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How Do Proficient Intermediate Grade Writers

Percieve Writing in School?

by

Tammy Weiss Schimmel

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

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Keywords: education, elementary, instruction, high-stakes testing, best practices

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Dedication

I dedicate this document to my family who has given me their love, their support, and their constant encouragement.

To my husband, Seth, who supported me in my desire to reach my goal of obtaining my doctorate degree and tolerated my many stressful days.

To my children, Samantha and Alex, who provided their support by trying to understand that I was busy writing a paper, but would someday be a “Doctor”.

To my Mother, Lourene Weiss, who inspired a love of learning and demonstrated perseverance in her own academic achievements.

To my sister, Randee Weiss, who always expressed confidence in me.

To my grandmother, Irene Novak, who at 91 years old serves as an inspiration and role model for me.

To my late grandfather, Louis Novak, who always strived to learn more.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine students' perspectives of writing instruction to gain insights into their awareness of the impact of high-stakes writing assessments on instructional practices and teaching strategies. Students in grades four and five who attended the 2004 Suncoast Young Author's Celebration (SYAC) served as the sample for this study. Data were gathered through surveys and interviews with 20 students who attended the SYAC. Survey questions were used to obtain general information about the students' perceptions of writing instruction and assessment. Interviews were conducted to gain a richer understanding of their perceptions of classroom experiences.

The participants in this study provided descriptive data about their perceptions of writing in school. Fourteen distinct patterns emerged from the data which fell into three overarching categories: Writing, Teacher Instruction, and Testing.

Findings suggest that students write for various purposes at school: for pleasure, to express themselves, to acquire and share knowledge, and because they are tested. The participants in this study spent a great deal of time discussing content area writing.

During content area writing, students interacted with their peers which provided meaningful support to their writing development.

According to the students, most teachers used a combination of grading methods when assessing writing. The students provided a great deal of data regarding the comments their teachers made on their writing assignments.

A major finding was the amount of emotion that the students expressed regarding timed writing assessments. The data from this study do not specify whether or not teachers overtly discussed the significance of the FCAT. I expected the emphasis on high-stakes writing assessments to impact the individual attention that the students received; however, according to the students, their teachers' provided a great deal of support and guidance.

Although the data did not produce what I expected, when I began analyzing the data it became apparent that FCAT Writing does influence many facets of the writing curriculum including grading, feedback, and conferencing.

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CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW OF STUDY

Assessment/High-Stakes Testing

A central concern of the school reform movement is assessment – how to best evaluate the progress and growth of students. This is an area of controversy and diverse opinions (Afflerbach, 2002; Costigan, 2002; Graves, 2002; Hillocks, 2002; Kohn, 2000; Linn, 2000; Mathis, 2003; Odell & Hampton, 1992). Teachers and administrators are often judged by the results of state-mandated tests yet these tests rarely evaluate what is occurring in the classroom. Assessment should promote better teaching, but this is improbable when assessment measures are incongruous with best classroom practices. Assessment should provide information that helps the teacher make further decisions about the best learning experiences for the child. Yet it is difficult for teachers to remain committed to effective pedagogy when they are pressured to prepare their students for high-stakes assessments (Darling-Hammond & Wise, 1985; Hillocks, 2002; Johnston, 2003; Linn, 2000; McNeil, 2000; Miller, 2002; Steeves, Hodgson, & Peterson, 2002; Zigo, 2001).

The National Council of Teachers of English's 2000 Position Statement states that "High-stakes–testing often harms students' daily experiences of learning, displaces more thoughtful and creative curriculum, diminishes the emotional well-being of educators and children, and unfairly damages the life chances of members of vulnerable groups" (p.1). Instead of measuring the success of a state's curriculum, the tests have simply replaced it (http://www.ncte.org/resolutions/highstakes2000.htlm).

Writing Assessment

The reform movement and the subsequent onslaught of performance assessment in writing have been marked by controversy. In an attempt to fit the art of writing into affordable assessment, a great deal of the recursive, passionate, and purposeful nature of writing has been reshaped (Wolf & Davinroy, 1998). A recent writing assessment study conducted by Hillocks (2003) demonstrates how high-stakes writing assessments impact instruction. He found that writing assessment drives instruction by stipulating the types of writing that should be taught, setting standards for good writing, and setting conditions under which students must demonstrate their proficiency. In addition, assessment rubrics diminish the role of language for young writers and often sacrifice communication to convention and originality to organization (Wolf & Davinroy, 1998). Despite the reported deleterious effects of high-stakes writing assessment, it drives the writing curriculum in many states (Hillocks, 2002).

In his text, *The Testing Trap: How State Writing Assessments Control Learning*, Hillocks (2002) examines the state writing assessment programs of Illinois, Texas, Kentucky, New York, and Oregon. In each of these states, legislation sets the parameters for testing and makes decisions about what the stakes in testing will be. The kinds of writing assessments and the theories underlying the assessments vary widely from state to state. As a result, the kind of writing emphasized also differs from state to state. Hillocks (2002) discovered that the Texas, Kentucky, and Oregon theories allow for the inclusion of literary writing in the assessments, whereas Illinois excludes it, and New York does not test it. Illinois, Texas, and Oregon explicitly call for persuasive writing and Kentucky includes it under the category of transactional writing. New York does not

mention persuasive writing. Hillocks (2002) concluded that there are clear differences in the kinds of writing tested in each of these states. This results in diverse types of writing instruction.

Writing Assessment in Florida

Florida currently administers a statewide writing assessment to students in grades 4, 8, and 10 as part of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). FCAT Writing uses demand writing (writing to an assigned topic within a specified period of time) to generate writing that can be scored holistically by trained scorers with a six point rubric scale. As of 2006, a score of 3.5 is considered passing. The elements considered in the evaluation rubric are focus, organization, support, and conventions.

For FCAT Writing, students demonstrate their proficiency by producing, within 45 minutes, a draft response to an assigned prompt. Two prompts are developed for each grade level and students are randomly assigned one of the two prompts for that grade level. Fourth grade students respond to a prompt that asks them to write a story (narrative writing) or to explain something (expository writing); eighth and tenth grade students respond to a prompt that asks them to explain (expository writing) or to persuade (persuasive writing).

Student achievement data are used to report educational status and annual progress for individual students, schools, districts, and the state. Florida schools are graded according to their students' test scores which contribute to the high-stakes of this assessment (http://www.FLDOE.org). The formula used to assign schools' grades consists of a maximum of 600 points. Up to 100 points can be earned from FCAT Writing scores. The points for the writing portion of the assessment are determined by

averaging the percentage of students who score a 3 with the percentage of students who score a 3.5. The remaining 500 points can be earned from FCAT Reading and FCAT Math results (C. York, personal communication, February 19, 2004).

Criticism of High-Stakes Writing Assessments

A section in *Lessons Learned- FCAT Writing* (2003), notes various limitations of analysis of the writing student performance data. These limitations include:

> The difficulty of the prompt may vary somewhat from year to year and prompt to prompt. The writing assessment is a one-item test. The student's scores reflect the student's performance on this assessment under specific testing conditions, and do not purport to reflect the totality of the student's writing experience, although a student's writing experience may impact performance on the test (p.87).

Critics of large-scale, single sample writing assessments agree with these limitations and feel that this type of assessment provides little indication of a student's understanding of writing (Hayes, Hatch, & Silk, 2000; Odell & Hampton, 1992; Wolcott, 1987). Farr (1998) states that all prompts are not created equal, so a piece of expository writing is quite different than a persuasive piece. Freedman (1991) states that higher order thinking increases when students take considerable time with their writing, write about subjects in which they have an interest and an investment in the writing, and receive response from peers and teachers in revision. It is difficult for this to occur when students have limited time and a predetermined topic.

