1999) view as being necessarily shared by writing teachers, and they believe that these concepts must be taken into consideration during the planning of writing instruction and of writing evaluation. Those beliefs are:

- Writing occurs in recursive stages that are different from writer-to-writer.
- Students should be allowed to do real writing (in paragraph form) from the beginning rather than being limited to sentences or phrases and working up to longer writings. Work can be done on the smaller segments of writing within the paragraph form.

- Writing assignments should have an authentic purpose and audience, which are clearly shared with students at the outset of the assignment.
- We do not write in the way we speak, and we must pay close attention to the differences between speech and the written language when we learn about writing.
- It is important to involve speech in the process of writing, and that can be done through conferences, discussions, workshops, etc.
- Writing is both open to interpretation and bound by rules in that students can write about anything and play with language within the conventions and formats that they are taught.
- One way to help students have better retention of the lessons they have learned about writing is to engage them in the practices of self-evaluation and self-reflection.

Of course, not all educators will agree with all of these points. The difficulty in finding a common ground stems from the variety of philosophies and beliefs held by educators (e.g., a belief in the importance of teaching writing as a process, valuing the use of the writing workshop, electing to not assign grades to student writing, etc.). Those who share my post-positivist views say that educators are free to agree or disagree with any of the points on the list and that they may even agree and disagree with a single item in the group or with the need to evaluate writing in any manner.

Validity and Reliability in the Evaluation of Writing

An important consideration for educators to acknowledge in their selection of an evaluation method is whether or not that method is valid and/or reliable. According to

Cooper and Odell (1977), reliability is an elusive concept in the assessment of writing. For example, they agree that educators can gather a reliable sample of writing from a student by asking them to write single pieces of writing in several different sittings that will then be scored by a group of raters. However, they believe that such a process only yields reliability of the student's writing ability only in one genre (Cooper & Odell, 1977). That result is problematic because the success of a student's writing in one genre does not transfer to automatic success in another style of writing, and another reliable assessment would be needed for each genre of writing (Breland, Camp, Jones, Morris, & Rock, 1987). There is also an issue with the reliability of the scorers in such an assessment. While it is possible for groups of raters to come to a consensus on a score for a writing sample, they are all approaching the paper with different backgrounds, presumptions, and biases, which are all aspects that could influence the resulting score for better or for worse (Diederich, French, & Carlton, 1961).

Validity is also difficult to obtain through writing assessments (Cooper & Odell, 1977). For example, Burgin and Hughes (2009) suggest that assessments which utilize a single sample of a student's writing as the source of evaluation are inherently dealing with a lack of content validity which results from a one time snapshot of a child's writing. The dilemma, then, is whether or not that method of assessing writing should be used at all. This dilemma is one that has existed for decades, and it will likely continue to exist as long as such assessments are utilized. Three types of validity were originally established as being important to Cooper and Odell (1977). Predictive validity is the ability to predict the performance of the person being assessed at another time or the ability to show that the student's performance on a particular assessment matches other

indications of their achievement in that area (i.e., grades from their teacher). A second type of validity is known as content validity, and that is found when it is shown that a particular assessment is appropriate for measuring the writing that results from a specific program, curriculum, etc. Finally, construct validity, the degree to which the assessment actually measures writing ability is also an important aspect of all methods of writing evaluation. Williamson (1993) later identified four areas which he believed to be necessary for teachers to consider in choosing an assessment method. Those were construct validity, contextual validation, authenticity, and the notion of consequence as a facet of validity.

Over time, many new tests were developed, and the argument about their validity was inevitable. Simply asking whether or not an assessment is valid based on the different types of validity outlined by Williamson (1993) or Cooper and Odell (1977) is insufficient. Researchers must also ask themselves whether the methods they choose are direct or indirect in their approach to assessment (Murphy & Yancey, 2008).

Indirect methods of assessment involve the estimation of “probable writing ability through the observations of specific kinds of knowledge and skills associated with writing” (Murphy & Yancey, 2008, p. 367) and have been criticized on the basis that consequential and predictive (Hughes & Nelson, 1991) validity can be lacking with such methods. Validity later came to be viewed as a “single, unified concept” rather than as having separate types of validity needing to be met (Camp, 1996, p. 136), but the pressure to ascertain the validity and reliability of all methods of evaluation for writing remains. Such pressure is good in that educators and researchers will always be looking for better ways to evaluate student writing. The important thing is for them to be mindful

of their time and to use their resources effectively while working to improve their evaluation methods so that too much time is not spent looking for a “perfect” method that may not exist. While there is, likely, no such thing as a perfect evaluation method for writing, the quest to find one will encourage conversations and the learning of new concepts and methods, which would not occur without the impetus to keep looking for a better method.

Teacher Beliefs About Writing

The beliefs held by teachers inform their instructional decisions and influence their actions (Ashton, 1990; Wilson, 1990). Pajares (1992) believes that the area of teachers’ beliefs is lacking in the literature because it is a daunting task for researchers to determine a way to study a mental construct. Bandura (1986) linked self-efficacy (i.e., beliefs about yourself and what you can do) to what people feel comfortable and confident doing in their day-to-day lives. For example, if a person has a high self-efficacy as a teacher, then she is more likely to feel better about what she does in the classroom, and she can reinforce those positive feelings by watching the successes of her students or by comparing herself to her peers (Pajares, 2003). While much of the research in the field (see Bandura 1997; Graham & Weiner, 1996; Pajares, 2003; Pajares & Johnson, 1996; Pintrich & Schunk, 1995) focuses on the influence self-efficacy has on the performance of students, there is some research (Berry, 2006) that examines the effect of those beliefs on the writing teaching practices of educators. It is important to note that even though research on teacher’s beliefs as they pertain to writing instruction is slim, researchers (Nespor, 1997; Pajares, 1992) have consistently found that teachers generalize their beliefs across the subject areas and use their general beliefs about learning to guide their

selection of instructional processes, materials, and even the conversations that they have with their students.

One area of interest when dealing with teachers' beliefs, then, is how their beliefs can shape their instructional practices. With respect to writing, Berry (2006) observed teachers working as a team in a classroom of learning disabled children. The teachers used their underlying beliefs about the abilities of their students based on their specific disabilities and backgrounds to determine how to respond to the students during writing instruction. For example, when some students offered a sentence during a shared writing, the teachers would accept the sentence as it was without requiring the students to do any revision to make it be a complete and correct sentence. When other students offered a sentence, however, the teachers would encourage them to revise the sentence or would scaffold them in a process of verbal revision based on their belief that those particular children had the ability to be successful in that process (Berry, 2006). Similarly, the reason that the teachers approached writing as a group or in a shared format was to include everyone in a process where they could all feel successful in the creation of a class writing, and instructional practice in writing was, therefore, moderated by this teacher's need for community. The teachers believed that a feeling of community and belonging was important, and therefore, they made instructional decisions during their planning for writing time that would be sure to address that belief (Berry, 2006). Even though these beliefs did not pertain specifically to the practice of writing, knowing how their beliefs affected their instructional practices in any way helps us understand other decisions that they make in other subject areas (Pajares, 1992).

In a separate study by Lee (1998), it was determined that not all teachers' instructional practices in writing are as close of a match to their beliefs as were the ones in Berry's (2006) study. Lee asked teachers about their beliefs with regards to writing and then asked them to share their current teaching practices. She found that teachers believed that discourse and learning about large concepts such as main idea, style, and structure were important but that their instructional practices focused on grammar and vocabulary, which displays a sharp dichotomy between what they believe to be effective in the teaching of writing and what they were actually doing in the classroom. Lee (1998) suggests two possible reasons for the split between what the teachers shared that they believed to be important and what they actually taught to their students. She suggested that perhaps the students' grammar needed much improvement simply to make their pieces readable, so the teachers chose to work on that aspect of their writing first. She also posits that it is possible that the teachers' skills in writing were not sufficient enough to teach the students how to improve their writing even though the teachers knew that was what they should be doing with them. This lapse between beliefs and practice is in alignment with Bandura's (1986) supposition that having a belief and knowledge of how to accomplish something does not ensure that it will be done in a successful manner.

Another interesting finding was that some of the teachers' responses on the questionnaire differed greatly from their actual practices, which led Lee to believe that the instructors were choosing the answer that they knew would be correct in the eyes of the researcher, even though it was not an accurate representation of what they were doing in their classrooms. For example, she found that a majority of the teachers in the study believed that the teaching of writing should be explicit through such practices as shared

writing and modeling. Those teachers, however, did not actually institute those practices during their writing lessons. Further analysis of the data revealed that many of the teachers who did not attend to grammar and vocabulary at a higher level held a belief that those areas of writing were topics to be covered by teachers in the younger grades, so their teaching practices focused on the areas of writing that they believed to be appropriate for their students' grade level despite any apparent needs in the students' writing that might suggest otherwise (Lee, 1998).

Graham, Harris, Fink, and MacArthur (2001) took a similar approach in another study in which they asked teachers to fill out questionnaires covering both their beliefs about teaching writing and their instructional practices. Their findings show that teachers who have a higher self-efficacy, i.e., they believe that they are proficient teachers of writing, feel more confident in their ability to teach writing, that their students spend more time actually composing writings, and that they are able to incorporate the teaching of grammar into their writing times without it becoming the focus of their lessons. Conversely, teachers with low-self-efficacy are more likely to avoid teaching grammar, and their students spend less time engaged in writing activities because those teachers do not feel confident in their abilities to teach, assist, and guide their students through writing (Graham et al., 2001). A positive finding was that 94% of the teachers responding to the questionnaire felt confident in their ability to teach writing and to cause improvement in their students' writing. Unfortunately, however, on another question that asked whether or not the teachers believed that they could help students improve their writing when there were factors in place, such as a lack of discipline or the lack of a good home experience, that could be viewed as impediments to their progress, 42% of the

teachers felt that they would not be able to effectively teach writing to those students (Graham et al., 2001). The researchers concluded by suggesting that more research be done in an effort to see if teacher beliefs are “causally related” to their ability to affect students’ improvement in the area of writing (Graham et al., 2001, p. 199).

When a teacher comes across factual information that repudiates knowledge that she thought she had, she will revise that knowledge (Nespor, 1987). Beliefs, on the other hand, seem to be more permanent and resistant to changes based on new knowledge or experiences and, at the same time, beliefs have more power over the decisions that are made in day-to-day life than simple knowledge (Nespor, 1987). However, that exact theory causes other researchers to believe that beliefs are less important to teachers than is knowledge as they are convinced that knowledge is more objective and likely to evolve to match new situations (Roehler, Duffy, Herrmann, Conley, & Johnson, 1988). Pintrich (1990) and Berry (2006) offer that perhaps knowledge and beliefs work together to inform teachers’ practices. Another view, offered by Raudenbush, Rowen, and Cheong (1992), is that teachers’ beliefs and feelings of efficacy may change based on the subject area as well as the perceived ability level of the students who they are currently teaching.

Regardless of how knowledge and beliefs work together, or separately, it is generally understood that beliefs are formed and shaped by a person’s life experiences. The earlier those beliefs are shaped, the firmer they hold with little chance of being changed (Pajares, 1992). In the field of education, beliefs can be troubling as they color every action and every memory that teachers have (Pajares, 1992).

Beliefs within attitudes have connections to one other and to other beliefs in other attitudes, so that a teacher’s attitude about a particular educational issue may

include beliefs connected to attitudes about the nature of society, the community, race, and even family. These connections create values that guide one's life, develop and maintain other attitudes, interpret information, and determine behavior. (Pajares, 1992, p 319)

When teachers face a situation in the classroom for which there is no clear-cut answer, they will rely on their beliefs to guide them into action (Kagan, 1992). That connection between beliefs and instructional action means that one teacher's classroom practices will be naturally different from another's with each classroom environment and lessons reflecting the personal beliefs of each particular teacher (Berry, 2006).

Posner, Strike, Hewson, and Gertzog (1982) posit that if someone is unsure about her beliefs, then it is possible that new and plausible information can help encourage the creation of new beliefs as long as those would be in alignment with her current belief structure. However, it is also true that even those teachers who are open to the change in their beliefs may experience feelings of discomfort and frustration as the new, and conflicting, knowledge is first introduced to them (Florio-Ruane & Lensmire, 1989). Dempsey, Pytlitzillig, and Bruning (2009) agree that a transformation of beliefs is possible. In a study in which they worked with pre-service teachers specifically to raise their self-efficacies with regards to writing and writing assessment, they found that walking the teachers through practice evaluations of student writing where they could receive feedback from experts on their assessment performance led to increases in the self-efficacies and beliefs about assessing writing. Obviously, it is not an easy process to shake people's confidence in their beliefs enough to force them to make a change. It follows, then, that Guskey (1986) found that professional development workshops were

generally ineffective in bringing about changes in the belief structures of teachers unless they had the ability to utilize whatever technique was being taught and then had the opportunity to see that it would have positive impact on the students' achievement. Some belief changes will be welcomed while others will be resisted, but the important point is that change is possible (Florio-Ruane & Lensmire, 1989).

Unfortunately, assessment has often been viewed as “a negative, disruptive feature for the teaching of writing,” and that view has transferred as a belief held by many teachers, and that type of belief will be difficult to alter (Huot, 2002, p. 9). Such a view is most likely made more difficult to ignore when reading reports like the one by Chait (2010) in which the author reveals that it is hypothesized that the removal of the “bottom six to ten percent” of teachers would lead to increases in student achievement (p. 2). Teachers may find it difficult to think positively about assessment when they are being personally assessed with the threat of losing their jobs. The questionnaire administered for this study asks teachers to identify their beliefs regarding assessment, and those responses will show if the participants have an unshakeable, negative belief towards assessment or if they have a more positive view.

Knowing that the amount of writing instruction that their students will have is limited, teacher educators must be sure to provide quality instruction in writing when they have the opportunity to do so, and it is also helpful to link the teaching to theory (Norman & Spencer, 2005). The connection of their learning to research and theory enables the pre-service teachers to examine their personal beliefs with respect to theory and to then be aware of any differences that may exist (Berry, 2006; Pajares, 1992). Norman and Spencer (1995) completed a study with 59 pre-service teachers who were

enrolled in two semesters of literacy coursework. The pre-service teachers began by writing an autobiography about their life's experiences with writing, and throughout the course, they continually examined their beliefs about writing. Norman and Spencer (2005) found that 80% of the pre-service teachers credited their former teachers with having an impact on their self-perception of themselves as writers. Generally, they had positive feelings about their elementary teachers but less positive feelings about their secondary and college-level instructors. In fact, those teachers who were perceived as having had a negative impact on the pre-service teachers' self-perceptions were labeled as "insensitive, critical, uncaring, and ineffective" (Norman & Spencer, 2005, p. 31). Of the 59 teachers involved in the study, 91% of them held a view that either characterized writing as being a skill that a person is simply born to be good at or as a skill that could be improved with practice and effective instruction (Norman & Spencer, 2005). When questioned regarding how they believed that writing should be taught in the classroom, some common themes emerged. They believed that the writing should be connected to the experiences of their future students, they supported choice for students writing topics and assignments, and they felt that it was important for students to receive positive comments and feedback on their writing (Norman & Spencer, 2005).

Because the writing performance of students can be linked to their self-efficacy (Pajares, 2003), it is unfortunate that a large number of pre-service teachers have a low self-efficacy with regards to writing (Norman & Spencer, 2005). It is important for teachers to work on improving both the "competence *and* confidence" of their students because those two constructs are linked and necessary for success in writing (Pajares, 2003, p. 153).

Review of Pertinent Evaluation Research

In the beginning of the evaluation research movement, it was not recognized that different strategies were needed in order to effectively evaluate different genres of writing (Cooper & Odell, 1999). The predecessor to all current writing methods came in the study completed by Diederich, French, and Carlton (1961) who were in search of a common approach that could be taken towards the assessment of writing. They found that 94% of the papers involved in their study received vastly different scores from multiple scorers who had the same background. This disparity in grades raised concerns about the validity of the grading method, so Diederich et al. looked for a new method of writing evaluation that could bring some agreement among graders (i.e., reliability). The result of their endeavor brought about the creation of the original five-point rubric containing the factors of ideas, form, flavor/style, mechanics, and wording, which “nearly every large-scale assessment of writing since 1961 has been strictly guided” (Broad, 2003, p. 6).

In 1980, Odell and Cooper examined four prominent methods of writing evaluation to gauge their effectiveness in assessing student writing. The four methods examined included the General Impression Scoring technique utilized by the Educational Testing Service, the Analytic Scale developed by Diederich et al. (1961), the assessment of relative readability developed by Hirsch (1977), and the Primary Trait scoring procedure developed by Lloyd-Jones (1977). The General Impression process allows writers to write on any topic of their choice. Then raters are required to compare written papers to one another rather than against a predetermined scoring guide (Charney, 1984). The Analytic Scale assigns a score to different elements, such as spelling, style, and grammar, of a writing, which can then be added together to get an overall score for the

paper (Diederich et al. (1961). The Primary Trait scoring procedure adapts the rubric to fit the type of writing being completed as well as to reflect the specific topic of the paper. Relative readability (Hirsch, 1977) is a holistic scoring technique that examines how well the writer presents ideas on paper. This technique never gained acceptance and was not fully developed (Charney, 1984). It was determined that the Primary Trait scoring procedure, although not perfect, was by far the most useful of the four methods of evaluation and that it was the only one that was based on research in its creation (Odell & Cooper, 1980).

The Education Testing Service provided the creation of the modern techniques in the evaluation of writing (Broad, 2003) as it was the predecessor to holistic scoring and helped to pave the way for assessment to move from solely looking at grammar and conventions to also evaluating the content of essays (Yancey, 1999). While the shift to evaluating whole pieces of writing rather than only multiple-choice tests was promising, Huot (2002) noted that no scholars related to the field of English had a hand in the development of holistic scoring. That concern transfers over to many of the evaluation methods in use today. If the methods being used by teachers of writing and English were not developed by people with the same background and understanding of the intricacies of student learning and development in writing, then that means that the methods were more likely created by professionals in the measurement field who are more concerned with the validity of a particular instrument than they are with the best way to measure student growth and understanding (Broad, 2003; Huot, 2002). Additionally, as found by Diederich et al. (1961), there would not be agreement between the raters in such a case as

the English and educational professionals would likely not come to the same conclusions about writing as would the measurement professionals.

Subjectivity of Raters

Some researchers (Cooksey, Freebody, & Wyatt-Smith, 2007; Wyatt-Smith & Castleton, 2005) have examined the different ways in which teachers implement a given set of standards for evaluating writing from an outside source when evaluating the writing of their own classroom students as compared to when they look at the writing of students who are unknown to them. They determined that instructors find it difficult to separate their personal knowledge of the students from the evaluation of their work as they want to include their insights of the students' abilities, effort, and growth into their final score. Obviously, this research shows that if the goal is to have a score based solely on the criteria set forth for the evaluation (on a rubric or other form), then it is important that the evaluation be done without knowledge of the author, and if the rater is allowed to know the students whose work is being assessed, then you must account for subjectivity in that evaluation, which would be especially important if that rater was responsible for evaluating work from unknown students as well as students who were known to him or her (Cooksey et al., 2007; Wyatt-Smith & Castleton, 2005). This type of summative assessment, which is based on a score, is completely different than the continual assessment that is done by classroom teachers, which is why it is difficult for those teacher-raters to give a score that would be greatly disparate from the students' normal writings. While all teachers should practice objectivity in an attempt to see their students' writing through the eyes of others, subjectivity (i.e. personal knowledge) during the writing evaluation process can be beneficial to both the rater and the writer.

Assessment Options

In an effort to determine what goes through the minds of student writers, Emig (1971) worked with 12th grade students. Through think-aloud protocols, interviews, and an analysis of writing products, she attempted to gain insight into what the student writers thought about their writing assignments, what they thought about while they did their writing, and what thoughts they gave to revising those works. She determined that any writings that stemmed from a teacher's assignment received extremely little thought and that the time spent writing was very minimal with virtually no revision being done by the student writers. Any writings that the students did outside of class on their own time for their own personal pleasure, however, captured their interest and were given more attention in the planning, drafting, and revision stages than were the writings done during class (Emig, 1971).

Going outside of the individual classroom writings, Broad (2003) embarked on a study to establish a model for Dynamic Criteria Mapping (DCM) at a university where the instructors were required to evaluate the writing of their students in an English course utilizing a portfolio system. He observed meetings of the instructors and analyzed their thoughts and struggles as related to how to decide what to include in the portfolio, how much (if any) revision to allow their students to do, and what criteria to use in the assessment of the portfolio. Included in the study were conversations in which the instructors shared their "Teachers' Special Knowledge (TSK)," which Broad (2003) defines as "direct and exclusive knowledge of the student-author shared by an instructor with his or her trio-mates [teachers shared their knowledge in groups of three]" (p. 84). This knowledge was used by the instructors to help one another make decisions about

whether or not particular students would pass the class, and they shared advice with one another across their classes to help complete the evaluation of students both in their own classes and in the classes of their trio-mates. Broad's (2003) assessment of the use of the DCM model is that it provides great benefit for the instructors, but it leaves the students without a clear picture of how their writing was evaluated or what they can do to make improvements as they are not privy to the content of the conversations between the teachers. If the goal of the writing teacher is to see improvement in the students' writing, then it would be important to find a way to show the students how their writing is evaluated as well as how they can go about improving their skills. Without that information, it would be difficult for the students to grow as writers.

Authentic Assessment

A search for an exact definition of authentic assessment comes up empty as it appears to be a term that is known by all and one that everyone assumes that the definition is agreed upon without speaking (Petraglia, 1998). Because of that ambiguity, Gulikers, Bastiaens, and Kirschner (2004) set out to establish a concrete definition of the term and decided that authentic assessment is "an assessment requiring students to demonstrate the same (kind of) competencies, or combinations of knowledge, skills and attitudes, that they need to apply in the criterion situation in professional life" (p. 5). Additionally, Gulikers et al. (2004) also determined that authentic assessment exists within a five-dimensional framework which includes task, physical context, social context, result/form, and criteria. One of the advantages of utilizing authentic assessment methods is that they provide a high level of construct validity (i.e., they measure the things that they purport to measure) as long as they are appropriately matched to a task

(Gielen, Dochy, & Dierick, 2003). According to Birenbaum and Dochy (1996), in order for assessment to be authentic and to give you a true picture of the student's capabilities, it is important for the assigned task to be engaging and to be linked to a real-life learning experience (i.e., it must have authentic applications to life). If those goals are accomplished, then students experiencing regular authentic assessments appear to become more motivated to learn after recognizing that accomplishment on such tasks can help them in their life outside of the classroom (Gulikers et al., 2004). This task is complicated, however, by researchers (Honebein, Duffy, & Fishman, 1993) who point out that the term authentic becomes relative to the situation that you are in at the moment. Additionally, authentic assessment can also be viewed as a process, rather than as being a single goal or task, where students demonstrate mastery or improvement while engaged in various activities (Mueller, 2005).

Authentic Writing Tasks

It is important that teachers recognize the necessity of having all student writing assignments have a specific purpose (from the perspective of the writers) and that the students have a specific audience in mind when they are writing (Cooper & Odell, 1999). If students are not given the opportunity to write for real purposes with real audiences, it is unlikely that they will be able to reach the level of an expert writer (Gielen et al., 2003). The audience for whom the students write has long been an issue of discord in education. In a collection of essays written in 1965, Judine points out that the authors of the essays contained in her edited volume all selected different audiences for their students because they had a belief of who the audience should be and that they remained firm in their selection across all of the assignments that they gave regardless of the nature

of the assignment. According to Sommers (1982), assigning an audience member for the writing would be a mistake. Instead, Sommers suggest that teachers pay attention only to preserving the goal of writing – the making of meaning. When students write with an audience member in mind, they automatically change aspects of their writing to meet the perceived expectations of the audience. When such writing is evaluated, the teacher must give feedback to tell the students how well they have achieved the goal set for them by the teacher rather than allowing the students to set their own goals based on what they believe to be necessary for their chosen audience (Sommers, 1982). That occurrence of the teacher taking control of the goals of the writing means that the students have only participated in a writing exercise rather than doing “real writing” (Probst, 1989, p. 75). This type of exercise is, of course, reflective of “real” writing for schools, but the key is for teachers to offer writing tasks that address the needs of both school and life.

In a study where the researchers examined 2,000 pieces of writing in order to determine the audience for the writing as well as the purpose for it, they identified many factors influencing the writing of students (Martin, D’Arcy, Newton, & Parker, 1994). When considering audience, for example, the researchers found that students are influenced not only by who they are writing for but also what they think of that audience. The findings of the study were that students viewed nearly half of their writing assignments as being intended for an “examiner” to read whether or not the actual intended audience was the teacher (Martin et al., 1994, p. 40). If teachers work to provide writing assignments that have meaning to the students and which challenge them cognitively rather than allowing them to only write to assigned topics and/or audiences, they may find that the students will rise to the challenge by responding with more writing

and more meaningful content, even though it may be perceived as a more difficult task to write with more freedom, than they would to a standardized writing assignment (Matsumura, Patthey-Chavez, Valdes, & Garnier, 2002). This finding is in line with the findings of previous researchers (Berry, 2006; Pajares, 2003) who determined that increased confidence in academic skills leads to increased performance. The action of the teacher giving an assignment with choice imbedded within the task shows that she has confidence in the students, which, in turn, boosts their own confidence going into the writing assignment.

One suggestion for a way in which to work authentic writing into the curriculum comes from Martin (2003) who incorporated the writing of “occasional papers” into his writing requirements for students (p. 52). His only requirements for this type of paper were that the students write at least one every six weeks and that they write about something that sparked their interest in whatever format/genre they would like. The students then read the paper aloud in class, their peers give them verbal feedback about the content of the paper by sharing their personal connections to the topic, and then the class moves on to another task. The students do not revise the papers unless they want to do so, but they have the power to write what they want, when they want to do so, and in whatever format they desire (Martin, 2003). While this activity is not a structured one with copious teacher feedback attached, it is an exercise in authentic writing and is one in which the students are in control of their writing, and they are interested in it (Martin, 2003).

Another way to encourage authentic writing, either within or outside of the classroom, is to introduce students to a “real” author who can share her experiences in

writing with the class. Teachers can invite authors to come to their school (Moynihan, 2009) or seek a local conference where authors will be present and talking with students. The experience of hearing how authors incorporate writing into their lives, where they get ideas, how they decide what and how to write, and how the process of revision successfully works for them can spark lasting interest in writing for students (Moynihan, 2009). The more opportunities that students have to think of a goal presented by their teacher and to make their own decisions about what kind of writing they would like to do in order to meet that goal, the more likely they are to take ownership of the writing task and to enjoy writing (Hudson, 1988).

Feedback to Student Writers

According to Cooper and Odell (1999), all steps that occur before students hand in their writing assignments pale in significance to the decision of what feedback to give to the students that will be the most helpful to them. Huot (2002) believes that the most important part of writing assessment is the act of actually reading and responding to writing. There is, however, a dearth of literature in the field of teacher response to writing (Freedman, 1985; Miller, 1994; Nixon & McClay, 2007; Phelps, 2000). With a lack of empirical research to fall back on, evaluators of writing must wrestle with the decision of how to best respond to student writers. They must also keep in mind that their responses to written work will have some type of effect on the writers. The process of giving and receiving feedback about writing can be “difficult and tense” for both the teacher and the student (Anson, 1989, p. 2). Because of that tension, teachers need to always be conscious of the specific student to whom they are responding in order to respond to them using terminology and a manner to which the student receiving the response will be

receptive rather than confused or angered (Huot, 2002). It is also important to individualize the comments to the paper rather than using standardized comments on all of the papers as knowing that the teacher is responding specifically to their paper will help the students with the acceptance of the comments (Matsumura et al., 2002).

Gee (1972) found that students who received negative comments or no comments at all on their writing began to write less and began to have less enjoyment while writing. Ideally, students will take the feedback from their teachers and will use the comments, critiques, or praise to strengthen their writing through additional drafts, but teachers often find it challenging to get students to make those changes once they perceive their writing as being completed (Beach & Friedrich, 2006). Even those students who do make changes to their writing based on the response from their teacher tend to make surface revisions without receiving detailed and/or quality comments from their instructor (Beach & Friedrich, 2006). One way for teachers to approach the issue of helping students to see the reasoning behind the request for revision is to work on making the comments that are given in response to student writing more encompassing and explanatory so that the student understands not only what must be fixed but also why it could be improved upon. For example, instead of telling a student that the writing is awkward, tell her why it is awkward. It is also helpful to explain why a certain aspect of the student's writing is effective so that she may understand how to transfer that effectiveness to other areas of her writing (Bardine, Bardine, & Deegan, 2000). It might also be helpful to emphasize that the final draft is still a draft, which indicates that it is still open to improvement (Haneda & Wells, 2000). Additionally, teachers can work to broaden their feedback from comments that encourage only standardization of writing (with respect to grammar or

form) and move to comments that are geared toward the improvement of the overall writing (Matsumura et al., 2002).

One option to help teachers provide specific feedback to students is for them to write an end note for each student at the conclusion of their writing to give praise and/or criticisms. One issue with end notes is that there is a large possibility that the teacher's intentions, i.e., the messages that she wanted to give to the students, are not understood by the students in the way that she meant them to be understood (Smith, 1997). One way to help lessen this problem is for teachers to video or audiotape their comments as they read and respond to the writing as those mediums allow for the opportunity for more thorough and complex feedback from the teacher with little effort as compared to what it would take to write the same comments for the students to read (Anson, 1997). Within that type of feedback, teachers who prefer to stay away from comments that could be taken only as criticism can shift to wearing a "reader hat" (Elbow, 1981) and then can respond to the students using words to describe how they feel or what they are thinking by sharing with the writer that they were "engaged, entranced, bothered, puzzled," etc. by what they are reading (Beach & Friedrich, 2006, p. 226). Ferris (1993) concluded that it is also important for teachers to individualize the feedback so that their comments are suitable for the intended recipient and so that the student writer is able to improve their writing based on those specific comments.

It is also helpful for teachers to be aware of the students' goals for their writings so that their feedback does not undermine those goals (Brannon & Knoblauch, 1982). Unfortunately, some teachers struggle with differentiating their feedback from student to student (Graham, Harris, Fink-Chorzempa, & MacArthur, 2003). Over time, it is quite

likely that every educator develops her own system of commenting on writing, and if we were to examine various student writings from her classes, we would see a pattern in her responses (Smith, 1997). Educators often, however, keep their responses to themselves, so they have few opportunities to see the different patterns of responses that may exist in their community, which means that they are not faced with differences that could cause them to expand or make changes to their own repertoire of assessment comments. In order to study the effect of written feedback (teacher and peer in oral or written form) on the writing of students, Freedman (1987) surveyed teachers and students and completed ethnographies of two of the teachers. She determined that in order to have a positive effect on their students' writing, teachers allowed the students to remain in charge of their own writing while reminding them of the goals that they as teachers established for them and were constantly and consistently available to the students whenever support was needed.

It is suggested by Chandler (1997) that more research is needed to see how the written or spoken remarks made by instructors with regards to students' writing actually impact the student writers both "affectively and cognitively" (p. 274) so that we can better make adjustments to our assessment procedures. Regardless of the form, it is clear that teachers need to work on responding effectively to their students' writing in order for students to be able to improve their skills as a writer (Beach & Friedrich, 2006).

Options for Assessing Writing

Many options exist when it comes to assessing writing. In order for educators to select an approach that they like the best, they must first consider their own beliefs about assessing writing. For example, do they believe that the most important part of

assessment is their own opinion of the writing, or are there more facets that need to be considered when embarking on the evaluation of student writing (Mathison-Fife & O'Neill, 1997)? Is it sufficient to only provide written comments to the writer, or should other forms of feedback be explored and engaged? Odell (1999) suggests that one of the necessary skills that a teacher must hone to be an effective evaluator of writing is the ability to match the writing assignment to the learning goal. That is, in order to choose an effective evaluation, it is important to know what the goal of the assignment is. Because different genres of writing have different purposes, and often different audiences, it is necessary to evaluate those writings utilizing whichever method of assessment best matches the goals of the author and/or the teacher (Tompkins, 2008). For example, while a teacher might want to determine whether or not the student makes a good argument in a persuasive writing piece, such a criterion would not be applicable to a narrative story (Tompkins, 2008). Given the many different types of writings that are possible, it follows that there is an equally large number of evaluation options to assess those writings.

Holistic Scoring

Holistic scoring has a rich past of support from those who value reliability over validity in writing evaluation (Cooper, 1977; Deiderich, 1964; Godshalk et al., 1964; White, 1985). In holistic scoring, the whole piece is examined, usually using a four to six point rubric, and a score for the writing is given on the overall impression from reading the work (Cooper, 1977). Holistic scoring can be useful when a rank order of the work of a group of students is desired (Cooper, 1977). One important note is that in holistic scoring, the rater does not make any corrections or revisions to the writing being evaluated, and the evaluator is supposed to complete the reading in two minutes or less

(Cooper, 1977). Obviously, if a reader can only spend two minutes on a writing sample, the amount of response that exists from the reader is limited. “The high rates of reader agreement that testers sometimes brag of do not reflect the way the readers value texts but only how they rate them under special conditions with constraining rules” (Elbow, 1996, p. 121). While holistic scoring may not appeal to today’s teachers or those who would prefer to have specific feedback about each paper being evaluated, at the time of its implementation, holistic scoring provided educators with a way to move away from multiple-choice tests towards allowing students to complete actual samples of writing while still being able to prove that such a method was reliable (with carefully trained raters) and valid (Cooper, 1977).

Rubrics

With the use of rubrics, it is important to be sure that the rubric evaluates what the teacher wants it to evaluate and that it is not actually emphasizing the rules of writing rather than the student’s efforts to play with language and to share a message with an audience (Wiggins, 1994). In order to ensure that rubrics are “relevant, valid, and fair” and that they support construct validity, the educator in charge of implementing or developing that set of guidelines measured by the rubric must pay close attention to whether or not the categories on the rubric match the areas brought to the attention of the students by their teacher during their work on that assignment as it would not be fair to expect students to perform at a high level in areas that were not previously taught to them (Broad, 2003, p. 11). One way to foster a better match between the teacher’s goal for the assignment and the evaluation of the assignment is for the teacher to develop her own rubric (Wilson, 2007). Teachers must also be sure to work with their students in order to

ensure that the student writers understand the criteria on the rubric well enough that they are able to apply it to their writing for a self-assessment before turning it in for the teacher to evaluate (Beach & Friedrich, 2006). Similarly, it is important to remember that simply by design, rubrics pull the evaluators' attention to certain aspects of the writing, and thereby, reduce the likelihood that the writers will think through the writing as they normally would when writing without having to address specific points that they know will be assessed (Delandshere & Petrosky, 1998).

In some cases, teachers utilize a standardized writing rubric that comes from their administrators, district, or the writers of their local standardized writing test in order to promote a standardization of evaluation. Even some teachers who report feeling comfortable making changes to such a rubric may not do so because they feel that they should follow the same evaluative path as the teachers around them (Nixon & McClay, 2007). It is left to teachers to decide if rubrics work within their writing curriculum or if they feel that the rubric constrains their response to the writing in such a way that they could better evaluate their students' writing with another method of response (Wilson, 2007).

Teacher Conferences

Conferences can take place at the individual or group level, can occur at all of the different stages of writing, and are an effective method to use in both the teaching and evaluating of writing (Murray, 2004). In order to make effective use of conference time, it could be beneficial for students to be allowed to have the first word in the assessment process by giving them the opportunity to include a self-assessment or self-scoring of their writing with the assignment for the teacher to read before beginning her own

assessment (Mathison-Fife & O'Neill, 1997; Murray, 2004; Sommers, 1989). Several decades ago, Beaven (1977) found that teaching her students how to self-evaluate their writings helped them to become more independent and more cognizant of the strengths and weaknesses within their own papers. Another helpful method of evaluation is to teach the students how to effectively point out strengths and weaknesses in their own writing and in the writing of their peers during conferences with their teacher and with one another (Cooper & Odell, 1999; Huot, 2002; Morrow, 1997; Spears, 1999).

During conferences between the teacher and student, teachers can share what they hope that the students will do with the feedback that they are given and can hear the students' responses to those thoughts (Frank, 2001). Such a conference is also a great time for teachers to provide one-on-one modeling as a way to help the students see how they can go about the process of assessing their own writing (Beach, 1989). Because of the wide array of skills present in all classrooms, attempting to show students how to improve their work through large group modeling of selected writing skills will likely be ineffective, so the individual conference provides a great platform for that teaching intention (Beach, 1985). The teachers can structure the conference to meet the needs of each individual writer by using language best suited to the current student and by focusing on that student's writing. An individual conference provides an opportunity for the teacher to guide the student through the process of identifying his or her own challenges in the writing and to find areas of strength while listening to the student to get a sense of their current level of skill in the process of writing (Probst, 1989).

Peer Conferences

When time is short, or when a teacher would like to implement another type of evaluation method in the classroom, peer conferences can be helpful as well in helping students identify areas where they need work as well as what is already working for them. The key to successful peer conferences is for teachers to take the time to train their students so that they know what they are looking for in their peers' writing (Berg, 1999). However, if teachers use modeling of a peer conference as a way to train the students, they must be aware that it is possible that the students will take that modeling literally. They may utilize the exact language and guidelines viewed in the modeled conference to the extent that they limit their own language and natural conversations about writing with their peers (Swaim, 1998). One way to try to mitigate the effects of the teacher's modeled peer conference is to have students share their work with one another in small groups and to have them model how they went about assessing their own writing. When the whole group shares their individual processes of self-assessment, then it starts to become obvious that there is no one correct way to approach writing or self-assessment (Beach, 1989). Teachers can also encourage students to share with one another the emotional impact that their writing has on one another and the content-related questions that they thought of as they read the story rather than attending to grammar or form. Opening up that type of dialogue could widen the scope of a peer conference and could lead to an increase in the possibilities for revision (Swaim, 1998). As the students become more skilled at the reading and evaluating of their peers' work, they "begin to appreciate differences in approach, content, organization, flavor, and wording" and begin to realize that those differences are to be expected among writers (Beaven, 1977, p. 149). That

realization allows students the freedom to then explore their writing in their own way and style in a comfortable environment, and it simultaneously motivates them to write more so that they have more to share with their friends (Beaven, 1977). There is another view on peer conferencing that says that instead of empowering student writers, peer conferencing about writing actually just comes to represent another checkpoint that students must pass through on their way to a finished product (Martin, 2004). In order to lessen the trepidation felt by students going into peer conferences, teachers can implement the previously mentioned methods in an effort to increase the usefulness and friendliness associated with the conferences.

Portfolios

Portfolios are a useful tool to use as part of an assessment plan for writing. They “provide a story of where children have been, and what they are capable of doing now, to determine where they should go” in the future (Morrow, 1997, p. 36). They also give the teacher “trustworthy evidence of a writer’s ability” (Elbow, 1996, p. 120). They accomplish this goal by holding records or copies of a wide variety of assessments or assignments such as writing drafts, observation checklists, audio or videotapes, etc. that were all completed over a period of time (Morrow, 1997). They can even provide a way in which teachers can involve students in the selection and evaluation of their own writing (Dyson & Freedman, 1991).