Impact on Instruction

Various studies have been conducted to gain teachers' perspectives on the impact of high-stakes writing assessments on instructional practices and teaching strategies (Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas, 2000; Brindley & Schneider, 2002; Hillocks, 2003; Lumley & Yan, 2001; Wolf & Wolf, 2002). Although studies have been conducted to investigate students' perceptions concerning the general purposes of writing, what they view as important in writing, and children's attitudes toward writing(Bottomley, Henk, & Melnick, 1997/1998; Bradley, 2001; Fang, 1996; Kear, Coffman, McKenna, & Ambrosia, 2000; Knudson, 1991, 1992, 1993 and 1995; Kos & Maslowski, 2001; Shook Marrion, & Ollila, 1989), few studies have focused on students' perceptions of writing instruction and test preparation. Just as students should be encouraged to use voice in their writing, educators should investigate students' perceptions of high-stakes writing assessments.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine students' perspectives of writing instruction to gain insights into their awareness of the impact of high-stakes writing assessments on instructional practices and teaching strategies. Students in grades four and five who attended the 2004 Suncoast Young Authors Celebration (SYAC) served as the sample for this study. SYAC is an annual writing conference held at a large southeastern university. I selected the SYAC as the population for this study because it is a gathering of children from a variety of schools who have an interest in writing and/or have been selected to attend because they are good writers. Students who attend SYAC have an opportunity to interact with students from other schools and grade levels that

share this interest. I anticipated that their fascination, ability and interest in writing would result in thoughtful and rich survey and interview responses. Through their responses, I explored and described how children perceive writing instruction and the impact of high-stakes writing assessments.

SYAC is attended by children in Kindergarten through grade five who have written and/or illustrated works, such as stories, poems, and non-fiction. All public and private schools from two large school districts in the local area are invited to attend. Approximately 114,000 students attend public elementary school in these districts. Individual schools choose to attend SYAC. These schools are then responsible for selecting students to participate using their own criteria. Each year approximately 600-800 children attend the event.

Data were gathered through surveys and interviews. The surveys were distributed to the schools prior to the conference. The school contact person was asked to distribute the surveys to the students. The students were instructed to complete the surveys at home and bring the completed surveys to the conference. Parents were encouraged to assist students in reading and comprehending the questions. The students were instructed to answer the questions with their own honest opinions and the survey directions emphasized that there were no right or wrong answers.

After the writing conference, audio-taped interviews were conducted with a random sample of the SYAC participants. Interviews were held at a library or book store at a time convenient for the parent and student. Each interview, with the exception of 1, took approximately 20 minutes to complete. The students were interviewed individually to avoid peer influence on responses which may have altered the validity of the data.

Research Questions

The primary research question is: how do proficient intermediate grade writers perceive writing at school?

The following questions guided my inquiry:

1 What are students' views of the purposes for writing at school?

2 What are students' views of the differing contexts for writing at school?

3 What decisions do children make when they write at school?

4 What are students' views of the role of their teachers in writing instruction?

5 How do students interpret writing assessment?

6 What are students' views of high-stakes writing exams?

7 Do students' interview responses reflect their survey responses?

In chapter two I examine literacy approaches and best practices in existing literature to learn how research defines best practices for teaching writing. In my analysis, I compare and contrast this information with the students' perspectives of writing instruction.

Limitations

This study is limited in several ways. First, although the sample reflects the population of children who attended the SYAC, it does not accurately reflect the demographic mix of the districts. Another limitation is the academic abilities of the sample. It is assumed that the students selected to attend SYAC are the "crème de la crème". As a result, the conclusions are only relevant to the students who attended SYAC.

A third limitation relates to the nature of survey research. The accuracy of self-reporting can be questioned because students may not understand the survey questions or they may have difficulty expressing their thoughts (Bell, 1993). What people say they do and what they actually do can be different. The interviews that I conducted should lessen this limitation by supporting the information gained from the survey data.

Another limitation is that I did not observe the students' teachers while they taught. I was unable to see their instructional methods. Data for my study came strictly from the students' responses on the surveys and personal interviews because I wanted to investigate their perceptions of writing in school.

There is always the danger of bias entering into interviews. When one interviewer conducts a series of interviews, the bias may be consistent and therefore go unnoticed. It is easier to acknowledge the fact that bias can enter than to completely eliminate it. Bell (1993) urges interviewers who hold strong views about some aspect of the topic to be extremely careful when wording questions. It is easy to lead responses in an interview and the interviewer's emphasis and tone of voice can produce different responses. I utilized member checking and peer debriefing to monitor my bias. This will be discussed further in chapter 3.

Definitions of Terms:

1. Demand writing – writing on an assigned topic and writing within a specified period of time.
2. High-stakes assessments - tests used for leverage; the future of individual students, schools, and school districts rise or fall on the results.
3. Suncoast Young Authors Celebration (SYAC) – an annual writing conference held at a large southeastern university. SYAC is attended by children in grades Kindergarten through five who have written and/or illustrated works, such as stories, poems, and non-fiction. All pubic and private schools in the local area are invited to attend. Individual schools are responsible for selecting students to participate using their own criteria.
4. Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) – the foundation of Florida's statewide assessment and accountability program. The FCAT program includes grades 3 – 10 assessments in reading and mathematics, and grades 4, 8, and 10 assessments in writing.
5. No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) – a federal law created to raise the quality of education by closing achievement gaps, offering more flexibility, giving parents more options, and teaching students based on what works.
6. Sunshine State Standards – standards developed in Florida that contain academic benchmarks that students must attain in each grade level.
7. Minimum Competency Tests (MCT) – tests that focus on the lower end of the achievement distribution.

Summary

Chapter one has provided an overview of the study. Chapter two will provide a review of related literature. It begins with information on the history of accountability, standards, and assessments, followed by criticisms of standards and assessments and contradictions between assessments and research. The literature review continues with a section on writing which includes: a synthesis of recent studies on students' perceptions of writing, theoretical approaches to writing, writing instruction, current best practices in writing instruction, and high-stakes writing assessments impact on instruction. Chapter two concludes with information on the history of the Suncoast Young Authors Celebration. Chapter three describes the conduct of the study and includes the purpose, research questions, design of the study, a description of the research site and sample, sources of data, and data analysis. Chapter four provides the results of the study and chapter five provides a summary and discussion of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

My primary research question is: how do proficient intermediate grade students perceive writing in school. I am specifically interested in the students' views of how high-stakes writing exams impact classroom instruction. Existing research explores the impact of assessment on instructional practices from an educator's point of view (Dyson & Freedman, 1990; Hillocks, 2002; Kohn, 2000; Linn, 2000). Students are directly impacted by classroom instruction and their beliefs can inform teachers' instruction; therefore, I examine this issue from the students' point of view. Through this study, I explored students' beliefs about writing to determine whether or not and to what degree they are cognizant of the influence of state-mandated writing assessments on writing instruction.

The following questions guided my inquiry:

1. What are students' views of the purposes for writing at school?
2. What are students' views of the differing contexts for writing at school?
3. What decisions do children make when they write at school?
4. What are students' views of the role of their teachers in writing instruction?
5. How do students interpret writing assessment?
6. What are students' views of high-stakes writing exams?
7. Do students' interview responses reflect their survey responses?

In order to provide a context for these research questions, in the following section I review the history of the national educational reform movement (accountability, standards, and assessment), the criticisms of standards and high-stakes assessments and their impact on classroom instruction. This section is followed by the history of Florida's statewide assessment program. This chapter ends with a review of the literature on writing instruction, including a synthesis of recent studies on students' perceptions of writing, theoretical approaches to literacy, best practices in writing instruction and the impact of high-stakes writing assessments on instruction. These sections, together with a section on the history of the Suncoast Young Authors Celebration, frame the present study that investigates students' perceptions of writing instruction.

History of National Educational Reform

Historically, state policymakers delegated authority over public education, in regards to curriculum and instruction, to local school districts. Individual schools and teachers were allowed to make decisions regarding the daily instructional activities that occurred in their classrooms. Over the past few decades, the involvement of states in curriculum matters has changed dramatically. Linn (2000) refers to this phenomenon as the "waves of educational reform" (p.4). This change started in the 1950s with tests utilized for tracking and selection of students for different educational tracks.

In 1957, the Soviet Union successfully launched Sputnik I, the world's first artificial satellite. This event marked the start of the space age and the U.S.-U.S.S.R. space race and led directly to the creation of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) (http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/pao/History/sputnik/indx.html).

In the 1960s, tests were used for program accountability. During this time, attention was focused on compensatory education in recognition of large disparities in student performance and educational opportunities. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was instituted to support congressional demands for evaluation and accountability for the funds distributed under Title I of ESEA. In order to evaluate the progress of students receiving Title I funds, the Title I Evaluation and Reporting System (TIERS) encouraged testing students twice a year. The testing demands of TIERS contributed to the dramatic increase in the use of norm-referenced tests (Linn, 2000).

Educational reform efforts of the 1970s included minimum competency testing (MCT). The focus was on the lower end of the achievement distribution and minimal basic skills were accepted as a reasonable requirement for high school graduation. Overlapping with the MCT movement and continuing into the 1980s and early 1990s was the accountability movement (Linn, 2000). The publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) brought to the nation's attention, a rising tide of mediocrity in America's schools and set off an onslaught of reform activity. Former President George W. Bush called an educational summit with state governors in September 1989. During the summit, they agreed on six broad educational goals to be reached by the year 2000 (National Education Goals Panel, 1991).

In response to the summit, Congress established the National Council on Educational Standards and Testing (NCEST) in June 1991. Six months later, NCEST issued a report recommending national content standards and a national system of assessments based on new standards (NCEST, 1992). The U.S. Department of Education

quickly pursued a strategy of educational reform based on high standards. The U.S. Department of Education determined that educational improvement should begin with an agreement on content standards that could be implemented at both the national and state levels (Wixson & Dutro, 1998).

According to Wixson and Dutro (1998), "a standards-based view of reform holds that once broad agreement on what is to be taught and learned has been achieved, everything else in the education system can be redirected toward reaching higher standards" (p.2). In order to attain this goal, new policy instruments that aim to foster changes in teaching and learning must be implemented. These policy instruments typically include: new content standards, assessments that focus on intellectually authentic tasks which are aligned with content standards, innovative curricula that are consistent with new standards and assessments, and changes in teacher education to improve implementation of the new standards (Cohen, 1995).

Standards were central to the Clinton administration's education initiative contained in the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (Linn, 2000). The Act endorsed national education goals and procedures to establish education standards across the country. Standards are general statements about what students should know that remain relatively constant across grade levels. Standard setting involves defining goals, implementing methods for attaining the goals, and determining means for assessing whether or not the goals have been met. Overall, standards are intended to improve the quality of education by focusing attention on specific types of learning (Darling-Hammond & Wise, 1985; Wixson & Dutro, 1998).

In January 2002 President Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, a federal law created to raise the quality of education by closing the achievement gap, offering more flexibility, giving parents more options, and teaching students based on what works (http://www.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/indx.html). Public support for equality, testing, highly qualified teachers, and other provisions of the law was strong. The primary outcome promised by the NCLB is that 95% of all student groups will reach their state standards by 2014.

Although it is too early to know if this goal can or will be reached, educators have specific concerns about the success of NCLB. These concerns include funding and assessment. Mathis (2003) studied the projected costs for ten states to fulfill the NCLB requirements. He concluded that the costs for making these goals a reality are far from being met. Mathis (2003) feared that obtaining the benefits of NCLB is hopeless if the system is not adequately funded. Graves (2002) felt that "it is at the point of measuring progress that the president's effort will stumble. Instead of raising standards they will be lowered" (p.1). Graves (2002) asserts that testing is not teaching. Instead of spending enormous amounts of time preparing for state-mandated tests, teachers should be presenting instruction that will improve reading and writing and encourage problem-solving. (See Appendix A for a timeline of National Education Reform).

Florida's Educational Reform

Florida's statewide assessment program was initiated in 1972 and has gone through numerous changes over the years. The original assessment program was based on measuring only a sample of students, but this changed to include all students in selected grades. The initial series of tests measured minimum competency skills. In

1976, the Florida legislature enacted a new accountability act that mandated statewide assessment tests for students in grades 3, 5, 8, and 11. The legislature also authorized a statewide Minimum Competency Test (MCT) graduation requirement which was implemented in October 1977.

The concept of a required graduation test was very controversial and led to a number of legal challenges in Florida. The most notable case was Debra P. v. Turlington. This case began in 1978 when ten African-American students who failed Florida's MCT challenged its use as a requirement for a diploma. This was an attack on all aspects of the graduation test. They challenged the testing requirement as racially biased, administered to affected students without notice, and designed to segregate African-American students into remedial classes.

The court ruled in favor of the state of Florida and students in the graduating class of 1983 were required to pass the competency test to receive a high school diploma. A student who does not pass the test will receive a Certificate of Completion which can be exchanged for a diploma if the student passes the test in a subsequent attempt (http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/doe/sas/hsap/hsap2000.htm; http://www.myflorida education.com/sas/hsap/hsap1983.htm).

In 1995, the Florida Commission on Education Reform and Accountability recommended procedures for assessing student learning that would raise educational expectations for students. These recommendations resulted in the adoption of the Comprehensive Assessment Design in 1995. The Design specified the development of new statewide assessments and required that educational content standards be developed and adopted. This resulted in the development of the Sunshine State Standards, Florida's

curriculum frameworks. The standards and frameworks created guidelines for a statewide system that incorporated assessment, accountability, and in-service training.

In 1996, the State Board of Education approved a contract with CTB/McGraw-Hill for the development of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). The FCAT was designed to meet the requirements of the content defined by the Sunshine State Standards and the Comprehensive Assessment Design. The FCAT was field tested in 1997. In January 1998, the first scored reading and mathematics tests were administered to students in grades 4, 5, 8, and 10. The results of the initial administration of the FCAT were not used for accountability purposes, but beginning in 1999, school accountability for student performance began with the release of test results. The results were used in assigning school grades.

An expansion of the state student assessment program was authorized in 1999. This included additional grade levels and a norm-referenced test component (Stanford Achievement Test-version 9). The updated FCAT was administered to students in grades 3-10 in February and March of 2000. In 2001, achievement for all grade levels was reported for the first time and in 2003 the FCAT became the test required for high school graduation (http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/doe/sas/hsap/hsap2000.htm). (See Appendix B for a timeline of Florida Education Reform).

Assessment

Assessments play a key role in the standards-based accountability system. Linn (2000) discusses several reasons for the strong appeal of assessments. First, assessments are relatively inexpensive when compared to changes that entail increasing instructional staff, reducing class size, hiring additional teacher aides, or providing professional

development for teachers. Second, assessment can be externally mandated. It is easier to mandate assessment requirements at the state level than it is to implement change inside the classroom. Third, assessment changes can be rapidly implemented. Fourth, assessment results are visible. Assessment results can be reported to the press. This can greatly benefit policymakers because it is reasonable to anticipate increases in scores during the first years of a program regardless of whether true improvements in the overall achievements constructs have occurred.

Criticism of Standards and Assessments

The overall goal of educational standards and aligned assessments is to improve education by ensuring that teachers teach and students learn predetermined content standards. Although no educator would disagree with the goal of improving student performance, opposition does exist to the preset, prescribed, and mandated standards and assessments that are imposed on schools. Tierney (1998) voiced his opposition when he stated "in some ways the quest for educational improvement via standards and in turn proficiency testing places a premium on uniformity rather than diversity and favors prepackaged learning over emerging possibilities" (p.387). Many educators agree with Tierney's view, particularly in regards to the issue of student assessment. In response to the accountability movement and the subsequent implementation of state and national educational standards, standardized testing has increased dramatically in America's schools (Calfee, 1987; Durkin, 1987; Farr & Carey, 1986; Kamii, 1990; Reutzel & Mitchell, 2005; Teale, 1988; Valencia & Pearson, 1987). In Linn's (2000) review of educational reform, he concludes that high-stakes tests have become the public

benchmark of educational quality; however, "the unintended negative effects of the high-stakes accountability uses often outweigh the intended positive effects" (p. 14).

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) passed a resolution in 1999 expressing concern over the prevalence of high-stakes assessments. A portion of the NCTE resolution states:

> High stakes testing often harms students' daily experiences of learning, displaces more thoughtful and creative curriculum, diminishes the emotional well-being of educators and children, and unfairly damages the life-chances of members of vulnerable groups (p.2).

Their resolution also encourages other organizations to support a reconsideration of high-stakes assessment.