While Huot (2002) believes that portfolios are effective and that their use is in line with effective practices of writing evaluation, he also believes that in too many instances, the use of portfolios is being standardized with the decisions regarding how they are used being taken away from the teachers and given to administrators, state

officials, or other people who do not have a personal stake in the classrooms in which they are actually used (Broad, 2003; Callahan, 1999; Huot & Williamson, 1997; Murphy, 1997). One example of such a loss of control by the classroom teachers is found by looking at the Kentucky portfolio assessment, which that state uses in addition to a standardized writing test. Writing in the portfolio must include the following types of writing:

literary (poems, stories, children's books, plays, etc), personal (narratives, memoirs, etc.), transactional (arguments, proposals, historical pieces, research-focused papers, etc.), and a piece reflecting on the writer's views of his or her development as a writer or the specific papers in the portfolio or some other dimension of the writing. (Hillocks, 2008, p 325-326)

Even though the classroom teachers are unable to change the requirements for the portfolio, the students in Kentucky are required to be exposed to a multitude of genres to such a level that they can produce their own works in those genres rather than being limited to only the one or two genres covered by the standardized writing assessment (Hillocks, 2008). While the state officials in Kentucky subscribe to the advantages of portfolios, other officials, administrators, and teachers may resist the implementation of portfolio assessment due to their belief that the evaluation of portfolios is "soft, inexact, not rigorous, too mushy, or too slippery" (Larson, 1996, p. 278). These views are especially held by those officials who are concerned with the ability to be able to compare students between schools or across states (Larson, 1996).

Fourteen years after the implementation of the portfolio assessment in Kentucky, Callahan and Spalding examined the status of writing and writing assessment in that state

(2006). They determined that as a result of officials and administrators wanting the teachers to understand how to best facilitate the students' writing for the portfolios, the teachers in Kentucky experienced quality professional development courses that were based on the principles of the National Writing Project. Additionally, at many schools, the majority, if not all, of the teachers were required to be a part of the spring time assessment of the student portfolios. The mix of the continuing professional development experiences and the portfolio evaluations opened the door for the teachers to spend a great deal of time talking about good writing and evaluation (Callahan & Spalding, 2006). Even better, the teachers were not the only ones talking about writing. The state collected examples of portfolios and made them available to the public for viewing, so the students were also able to engage in discussions about the variety of writings that they read in others' portfolios (Callahan & Spalding, 2006). Clearly, some positive effects have come about since the implementation of the portfolio assessment in Kentucky, but there are also teachers who do not like the time-consuming process or the amount of time that is given to writing over other subject areas in an effort to ensure that all students are able to have completed works in all of the required genres (Callahan & Spalding, 2006).

Standardized Writing Assessments

While a common argument against standardized writing tests is that they do not test what teachers should be teaching in writing, White (1996) suggests that the protests over testing are, in fact, the rumblings from teachers who would prefer to have no tests at all and do not bear any credence to whether or not the tests in question are actually problematic. There is no way, however, to ignore the fact that the tests are prevalent and that teachers must deal with them. In recent years, the push to hold students and teachers

accountable to standards and to administer standardized writing assessments has led some researchers to believe that this period of time will later be referred to as the standards period (Hoffman, Paris, Salas, Patterson, & Assaf, 2002). Many students experience a standardized test of their writing in which they are required to complete a single writing sample for evaluation, but some researchers question whether that is an effective way to measure students' writing ability (Camp, 1983). The results of such tests often do not inform teachers of what the "students know and can do," and without that knowledge being a result of an assessment, it is difficult to verify its validity (Burgin & Hughes, 2009).

One aspect of vital importance that should be considered when selecting a standardized assessment is this – is the test valid for particular students? In other words, does the material assessed by the test align with the curriculum that is currently in place in the classroom (Morrow, 1997)? That is an impossible feat according to Sharton (1996) because many classroom teachers support the use of process writing by their students, and with that being a common classroom practice, when coupled with its underlying philosophy, it is not possible for a one-shot standardized writing test to achieve construct validity.

There are advocates (Schaffer, 1995) for what many call formulaic writing (i.e., the type of writing supported by the one-shot assessments of writing), and the reasoning behind that support is that having a guide allows students to be successful in completing an essay with many details in an organized format. The Schaffer method is just one method that is available to teachers who are looking for a form to use with their students in the preparation for the standardized writing test. The advantage of the Schaffer method

is that it incorporates more than the standard five-point paragraph in that Schafer's paragraphs contain eight sentences, which include commentary statements as well as supporting details. However, just because this format is more detailed than a five sentence paragraph, does not mean that it is teaching the students how to be writers (Wiley, 2000). Because it is still a formula that must be followed exactly, students are unable to work out their own approaches to the writing assignment at hand. They cannot play with language and decide how they want to address each detail on their own. Instead, the students learn that ideas do not play a part in deciding on the structure of their writing at all as one structure will work for all ideas (Pirie, 1997). Regardless of the approach to writing that a teacher takes with her class, it is important that she monitor her students to be sure that they do not begin to think that there is only one way or one form allowed for their writing products. Students must know that there are more kinds of writing than just a five-paragraph essay (Wesley, 2000).

Cooper and Odell (1999) believe that standardized writing tests can have a negative influence on classroom instruction in writing by becoming the driving force behind the writing curriculum in the classroom, but they also point out that there are some standardized assessments that utilize draft writing, the formation of portfolios, and other practices that they perceive to be positive activities in the writing classroom. They also share that even if all writing instruction becomes driven by standardized tests, then at least all students will now be writing whereas in the past, many students never wrote full writing samples of any kind. Morrow (1997) believes that regardless of your views related to standardized testing, that it is important to recognize that such tests are here to stay, so the task becomes one of attempting to get the tests changed so that they better

match the content of the classrooms while avoiding the urge to make the tests overly important to the students.

Strengths and Limitations of Available Literature

The body of literature representing the work in the field of writing evaluation displays a lack of a “theoretical basis for our assessment practices” that has persisted for many years (White, Lutz, & Kamuskiri, 1996, p. 105). While there are improvements that could be made in the research in the field of assessing writing, it is also important to note that there is a great deal of useful information available as well. For example, Huot (2002) presents a full examination of the history of the researchers who wish for a greater validity in the evaluation of writing and of the conflict that exists between those in measurement and those in education who emphasize different aspects of evaluation. Many other researchers (Cooper & Odell, 1977; Diederich et al., 1961; Williamson, 1993) also added to the field of reliability and validity in the evaluation of writing, but no consensus has been reached. Yancey (1999) provides a thorough look at the issue of validity of writing evaluation methods from another view.

The representation of the literature available on the various evaluation methods that are utilized by educators also shows an agreement by many researchers (Gulikers et al., 2004; Huot, 2002; Morrow, 1997) that it is important for all students to be evaluated in a myriad of ways in order to give a complete picture of their strengths and weaknesses. For teachers wishing to research multiple options that may be available to them in order to evaluate the writing of their students, there is a wide body of research (Beach, 1989; Huot, 2002; Martin, 2003; Murray, 2004; Wiggins, 1994; Wilson, 2007) available to assist them. However, more research is needed regarding the impact that standardized

assessments have on the evaluation of writing (Anson et al. 2008; Callahan & Spalding, 2006; Spandel, 2006; Wesley, 2000), and that research could affect the way that teachers view the different evaluation options available to them.

Essentially, this study was conducted in order to extend on the research already completed in the areas of the evaluation of writing. More specifically, this study also extends the research that is currently available on teacher beliefs and adds to the limited selection of research that is available for those interested in teacher beliefs about the evaluation of writing. Hopefully, this study will lead to future studies that can be generalizable to other populations of teachers in order to truly come to an understanding of how teachers approach and respond to student writing and how they select their evaluation methods for student writing samples.

Chapter 3

Method

Research Design

The overarching purpose of this study was to describe educators' beliefs about the evaluation of student writing. The inquiry was guided by the following research questions: (a) what are the differences in the ways in which educators approach evaluating student writing? (b) how do educators evaluate the effectiveness of their evaluation methods for judging the quality of students' writing samples? and (c) what factors impact the evaluation decisions of educators?

As I began to consider the best ways in which I could examine how educators approach the evaluation task, what factors impact their evaluation decisions, and how to explore whether or not those approaches are aligned with their beliefs about the best ways to assess student writing, I realized that I would need to utilize mixed methods throughout my study. A mixed methods (Maxwell & Loomis, 2003) approach was utilized in that qualitative data was collected with content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004) following, and quantitative data was collected with statistical analysis following (Patton, 2002). The qualitative portion of the study was naturalistic and descriptive in nature in that I carefully observed educators in action in their natural setting without purposefully changing their environment or subjecting them to any experiments (Patton, 2002).

I utilized a questionnaire (Appendix A) to gather data about the educators' beliefs about evaluation and writing. However, in order to uncover the thoughts behind the evaluation decisions made by educators when examining student writing, it was necessary to also observe the teachers in the act of evaluation and to talk with them about their beliefs (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2005). While reading the responses on a questionnaire can provide details about their general beliefs, giving the participants the opportunity to answer questions at any length without having to worry about writing the responses on paper or about being confined to a small selection of choices for responses allowed me to glimpse their view of the world (Patton, 2002).

Similarly, while I observed the educators in their natural setting and completed the interview in a setting of their choice, it is possible that some of the behavior or that some of the beliefs shared differed from the educators' actual beliefs. In order to learn about their inner thoughts, their constructions of reality, which they may not have verbally shared during an interview or in a group setting, was to give them the opportunity to share those in privacy on the questionnaire (Patton, 2002). I attempted to "capture" the beliefs and experiences of all of the participating educators through the different phases of data collection (questionnaire, interviews, and observations) and during analysis so that all of their realities could then be examined together in order to create a type of understanding for their experiences (Patton, 2002, p. 98). The combination of the questionnaire, interviews, student writings, and observations provided multiple data sources and enabled me to check for consistency in the data from each of the sources during the analysis of the data.

Context of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe educators' beliefs about the evaluation of students' writing. I used a convenience sample from a local writers' conference for students. The conference had student participants from first through sixth grades and children's authors and illustrators offered presentations on writing to the children who attended. The conference is held in the conference center of a large, public university in the southeastern United States. It is a university-sponsored outreach program to surrounding school districts. Over 250 schools located near the university are invited to attend and to bring their students. A fee is charged for each participant. The schools that participate in the conference generally use one of six selection methods to select participants: teachers select the most improved writers, teachers select the best writer(s) in their classes, teachers select children who love to write, children self-select to attend, teachers have classroom contests, and whole schools have contests (Personal communication, February 17, 2010). Every educator participating in the event was invited to be a participant in this study, and all who agreed were asked to complete a questionnaire. The questionnaire portion of the study was sent to all of the educators who accompanied students to the conference or who taught writing to the students from their school who attended. Using the conference contacts as my liaisons to the individual schools, 114 surveys were distributed to fourteen different schools and one homeschooling family in each of three different school districts. One additional school was from a third district for which I was unable to obtain permission for conducting research, so that school was not included in this study. Normally, there are many more participating schools, but this was the first year that the conference returned after a three

year absence. Permission was obtained through the U.S.F. Institutional Review Board, the headmasters/principals of the private schools, the homeschooling parent, and the school districts for the participating public schools.

Among those participants, I invited two schools (one public and one private) to further participate in observations and interviews so that I could learn more about the beliefs held and the practices used by educators during the evaluation of student writing. These were the only two schools which indicated that they utilized a selection process involving the evaluation of student writing for their student participants. One of those schools, a private school, agreed to move forward with the study and completed interviews, allowed me to observe a classroom lesson, and shared student writing samples with me. The contact from the other school, a public school, did not respond to subsequent requests for permission to conduct the observation and interview portions of the study.

Phase One: Questionnaire

Writing and Evaluation Questionnaire.

This instrument (see Appendix A) was developed for this study. A pilot study was conducted prior to the start of the actual study in order to determine if there were any questions that needed revision before being distributed to the educators who participated in the conference. At the advice of Dillman et al. (2009), the pilot study used a group of people from varying specialties rather than just educators in order to take advantage of the different opinions and feedback that professionals of other specialties with new lenses and points-of-view could offer. That group did, for example, ask for a distinction to be made between terminologies (such as grading and assessing) that would not have been

likely to draw attention from an educator who was used to hearing those terms. Once feedback was received from that group, then an additional pilot study was done with a small group of educators to be sure that the instrument was understandable to those in the field for which it was intended. I analyzed the resulting comments and questionnaire responses and made the necessary revisions to the instrument before beginning the study (see Appendix B).

Development of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire included multiple-choice, open-ended, and Likert scale questions. The content of the survey questions was based on the review of the literature in which I searched education-centered electronic databases for research based on the following key words: beliefs, writing, evaluation of writing, grading writing, standardized writing, assessment of writing, options for evaluation of writing, etc. I followed those searches with a hand search of many (see References section) books and educational journals to find related research in the field of the evaluation of writing and teacher beliefs regarding writing. I continued searching the databases, books, and journals until I repeatedly came across the same studies and authors and until I felt that the review was as encompassing as possible with respect to the areas that I was interested in studying and that some degree of saturation of the categories was achieved.

Following my review, I created a simple tally to determine which areas of writing assessment were most frequently discussed in the literature. Because many of the themes (the use of portfolios, for example) were repeated time and time again in the literature at a much higher rate than others (such as the use of a red pen during evaluation), I was able to see a trend of the more popular and well-researched evaluation techniques and

incorporated all of those into the questionnaire. I also determined 1) what terminology would be accessible to the participants, 2) what the researchers agree upon as being the best practices of writing assessment, and 3) what the researchers view as controversial or less effective practices that are used in evaluating student writing. I relied on the writings of Cooper and Odell (1977; 1999), Culham (2003), Hibbard and Wagner (2003), Huot (2002), Murphy and Yancey (2008), Murray (2004), and Tompkins (2008) when formulating questions for the questionnaire. These researchers and texts presented nearly all, if not all, of the themes in their work with clear explanations of what each evaluation method involves along with a body of research to support their methods.

While my synthesis of the research informed the decisions made during the construction of the questions, I focused on the language used by Culham (2003), Hibbard and Wagner (2003), Murphy and Yancey (2008), Murray (2004), and Tompkins (2008) in order to utilize what I considered to be their “teacher-friendly terms” for the questionnaire. I then confirmed their positions on the evaluation of writing using the empirical research of Huot (2002) as well as Cooper and Odell (1977; 1999). I was guided by the research during the formulation of each question to be sure that as much of the assessment process as possible was covered by the questions and that I used easily understood language in the writing of the questions. For example, the idea that portfolios are valid tools to use in the assessment of writing was echoed in the work of Culham (2003), Hibbard and Wagner (2003), and Tompkins (2008), but that notion was challenged by Murphy and Yancey (2008). I included portfolios on the questionnaire in an effort to determine whether or not they are being used by local teachers in the assessment of their students’ writing and if so, to find out why they are choosing to use

that method of evaluation. Even though there is disagreement among some researchers regarding the validity of the use of portfolios in the evaluation of writing, they were mentioned repeatedly in the literature as being a commonly used evaluation tool. Because of the frequency of the references to the use of portfolios, I decided to include them in the questionnaire. Similarly, one subject that is repeated in the literature is the impact that standardized testing has on the teaching and evaluation of writing (Anson, Perelman, Poe, & Sommers, 2008; Callahan & Spalding, 2006; Hillocks, 2003; Scherff & Piazza, 2005). In order to see if the testing had an influence on the writing assessment practices of local teachers, that topic was included on the questionnaire as well.

The mix of question types on the instrument helped to ensure that every question was addressed using whichever format most effectively measured the participants' responses (Dillman et al., 2009). The design of specific questions was tailored to the advice of Dillman et al. For example, the scalar questions have between four and seven categorical response options because a range of four to seven options is recommended as being the most effective number of choices for that type of question (Dillman et al., 2009, p. 137). Similarly, I revised the first draft of the questionnaire in order to eliminate some of the open-ended questions as Dillman et al. (2009) suggest minimizing the number of open-ended questions because of the possibility of higher non-response rates that occur with a large number of open-ended questions being included on a survey. However, I did not omit all of the open-ended questions because, as Dillman et al. also suggest, survey constructors should be careful to use the question type that will provide the information that is needed. For several of the questions, the only way to truly get a sense of the

respondents' feelings and thoughts about the topics addressed was to allow them to write their responses in their own words.

The questionnaire includes a demographic section that requests information about the educator's position and the number of years that they have taught writing to students. If the participant did not teach writing to students, they were able to indicate whether or not they have ever taught writing and were asked to share their current position. Following the advice of Dillman et al. (2009) again, I placed an open-ended invitation for the respondents to share any information that they would like to share regarding the evaluation of writing at the end of the survey with space available on that page for them to use in writing their response.

Pilot study.

A pilot study was conducted with a group of ten local professionals from a variety of fields of work such as health administration, insurance, environmental preservation, medicine, and computer sciences. They completed the questionnaire and then were asked the interview questions. The participants of the pilot study were, at the suggestion of Dillman et al. (2009), from fields other than education so that they could point out different issues, ambiguities, or unclear questions that might not be noticed by educators. Unlike teachers, they are not used to hearing the terminology included in the interview. By using a panel of other professionals, I hoped to prevent teachers from filling-in-the-blanks with conjecture rather than realizing that they should ask for clarification.

The pilot helped to indicate whether or not there were questions on the questionnaire or in the interview that needed to be revised because of issues of clarity, answer responses that did not match what the participants wanted to say, and whether or

not there were some response categories that were not used by the respondents and others that they would like to use but were not present (Dillman et al., 2009). While the respondents were not able to answer all of the questions on the interview, they were able to provide feedback to help determine whether or not all of the questions made sense. In addition, conducting this pilot study also helped give an idea of possible non-response items or other problems that could have appeared if the questionnaire and interview were utilized without first testing the items with a small pilot sample (Dillman et al., 2009).

One area in which the non-educational pilot group helped to improve the questionnaire was in the chosen word choice. Three of the respondents asked for clarification regarding the terms “evaluation” and “grading” and what those words encompassed. When the word “assess” was substituted in number two and ten, the respondents indicated that they better understood the question. In question thirteen, the non-educator respondents were extremely helpful in requesting clarification in the descriptions provided for each example of writing evaluation methods. Five people asked that I further explain what a checklist was by adding examples to the description. Two other respondents needed clarification on what students accomplish during a peer conference. Those changes were made, and the resulting descriptions were much more thorough than the original ones.

Once the initial pilot study was completed, and the suggested changes were made, the revised questionnaire and interview protocol was piloted with a group of eight educators who ranged in years of experience from ½ year of teaching to a retired teacher with forty years of teaching experience. The educators were able to bring another point-of-view to the examination of the questionnaire. For example, when looking at item

number ten, two of the respondents pointed out that there may be another source of learning assessment methods that was not listed in the question's options and suggested that an "other" option be added. None of the respondents in the first pilot mentioned anything about that issue as they were less aware of the different learning environments available to educators. When they considered item number thirteen, three respondents asked that I move the FCAT scoring rubric to immediately before the Primary Traits Scoring Rubric and justified the move by saying that they believed some teachers may be unsure of the difference between the two and that having the descriptions right next to one another would help them make an immediate comparison rather than a guess. Finally, one of the educators pointed out that there was no option for her to choose in item number thirty-seven as she was a sixth-grade teacher, and there was no answer choice for 6th grade. That option was promptly added to the survey. Hearing from both a non-educator group as well as from a group of educators helped to fine-tune the questionnaire and to make it understandable to a larger group of respondents.

During the pilot study with educators, I attempted to establish the validity of the questionnaire. The educator respondents were asked if they believed that the questionnaire was asking them about their beliefs regarding the evaluation of writing. All eight respondents responded in the affirmative lending to the content and face validity (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003) of the questionnaire. Further supporting the validity of the instrument were the comments from two of the educators who said that the questionnaire was specific to my study rather than being extremely general in nature. It was, however, not possible to measure the construct validity of the questionnaire because there was not a similar, already validated, instrument available to provide to my pilot group. Also,

because this questionnaire is not predictive in nature, it was not possible to establish predictive validity for this instrument.

Questionnaire distribution.

Data collection took different forms during this study. I personally distributed questionnaires to twelve of the contact people involved with the registration of students for the writers' conference who agreed to participate in the study on the day of the conference (76 questionnaires distributed at the conference). Because one school district had not yet given permission to conduct research in its schools, the questionnaires for the three schools located in that district were mailed to the conference contact people once the permission was received. That mailing (38 questionnaires) occurred two weeks after the conference. A total of 41 completed questionnaires were returned via mail or were completed online.

While the questionnaire was given out by hand or through mail in a paper form, it was also available to all participants online via Survey Monkey, a data collection site. I chose to hand out and mail the surveys because I knew that it was likely that most of the participants would complete the surveys at the school where they work. Some teachers may have had a difficult time accessing the internet at their school, their school may have protections in place on their computers that would prohibit them from viewing an unauthorized website, like a survey site, and some teachers may have preferred a portable paper option (Dillman et al., 2009). For others, the convenience of the online survey option provided an appealing format for them to complete the questionnaire (Dillman et al., 2009).

Following the advice of Dillman et al. (2009), a thank you email was sent to participants a week after the distribution of the questionnaire thanking them for their participation and encouraging them to return the questionnaire if they had not yet had an opportunity to do so. The participants not returning the questionnaires by the end of the fourth week after the distribution/ mailing were sent an email asking if they needed more copies of the questionnaire and giving the link to the questionnaire on Survey Monkey. Because all contact had to filter through the conference contact people, individual participants were not able to be reached. Sending an email to the contact person, which could be easily forwarded to the eligible participants at their school, appeared to be the best option for a reminder. As recommended by Dillman et al. (2009) one last reminder in the form of a handwritten note and email was sent to the remaining non-responders two weeks after the initial email reminder.

Participant demographics.

In completing this research, I utilized a mixed methods approach in collecting data. For the first phase of data collections, I obtained 43 responses to my questionnaire (see Appendix B) with 41 of those responses being complete. The two incomplete questionnaires consisted of three complete responses on one and two complete responses on the other. The majority of the respondents (73.2%) were teachers with another 12.2% being reading specialists or literacy coaches, 2.4% were administrators, and the remaining 12.2% were from other categories such as media specialist, writing resource teacher, and homeschooling mom (see Figure 1). Of those participants, 92.7% were females. The participants represented public (65.9%) and private schools (31.7%) as well as one homeschool (2.4%) in three different counties. County A was represented by

52.5% of the participants while 45% of the participants worked in County B, and 2.5% of the participants were employed in County C.

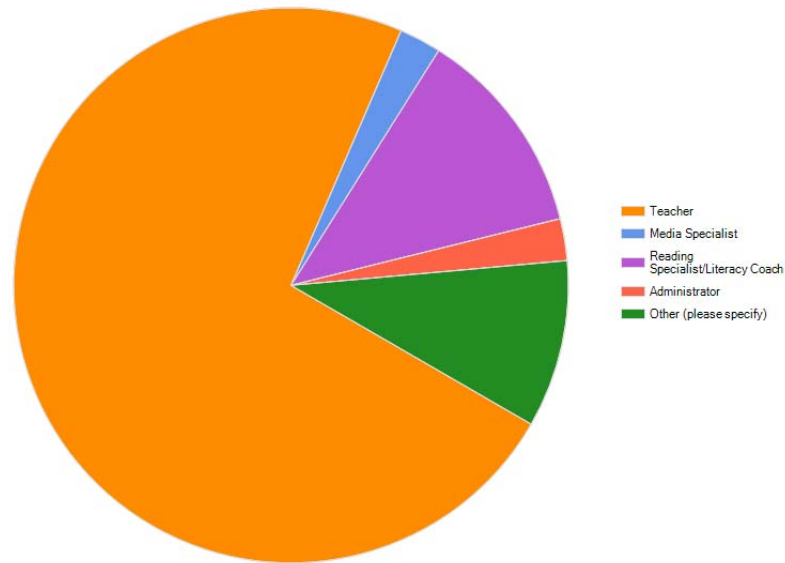


Figure 1: Responses to question 33: What is your current position?

The participants represented a wide range of ages and years of experience. More of the participants identified themselves as being over 50 (32.5%) than did the participants in any other category. Those in the age range of 33-38 years were the next largest (27.5%) group represented with another 17.5% being 39-44 years old. The remaining participants were grouped into four other categories of 21-26 years old (7.5%), 27-32 years old (12.5%), 39-44 years old (17.5%), and 45-50 years old (2.5%). They represented a range of experiences with teaching with 27.5% of them having 11-15 years of experience, 25% of them having 6-10 years of teaching experience, 20% having only 1-5 years of experience, 17.5% with over 20 years of experience, and 10% with 16-20 years of teaching experience (see Figure 2).

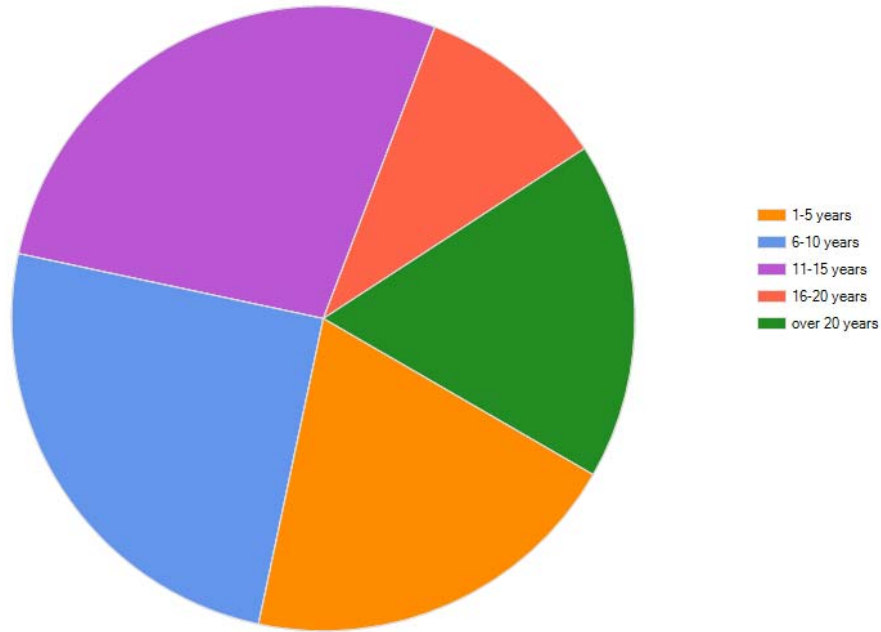


Figure 2: Responses to question thirty-five: How many years have you taught writing to students? Please include all years spend teaching writing to students in this response even if you are not currently teaching.

The participants also indicated their highest level of education on the questionnaire. An equal number of participants held bachelor's degrees (20) and master's degrees (20). One teacher indicated that she had a bachelor's degree and that she also held a National Board Certification. All participants who responded to this question had experience with teaching, and 97.6% of the respondents had personal experience with teaching writing to students at some point during their career in education. Of that group, 95.1% were teaching to writing to students when they completed the questionnaire (see Figure 3). They represented kindergarten (2.7%), first grade (5.4%), second grade (8.1%), third grade (13.5%), fourth grade (27%), fifth grade (40.5%), and sixth grade (2.7%).

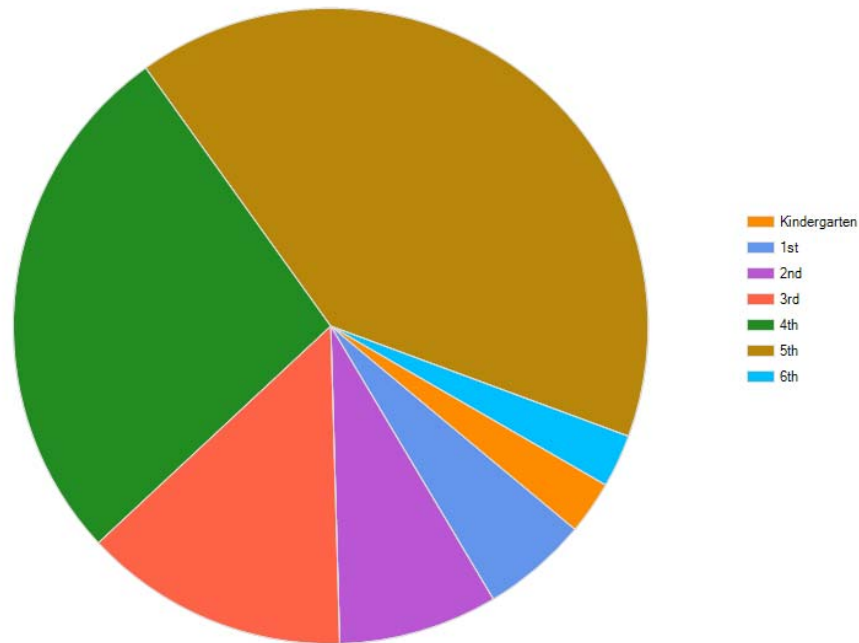


Figure 3: *Responses to question 37: What grade level do you currently teach?*

Questionnaire analysis procedures.

Data analysis began as each stage of data collection ended. The questionnaires were distributed to twelve of the conference contact people on the day of the writing conference and to the remaining three contact people two weeks after the conference when permission to do so was obtained from their school district. The period of time for questionnaires to be returned did not end until approximately six weeks after the conference date, so that data analysis began approximately eight weeks after the conclusion of the conference. In order to facilitate data analysis of the questionnaire responses, those responses received on the paper copies of the survey were transferred over to Survey Monkey. Once I input the responses for the 24 paper surveys, I had a professional peer, also an educator, check my submissions against the paper copies in order to be sure that the entries were all accurate and true to the original form.

The questionnaire consisted of forty-four questions and represented a mixture of Likert scale, multiple choice, and open-ended questions. The data was inductively analyzed by developing a coding system to help identify any patterns or themes that arose while reviewing the responses to the open-ended questions. This was done by first reading through all of the responses to obtain an idea of the content. Then, in a second rereading the formal generation of codes was able to begin in a systematic way as similar words and topics were highlighted and patterns and themes began to emerge. Constant comparison analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) was used as I read through the open-ended responses to look for themes between the responses from different teachers. After highlighting similar words and phrases, I conducted a frequency count to see how often the patterns of words and phrases actually appeared and to find which responses were repeated on a frequent basis. Finally, all common themes were retyped in a word processing file within Microsoft Word. The patterns or themes identified were not labeled by the participants of the study. Instead, they represented sensitizing concepts identified by the researcher (Patton, 2002). In summary, a close content analysis of all of the data allowed me to identify, code, categorize, classify, and label the primary patterns in the data (Patton, 2002). This analysis occurred with the data from individual schools and teachers as well as across the participating schools and teachers.

When the coding and categorization was completed, the resulting categories were judged and evaluated for completeness. First, the categories needed to demonstrate internal homogeneity by showing that the items in each category held together in a meaningful way and external heterogeneity by displaying differences between the categories that were bold and clear (Patton, 2002). Additionally, Patton (2002) asserts

that the categories must have been checked for completeness and must meet the following criteria: the set should have internal and external plausibility (i.e., they should appear consistent and should seem to comprise a whole picture), the set should be reasonably inclusive, it should be reproducible by another competent judge who can verify that the categories make sense and that the data have been appropriately arranged in the category system, and it should be credible to the people who provided the information. If there was any instance in which it appeared that there was more than one way to classify the information, I decided which classification system would be “more important or illuminative” (Patton, 2002, p. 466).

The same educator who assisted me in checking to be sure that the data inputted into Survey Monkey was accurate was also able to read through the open-ended responses of three randomly chosen questions from the questionnaire to see if she identified the same patterns and themes. Because she is an educator, she was also able to verify that the themes, in her opinion, would be credible to other educators. She concurred with the patterns that I identified.

For the scalar and multiple choice questions, descriptive statistics (measures of central tendency and measures of variability) and percentages were used to describe the array of responses from the participants. This study was descriptive in nature, so the quantitative statistics utilized were intended to give readers of the report a snapshot of the views of the educator participants as they were at the time of the survey’s administration. Reporting the measures of central tendency (the mean, median, and mode) as well as the measures of variability (the standard deviations, variance, and range) gives a clear picture of the points-of-view of the educators who responded to the questionnaire as well as an

idea of their backgrounds and current educational status. Additionally, a derived score was calculated based on the participants' responses as compared to their peers relative to their age, years in profession, position held, etc. (Gall et al., 2003). Completing a Chi-Square test in order to examine the responses of the participants with respect to their grade taught, county taught in, etc. provided a p-value that enabled me to determine whether or not any statistically significant relationships existed between those areas.

Phase Two: Observations

The schools that participate in the writers' conference generally use one of six selection methods to select participants: teachers select the most improved writers, teachers select the best writer(s) in their classes, teachers select children who love to write, children self-select to attend, teachers have classroom contests, and whole schools have contests (Personal communication, February 17, 2010). Schools which had committees to select their student participants for the conference through a selection process that utilized samples of student writing as a means of selection were invited to participate in observations and interviews in order to give me a better understanding of the choices made during the evaluation of the student writing submissions. One private school consented to participate in the study, and the contact person from a public school in a different county indicated that the school might participate. I hoped that a larger number of schools would engage in a selection process, but because of the three-year absence of the conference, schools that participated in the past, and may have used a selection process, did not elect to attend the conference this time.

Observation data.

Observation data is an important inclusion in this study because “people do not always do what they say they do” (Johnson & Turner, 2003, p. 312). I wanted to determine whether or not the teachers’ beliefs (as shared in the interviews and on the questionnaire) matched the practices used in the classroom during the teaching and evaluation of writing. I also wanted to gain a richer understanding of the enactment of evaluation practices. As a result of a small beginning sample pool, the final participant number was small. The public school contact did not respond to requests from me for times to visit her school to observe and interview a few teachers during the teaching of writing. Because of that non-response, that school was dropped from the observation portion of the study. Educators from that school did, however, respond to the questionnaire, so they were included as part of the quantitative data.

While the private school agreed to participate, I initially hesitated to utilize them in my study because I have family members affiliated with that school. Ultimately, I opted to observe two of the teachers at that school during the teaching of writing. I did not have a personal relationship with the teachers who were observed and interviewed for this study prior to the interviews and observations. I felt that this approach could provide me with “a more meaningful unit of analysis” and that I would gain a deeper understanding of teacher beliefs and practices in the evaluation of writing if I focused on two teachers during their evaluation practices and combined that data with their responses from the interviews, on the questionnaire, and on their students’ writings (Patton, 2002, p. 447).

I observed one of the fifth grade classes during a 40-minute writing lesson in which the children produced writing. One of the teachers of that lesson was the former contact from that school for the conference and was previously interviewed. The co-teacher for that lesson was not previously interviewed and was not a part of the selection process for the writing conference.

Observation data analysis.

During analysis of the observational data, it was important to take all related data sources into consideration. Notes, voice recordings/transcriptions, student writings, and the researcher's reflective journal were all utilized during the analysis stage. Before beginning the analysis, the different participants' actions were examined in an effort to distinguish between those who displayed frontstage behavior (behaviors that occur because the participants think that is what the researcher wants to see) and those who demonstrated backstage behavior (behaviors that reflect the participants' natural motions and conversations) because the frontstage behavior could skew the analysis in a divergent direction if it is not recognized (Goffman, 1959). After a first read through of the transcription and my notes taken during the observation, I underlined points that caught my attention and took notes on a notepad during a second reading. After that, I looked for similarities between the underlined portions and notes, which I then highlighted. Then, after going back through the highlighted portions, I noted points of agreement, points of disagreement, and patterns. Those notations were compared to the teacher comments on the student writings and on the rubrics used by the teachers to evaluate the students' writing in an effort to identify whether or not the teacher comments matched their beliefs and expectations as shared in the interviews, observation, and questionnaires.

Phase Three: Interviews

When interviewing (see Appendix C) a participant, I attempted to build a rapport that was not possible during the completion of a questionnaire. Having rapport established can help the interviewee feel more comfortable and more apt to share his or her perspective about the questions being asked, and it allowed the interviewer to have the opportunity to probe the participant for more details (Johnson & Turner, 2003). Patton (2002) shares that “if participant observation means ‘walk a mile in my shoes,’ in-depth interviewing means ‘walk a mile in my head’” and thereby makes the purpose of the interview clear (pp. 416-417). Having the opportunity to talk with the participants, in-person, allowed me to gain a deep understanding of their stated beliefs.

In order to be a proficient interviewer, Patton (2002) recommends that interviewers must be interested in hearing what the participants have to say. Additionally, it is important to be objective and open to anything that the respondents would like to share without attempting to influence their answers in any way. I was extremely interested in speaking with the educators regarding their beliefs about the evaluation of student writing and tried to show them my interest in anything that they would like to share so that they would feel comfortable speaking with me and so that they would know that I had no expectations of what their answers would be. The interview is an area of data collection where the participants are allowed to bring the interviewer into their world rather than being forced to make their world fit on a form created by the researcher (Patton, 2002). Fortunately, I have had numerous experiences with interviewing educators throughout my years as a master’s and doctoral student. I worked hard to

portray interest and objectivity and feel that my past experiences prepared me well for these interviews.

The Educator Interview.

The Educator Interview is considered a standardized open-ended interview in that the questions were worded the same from one interviewee to the next, and the questions were asked of the participants in the same sequence (Johnson & Turner, 2003; Patton, 2002). This format of the interview allowed for comparability across interviews by ensuring that all participants had a consistent experience with the same questions. The standardized interview has the added benefit of making more efficient use of the participants' time by moving along quickly and of making data analysis easier for the researcher (Patton, 2002). There were prompts written into the interview that allowed for the participant to elaborate on the response or to bring in information from a slightly different topic from the main question. Such prompts were helpful in gathering additional information while still staying on-task during the interview. While this format prohibits the interviewer from asking about unforeseen topics that arise, at the end of the interview, I did ask the participants if there was any other information that they would like to share with me.

The interview consisted of seven open-ended questions with probes (see Appendix C) that accompanied each question to be used if necessary and three demographic questions. The questions used for this interview were formulated for use in this study with the question types and order being determined with the guidance of the question formation techniques suggested by Dillman et al. (2009). Those techniques include: making sure that the question is applicable to the respondent or providing an

alternative for the respondent if there is a nonapplicable question, asking the question in the form of a complete sentence, asking only one question at a time, using simple and familiar words in the question, and using specific and concrete words in the questions. I also followed the guidelines provided for Dillman et al. (2009) when deciding upon the order of the interview questions. For example, the questions about the possible impact of the FCAT writing assessment, a standardized writing assessment administered to students in public schools as required by the state in grades four, eight, and ten, on the selection process for conference participants are at the end of the interview because I did not want the educators to be thinking about the FCAT throughout the whole interview and risk introducing a “question order effect” whereby the first response then impacted all of the following responses to questions that were, quite possibly, unrelated to the FCAT (Dillman et al., 2009, p. 312). Other considerations included the grouping of questions that are related (i.e., asking two questions about writing in general, then two about the conference, and then two about FCAT), asking the demographic questions last, and thinking carefully about which question to ask first (Dillman et al., 2009).

The number of interview questions was selected based on the recommendations of Patton (2002) who warns that a large number of questions can lead to extremely lengthy interviews that are tiring for the participants and time-consuming for the researcher. Because there were a limited number of questions, it was important to be sure that the respondents answered each question fully. The probes (see Appendix C) were utilized if, after appropriate wait time, the respondent was unsure of an answer or needed help in formulating a deeper, richer response with more details and elaboration than they provided in their initial response (Patton, 2002). Similarly, while the respondent was

speaking, I followed the advice of Patton (2002) and was careful to provide the appropriate recognition and feedback to the participant by utilizing such behaviors as tilting the head, raising the eyebrows, slight nodding, or even remaining silent at appropriate times during the interview. At the end of the interview, the educators were given the opportunity to make any additional remarks that they wanted to share.

Interview data.

The headmaster at the private school and the teacher who was in charge of the conference participant selection process at that school in previous years were asked to participate in a one-on-one interview for the study. Those interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the educators. A time before school was chosen by the teacher, and the headmaster elected to meet after school. The teacher's interview lasted for approximately 13 minutes, and the headmaster spoke with me for approximately 10 minutes. The interviews occurred at their school so that the surroundings were familiar, and the context of the interview was natural for them (Patton, 2002). Those interviews were voice recorded, and transcripts were completed.