Contradictions between Assessments and Research

Statewide assessments and educational research are growing at comparable rates; however, they are often contradictory. As educators gain a deeper understanding of literacy processes, these processes are often undermined by the use of tests that are at odds with theory and practice. For example, current views of reading suggest that prior knowledge and metacognitive strategies have a significant impact on comprehension, yet reading assessments rarely account for these skills (Valencia, Pearson, Peters, & Wixson, 1989). Tensions also arise between classroom practices encouraged by high-stakes writing assessments and the notions of best practices that emerge from research on writing and writing instruction (Kelley, 2003).

Standards and high-stakes assessments have become a powerful force shaping many aspects of classroom life. Many educational researchers have addressed the

significant impact of testing on classroom practices (Dyson & Freedman, 1990; Hillocks, 2002; Kohn, 2000; Linn, 2000). As Darling-Hammond and Wise (1985) discovered in their study, teachers are dramatically affected by high-stakes assessments because their teaching ability is often evaluated by how well their students perform. They found that high-stakes testing effects teacher behavior in the following ways: teachers may alter curriculum emphasis, teach students how to take the test, teach students for the test (specific test preparation), have less time to teach, and feel extreme pressure. Teachers reported test preparation resulted in a narrowing of the curriculum. They stated that their effectiveness was often measured by test results which pressured them to teach tested areas of knowledge at the expense of untested areas. Despite their pedagogical beliefs, these teachers were forced to deemphasize important types of learning to ensure that their students performed well on mandated tests. In the name of accountability, teachers find themselves forced into teaching methods they do not believe in (Calkins, Montgomery, & Santman, 1998).

Impact of High-Stakes Testing and Standards on Instruction

Many educators agree that holding common standards for all students and mandating high–stakes assessments encourages a narrowing of the curriculum. High-stakes tests tend to measure skills that are simple to measure, in an economical and efficient way (Johnston, 2003). The focus is typically on lower-order thinking skills. In order to avoid the label of a "failing school", teachers and schools will logically focus on curriculum that is most likely to improve test scores (Afflerbach, 2002; Neil, 2003).

The test becomes a teacher's filter for making instructional decisions. Content and skills that are not on the assessment are often eliminated from the curriculum. This

results in narrowing the curriculum and lowering student expectations which negatively alters the educational environment for teachers and students (Amrein & Berliner, 2003; Coffman, 1993 in Linn, 2000; Jacobson, 2004; NCTE, 2000; Zigo, 2001; Mathis, 2003; Miller; 2002; Gordon & Reese, 1997; Graves, 2002; Steeves, Hodgson & Peterson, 2002; Johnston, 2003; Shepard, 1989).

Thomason and York's (2000) book, *Write on Target: Preparing Young Writers to Succeed on State Writing Tests*, is a resource for teachers who are interested in teaching test-writing as a genre. The authors' stress that by implementing the ideas and strategies presented in their book, teachers can set the stage for test success without compromising students' growth as writers.

They address the negative effects of formula writing and teaching to the test. Thomason and York (2000) compare formula writing to a fad diet. "No one doubts that fad diets-and formula writing- work in the short run. They just don't work long-term" (p. 66). They suggest that teachers use formula writing as one genre of writing. In regards to teaching to the test, they acknowledge that students need practice in writing to a prompt within time limits, yet they emphasize that the best way to prepare students for the test is to build fluency as writers. Teachers should help students "become comfortable with the writing process as used for authentic writing" (p.65). Students must learn to write without time limits before they are expected to write an effective piece in a predetermined amount of time.

Thomason and York (2000) recognize the pressures incurred from state mandated writing tests, but they offer positive approaches instead of criticism. Their book serves as a guide for teachers to create a classroom writing environment that encourages and

honors writing while preparing students for state writing tests using a writing workshop approach.

Writing

For the purposes of this study, I focused on intermediate grade students' perspectives of the impact that high-stakes writing assessments have on instructional practices and teaching strategies for writing. I begin this section by synthesizing recent studies on students' perceptions of writing and instruments that have been developed to access students' attitudes.

Studies on Students' Perceptions of Writing

Although research in the field is limited, various studies have been conducted to investigate students' perceptions of the general purposes of writing, children's perceptions of themselves as writers, what students view as important in writing, and children's attitudes toward writing (Bottomley, Henk, & Melnick, 1997/1998; Bradley, 2001; Fang, 1996; Kear, Coffman, McKenna & Ambrosia, 2000; Knudson, 1991, 1992, 1993 and 1995; Kos & Maslowski, 2001; Shook Marrion, & Ollila, 1989). These studies utilized interviews, surveys, field notes, and children's texts to obtain data on students' perceptions regarding these aspects of writing.

Shook, Marrion, & Ollila (1989) conducted interviews with first and second grade students to investigate their views about writing in general, personal preferences about writing, and self-concepts of writing ability. They discovered that the children had a definite opinion to share as they responded to the questions. In regards to the general purposes of writing, the data revealed that the students understood the communicative nature of writing and viewed writing as an important activity. Children exhibited clear

preferences about writing activities and topics. In response to questions related to the writers' self-concepts, a majority of the children (62%) considered themselves good writers, but voiced concerns about the mechanical aspects of writing.

Shook, Marrion, & Ollila's (1989) analysis of the interview data did not show significant sex or age differences; however, the data did indicate that primary age children are able to understand the writing process. They concluded that "children's viewpoints are crucial in understanding how young writers develop" (p. 138).

The results of the analysis suggest important implications for educators which include: placing increased value on children's exploration of writing, providing an environment that values acceptance and expression, modeling reading and writing activities for students, providing time for students to write, and finally, allowing children ownership of their writing (Shook Marrion, & Ollila, 1989).

Another study that explored young writers' perceptions of writing was conducted by Bradley (2001). She conducted a multi-case study in three first-grade classrooms. Data sources for this study included student interviews, writing samples, and teacher interviews. The students' responses to the interview questions were very similar to the interview responses provided in Shook et al's (1989) study. Most students were able to verbalize their thoughts about the meaning of writing (84%) and describe what they considered to be "good" writing. Another similarity between the studies had to do with the students' concern for the mechanics of writing. When the students in Bradley's study were asked to evaluate a peer's writing sample, they focused more on mechanics than on the writing process.

Bradley (2001) collected writing samples from each child in the study to compare what students said about "good" writing to what they actually did in their own writing. By comparing the student data, she found that 61% of the students "demonstrated that what they articulated about quality writing they could specifically do in their own writing" (p.288). Of the remaining students, 36% demonstrated a high correlation between what they said and the writing they produced. Only 3% of the study participants verbalized competencies that they did not demonstrate in their own writing. Based on the evidence in this study, Bradley concluded that "many young writers are aware of and can successfully use what they know and say about quality writing…children are far more sophisticated in their understandings of the complexities of writing than we often credit them" (p.292).

Classroom teaching was not observed, therefore, instructional differences were inferred from the teachers' interview responses. The three first grade teachers focused on different aspects of writing during their interviews. Bradley (2001) found a noticeable linkage between what the teachers and their respective students emphasized throughout the interviews. This study supports and adds to existing research by Fang (1996) about "how instructional differences and teachers' articulations do influence student articulations about writing and performance on writing tasks" (p.293).

Kos & Maslowski (2001) explored primary grade students' perceptions of writing by analyzing data from student interviews and student and teacher talk during small-group writing sessions. The goal of their study was to gather and analyze data from the students that would inform classroom instruction.

Interviews were conducted with the students at the beginning and end of the 5-month study. During the initial interviews, students were asked the following questions: "What do you need to do to become a good writer? Who is a good writer in your classroom? Why?" (p.571). The students' responses to the first question focused predominantly on handwriting (53%) and writing often (21%). The students were concerned with handwriting and felt that practice was necessary for improvement to occur. The practice they referred to focused on mechanics and conventions as opposed to organization or idea generation. Responses to the second question also focused on handwriting. They considered classmates to be "good writers" if they wrote neatly. Students' responses to these questions illustrate their intense concern with the physical components of writing.