The co-teacher for the observed lesson was not previously interviewed and was not a part of the selection process for the writing conference. I then adapted the interview for her by removing the questions specific to the writing conference selection process and by adding a couple of questions related to the lesson that they taught versus her own experiences as a writing student. She was unable to schedule a time to meet in person and requested a written copy of the questions for expediency. I provided those questions to her, which she completed and returned via email. Similarly, I asked her co-teacher, the originally interviewed teacher, to complete a few reflection questions after the lesson.

She also requested that those be sent and completed via email because of their busy schedule. I complied by sending her those questions, and she returned them to me via email.

Interview data analysis.

Analysis of the interview data began with the coding of repeated responses or phrases found in the notes, transcriptions, and/or voice recordings of the interviews. The coding process involved the segmentations of data into smaller, related chunks of data that became meaningful again once content analysis exposed cross-case or cross-interview similarities, differences, and/or ambiguities (Patton, 2002). This coding was completed with the data from two face-to-face interviews that were conducted at the private school and with the written information shared in response to the interview questions by the co-teacher of the lesson observed during case study data collection. I was looking for areas of agreement or similarity, areas of differences, and new areas that naturally occurred through the reading of the three participants' interviews (Johnson & Turner, 2003). I looked primarily at the responses of the two teachers when looking for agreement in their responses as a whole and within each question. This was done by completing several readings of the transcriptions and by looking at my notes. I highlighted any points of agreement or disagreement and made notes on my notepad. Next, I looked to see if their responses matched the expectations put forth in the interview of their headmaster and highlighted any key words that indicated an agreement or disagreement between her responses and those of her teachers.

Phase Four: Writing Samples

Writing sample data.

During the course of this study, three separate sets of student writing samples were obtained. The first set came from the winning writings of the students who were selected to attend the writing conference sponsored by a local university. While I was not able to speak or correspond directly with the judges for the school, the headmaster of the private school provided some demographic information about the judges and shared some of the anecdotal remarks that they made when returning the student writings to the school. Additionally, I received copies of the three rubrics used to evaluate the writings of the conference contest participants and anonymous copies of the winning writings, those whose authors attended the conference, for one class of second, all of fifth, and all of sixth grades. There were three writings from second grade students, six from fifth grade students, and six from sixth grade students.

The remaining writing samples were the products of writing lessons taught to a fifth grade class by a team of two teachers. I observed them during one forty-minute lesson during which the 20 students completed draft paragraphs on a topic of their choice. I received anonymous copies of those writings along with the comments made on the writings by their teachers. The teachers later taught a follow-up lesson, and I received copies of the 20 final draft paragraphs written by the students on an assigned topic along with the completed rubrics with grades and comments from the teachers. The comments on these writing samples were then analyzed.

Writing sample data analysis.

Three sets of student writing samples were collected during the course of this study for a total of 55 collected student writings. The first writings came from the winning participants of the conference with three samples from second grade, six from fifth grade, and six from sixth grade. Because I did not have the non-winning writings as a basis for comparison, I looked at these writings in search of interesting sections, and I examined the provided rubrics to gain a better understanding of what aspects of writing the educators at that school viewed as being important when evaluating writing.

The second set of writing consisted of the 3.8 paragraph drafts written by the students during the observed lesson. I began analysis of these writings by labeling the samples with names so that I would be able to differentiate between them. I simply picked up the stack and began giving them names alphabetically beginning with a name beginning with the letter 'a' for the writing on top, a name beginning with the letter 'b' for the next writing on the stack, and so on until I reached the letter 't' at the end of the stack. Then, I began sorting the written comments of the teachers into categories by highlighting similar comments in similar colors and then checking to be sure that all of the commonly colored comments fit together. Next, I completed a simple frequency tally in order to check on the prevalence of the different categories of comments.

The third set of student writing samples resulted from a follow-up lesson to the one that I observed. In this lesson, the students were asked to write a 3.8 paragraph focused on their morning routines. The students were told that they would receive a grade for this writing. The analysis of these writings followed the same steps as described above for the second set.

Role of the Researcher

My goal in conducting this study was to remain as objective as possible in the analysis of data and to acknowledge my bias because I was the one person collecting all of the necessary data. The primary area of concern for me was the inclusion of a school as my case study with which I have a personal connection. Because of that connection, I was careful to always double check my notes and the triangulation of my data to be sure that my findings could be supported by another researcher based on the written and recorded evidence that I possessed. In that same vein, I repeatedly asked a peer who is also an educator to see if she agreed with my analysis. There was never an instance of disagreement between my summarization of the analysis and hers.

Additionally, Patton (2002) reports four ways in which the presence of an outside researcher can impact the data being collected: 1) the presence of the researcher can cause a reaction amongst the participants 2) changes in the actions, thoughts, or physical health of the researcher 3) the preexisting biases of the researcher and 4) the inability of the researcher to display competence in data collection and analysis (p. 567). I did not notice any obvious signs that my presence affected the actions of the participants, but it is possible, especially during the observation, that I may have made the teachers nervous. In order to mitigate that possibility, I attempted to talk with the teachers before the observation about other subjects to relieve some of the tension that would have been more likely to exist if I simply entered the room with the sole intention of watching them teach and then leaving again. A series of observations would have provided a richer portrait, but for the purposes of this study, and in the available timeframe, one observation was completed. However, while the teachers and I did not have a personal

relationship before meeting for this study, they were used to seeing me around their school. Simply having that previous exposure may have helped to increase my trustworthiness in their eyes (Patton, 2002). I experienced no changes that I was aware of during the course of data collection, I attempted to alleviate concerns about my personal biases by checking with a peer educator throughout data analysis, and I worked to display competency in data collection and analysis by referring back to research (Dillman et al., 2003; Patton, 2002) for guidance when I was less than 100% certain of my next step.

One area in which I may have affected the data was in the samples of student writing. It is possible that the “halo effect” may have taken place because the teachers knew in advance of evaluating the student papers that I would be examining them (Patton, 2002, p. 567). Knowing that an outside party was going to look at their grades for a study on evaluating writing could certainly have influenced the amount and types of comments that they left on the student writings. However, it is quite likely that I overestimated the impact that I had on the educators involved in my study, and my awareness of my possible effects on the data and on the analysis allowed me to provide many checks of my competence throughout the study (Patton, 2002). In terms of my analysis of their comments, I hesitate to make blanket statements about the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of their evaluations because I was so limited in the amount of time that I spent with them. It is possible that the comments made on these student papers were either altered because of their knowledge that I would look at them or because of the nature of the lesson (these writings resulted from introductory lessons that would be continued over the next several weeks). More discussion regarding the evaluation of the writing samples can be found in chapter five.

Triangulation

Finally, it is important to remember that “in lieu of statistical significance, qualitative findings are judged by their substantive significance” (Patton, 2002, p. 467). There is no one way to determine how substantive the data are. Instead, it should be considered whether or not the triangulation of data sources supports the findings. It is also helpful to consider whether the findings are consistent with other knowledge in the field or if they further our knowledge about that field, which, in this case, is how educators respond to writing. Triangulation occurred in this study with the collection of observation data, questionnaire responses, three sets of student writings with teacher feedback, and interviews with the teachers as well as with their headmaster.

Conclusion

Analysis of the data gathered in this study occurred at many levels and covered both quantitative and qualitative data. A look at the research questions listed on Table 1 shows the relationship between the research questions and the data from the study. Information received on the questionnaires (Phase one data) helped broaden my understanding of questions one, two, and three while the observation (Phase two data) illuminated questions two and three. The interviews (Phase three data) brought greater understanding to the answers to the second and third questions. Finally, the student writing samples gave me a deeper understanding of question one (Phase four data). All four phases of data intermingled and worked together to help form a broad picture of the methods of evaluation for student writing used by the educator participants in this study.

Table 1

The relationship between research questions and their data source(s)

Research Question	Source of Data	Data Summary
1. Are there differences in the ways in which educators approach evaluating student writing?	Questionnaire Interviews Student writing samples with accompanying teacher comments and rubrics	- 41 completed questionnaires - Two completed verbal interviews - One “interview” completed as a questionnaire - 40 student writings (20 with comments and 20 with both comments and rubrics from teachers)
2. How effective do educators believe their evaluation methods are for judging the quality of students’ writing samples?	Interviews Observations Questionnaire	- Two completed verbal interviews - One “interview” completed as a questionnaire - One classroom observation - 41 completed questionnaires
3. What factors impact the evaluation decisions of educators?	Questionnaires Interviews	- 41 completed questionnaires - Two completed verbal interviews - One “interview” completed as a questionnaire

In order to fully encompass all possible areas of interest throughout this study, the research was conducted under a mixed methods paradigm, which allowed all aspects of the educators’ beliefs and practices to be studied. Using a mixture of both quantitative and qualitative methods allowed for stronger inferences to be made from the results of the study and also allowed for a greater variety of views from the participants to be showcased (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). All data collection procedures, both qualitative

and quantitative in nature, took a realist approach in an attempt to gain an accurate portrayal of what is actually occurring during writing evaluations and to determine if a “plausible explanation” for those actions could be found (Patton, 2002, p. 132). The design of the study was naturalistic in nature as no manipulations of the educators or of their experiences occurred. Instead, the study was as unobtrusive as possible and allowed the educator-participants to remain in their familiar surroundings and to conduct their activities as they would normally (Patton, 2002).

In an effort to gain multiple perspectives of the views of the educators involved in this study, multiple methods of data collection occurred. Gathering several types of data allowed the results to be triangulated. When data entered the analysis stage, triangulation helped to show the extent of the consistency in the responses across the different data sources. It also helped to make up for some of the weaknesses that resulted in one area of data collection by covering that area again in another method (Patton, 2002). Additionally, the combination of multiple sources of data gave a “comprehensive perspective” of the educators’ beliefs and practices as they relate to the evaluation of writing (Patton, 2002, p. 306).

A questionnaire, interviews, and observation were all utilized throughout the data collection stage of this study. The Writing and Evaluation Questionnaire is a hybrid questionnaire and includes both closed and open-ended questions (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009). The inclusion of open-ended questions allowed for the educators to share views that would be impossible for them to include on a closed-ended instrument while the closed-ended questions allowed a quick and easy way for the participants to select an answer that best represented their beliefs. It was necessary to include both types

of questions because Dillman et al. (2009) found that in addition to the open-ended questions providing rich, meaningful information that cannot be expressed in an only closed-ended response format, the open-ended questions provide an easy way for respondents to skip questions when they want to avoid having to fill-in a blank or to write a lengthy answer. It was, therefore, better to include both open and closed-ended questions. It was imperative that the questionnaire be included in this study as it was desired that the largest sample possible be obtained. Because of time constraints and scheduling conflicts between schools, it was impossible to interview and observe all of the teachers involved with the writers' conference. The questionnaire, however, was sent to every participating school and allowed for a larger sample size.

The two types of qualitative data that were collected were observations and interviews. Additionally, student samples of writing were analyzed. These methods of collection were utilized because of their ability to show richer and more diverse beliefs of the participants (Patton, 2002). The observation was useful because of the objectivity that it offered and was helpful in providing a descriptive picture for data analysis. It also helped to reinforce the realist approach as the observation occurred in the schools where the educators work, which provided the participants with a level of comfort and normality that would not be found in another location (Johnson & Turner, 2003). While not quite as founded in the realistic perspective as are observations, the interview provided an opportunity to probe the participant for "more detailed information" when it was necessary or helpful to do so (Johnson & Turner, 2003, p. 305). It also allowed entrance into the perspective of the participants and to see the situation through their eyes (Patton, 2002). This melding of the qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection

provided a more complete glimpse into the realm of educators' beliefs about evaluating writing.

Chapter 4

Results

The overarching purpose of this study was to describe educators' beliefs about the evaluation of student writing. The inquiry was guided by the following research questions: (a) what are the differences in the ways in which educators approach evaluating student writing? (b) how do educators evaluate the effectiveness of their evaluation methods for judging the quality of students' writing samples? and (c) what factors impact the evaluation decisions of educators?

Results by Phase of Data Collection

Phase one: Writing and evaluation questionnaire.

The questionnaire responses help to illuminate the answers to the research questions, so they will be addressed with regards to the research question to which they are related. The research questions were also addressed by the interviews, observation, and student work samples, and those will be presented after the analysis of the data from the questionnaire. Because of the wide range of topics covered by the open-ended questions (7 total), many patterns (40 total with much overlap) were identified amongst the responses for each individual question. Because the open-ended questions were distinct and addressed many different topics within writing evaluation, all of the patterns cannot be condensed into a smaller number. However, there are some commonalities that run throughout the responses to those seven questions, which can be placed into five

categories. Those five categories are instruction/planning, student skills, growth and development, feedback, and limitations and will be discussed further in chapter five.

Research question one.

The first research question, “What are the differences in the ways in which educators approach evaluating student writing?” was addressed by eighteen different questions on the questionnaire. There are many evaluation options available to educators, and their responses to these questions show that they all go about the evaluation of writing in different ways. The first question on the questionnaire, “What do you see as the purpose(s) of writing assessment?” provided insight into the ways in which educators approach the evaluation of student writing. This was an open-ended question, so through an analysis of the responses, I identified four different patterns in the responses of the educators: students’ performance in relation to the lesson objectives, assessment of students’ writing skills, monitoring the progress and growth in student writing, using assessment results to guide instructional decisions, and using assessment results to guide feedback for the writers.

Lesson objectives.

The first pattern identified in the educator responses to this question was that they believed that one purpose of writing assessment was to determine whether or not their lesson objectives were met. For example, three respondents shared that the results of the writing assessments showed them whether or not their students had followed the correct “form” in their writing as requested by the teacher. Another pattern in the responses was that the educators view writing assessment as a way to check on the level of the writing skills of their students. Some of the skills mentioned included “revision,” “grammar,”

“mechanics,” and the different writing “traits.” Many points in the responses (37 total) referred to the ability of writing assessment to show the teacher the progress, development, and growth of the students in their writing abilities. Educators shared that writing assessments allow them to look for areas of “strength and weakness” in addition to establishing if the students are “on, above, and below levels” with respect to their “grade/age-appropriate expectations.” Additionally, educators indicated that assessment results were often used to guide their instructional decisions. For example, one respondent shared that she assessed her students’ writings while thinking about how the results could “direct future lessons” while another wrote that the assessment results helped her decide what “craft/trait” to teach next. Some responses (11 total) included thoughts about the ways in which writing assessment helped them to “provide teachers, parents and most importantly – students - with feedback about their writing.” While all of these responses were related to whether or not the students met the objectives of the lessons, the majority of the responses (37 total) were most concerned with whether or not the students met those objectives while showing growth in their writing.

Frequency of assessment of writing.

The second question on the questionnaire, “How often do you assess student writing?” also gave information related to the differences in the ways in which educators approach the evaluation of student writing (see Figure 4). Over 50% of the respondents assesses student writing either once a month or less (25.6%) or once every couple of weeks (30.2%). An equal number of participants assessed student writing once a week (14%) or once a day (14%) while 16.3% of the respondents gave “other” as their response. A look at their responses showed replies such as “quarterly,” “twice per

month,” and “varies.” Those teaching 1st, 2nd or 3rd grades seemed to report assessing writing on a more frequent basis than those teaching 4th, 5th or 6th grades.

A Chi-square test was performed to test whether there was any association between frequencies of assessing writing assignments and teachers’ experience, grades taught, and age. Here the null hypothesis of no association against the alternative hypothesis that there was a significant association was tested. I would reject the null hypothesis if the p value of the test was less than 0.05. Chi-square test analysis (p = 0.816) reveals that there was no significant association between frequency of assessing writing assignments and a teacher’s experience, grades taught and age.

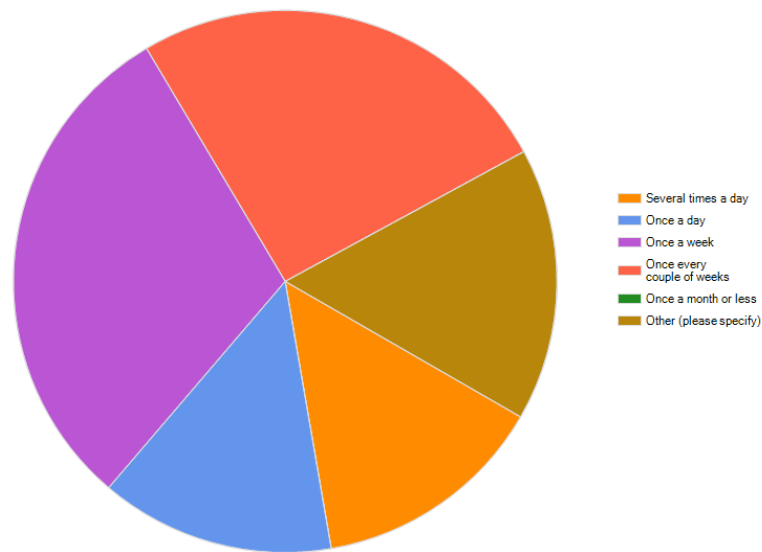


Figure 4: Responses to question two: How often do you assess student writing?

In addition to looking at those factors with relation to their responses, I also compared the responses of teachers from County A with those from County B to see if there were any differences in the distribution of their responses (see Table 2). The most frequently selected response (37.5% for County A teachers and 38.9% for County B

teachers) was that the teachers assess student writing once every couple weeks. There was a difference in the response, however, for those reporting assessing student writing once a month or less. While only 12.5% of the teachers in County A selected that response, 33.3% of the County B teachers reported only assessing writing once a month or less.

Table 2

Responses to question two

	Other	Once a day	Once a week	Once every couple of weeks	Once a month or less	Total
Public County A	1 12.5%	2 25.0%	1 12.5%	3 37.5%	1 12.5%	8 100.0%
Public County B	3 16.7%	2 11.1%	0 .0%	7 38.9%	6 33.3%	18 100.0%
Total	4 15.4%	4 15.4%	1 3.8%	10 38.5%	7 26.9%	26 100.0%

In response to the question, “What percentage of the time that you spend assessing all of your students’ work would you say is spent assessing writing assignments?” the educators report that they spend varying amounts of their assessment time on assessing writing (see Figure 5). A large group of educators (41.9%) marked that they spend 25-49% of their assessment time on writing assignments. Close behind that group was the 50-74% range where 32.6% of the teachers spend their time on writing assessment. Another 23.3% of the teachers spend 0-24% of their time assessing writing assignments, and only 2.3% report spending 75-100% of their assessment time dealing with writing. A similar patter of responses was found across experience of teachers, grades taught, and the age of the teachers. A Chi-square test was performed to test whether there was any association between the percentage of time being spent on

assessing writing and their experience, grades taught, and age. Here, I tested the null hypothesis of no association against the alternative hypothesis that there is a significant association. The Chi-square test revealed that there was no significant association ($p = 0.288$) between percentage of total work in assessing the writing assignments and the teachers' experience, grades taught and age.

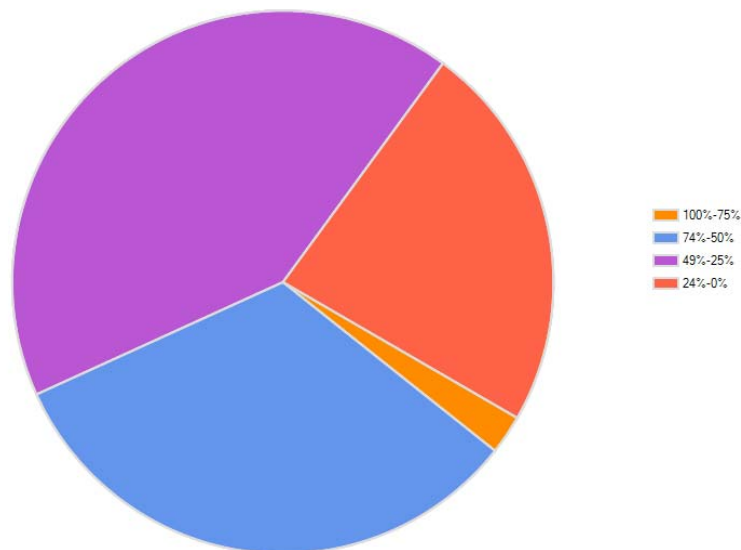


Figure 5: *Responses to question three: What percentage of the time that you spend assessing all of your students' work would you say is spent assessing writing assignments?*

Most important aspect of writing during assessment.

Another area where the educators display differences in their responses regarding the ways they approach the assessment of writing (see Figure 6) is found when asking, "What is the most important aspect of writing that you are looking for when you assess a student's writing?" The majority of educators (56.1%) reported their belief that "ideas/concepts" would be the most important aspect that they look for when assessing writing. The next most common answer, "Other," was used by 19.5% of the respondents, and this category included clarifications such as, "whatever trait I just taught,"

“elaboration,” and “all of the above.” An additional 12.2% of the respondents selected “organization” as the most important aspect of writing for assessment purposes while “correctness in grammar/punctuation,” “voice,” and “fluency” only received 4.9%, 4.9%, and 2.4% of the responses respectively. A chi-square test was performed to test whether or not there was an association between what teachers look for as the most important aspect of writing during assessment and their experience, grades taught, and age. The results of that test were that there was no significant association ($p = 0.406$).

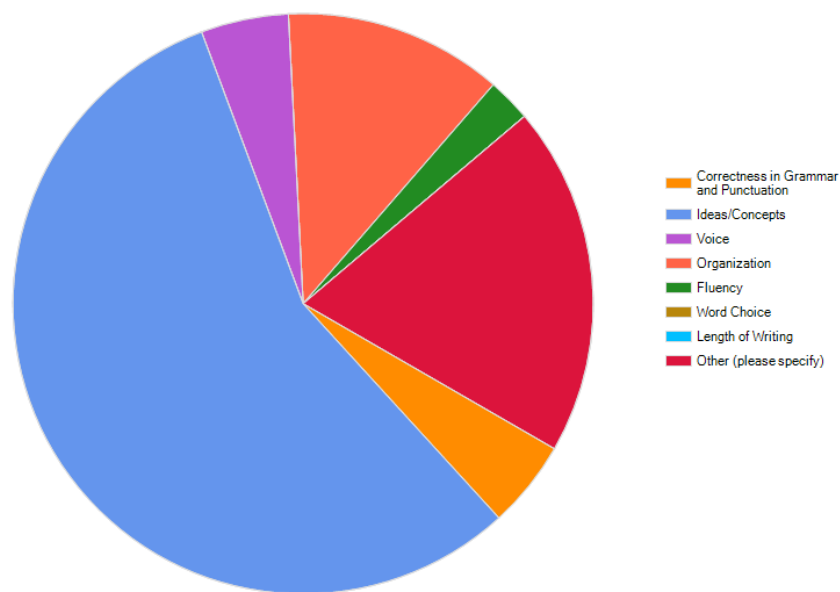


Figure 6: *Responses to question eight: What is the most important aspect of writing that you are looking for when you assess a student writing?*

The next question, “Why do you feel that this aspect is the most important part of the writing to consider when you are assessing writing?” was an open-ended response question. An analysis of the responses to this question revealed six different patterns to those responses. Those patterns were: this aspect greatly impacts the readability of the writing (whether through illegible handwriting, spelling errors, or an unclear main idea),

this aspect is vital to the meaning of the paper, other aspects come naturally with time and can be done later, this aspect is especially difficult to master, this aspect is required to be taught by our standards or curriculum, and all aspects are equally important. The most prevalent pattern among the responses (in 20 responses) was that the most important aspect of writing is the one that impacts its readability. Some of those responses included, “it needs to flow,” “students need to clearly state their thoughts,” and “it is necessary for a piece of writing to flow.” The next most prevalent pattern (found in 18 responses) in the responses was that their chosen aspect of writing was the most important because it was vital to the meaning of the paper. The educators shared that their chosen aspect was “the foundation for writing,” “the essence of the message,” and the thing that helps their writing to “make sense.” Other (13 total) responses (“the other skills are usually developmental and will develop over time”) shared the idea that their chosen one required teaching while some of the others would come to the writer with time and experience. Another pattern (6 responses) spoke to the perceived higher difficulty level of some aspects of writing as compared to others. Those educators who believed that their chosen aspect was the most difficult wrote, “ideas/concepts (and voice) are more abstract skills,” “most important but difficult for some students,” and “the other stuff is more concrete – seemingly easier to develop.” While three educators wrote that all aspects of writing were equally important, six others shared that they are required to focus on the aspect of writing that they selected as being the most important, and one clarified by writing, “this is what the state is looking at – in order to get a score of 4.” Overall, factors that teachers perceived to affect the readability and the meaning of the students’ papers were reported to be the most important aspects of writing.

Drafts and evaluation.

The educators were then asked, “Do you ever have assignments in which your students write more than one draft for you?” An overwhelming majority (82.9%) reported that they do have students, at least on occasion, write more than one draft of a writing assignment. The pattern of responses does not change when looking at the experience and age of teachers. However, the kindergarten teacher and the two first grade teachers were the only grades represented where all respondents reported only having their students write one draft.

In a follow-up question, “How do the students receive grades for those papers?” the respondents answers were fairly evenly distributed among the answer choices (see Figure 7). The most common choice, “The final copy and drafts are put together for one grade,” received 36.4% of the responses while the next most common choice, “The drafts are not graded,” received 27.3% of the responses. The remaining responses were split between the other two options, “Other” and, “Every draft has a separate grade,” and those two choices received 15.2% and 21.2% of the responses respectively. Some of the “other” options reported by the participants included, “Drafts can be evaluated using a checklist for completion and coaching. Final copies are graded as well,” and, “Sometimes drafts are graded based off of the mini-lessons I have focused on. Sometimes, they’re not graded at all.”

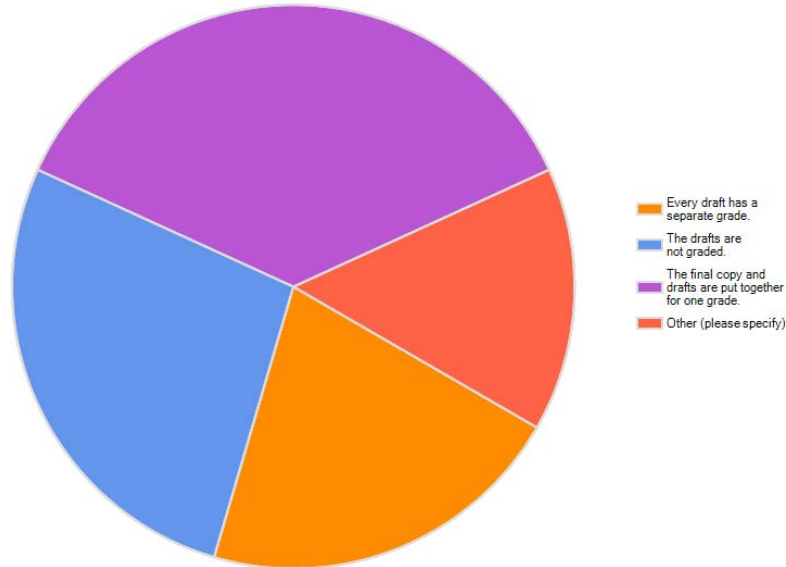


Figure 7: Responses to question twelve: How do the students receive grades for those papers?

A chi-square test was performed to test whether there was any association between whether teachers assess assignments with more than one draft and their experience, grades taught, and age. Here, I tested the null hypothesis of no association against the alternative hypothesis that there was a significant association. I rejected the null hypothesis if the p value of the test was less than 0.05. The chi-square test analysis reveals that there was no significant association between whether teachers assess assignments with more than one draft and their experience and age ($p = 0.204$). There was a significant association revealed between grades taught by teachers and assessing assignments with more than one draft ($p = 0.023$). Teachers who taught older students (in grades two through six) were more likely to have their students write more than one draft of their writing. Because it would logically be more difficult for kindergarten and first grade students to write a first draft, that statistical finding did not surprise me. I would expect older students to write more drafts than younger ones.

Table 3

Responses to question 11: Do you ever have assignments in which your students write more than one draft for you?

Grade	Yes	No	Total
Kindergarten	0	1	1
	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
1 st	0	2	2
	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
2 nd	3	0	3
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
3 rd	4	1	5
	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%
4 th	9	1	10
	90.0%	10.0%	100.0%
5 th	13	2	15
	86.7%	13.3%	100.0%
6 th	1	0	1
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	30	7	37
	81.1%	18.9%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 14.618 , p = 0.023

Frequency of use of evaluation methods.

The next section of the questionnaire asked the respondents to “mark how often you use each of the following methods of assessment while assessing the writing of your students” and had a scale of rarely, if ever, once in a while, frequently, and almost always. Refer to Table 4 for the distribution of responses. With the exception of the FCAT rubric and self-assessment, the most commonly chosen response was “frequently.” Portfolios had 36.6% of the responses for both “frequently” and “once in a while,” while the most common answer (35.9%) for the FCAT rubric as “rarely, if ever,” and self-

assessment had 41.5% of the respondents indicating that they used that assessment “once in a while.”

Table 4

Distribution of responses to the question, “Please mark how often you use each of the following methods of assessment while assessing the writing of your students.”

	1 - Rarely, if ever	2 - Once in a while	3 - Frequently	4 - Almost always
Checklists - [Method by which the teacher notes whether or not the student has accomplished what he or she has been asked to do but without judging the quality of the work (i.e., has five sentences, made a cover, wrote a narrative piece, etc.).]	14.6% (6)	26.8% (11)	46.3% (19)	12.2% (5)
Teacher Conferences - [The teacher and student meet to discuss the student’s writing. This conversation may include a discussion about the strengths and weaknesses, suggestions for revisions, attention to conventions, etc.]	0.0% (0)	22.0% (9)	51.2% (21)	26.8% (11)
Peer Conferences - [Students meet with one or more of their peers to share and discuss their writing. These meetings may include suggestions for revisions, sharing what they like or dislike about each other’s writing, etc.]	2.4% (1)	39.0% (16)	48.8% (20)	9.8% (4)
Holistic Scoring - [This method of evaluating writing requires the evaluator to look at all components of a writing sample in conjunction when giving a final grade rather than assessing individual characteristics separately.]	17.5% (7)	25.0% (10)	45.0% (18)	12.5% (5)
Portfolios - [Teachers have students compile samples of their writing over the course of a certain timeframe (a grading period, the whole year, etc.) in order to evaluate the	14.6% (6)	36.6% (15)	36.6% (15)	12.2% (5)

writing.]				
Observations - [During the times when students write, the teacher watches to see what each student is doing and may make a mental or anecdotal note about what he or she observes.]	7.3% (3)	26.8% (11)	43.9% (18)	22.0% (9)
Rubrics - [When assessing student writing, the teacher looks at specified characteristics as outlined on a rubric and decides how well the student succeeded in each area before adding those scores together for a final score.]	4.9% (2)	7.3% (3)	46.3% (19)	41.5% (17)
FCAT Scoring Rubric - [The teacher uses the FCAT rubric to evaluate student writing. The rubric requires teachers to look at focus, organization, support, and conventions.]	35.9% (14)	15.4% (6)	33.3% (13)	15.4% (6)
Primary Traits Scoring - [The teacher predetermines what characteristics of the writing are the most important as well as what will be assessed and how it will be assessed. This method is specific to each assignment.]	15.4% (6)	20.5% (8)	38.5% (15)	25.6% (10)
Self Assessment - [Students are given the opportunity to evaluate their own writing. They may use criteria established by the teacher or may create their own criteria.]	24.4% (10)	41.5% (17)	29.3% (12)	4.9% (2)
Other (Please specify in the box below)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	100.0% (1)	0.0% (0)

A chi-square test was performed to test whether there was any association between each method of assessment and teachers' experience, grades taught, and age. The test was conducted separately for each method of assessment. The analysis revealed that there is no significant association between any method of assessment and the educators' experience, grades taught, or age.

There were three follow-up questions asking the educators to identify which three of the writing assessment methods they used “most frequently” (see Figure 8). Observation methods (29.3%) and teacher conferences (19.5%) were the two most frequently used assessment methods. Rubrics were the next most popular method with 14.6% respondents identifying them as the most frequently used method of assessing writing assignments. Checklists and holistic scoring were each chosen as the most frequently used methods by 9.8% of the respondents. Finally, peer conferences were the least frequently used method of assessment for 7.3% of respondents. This pattern remains the same when accounting for different levels of experience, grades taught, and for the age of the teachers. A chi-square test was performed to test whether there was any association between the most frequently used method and the experience, grades taught, and ages of the respondents. The analysis reveals that there is no significant association between most frequently used method and teachers’ experience, grades taught and age.

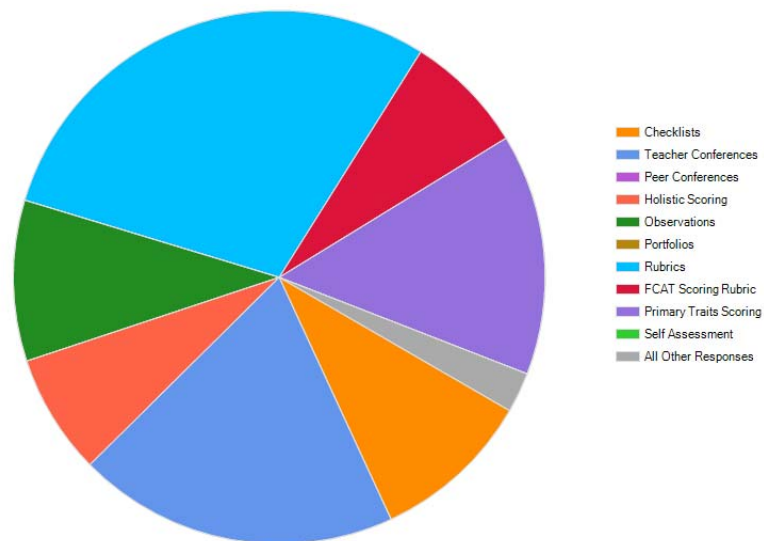


Figure 8: Responses to question 14: Select the method of assessing student writing listed in the previous question that you use most frequently.

In order to find out more about how educators differ in their choices of how to go about evaluating student writing, they were asked, “Why do you choose to use these three methods of assessing student writing more often than other methods?” This was an open-ended question so that the respondents could share their decision-making process. This question resulted in a wide range of responses. The 41 educators brought up 75 different points in their answers. Among the reasons given for selecting those methods, I identified six different patterns of responses. The educators shared that their chosen methods offer feedback to the students, offer feedback to the teachers, work together with a variety of methods for effective evaluation, are mandated to be used or are used because they are quick and easy to use, give students ownership of the task while helping them to understand the purpose of the assignment, and are comfortable and familiar to the teacher. The most repeated reasoning (listed in 22 of the responses) was that they chose their most frequently used methods for evaluating writing based on the feedback that those methods offered to teachers. One teacher shared that her chosen methods “help me to know my students’ strengths and weaknesses the best,” while another said that her choice “allows me to see specific areas of writing as they improve.” Many (20 total) educators stated that they felt that it was important to use a variety of assessments in writing for their “combined effectiveness” and because they “work well in conjunction with each other.” Twelve others mentioned that at least one of their methods of writing assessment was used because of a mandate or because it was a quick and easy option. “It is easier and faster,” it is “mandated,” and “as a 4th grade team, we use these.” Nearly the same number (11 total) of educators mentioned that their most frequently used methods of writing evaluation were chosen because they provided some ownership for the students

and/or clarified the purpose of the assignment for them. In their words, “it helps the children to be aware of the steps,” it allows students to “gain independence,” and it “gives them the buy-in.” Finally, four teachers mentioned that they utilized those methods that they were “most comfortable and most familiar with” in the classroom. There were varied responses to this question, but the majority of responses (20 total) showed that teachers hope to gain helpful feedback from their students’ writings while engaged in the evaluation process.

Use of formal vs. informal assessments.

Looking at another difference in the ways that educators could approach the evaluation of writing, another question on the questionnaire asked them, “Do you use both formal (written feedback, rubrics, grades, etc.) and informal (observation, anecdotal notes, conferences, etc.) methods of assessing writing? A majority (95.1%) of the respondents indicated that they do use both formal and informal methods of assessing writing, and that pattern was the same across all grades, ages, and years of experience. The follow-up question was, “What percentage (for a total of 100%) of your time spent evaluating writing is spent on informal assessments and on formal assessments?” The respondents were asked to give a percentage between 0 and 100 for both formal and informal assessments to add up to 100% of their assessments (see Tables 5 and 6).

Table 5

Percentage of time spent on informal assessments

Percentage	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
10.00	1	2.3	3.3
20.00	1	2.3	3.3
25.00	2	4.7	6.7
30.00	5	11.6	16.7
35.00	1	2.3	3.3
40.00	5	11.6	16.7
50.00	6	14.0	20.0
60.00	5	11.6	16.7
70.00	1	2.3	3.3
75.00	1	2.3	3.3
80.00	2	4.7	6.7
Total	30	69.8	100.0
Missing	13	30.2	
Total	43	100.0	

The percentage of the total evaluation time spent on informal assignments ranged from 10 to 80 percent. The median was 40%, which means that 50% of the teachers spent more than 40% of their total evaluation time on informal assignments. The percentage of the total reported evaluation time spent on formal assignments ranged from 20 to 90 percent with a median is 50%. This means that 50% of the teachers spent more than 50% of their total evaluation time on formal assignments. The educators spend a substantial amount of time on the evaluation of writing with both formal and informal assignments. However, they spent slightly more time, on average, using formal assignments.

Table 6

Percentage of time spent on formal assessments

Percentage	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
20.00	2	4.7	6.7
25.00	1	2.3	3.3
30.00	1	2.3	3.3
40.00	5	11.6	16.7
50.00	6	14.0	20.0
60.00	5	11.6	16.7
65.00	1	2.3	3.3
70.00	5	11.6	16.7
75.00	2	4.7	6.7
80.00	1	2.3	3.3
90.00	1	2.3	3.3
Total	30	69.8	100.0
Missing	13	30.2	
Total	43	100.0	

The ANOVA test procedure was used to test whether there was a significant difference in the average percentage of time spent between the different categories of experience, the grades taught and the different age groups of the educators. Using the ANOVA allowed me to test the multiple means across all of the different units of analysis (years of experience, grades taught, etc.). In conducting this test, the null hypothesis is that the mean is the same for all groups. The test produces an F-statistic, which is used to calculate the p-value. As in the Chi-square test, if $p < .05$, there was a statistically significant result, and the null hypothesis would be rejected. This analysis was done separately for formal and informal assignments. Refer to tables D103-D109 in Appendix D to see the summary statistics of the percentage of time spent on informal and formal assignments for the different categories of experience, grades taught, and age

groups of educators as well as for the ANOVA results. Those results reveal that there is no significant difference between different categories of experience, grades taught, and age of teachers in terms of the percentage of time spent on informal and formal assignments. Because there were only two private schools in the study (with only two responses from one of those schools) and because those two schools were in different counties, the ANOVA was not run for a private versus public school comparison as it would be in a study with a more representative group for the private schools.

FCAT rubric use.

The next two questions asked the educators about their experience with using the FCAT Writing Assessment rubric. The first question asked, “Do you ever utilize the FCAT Writing Assessment rubric to score papers?” The responses to this question were fairly evenly distributed with 55% of the respondents indicating that they did utilize the FCAT rubric while 45% of the respondents indicated that they never utilized the rubric. In order to gain more information on this topic (see Figure 9), the next question asked those who responded affirmatively, “How often do you use the FCAT Writing Assessment?” Many (47.8%) of the respondents indicated that they used the FCAT rubric on a monthly basis while 21.7% used it weekly, 4.3% used it daily, and 26.1% used it on another basis. Those responses were individualized and included, “once a trimester,” “three times a year,” “at least two times monthly,” and “every six weeks, 4th grade only.” A chi-square analysis showed that there was no significant association between the frequency of the use of the FCAT rubric and the teachers’ years of experience, grades taught, or age.

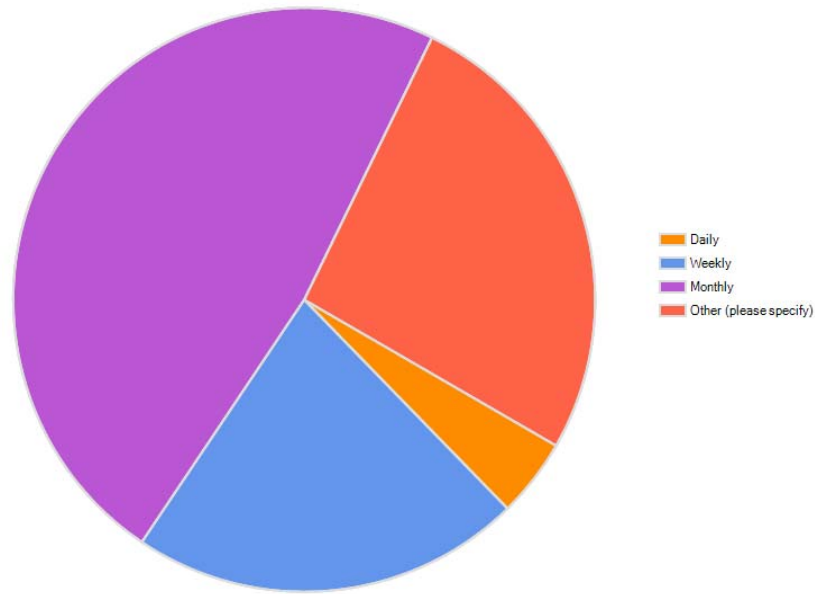


Figure 9: Responses to question 28: How often do you use the FCAT Writing Assessment?

The next question asked the educators, “Do you use any standardized writing assessments (SAT, FCAT, etc.)?” The majority (57.5%) of the respondents replied that they did not use any standardized assessments for writing. A chi-square analysis revealed no significant association between the use of the standardized writing assessments and the educators’ age or years of experience, but there was a significant ($p = 0.044$) association between the use of the standardized writing assessment and the grades taught by the educators (see Table 7). Teachers of older students are more likely to use a standardized writing assignment than those of younger students, which was a similar finding to the likelihood of teachers of older students to require their students to write more than one draft of their writing.

Table 7

Relationship between the grade being taught and the use of standardized assignments

Grade Teaching	Yes	No	Total
Kindergarten	0	1	1
	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
1 st	0	2	2
	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
2 nd	3	0	3
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
3 rd	0	5	5
	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
4 th	6	3	9
	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
5 th	6	9	15
	40.0%	60.0%	100.0%
6 th	0	1	1
	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total	15	21	36
	41.7%	58.3%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 12.960 , p = 0.044

Finally, the last question that provides information about the different ways in which educators approach the evaluation of student writing was, “How often do you provide your students with written feedback on their writing assignments?” A large percentage (85.3%) of the respondents give written feedback to their students either “almost always” (39%) or “frequently” (46.3%) with an additional 12.2% giving written feedback “once in a while” and 2.4% doing so “rarely, if ever” (see Figure 10).

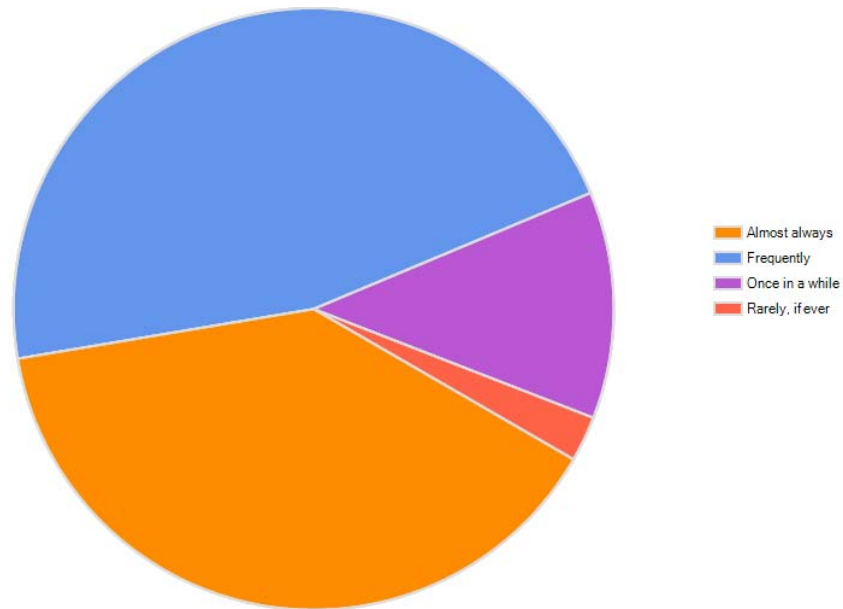


Figure 10: *Responses to question 32: How often do you provide your students with written feedback on their writing assignments?*

A chi-square analysis found no significant association between the frequency of written feedback and the educators' age or years of experience, but there was a significant association ($p = 0.0001$) between the frequency of written feedback and the grade levels taught by the educators. The frequency of giving feedback is more significant for 2nd-6th grades than in kindergarten or first grade (see Table 8), which makes sense because kindergarten and first grade students would likely have difficulty reading written feedback from their teachers on their writing.

Table 8

Grade teaching and frequency of giving written feedback

Grade	Almost always	Frequently	Once in a while	Rarely	Total
Kinder- garten	0 .0%	0 .0%	0 .0%	1 100.0%	1 100.0%
1 st	1 50.0%	0 .0%	1 50.0%	0 .0%	2 100.0%
2 nd	1 33.3%	2 66.7%	0 .0%	0 .0%	3 100.0%
3 rd	0 .0%	4 80.0%	1 20.0%	0 .0%	5 100.0%
4 th	6 60.0%	3 30.0%	1 10.0%	0 .0%	10 100.0%
5 th	5 33.3%	8 53.3%	2 13.3%	0 .0%	15 100.0%
6 th	1 100.0%	0 .0%	0 .0%	0 .0%	1 100.0%
Total	14 37.8%	17 45.9%	5 13.5%	1 2.7%	37 100.0%

Chi-Square = 47.769 , p = 0.0001

Summary of findings related to research question one.

In reviewing the data collected, I found many patterns among the responses of the participants. While there were few areas of great difference in their answers, significance was found when looking at the evaluation practices of the teachers of grades two through six as compared to those of the teachers of kindergarten and first grade. The teachers of the older students were more likely to have their students write more than one draft of their writing assignments, were more likely to utilize standardized writing assessments, and were more likely to give written feedback to their students regarding their writing assignments. Nearly half (49%) of the participants reported spending 25-49% of their

total assessment time on the assessment of writing, so regardless of their chosen approach, writing does appear to be viewed as important by many of the educator participants.

Research question two.

The second research question, “How do educators evaluate the effectiveness of their evaluation methods for judging the quality of students’ writing samples?” was addressed by six different questions from the questionnaire.

Perceived effectiveness of most frequent methods of writing evaluation.

The first question was, “Please rate the method of assessing student writing that you use most frequently (as designated in the previous question) on a scale of 1-4 with 1 being minimally effective and 4 being extremely effective.” This question was repeated for each of the three methods of assessing student writing that the educators selected in response to the questions discussed in the previous section. In identifying the level of effectiveness that they believed their most frequently used method of writing assessment held, 51.2% indicated that they believed that method to be “effective,” and 41.5% chose to designate that method as being “extremely effective.” Only 7.3% labeled their most frequently used method as being “somewhat effective,” and no one selected the “minimally effective option. When looking at those same responses while isolating the public schools in two different counties, 12.5% of the teachers in County A reported a belief that their most frequently used method of assessing student writing was only “somewhat effective” while no teachers in County B selected that response (see Table 9).

Table 9

Effectiveness of most frequently used method of assessing writing by county

	Somewhat effective	Effective	Extremely effective	Total
Public County A	1 12.5%	3 37.5%	4 50.0%	8 100.0%
Public County B	0 .0%	8 44.4%	10 55.6%	18 100.0%
Total	1	11	14	26

For the second and third choice methods of evaluating student writing, the responses were quite similar although there were more responses in the lower categories for these two methods (see Figure 11). For the methods chosen as being used second most frequently, 39% of the educators identified their method as being “extremely effective” with 48.8% labeling their choice as being “effective.” Those rankings were followed by 12.2% of the respondents indicating that their second-choice methods were “somewhat effective,” but no respondents selected the “minimally effective” category. Again, a look at the comparison of public school teacher responses by county shows 12.5% of the teachers in County A reporting that their second most chosen method of evaluating student writing was only “somewhat effective” with an additional 62.5% choosing the “effective” response. In the responses of County B educators, 100% selected either “effective” (44.4%) or “extremely effective” (54.6%) as their response.

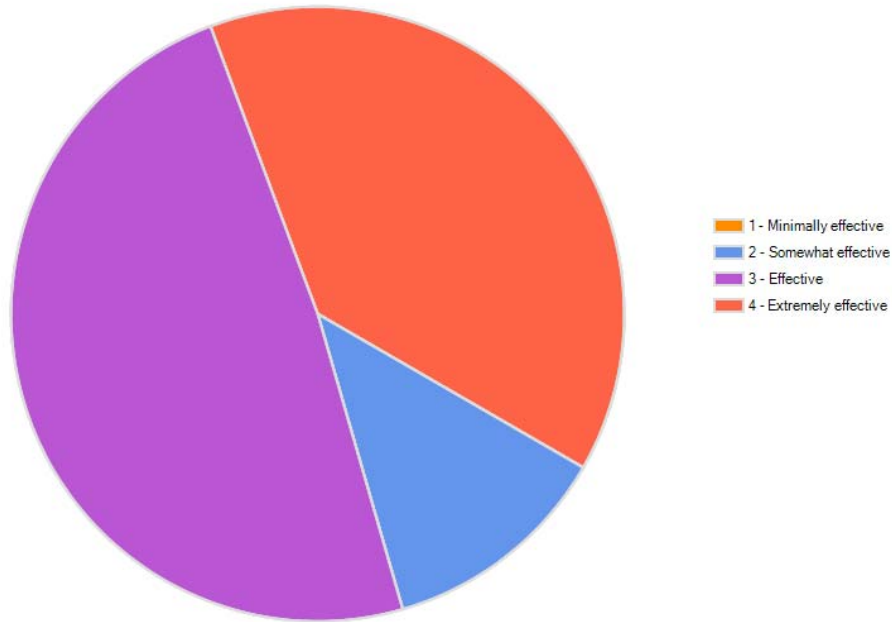


Figure 11: *Responses to question 17: Please rate the method of assessing student writing that you use second most frequently (as designated in the previous question) on a scale of 1-4 with 1 being minimally effective and 4 being extremely effective.*

The third choice method rankings were similar, but this time, 2.5% of the respondents ranked their third choice as being “minimally effective,” and 12.5% labeled their choice as being “somewhat effective.” There were still more educators choosing their answers from the upper categories as 50.0% of the respondents selected “effective” as the descriptor for their third choice, and 35% decided that their third choice was “extremely effective.” These percentages were similar to those found when comparing responses from one county to the other.

Overall effectiveness of all writing evaluation methods.

Another question, “Please think about ALL of the different methods of evaluation that you use when reviewing student writing. As a whole, how effective do you believe that the method(s) of evaluating writing that you utilize are?” asks educators to think of the big picture with regards to their work on evaluating student writing. A large majority

(68.3%) believe that their methods for evaluating writing are “effective.” Another 22.0% of the educators ranked their methods as being “extremely effective” while 9.8% see their methods as being “somewhat effective,” and no one selected “minimally effective” as a descriptor for their methods. Table 10 reflects the responses of the educators at the public schools in County A and County B. The majority of the responses fell into the “effective” category, but each county had respondents who believed that ALL of their methods combined together were only “somewhat effective” in the evaluation of student writing.

Table 10

Responses by county of teachers’ beliefs about the effectiveness of their evaluation methods

	Somewhat Effective	Effective	Extremely Effective	Total
Public County A	1 12.5%	4 50.0%	3 37.5%	8 100.0%
Public County B	1 5.6%	14 77.8%	3 16.7%	18 100.0%
Total	2 7.7%	18 69.2%	6 23.1%	26 100.0%

A follow-up question asks, “Why do you feel that way?” This was an open-ended response question with 36 responses. After analyzing all parts of all responses, I identified six patterns among the responses. Those patterns were: these methods are not effective, these methods promote growth in my student writers, these methods provide variety for my writers, these methods allow me to meet individual needs, these methods help my students, and these methods allow me to assess their writing daily. Many educators (12 total) indicated that they believed that their methods of writing assessment were effective because they witnessed growth in their students’ writing. They wrote,

“They give the children the most opportunity for growth,” “I can see growth in my students’ writing,” and “we see improvement in student writing over the school year.” The rest of the responses were close in numbers. For example, six respondents indicated that they had negative feelings about methods that they viewed as being ineffective. They shared, “Only slight differences are noted,” and “I think there is no perfect way to score writing.” Six respondents also believe that their methods help them to provide variety with their assessment practices, and one of those educators wrote, “I am using a combination...to accurately determine by students’ strengths and weaknesses.” Five educators indicated that they like utilizing methods that allow them to assess children’s writing on a daily basis and said, “I can assess daily if need be,” and “we discuss his progress daily.” The final two patterns were represented by seven educators. Four of those believed that their methods were effective because they allow them to help their students by allowing them to “know exactly what is expected of them and [to] give them guidance,” and three respondents favored their methods because “each individual can be assessed at their particular level.” While a variety of responses were given, the largest pattern shows that the teachers in this sample were most concerned with seeing growth in the writing of their students.

Perceived helpfulness of FCAT rubric.

The last question that helped to give more information about how educators evaluate the effectiveness of the methods used to assess the writing of their students was, “How helpful do you feel that the feedback from the FCAT rubric is to your students?” The majority (68.2%) of the respondents to this question labeled the feedback from the FCAT rubric as being “helpful” to their students while “somewhat helpful” and

“minimally helpful” both garnered 13.6% of the responses. Only 4.5% of the respondents indicated that they believed the feedback from the FCAT rubric to be “extremely helpful” to their students (see Figure 12). A chi-square analysis was run to see if there was a significant association between the teachers’ perceptions of the helpfulness of the FCAT rubric feedback and their ages, years of experience, or grades taught. No significant association was found.

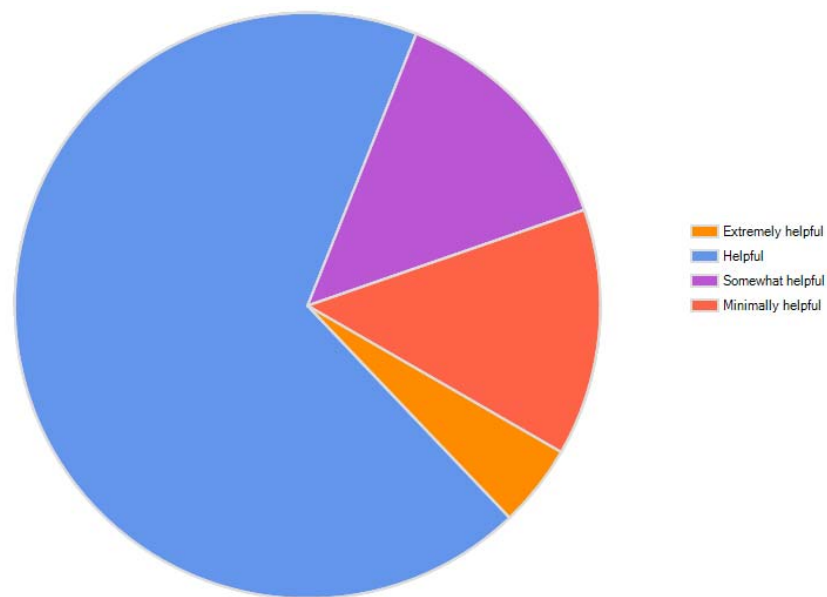


Figure 12: Responses to question 30: How helpful do you feel that the feedback from the FCAT rubric is to your students?

It is, however, interesting to look at the responses to this question when separated by public schools in County A and County B. An examination of Table 11 reveals that only six educators in County A reported utilizing the FCAT rubric, and out of those six, they all believe that the FCAT rubric is “helpful” to their students. Nearly twice as many educators in County B (11 total) reported using the FCAT rubric, and while five (45.5%) of them believe that the rubric is “helpful” to the students, five more find that it is only “somewhat helpful” (27.3%) or “minimally helpful” (18.2%) to their students.

Table 11

Responses by county of teachers evaluating the effectiveness of feedback from the FCAT rubric

County	Extremely helpful	Helpful	Somewhat helpful	Minimally helpful	Total
Public County A	0 .0%	6 100.0%	0 .0%	0 .0%	6 100.0%
Public County B	1 9.1%	5 45.5%	3 27.3%	2 18.2%	11 100.0%
Total	1 5.9%	11 64.7%	3 17.6%	2 11.8%	17 100.0%

The feelings of the educator participants regarding the effectiveness of their methods used for the evaluation of student writing vary from thoughts of minimally effective writing methods to methods that are perceived as being extremely effective. An examination of the responses of the educators when labeling their three most frequently used methods of writing evaluation shows a trend in that the number of teachers classifying their chosen methods as being either extremely effective or effective declined from the most oft used method to the third most used method. At the same time, the number of teachers identifying those most frequently used techniques as being minimally or somewhat effective increased from 7.3% with the most frequently used method to 15% with the third most used method. That trend makes sense in that the most frequently used methods of writing assessment should logically be those that the teachers believe are the most effective methods. Supporting that trend were the responses of the teachers when asked how effective all of their writing evaluation methods were when thought of all together. 90.3% of the educators believed that their methods of evaluating writing are effective. It appeared from their responses that at least some of the educators based their judgments of effectiveness on the growth that they saw in the writing of their students.

Overall, the responses indicated that the participants in this study believe their methods of evaluating student writing to be effective.

Research question three.

The final research question addresses another angle of the evaluation process by asking, “What factors impact the evaluation decisions of educators?”

Time spent evaluating individual student papers.

The first question on the questionnaire which addressed this topic was, “Do you spend more time assessing some individual students’ papers than others? A large majority (92.9%) of the respondents do spend more time on some papers than on others. In order to further clarify the factors that cause the educators to spend more time on one paper over another, the next question asked, “What accounts for differences in the amount of time spent on various papers?” This was an open-ended response question. In analyzing the responses, I identified five different patterns that characterized the responses. Those patterns were: needs/skill, time, feedback, type of assignment, and readability. A large number (37) of respondents referred to the needs and/or skills of their students as a deciding factor in whether or not they would need to spend more time on a particular paper. Some of those comments included, “if students have a natural talent for writing...it generally is easier to assess,” “some students have challenges when writing” and “some students require more support to be successful.” A large group (15) of the respondents expressed a desire to give feedback to their writers because, “there are things that need to be corrected and commented on,” and “sometimes I just need to suggest an idea for improvement or consideration.” Many (14) of the educators indicated that time played a part in the amount of effort that they could put forth in grading their students’

writings. “Sometimes you spend a lot of time trying to determine what exactly the student is trying to say,” “one with more challenges takes much longer,” and “more time is spent looking for needs with the neediest writers” are only a few of the comments from those educators who were concerned about time. Eleven teachers mentioned that the readability of the students’ writing can influence the amount of time spend on a paper. They lamented, “Some papers are harder to read” and mentioned that the “ease of handwriting” could impact their ability to read the paper and to “help them move forward.” Finally, a smaller group (6) of educators shared that the type of assignment being done could affect the amount of time they spent reading a paper because, “Expository essays require a different amount of time than creative and narrative pieces of writing,” and the “length of the paper,” as well as the “type of rubric being used” can all be a factor when the teacher decides how to approach the evaluation of a particular writing. Teachers seem to be most focused on helping those students with challenges or those who are in need of assistance with specific skills in their writing.

A follow-up question, “How would you characterize those papers you spend more time responding to as contrasted with those that take less time?” required the respondents to think more about their students’ writing. This was also an open-ended response question, and I identified four patterns among the responses from the participants. Those patterns showed that the educators were thinking about whether or not the writer was challenged, feedback, whether or not there were aspects of the paper that affected its readability, and if there were specific skills that the writer needed to work on to improve. The most frequent response (19 references) included references to the writer and his challenges. “I spend more time with my struggling writers’ papers to look deeper into

their needs” and some writers “need more assistance to improve.” Many (18) educators referenced the students’ skill levels with reference to time. One respondent shared, “Usually papers I spend more time on require the students to add more detail, elaboration, mechanics and choose vocabulary words more appropriate for pieces.” Similarly, a group (13 total) of respondents was concerned about the amount of feedback needed by certain writers. “Some children need one on one conferencing more frequently than others,” and some need “more coaching.” Finally, a small group (9 total) of responses pointed out the factors like “handwriting,” “spelling errors,” and “sloppy, poor grammar” that affect the readability of student papers. While some teachers pinpoint readability issues as the cause of increased time required for grading, the majority of the teachers indicate that they spend more time on those papers that need the most help.

Feelings about the assessment of writing.

Moving away from questions particular to the content of student writings, the next question asked, “How do you feel about assessing student writing?” The respondents were given a scale with four choices from which to choose their response. The majority (56.1%) of educators selected “positive” as the word to best describe their feelings regarding the assessment of student writing. Another choice was “somewhat positive,” and that option was selected by 31.7% of the respondents followed by 4.9% who chose “somewhat negative” and 7.3% who felt “negative” about the assessment of student writing (see Figure 13). A chi-square analysis was run but no significant association was found between the educators’ feelings about the assessment of student writing with respect to their ages, grades taught, and years of experience.

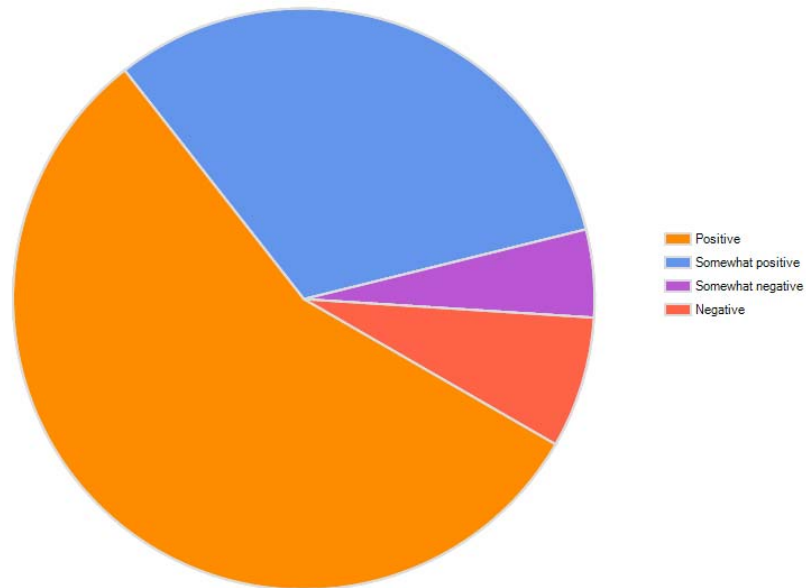


Figure 13: *Responses to question seven: How do you feel about assessing student writing?*

Table 12 shows the distribution of responses when separated by county for the public schools. In County A, 100% of the teachers had a positive feeling about the evaluation of student writing. In County B, 83.3% of the teachers reported positive feelings with 5.6% reporting “somewhat negative” feelings and an additional 11.1% shared that they had “negative” feelings about evaluating student writing.

Table 12

Feelings of teachers with regards to the assessment of writing

	Positive	Somewhat Positive	Somewhat Negative	Negative	Total
Public County A	6	2	0	0	8
	75.0%	25.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Public County B	8	7	1	2	18
	44.4%	38.9%	5.6%	11.1%	100.0%
Total	14	9	1	2	26
	53.8%	34.6%	3.8%	7.7%	100.0%

Source of evaluation methods.

Another question related to the factors that impact the evaluation decisions made by teachers was, “Where did you learn the different assessment methods that you use to assess student writing?” A large number (48.8%) of the respondents selected “school or district based training” as their answer. After that, 22% indicated that they learned their assessment methods from “college or university courses,” and another 12.2% were educated by their “reading coaches or literacy specialists.” A few (2.4%) shared that they learned their methods from “peer teachers” while 14.6% chose the “other” response and shared that they learned their methods from a “combination of college, public school trainings, and peer teachers,” “college courses as well as from mentors during previous years of teaching,” and “after thirty years of teaching, you tend to accumulate many methods from all of these sources and more.” Nearly half of the respondents learned their methods of assessment from their school or county trainings.

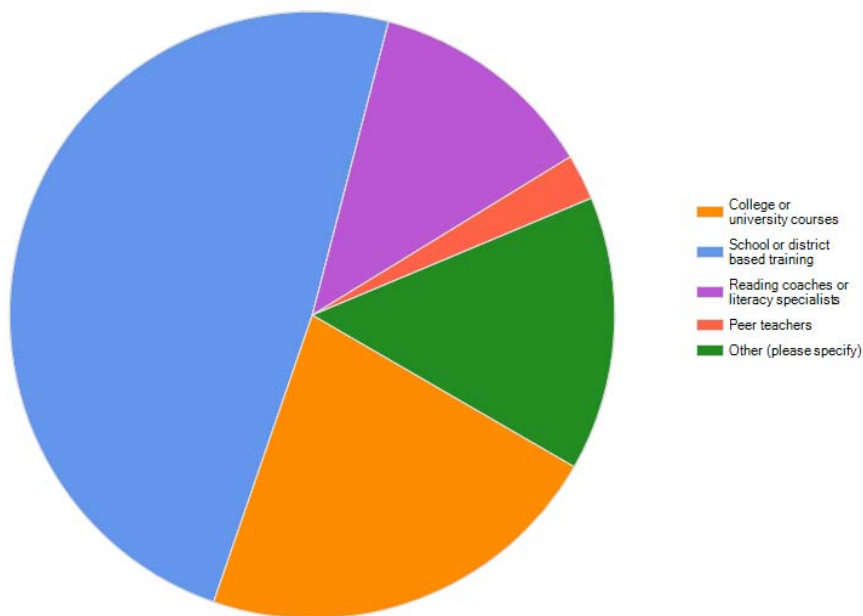


Figure 14: Responses to question 10: Where did you learn the different assessment methods that you use to assess student writing?

Mandated methods of evaluation.

I wanted to find out if any of the factors influencing the decisions of the respondents were beyond their control, so the next question asked, “Are you mandated by your school to use any of the three methods of assessment that you use most frequently?” A large number (58.5%) of the educators are required by their school to use at least one of the methods of assessment that they use most frequently in their classroom. All eight of the public school teachers from County A reported that they are mandated to use at least one of the three methods of assessment for student writing that they use most often (see Table 13). In County B, 77.8% of the teachers reported the same, but 22.2% of those teachers shared that they are not mandated to use any of their most-oft used methods for evaluating student writing.

Table 13

Rates of mandated assessments of writing

County	Yes	No	Total
Public County A	8 100.0%	0 .0%	8 100.0%
Public County B	14 77.8%	4 22.2%	18 100.0%
Total	22 84.6%	4 15.4%	26 100.0%

The next question asks for more information with, “Which method(s) of evaluating writing are you mandated to use?” This was an open-ended response question in order to provide the respondents with the opportunity to share any mandated assessments that they may have had. The responses fell into six categories. Rubrics were the most oft mentioned mandated method with 19 references to having to use a specific rubric. Ten of those specifically named the FCAT rubric, and a county-designed rubric

the Six Traits rubric and a school-designed rubric were also mentioned. The other mandated forms of evaluation were conferences (five references), portfolios (two references), checklists (two references), observations (three references), and holistic scoring with anchor papers (four references). The most popular response, then, was that the FCAT rubric was the most frequently mandated method of writing evaluation.

Reasons for choosing FCAT rubric.

In order to determine whether there were reasons beyond a mandate for teachers to select and use the FCAT rubric in the evaluation of their students' writing, I asked, "Why do you choose to use the FCAT rubric?" This was an open-ended response question, and I was able to identify four patterns in the responses provided. The most prevalent pattern (mentioned by eight respondents) was that of using the rubric because it was mandated. These responses included, "mandated by writing program in county," "mandated," and "we are forced to." The next pattern of responses, seen in the responses of six educators, was one of the teachers believing that the FCAT rubric was good to use because they believed that it gave them a quick view of the skills of their students. They shared, "it gives a snapshot of what the child would achieve on the state test," "it is a good means to look at writing strengths and weaknesses," and "with expository essays, it is a quick glance at what the expectations are for 4th graders." A few others (three educators) viewed the FCAT rubric use as allowing their students to practice for the test. They commented, "to prepare students," and "I use the FCAT rubric in order to prepare students and teachers." Finally, one respondent attributed her choice of using the FCAT rubric to the fact that the rubric is "holistic." The majority of these responses reflected

reasons outside of the teachers' personal preferences for the use of the FCAT rubric in the evaluation of student writing.

While there were only two instances of statistical significance (related to draft writing and the practice of giving feedback) found in the questionnaire data, the shared responses of the participants gave a glimpse into their beliefs with regards to the evaluation of student writing. Examining the responses with respect to the demographics of the participants also helped me to learn more about their evaluation practices.

The data showed that there were many factors that impacted the evaluation decisions of the participant educators. A positive finding was that over half of the respondents had a positive feeling about the assessment of student writing. The participants also noted that the needs and skills of their students had a great deal of influence on their choices of evaluation methods as well as on the time that they spent assessing the student writings. A final point of interest was that nearly half (48.8%) of the participants obtain their methods of writing evaluation from school or district trainings with an additional 22% finding their methods in college courses. While many factors were mentioned by the participant group, their feelings about evaluation, the needs and skills of their students, and the source of their evaluation methods were a few of the notable factors found in their responses on the questionnaire.

All of the responses to the questions on the questionnaire help me to better understand the beliefs of the teachers in this sample with regards to the evaluation of student writing. In order to achieve a more intimate, working knowledge of how those beliefs transfer to practice, I conducted interviews and an observation, and I also collected student writing samples. The results of those endeavors are analyzed here.

Phases two-four: Interviews, observation, and student writing samples.

Maple Court Prep (MCP) is a private school in the southeastern United States. With a student population of approximately 500 students ranging in age from three to fifteen, this school employs over 100 teachers and staff members. This school is part of the International Baccalaureate Program for the middle years, and the administration and faculty pride themselves on staying current with educational research and with the research-based methods of instruction that are implemented in the classrooms at all grade levels. MCP boasts of its ability to teach the whole child, and to that end, students at the school are exposed to a large number of “special” classes on a regular basis, participate in Brain Gym activities during the school day, and have the opportunity to take their learning off-site many times during the school year (Headmaster, personal communication, April 7, 2010). Throughout the school year, MCP is visited by hundreds of teachers from around the world who come to learn about the different educational methods in place at that school.

MCP has been attending the writers’ conference for several years and is always one of the larger student groups in attendance. As a matter of fact, because the headmaster wished that she could bring her whole student body to the conference, she started an annual authors’ conference at MCP. In this particular year, in order to select student participants to attend the writers’ conference at the university, the headmaster had a meeting with representatives from each grade level that would be sending students. They decided that they would send three students from each grade level as representatives for the school to the conference. The team agreed that they would continue their practice from the previous years and have outside judges do a blind reading

and selection of the winning student writings. When asked why her school chooses to use that method of selecting participants, the headmaster replied:

I think it's fair and equal, and no one can say, 'What about me?' or anything else. It's blind reading. I thought it was an excellent process, so I would recommend it for everybody if they can – it's hard for everybody – we have a lot of contacts, and a lot of people who are happy to help us with things because of all we do for others. It's synergy. (Personal communication, April 7, 2010)

I asked if she could share more information about the judges, and she said that one woman was a former elementary school teacher who runs a program at a local university and trains teachers in public schools. Another judge, a male, was a former professor at an Ivy League university who then moved on to become a dean of a university. The judges, according to the headmaster, were “impressed” and one said that she was “blown away” by the quality of writing presented by the students.

A look at the three rubrics compiled by the teachers at MCP gave me an idea of the expectations held for their student writers. The three separate rubrics were used for early primary (first and second grade), intermediate, and sixth grade, but all three shared common features in that the main categories of assessment were the same for the intermediate and middle school rubrics and similar to the early primary one. Focus, support/elaboration, organization, and presentation were the larger categories, which were then broken down into more specific guidelines for the judges. For example, under the organization section on the middle school rubric, one of the guidelines was, “Arrangement of words in sentences is varied.” Under the same section on the intermediate rubric, the guideline read, “Dialogue is realistic and illuminates story elements.” Finally, on the upper primary rubric, the judges were asked to see if the writing “shows sentence fluency.”

I was given the winning writings for one class of second graders (three writings), all of the fifth graders (six writings), and all of the sixth graders (four writings). In order to share a representation of those writings, I used all of the second grade writings and then randomly selected three each of the fifth and sixth grade writings so that there would be an equal number of writings representing each grade. I then selected the three most interesting excerpts from each of the writings to share on Table 14. The interest of those excerpts was determined by the use of exclamations, a presence of student voice, complex sentence structure, or engaging ideas. I did not complete a formal grading or scoring of the papers because of a lack of a basis for comparison.

Table 14

Sample sentences from conference participant writings

Second grade	Fifth grade	Sixth grade
I tried and tried to stop but I couldn't. So then...bam! Ah, I'm stuck. I got on the bench. I tried to get out and I did. Yah, but then I noticed that I was flat!	He picked Sarah up in a fireman's carry and whisked her out to the car with Rachell following close on his heels.	The town all rushed at me as if they were going to run me over. Moving was difficult for me due to all of the energy I had exerted.
I cried, cried, and cried some more until everybody came in and asked what happened to me. I said, "I do not know. Why?" After we went home, I told my mom that I was watching TV when the ceiling fell on me. "Oh, honey! I'm so sorry." said mom. "Just look at you...you're FLAT!"	Thump. Thump. Thump. The swollen marigold basketball hit the thick pavement. Melanie leaped up and threw the basketball through the tattered net with its jet-black base. Melanie was a tall girl with thick, mahogany colored hair. Today, she wore her hair in two braids resting on her back.	That was it. She was gone. Gone forever, and there was nothing I could do. It felt as if my heart had been dropped to the ground and all hope lost. There was no way I could go on without her in my life. But I had to, and I had to keep going She was my best friend, and we were like two peas in a pod.
"Mom", I said. "I'm flat! I'm going to my room." I slid under the door. I guess	A couple of years ago, we were probably the happiest family in all of London.	The intensity of the spotlight envelops my soul, all eyes bewitchingly follow

<p>it was pretty impressive. The very next day I was at the surfboard pool. “I know I’ll be the surfboard. This is fun.” I thought. I didn’t know being a surfboard could be so much fun!</p>	<p>Together we were like good coffee, rich, warm, and strong. Business was booming, birds were chirping with glee, and when we were feeling blue it seemed that magic rays of sunshine would shine down on us.</p>	<p>my every move, electricity reverberates through my veins...I am the god of the theatre and I majestically shimmy with poise and scoot across the stage. Boy that was a funky dance! (Cue theme song “Dora the Explorer”) Ugh! If only Ava hadn’t texted me at that moment; my fantasy was getting pretty bizarre.</p>
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During my interview with the headmaster, I asked her to share her beliefs about writing with me. Knowing that I was also going to interview one of her teachers, I was curious to find out if their beliefs about writing would be similar. The headmaster shared:

One of the beautiful things about writing is I think you can teach about life. A lot of things kids do, they finish, they’re done, and they don’t want to redo it. Well, when you get a job, if you have a builder, and they need to fix something, they better come back and fix it. You grow up in school thinking what? I did it already; I’m done. I don’t have to touch it. But the writing process has you do a draft. First, you get your ideas. Then you do a draft. Then you edit it. Then other people edit it. Then you read it to people. You hear how it sounds. It’s not a one-step process. It’s a developmental process. It’s one of the best ways to teach a good work ethic – that something can always get better. That’s part of the process. (Personal communication, March 4, 2010)

When I asked one of her fifth grade teachers, Mrs. Tenley, what she enjoyed about teaching writing, she replied:

I think writing for some children is such a natural way of expression that the joy that I watch in their faces and their choice of words and the ability to put thoughts together is just incredible. It’s inspiring for others...I think my most enjoyable thing about teaching writing is if – I enjoy teaching it when we teach small sections at a time because that way, the kids can practice it, and they actually get it. (Personal communication, April 7, 2010)

While the two responses did not have a lot of commonalities because the headmaster spoke about the process of writing while the teacher addressed the feelings involved with teaching writing, they both spoke positively about writing and seemed to believe that their students would be successful if they, as educators, were effective in teaching the students.

After speaking with this teacher, I wanted to go further than simply hearing about her beliefs and practices during the teaching and assessing of writing. I wanted to see her in action. She and her co-teacher, Mrs. Drake, agreed to let me observe them during a writing lesson with their fifth grade students. The lesson was a forty minute lesson entitled, "Writer's secret - What is a paragraph?" I was able to see the last few minutes of the lesson that finished with one group of students upon my arrival. The students learned about a 3.8 paragraph and were then given six slips of paper with one sentence printed on each slip. The students needed to put those slips in order based on which one was the main idea, which ones were the details, etc. As the teacher revealed the correct order of the sentences on the SmartBoard, the students made sure that their strips matched that order and then glued them onto a sheet of paper. After the lesson was over, Mrs. Tenley shared with me that I had just witnessed the conclusion of a lesson with the same topic as the one that I was there to observe but that the lessons were differentiated according to the needs of the students in each group.

While I waited for the groups of students to change rooms and to prepare for their lesson, I took a few minutes to look at my surroundings. The classroom had five round tables, and each table had four chairs. In the center of each table was a mini-milk crate filled with pencils, index cards, and a table number. Those items sit atop of a wire basket

filled with notebook paper. Mrs. Drake went around and placed sheets for the lesson in the basket before the kids entered the room. Under each table was a rectangular storage cube used to hold the kids' notebooks and other larger supplies.

Across the front of the room, where the wall meets the ceiling, were colored cutouts of keys labeled with the words, "flexibility, integrity, ownership, failure leads to success, commitment, balance, this is it, and speak with good purpose." Across the left side of the room were learner profiles: "caring, reflective, risk-takers, inquirers, knowledgeable, open minded, thinkers, principled, communicators, and balanced." At the back of the room was a list of attitudes, which I was unable to read from my vantage point. Hanging from the ceiling were four fluorescent colored pennants with ribbons hanging from them. On the whiteboard at the front (peeking out from either side of the mounted SmartBoard), were the day's schedule and the class jobs. Nearly everywhere the students look, they had reminders about how to act and treat others. These reminders were presented in a friendly and colorful way while, at the same time, giving the message in a more mature way than you might find in a primary classroom.

When the teachers were ready to start, they called for attention at the SmartBoard where the writer's secret handout was being projected via the ELMO device. A small, yellow finger pointer was used to show the students where the teachers were at on the handout. The two teachers team-taught the lesson. Mrs. Drake stayed closer to the ELMO to move the pointer while Mrs. Tenley circulated and checked on students as she moved and added to the lesson from wherever she was at when the moment presented itself. Mrs. Drake shared the following with the students:

A good paragraph represents a complete and interesting picture. All the sentences work together to complete the picture for the reader. So even

though in your minds you might be thinking, “Wow, a paragraph is pretty short,” if it’s done well, the picture can be complete. It all depends on the way that you structure it and the details and support you put in it.
(Observation, September 21, 2010)

Throughout the lesson, the students appeared to be mostly attentive and taking notes.

Mrs. Tenley continued to circulate and would check on and assist students when notes seemed to be lacking on students’ papers. Meanwhile, she continued to add to the lesson from her current place in the room with the teachers speaking together seamlessly.