Kos & Maslowski (2001) categorized the talk that took place during writing groups into idea generation, organization, ownership and audience, handwriting, spelling, and mechanics. During the small-group writing sessions, the teachers provided "scaffolded writing situations" (p.567). For example, teachers modeled brainstorming to assist students with idea generation and modeled the use of story maps to help with organization. Conversations about ideas and organization dominated the writing sessions. Conventions of writing were rarely discussed and unlike during the initial interviews, there was little discussion of handwriting.

The interviews conducted at the end of the study "were intended to uncover growth in children's perceptions of the qualities of good writing" (p.581). The researchers specifically wanted to see if the talk that occurred during group writing was reflected in the students' interview responses. References to handwriting, mechanics, and

spelling continued to be common responses during the second set of interviews. Students infrequently referred to ideas and organization in their interview responses even though these writing components were often discussed during their writing groups.

Kos & Maslowski (2001) concluded that their students possessed a strong desire to "become competent producers of writing. This need may have swayed their criteria for judging good writing toward production issues…" (p.584). The interaction and scaffolding that occurred during the writing groups enabled students to expand their criteria for good writing; however, the students continued to talk about handwriting and conventions when they were away from the group setting.

Fang (1996) interviewed fourth grader students and their language arts teacher to determine the relationship between teacher beliefs and student perceptions of good writing. The teacher and students were asked questions about how they perceived a good sample of writing. The teacher responded by describing a good piece of writing as a work that "should simultaneously address substance, mechanics, and style" (p.251). All of the students' responses were consistent with their teacher's beliefs. They said that "a good piece of writing must have a lot of details, be mechanically neat, contain challenge words, adventure, fun, and be interesting and effortful" (p.253). The emphasis of the students' responses varied greatly from the students' responses in the previously described studies in that they went beyond focusing on handwriting and conventions.

Fang (1996) concluded that the high correlation between the teacher's description of good writing and the students' perceptions of good writing indicate the strong impact that teacher's beliefs have on students' perceptions of literacy. He suggests that these results should be utilized to inform the instruction of pre-service teachers. Since this

influence came through daily instructional practices, Fang recommends that teacher educators need to help pre-service teachers "effectively translate their beliefs into sound instructional practices" (p.256).

A limited number of instruments have been developed to measure writer's self-perceptions and students' attitudes toward writing. Knudson (1991, 1992, & 1993) was one of the first researchers to develop writing attitude instruments. Knudson developed and used writing-attitude instruments with students in grades 1-3, 4-8, and 9-12.

In 1995, Knudson extended her earlier work (Knudson, 1991,1992, & 1993) and conducted a study "to determine the relationship of writing achievement and attitude toward writing as well as the relationship of grade level and gender to attitude toward writing" (p.90). The sample for this study consisted of students in grades 1-6. The students were administered the Knudson Writing Attitude Survey for Children (Grades 4-8) or the Knudson Writing Attitude Survey For Primary Grade Students (Grades 1-3) and they responded to a timed writing prompt. In addition, 12 randomly selected students from each grade level were interviewed.

The purpose of the interview was to give students an opportunity to elaborate and/or clarify responses given in the questionnaire and to provide information about school experiences. The students' responses revealed differences in writing emphasis as students got older. For example, students in grades 2 and 3 emphasized surface features when they responded to the question "What would you do if you wanted to write better than you do?" The older students' responses went beyond focusing solely on the product of writing to expressing an awareness of the writing process and the need for elaboration.

This difference supports Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1983) belief that children begin to advance past the focus on surface writing when they reach third grade. Students in grade 3 or 4 "have reached automatization in writing and can address other demands of the writing task" (Knudson, 1995, p.94).

Results of Knudson's analysis of students' attitudes toward writing and writing competence, suggest "that grade level, gender, and attitude toward writing are very good predictors of writing achievement. Specifically, students who are in upper grades, are female, and who have more positive attitudes toward writing are more likely to be above-average writers" (p.90). The analysis of the interview responses, as described above, indicate that children progress to more advanced aspects of writing as they get older.

Bottomley, Henk, and Melnick (1997/1998) developed the Writer Self-Perception Scale (WSPS) to measure fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students' perceptions of their own writing in order to enhance instruction. The WSPS also "provides educators with data on attitudes toward writing that make individual literacy evaluations more complete" (p.287). The WSPS is grounded in Bandura's (1977) theory of perceived self-efficacy which "predicts that a child's self-perception of writing ability will affect his/her subsequent writing growth" (p.287).

The WSPS contains 38 items that deal with writing ability in general and more specific aspects of writing including focus, organization, content, style, and coherence. The items represent one of the following five scales: General Progress (GPR), Specific Progress (SPR), Observational Comparison (OC), Social Feedback (SF), and Physiological States (PS). Bottomley et al., (1997/1998) believe that interactions in the five categories influence one another and do not operate independently. As a result, they

view literacy learning as complex and social. The researchers recommend that educators use the data obtained from the WSPS for individual and whole-group interventions and assessments in order to "make general assessments of their classroom writing climates and more specific appraisals of individual children's perceptions" (p.290).

While studying writing instruction, Kear, Coffman, McKenna, & Ambrosio (2000) recognized a lack of valid and reliable instruments for determining students' attitudes toward writing. In response to this, they developed the Writing Attitude Survey (WAS) to be used by educators to learn about students' attitudes toward writing and to inform instructional practices.

The items on the WAS were developed after reviewing Knudson's instruments (1991, 1992, 1993) and studying language arts methods textbooks. All of the 28 items begin with the phrase "How would you feel…" Students respond to the items by circling the picture of Garfield (the cartoon character) that best represents their feeling toward the question. The four Garfield pictures that accompany each question display emotions that range from very happy to very upset. Scores are determined by assigning 1-4 points to each response (4 points for "very happy", 3 points for "happy", 2 points for "unhappy" and 1 point for "very unhappy"). The total scores can be converted to a percentile by using the Table provided with the survey.

Kear et al., (2000) stress that data obtained from this survey "is meaningless unless the information is used to plan instruction (p. 13). They acknowledge that fostering positive writing attitudes in students is a challenging endeavor; however, they assert that "effective teaching strategies and engaging opportunities to write successfully can make real inroads in students perspectives" (p.15).

These studies and instruments that focus on students' perceptions of writing demonstrate the valuable information that students can provide to educators. Shook, Marion, and Ollila (1989), Bradley (2001), Kos and Maslowski (2001), and Fang (1996) all utilized interviews as a data collection tool. The rich data that was obtained in each study, demonstrated the valuable information that students can provide regardless of their age.

Bradley (2001) and Fang (1996) interviewed students and teachers in their studies. Although there was a three year difference between the grades of the students in the studies (first grade and 4th grade respectively), the data from both studies revealed a strong linkage between the students' and their respective teachers' responses. As mentioned previously, Fang (1996) concluded that this correlation indicates the strong impact that teachers' beliefs have on students' perceptions of literacy.

The instruments created by Knudson (1991, 1992, & 1993), Bottomley et al., (1997/1998), and Kear et al., (2000) all measure students attitudes toward writing. Knudson's (1991, 1992, & 1993) writing attitude instruments were developed for students in grades 1-3, 4-8, and 9-12 and therefore were appropriate for all grade levels. The main purpose of her surveys was to determine the relationship between writing achievement and attitude toward writing.

Bottomley et al.'s (1997/1998) Writer Self-Perception Scale was developed for fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students. Kear et al.'s (2000) Writing Attitude Survey was developed for elementary grade students. Both of these instruments were developed to obtain data that would enhance and inform instruction. In addition, the data enables educators to assess the climate of their classrooms.

As noted above, these studies all resulted in rich data about students' perceptions regarding various aspects of writing. Based on the rich data that was gathered in these studies by utilizing these methods, I also explored my research questions through surveys and interviews.

The following section presents theoretical approaches to literacy that serve as a framework for this study on students' perceptions of writing instruction.

Theoretical Approaches to Literacy

Discourse theory. Kinneavy (1971) gave a great deal of attention to purpose in discourse. Kinneavy (1971) stated that "purpose in discourse is all important. The aim of discourse determines everything else in the process of discourse (p.48)". He argues that modes of discourse are only important as a means of accomplishing a certain purpose. Skills in narrative, expository, or descriptive writing are of minimal use unless those skills serve a larger rhetorical purpose. Kinneavy (1971) asserted that theories of language and discourse "should be crowned with a viable framework of the uses of language" (p.38).