Together, the teachers guided the students through a sample 3.8 paragraph while identifying the three parts (topic, body, and closing) that the students must include in their own paragraphs. The teachers discussed the varying characteristics of paragraphs and reminded the students that paragraphs could be “long,” “short,” “it can have descriptive words,” “it can have complex sentences,” “it can have transition words,” “figurative language,” and “similes and metaphors.”

Next, it was time for the students to write their own 3.8 paragraphs. In order to get them started on writing, the teachers asked the students to take out their heart maps, which are construction paper hearts glued onto a sheet of paper and then covered with all of the ideas and things that the students would like to write about at some point during the school year. The following directions were given: “What we’re going to ask is that you actually take that topic and turn it into a 3.8 paragraph so we can see how you are as a writer. It’s short enough for us to be able to read kind of where we can take you as fifth graders in this particular writing group.” The teachers put a sheet of notebook paper on the ELMO and together (speaking back-and-forth) demonstrated how they wanted to use that paper while, at the same time, reminding the students that they could use a portion of

the paper as a planning area. Mrs. Drake remained at the ELMO in order to demonstrate on that paper what they were asking the students to do.

While the students worked, both teachers walked around to assist them as needed. While the kids worked, soft, classical music played in the background. The students continued to work for approximately 15 minutes. During that time, all of the students were writing with periodic breaks to refer to the top of their papers (where they'd drawn their organizational maps) and to reread what they had already written. The pencils were moving, and heads were down. When one girl finished, she raised her hand and asked Mrs. Tenley to read over her writing. After the first girl finished writing, she pulled out a novel to read. Another girl quickly followed with her own book as she finished writing. Throughout the whole writing time, the teachers continued circulating, talking with students, reading over different writings, and occasionally sharing writing with one another.

When the fifteen minute timeframe was completed, Mrs. Tenley directed those who were writing to keep going with their writing, but she also asked if there was anyone who wanted to share their writing. She said, "We want to see what you can come up with for coaching or the compliments as needed." A couple of students read their work, and then I could see from the daily schedule on the board that it was time for them to move to another activity. After the last student shared her writing, Mrs. Drake said:

You had a lot of complex sentences. I could tell for how long they were and you needing to have a pause in breathing, which was good. Other people kind of get straight to the point in a shorter sentence style. Either way, we are excited to see what you wrote, and we are excited to give you some comments. So, could you turn those into my basket? (Observation, September 21, 2010)

Below is the paragraph written by the girl with the "complex sentences."

All-State Chorus is amazing. I tried out last year, made it last year, and I just auditioned this year. First, when I tried out last year I was insanely nervous because it was my first time ever! Then I was relieved when I found out that I had made it. Next, when I did All-State, it was hard, really hard. I had to memorize six or seven songs, but, it definitely paid off because in the end we sounded great! Finally, I started all over again, and I am back to the nervousness after trying out and having to wait to find out. In the end, I am really happy that I have the chance to do All-State Chorus because it is an amazing experience. (Student writing, September, 21, 2010)

After the lesson, I asked the teachers to tell me if there was anything that they would have done differently if they were to teach the lesson again. Mrs. Tensley, shared, “I believe that we could have checked for understanding to be sure that all understood the 3.8 paragraph,” and Mrs. Drake stated, “I would try to build in a comparison so that students could see the difference between narrative and expository for this particular 3.8 paragraph assignment.”

The teachers allowed me to have anonymous copies of the students’ 3.8 paragraphs, which they later checked for understanding of the 3.8 paragraph. According to Mrs. Tensley, the teachers sit together and review all the writings as a team. They discuss each piece together. In this case, no grade was assigned to the draft. The class did, however, complete a subsequent 3.8 paragraph for a grade, and the teachers again allowed me to have anonymous copies of those writings. On the table below, there is a breakdown of the different comments that were made on the individual writings with the alphabetical names that I assigned them in order to identify matching student writings.

Table 15

Teacher comments on student 3.8 paragraphs

Name	Gender	Observed Lesson Paragraph Comments	Follow-up Lesson Paragraph Comments	Follow-up Lesson Rubric Comments	Follow-up Lesson Points/Percent
Alan	Male	You followed the format. Well done!	- Inserted the word “and”	- Misspelled “choose” - Smooth closure w/ morning routines	13/93
Barbara	Female	- You followed the format. Congratulations! - Placed a reminder to indent the paragraph. - Circled three misspelled words	- Replaced “to” with “too.”	- Misspelled “too” - indicated that the writer’s restating of the topic in the conclusion was “basic”	14/100
Christa	Female	- Made a note for writer to indent. - Added the letter ‘n’ to a word where it was missing. - Followed format	- Made a note for writer to indent. - OK – I got it. Reword thought? 😊	N/A	14/100
Darla	Female	- I can feel the excitement. - Followed format! - Circled one misspelled word	- Noted that “especially” was misspelled	- Noted that “especially” was misspelled	14/100
Ed	Male	- Avoid being redundant...use thesaurus to find synonyms for cool. - Underlined the six times that he used cool in his paragraph.	- Showed writer that he needed to indent. - Gave some letters a triple underlining to show that they should be capitalized.	- Circled the word “capitals” to indicate that he was missing some capital letters. -Commented that the three ideas in the body of his paragraph were basic.	11/79

Fiona	Female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I love your enthusiasm for softball. Nice work 😊 - Circled misspelled word - Drew an arrow to show that next to last sentence should have been the last sentence and wrote, "Closing sentence on front 😊" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We discussed that doing hair can be a support detail for getting dressed 😊 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Your spelling was correct. -Your word choice is terrific! -Made a note that her topic sentence was "cute." - Made a note that her ending was "clever 😊" 	14/100
Gillian	Female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Followed format -Enjoyed reading 😊 	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Noted that "Wednesday," "waffles," and "off" were misspelled. 	14/100
Henry	Male	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Circled the word "usually" twice to indicate that it was misspelled. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I would love to know what you discuss on the bus. - Noted that "usually" was misspelled. 	14/100
Isabel	Female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Followed format! - Enjoyed reading 😊 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Made a note that indention was needed at beginning of paragraph. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Your last sentence brought the paragraph to a close. The topic needed to be restated. - Remember to indent. - A 😊 was placed in the spelling box as she had no misspelled words. 	12/86
Jamie	Male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Great details! We need to work on sentence structure to avoid run-on sentences. See semicolon techniques. - Teacher added 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Triple underlined a letter that needed to be capitalized. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yeah! (written in the topic sentence section of the rubric). - Very clever! 	13/93

		three semicolons throughout the paper.			
		- She also added the word “when” where it was forgotten.			
Ken	Male	- Followed format! - Noted that paragraph needed to be indented. - This is great!	- Added the letter ‘s’ at the end of the word “help” where needed.	- Enjoyed reading ☺	14/100
Lisa	Female	- Enjoyed! - A semi-colon helps combine 2 sentences ☺ - Added a semicolon where needed.	- Noted that two words were misspelled.	- I love the question technique. - Noted that “definitely” and “Wednesday” were misspelled.	14/100
Mike	Male	- Followed format!	- Noted that one word was misspelled.	- Noted that “alert” was misspelled.	13/93
Nolan	Male	- You need to add 1 additional sentence and support plus a conclusion.	- Indicated that the paragraph needed to be indented. - Noted that the writer used brushing teeth as a supporting detail twice. - Added ending punctuation where needed.	N/A	8/57
Opal	Female	- Cute narrative for future use. We’ll continue to work on 3.8 format ☺	- Opal, I enjoyed! We need to work on format. - Semicolon was added. - Triple underlined a	N/A	N/A

Polly	Female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Details are fun! - We need to work on sentence structure to avoid run-on sentences. See semicolon techniques. - Added three semicolons and then showed her how to break one other run-on into two sentences with a period and capital letter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> letter to show that it should be capitalized. - Be careful to avoid overuse of the words “so” and “then” - Indicated that the paragraph needed to be indented. - Inserted seven commas and one semicolon. - Deleted several words and provided alternatives. - Showed that up and stairs should be combined as one word. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Basic sentence - Arrow notation - Noted that breakfast was misspelled and that she should check her paper for additional circled misspellings. 	12/86
Quentin	Male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Count sentences to make sure it is a 3.8 paragraph. - Indicated that the paragraph needed to be indented. - Combined one sentence with the word “and” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indicated that the paragraph needed to be indented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Noted that the conclusion was “Basic” and that he “needed to close.” 	11/79
Rita	Female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cute! See semicolon below. You followed the format. Congratulations! - One semicolon was added to correct a run-on sentence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indicated with triple underlining that Wednesday should be capitalized. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Noted that the ending was abrupt. 	13/93
Sarah	Female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good details! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indicated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Correct use of 	13/93

		We need to work on sentence structure to combine some and avoid run-ons. See semicolon techniques. - One semicolon was added to correct a run-on sentence.	that the paragraph should be indented. - Noted that “usually” was misspelled. - Triple underlined a letter to show that it should be capitalized. - Added the word “and” where needed.	punctuation would have helped. - 4 ideas – getting dressed, eating breakfast, playing with dog, packing backpack. - 8 sentences. You have 10 sentences.	
Tara	Female	- Followed format 😊 - Indicated that paragraph should be indented. - Corrected the word “their” to “they’re” - Added the word “want” where needed. - Corrected spelling from “wrighting” to “writing”	- Indicated (by circling with sp) that twelve words were misspelled. - Indicated that the paragraph needed to be indented. - Added a comma and semicolon where needed.	- Correct use of punctuation would have helped. - Noted some of the misspelled words - Wrote, “Cute!” in the topic sentence area of the rubric.	12/86

A review of the comments on this table gives an overview of the type of feedback that the students received on their two writing attempts involving a 3.8 paragraph. The first one, resulting from the lesson that I observed, was simply a draft and was used to check for the students’ understanding of the 3.8 paragraph format. The most prevalent comment on the drafts was, “Followed format!” On each draft, the teachers circled all of the end punctuation marks as a way to track the number of sentences written, and they circled any misspelled words. After reviewing the comments on the drafts, I noted that they fell into five patterns: corrections, format reminders, compliments,

spelling/punctuation corrections or notes, and tips. The compliments (18 total) were the most liberally used comments on the student papers and included, “good details,” “congratulations,” and “details are fun.” The next most repeated pattern (16 total) found among the comments were those related to the format of the writings. The teachers wrote, “followed format,” “should be indented,” and “we need to work on sentence structure.” The teachers also made corrections (5 total) by adding missing letters and/or words and correcting misused homonyms. The same frequency (each a total of 6) was noted for both spelling and punctuation corrections and tips to the writer. The tips included comments like, “avoid redundancy,” and “see semicolon techniques to avoid run-ons.”

A week after the writing of those drafts, the students wrote another 3.8 paragraph. This time, it was not a topic of their choice. Instead, the teachers asked them to write about their morning routines. These paragraphs were graded by the teachers with a rubric, and each student (with the exception of one) received a numerical score. Eight students received a score of 14, five had a score of thirteen, three scored twelve points, two received eleven points, one student had a score of eight points, and one student who did not follow the 3.8 format (she wrote a narrative) received only comments on her paper rather than being assigned a grade for her efforts. The comments and markings on these writings fell into the same patterns noted on the drafts: corrections, format reminders, compliments, spelling/punctuation corrections or notes, and tips. On these writings, the most repeated comments/corrections (24 total) were related to spelling and punctuation with misspelled words being circled and/or corrected, punctuation being corrected, and letters that needed to be capitalized being triple underlined. The next most repeated comments (14 total) were compliments, which included, “cute,” “very clever,” “yeah,”

and the drawing of happy faces. Twelve comments were made relating to the format of the writing with eight of those comments being reminders to indent the paragraph. Those comments also included, “you need eight sentences and have ten,” and “you needed to close.” The teachers also provided eight tips such as “avoid overuse of the words ‘so’ and ‘then’.” Finally, twelve corrections were made with regards to misspelled words, missing words, missing capitalization, or missing semicolons. The patterns of comments from the drafts and final writings are discussed further in chapter five.

I was curious to find out if the teachers’ beliefs about writing that they had shared on the questionnaires were a match to their actual evaluation practices, so I referred back to the questionnaire responses of the two fifth grade co-teachers, Mrs. Drake and Mrs. Tenley. Mrs. Drake’s response to the question regarding her thoughts on the purpose of writing assessment were:

The purposes of assessing writing are varied. Sometimes it’s to evaluate the piece as a whole. Sometimes it’s to evaluate one trait of the piece. Sometimes it’s to see if revision recommendations were made. Sometimes it’s to see if editing skills are progressing. Sometimes it’s to see if grammar and mechanics rules are being followed. Sometimes it’s to check to see if the form of the writing is being followed. Sometimes it’s to check the flow of the writing. (Questionnaire response, February 17, 2010)

Mrs. Tenley’s response to the same question was, “Writing assessments should be an ongoing process throughout the year. To me they measure a student’s ability to demonstrate different writing skills at that time” (Questionnaire response, February, 28, 2010). Because the teachers work together on a daily basis, my expectation was that their responses on the questionnaire related to classroom practices would be similar. However, that was not always the case. For example, when asked what percentage of their time was spent assessing student writing, Mrs. Tenley said 74-50% while Mrs. Drake selected 49-

25%. Another area where their responses differed was on the question asking them what the most important aspect of writing is, and Mrs. Tenley wrote, “All of the above – we try to start with one area and then move into a new area of assessment. At the end, we are doing it all because it has been taught, re-taught or reviewed,” while Mrs. Drake selected “organization.”

Two other areas of responses showed differences between the responses of the two teachers. On the section of the questionnaire that listed eleven different types of writing evaluation and then asked the teachers to indicate how frequently they used those methods, Mrs. Drake indicated that she “frequently” uses checklists, teacher conferences, holistic scoring, and rubrics, that she “once in a while” uses peer conferences, portfolios, observations, and primary traits scoring, and that she “rarely, if ever” utilizes the FCAT scoring rubric or self assessment. A review of Mrs. Tenley’s responses for the same question reveal that she believes that she “almost always” uses checklists, observations, rubrics, and primary traits scoring, that she “frequently” uses teacher conferences, portfolios, the FCAT scoring rubric, and self assessment, and that she uses peer conferences and holistic scoring “once in a while.” The last area of disagreement between the responses of the teachers was in response to the question, “Please think about ALL the different methods of evaluation that you use when reviewing student writing. As a whole, how effective do you believe that the method(s) of evaluating writing that you utilize are?” Mrs. Tenley replied “extremely effective” and provided the following reasoning:

There are many components to assessing writing. I strongly believe it takes many approaches to have students progress and become confident writers. I believe this is why we struggle as teachers because in order to meet each child’s individual needs it takes time. Finding the balance and

making sure writing occurs daily in our classrooms is sometimes hard for teachers. That is why we write in all subject areas (Questionnaire response, February 28, 2010).

In response to the question asking her to rate the effectiveness of all of her methods of evaluation for student writing, Mrs. Drake gave the response, “Effective,” and she followed that response with, “We strive to encourage our students as writers to stretch and reach goals they have set for themselves and we have set for them. Using these methods has helped us meet their needs” (Questionnaire response, February 17, 2010).

In their interviews, the two fifth grade team teachers and the headmaster all agreed that writing was “part of everything we do” (Headmaster, personal communication, March 4, 2010) and that “it’s okay to have fun with writing” (Mrs. Drake, personal communication, September 23, 2010). It was also agreed that it is necessary for teachers to model writing for their students, that teachers need continuing education in order to build their own skills, and that a variety of different types of writing, teaching, and evaluation are necessary in order to be effective teachers and evaluators of writing. The following thoughts give a good representation of the beliefs of the teachers and headmaster at MCP.

When I was growing up, the focus on writing was entirely different. Formal writing instruction began more in middle school than in elementary. The focus of writing at an early age was more on the look of literacy in a paragraph or being able to respond to a question correctly. My teaching is very different. Our goal is to ensure that students master the national and state standards of writing. We try to take each child and develop a love for writing and an understanding and appreciation of how an author can use words in a variety of ways to engage the reader. (Mrs. Tenley, personal communication, September 27, 2010).

I will laugh at myself through writing and sharing and I want my students to be able to do the same. I want them to learn to use writing as a tool for reflection and to realize we are all human and it’s okay to have fun with writing. I want the students to look forward to writing time rather than see

it as a daunting task (Mrs. Drake, personal communication, September 23, 2010).

I think writing is like anything: if you have a talent for it, you're gonna love it; you're gonna want to do it. If writing is something that is a challenge for you, then it takes a lot more stretching for the teachers to do things: different types of writings, different topics. Lots of excitement, lots of reading to each other. Lots of variety like we do with everything that we do, would be key to doing that. It's just part of what's integrated into what we do. You start small; you build big (Headmaster, personal communication, March 4, 2010).

The experience of talking with and observing the participating teachers at MCP allowed me to see the live representation of the data shared on the questionnaire. The ability to see the teachers' beliefs regarding the evaluation of student writing come to life gave a new face to the data. Additionally, having the participants complete the questionnaire, conduct a lesson for observation, sit for an interview, and share their graded student writing samples allowed for triangulation to be achieved during analysis when the intersections between all four phases of data collection were recognized.

Categorical Analysis

In order to better synthesize the results previously discussed, the remainder of this chapter will examine the patterns and categories that were revealed during the analysis process. Those patterns and categories form threads that wind through all four phases of data collection and which work together to comprise a full picture of the beliefs about the evaluation of student writing as shared by the educator participants in this study.

Triangulation of the data is presented in the analysis of each category as pieces of data are brought together in agreement from each of the phases of data collection in order to comprise the overall picture of educators' beliefs about the evaluation of writing.

Through the course of analysis, five separate categories of responses were identified:

instruction and planning, student skills, growth and development, feedback, and limitations. The underlying patterns within each of those categories can be viewed on Table 16 and will be referenced throughout this chapter.

Table 16

Visual representation of the categories and patterns found across all responses

Instruction/Planning	Related Participant Comments
- students' performance in relation to the lesson objectives (Q)	- "direct future lessons" (Q)
- using assessment results to guide instructional decisions (Q)	- assessment results help determine what "craft/trait" to teach next (Q)
- these methods allow me to meet individual needs (Q)	- "I can assess daily if need be" (Q)
- these methods allow me to assess their writing daily (Q)	- "we discuss his progress daily" (Q)
- a variety of writing and evaluation methods needed (I)	- "each individual can be assessed at their particular level" (Q)
- teachers need continuing education to improve evaluation skills (I)	- "And then what we're gonna ask is that you actually take that topic and turn it into a 3.8 paragraph so we can see how you are as a writer. It's short enough for us to be able to read kind of where we can take you as fifth graders in this particular writing group." (O)
- beginning with a draft writing lets teachers know what to teach for final (S)	
<hr/>	
Student skills	
- assessment of students' writing skills (Q)	- "revision" (Q)
- this aspect greatly impacts the readability of the writing (Q)	- "grammar" (Q)
- this aspect is vital to the meaning of the paper (Q)	- "mechanics" (Q)
- other aspects come naturally with time and can be done later (Q)	- different writing "traits" (Q)
- this aspect is especially difficult to	- "it needs to flow" (Q)

- master (Q)
- this aspect is required to be taught by our standards or curriculum (Q)
- all aspects are equally important (Q)
- needs/skill (Q)
- whether or not there were aspects of the paper that affected its readability (Q)
- if there were specific skills that the writer needed to work on to improve (Q)
- gives a quick view of skills (Q)
- good practice for standardized test (Q)
- it is easier to stretch/evaluate talented writers (I)
- revision is a necessary skill to teach and assess (I)
- “students need to clearly state their thoughts” (Q)
- “the essence of the message” (Q)
- the thing that helps their writing to “make sense” (Q)
- “see semicolon techniques to avoid run-ons” (S)
- “they measure a student’s ability to demonstrate different writing skills at that time” (Q)
- “think it’s important for students to strive to revise their initial drafts instead of just wanting to be done the first time” (I)
- “I think compliments other than coaching – and you had a lot of complex sentences, I could tell, for how long they were and you needing to have a pause in breathing which was good. Other people kind of get straight to the point in a shorter sentence style.” (O)
- “Fix it on the next line. It works. It’s a draft.” (O)
- We circle words that we’re uncertain about and we put sp at the top. That sp lets the teacher know, “Ooh, you were unsure.” A dictionary when we edit and revise would be helpful for you. When we also look at your writing, we circle words and put sp just the same to coach you and let you know, “Oh, you needed to know that this word needs fixing when you make your final copy.” (O)

- spelling and grammar can be addressed on student writings (S)

Growth and development

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| - monitoring the progress and growth in student writing (Q) | - “strength and weakness” (Q) |
| - these methods promote growth in my student writers (Q) | - establishing if the students are “on, above, and below levels” with respect to their “grade/age-appropriate expectations (Q) |
| - these methods help my students (Q) | - “Give the children the most opportunity for growth” (Q) |
| - whether or not the writer was challenged (Q) | - “I can see growth in my students’ writing” (Q) |
| - methods encouraging reflection improve writing (I) | - “we see improvement in student writing over the school year” (Q) |
| - progressive writings within one format can show growth (S) | - “The most important part would be able to take something, read it. No matter what the context subject is - be able to reflect on it.” (I) |
| | - It’s really great when we evaluate you as writers to see the date on which your writing appears. We can go back and say, “Wow, look how much progress so-and-so has made since their initial 3.8 paragraph!” (O) |

Feedback

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| - using assessment results to guide feedback for the writers (Q) | - “help me to know my students’ strengths and weaknesses the best” (Q) |
| - these methods provide variety for my writers (Q) | - “Sometimes I just need to suggest and idea for improvement or consideration.” (Q) |
| - peer editing is useful evaluation method (I) | - “You edit it. Then other people edit it.” (I) |

- feedback on drafts and final writings is helpful (S)
- “Either way, we are excited to see what you wrote, and we are excited to give you some comments.” (O)
- “We need to be better at the conference.” (I)

Limitations

- these methods are not effective (Q)
 - time (Q)
 - type of assignment (Q)
 - mandated methods (Q)
 - “It is easier and faster” (Q)
 - it is “mandated” (Q)
 - “Only slight differences are noted” (Q)
 - “I think there is no perfect way to score writing.” (Q)
 - “Is there one right rubric that we could entertain and use?” (I)
 - “Anything you can send me that would be wonderful because that is really – it [evaluation of writing] is something we need to work on as a school.” (I)
-

Sources of data: Q = questionnaire, I = interview, S = student writing samples

Instruction and Planning

Within the first category, instruction and planning, I identified seven patterns of responses (see Table 16) that were related to the ways in which teachers utilize their methods of evaluating writing to help guide their instructional decisions. Data to support the formation of this category was found across all four phases of data collection. For example, the comments on Table 16 show that teachers shared the usefulness of their chosen methods of instruction in helping them to make important instructional decisions. They indicated that methods of evaluating writing which helped them to see on which

writer's crafts future lessons needed to focus were useful and that they liked the ability of being able to assess writing frequently for this purpose.

On the questionnaire, four questions supported the patterns identified in this category. The first one, "How often do you assess student writing?" showed that more teachers (30.2%) chose to assess their students' writing at least once a week. Based on the other data discussed here, it can be inferred that one of the reasons for a more frequent rate of assessment would be to help teachers gauge their students' needs and to allow them to plan their instruction accordingly. On another question, "Do you ever have assignments in which your students write more than one draft for you?" an overwhelming 82.9% of the teachers reported that they do have students write more than one draft on some assignments. It is quite likely that the choice to do so is related to the teachers' ability to plan their lessons based on the needs of the students as seen on the draft writings in order to increase that success on final writings. As represented by the array of responses when asked to mark how frequently they used all of the different evaluation methods on the list, the educator participants in this study rely on a wide variety of evaluation methods in the assessment of their students' writing. That reliance provides those teachers with more information to use in the planning of their future writing instruction. Similarly, a large majority (95.1%) of the respondents indicated that they use both formal and informal methods of assessing writing, which shows their commitment to using a variety of methods of assessment. That variety leads to a wealth of information that the teachers can use to guide their planning of writing lessons.

Those same views were reflected in the interviews, during the observation, and on the questionnaires of the educators at MCP. During the interviews with the teachers and

headmaster at MCP, it was shared that they believed in the importance of continuing education for all educators because learning new methods of teaching and evaluation would help them to better plan future lessons on writing and to help them become more effective at teaching and assessing all student writers. Those same teachers set-up two writing lessons to help their students learn the 3.8 paragraph format. They were able to use the draft paragraphs written in the first (observed) lesson to inform their instruction for the next lesson and to see where the students were at with regards to their skill level before moving forward with plans to have the students write a final paragraph in a subsequent lesson for a grade. The practice of first allowing a draft writing and then revising the follow-up instruction to be a better match for students' needs is an effective practice to utilize and will lead to a more effective evaluation process (Odell, 1999). Overall, the views of many of the educator participants in this study indicated a strong preference for utilizing the results of their evaluations of writing as a way to guide their future instruction of and planning for writing lessons with their students.

Student Skills

The second category, student skills, represents all of the responses shared by the educator participants where they indicated that they value methods of evaluation that allow them to gauge the strengths and weaknesses of their students' skills. All four phases of data collection contributed to the development of fifteen patterns (see Table 16) within this category. The listing of skills referenced by the educator participants included revision, grammar, mechanics, and spelling as well as sentence structure, the flow of writing, and other writing traits. This category is the largest of all five identified categories because there are so many different skills available for student writers to

master. On the questionnaire, when asked, “Do you spend more time assessing some individual students’ papers than others?” a large majority of respondents (92.9%) replied that they did spend more time on some papers, and on the follow-up question asking for the reasons why they spend more time on some papers over others, all 37 of the respondents indicated that the students’ skills, or lack thereof, were a determining factor in the amount of time they spent evaluating the writing.

An examination of the observation, interview, and student writing sample data from MCP also revealed several references to the importance of student skills. Revision was mentioned during both the interviews and the observation as being an important skill for writers, and many comments were written on the student writing samples with regards to the spelling, sentence structure, capitalization, etc. skills that the teachers wanted the students to notice. These practices only reinforced the data from the questionnaires and confirmed that educators utilize their varying methods of evaluation of writing as a way to check for and to improve student writing skills.

Growth and Development

Many educator participants shared a belief that effective methods of evaluating student writing were those that showed them whether or not the students’ writing displayed signs of growth and development. Within this category, I identified six patterns of responses (see Table 16) that represented the beliefs of the educator participants with regards to their views of the connections between writing evaluation and the ability to gauge the growth and development of their student writers. These patterns stemmed from the data collected across all four stages of data collection during this study.

On the questionnaire, the educators indicated that they looked for changes in strengths and weaknesses, signs of progress, and the students' current writing levels with regards to their grade-level standards of writing. On the question that asked the participants to indicate how frequently they used all of the given methods of evaluation, teacher conferences, peer conferences, and portfolios were the ones that I would designate as having the most potential to show the growth and progress of student writers. All three of those methods were used "frequently" by the respondents with the portfolios having a tied response between "frequently" and "once in a while." In the follow-up questions asking the participants to select the three methods of evaluation that they used most frequently, teacher conferences and portfolios were chosen as the second and third most used methods, and they were both rated as being "effective" by the respondents. Portfolios (Elbow, 1996; Morrow, 1997) and conferences (Murray, 2004) are designated as being effective in the research, and the selection of these two methods as being used frequently reflects the commitment of the educators to utilize methods of evaluation which allow them to monitor the growth and progress of their student writers.

Those areas of importance were echoed during the observation and interviews and within the student writing samples. For example, on the initial writing drafts, six students received comments from their teachers drawing their attention to the presence of run-on sentences in their paragraph. However, on the final writing assignment, only two of those students wrote run-on sentences in their paragraphs. While that is not hard evidence that the other four students will forever know when they are or are not writing a run-on sentence, it does show that the possibility for growth to be seen from one writing to the next does exist. The teachers were sure to verbally address the concept of growth with

their students during the observed lesson when they requested that the students date their papers so that they would have a reference to refer back to during future writing lessons for how much progress they had made from the time of their first writing in the 3.8 paragraph to the current one. The measure of growth and development of student writers from one writing to another was repeated in the responses of many educator participants throughout all four phases of data collection and appears to be part of their belief structure with regards to the ways in which they can utilize the results of writing evaluation.

Feedback

It is important to note that the evaluation of writing does more than just inform the teachers. The feedback provided by varying methods of evaluating writing also informs students about their progress, and that feedback was valued by many of the educator participants in this study who referred to the helpfulness of the evaluation to the writers who learn where improvement is needed as well as to the teachers who learn how to best help their students progress. Within this category, I identified four patterns of responses (see Table 16) that demonstrated the shared beliefs of the educator participants throughout all four phases of data collection. The respondents reported the results stemming from their methods of evaluation as being useful to them when looking to provide feedback to their student writers. They also liked the variety of feedback offered to the writers by different methods of evaluation. On the question asking the participants, “How often do you provide your students with written feedback on their writing assignments?” 85.3% of them indicated that they either provide feedback “almost always” (39%) or “frequently” (46.3%) on their students’ writings. That frequency

supports the patterns found in this category, which demonstrate that teachers value the importance of feedback on their students' writing.

The same sentiments were echoed by the educators in the observation and interviews and were evident in the student writing samples. The headmaster referenced the feedback gained from peer conferences as being helpful, and her teachers also noted the importance of being skilled in the area of conferences in order to provide effective feedback to their student writers. Finally, the teachers worked together to provide written feedback on the students' writing drafts in order to give the students help that would guide them to improve their writing on their next assignment. Overall, the data showed that the majority of educator participants in this study engage in the process of sharing feedback with their students regarding their writing on a regular basis because they believe that feedback is important to young writers, which is consistent with the beliefs of Cooper and Odell (1999) as well as Norman and Spencer (2005).

Limitations of Writing Evaluation

In addition to the previous categories which showed the help provided by different evaluation methods to educators, the final category, limitations, was formed by comments from educators who believed that no methods of evaluating writing were perfect. Four patterns (see Table 16) were identified within this category. This category, unlike the previous ones, only represents data represented in the questionnaire as no limitations were noted by the educators during the observation or in the interviews. The participants believed that they were limited in their evaluation methods by a perceived lack of effectiveness, a time constraint, the type of assignment, and the fact that some choices are taken out of their hands by being mandated to use particular methods of

evaluation. One of those limitations, the mandated use of a particular method of evaluation, was reported on a closed-ended question from the questionnaire. 58.5% of the respondents indicated that they were mandated to use at least one of the methods of assessing writing that they use most frequently. The most commonly reported mandated assessment in use was the FCAT rubric. In a follow-up question asking the teachers, “How helpful do you feel that the feedback from the FCAT rubric is to your students?” 27.3% of the respondents indicated that the feedback was only “somewhat helpful” (13.6%) or “minimally helpful” (13.6%). Only 4.5% of the participants felt that the feedback from the FCAT rubric was “extremely helpful” to their students. Perhaps those teachers agree with Broad (2003) and feel that the criterion designated on the FCAT rubric are limiting the scope of the students’ writings. The lack of confidence in the helpfulness of the feedback from this rubric to their students highlights the importance of this category despite the fact that the pertinent data stems from only one phase of data collection.

Summary

A review of the categories formed by the educator participants in this study, instruction and growth, student skills, growth and development, feedback, and limitations, found that those categories covered many areas of evaluation. The fact that educators gave thought to the possible impacts of evaluation of writing before and after their teaching time is reassuring. Additionally, the trends in responses of the participants showed that many of the educators involved in this study hold beliefs that appeared to be consistent with the literature in the area of writing evaluation. That topic will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Discussion

This study focused on educators' evaluation decisions in order to provide an insight into their perceived beliefs about evaluating writing and their reported actions when practicing those beliefs during the evaluation of their students' writing. The information gleaned throughout this research sheds light on the actual evaluation practices of educators and also adds to the literature base involving writing and assessment. In order to achieve that goal, the population used in this study was economically and environmentally (e.g. private and public school educators were both included in the questionnaire participants) diverse and included as many participants as possible. The study examined the educators' beliefs about the importance of writing, the various methods of evaluation used to assess student writing, and teachers' feelings of effectiveness, or ineffectiveness, as related to the evaluation of student writing through the Writing and Evaluation Questionnaire (Appendix B).

Two teachers at the school which utilized a contest in the selection of participants for the conference based on student writings, and who agreed to participate, were observed during a writing lesson with the resulting student writings being collected for analysis. Finally, a small sample of willing educator participants was asked to complete an interview in order to further share their beliefs about writing and evaluation for this study. The overarching purpose of this study was to describe educators' beliefs about the

evaluation of student writing. The inquiry was guided by the following research questions: (a) what are the differences in the ways in which educators approach evaluating student writing? (b) how do educators evaluate the effectiveness of their evaluation methods for judging the quality of students' writing samples? and (c) what factors impact the evaluation decisions of educators?

Current Evaluation Climate

In this study, the participants were asked to share the different practices used in their classrooms to assist in the evaluation of writing in order to help me understand more about which evaluation practices are currently being used. Huot (2002), Moss (1994; 1996), and Guba (1978) feel that teachers and students, the ones who are the most affected by writing evaluation practices, should be the ones who make the decisions regarding which methods to use and how to use them effectively in their own classrooms. By giving attention to evaluation and by changing the methods being used to evaluate our students (especially by being sure to base those methods on current research), we can preserve the things that are viewed as valuable (Huot, 2002; Moss, 1996). It is important for researchers and teachers to work on finding methods of assessment that are backed by research, that satisfy outside administrators, and that are beneficial in the classroom (Huot, 2002). It is also important for teachers to continually evaluate the effectiveness of the evaluation methods that they choose (Nixon & McClay, 2007; Odell, 1999).

More research is needed into the field of teacher beliefs about teaching and evaluating writing, and one of the goals of this study was to offer a glimpse into the teacher beliefs of a small sample of teachers. That research must include the connection that exists between their beliefs and the practices that they put into place in their

classrooms (Berry, 2006; Lee, 1998; Nespor, 1986; Norman & Spencer, 2005; Pajares, 2003; Pajares, 1992). Additionally, giving more attention to writing assessment during teachers' college years or during professional development workshops in order to work on specific skills that could help teachers during the process of evaluating writing could raise their beliefs about their own abilities to assess writing, so more research in this area would be suggested (Dempsey et al., 2009). Murray (2004) agrees that it is possible that educators can use newly learned skills for their own writing and apply them to their teaching and evaluating with their students. More research into that phenomenon will allow us to see the best way to approach the possibility of introducing new beliefs about the evaluation of writing into the mindsets of teachers.

In 1975, Jerabek and Dieterich observed that while more research was needed in the area of writing assessment, even the research that was completed was not being used in the classrooms. I believe that to be an appropriate assessment to make today. There is more research available to educators to assist them in deciding how to best evaluate their students' writing, but perhaps more attention should shift to completing studies that monitor how frequently and how effectively the findings from studies focused on writing assessment transfer into the practice of writing teachers. Anson (1989) advises caution in the acceptance and the promotion of new or newly utilized assessments of writing as he believes that there will always be research to be found about the difficulties of one method of assessment or another. Instead of becoming excited and fully embracing new methods without questions, it is important for teachers to become well-versed in the available literature in their quest to match writing assessments with their tasks.

While we may be used to hearing or reading media reports telling us that the United States is falling behind the rest of the world's students, other countries are actually struggling with some of the same issues related to the evaluation of writing that American teachers are facing (Berge, 2002; Deuchar, 2005; Lee, 1998). It is important that we do everything that we can to help our students become writers and not just writers but writers who learn as they write. They can learn about the world around them, their family and friends, and most of all, they can learn about themselves if they are taught how to be writers (Reeves, 1997). Teachers have the ability through their responses to students' writing to cultivate those writers, and understanding how teachers think, feel, and go about their responses to writing will help us to see what needs to be done differently in the future and what we are already doing well.

Contributions to the Field

This study attempted to fill in gaps in knowledge about teachers' beliefs about the evaluation of writing. A review of the research questions showed the contributions that I hoped to make to the field of the evaluation of writing: (a) *What are the differences in the ways in which educators approach evaluating student writing?* and (b) *What factors impact the evaluation decisions of educators?* While the literature reviewed previously presents the many options (see Bardine et al. 2000; Smith, 1997; Wilson, 2007) that are available to teachers looking for methods of evaluation, observing, talking to, and reading the thoughts of current, practicing educators gave an up-to-date snapshot of the methods actually utilized, and how educators go about selecting those methods, in the evaluation of student writing in the real world. (c) *How do educators evaluate the effectiveness of their evaluation methods for judging the quality of students'*

writing samples? The answer to this question relates to teacher beliefs and provides an opportunity to see if the participating educators believe that they are effective in their chosen methods of evaluation. Such information is much needed as there is a lack of information about teachers' beliefs (see Dempsey et al. 2009; Lee, 1998; Pajares, 2003) as they pertain to writing and, even more specifically, to the evaluation of writing.

Teacher Beliefs

Teacher beliefs about writing formed the crux of this study. Whether sharing their beliefs explicitly by answering a question asking how they felt about assessing writing or implicitly when sharing their most frequently utilized methods of evaluating writing, the beliefs of the educator participants colored every response given. While there was always a danger that the beliefs shared on the questionnaire were not an accurate depiction of their true beliefs or of their classroom practices (Lee, 1998), the hope was that the participants would accurately report their beliefs. Lending some credibility to that hope was the fact that the teachers who were observed during a lesson of teaching writing reported beliefs that were a match to their teaching practices.

Because the beliefs of teachers are resistant to change (Nespor, 1987) and because they control the instructional decisions of educators (Kagan, 1992; Nespor, 1987), it was important to give educators the opportunity to share their beliefs through the questionnaire and interview portions of this study. A review of their shared beliefs and the implications of those views follow along with an examination of some of the tensions found between the responses and practices of the observed team of teachers and the research presented here.

Approaches to the Evaluation of Student Writing

A look at the data which addresses the first research question, “What are the differences in the ways in which educators approach evaluating student writing?” reveals that the educators reported a wide variety of methods in use for the evaluation of student writing. As a parent with children in school and as a future teacher educator, I am relieved to know that this sample of teachers recognizes the importance of including a variety of methods of evaluation in their classroom. However, I was disappointed to see that none of the teachers made any reference to the importance of having authentic assessments as part of their evaluation methods (Cooper & Odell, 1999). While it is possible that some educators do utilize such methods and just neglected to mention them in their responses, it is also possible that they are not aware of the importance or usefulness of authentic writing tasks and assessments. Additionally, with the multiple references to the use of standardized assessments for their students’ writing, it seems plausible that at least some educators who use those assessments may feel that reconciling that use with an authentic writing task would be impossible. Because nearly half of the educators reported gaining their assessment practices from professional development courses or from college courses, those would be ideal opportunities to present more information regarding the importance of authentic assessments and authentic writing tasks to educators with the hope that they would transfer that knowledge into their practices. More research will be needed to further explore the types of writing assignments that precede the chosen evaluation methods in order to determine whether or not authentic writing tasks and assessments are being utilized in the classroom.

Evaluation as an instructional guide.

As noted previously, the educator respondents in this study repeatedly referenced the importance of using the results of their evaluations as a guide for their future instruction. Several participants referred to the value of evaluation methods that helped them to “direct future lessons,” to see which “craft/trait” needed to be taught next, and allowed them to “meet individual needs” in their lesson planning. The key is that they need to engage in careful planning and reflection in order to ensure that those methods are the best fit for the needs of the students (Spandel, 2006). If the chosen methods of evaluation are not a good match for the students, then the resulting plans would also be less than effective. It is also important to consider the reasons behind the educators’ desire to use the assessments to guide their instruction, and a closer look at what information is being used to inform instruction is necessary as well. For example, if the educators are focusing only on the grammar and mechanics of their students’ writing because that is an obvious area where growth can be viewed through the decline of marked errors, then more education about the best use of evaluation as a guide for future instruction is needed. In order to determine whether or not their chosen methods of evaluation are effective for use with their students, educators could work to answer the questions put forth for that purpose by Odell and Cooper (1980, p. 35): 1) What assumptions are implicit or explicit in our evaluation procedures? 2) Are those assumptions consistent with current discourse theory? and 3) Will the result of using these procedures help us with the problem of improving students’ writing?

Mandated evaluation methods.

Despite their best efforts, complication arises when teachers are mandated to use a specific method that may not align with their beliefs about evaluating writing. They may recognize that using an assessment method with a narrow focus (like the FCAT rubric) can prevent overall writing growth but feel powerless to change the situation (Anson, 2008). As reported on the questionnaire by one participant, the teachers feel that “this is what the state is looking at – in order to get a score of 4.” Other respondents shared that they utilized certain methods of evaluation because they were “mandated” and “forced to.” Having a supportive administrator who is knowledgeable about writing can help teachers to implement more methods in their classrooms (albeit sometimes in addition to mandated ones) (McGhee & Lew, 2007). While it was not unexpected to find that many teachers are being mandated to use the FCAT rubric in the evaluation of their students’ writing, or that its use was more prevalent amongst the teachers of the children in second through sixth grades, it was surprising to me that the overall findings show its use to be among the top three methods of evaluation in use by the teachers in this sample. This status concerns me and would lead me to do further research in order to determine the actual reasons (beyond a mandate) for their justification of the use of this rubric on a frequent basis. If the educators are simply accepting the use of the FCAT rubric when mandated or if they are implementing it because they feel that it is what everyone else is using, then their reality needs to be better informed. They need to be made aware that it is possible to implement other evaluation methods that will help their students’ writing grow and develop, which would then mean that their students would succeed on the FCAT without having become slaves to the rubric. If educators were more aware of

research-based evaluations, then they might feel more positive and courageous about their selections of assessments. As evidenced by the responses during this study, there are many different ways in which the participants approach the evaluation of student writing. The next step would be to delve deeper into their reasons for selecting the methods that they use.

Effectiveness of Evaluation Methods

The second research question was, “How do educators evaluate the effectiveness of their evaluation methods for judging the quality of students’ writing samples?” It appeared that most of the educator participants based the effectiveness of their methods of writing evaluation on the perceived growth viewed in the writing of their students. One respondent shared, “We see improvement in student writing over the school year.” Other teachers echoed those sentiments when justifying their classification of their evaluation methods as being effective. However, the overall impression left by the responses related to this question was that many teachers seem to be less than clear in how to improve the effectiveness of their chosen methods. The lack of clarity in the area of improvement could stem from their lack of confidence as teachers of writing (Graves, 2002; Napoli, 2001). My assumption was that the majority of teachers would feel that their methods of evaluation were extremely effective. While I know that the mandating of some methods could slightly lower that expectation, it seems logical that educators would only select and implement evaluation practices that they feel are extremely effective. Perhaps another source for the lack of feelings of effectiveness could be the lack of attention being paid to the validity and reliability of the methods that are currently in place.

My assumption was that the educators involved in this study would represent a group of high-efficacy teachers who felt positively enough about teaching writing that they saw the value in taking their students to a conference about writing. However, the lack of confidence in the effectiveness of their evaluation methods shows a tension between their feelings of efficacy, with regards to teaching, and their use of varying evaluation methods. Gathering more information on the efficacy of educators in future studies would help to shed light on this area and to help increase understanding of the ways in which it might be possible to encourage the use of research-based, effective methods of evaluation.

Validity and reliability of writing evaluation methods.

In the beginning review of the literature, it was obvious that validity and reliability are two of the most important constructs to take into consideration when selecting an evaluation method (Camp, 1996; Cooper & Odell, 1977; Hughes & Nelson, 1991; Williamson, 1993). That belief was not, however, reflected in the responses of the educator participants of this study. The absence of any references to reliability or validity leads me to believe that perhaps the teachers are daunted by the idea of needing to gather a myriad of valid and reliable assessments for their students, so they avoid that situation altogether by relying on methods shared with them by others (Breland et al., 1987). In the study, the majority of teachers (48.8%) reported that they learned about their methods of evaluation through professional development workshops and continuing education courses provided by their districts. If those educators are feeling overwhelmed by the responsibility of selecting their own effective measures of evaluation or if they are less than confident in their abilities as writers (which could lead to less confidence in their

abilities as evaluators of writing), then they may be more apt to accept any methods of evaluation that are perceived as being effective because they come from an administrative source (Gallavan et al., 2007). Additionally, if teachers suffer from the feeling that the results of their evaluations could reflect negatively upon their teaching (Huot, 2002), then it is possible that they would be more likely to feel safe in implementing those provided and/or mandated methods of evaluation rather than choosing their own methods for their students. Again, the importance of the educators having a higher sense of efficacy and the confidence to select their own evaluation methods becomes obvious.

There are, however, many ways that teachers can further boost their feelings of effectiveness in the evaluation of student writing. Because many of the teachers reported the use of rubrics as an evaluation tool, it would be ideal for schools to offer training in the effective use of rubrics. Having more knowledge of the best way to use the rubrics would increase teacher confidence, and therefore, increase their feelings of effectiveness (De La Paz, 2009). My hope would be that as their confidence increases, their desire to learn more about the effectiveness of their particular methods of evaluation might increase as well so that they will feel comfortable and confident in diverging from the path of evaluation established by their peers, administrators, and districts (Nixon & McClay, 2007).

Importance of feedback.

A positive finding was that all of the respondents reported engaging in methods of evaluation that require feedback to be given to their students. One participant said that the most effective methods of evaluating writing “provide teachers, parents, and most importantly – students with feedback about their writing.” Responding to student writing

is, possibly, the most important part of writing evaluation, so it is encouraging that all participants in this study are engaging in that practice (Huot, 2002). Especially encouraging is the fact that 85.3% of the participants report giving written feedback on their students' writing either always or frequently. One way to encourage the teachers to continue to use and to increase their feedback on writing is to teach them to engage their students in conversations about that feedback so that they can see the effect that their time and comments have on the students (Bagley, 2008). The important aspect of feedback that educators must be aware of is that in order to be helpful, feedback must be specific to the writing of each student (Bardine et al., 2000; Beach & Friedrich, 2006; Cooper & Odell, 1999; Matsumura et al., 2002).

While one educator stated, "There are things that need to be corrected and commented on," not all educators know how to effectively utilize feedback with their student writers. Unfortunately, on the writing samples collected during this study, much of the feedback consisted of general compliments or comments that were not designed to help the student writers to improve their writing. Similarly, on the open-ended questions of the questionnaire, many of the educators reported being concerned with factors influencing the readability of their students' papers. Those factors were listed as spelling, handwriting, grammar, and mechanics, which are all easily marked by the teacher for correction. The question, then, is whether the educators truly believe that those factors negatively impact the written message of their student writers or if they focus on those areas because they provide an avenue by which the educators can provide the students with tangible feedback that requires little higher level thought on their part. Because feedback is such an important aspect of writing evaluation, and because it is widely in

use, more research in the area of educating teachers regarding the best ways to improve their response practices would be extremely beneficial to both the teachers and students.

Selection of evaluation methods.

All respondents on the survey reported the use of more than one evaluation method. One participant reasoned that she made the choice in order to gain the “combined effectiveness” of a number of different methods of assessing writing being used together. Again, this is an encouraging practice to see among the participants as using a variety of assessment measures is always preferable to using just one (Breland et al., 1987). The combination of methods can increase their effectiveness (Burgin & Hughes, 2009). All of the respondents reported that they based their selection of methods of evaluation on their previous experience with those methods and shared that they use those which they feel have proven to be effective (as evidenced in their students’ writing growth). The teachers are, however, limited by what they know, how they learned, and how they were taught to evaluate writing. In order to continue to grow as an evaluator, they need to continue to learn and to, perhaps, change some of their current beliefs about the evaluation of writing (Florio-Ruane & Lensmire, 1989; Gallavan & Bowles, 2007). Obviously, the participants in this study who indicated that they obtain their methods of evaluation from professional development courses or from college courses are willing to change some of their practices when given new ideas. While some others may be uncomfortable and frustrated when first asked to implement new methods of evaluation (Florio-Ruane & Lensmire, 1989), it makes me hopeful to see research (Dempsey et al., 2009) which shows that good continuing education courses can be the catalyst for a shift towards increased use of more effective methods of evaluation. Additionally, as those,

even the skeptical, give new methods a try and see that they are effective in their classrooms, they will be more likely to continue the use of those practices (Guskey, 1986). Any increase in use of effective practices, and in the teachers' ability to identify them as being effective, is good news for the students.

Factors Which Influence the Evaluation Decisions of Educators

Standardized testing and writing evaluation.

The final research question addressed in this study was, "What factors impact the evaluation decisions of educators?" There were many factors identified as impacting the decisions of the educator participants. The one that seems to be the most obvious is the mandated use of standardized testing rubrics. This is an unfortunate situation as Scherff and Piazza (2005) found that most writing instruction that occurs in the test-influenced classrooms was "often at odds with research-based practice" (p. 271). It is concerning when so many respondents on the questionnaire reported being mandated to use the FCAT rubric as an assessment tool. It is even more concerning when the participants qualified its use by explaining that they want to "prepare students" and that the FCAT rubric "gives a snapshot of what the child would achieve on the state test." Such statements make it seem as though the educators are simply accepting that the standardized assessment is effective whether or not they have data to support that idea. While it would be understandable if they chose to use the rubric after seeing its benefits with their students, that is seemingly not the case based on the lack of "extremely effective" and "effective" responses given when asked about the effectiveness of the FCAT rubric.

Hillocks (2002) contended that students would be better served if the teachers received high-quality professional development with the money that is used for standardized testing. The pressure that teachers feel to alter their curriculum in a way that they feel is expected of them in order to increase the performance of their students on standardized assessments is leading to the “deprofessionalism” of teachers, which, in turn, leads to a reduction of confidence for those teachers (Hollingworth, 2007, p. 341). Other researchers posit that the standardized tests can lead to the implementation of high quality professional development thereby having a positive impact on the assessment procedures used by teachers in those programs, but that impact was not seen in this study (Callahan & Spalding, 2006). The key is to recognize that the scope of the results stemming from standardized tests that require writing is extremely limited. That limited feedback to teachers seems to be at odds with the responses of the educators who shared that they prefer the use of evaluations that help them see growth and development in their writing of their students over time. It seems possible that the educators who report the frequent use of the FCAT rubric are simply using it because it is mandated and not because they view it as an effective tool in the evaluation of writing.

Generally, it is hoped that students can take their learning from school to expand and apply it to their current and later lives beyond the classroom, but Anson (2008) suggests that the “results” from standardized tests are not real results at all (p. 114). Instead, he recommends that educators recognize the narrow applications of the writing required for standardized tests and that they work hard to ensure that their students experience writing across a range of genres and for a variety of purposes. That recommendation is supported by others and requires that the method of assessment be

chosen based on which evaluative practice is the best fit for the current assignment (Tompkins, 2008). With some teachers feeling that their jobs are in jeopardy based on their students' standardized test scores and with them being willing to employ whichever teaching techniques they are told to use by outside professionals even when those techniques fly in the face of what those teachers know to be effective, theory-based instructional practices, it is easy to see the negative force that the standardized assessment of writing can have in classrooms, on teachers, and on students (Hollingworth, 2007).

Additional factors influencing evaluation decisions.

There were other factors, aside from mandated standardized testing rubrics, that impacted the evaluative decisions of the respondents in this study. For example, several participants mentioned "ease" as one of the reasons for selecting the methods of evaluation that they did. It's important for teachers to resist the easy methods and to look for those best suited to their students' needs (Wiley, 2000). Using the easy methods is also another way to avoid having to worry about whether or not newly selected methods of evaluation are effective. However, as previously stated, it is important for educators to continue to learn and grow as evaluators, which cannot happen if they are unwilling to reexamine their current evaluation practices.

The teachers' feelings about writing assessment were one factor that contributed to their selection of different methods for evaluating writing. Some teachers reported feeling less than positive about writing assessment, and it seems quite likely that those were the teachers who chose "quick" and "easy" methods of evaluation or who simply relied on the mandated methods that were given to them to use. Adding quality professional development courses to change their current feelings or to add to their

knowledge base (Nixon & McClay, 2007) or addressing those feelings while they are still preservice teachers (Dempsey et al., 2009) can lead to a wider repertoire of methods to choose from. There will always be a variety of factors that can affect the evaluation decisions of teachers on any given day. It is our responsibility as teacher educators to make sure that the teachers have enough knowledge of how students best learn to write and how to effectively match their evaluation to that learning regardless of any outside factors that may try to influence their decisions.

Beliefs into Practice

Being able to complete a case study at Maple Court Prep (MCP) allowed me to see some of the beliefs shared on the Writing and Evaluation Questionnaire in practice and helped me gain a deeper understanding of the beliefs of three educators with regard to the evaluation of student writing. The ability to hear about, see, read about, and track the educators' beliefs about the evaluation of writing from paper into practice enabled me to be confident in my discussion of my observations.

All three of the educators interviewed supported the use of continuing education as a way to help teachers stay current regarding the most effective ways to evaluate writing. Teachers who are open to continuing education are more likely to learn and implement new methods into their practices (Murray, 2001; Nolen, McCutchen, & Berninger, 1990). I was pleased to hear all three educators reference a desire to learn about new methods or even new ways to implement already familiar methods. They were willing to change their practices if they were shown something that they felt would be more effective with their students. That willingness is the first step towards increased effectiveness in their evaluation practices.

I was also pleased to note that the teachers' beliefs and practices were largely a match. The following list shows the beliefs that were shared on either their questionnaires or in the interviews, which were then observed during teaching or through their evaluation of the students' writing:

- Spelling was not counted against the student writers on the drafts or for a grade.
- They modeled writing during their lesson.
- They encouraged the selection of a desired/interesting topic during the first writing (Martin, 2003).
- The draft was not graded.
- They used a rubric in the grading of the papers.

The ability to see their beliefs transfer into practice assured me that their responses on the questionnaire and during the interviews were honestly reported. However, I did not agree with all of their practices. For example, a review of the comments given by the teachers to the students on both their drafts and their final writing leads me to believe that stronger and more specific/helpful comments would help the students to improve their writing. It is beneficial, even for experienced teachers, to review their comments in order to see what they are really saying and how helpful they are (Crone-Blevins, 2002; Smith, 1997; Sprinkle, 2004). There were too many compliments given without any advice, and even when advice was given, on semi-colon use, no explanation was provided. There were many comments made on every paper, but their students would benefit more from fewer comments that were more constructive in nature. Because the comments were so brief in nature, it is likely that the students, who may not

be aware of the teachers' values, do not fully understand the comments or the teachers' intentions. If they hope to truly help their students to progress in their writing skills, more detailed and more specific comments will be needed on future student writings.

One other area that was notable was that one student lost a point on the assignment because the paragraph had two extra sentences. The teachers commented that there were ten sentences included rather than the required eight and deducted a point for the failure to follow the format. I thought that the students should be allowed to do more than was required. There is research that shows that keeping students' writing to a standard during the learning process actually helps their writing to improve more in the long run (Matsumura et al., 2002). There is, however, also research that shows that such a strict adherence to the rubric is emphasizing the rules of writing rather than praising and helping students in their quest to expand their writing skills (Wiggins, 1994). While I would have worked with the student to see if she effectively used her two extra sentences, the educator participants chose to abide strictly by the rubric. Because I only observed one lesson, it is difficult to say whether this adherence to the format is only maintained until the students show proficiency in the given format or if they always strictly adhere to the rules. A look at the winning writings from the conference participants leads me to believe that the students are allowed to inject their own creativity and form into the previously taught formats once they have become proficient in that genre of writing, but more observations would be necessary to confirm my thoughts.

Overall, this observation was a good example of what instruction looks like when the teachers' beliefs match their instruction. It does, however, raise a question of how much the co-teachers negotiate with one another in their planning as their separate responses on

the questionnaire were not always an exact match. This would be an area of further exploration for future studies. It is also important to note that because these teachers are in a private school setting, they are not bound to the same standardized testing rules as are the teachers in the public schools. They have more freedom than most public school teachers and are fortunate to have a headmaster who values research-based practices.

Implications for Future Research

During this study, I was repeatedly struck by ideas for future research stemming from the encounters that I had with teachers or from reading their questionnaire responses. In order to gain a more complete understanding of how teachers' beliefs transfer to their practice of evaluating student writing, it would be beneficial to observe a teacher during planning, teaching, and evaluation times to see how she negotiates her beliefs with the needs of her students and how that transfers into instructional time and then results in a writing piece to be evaluated. Completing such a study over a longer period of time would also help stimulate new ideas for questions that could be added to the Writing and Evaluation Questionnaire before sharing it with a wider audience of educators in an effort to reach a sample size that would allow for generalizability. If such a study was completed at a school like MCP where most of the teachers teach in teams, then the opportunity would be present to also look at the influence that a teaching partner has on the beliefs of an educators.

Additionally, it was interesting to me that there were many grammatical and punctuation errors in the responses of the teacher participants. While their responses were certainly not being graded, my expectation was that a teacher who was writing about the evaluation of student writing would take care to do so in a "correct" way. Either the

teachers were not concerned with how their writing came across, or they need additional assistance with some areas of their own writing. If that is the case, it is quite possible that some of their feelings regarding the evaluation of writing and that some of their beliefs about their effectiveness as an evaluator of writing are influenced by a personal feeling of inadequacy as a writer (Napoli, 2001) or as a teacher of writing (Graves, 2002). That is a dangerous place to be as such feelings may lead to less attention being given to writing and its evaluation (Pardo, 2006). Future research in the area of teachers' personal writing beliefs would help to increase understanding of how to best help teachers be comfortable with both the teaching and the evaluation of writing.

Finally, school or district-based training has a great influence on the methods used by teachers in the evaluation of student writing, and that influence was evidenced by the 48.8% of the respondents to the questionnaire who indicated such trainings and workshops as being their primary source for finding methods to use in the evaluation of student writing. Knight, Wiseman, and Cooner (2000) found that many professional development programs have not been evaluated for effectiveness. Because of the wide-reaching influence, research into the techniques taught and the types of programs available would be worthwhile.

Through a survey, interviews, and observations, I examined the varying beliefs held by educators with regards to the evaluation of student writing. All of the data from four different phases of data collection combined to present a snapshot of a small sample of educators and their beliefs about evaluating student writing. The evaluation of writing is a complex task. Yet it is an extremely important and high-stakes one (Hillocks, 2003). Teachers are being asked to make instructional and evaluative decisions that are

responsive to the current assessment-driven climate (Conca, Schechter, & Castle, 2004). Conversely, it is also necessary for students to be able to write in the "real world" for authentic audiences and authentic purposes. With these competing goals in mind, it is important that educators understand the range of evaluation methods that are effective and for them to be able to select the method of evaluation that best fits the writing task at hand. Having a large repertoire of evaluation methods at their disposal means that teachers will be able to evaluate all types of writing done by the students and will, therefore, be better-equipped to show their students how to make improvements in all of the different genres of writing that they do while also learning where their instruction can be altered in order to reach all of their students at their point of need.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Writing and Evaluation Questionnaire

Please complete the following questionnaire. Results will be used for research purposes and will be kept confidential. Please respond truthfully to each question, as there are not right or wrong answers on this survey.

1. How often do you evaluate student writing?

- Several times a day
- Once a day
- Once a week
- Once every couple weeks
- Once a month or less
- Other (Please specify): _____

2. What percentage of the time that you spend assessing ALL of your students' work would you say is spent evaluating writing assignments?

- 100%-75%
- 74%-50%
- 49%-25%
- 24%-0%

3. Do you spend more time assessing some individual students' papers than others?

- Yes
- No

4. What accounts for differences in the amount of time spent on various papers? How would you characterize those papers you spend more time responding to as contrasted with those that take less time?

Appendix A: (Continued)

5. How do you feel about assessing student writing?

- Positive
- Somewhat positive
- Somewhat negative
- Negative

6. What is the most important aspect of writing that you are looking for when you grade a student writing?

- Correctness in Grammar and Punctuation
- Ideas/Concepts
- Voice
- Organization
- Fluency
- Word Choice
- Length of Writing
- Other (Please Specify): _____

7. Why do you feel that aspect is the most important part of the writing to consider when you are grading?

8. What do you see as the purpose(s) of writing assessment?

Appendix A: (Continued)

9. Where did you learn the different assessment methods that you use to evaluate student writing?

- College or university
- Professional Development Courses
- Colleagues
- Other

10. Do you ever have assignments where your students write more than one draft for you? If not, please go to #12.

- Yes
- No

11. How do the students receive grades for those papers?

- Every draft has a separate grade.
- The drafts are not graded.
- The final copy and the drafts are put together for one grade.
- Other (Please specify): _____

12. Please mark how often you use each of the following methods of assessment while grading the writing of your students.

	1 Never	2 Rarely	3 Sometimes	4 Always
Checklists	1	2	3	4
Group Conferences	1	2	3	4
Holistic Scoring	1	2	3	4
Individual Student Conferences	1	2	3	4
Observation	1	2	3	4
Portfolios	1	2	3	4
Primary Traits Scoring	1	2	3	4
Rubrics	1	2	3	4
Self-Assessment	1	2	3	4
Other: _____	1	2	3	4

13. Which of those types of assessment you use most frequently when evaluating student writing?

Appendix A: (Continued)

14. Why do you choose to use that method of assessing student writing more often than any other method?

15. Do you use both formal (written feedback, rubrics, etc) and informal (observation, anecdotal notes, conferences, etc.) methods of assessing writing?

- Yes
- No

16. If so, what percentage (for a total of 100%) of your time spent evaluating writing is spent on:

- Informal Assessments
- Formal Assessments

17. Do you ever utilize the FCAT Writing Assessment rubric to score papers?

- Yes
- No

18. If so, how often do you use that?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Other

19. Why do you choose to use that rubric?

Appendix A: (Continued)

20. How helpful do you feel that the feedback from that rubric is to your students?

- Extremely helpful
- Helpful
- Somewhat helpful
- Not helpful

21. How often do you provide your students with written feedback on their writing assignments?

- Always
- Most of the time
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

22. How effective do you believe that your method(s) of evaluating writing are?

- Extremely effective
- Effective
- Somewhat effective
- Ineffective

23. Why do you feel that way?

24. What is your current position?

- Teacher
- Media Specialist
- Reading Specialist
- Administrator
- Other (please specify): _____

25. Do you currently teach writing to students? If you do currently teach writing to students, please go to #26. If you are not currently teaching, please skip to #27.

- Yes
- No

Appendix A: (Continued)

26. What grade level do you currently teach?

K 1 2 3 4 5

27. Have you ever taught writing to students? If so, please go to #28. If you have never taught writing to students, please skip to #29.

Yes

No

28. How many years have you taught writing to students? Please include all years spent teaching writing to students in this response even if you are not currently teaching.

1-5 years 6-10 years 11-15 years 16-20 years over 20
years

29. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

Bachelor's Degree

Master's Degree

Doctoral Degree

Other (please specify): _____

30. Sex: Female Male

25. Age:

21-26 27-32 33-38 39-44 45-50 Over 50

Please feel free to share any other thoughts or comments that you have regarding the evaluation of student writing here. You may use the back of this page if you need more space for your response:

Appendix B

Final Version of Survey Monkey: Writing and Evaluation Questionnaire

1. Writing and Evaluation Questionnaire

The results of this questionnaire will be used for research purposes and will be kept confidential. Please respond truthfully to each question, as there are not right or wrong answers on this survey.

Thank you so much for agreeing to complete this survey. I am interested in learning more about your beliefs regarding teaching and assessing writing. I am aware that there are many different ways to approach the evaluation of writing. I also know that there are many factors that may influence your selection of the methods of evaluation that you utilize with students. Anything that you would like to share with me is welcome because your thoughts, feelings, and beliefs will help me gain a better understanding of the current status of writing evaluation in schools.

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1. What do you see as the purpose(s) of writing assessment?

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2. How often do you assess student writing?

- Several times a day
- Once a day
- Once a week
- Once every couple of weeks
- Once a month or less
- Other (please specify)

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Appendix B: (Continued)

3. What percentage of the time that you spend assessing all of your students' work would you say is spent assessing writing assignments?

- 100%-75%
- 74%-50%
- 49%-25%
- 24%-0%

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4. Do you spend more time assessing some individual students' papers than others?

- Yes
- No

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5. What accounts for differences in the amount of time spent on various papers?

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6. How would you characterize those papers you spend more time responding to as contrasted with those that take less time?

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3. Writing and Evaluation Questionnaire (Cont'd)

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7. How do you feel about assessing student writing?

Appendix B: (Continued)

- Positive
- Somewhat positive
- Somewhat negative
- Negative

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8. What is the most important aspect of writing that you are looking for when you assess a student writing?

- Correctness in Grammar and Punctuation
- Ideas/Concepts
- Voice
- Organization
- Fluency
- Word Choice
- Length of Writing
- Other (please specify)

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9. Why do you feel that this aspect is the most important part of the writing to consider when you are assessing writing?

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10. Where did you learn the different assessment methods that you use to assess student writing?

- College or university courses
- School or district based training
- Reading coaches or literacy specialists

Appendix B: (Continued)

Peer teachers

Other (please specify)

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11. Do you ever have assignments in which your students write more than one draft for you?

Yes

No

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4. Writing and Evaluation Questionnaire (Cont'd)

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12. How do the students receive grades for those papers?

Every draft has a separate grade.

The drafts are not graded.

The final copy and drafts are put together for one grade.

Other (please specify)

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5. Writing and Evaluation Questionnaire (Cont'd)

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13. Please mark how often you use each of the following methods of assessment while assessing the writing of your students.

1 - Rarely, if ever

2 - Once in a while

3 - Frequently

4 - Almost always

Checklists - [Method by which the teacher notes

Please mark how often you use each of

2 - Once in a while

3 - Frequently

4 - Almost always

<p>whether or not the student has accomplished what he or she has been asked to do but without judging the quality of the work (i.e., has five sentences, made a cover, wrote a narrative piece, etc.).]</p>	<p>the following methods of assessment while assessing the writing of your students. Checklists - [Method by which the teacher notes whether or not the student has accomplished what he or she has been asked to do but without judging the quality of the work (i.e., has five sentences, made a cover, wrote a narrative piece, etc.).] 1 - Rarely, if ever</p>
<p>Teacher Conferences - [The teacher and student meet to discuss the student's writing. This conversation may include a discussion about the strengths and weaknesses, suggestions for revisions, attention to conventions, etc.]</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Teacher Conferences - [The teacher and student meet to discuss the student's writing. This conversation may include a discussion about the strengths and weaknesses, suggestions for revisions, attention to conventions, etc.] 1 - Rarely, if ever</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2 - Once in a while</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 3 - Frequently</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 4 - Almost always</p>

<p>Peer Conferences - [Students meet with one or more of their peers to share and discuss their writing. These meetings may include suggestions for revisions, sharing what they like or dislike about each other's writing, etc.]</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Peer Conferences - [Students meet with one or more of their peers to share and discuss their writing. These meetings may include suggestions for revisions, sharing what they like or dislike about each other's writing, etc.] 1 - Rarely, if ever</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2 - Once in a while</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3 - Frequently</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4 - Almost always</p>
<p>Holistic Scoring - [This method of evaluating writing requires the evaluator to look at all components of a writing sample in conjunction when giving a final grade rather than assessing individual characteristics separately.]</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Holistic Scoring - [This method of evaluating writing requires the evaluator to look at all components of a writing sample in conjunction when giving a final grade rather than assessing individual characteristics separately.] 1 - Rarely, if ever</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2 - Once in a while</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3 - Frequently</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4 - Almost always</p>
<p>Portfolios - [Teachers have students compile samples of their writing over the course of a</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Portfolios - [Teachers have students compile samples of their writing over the course of a certain</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2 - Once in a while</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3 - Frequently</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4 - Almost always</p>

<p>certain timeframe (a grading period, the whole year, etc.) in order to evaluate the writing.]</p>	<p>timeframe (a grading period, the whole year, etc.) in order to evaluate the writing.] 1 - Rarely, if ever</p>			
<p>Observations - [During the times when students write, the teacher watches to see what each student is doing and may make a mental or anecdotal note about what he or she observes.]</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Observations - [During the times when students write, the teacher watches to see what each student is doing and may make a mental or anecdotal note about what he or she observes.] 1 - Rarely, if ever</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2 - Once in a while</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3 - Frequently</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4 - Almost always</p>
<p>Rubrics - [When assessing student writing, the teacher looks at specified characteristics as outlined on a rubric and decides how well the student succeeded in each area before adding those scores together for a final score.]</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Rubrics - [When assessing student writing, the teacher looks at specified characteristics as outlined on a rubric and decides how well the student succeeded in each area before adding those scores together for a final score.] 1 - Rarely, if ever</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2 - Once in a while</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3 - Frequently</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4 - Almost always</p>
<p>FCAT Scoring Rubric - [The teacher uses</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> FCAT Scoring Rubric -</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2 - Once in a while</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3 - Frequently</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4 - Almost always</p>

<p>the FCAT rubric to evaluate student writing. The rubric requires teachers to look at focus, organization, support, and conventions.]</p>	<p>[The teacher uses the FCAT rubric to evaluate student writing. The rubric requires teachers to look at focus, organization, support, and conventions.] 1 - Rarely, if ever</p>			
<p>Primary Traits Scoring - [The teacher predetermines what characteristics of the writing are the most important as well as what will be assessed and how it will be assessed. This method is specific to each assignment.]</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Primary Traits Scoring - [The teacher predetermines what characteristics of the writing are the most important as well as what will be assessed and how it will be assessed. This method is specific to each assignment.] 1 - Rarely, if ever</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2 - Once in a while</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3 - Frequently</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4 - Almost always</p>
<p>Self Assessment - [Students are given the opportunity to evaluate their own writing. They may use criteria established by the teacher or may create their own criteria.]</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Self Assessment - [Students are given the opportunity to evaluate their own writing. They may use criteria established by the teacher or may create their own criteria.] 1 - Rarely, if ever</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2 - Once in a while</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3 - Frequently</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4 - Almost always</p>

<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify in the box below)	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify in the box below) 1 - Rarely, if ever	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 - Once in a while	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 - Frequently	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 - Almost always
------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------

Other (please specify)

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14. Select the method of assessing student writing listed in the previous question that you use most frequently.

- Checklists
- Teacher Conferences
- Peer Conferences
- Holistic Scoring
- Observations
- Portfolios
- Rubrics
- FCAT Scoring Rubric
- Primary Traits Scoring
- Self Assessment
- Other (please specify)

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15. Please rate the method of assessing student writing that you use most frequently (as designated in the previous question) on a scale of 1-4 with 1 being minimally effective and 4 being extremely effective.

- 1 - Minimally effective
- 2 - Somewhat effective
- 3 - Effective
- 4 - Extremely effective

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6. Writing and Evaluation Questionnaire (Cont'd)

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16. Please select the method of assessing student writing that you use second most frequently from the list below .

- Checklists
- Teacher Conferences
- Peer Conferences
- Holistic Scoring
- Observations
- Portfolios
- Rubrics
- FCAT Scoring Rubric
- Primary Traits Scoring
- Self Assessment
- Other (please specify)

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17. Please rate the method of assessing student writing that you use second most frequently (as designated in the previous question) on a scale of 1-4 with 1 being minimally effective and 4 being extremely effective.

- 1 - Minimally effective
- 2 - Somewhat effective
- 3 - Effective
- 4 - Extremely effective

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18. Please select the method of assessing student writing that you use third most frequently from the list below.

- Checklists

- Teacher Conferences
- Peer Conferences
- Holistic Scoring
- Observations
- Portfolios
- Rubrics
- FCAT Scoring Rubric
- Primary Traits Scoring
- Self Assessment
- Other (please specify)

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19. Please rate the method of assessing student writing that you use third most frequently (as designated in the previous question) on a scale of 1-4 with 1 being minimally effective and 4 being extremely effective.

- 1 - Minimally effective
- 2 - Somewhat effective
- 3 - Effective
- 4 - Extremely effective

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20. Why do you choose to use these three methods of assessing student writing more often than other methods?

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21. Are you mandated by your school to use any of the three methods of assessment that you use most frequently?

- Yes

No

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7. Writing and Evaluation Questionnaire (Cont'd)

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22. Which method(s) of evaluating writing are you mandated to use?

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8. Writing and Evaluation Questionnaire (Cont'd)

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23. Please think about ALL of the different methods of evaluation that you use when reviewing student writing. As a whole, how effective do you believe that the method(s) of evaluating writing that you utilize are?

- Minimally effective
- Somewhat effective
- Effective
- Extremely effective

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24. Why do you feel that way?

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25. Do you use both formal (written feedback, rubrics, grades, etc) and informal (observation, anecdotal notes, conferences, etc.) methods of assessing writing?

- Yes
- No

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9. Writing and Evaluation Questionnaire (Cont'd)

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26. What percentage (for a total of 100%) of your time spent evaluating writing is spent on:

Informal Assessments (e.g. observations, anecdotal notes, conferences, etc.)

Formal Assessments (e.g. written feedback, rubrics, grades, etc.)

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10. Writing and Evaluation Questionnaire (Cont'd)

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27. Do you ever utilize the FCAT Writing Assessment rubric to score papers?

- Yes
- No

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11. Writing and Evaluation Questionnaire (Cont'd)

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28. How often do you use the FCAT Writing Assessment?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Other (please specify)

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29. Why do you choose to use the FCAT rubric?

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30. How helpful do you feel that the feedback from the FCAT rubric is to
your students

- Extremely helpful
- Helpful
- Somewhat helpful
- Minimally helpful

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12. Writing and Evaluation Questionnaire (Cont'd)

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31. Do you use any standardized writing assessments (SAT, FCAT, etc.)?

- Yes
- No

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32. How often do you provide your students with written feedback on their
writing assignments?

- Almost always
- Frequently
- Once in a while
- Rarely, if ever

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33. What is your current position?

- Teacher
- Media Specialist
- Reading Specialist/Literacy Coach
- Administrator
- Other (please specify)

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34. Have you ever taught writing to students?

- Yes
- No

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13. Writing and Evaluation Questionnaire (Cont'd)

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35. How many years have you taught writing to students? Please include all years spent teaching writing to students in this response even if you are not currently teaching.

- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- over 20 years

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14. Writing and Evaluation Questionnaire (Cont'd)

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36. Do you currently teach writing to students?

Yes

No

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15. Writing and Evaluation Questionnaire (Cont'd)

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37. What grade level do you currently teach?

Kindergarten

1st

2nd

3rd

4th

5th

6th

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16. Writing and Evaluation Questionnaire (Cont'd)

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38. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

Bachelor's Degree

Master's Degree

Doctoral Degree

Other (please specify)

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39. With which of the following are you currently affiliated?

- Public School
- Private School
- Charter School
- Homeschool
- Other (please specify)

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40. In which county is your school?

- Hillsborough
- Pasco
- Pinellas

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41. What is the name of your school?

Please note: The names of schools, teachers, and districts will NOT be reported
in my research.

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42. What is your gender?


- Male
- Female


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43. In which range does your age fall?

- 21-26
- 27-32
- 33-38
- 39-44

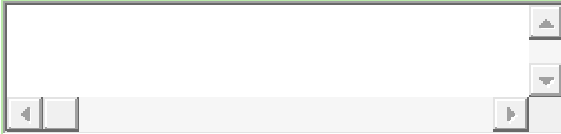
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44. Please feel free to share any other thoughts or comments that you have regarding the evaluation of student writing here.



Appendix C

Interview Protocol for the Educator Interview Developed using Dillman et al. (2009) and Patton (2002) as guides

Hello! Thank you so much for agreeing to talk with me today. I am interested in chatting with you regarding your beliefs about teaching and assessing writing. There are no right or wrong answers to my questions. Anything that you would like to share with me is welcome.

Let's start by talking about writing.

What do you enjoy about teaching writing?

Probes: Why do you enjoy that?
 What do you feel when you are teaching writing?
 Do you look forward to that part of your day?

Okay, can you tell me what you feel is the most important thing that you can teach your students about writing?

Probes: Why is that so important?
 How do you go about teaching that?
 What happens if this is missed?
 Is there any other aspect of writing that you feel is equally important?

Now I'd love to talk with you about the conference and the meetings that you all had here to select the student participants who will represent your school at the conference.

How did you feel about the selection process when selecting students to attend the conference?

Probes: Why did you feel that way?
 Is there anything that could change the way you feel?
 Was there something that you would have done differently?

Can you tell me about how the group decided on a method to use when selecting the participants for the conference?

Probes: Did everyone have input in deciding on the methods used?

Appendix C: (Continued)

Was there another way that you would have liked to have approached the task?

Do you feel like the best student writings were selected from the submissions for those authors to attend the conference?

Probes: What were the factors that led you, as a group, to select those writings?
Were there any writings that you would have liked to have seen included in the “winning” group that were not? Why did you want to see them included? Why do you feel that they were not included?

Can you tell me how you think that the FCAT writing assessment, any other standardized assessments, or the writing curriculum that you have in place at your school had an impact on the student writings that were submitted for the conference?

Probes: Were the students given instructions on what or how to write?
Were these writings typical of the types of writings you see from your students?

Can you tell me how the FCAT writing assessment, other standardized assessments, or the writing curriculum you have in place at your school may have impacted your evaluation decisions during this selection process?

Probes: How did you, personally, feel an influence from the FCAT on the decisions that you made?
How do you think that the FCAT may have influenced the decisions of the other people on your team?

What else would you like to share with me that we have not yet had the opportunity to discuss? I’d love to hear your thoughts.

Just to close, may I ask how long you have been an educator? What degree do you have (i.e., a Bachelor’s, Master’s, or a Ph.D.)? And how many years have you taught writing to your students?

Thank you so much for taking the time out of your busy schedule to talk with me today. I greatly appreciate your willingness to share your thoughts with me, and your comments will help me greatly.

Appendix D

Additional Quantitative Data Result Tables

Question 2: How often do you assess student writing?