Kinneavy (1971) identified four major purposes of discourse: expressive, literary, persuasive, and referential. Each of these discourse types are characterized by different qualities and entail different thinking processes which result in pieces of discourse that have distinct features as well as different organizational patterns. Kinneavy suggested that skills in accomplishing one rhetorical purpose did not guarantee skills in accomplishing another. Kinneavy also claimed that a writer's purpose guides his/her choice about diction, organizational patterns, and content.

Bazerman (1992) honored Kinneavy's work in his essay, yet he stated that "Kinneavy provides guidance only for recognizing four idealized types of text to be produced or interpreted" (p. 106). Bazerman (1992) stressed that Kinneavy's discourse theory offers rich and useful information, but does not "provide guidelines for the acts of writing and reading, for recognizing one's local and cultural rhetorical situation, for shaping intent, and for pursuing interaction" (p.106).

Kinneavy's theory is based largely on the analysis of written product. He is concerned with how text appears (Bazerman, 1992). Odell, Cooper, and Courts (1978) stated, "If we are to use this theory in researching the composing process, it seems essential that theory be informed by the analysis of this process" (p.6). Odell et al., admit that this sort of analysis may be difficult to obtain because the cognitive processes of composing are complex and not directly observable.

Cognitive process model. Flower and Hayes (1981) were the first to present a model of writing grounded in both rhetoric and cognitive psychology. Their model offers a more complex look at processes and sub-processes of writing and was constructed to demonstrate that writing process elements are interactive and recursive.

These processes interact with the task environment, which includes the rhetorical problem and the emerging text. The second element is the writer's long-term memory which works to organize stored knowledge of the topic, audience awareness, and writing plans. The third element in their model contains the actual writing processes of planning, translating, and reviewing. The monitor, which functions as a writing strategist, controls these processes. During the composing process, the monitor decides when the writer moves from one writing process to the next.

Flower and Hayes (1981) described the writing process as the organizing of thoughts in a hierarchical, goal-directed way and as the expressing of this process on paper. They stressed that by placing emphasis on the writer, an important part of creativity is put where it belongs, "in the hands of the working, thinking writer" (p.386).

Cooper and Holzman (1989) criticized the Flower and Hayes model and the methodology by which data were collected. Their main concern was that writing is a social process structured by the environment as opposed to being strictly a cognitive process. They felt the writing should be explained in regards to social structure and classroom dynamics. They also questioned the think-aloud protocols utilized by Flower and Hayes, noting the difficulty of completing a task (writing) while verbalizing thought processes. Cooper and Holzman preferred situated studies that analyzed composing during classroom activities by looking at writers' processes.

Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) also applied a cognitive framework to writing. Their research suggested that numerous demands in writing compete for a writer's attention. Berieter and Scardamalia (1987) stated that the writing process is complex because of "the interdependency of components, which requires that a number of elements be coordinated or taken into account jointly" (p.133). These components are not limited to cognitive or mental processes, they also include the nature of the writing task.

Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) emphasized the control processes in writing. They characterized current cognitive theory based on the distinction between fixed structures and flexible control processes. According to Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) "the structures establish the constraints within which the control processes can operate.

The development of writing skills consists to a large extent in acquiring suitable control strategies (p. xi)". Structural changes, such as the knowledge structures of the writer, interact with the development of control strategies. This interaction creates a rich and complex pattern of observations and experimental results.

Process writing. Writing workshop approaches were researched, popularized, and promoted by Graves (1983, 1994, 2003), Calkins (1983, 1994), and Atwell (1987); however, Graves is the researcher most often associated with process writing. In 1975, Graves conducted one of the earliest studies of primary grade children's writing processes. He analyzed the actions of second grade students and discovered that their composing often began during the process of sketching or coloring. In Graves' yearlong study, two distinctive types of writers emerged: the reactive child and the reflective child. The reactive child used erratic problem-solving strategies, needed time to rehearse what he would write, and spoke out loud as he wrote. The reflective child needed little rehearsal before writing, and wrote rapidly and silently. Graves (1975) found that the characteristics of reactive and reflective writers exist in varying degrees in all children and can emerge under different writing conditions.

Graves (1975) defined three phases in the writing process: prewriting, composing, and postwriting. The prewriting phase immediately precedes the writing of the child. The composing phase begins and ends with the actual writing. The third phase, postwriting, refers to all of the behaviors following the completion of the writing. Graves (1975) stressed that teachers be involved in all three phases of the writing process as they are engaged by individual students. Up to this point, Graves' research focused on what writers did during the composing process.

Graves (1983) discussed some of the basic elements that contribute to learning. He stressed the importance of listening to children, allowing them to select their own topics, and the process of writing. A decade later, Graves (1994) began focusing on the conditions for learning within literate classrooms and how to use time well as a teacher of writing. In rethinking the concept of writing workshops, Dahl and Farnan (1998) state that "he reconsiders the role of writing conferences in providing instruction for children, contending that significant instruction in writing also comes through the social interactions among children and their independent experimentation with writing" (p.38). Graves (1994) suggests that classrooms move from rigid routines to classroom environments with focused attention on learning which allow children to explore writing.

Lensmire (1994, 2000) criticized the writing workshop approach. While working as a teacher researcher, Lensmire (1994) both acted in, and reflected on, the writing workshop in his third grade classroom. Through extensive field notes, he followed peer relationships and writing progress in his classroom. As the school year progressed, he became increasingly aware of the dominant role of social context in the workshop setting. Student writing became attacks on less-popular students. Teasing was voiced through writing, and genres that entailed personal sharing were avoided.

Lensmire (1994) suggested that workshops might work better if students work toward a common purpose in which the focus is shifted away from the use of writing as a means of playing out power relations among children. He also stressed that teacher guidance is central to the success of writing workshops. He supported the idea of teachers and students working together and discussing writing in a supportive environment for all children.

McCarthy (1994) agreed with Lensmire's criticisms of the writing workshop. She recommended that "teachers may need to balance student choice with developing a community in order to avoid the extreme individualism advocated by the Writing Workshop" (p. 228).

Dyson and Freedman (1990) criticized the writing workshop format as being too structured and predictable. Many writing classes developed formats in which all students would begin by prewriting (brainstorming and outlining), next they would write the complete composition based on their prewriting, and then students would be encouraged to revise. Dyson and Freedman (1990) stated that "writers need flexibility, and they need time to allow the subprocesses to cycle back on each other" (p.760).

Genre studies. Rhetorical studies of genre provide a deep understanding of the dynamic relationship between genre activities and the historical, institutional, and social contexts in which those activities transpire. Genre studies provide a societal look at writing (Dunmire, 2000). Cope and Kalantzis (1993) documented an educational experiment that began in Sydney, Australia. It presents an approach to issues of writing, access, and marginality. Although the authors of this text debate various consequences and emphases of genre teaching, they share a common goal of economic and social access through teaching which explains how texts work. Genre analysis is concerned with whole texts and their social functions (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993).

According to Cope and Kalantzis (1993) "all genre theorists would agree that genre literacy should open students' educational and social options by giving them access to discourse of educational significance and social power" (p.15). Genre literacy uses cultural differences as a resource for access. It also presents the teacher as an expert in

language, with an authoritative, not authoritarian status. Another principle that underlies genre literacy is the use of curriculum scaffolds that support the structure of a discipline and the recursive patterns that encompass classroom experience. The final principle in genre literacy is that students move back and forth between activity and receive knowledge, language and metalanguage, processes of induction and deduction, and experience and theory.

Progressivists view genre literacy as the return of transmission pedagogy in which classrooms are authoritarian and formal "language facts" are learned. Conservative educators may be suspicious of the concept of equity in education. They may view genre literacy as a threat to Western standards and status (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993). Lensmire (1994), on the other hand, views genre studies as an important development that recognizes that children may benefit from producing texts that they would not typically choose or have access to without teacher intervention.