Table D1: Frequency of assessing student writing			
Frequency	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Others	7	16.3	16.3
Once a day	6	14.0	14.0
Once a week	6	14.0	14.0
Once every couple of weeks	13	30.2	30.2
Once a month or less	11	25.6	25.6
Total	43	100.0	100.0

Table D2: County and frequency of assessing cross tabulation						
	Others	Once a day	Once a week	Once every couple of weeks	Once a month or less	Total
Public County A	1	2	1	3	1	8
	12.5%	25.0%	12.5%	37.5%	12.5%	100.0%
Public County B	3	2	0	7	6	18
	16.7%	11.1%	.0%	38.9%	33.3%	100.0%
Total	4	4	1	10	7	26
	15.4%	15.4%	3.8%	38.5%	26.9%	100.0%

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D3: Experience and frequency of assessing cross tabulation						
Exp	Others	Once a day	Once a week	Once every couple of weeks	Once a month or less	Total
1 -5 years	1	0	1	4	2	8
	12.5%	.0%	12.5%	50.0%	25.0%	100.0%
6 – 10 years	2	1	1	2	4	10
	20.0%	10.0%	10.0%	20.0%	40.0%	100.0%
11 -15 years	1	3	2	3	2	11
	9.1%	27.3%	18.2%	27.3%	18.2%	100.0%
16 – 20 years	1	0	0	2	1	4
	25.0%	.0%	.0%	50.0%	25.0%	100.0%
More than 20 years	2	2	0	2	1	7
	28.6%	28.6%	.0%	28.6%	14.3%	100.0%
Total	7	6	4	13	10	40
	17.5%	15.0%	10.0%	32.5%	25.0%	100.0%
Chi-Square = 10.194, p =0.816						

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D4: Grade teaching and frequency of assessing cross tabulation						
	Others	Once a day	Once a week	Once every couple of weeks	Once a month or less	Total
Kinder-Garten	0	0	1	0	0	1
	.0%	.0%	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
1 st	0	0	0	2	0	2
	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
2 nd	0	1	1	1	0	3
	.0%	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%	.0%	100.0%
3 rd	2	0	1	0	2	5
	40.0%	.0%	20.0%	.0%	40.0%	100.0%
4 th	0	2	0	6	2	10
	.0%	20.0%	.0%	60.0%	20.0%	100.0%
5 th	3	1	1	4	6	15
	20.0%	6.7%	6.7%	26.7%	40.0%	100.0%
6 th	0	0	1	0	0	1
	.0%	.0%	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	5	4	5	13	10	37
	13.5%	10.8%	13.5%	35.1%	27.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 33.243, p =0.096

Appendix D: (Continued)

Age	Others	Once a day	Once a week	Once every couple of weeks	Once a month or less	Total
21 – 26	0	0	0	2	1	3
	.0%	.0%	.0%	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
27 – 32	2	1	0	1	1	5
	40.0%	20.0%	.0%	20.0%	20.0%	100.0%
33 -38	0	2	2	4	3	11
	.0%	18.2%	18.2%	36.4%	27.3%	100.0%
39 -44	0	1	3	1	2	7
	.0%	14.3%	42.9%	14.3%	28.6%	100.0%
45 – 50	0	0	0	1	0	1
	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
Over 50	4	2	0	4	3	13
	30.8%	15.4%	.0%	30.8%	23.1%	100.0%
Total	6	6	5	13	10	40
	15.0%	15.0%	12.5%	32.5%	25.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 20.452, p =0.430

Question 3: What percentage of the time that you spend assessing all of your students' work would you say is spent assessing writing assignments?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
75% - 100%	1	2.3	2.3
50% -74%	14	32.6	32.6
25% - 49%	18	41.9	41.9
0% -24%	10	23.3	23.3
Total	43	100.0	100.0

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D7: Percentage of time assessing work by county					
	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	Total
Public County A	0	4	3	1	8
	.0%	50.0%	37.5%	12.5%	100.0%
Public County B	1	3	8	6	18
	5.6%	16.7%	44.4%	33.3%	100.0%
Total	1	7	11	7	26
	3.8%	26.9%	42.3%	26.9%	100.0%

Table D8: Experience and Percentage of total work in assessing writing cross tabulation					
Exp	75 – 100	50 -74	25 - 49	0 -24	Total
1 -5 years	0	2	4	2	8
	.0%	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%	100.0%
6 – 10 years	0	3	5	2	10
	.0%	30.0%	50.0%	20.0%	100.0%
11 -15 years	1	4	4	2	11
	9.1%	36.4%	36.4%	18.2%	100.0%
16 – 20 years	0	0	4	0	4
	.0%	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
More than 20 years	0	4	0	3	7
	.0%	57.1%	.0%	42.9%	100.0%
Total	1	13	17	9	40
	2.5%	32.5%	42.5%	22.5%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 14.205, p =0.288

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D9: Grade teaching and Percentage of total work in assessing writing cross tabulation					
	75 - 100	50 -74	25 - 49	0 -24	Total
Kindergarten	0	0	1	0	1
	.0%	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
1 st	0	1	0	1	2
	.0%	50.0%	.0%	50.0%	100.0%
2 nd	0	2	1	0	3
	.0%	66.7%	33.3%	.0%	100.0%
3 rd	0	0	4	1	5
	.0%	.0%	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%
4 th	0	3	4	3	10
	.0%	30.0%	40.0%	30.0%	100.0%
5 th	1	4	6	4	15
	6.7%	26.7%	40.0%	26.7%	100.0%
6 th	0	1	0	0	1
	.0%	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	1	11	16	9	37
	2.7%	29.7%	43.2%	24.3%	100.0%
Chi-Square = 12.308, p =0.831					

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D10: Age of Teachers and Percentage of total work in assessing writing cross tabulation					
Age	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	Total
21 – 26	0	2	0	1	3
	.0%	66.7%	.0%	33.3%	100.0%
27 – 32	0	1	3	1	5
	.0%	20.0%	60.0%	20.0%	100.0%
33 -38	0	3	5	3	11
	.0%	27.3%	45.5%	27.3%	100.0%
39 -44	0	2	5	0	7
	.0%	28.6%	71.4%	.0%	100.0%
45 – 50	1	0	0	0	1
	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Over 50	0	5	5	3	13
	.0%	38.5%	38.5%	23.1%	100.0%
Total	1	13	18	8	40
	2.5%	32.5%	45.0%	20.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 46.390, p <0.001

Table D11: Spend more time in assessing some students writing that others			
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Yes	39	90.7	92.9
No	3	7.0	7.1
Total	42	97.7	100.0
Missing	1	2.3	
Total	43	100.0	

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D12: Experience and whether more time spent in assessing some assignments than others			
Exp	Yes	No	Total
1 -5 years	8	0	8
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
6 – 10 years	9	1	10
	90.0%	10.0%	100.0%
11 -15 years	9	2	11
	81.8%	18.2%	100.0%
16 – 20 years	4	0	4
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
More than 20 years	7	0	7
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	37	3	40
	92.5%	7.5%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 3.440, p= 0.487

Table D13: Grade teaching and whether more time spent in assessing some assignments than others			
Grade	Yes	No	Total
Kindergarten	2	0	2
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
2 nd	2	1	3
	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
3 rd	5	0	5
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
4 th	9	1	10
	90.0%	10.0%	100.0%
5 th	15	0	15
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
6 th	1	0	1
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	34	2	36
	94.4%	5.6%	100.0%

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D14: Age teaching and whether more time spent in assessing some assignments than others			
Age	Yes	No	Total
21 – 26	3	0	3
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
27 – 32	5	0	5
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
33 -38	9	1	10
	90.0%	10.0%	100.0%
39 -44	6	1	7
	85.7%	14.3%	100.0%
45 – 50	1	0	1
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
Over 50	12	1	13
	92.3%	7.7%	100.0%
Total	36	3	39
	92.3%	7.7%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 1.254, p = 0.940

Question 7: How do you feel about assessing student writing?

Table D15: Feelings about assessing student writing			
Feeling	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Positive	23	53.5	56.1
Somewhat positive	13	30.2	31.7
Negative	2	4.7	4.9
Some what negative	3	7.0	7.3
Total	41	95.3	100.0
Missing	2	4.7	
Total	43	100.0	

Appendix D: (Continued)

	Table D16: Feelings about assessing writing by county				Total
	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	
Public County A	6	2	0	0	8
	75.0%	25.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Public County B	8	7	1	2	18
	44.4%	38.9%	5.6%	11.1%	100.0%
	14	9	1	2	26
	53.8%	34.6%	3.8%	7.7%	100.0%

Table D17 : Experience and feeling about writing					
Exp	Positive	Somewhat positive	Negative	Somewhat negative	Total
1 -5 years	3	3	1	1	8
	37.5%	37.5%	12.5%	12.5%	100.0%
6 – 10 years	5	4	1	0	10
	50.0%	40.0%	10.0%	.0%	100.0%
11 -15 years	5	4	0	2	11
	45.5%	36.4%	.0%	18.2%	100.0%
16 – 20 years	4	0	0	0	4
	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
More than 20 years	5	2	0	0	7
	71.4%	28.6%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	22	13	2	3	40
	55.0%	32.5%	5.0%	7.5%	100.0%
Chi-Square = 10.123 , p = 0.605					

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D18: Grade teaching and feeling about writing					
	Positive	Somewhat positive	Negative	Somewhat negative	Total
Kindergarten	1	0	0	0	1
	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
1 st	0	2	0	0	2
	.0%	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
2 nd	3	0	0	0	3
	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
3 rd	3	1	1	0	5
	60.0%	20.0%	20.0%	.0%	100.0%
4 th	4	3	1	2	10
	40.0%	30.0%	10.0%	20.0%	100.0%
5 th	8	6	0	1	15
	53.3%	40.0%	.0%	6.7%	100.0%
6 th	0	1	0	0	1
	.0%	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	19	13	2	3	37
	51.4%	35.1%	5.4%	8.1%	100.0%
Chi-Square = 15.525 , p = 0.626					

Appendix D: (Continued)

Age	Positive	Somewhat positive	Negative	Somewhat negative	Total
21 – 26	2	1	0	0	3
	66.7%	33.3%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
27 – 32	2	3	0	0	5
	40.0%	60.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
33 -38	5	4	1	1	11
	45.5%	36.4%	9.1%	9.1%	100.0%
39 -44	4	2	1	0	7
	57.1%	28.6%	14.3%	.0%	100.0%
45 – 50	0	0	0	1	1
	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Over 50	10	2	0	1	13
	76.9%	15.4%	.0%	7.7%	100.0%
Total	23	12	2	3	40
	57.5%	30.0%	5.0%	7.5%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 20.152 , p = 0.166

Question 8: What is the most important aspect of writing that you are looking for when you assess a student writing?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Others	8	18.6	19.5
Correctness in grammar and punctuation	2	4.7	4.9
Ideas / Concepts	23	53.5	56.1
Voice	2	4.7	4.9
Organization	5	11.6	12.2
Fluency	1	2.3	2.4
Total	41	95.3	100.0
Missing	2	4.7	
Total	43	100.0	

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D21: Experience and most important aspect that teachers look for in a writing assignment							
Exp	Others	Correctness in grammar	Ideas /concepts	Voice	Organization	Fluency	Total
1 -5 years	2	1	5	0	0	0	8
	25.0%	12.5%	62.5%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0 %
6 – 10 years	2	1	5	1	0	1	10
	20.0%	10.0%	50.0%	10.0%	.0%	10.0%	100.0 %
11 - 15 years	2	0	6	0	3	0	11
	18.2%	.0%	54.5%	.0%	27.3%	.0%	100.0 %
16 – 20 years	0	0	3	0	1	0	4
	.0%	.0%	75.0%	.0%	25.0%	.0%	100.0 %
More than 20 years	2	0	4	0	1	0	7
	28.6%	.0%	57.1%	.0%	14.3%	.0%	100.0 %
Total	8	2	23	1	5	1	40
	20.0%	5.0%	57.5%	2.5%	12.5%	2.5%	100.0 %
Chi-Square = 14.726 , p = 0.792							

	Table D22: Most important aspect of writing by county						Total
	.00	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	
Public County A	2	0	5	0	1	0	8
	25.0%	.0%	62.5%	.0%	12.5%	.0%	100.0%
Public County B	2	2	12	1	0	1	18
	11.1%	11.1%	66.7%	5.6%	.0%	5.6%	100.0%
	4	2	17	1	1	1	26
	15.4%	7.7%	65.4%	3.8%	3.8%	3.8%	100.0%

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D23: Grade teaching and most important aspect that teachers look for in a writing assignment							
Grade	Others	Correctness in grammar	Ideas /concepts	Voice	Organization	Fluency	Total
Kindergarten	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
1 st	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
	50.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	50.0%	.0%	100.0%
2 nd	1	0	1	0	1	0	3
	33.3%	.0%	33.3%	.0%	33.3%	.0%	100.0%
3 rd	1	1	3	0	0	0	5
	20.0%	20.0%	60.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
4 th	2	0	6	0	2	0	10
	20.0%	.0%	60.0%	.0%	20.0%	.0%	100.0%
5 th	2	1	9	1	1	1	15
	13.3%	6.7%	60.0%	6.7%	6.7%	6.7%	100.0%
6 th	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	.0%	.0%	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	7	2	20	2	5	1	37
	18.9%	5.4%	54.1%	5.4%	13.5%	2.7%	100.0%
Chi-Square = 31.186 , p = 0.406							

Appendix D: (Continued)

Age	Others	Correctness in grammar	Ideas /concepts	Voice	Organization	Fluency	Total
21 – 26	1	1	1	0	0	0	3
	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
27 – 32	2	0	3	0	0	0	5
	40.0%	.0%	60.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
33 -38	1	0	4	2	3	1	11
	9.1%	.0%	36.4%	18.2%	27.3%	9.1%	100.0%
39 -44	1	1	4	0	1	0	7
	14.3%	14.3%	57.1%	.0%	14.3%	.0%	100.0%
45 – 50	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	.0%	.0%	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Over 50	2	0	10	0	1	0	13
	15.4%	.0%	76.9%	.0%	7.7%	.0%	100.0%
Total	7	2	23	2	5	1	40
	17.5%	5.0%	57.5%	5.0%	12.5%	2.5%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 23.639 , p = 0.540

Question 10: Where did you learn the different assessment methods that you use to assess student writing?

Sources	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Others	6	14.0	14.6
College ./ University	9	20.9	22.0
School / District based training	20	46.5	48.8
Reading coaches and literary specialists	5	11.6	12.2
Peer teachers	1	2.3	2.4
Total	41	95.3	100.0
Missing	2	4.7	
Total	43	100.0	

Appendix D: (Continued)

	Table D26: Places where methods learned by county				Total
	.00	1.00	2.00	3.00	
Public County A	0	1	7	0	8
	.0%	12.5%	87.5%	.0%	100.0%
Public County B	1	5	8	4	18
	5.6%	27.8%	44.4%	22.2%	100.0%
	1	6	15	4	26
	3.8%	23.1%	57.7%	15.4%	100.0%

Question 11: Do you ever have assignments in which your students write more than one draft for you?

Table D27: Assignments with more than one draft			
Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Yes	34	79.1	82.9
No	7	16.3	17.1
Total	41	95.3	100.0
Missing	2	4.7	
Total	43	100.0	

	Table D28: More than one draft by county		Total
	1.00	2.00	
Public County A	6	2	8
	75.0%	25.0%	100.0%
Public County B	15	3	18
	83.3%	16.7%	100.0%
	21	5	26
	80.8%	19.2%	100.0%

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D29: Experience and assessing more assignment with more than one draft			
Exp	Yes	No	Total
1 -5 years	8	0	8
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
6 – 10 years	8	2	10
	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%
11 -15 years	9	2	11
	81.8%	18.2%	100.0%
16 – 20 years	4	0	4
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
More than 20 years	5	2	7
	71.4%	28.6%	100.0%
Total	34	6	40
	85.0%	15.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 3.412 , p = 0.491

Table D30: Grade teaching and assessing more assignment with more than one draft			
Grade	Yes	No	Total
Kindergarten	0	1	1
	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
1 st	0	2	2
	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
2 nd	3	0	3
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
3 rd	4	1	5
	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%
4 th	9	1	10
	90.0%	10.0%	100.0%
5 th	13	2	15
	86.7%	13.3%	100.0%
6 th	1	0	1
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	30	7	37
	81.1%	18.9%	100.0%

Table D30: Grade teaching and assessing more assignment with more than one draft			
Grade	Yes	No	Total
Kindergarten	0	1	1
	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
1 st	0	2	2
	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
2 nd	3	0	3
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
3 rd	4	1	5
	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%
4 th	9	1	10
	90.0%	10.0%	100.0%
5 th	13	2	15
	86.7%	13.3%	100.0%
6 th	1	0	1
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
	30	7	37
Chi-Square = 14.618 , p = 0.023			

Table D31: Age and assessing assignments with more than one draft			
Age	1.00	2.00	Total
21 – 26	3	0	3
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
27 – 32	5	0	5
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
33 -38	8	3	11
	72.7%	27.3%	100.0%
39 -44	6	1	7
	85.7%	14.3%	100.0%
45 – 50	0	1	1
	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Over 50	11	2	13
	84.6%	15.4%	100.0%
Total	33	7	40
	82.5%	17.5%	100.0%
Chi-Square = 7.229 , p = 0.204			

Appendix D: (Continued)

Question 12: How do the students receive grades for those papers?

Table D32: Method of receiving grades by students			
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Others	5	11.6	15.2
Every draft has a separate grade	7	16.3	21.2
Drafts are not graded	9	20.9	27.3
Final copy and draft are put together for one grade	12	27.9	36.4
Total	33	76.7	100.0
Missing	10	23.3	
Total	43	100.0	

	Table D33: Method of receiving grades by county				Total
	.00	1.00	2.00	3.00	
Public County A	0	0	2	4	6
	.0%	.0%	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
Public County B	2	3	3	7	15
	13.3%	20.0%	20.0%	46.7%	100.0%
	2	3	5	11	21
	9.5%	14.3%	23.8%	52.4%	100.0%

Question 13: Please mark how often you use each of the following methods of assessment while assessing the writing of your students.

Table D34: Frequency of using checklists			
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Rarely	6	14.0	14.6
Once in a while	11	25.6	26.8
Frequently	19	44.2	46.3
Almost always	5	11.6	12.2
Total	41	95.3	100.0
Missing	2	4.7	
Total	43	100.0	

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D35 : Experience and frequency of using checklists cross tabulation					
Exp	Rarely	Once in a while	Frequently	Almost always	Total
1 -5 years	1	2	4	1	8
	12.5%	25.0%	50.0%	12.5%	100.0%
6 – 10 years	0	4	4	2	10
	.0%	40.0%	40.0%	20.0%	100.0%
11 -15 years	2	4	5	0	11
	18.2%	36.4%	45.5%	.0%	100.0%
16 – 20 years	1	1	2	0	4
	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%	.0%	100.0%
More than 20 years	1	0	4	2	7
	14.3%	.0%	57.1%	28.6%	100.0%
Total	5	11	19	5	40
	12.5%	27.5%	47.5%	12.5%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 8.939 , p = 0.708

	Table D36: Frequency of checklists by county				Total
	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	
Public County A	0	3	5	0	8
	.0%	37.5%	62.5%	.0%	100.0%
Public County B	4	6	5	3	18
	22.2%	33.3%	27.8%	16.7%	100.0%
	4	9	10	3	26
	15.4%	34.6%	38.5%	11.5%	100.0%

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D37: Grade teaching and frequency of using checklists cross tabulation					
Grade Teaching	Rarely	Once in a while	Frequently	Almost always	Total
Kindergarten	1	0	0	0	1
	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
1 st	0	0	2	0	2
	.0%	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
2 nd	0	2	1	0	3
	.0%	66.7%	33.3%	.0%	100.0%
3 rd	1	2	2	0	5
	20.0%	40.0%	40.0%	.0%	100.0%
4 th	0	4	5	1	10
	.0%	40.0%	50.0%	10.0%	100.0%
5 th	1	2	9	3	15
	6.7%	13.3%	60.0%	20.0%	100.0%
6 th	1	0	0	0	1
	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	4	10	19	4	37
	10.8%	27.0%	51.4%	10.8%	100.0%
Chi-Square = 26.728 , p = 0.084					

Appendix D: (Continued)

Age	Rarely	Once in a while	Frequently	Almost always	Total
21 – 26	1	0	1	1	3
	33.3%	.0%	33.3%	33.3%	100.0%
27 – 32	0	1	4	0	5
	.0%	20.0%	80.0%	.0%	100.0%
33 -38	2	4	4	1	11
	18.2%	36.4%	36.4%	9.1%	100.0%
39 -44	0	3	4	0	7
	.0%	42.9%	57.1%	.0%	100.0%
45 – 50	0	1	0	0	1
	.0%	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Over 50	2	2	6	3	13
	15.4%	15.4%	46.2%	23.1%	100.0%
Total	5	11	19	5	40
	12.5%	27.5%	47.5%	12.5%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 13.560 , p = 0.559

Frequency	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Once in a while	9	20.9	22.0
Frequently	21	48.8	51.2
Almost always	11	25.6	26.8
Total	41	95.3	100.0
Missing	2	4.7	
Total	43	100.0	

Appendix D: (Continued)

	Table D40: Frequency of teacher conferences by county			Total
	2.00	3.00	4.00	
Public County A	1	2	5	8
	12.5%	25.0%	62.5%	100.0%
Public County B	4	9	5	18
	22.2%	50.0%	27.8%	100.0%
	5	11	10	26
	19.2%	42.3%	38.5%	100.0%

Table D41 : Experience and frequency of using teacher conferences				
	Once in a while	Frequently	Almost always	Total
1 -5 years	0	6	2	8
	.0%	75.0%	25.0%	100.0%
6 – 10 years	4	2	4	10
	40.0%	20.0%	40.0%	100.0%
11 -15 years	4	5	2	11
	36.4%	45.5%	18.2%	100.0%
16 – 20 years	1	2	1	4
	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%	100.0%
More than 20 years	0	6	1	7
	.0%	85.7%	14.3%	100.0%
Total	9	21	10	40
	22.5%	52.5%	25.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 11.476 , p = 0.176

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D42: Grade teaching and frequency of using teacher conferences cross tabulation				
Grade Teaching	Once in a while	Frequently	Almost always	Total
Kindergarten	0	0	1	1
	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
1 st	0	2	0	2
	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
2 nd	1	2	0	3
	33.3%	66.7%	.0%	100.0%
3 rd	1	2	2	5
	20.0%	40.0%	40.0%	100.0%
4 th	2	5	3	10
	20.0%	50.0%	30.0%	100.0%
5 th	3	8	4	15
	20.0%	53.3%	26.7%	100.0%
6 th	0	1	0	1
	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	7	20	10	37
	18.9%	54.1%	27.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 7.056 , p = 0.854

Appendix D: (Continued)

Age	Once in a while	Frequently	Almost always	Total
21 – 26	0	1	2	3
	.0%	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
27 – 32	1	3	1	5
	20.0%	60.0%	20.0%	100.0%
33 -38	4	4	3	11
	36.4%	36.4%	27.3%	100.0%
39 -44	1	3	3	7
	14.3%	42.9%	42.9%	100.0%
45 – 50	1	0	0	1
	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Over 50	2	9	2	13
	15.4%	69.2%	15.4%	100.0%
Total	9	20	11	40
	22.5%	50.0%	27.5%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 10.354 , p = 0.410

Frequency	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Rarely	1	2.3	2.4
Once in a while	16	37.2	39.0
Frequently	20	46.5	48.8
Almost always	4	9.3	9.8
Total	41	95.3	100.0
Missing	2	4.7	
Total	43	100.0	

Appendix D: (Continued)

	Table D45: Frequency of peer conferences by county			Total
	2.00	3.00	4.00	
Public County A	3	4	1	8
	37.5%	50.0%	12.5%	100.0%
Public County B	4	11	3	18
	22.2%	61.1%	16.7%	100.0%
	7	15	4	26
	26.9%	57.7%	15.4%	100.0%

Table D46: Experience and frequency of using peer conferences					
Exp	Rarely	Once in a while	Frequently	Almost always	Total
1 -5 years	0	1	5	2	8
	.0%	12.5%	62.5%	25.0%	100.0%
6 – 10 years	0	4	5	1	10
	.0%	40.0%	50.0%	10.0%	100.0%
11 -15 years	1	6	4	0	11
	9.1%	54.5%	36.4%	.0%	100.0%
16 – 20 years	0	2	2	0	4
	.0%	50.0%	50.0%	.0%	100.0%
More than 20 years	0	3	3	1	7
	.0%	42.9%	42.9%	14.3%	100.0%
Total	1	16	19	4	40
	2.5%	40.0%	47.5%	10.0%	100.0%
Chi-Square = 8.990 , p = 0.704					

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D47: Grade teaching and frequency of using peer conferences cross tabulation					
Grade	Rarely	Once in a while	Frequently	Almost always	Total
Kindergarten	0	0	1	0	1
	.0%	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
1 st	0	1	1	0	2
	.0%	50.0%	50.0%	.0%	100.0%
2 nd	0	3	0	0	3
	.0%	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
3 rd	0	3	2	0	5
	.0%	60.0%	40.0%	.0%	100.0%
4 th	1	3	5	1	10
	10.0%	30.0%	50.0%	10.0%	100.0%
5 th	0	5	7	3	15
	.0%	33.3%	46.7%	20.0%	100.0%
6 th	0	0	1	0	1
	.0%	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	1	15	17	4	37
	2.7%	40.5%	45.9%	10.8%	100.0%
Chi-Square = 12.313 , p = 0.831					

Appendix D: (Continued)

Age	Rarely	Once in a while	Frequently	Almost always	Total
21 – 26	0	0	1	2	3
	.0%	.0%	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
27 – 32	0	2	3	0	5
	.0%	40.0%	60.0%	.0%	100.0%
33 -38	1	4	6	0	11
	9.1%	36.4%	54.5%	.0%	100.0%
39 -44	0	4	2	1	7
	.0%	57.1%	28.6%	14.3%	100.0%
45 – 50	0	1	0	0	1
	.0%	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Over 50	0	5	7	1	13
	.0%	38.5%	53.8%	7.7%	100.0%
Total	1	16	19	4	40
	2.5%	40.0%	47.5%	10.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 118.345 , p = 0.245

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Rarely	7	16.3	17.5
Once in a while	10	23.3	25.0
Frequently	18	41.9	45.0
Almost always	5	11.6	12.5
Total	40	93.0	100.0
Missing	3	7.0	
Total	43	100.0	

Appendix D: (Continued)

		Table D50: Frequency of holistic scoring by county				Total
		1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	
Public County A		2	1	4	1	8
		25.0%	12.5%	50.0%	12.5%	100.0%
Public County B		1	3	10	3	17
		5.9%	17.6%	58.8%	17.6%	100.0%
		3	4	14	4	25
		12.0%	16.0%	56.0%	16.0%	100.0%

Table D51: Experience and frequency of using holistic scoring					
Exp	Rarely	Once in a while	Frequently	Almost always	Total
1 -5 years	1	1	5	1	8
	12.5%	12.5%	62.5%	12.5%	100.0%
6 – 10 years	2	3	4	0	9
	22.2%	33.3%	44.4%	.0%	100.0%
11 -15 years	2	3	4	2	11
	18.2%	27.3%	36.4%	18.2%	100.0%
16 – 20 years	0	1	3	0	4
	.0%	25.0%	75.0%	.0%	100.0%
More than 20 years	2	2	2	1	7
	28.6%	28.6%	28.6%	14.3%	100.0%
Total	7	10	18	4	39
	17.9%	25.6%	46.2%	10.3%	100.0%
Chi-Square = 6.209 , p = 0.905					

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D52: Grade teaching and frequency of using holistic scoring cross tabulation					
Grade Teaching	Rarely	Once in a while	Frequently	Almost always	Total
Kindergarten	0	0	0	1	1
	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
1 st	2	0	0	0	2
	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
2 nd	0	1	2	0	3
	.0%	33.3%	66.7%	.0%	100.0%
3 rd	1	2	2	0	5
	20.0%	40.0%	40.0%	.0%	100.0%
4 th	2	3	5	0	10
	20.0%	30.0%	50.0%	.0%	100.0%
5 th	1	2	7	4	14
	7.1%	14.3%	50.0%	28.6%	100.0%
6 th	0	1	0	0	1
	.0%	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	6	9	16	5	36
	16.7%	25.0%	44.4%	13.9%	100.0%
Chi-Square = 27.033 , p = 0.078					

Appendix D: (Continued)

Age	Rarely	Once in a while	Frequently	Almost always	Total
21 – 26	1	0	2	0	3
	33.3%	.0%	66.7%	.0%	100.0%
27 – 32	1	1	2	1	5
	20.0%	20.0%	40.0%	20.0%	100.0%
33 -38	2	2	5	1	10
	20.0%	20.0%	50.0%	10.0%	100.0%
39 -44	1	2	4	0	7
	14.3%	28.6%	57.1%	.0%	100.0%
45 – 50	0	0	0	1	1
	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Over 50	2	5	5	1	13
	15.4%	38.5%	38.5%	7.7%	100.0%
Total	7	10	18	4	39
	17.9%	25.6%	46.2%	10.3%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 13.362 , p = 0.574

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Rarely	6	14.0	14.6
Once in a while	15	34.9	36.6
Frequently	15	34.9	36.6
Almost always	5	11.6	12.2
Total	41	95.3	100.0
Missing	2	4.7	
Total	43	100.0	

Appendix D: (Continued)

		D55: Frequency of portfolio use by county				Total
		1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	
Public County A	1	2	2	3	8	
		12.5%	25.0%	25.0%	37.5%	100.0%
Public County B	2	8	7	1	18	
		11.1%	44.4%	38.9%	5.6%	100.0%
		3	10	9	4	26
		11.5%	38.5%	34.6%	15.4%	100.0%

Table D56: Experience and frequency of using portfolio					
Exp	Rarely	Once in a while	Frequently	Almost always	Total
1 -5 years	1	5	2	0	8
		12.5%	62.5%	25.0%	.0%	100.0%
6 – 10 years	1	4	4	1	10
		10.0%	40.0%	40.0%	10.0%	100.0%
11 -15 years	3	1	6	1	11
		27.3%	9.1%	54.5%	9.1%	100.0%
16 – 20 years	0	2	1	1	4
		.0%	50.0%	25.0%	25.0%	100.0%
More than 20 years	1	3	2	1	7
		14.3%	42.9%	28.6%	14.3%	100.0%
Total	6	15	15	4	40
		15.0%	37.5%	37.5%	10.0%	100.0%
Chi-Square = 9.200 , p = 0.686					

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D57: Grade teaching and frequency of using portfolio cross tabulation					
Grade Teaching	Rarely	Once in a while	Frequently	Almost always	Total
Kindergarten	0	0	0	1	1
	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
1 st	0	1	1	0	2
	.0%	50.0%	50.0%	.0%	100.0%
2 nd	0	1	2	0	3
	.0%	33.3%	66.7%	.0%	100.0%
3 rd	0	5	0	0	5
	.0%	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
4 th	2	2	5	1	10
	20.0%	20.0%	50.0%	10.0%	100.0%
5 th	3	4	6	2	15
	20.0%	26.7%	40.0%	13.3%	100.0%
6 th	1	0	0	0	1
	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	6	13	14	4	37
	16.2%	35.1%	37.8%	10.8%	100.0%
Chi-Square = 26.547 , p = 0.088					

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D58: Age and frequency of using portfolio cross tabulation					
Age	Rarely	Once in a while	Frequently	Almost always	Total
21 – 26	0	1	2	0	3
	.0%	33.3%	66.7%	.0%	100.0%
27 – 32	0	4	0	1	5
	.0%	80.0%	.0%	20.0%	100.0%
33 -38	2	3	4	2	11
	18.2%	27.3%	36.4%	18.2%	100.0%
39 -44	1	3	3	0	7
	14.3%	42.9%	42.9%	.0%	100.0%
45 – 50	1	0	0	0	1
	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Over 50	2	4	5	2	13
	15.4%	30.8%	38.5%	15.4%	100.0%
Total	6	15	14	5	40
	15.0%	37.5%	35.0%	12.5%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 14.513 , p = 0.487

Table D59: Frequency of observations			
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Rarely	3	7.0	7.3
Once in a while	11	25.6	26.8
Frequently	18	41.9	43.9
Almost always	9	20.9	22.0
Total	41	95.3	100.0
Missing	2	4.7	
Total	43	100.0	

Appendix D: (Continued)

	Table D60: Frequency of observations by county			Total
	2.00	3.00	4.00	
Public County A	2	2	4	8
	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%	100.0%
Public County B	8	8	2	18
	44.4%	44.4%	11.1%	100.0%
	10	10	6	26
	38.5%	38.5%	23.1%	100.0%

Table D61: Experience and frequency of using observations					
Exp	Rarely	Once in a while	Frequently	Almost always	Total
1 -5 years	0	2	4	2	8
	.0%	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%	100.0%
6 – 10 years	1	3	4	2	10
	10.0%	30.0%	40.0%	20.0%	100.0%
11 -15 years	2	2	5	2	11
	18.2%	18.2%	45.5%	18.2%	100.0%
16 – 20 years	0	3	1	0	4
	.0%	75.0%	25.0%	.0%	100.0%
More than 20 years	0	1	4	2	7
	.0%	14.3%	57.1%	28.6%	100.0%
Total	3	11	18	8	40
	7.5%	27.5%	45.0%	20.0%	100.0%
Chi-Square = 9.157 , p = 0.689					

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D62 : Grade teaching and frequency of using observations cross tabulation					
Grade Teaching	Rarely	Once in a while	Frequently	Almost always	Total
Kindergarten	0	0	0	1	1
	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
1 st	0	0	1	1	2
	.0%	.0%	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
2 nd	0	1	1	1	3
	.0%	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%	100.0%
3 rd	0	1	3	1	5
	.0%	20.0%	60.0%	20.0%	100.0%
4 th	2	4	3	1	10
	20.0%	40.0%	30.0%	10.0%	100.0%
5 th	1	4	7	3	15
	6.7%	26.7%	46.7%	20.0%	100.0%
6 th	0	0	1	0	1
	.0%	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	3	10	16	8	37
	8.1%	27.0%	43.2%	21.6%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 11.275 , p = 0.882

Appendix D: (Continued)

Age	Rarely	Once in a while	Frequently	Almost always	Total
21 – 26	0	0	1	2	3
	.0%	.0%	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
27 – 32	0	2	2	1	5
	.0%	40.0%	40.0%	20.0%	100.0%
33 -38	1	3	5	2	11
	9.1%	27.3%	45.5%	18.2%	100.0%
39 -44	1	1	3	2	7
	14.3%	14.3%	42.9%	28.6%	100.0%
45 – 50	0	0	1	0	1
	.0%	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
Over 50	1	4	6	2	13
	7.7%	30.8%	46.2%	15.4%	100.0%
Total	3	10	18	9	40
	7.5%	25.0%	45.0%	22.5%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 7.250 , p = 0.950

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Rarely	2	4.7	4.9
Once in a while	3	7.0	7.3
Frequently	19	44.2	46.3
Almost always	17	39.5	41.5
Total	41	95.3	100.0
Missing	2	4.7	
Total	43	100.0	

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D65: Frequency of using rubrics by county					
	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	Total
Public County A	0	3	3	2	8
	.0%	37.5%	37.5%	25.0%	100.0%
Public County B	1	0	7	10	18
	5.6%	.0%	38.9%	55.6%	100.0%
	1	3	10	12	26
	3.8%	11.5%	38.5%	46.2%	100.0%

Table D66: Experience and frequency of using rubrics					
Exp	Rarely	Once in a while	Frequently	Almost always	Total
1 -5 years	0	0	4	4	8
	.0%	.0%	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
6 – 10 years	0	1	4	5	10
	.0%	10.0%	40.0%	50.0%	100.0%
11 -15 years	1	0	7	3	11
	9.1%	.0%	63.6%	27.3%	100.0%
16 – 20 years	0	0	1	3	4
	.0%	.0%	25.0%	75.0%	100.0%
More than 20 years	0	2	3	2	7
	.0%	28.6%	42.9%	28.6%	100.0%
Total	1	3	19	17	40
	2.5%	7.5%	47.5%	42.5%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 11.931 , p = 0.451

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D67 : Grade teaching and frequency of using rubrics cross tabulation					
Grade Teaching	Rarely	Once in a while	Frequently	Almost always	Total
Kindergarten	1	0	0	0	1
	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
1 st	0	1	1	0	2
	.0%	50.0%	50.0%	.0%	100.0%
2 nd	0	0	3	0	3
	.0%	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
3 rd	0	0	4	1	5
	.0%	.0%	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%
4 th	0	1	4	5	10
	.0%	10.0%	40.0%	50.0%	100.0%
5 th	1	1	6	7	15
	6.7%	6.7%	40.0%	46.7%	100.0%
6 th	0	0	1	0	1
	.0%	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	2	3	19	13	37
	5.4%	8.1%	51.4%	35.1%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 30.722 , p = 0.031

Appendix D: (Continued)

Age	Rarely	Once in a while	Frequently	Almost always	Total
21 – 26	0	0	0	3	3
	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
27 – 32	0	0	3	2	5
	.0%	.0%	60.0%	40.0%	100.0%
33 -38	1	1	5	4	11
	9.1%	9.1%	45.5%	36.4%	100.0%
39 -44	0	0	5	2	7
	.0%	.0%	71.4%	28.6%	100.0%
45 – 50	1	0	0	0	1
	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Over 50	0	2	5	6	13
	.0%	15.4%	38.5%	46.2%	100.0%
Total	2	3	18	17	40
	5.0%	7.5%	45.0%	42.5%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 28.617 , p = 0.018

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Rarely	14	32.6	35.9
Once in a while	6	14.0	15.4
Frequently	13	30.2	33.3
Almost always	6	14.0	15.4
Total	39	90.7	100.0
Missing	4	9.3	
Total	43	100.0	

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D70: Frequency of FCAT rubric use by county					
	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	Total
Public County A	2	0	1	5	8
	25.0%	.0%	12.5%	62.5%	100.0%
Public County B	5	4	9	0	18
	27.8%	22.2%	50.0%	.0%	100.0%
	7	4	10	5	26
	26.9%	15.4%	38.5%	19.2%	100.0%

Table D71 : Experience and frequency of using FCAT scoring rubric					
Exp	Rarely	Once in a while	Frequently	Almost always	Total
1 -5 years	2	1	4	0	7
	28.6%	14.3%	57.1%	.0%	100.0%
6 – 10 years	2	3	2	2	9
	22.2%	33.3%	22.2%	22.2%	100.0%
11 -15 years	5	2	2	2	11
	45.5%	18.2%	18.2%	18.2%	100.0%
16 – 20 years	1	0	2	1	4
	25.0%	.0%	50.0%	25.0%	100.0%
More than 20 years	3	0	3	1	7
	42.9%	.0%	42.9%	14.3%	100.0%
Total	13	6	13	6	38
	34.2%	15.8%	34.2%	15.8%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 8.974 , p = 0.705

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D72: Grade teaching and frequency of using FCAT scoring rubric cross tabulation					
Grade Teaching	Rarely	Once in a while	Frequently	Almost always	Total
Kindergarten	1	0	0	0	1
	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
1 st	2	0	0	0	2
	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
2 nd	2	0	1	0	3
	66.7%	.0%	33.3%	.0%	100.0%
3 rd	3	1	0	0	4
	75.0%	25.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
4 th	1	2	4	3	10
	10.0%	20.0%	40.0%	30.0%	100.0%
5 th	4	2	6	2	14
	28.6%	14.3%	42.9%	14.3%	100.0%
6 th	0	1	0	0	1
	.0%	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	13	6	11	5	35
	37.1%	17.1%	31.4%	14.3%	100.0%
Chi-Square = 19.996 , p = 0.333					

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D73 : Age and frequency of using FCAT scoring rubric cross tabulation					
Age	Rarely	Once in a while	Frequently	Almost always	Total
21 – 26	1	1	1	0	3
	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%	.0%	100.0%
27 – 32	1	0	2	1	4
	25.0%	.0%	50.0%	25.0%	100.0%
33 -38	3	4	1	3	11
	27.3%	36.4%	9.1%	27.3%	100.0%
39 -44	3	1	2	0	6
	50.0%	16.7%	33.3%	.0%	100.0%
45 – 50	1	0	0	0	1
	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Over 50	5	0	6	2	13
	38.5%	.0%	46.2%	15.4%	100.0%
Total	14	6	12	6	38
	36.8%	15.8%	31.6%	15.8%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 14.293 , p = 0.503

Table D74: Primary traits scoring			
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Rarely	6	14.0	15.4
Once in a while	8	18.6	20.5
Frequently	15	34.9	38.5
Almost always	10	23.3	25.6
Total	39	90.7	100.0
Missing	4	9.3	
Total	43	100.0	

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D75: Frequency of primary traits scoring by county					
	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	Total
Public County A	2	4	2	0	8
	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%	.0%	100.0%
Public County B	1	1	9	5	16
	6.3%	6.3%	56.3%	31.3%	100.0%
	3	5	11	5	24
	12.5%	20.8%	45.8%	20.8%	100.0%

Table D76: Experience and frequency of using traits scoring					
Exp	Rarely	Once in a while	Frequently	Almost always	Total
1 -5 years	2	0	4	2	8
	25.0%	.0%	50.0%	25.0%	100.0%
6 – 10 years	1	2	2	4	9
	11.1%	22.2%	22.2%	44.4%	100.0%
11 -15 years	1	3	3	3	10
	10.0%	30.0%	30.0%	30.0%	100.0%
16 – 20 years	0	1	3	0	4
	.0%	25.0%	75.0%	.0%	100.0%
More than 20 years	1	2	3	1	7
	14.3%	28.6%	42.9%	14.3%	100.0%
Total	5	8	15	10	38
	13.2%	21.1%	39.5%	26.3%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 8.826 , p = 0.718