The pedagogy that underlies genre theory is supportive to different modes of learning, unlike the rigidly structured traditional curriculum and the unstructured, natural progressive curriculum. Also, teachers are reinstated as professionals as opposed to their managerial role in progressivism or their authoritarian role in traditionalism.

All of these theoretical approaches to literacy: discourse theory, cognitive process model, process writing, and genre studies, offer frameworks for school literacy. They provide what they consider to be effective ways for students to develop as writers. Each approach has limitations yet adds to the body of knowledge of children's literacy.

While studying these theories, I reflected on my personal beliefs about literacy and how my beliefs support and/or refute these approaches. I believe that writing is a

combination of cognitive and social process that must be supported and guided by a competent teacher. Although I agree with many aspects of process writing, I also agree with Dyson and Freedman's (1990) criticism that the writing workshop format is too structured. Children need flexibility when they write. I support genre literacy's principle of utilizing curriculum scaffolds to support writing in the classroom. As stated above, in genre theory teachers are reinstated as professionals who guide students in the process of learning. These theoretical approaches to literacy informed the design of this study by painting a picture of writing that I referred to when establishing my interview guide.

Following is a section on changing perspectives of writing instruction that will show where we are today in terms of children's literacy.

Changing Perspectives on Writing Instruction

Prior to the 1970s, researchers and educators focused on children's written products and skills (Freedman, Flower, & Chafe, 1987). In the 1970s there was a major shift away from studying writing products to studying the processes that writers employ during writing (Freedman, Flower & Chafe, 1987; Flower & Hayes, 1981). Researchers and educators emphasized that a skillful product was the result of a composing process consisting of planning, drafting, revising, and editing. They began focusing on what people do when they write and how their writing could be best supported in the classroom (Calkins, 1994; Dyson & Freedman, 1990; Chapman, 2006; Dyson, 2001; Flower & Hayes, 1981; Graves, 1983; Graves, 2003; Scardamalia, 1984; Strickland, Bodino, Buchan, Jones, Nelson, & Rosen, 2001).

Twenty years later, the concept of a literacy event or practice was emphasized. The writing process unfolds within recurrent kinds of events or practices. Literacy events

are energized by particular purposes with and for particular people. For elementary school age students, the emphasis is on learning through participation in events in which oral language plays a dominant role (Dyson, 2001).

Skilled writing is an extremely sophisticated cognitive task that entails generative thought processes, reflection, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Henk, Marinak, Moore, & Mallette, 2003/2004; Hillocks, 2002). Stickland et al., (2001) define writing as a meaning-making process in which writers gather and organize ideas, draft compositions, revise and edit drafts, and publish their final products. They stress that the writing process is recursive, with writers moving back and forth among stages throughout the process. Hillocks (2002) addresses the recursive nature of writing by describing the typical process of a writer:

> The writer does not move forward in a straight line…Rather, she is more likely to collect data, make an analysis, begin a first draft, return to the data for further collection or analysis, revise the draft while it is still in progress, move forward again only to return once more to the data, and revise ideas again (p.29).

Current Best Practices in Writing Instruction

"The shift to a process approach to writing helped teachers understand how to support students' writing development and inspired changes in the writing curriculum" (Strickland et al., 2001, p.387). Helping students acquire the abundance of writing competencies is a demanding task for educators. There is a vast amount of research that identifies best practices in writing instruction. These best practices include: providing a variety of kinds of social interaction around writing, allowing children choices in their writing topics, and using literature (Atwell, 1987; Calkins, 1994; Chapman, 2006; Dyson

& Freedman, 1990; Graves, 1983; Graves, 2003; Kern, Andre, Schike, Barton, & McGuire, 2003; Lensmire, 1994; McComiskey, 2000; Nystrand, 2006; Ray, 2004; Schneider, 2001; Shelton & Fu, 2004; Thomason & York, 2000; Wolf & Davinroy, 1998; Wolf & Wolf, 2002).

Vygotsky's (1978) research on children's acquisition of language revealed that learning is a social process; children are initiated into written language by their interactions with other people. Children acquire knowledge as they participate in social activities. Britton (1993) emphasizes the importance of collaborative relationships between teachers and students. Effective teachers collaborate with students by modeling learning processes and involving students in that process.

Dyson and Freedman (1991) stress that schools can best promote development if they are social places where students have opportunities to interact with each other and their teacher. Student interaction can take various forms. Students may talk to one another about their individual writing or as they work together on a joint piece. According to Daiute and Dalton (1988) the playfulness of the verbal interactions among elementary school children encompasses its value because language play involves modeling, exploring, and negotiating language. "Children need opportunities to share ideas, collaborate, and respond to one another's writing (Chapman, 2006, p. 38)." These social interactions provide meaningful support to the writing development of children.

Writing research recommends that students should be allowed to write on topics of their choice (Atwell, 1987; Chapman, 2006; Dyson & Freedman, 1990; Graham, et al., 2007; Graves, 1975, 1983, 1994, & 2003; Ray, 2004; Higgins et al., 2006; Wolf & Wolf, 2002). Writing reflects the unique experiences of children and therefore, writers develop

a sense of ownership when selecting a writing topic (Atwell, 1987). In his study of the writing processes of seven year old children, Graves (1975) reached several conclusions related to topic choice. He found that when children are given a choice of what to write, they write more and in greater length than when specific topics are assigned. Graves (1975) also concluded that "an environment that requires large amounts of assigned writing inhibits the range, content, and amount of writing done by children" (p.235). In more recent works, Graves (1983, 1994, & 2003) reiterates the importance of topic choice by suggesting that when writers choose topics that they know something about, they can write with authority. Children are able to exercise stronger control of their writing and establish ownership and pride in their written work.

When given topic choice, children are often inclined to write in certain genres and styles. Providing students with a range of opportunities to write in different genres enables students to draw on other discourses from their lives. Although teachers should encourage their students to expand beyond their particular preferences, children will often be more successful if they begin with their strengths (Wolf & Davinroy, 1998). To support student expression, Schneider (2001) urges teachers "to provide students with the time to write on topics of their choice, in genres of their choice, without fear of criticism, exposure, or grades" (p. 423).

Lensmire (1994) suggests that teacher-assigned topics may not be limiting, but expand chances for growth in writing. He points to his work that emphasizes the importance of risk and peer influences in children's writing processes. Lensmire (1994) also supports genre studies as a positive development for traditional writing workshop approaches.

Literature should be an integral part of all writing curriculums (Calkins, 1994; Chapman, 2006; Elbow, 2000; Fecho, Allen, Mazaros, & Inyega, 2006; Graves, 1994; Kern, Andre, Schilke, Barton, & McGuire, 2003; Lensmire, 1994; Thomason & York, 2000). Children should be surrounded by literature. By exposing children to literature, written by children and adults, they have an opportunity to see examples of good compositions. Literature offers children authentic purposes to write and clear models to follow (Kern et al., 2003). Literature can serve as model to help children evaluate their own work and the work of professional writers (Graves, 1994).

When students read every day, are read to every day, and write every day, the connection between reading and writing becomes apparent to them. Chapman (2006) stresses that to promote students' writing development as well as their overall literacy growth, "children need opportunities to engage with quality literature through listening, reading, discussing, and responding (p.38)". Literature can serve as a scaffold for children's writing. When teachers and students examine the techniques that good writers use, students can incorporate these ideas in their own pieces of writing (Dyson, 1990; Lensmire, 1994).

The challenge for schools and teachers is to provide support to their students. In their review of the literature on teaching writing, Dyson and Freedman (1990) conclude that "through supportive and responsive classroom environments, schools may best help each generation grow into literacy in ways that enable them to use written language productively and fulfillingly throughout their lives" (p. 25).

High-Stakes Writing Assessments Impact on Instruction

Many factors influence classroom writing instruction. Currently, few educators would argue that the most significant of these factors is the high-stakes assessment of writing legislated by most state governments. These assessments intend to measure the progress of schools, teachers, and students toward achieving goals set forth in academic standards. Tensions arise between the classroom practices encouraged by these high-stakes assessments and the notions of best practices that emerge from the domains of research on writing and writing instruction (Hillocks, 1986).