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D77: Grade teaching and frequency of using primary traits scoring cross tabulation					
	Rarely	Once in a while	Frequently	Almost always	Total
Kindergarten	1	0	0	0	1
	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
1 st	1	1	0	0	2
	50.0%	50.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
2 nd	0	1	2	0	3
	.0%	33.3%	66.7%	.0%	100.0%
3 rd	1	0	1	3	5
	20.0%	.0%	20.0%	60.0%	100.0%
4 th	2	2	4	1	9
	22.2%	22.2%	44.4%	11.1%	100.0%
5 th	0	4	5	5	14
	.0%	28.6%	35.7%	35.7%	100.0%
6 th	0	0	0	1	1
	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total	5	8	12	10	35
	14.3%	22.9%	34.3%	28.6%	100.0%

Appendix D: (Continued)

Age	Rarely	Once in a while	Frequently	Almost always	Total
21 – 26	0	0	2	1	3
	.0%	.0%	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
27 – 32	1	0	3	1	5
	20.0%	.0%	60.0%	20.0%	100.0%
33 -38	2	3	1	4	10
	20.0%	30.0%	10.0%	40.0%	100.0%
39 -44	1	3	1	2	7
	14.3%	42.9%	14.3%	28.6%	100.0%
45 – 50	0	0	0	1	1
	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Over 50	2	2	8	1	13
	15.4%	15.4%	61.5%	7.7%	100.0%
Total	6	8	15	10	39
	15.4%	20.5%	38.5%	25.6%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 16.311 , p = 0.362

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Rarely	10	23.3	24.4
Once in a while	17	39.5	41.5
Frequently	12	27.9	29.3
Almost always	2	4.7	4.9
Total	41	95.3	100.0
Missing	2	4.7	
Total	43	100.0	

Appendix D: (Continued)

	Table D80: Frequency of self assessment by county				Total
	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	
Public County A	0	6	0	2	8
	.0%	75.0%	.0%	25.0%	100.0%
Public County B	6	7	5	0	18
	33.3%	38.9%	27.8%	.0%	100.0%
	6	13	5	2	26
	23.1%	50.0%	19.2%	7.7%	100.0%

Table D81 : Experience and frequency of using self assessment					
Exp	Rarely	Once in a while	Frequently	Almost always	Total
1 -5 years	3	3	2	0	8
	37.5%	37.5%	25.0%	.0%	100.0%
6 – 10 years	3	4	2	1	10
	30.0%	40.0%	20.0%	10.0%	100.0%
11 -15 years	3	5	3	0	11
	27.3%	45.5%	27.3%	.0%	100.0%
16 – 20 years	1	1	1	1	4
	25.0%	25.0%	25.0%	25.0%	100.0%
More than 20 years	0	4	3	0	7
	.0%	57.1%	42.9%	.0%	100.0%
Total	10	17	11	2	40
	25.0%	42.5%	27.5%	5.0%	100.0%
Chi-Square = 8.931 , p = 0.709					

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D82: Grade teaching and frequency of using self assessment cross tabulation					
Grade Teaching	Rarely	Once in a while	Frequently	Almost always	Total
Kindergarten	0	0	1	0	1
	.0%	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
1 st	0	1	1	0	2
	.0%	50.0%	50.0%	.0%	100.0%
2 nd	0	2	1	0	3
	.0%	66.7%	33.3%	.0%	100.0%
3 rd	3	2	0	0	5
	60.0%	40.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
4 th	4	4	2	0	10
	40.0%	40.0%	20.0%	.0%	100.0%
5 th	3	7	3	2	15
	20.0%	46.7%	20.0%	13.3%	100.0%
6 th	0	0	1	0	1
	.0%	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	10	16	9	2	37
	27.0%	43.2%	24.3%	5.4%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 15.836 , p = 0.604

Appendix D: (Continued)

Age	Rarely	Once in a while	Frequently	Almost always	Total
21 – 26	1	1	1	0	3
	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%	.0%	100.0%
27 – 32	1	3	1	0	5
	20.0%	60.0%	20.0%	.0%	100.0%
33 -38	4	4	3	0	11
	36.4%	36.4%	27.3%	.0%	100.0%
39 -44	2	3	1	1	7
	28.6%	42.9%	14.3%	14.3%	100.0%
45 – 50	1	0	0	0	1
	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Over 50	1	5	6	1	13
	7.7%	38.5%	46.2%	7.7%	100.0%
Total	10	16	12	2	40
	25.0%	40.0%	30.0%	5.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 10.144 , p = 0.811

Question 14: Select the method of assessing student writing that you use most frequently.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Others	1	2.3	2.4
Checklists	4	9.3	9.8
Teacher conferences	8	18.6	19.5
Peer Conferences	3	7.0	7.3
Holistic scoring	4	9.3	9.8
Observations	12	27.9	29.3
Portfolios	3	7.0	7.3
Rubrics	6	14.0	14.6
Total	41	95.3	100.0
Missing	2	4.7	
Total	43	100.0	

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D85: Experience and Most frequently used method of assessment									
Exp	Other s	Check list	Teach er confer ence	Peer conference	Holistic scoring	Observa tions	Portfo lios	Rubric s	Total
1 -5 years	0	1	2	0	1	1	1	2	8
	.0%	12.5%	25.0%	.0%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	25.0%	100.0%
6 – 10 years	0	1	2	0	1	3	1	2	10
	.0%	10.0%	20.0%	.0%	10.0%	30.0%	10.0%	20.0%	100.0%
11 - 15 years	0	0	1	2	1	5	1	1	11
	.0%	.0%	9.1%	18.2%	9.1%	45.5%	9.1%	9.1%	100.0%
16 – 20 years	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	4
	.0%	25.0%	25.0%	.0%	.0%	25.0%	.0%	25.0%	100.0%
Mor e than 20 years	1	1	1	1	1	2	0	0	7
	14.3%	14.3%	14.3%	14.3%	14.3%	28.6%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	1	4	7	3	4	12	3	6	40
	2.5%	10.0%	17.5%	7.5%	10.0%	30.0%	7.5%	15.0%	100.0%
Chi-Square = 17.356 , p = 0.941									

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D86: Grade Teaching and Most frequently used method of assessment									
Grade	Others	Check list	Teacher conference	Peer conference	Holistic scoring	Observations	Portfolios	Rubrics	Total
Kindergarten	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	.0%	.0%	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
1 st	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
	.0%	.0%	50.0%	.0%	50.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
2 nd	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	3
	.0%	.0%	33.3%	.0%	33.3%	33.3%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
3 rd	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	3	5
	.0%	.0%	40.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	60.0%	100.0%
4 th	0	1	1	0	0	6	2	0	10
	.0%	10.0%	10.0%	.0%	.0%	60.0%	20.0%	.0%	100.0%
5 th	1	3	1	3	2	3	1	1	15
	6.7%	20.0%	6.7%	20.0%	13.3%	20.0%	6.7%	6.7%	100.0%
6 th	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total	1	4	7	3	4	10	3	5	37
	2.7%	10.8%	18.9%	8.1%	10.8%	27.0%	8.1%	13.5%	100.0%
Chi-Square = 48.059 , p = 0.241									

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D87: Age and most frequently used method of assessment									
Age	Others	Checklist	Teacher conference	Peer conference	Holistic scoring	Observations	Portfolios	Rubrics	Total
21 – 26	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	3
	.0%	33.3%	.0%	.0%	33.3%	.0%	.0%	33.3%	100.0%
27 – 32	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	2	5
	.0%	.0%	20.0%	.0%	.0%	20.0%	20.0%	40.0%	100.0%
33 – 38	0	1	2	0	0	4	2	2	11
	.0%	9.1%	18.2%	.0%	.0%	36.4%	18.2%	18.2%	100.0%
39 – 44	0	1	2	0	2	2	0	0	7
	.0%	14.3%	28.6%	.0%	28.6%	28.6%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
45 – 50	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Over 50	1	1	3	1	1	5	0	1	13
	7.7%	7.7%	23.1%	7.7%	7.7%	38.5%	.0%	7.7%	100.0%
Total	1	4	8	2	4	12	3	6	40
	2.5%	10.0%	20.0%	5.0%	10.0%	30.0%	7.5%	15.0%	100.0%
Chi-Square = 41.847 , p = 0.198									

Appendix D: (Continued)

Question 15: Please rate the method of assessing student writing that you use most frequently on a scale of 1-4 with 1 being minimally effective and 4 being extremely effective.

Table D88: Rating of the assessment method used most frequently			
Rating	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Somewhat effective	3	7.0	7.3
Effective	21	48.8	51.2
Extremely effective	17	39.5	41.5
Total	41	95.3	100.0
Missing	2	4.7	
Total	43	100.0	

	Table D89: Effectiveness of frequent method by county			Total
	2.00	3.00	4.00	
Public County A	1	3	4	8
	12.5%	37.5%	50.0%	100.0%
Public County B	0	8	10	18
	.0%	44.4%	55.6%	100.0%
	1	11	14	26
	3.8%	42.3%	53.8%	100.0%

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D90: Experience and perception on effectiveness of assessment method				
Exp	Somewhat effective	Effective	Extremely effective	Total
1 -5 years	2	5	1	8
	25.0%	62.5%	12.5%	100.0%
6 – 10 years	0	6	4	10
	.0%	60.0%	40.0%	100.0%
11 -15 years	1	9	1	11
	9.1%	81.8%	9.1%	100.0%
16 – 20 years	0	4	0	4
	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
More than 20 years	1	4	2	7
	14.3%	57.1%	28.6%	100.0%
Total	4	28	8	40
	10.0%	70.0%	20.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 5.093 , p = 0.748

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D91: Grade teaching and perception on effectiveness of assessment method				
Grade teaching	Somewhat effective	Effective	Extremely effective	Total
Kindergarten	0	0	1	1
	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
1 st	1	1	0	2
	50.0%	50.0%	.0%	100.0%
2 nd	0	2	1	3
	.0%	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
3 rd	1	1	3	5
	20.0%	20.0%	60.0%	100.0%
4 th	1	9	0	10
	10.0%	90.0%	.0%	100.0%
5 th	1	11	3	15
	6.7%	73.3%	20.0%	100.0%
6 th	0	1	0	1
	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	4	25	8	37
	10.8%	67.6%	21.6%	100.0%
Chi-Square = 11.321 , p = 0.502				

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D92: Age and perception on effectiveness of assessment method				
Age	Somewhat effective	Effective	Extremely effective	Total
21 – 26	0	2	1	3
	.0%	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
27 – 32	1	2	2	5
	20.0%	40.0%	40.0%	100.0%
33 -38	1	9	1	11
	9.1%	81.8%	9.1%	100.0%
39 -44	1	3	3	7
	14.3%	42.9%	42.9%	100.0%
45 – 50	0	1	0	1
	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
Over 50	1	10	2	13
	7.7%	76.9%	15.4%	100.0%
Total	4	27	9	40
	10.0%	67.5%	22.5%	100.0%
Chi-Square = 10.113 , p = 0.431				

Appendix D: (Continued)

Question 16: Please select the method of assessing student writing that you use second most frequently.

Table D93: Second most frequently used method of assessment			
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Others	2	4.7	4.9
Checklists	3	7.0	7.3
Teacher conferences	8	18.6	19.5
Peer Conferences	2	4.7	4.9
Holistic scoring	6	14.0	14.6
Observations	3	7.0	7.3
Portfolios	2	4.7	4.9
Rubrics	6	14.0	14.6
FCAT scoring rubric	4	9.3	9.8
Primary traits scoring	4	9.3	9.8
Self assessment	1	2.3	2.4
Total	41	95.3	100.0
Missing	2	4.7	
Total	43	100.0	

Question 17: Please rate the method of assessing student writing that you use second most frequently on a scale of 1-4 with 1 being minimally effective and 4 being extremely effective.

Table D94: Rating of the second most frequent method of assessment			
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Somewhat effective	5	11.6	12.2
Effective	20	46.5	48.8
Extremely effective	16	37.2	39.0
Total	41	95.3	100.0
Missing	2	4.7	
Total	43	100.0	

Appendix D: (Continued)

	Table D95: Rating of second most frequent method by county			Total
	2.00	3.00	4.00	
Public County A	1	5	2	8
	12.5%	62.5%	25.0%	100.0%
Public County B	0	8	10	18
	.0%	44.4%	55.6%	100.0%
	1	13	12	26
	3.8%	50.0%	46.2%	100.0%

Question 18: Please select the method of assessing student writing that you use third most frequently.

Table D96: Third most frequently used method of assessment			
Method	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Checklists	5	11.6	12.5
Teacher conferences	6	14.0	15.0
Peer Conferences	3	7.0	7.5
Holistic scoring	4	9.3	10.0
Observations	2	4.7	5.0
Portfolios	7	16.3	17.5
Rubrics	6	14.0	15.0
FCAT scoring rubric	2	4.7	5.0
Primary traits scoring	3	7.0	7.5
Self assessment	2	4.7	5.0
Total	40	93.0	100.0
Missing	3	7.0	
Total	43	100.0	

Appendix D: (Continued)

Question 19: Please rate the method of assessing student writing that you use third most frequently on a scale of 1-4 with 1 being minimally effective and 4 being extremely effective.

Table D97: Rating of the third most frequent method of assessment			
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Minimally effective	1	2.3	2.5
Somewhat effective	5	11.6	12.5
Effective	20	46.5	50.0
Extremely effective	14	32.6	35.0
Total	40	93.0	100.0
Missing	3	7.0	
Total	43	100.0	

	Table D98: Effectiveness of third most frequent method by county			Total
	2.00	3.00	4.00	
Public County A	1	4	3	8
	12.5%	50.0%	37.5%	100.0%
Public County B	2	8	7	17
	11.8%	47.1%	41.2%	100.0%
	3	12	10	25
	12.0%	48.0%	40.0%	100.0%

Question 23: Please think about ALL the different methods of evaluation that you use when reviewing student writing. As a whole, how effective do you believe that the method(s) of evaluating writing that you utilize are?

Table D99: Effectiveness of evaluation methods overall			
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Somewhat effective	4	9.3	9.8
Effective	28	65.1	68.3
Extremely effective	9	20.9	22.0
Total	41	95.3	100.0
Missing	2	4.7	
Total	43	100.0	

Appendix D: (Continued)

Question 25: Do you use both formal (written feedback, rubrics, grades, etc) and informal (observation, anecdotal notes, conferences, etc.) methods of assessing writing?

Table D100: Use of both formal and informal methods of assessing writing			
Use	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Yes	39	90.7	95.1
No	2	4.7	4.9
Total	41	95.3	100.0
Missing	2	4.7	
Total	43	100.0	

Table D101: Experience and use of both formal and informal methods of assessment			
Exp	Yes	No	Total
1 -5 years	8	0	8
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
6 – 10 years	10	0	10
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
11 -15 years	11	0	11
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
16 – 20 years	4	0	4
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
More than 20 years	6	1	7
	85.7%	14.3%	100.0%
Total	39	1	40
	97.5%	2.5%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 4.835 , p = 0.305

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D102: Grade teaching and use of both formal and informal methods of assessment			
Grade	Yes	No	Total
Kindergarten	0	1	1
	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
1 st	1	1	2
	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
2 nd	3	0	3
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
3 rd	5	0	5
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
4 th	10	0	10
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
5 th	15	0	15
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
6 th	1	0	1
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	35	2	37
	94.6%	5.4%	100.0%

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D103: Age and use of both formal and informal methods of assessment			
Age	Yes	No	Total
21 – 26	3	0	3
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
27 – 32	5	0	5
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
33 -38	10	1	11
	90.9%	9.1%	100.0%
39 -44	7	0	7
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
45 – 50	1	0	1
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
Over 50	12	1	13
	92.3%	7.7%	100.0%
Total	38	2	40
	95.0%	5.0%	100.0%
Chi-Square = 1.428 , p = 0.921			

Appendix D: (Continued)

Question 26: What percentage (for a total of 100%) of your time spent evaluating writing is spent on informal assessments?

Table D104: Percentage of time of total evaluation spent on informal assessments			
Percentage	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
10.00	1	2.3	3.3
20.00	1	2.3	3.3
25.00	2	4.7	6.7
30.00	5	11.6	16.7
35.00	1	2.3	3.3
40.00	5	11.6	16.7
50.00	6	14.0	20.0
60.00	5	11.6	16.7
70.00	1	2.3	3.3
75.00	1	2.3	3.3
80.00	2	4.7	6.7
Total	30	69.8	100.0
Missing	13	30.2	
Total	43	100.0	

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D105: Experience wise summary statistics of percentage of time of total evaluation spent on informal assessments							
Exp	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
1 – 5 years	51.6667	16.02082	6.54047	34.8538	68.4795	30.00	80.00
6 – 10 years	49.3750	18.98072	6.71070	33.5067	65.2433	30.00	80.00
11 – 15 years	40.0000	18.40894	5.82142	26.8310	53.1690	10.00	75.00
16 – 20 years	40.0000	20.00000	11.54701	-9.6828	89.6828	20.00	60.00
Over 20 years	48.3333	20.20726	11.66667	-1.8643	98.5309	25.00	60.00
Total	45.6667	17.84673	3.25835	39.0026	52.3307	10.00	80.00

Table D106: ANOVA for percentage of time of total evaluation spent on informal assessments for experience					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	764.792	4	191.198	.564	.691
Within Groups	8471.875	25	338.875		
Total	9236.667	29			

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D107: Teaching grade wise summary statistics of percentage of time of total evaluation spent on informal assignments							
Grade	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
1 st	60.0000	.	.	.	.	60.00	60.00
2 nd	45.0000	7.07107	5.00000	-18.5310	108.5310	40.00	50.00
3 rd	50.0000	20.00000	11.54701	.3172	99.6828	30.00	70.00
4 th	38.8889	17.63834	5.87945	25.3309	52.4469	10.00	60.00
5 th	49.5455	17.81215	5.37057	37.5791	61.5118	25.00	80.00
6 th	30.0000	.	.	.	.	30.00	30.00
Total	45.3704	17.09284	3.28952	38.6087	52.1321	10.00	80.00

Table D108: ANOVA for percentage of time of total evaluation spent on informal assessments for different grades taught					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1084.680	5	216.936	.700	.630
Within Groups	6511.616	21	310.077		
Total	7596.296	26			

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D109: Age wise summary statistics of percentage of time of total evaluation spent on informal assignments							
Age	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
21 -26	60.0000	17.32051	10.00000	16.9735	103.0265	50.00	80.00
27 - 32	47.5000	23.62908	11.81454	9.9009	85.0991	30.00	80.00
33 - 38	36.5000	13.34375	4.21966	26.9545	46.0455	10.00	60.00
39 -44	65.0000	13.22876	7.63763	32.1379	97.8621	50.00	75.00
45 – 50	25.0000	.	.	.	.	25.00	25.00
Over 50	46.8750	16.67708	5.89624	32.9326	60.8174	20.00	60.00
Total	45.8621	18.12994	3.36664	38.9658	52.7583	10.00	80.00

Table D110: ANOVA for percentage of time of total evaluation spent on informal assessments for different age groups					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3029.073	5	605.815	2.257	.083
Within Groups	6174.375	23	268.451		
Total	9203.448	28			

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D111: Informal assessment frequency by county											
	20	25	30	35	40	50	60	70	75	80	Total
Public County A	0	0	1	0	2	1	3	0	0	1	8
	.0%	.0%	12.5%	.0%	25.0%	12.5%	37.5%	.0%	.0%	12.5%	100.0%
Public County B	1	2	2	1	3	4	1	1	1	1	17
	5.9 %	11.8 %	11.8%	5.9 %	17.6%	23.5%	5.9%	5.9 %	5.9%	5.9%	100.0%
	1	2	3	1	5	5	4	1	1	2	25
	4.0 %	8.0 %	12.0%	4.0 %	20.0%	20.0%	16.0%	4.0 %	4.0%	8.0%	100.0%

Question 26: What percentage of your time spent evaluating writing is spent on formal assessments?

Table D112: Percentage of time of total evaluation spent on formal assignments			
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
20.00	2	4.7	6.7
25.00	1	2.3	3.3
30.00	1	2.3	3.3
40.00	5	11.6	16.7
50.00	6	14.0	20.0
60.00	5	11.6	16.7
65.00	1	2.3	3.3
70.00	5	11.6	16.7
75.00	2	4.7	6.7
80.00	1	2.3	3.3
90.00	1	2.3	3.3
Total	30	69.8	100.0
Missing	13	30.2	
Total	43	100.0	

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D113: Experience wise summary statistics of percentage of time of total evaluation spent on formal assessments							
Exp	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
1 – 5 years	48.3333	16.02082	6.54047	31.5205	65.1462	20.00	70.00
6 – 10 years	50.6250	18.98072	6.71070	34.7567	66.4933	20.00	70.00
11 – 15 years	60.0000	18.40894	5.82142	46.8310	73.1690	25.00	90.00
16 – 20 years	60.0000	20.00000	11.54701	10.3172	109.6828	40.00	80.00
Over 20 years	51.6667	20.20726	11.66667	1.4691	101.8643	40.00	75.00
Total	54.3333	17.84673	3.25835	47.6693	60.9974	20.00	90.00

Table D114: ANOVA for percentage of time of total evaluation spent on formal assessments for experience					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	764.792	4	191.198	.564	.691
Within Groups	8471.875	25	338.875		
Total	9236.667	29			

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D115: Teaching grade wise summary statistics of percentage of time of total evaluation spent on formal assignments							
Grade	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
1 st	40.0000	.	.	.	.	40.00	40.00
2 nd	55.0000	7.07107	5.00000	-8.5310	118.531	50.00	60.00
3 rd	50.0000	20.00000	11.54701	.3172	99.6828	30.00	70.00
4 th	61.1111	17.63834	5.87945	47.5531	74.6691	40.00	90.00
5 th	50.4545	17.81215	5.37057	38.4882	62.4209	20.00	75.00
6 th	70.0000	.	.	.	.	70.00	70.00
Total	54.6296	17.09284	3.28952	47.8679	61.3913	20.00	90.00

Table D116: ANOVA for percentage of time of total evaluation spent on formal assessments for different grades taught					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1084.680	5	216.936	.700	.630
Within Groups	6511.616	21	310.077		
Total	7596.296	26			

Appendix D: (Continued)

Age	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
21 - 26	40.0000	17.32051	10.00000	-3.0265	83.0265	20.00	50.00
27 - 32	52.5000	23.62908	11.81454	14.9009	90.0991	20.00	70.00
33 - 38	63.5000	13.34375	4.21966	53.9545	73.0455	40.00	90.00
39 - 44	35.0000	13.22876	7.63763	2.1379	67.8621	25.00	50.00
45 - 50	75.0000	.	.	.	.	75.00	75.00
Over 50	53.1250	16.67708	5.89624	39.1826	67.0674	40.00	80.00
Total	54.1379	18.12994	3.36664	47.2417	61.0342	20.00	90.00

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3029.073	5	605.815	2.257	.083
Within Groups	6174.375	23	268.451		
Total	9203.448	28			

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D119: Frequency of formal assessments by county											
	20	25	30	40	50	60	65	70	75	80	Total
Public County A	1	0	0	3	1	2	0	1	0	0	8
	12.5 %	.0%	.0%	37.5%	12.5%	25.0%	.0%	12.5%	.0%	.0%	100.0 %
Public County B	1	1	1	1	4	3	1	2	2	1	17
	5.9 %	5.9 %	5.9 %	5.9%	23.5%	17.6%	5.9%	11.8%	11.8%	5.9%	100.0 %
	2	1	1	4	5	5	1	3	2	1	25
	8.0 %	4.0 %	4.0 %	16.0%	20.0%	20.0%	4.0%	12.0%	8.0%	4.0%	100.0 %

Question 27: Do you ever utilize the FCAT Writing Assessment rubric to score papers?

Table D120: Use of FCAT writing rubric			
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Yes	22	51.2	55.0
No	18	41.9	45.0
Total	40	93.0	100.0
Missing	3	7.0	
Total	43	100.0	

Table D121 : Frequency of using FCAT writing rubric			
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Others	6	14.0	26.1
Daily	1	2.3	4.3
Weekly	5	11.6	21.7
Monthly	11	25.6	47.8
Total	23	53.5	100.0
Missing	20	46.5	
Total	43	100.0	

Appendix D: (Continued)

	Table D122: Use of FCAT rubric by county		Total
	1.00	2.00	
Public County A	6	2	8
	75.0%	25.0%	100.0%
Public County B	12	6	18
	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
	18	8	26
	69.2%	30.8%	100.0%

Table D123: Experience and use of FCAT writing rubric			
Exp	Yes	No	Total
1 -5 years	5	3	8
	62.5%	37.5%	100.0%
6 – 10 years	5	5	10
	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
11 -15 years	6	5	11
	54.5%	45.5%	100.0%
16 – 20 years	3	1	4
	75.0%	25.0%	100.0%
More than 20 years	3	3	6
	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
Total	22	17	39
	56.4%	43.6%	100.0%
Chi-Square = 0.966 , p = 0.915			

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D124: Grade teaching and use of FCAT writing rubric			
Grade	Yes	No	Total
Kindergarten	0	1	1
	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
1 st	0	2	2
	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
2 nd	0	3	3
	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
3 rd	0	5	5
	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
4 th	9	1	10
	90.0%	10.0%	100.0%
5 th	9	5	14
	64.3%	35.7%	100.0%
6 th	1	0	1
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	19	17	36
	52.8%	47.2%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 19.492 , p = 0.003

Appendix D: (Continued)

Age	Yes	No	Total
21 – 26	2	1	3
	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
27 – 32	3	2	5
	60.0%	40.0%	100.0%
33 -38	7	4	11
	63.6%	36.4%	100.0%
39 -44	1	6	7
	14.3%	85.7%	100.0%
45 – 50	1	0	1
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
Over 50	7	5	12
	58.3%	41.7%	100.0%
Total	21	18	39
	53.8%	46.2%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 6.601 , p = 0.300

Question 28: How often do you use the FCAT Writing Assessment?

Exp	Others	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Total
1 -5 years	1	0	2	2	5
	20.0%	.0%	40.0%	40.0%	100.0%
6 – 10 years	0	1	0	4	5
	.0%	20.0%	.0%	80.0%	100.0%
11 -15 years	2	0	3	1	6
	33.3%	.0%	50.0%	16.7%	100.0%
16 – 20 years	1	0	0	2	3
	33.3%	.0%	.0%	66.7%	100.0%
More than 20 years	2	0	0	2	4
	50.0%	.0%	.0%	50.0%	100.0%
Total	6	1	5	11	23
	26.1%	4.3%	21.7%	47.8%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 14.204 , p = 0.288

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D127: Experience and frequency of using FCAT writing rubric					
Grade teaching	Others	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Total
4 th	2	1	4	2	9
	22.2%	11.1%	44.4%	22.2%	100.0%
5 th	3	0	1	6	10
	30.0%	.0%	10.0%	60.0%	100.0%
6 th	1	0	0	0	1
	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	6	1	5	8	20
	30.0%	5.0%	25.0%	40.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 7.659 , p = 0.264

Table D128: Age and frequency of using FCAT writing rubric					
Age	Others	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Total
21 – 26	0	0	1	1	2
	.0%	.0%	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
27 – 32	1	0	0	2	3
	33.3%	.0%	.0%	66.7%	100.0%
33 -38	2	1	2	2	7
	28.6%	14.3%	28.6%	28.6%	100.0%
39 -44	0	0	0	1	1
	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
45 – 50	0	0	1	0	1
	.0%	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
Over 50	3	0	1	4	8
	37.5%	.0%	12.5%	50.0%	100.0%
Total	6	1	5	10	22
	27.3%	4.5%	22.7%	45.5%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 10.140 , p = 0.811

Appendix D: (Continued)

		Table D129: Frequency of FCAT rubric use by county				Total
		.00	1.00	2.00	3.00	
Public County A	1	1	1	3	6	
		16.7%	16.7%	16.7%	50.0%	100.0%
Public County B	2	0	3	7	12	
		16.7%	.0%	25.0%	58.3%	100.0%
	3	1	4	10	18	
		16.7%	5.6%	22.2%	55.6%	100.0%

Question 30: How helpful do you feel that the feedback from the FCAT rubric is to your students?

Table D130: Helpfulness of feedback on FCAT rubric to students			
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Extremely helpful	1	2.3	4.5
Helpful	15	34.9	68.2
Somewhat helpful	3	7.0	13.6
Minimally helpful	3	7.0	13.6
Total	22	51.2	100.0
Missing	21	48.8	
Total	43	100.0	

		Table D131: Helpfulness of FCAT rubric feedback by county				Total
		1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	
Public County A	0	6	0	0	6	
		.0%	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Public County B	1	5	3	2	11	
		9.1%	45.5%	27.3%	18.2%	100.0%
	1	11	3	2	17	
		5.9%	64.7%	17.6%	11.8%	100.0%

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D132: Experience and helpfulness of FCAT writing assessment to students					
Exp	Extremely helpful	Helpful	Somewhat helpful	Minimally helpful	Total
1 -5 years	1	3	0	1	5
	20.0%	60.0%	.0%	20.0%	100.0%
6 – 10 years	0	3	1	0	4
	.0%	75.0%	25.0%	.0%	100.0%
11 -15 years	0	4	0	2	6
	.0%	66.7%	.0%	33.3%	100.0%
16 – 20 years	0	1	2	0	3
	.0%	33.3%	66.7%	.0%	100.0%
More than 20 years	0	4	0	0	4
	.0%	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	1	15	3	3	22
	4.5%	68.2%	13.6%	13.6%	100.0%
Chi-Square = 16.573 , p = 0.166					

Table D133: Grade teaching and helpfulness of FCAT writing assessment to students					
Grade teaching	Extremely helpful	Helpful	Somewhat helpful	Minimally helpful	Total
4 th	1	5	1	1	8
	12.5%	62.5%	12.5%	12.5%	100.0%
5 th	0	7	1	2	10
	.0%	70.0%	10.0%	20.0%	100.0%
6 th	0	1	0	0	1
	.0%	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	1	13	2	3	19
	5.3%	68.4%	10.5%	15.8%	100.0%
Chi-Square = 2.028 , p = 0.917					

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D134: Age and helpfulness of FCAT writing assessment to students					
Age	Extremely helpful	Helpful	Somewhat helpful	Minimally helpful	Total
21 – 26	1	0	0	1	2
	50.0%	.0%	.0%	50.0%	100.0%
27 – 32	0	3	0	0	3
	.0%	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
33 -38	0	4	1	1	6
	.0%	66.7%	16.7%	16.7%	100.0%
39 -44	0	1	0	0	1
	.0%	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
45 – 50	0	0	0	1	1
	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Over 50	0	6	2	0	8
	.0%	75.0%	25.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	1	14	3	3	21
	4.8%	66.7%	14.3%	14.3%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 22.583 , p = 0.093

Question 31: Do you use any standardized writing assessments (SAT, FCAT, etc.)?

Table D135: Use of standardized writing assignments			
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Yes	17	39.5	42.5
No	23	53.5	57.5
Total	40	93.0	100.0
Missing	3	7.0	
Total	43	100.0	

Appendix D: (Continued)

	Table D136: Use of standardized assessments by county		Total
	1.00	2.00	
Public County A	6	2	8
	75.0%	25.0%	100.0%
Public County B	4	14	18
	22.2%	77.8%	100.0%
	10	16	26
	38.5%	61.5%	100.0%

Table D137: Experience and use of standardized assignments			
Exp	Yes	No	Total
1 -5 years	1	7	8
	12.5%	87.5%	100.0%
6 – 10 years	4	6	10
	40.0%	60.0%	100.0%
11 -15 years	6	4	10
	60.0%	40.0%	100.0%
16 – 20 years	3	1	4
	75.0%	25.0%	100.0%
More than 20 years	3	4	7
	42.9%	57.1%	100.0%
Total	17	22	39
	43.6%	56.4%	100.0%
Chi-Square = 5.899 , p = 0.207			

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D138: Grade teaching and use of standardized assignments			
Grade Teaching	Yes	No	Total
Kindergarten	0	1	1
	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
1 st	0	2	2
	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
2 nd	3	0	3
	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
3 rd	0	5	5
	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
4 th	6	3	9
	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
5 th	6	9	15
	40.0%	60.0%	100.0%
6 th	0	1	1
	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total	15	21	36
	41.7%	58.3%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 12.960 , p = 0.044

Appendix D: (Continued)

Age	Yes	No	Total
21 – 26	0	3	3
	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
27 – 32	0	5	5
	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
33 -38	6	5	11
	54.5%	45.5%	100.0%
39 -44	3	4	7
	42.9%	57.1%	100.0%
45 – 50	0	1	1
	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Over 50	7	5	12
	58.3%	41.7%	100.0%
Total	16	23	39
	41.0%	59.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 8.587 , p = 0.127

Question 32: How often do you provide your students with written feedback on their writing assignments?

Frequency	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Almost always	16	37.2	39.0
Frequently	19	44.2	46.3
Once in a while	5	11.6	12.2
Rarely if ever	1	2.3	2.4
Total	41	95.3	100.0
Missing	2	4.7	
Total	43	100.0	

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D141: Experience and frequency of giving written feedback				
Exp	Almost always	Frequently	Once in a while	Total
1 -5 years	4	2	2	8
	50.0%	25.0%	25.0%	100.0%
6 – 10 years	4	5	1	10
	40.0%	50.0%	10.0%	100.0%
11 -15 years	5	5	1	11
	45.5%	45.5%	9.1%	100.0%
16 – 20 years	1	3	0	4
	25.0%	75.0%	.0%	100.0%
More than 20 years	2	4	1	7
	28.6%	57.1%	14.3%	100.0%
Total	16	19	5	40
	40.0%	47.5%	12.5%	100.0%
Chi-Square = 4.055 , p = 0.852				

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D142: Grade teaching and frequency of giving written feedback					
Grade	Almost always	Frequently	Once in a while	Rarely	Total
Kindergarten	0	0	0	1	1
	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
1 st	1	0	1	0	2
	50.0%	.0%	50.0%	.0%	100.0%
2 nd	1	2	0	0	3
	33.3%	66.7%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
3 rd	0	4	1	0	5
	.0%	80.0%	20.0%	.0%	100.0%
4 th	6	3	1	0	10
	60.0%	30.0%	10.0%	.0%	100.0%
5 th	5	8	2	0	15
	33.3%	53.3%	13.3%	.0%	100.0%
6 th	1	0	0	0	1
	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	14	17	5	1	37
	37.8%	45.9%	13.5%	2.7%	100.0%
Chi-Square = 47.769 , p = 0.0001					

Appendix D: (Continued)

Age	Almost always	Frequently	Once in a while	Rarely	Total
21 – 26	2	0	1	0	3
	66.7%	.0%	33.3%	.0%	100.0%
27 – 32	2	2	1	0	5
	40.0%	40.0%	20.0%	.0%	100.0%
33 -38	5	3	2	1	11
	45.5%	27.3%	18.2%	9.1%	100.0%
39 -44	2	5	0	0	7
	28.6%	71.4%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
45 – 50	0	1	0	0	1
	.0%	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Over 50	5	7	1	0	13
	38.5%	53.8%	7.7%	.0%	100.0%
Total	16	18	5	1	40
	40.0%	45.0%	12.5%	2.5%	100.0%

Chi-Square = 10.810 , p = 0.766

Question 33: What is your current position?

Position	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Others	4	9.3	9.8
Teacher	30	69.8	73.2
Media specialist	1	2.3	2.4
Reading specialist / Literacy coach	5	11.6	12.2
Administrator	1	2.3	2.4
Total	41	95.3	100.0
Missing	2	4.7	
Total	43	100.0	

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D145: Position distribution by county					
	.00	1.00	2.00	3.00	Total
Public County A	2	5	1	0	8
	25.0%	62.5%	12.5%	.0%	100.0%
Public County B	0	15	0	3	18
	.0%	83.3%	.0%	16.7%	100.0%
	2	20	1	3	26
	7.7%	76.9%	3.8%	11.5%	100.0%

Question 34: Have you ever taught writing to students?

Table D146: Ever taught writing to students			
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Yes	40	93.0	97.6
No	1	2.3	2.4
Total	41	95.3	100.0
Missing	2	4.7	
Total	43	100.0	

Question 35: How many years have you taught writing to students?

Table D147: Number of years teaching writing to students			
# years	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
1 – 5 years	8	18.6	20.0
6 – 10 years	10	23.3	25.0
11 – 15 years	11	25.6	27.5
16 – 20 years	4	9.3	10.0
Over 20 years	7	16.3	17.5
Total	40	93.0	100.0
Missing	3	7.0	
Total	43	100.0	

Appendix D: (Continued)

Question 36: Do you currently teach writing to students?

Table D148: Currently teaching writing to students			
Teaching	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Yes	39	90.7	95.1
No	2	4.7	4.9
Total	41	95.3	100.0
Missing	2	4.7	
Total	43	100.0	

Question 37: What grade level do you currently teach?

Table D149: Grade level teaching			
Grade	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Kindergarten	1	2.3	2.7
1 st	2	4.7	5.4
2 nd	3	7.0	8.1
3 rd	5	11.6	13.5
4 th	10	23.3	27.0
5 th	15	34.9	40.5
6 th	1	2.3	2.7
Total	37	86.0	100.0
Missing	6	14.0	
Total	43	100.0	

Question 38: What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

Table D150: Highest level of education			
Level	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Others	1	2.3	2.4
Bachelor's	20	46.5	48.8
Master's	20	46.5	48.8
Total	41	95.3	100.0
Missing	2	4.7	
Total	43	100.0	

Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D151:	Highest degree distribution by county			Total
	.00	1.00	2.00	
Public County A	1	3	4	8
	12.5%	37.5%	50.0%	100.0%
Public County B	0	10	8	18
	.0%	55.6%	44.4%	100.0%
	1	13	12	26
	3.8%	50.0%	46.2%	100.0%

Question 39: With which of the following are you currently affiliated?

Table D152: Affiliation			
Affiliation	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Public school	27	62.8	65.9
Private school	13	30.2	31.7
Home school	1	2.3	2.4
Total	41	95.3	100.0
Missing	2	4.7	
Total	43	100.0	

Question 40: In which county is your school?

Table D153: County in which is the school is located			
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
A	21	48.8	52.5
B	18	41.9	45.0
C	1	2.3	2.5
Total	40	93.0	100.0
Missing	3	7.0	
Total	43	100.0	

Appendix D: (Continued)

Question 41: What is the name of your school?

Table D154: Name of the school			
Name of the school	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Others (did not complete question)	3	7.0	7.0
1	1	2.3	2.3
2	1	2.3	2.3
3	1	2.3	2.3
4	2	4.7	4.7
5	1	2.3	2.3
6	11	25.5	25.5
7	1	2.3	2.3
8	4	9.3	9.3
9	7	16.3	16.3
10	4	9.3	9.3
11	7	16.3	16.3
Total	43	100.0	100.0

Question 42: What is your gender?

Table D155 : Gender of the respondent			
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Male	3	7.0	7.3
Female	38	88.4	92.7
Total	41	95.3	100.0
Missing	2	4.7	
Total	43	100.0	

Appendix D: (Continued)

Question 43: In which range does your age fall?

Table D156: Age of the respondent			
Age group (years)	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
21 – 26	3	7.0	7.5
27 – 32	5	11.6	12.5
33 – 38	11	25.6	27.5
39 - 44	7	16.3	17.5
45 - 50	1	2.3	2.5
Over 50	13	30.2	32.5
Total	40	93.0	100.0
Missing	3	7.0	
Total	43	100.0	