Relevant studies have shown a growing understanding for the ways students learn to write and the methods utilized by successful writing instructors (Atwell, 1987; Calkins, 1994; Dahl & Farnan, 1998; Dyson, 2001; Elbow, 1981; Graves, 1983, 1994, & 2003; McCarthy, 1994; Strickland et al., 2001; Wolf & Wolf, 2002). Relatively few studies, however, have addressed the impact that high-stakes writing assessments have on instructional practices and teaching strategies.

In the last decade, the most popular high-stakes writing assessments have been modeled after the evaluations commonly used by the Educational Testing Service. In these assessments, students write on an assigned topic, in a set period of time, and in a testing situation (Dyson & Freedman, 1990). These conditions are in stark contrast to what researchers consider best practices for writing instruction (Hillocks, 2002).

Are students aware of the impact of high-stakes assessments on writing instruction? This study investigates students' perceptions of writing instruction. The Suncoast Young Authors Celebration served as the context for this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

This chapter describes the conduct of the study and includes the purpose, context, research questions, design of the study, a description of the research site and sample, sources of data, data analysis, and limitations of the study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine students' perceptions of writing instruction to gain insights into their awareness of the impact of high-stakes writing assessments on instructional practices and teaching strategies. Students in grades four and five who attended the 2004 Suncoast Young Authors Celebration (SYAC) served as the population for this study.

Context

The Suncoast Young Authors Celebration (SYAC) is an annual writing event held at the University of South Florida. SYAC was established in 1985 by Dr. Gloria Houston as a forum for students to share their writing and learn writing techniques from professional authors. Since 1999, Dr. Jenifer Schneider has been solely responsible for organizing SYAC. SYAC's purpose "is to honor the creativity of children and promote lifelong writing, reading, and visual expression" (http:/ww.coedu.usf.edu/syac/generalinfo.htm, p.1). The conference is not marketed as a writing contest, but as an opportunity for students to share their written and/or illustrated work.

SYAC is attended by children in grades Kindergarten through five who have written and/or illustrated works such as stories, poems and non-fiction. All public and private schools in the local service area are invited to attend the event. Individual schools are responsible for selecting students to participate in the conference using their own criteria. Selection procedures include: school writing contests, student nominations by self and/or peers, and teacher selection.

When children come to SYAC, they attend a general assembly and break-out sessions. During the general assembly, the students share their work with each other, write letters to the authors, design t-shirts for next year's conference, purchase books, receive autographs from the authors and illustrators, and have their faces painted. The break-out sessions are led by professional authors and illustrators of children's books. During these sessions, children participate in activities related to writing and drawing.

Over the years, the SYAC has grown from several hundred children representing 20 schools to over 1,000 children representing 90 schools. The USF College of Education, Department of Childhood Education continues to recognize the writing, creativity, and effort of local children by supporting the SYAC (http:/ww.coedu.usf.edu/syac/generalinfo.htm).

I selected the SYAC as the population for this study because it is a gathering of children from a variety of schools that have an interest in writing and/or have been selected to attend because they are good writers. Students who attend SYAC have an opportunity to interact with students from other schools and grade levels who share this interest. I anticipated that their fascination, ability, and interest in writing would result in thoughtful and rich survey and interview responses. Through their responses, I explored

and described how these children perceive writing instruction and the impact of high-stakes writing assessments.

My primary research question is: how do proficient intermediate grade writers' perceive writing in school. The following questions guided my inquiry:

1 What are students' views of the purposes for writing at school?

2 What are students' views of the differing contexts for writing at school?

3 What decisions do children make when they write at school?

4 What are students' views of the role of their teachers in writing instruction?

5 How do students interpret writing assessment?

6 What are students' views of high-stakes writing exams?

7 Do students' interview responses reflect their survey responses?

Design

Although there are different traditions within qualitative research, the general design of qualitative research is similar across the traditions. The way qualitative researchers precede in their studies is based on the following theoretical assumptions: meaning and process are crucial in understanding human behavior, descriptive data are what is important to collect, and analysis is best done inductively. The various stages of qualitative research are not as segmented as traditional research because design decisions are often made throughout the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

As stated above, the goal of qualitative research is to better understand human behavior and experience. Qualitative researchers "seek to grasp the processes by which people construct meaning and to describe what those meanings are" (Bogdan & Biklen,

1992, p. 49). This study is composed of descriptive research. The purpose of this study was to describe a selected group's perception on an issue. In this case, intermediate grade students' perceptions of writing in school.

The studies on students' perceptions of writing that were described in chapter 2 illustrate how vital students' perceptions can be to inform classroom instruction (Bottomley et al., 1997/1998; Bradley, 2001; Fang, 1996; Kear et al., 2000; Knudson, 1995; Kos & Maslowski, 2001; Shook et al., 1989). Survey and interviews were the predominate methods of data collection in these studies. Based on the rich data that were gathered in these studies by utilizing these methods, I also explored my research questions through surveys and interviews.

I used the SYAC survey because it was already in place and had been used previously with students who attended Suncoast Young Author Celebrations. Also, the survey was predominately used as a tool to find participants for the study. I used the survey questions to obtain general information about the students' perceptions of writing instruction and writing assessment.

I conducted interviews with a sample of SYAC participants who completed the survey to gain a richer understanding of their perspectives on classroom experiences. The interviews provided me with an opportunity to question the students about best practices in writing instruction and research-proven methods. I anticipated details to result from exploring/probing techniques such as those recommended by Seidman (1991), Bogdan and Biklen (1992) and Patton (2002). According to Patton (2000) "probes are used to deepen the response to a question, increase the richness and depth of responses, and give cues to the interviewee about the level of response that is desired" (p.

372). He suggested using *detail-oriented probes*, such as "when", "who", "where", "what", and "how" to get a complete picture of an experience, *elaboration probes*, such as gentle head nodding to keep a respondent talking, and *clarification probes*, such as "what do you mean" and "could you say some more about that" if a statement made by the interviewee is ambiguous.

Overview of Research

Participants

The sample for this study was public school students in grades four and five who attended the 2004 SYAC. These students attended public elementary schools in the university's service area. FCAT (Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test) Writing is administered to all students in grade 4 who attend Florida's public schools and is therefore a part of their educational environment. I included fifth graders in the study because they had taken the FCAT Writing the year prior to this study and I was curious to get their views on writing as well as to see if their perceptions of purposes for writing, contexts for writing, decisions they made when writing, views of their teachers' roles, and their views of writing assessment and high-stakes writing exams were different from the fourth graders in the study.

One of the local public school districts who participated in the study had an enrollment of 88,542 elementary students when the data were collected. This district's ethnic make-up was 44.29% white, 22.34% black, 25.66% Hispanic, 2.38% Asian, .25% Indian, and 5.08% multiracial. Breakdown by gender was not available (Hillsborough County School District, 2003). The other participating local school district had an

enrollment of 25,276 elementary students when the data were collected. Ethnic make-up was not available (http://www.pasco.k12.fl.us).

A total of 760 students attended the 2004 Suncoast Young Authors Celebration. The participants included 225 fourth graders and 191 fifth graders. From the 211 returned surveys, I randomly selected 15 students in grade four and 15 students in grade five who attended public schools to serve as potential interviewees. My goal was to find 20 verbal students (10 fourth graders and 10 fifth graders) from the sample of interviewees to participate in the study. The first 20 students who I interviewed were verbal and therefore it was not necessary to interview any other students. Table 1 provides information about the students' grade, gender, and race. It also includes a quote from each participant. Each student has been given a pseudonym for future reference. See Appendix K for a description of each student.

Table 1

Students' Pseudonyms, Grade, Gender, Race, and Quote

NAME	GRADE	GENDER	RACE	QUOTE
James	4th	Male	Caucasian	"The teacher I had last year was one of the best teachers in writing at the school, so that's one of the reasons I'm so good at it."
Roberto	4th	Male	Hispanic	"Every Thursday we went to the science lab and we'd take notes about stuff. We had hermit crabs, all males, and it wasn't a good idea because they killed each other in a fight.
Theo	4th	Male	Caucasian/ African American	"I would make connections, like if it was an expository and you had to write about what you did, I would connect it to another book that I have read."
Karen	4th	Female	Caucasian	"I use lots of details…I write down ideas before I start writing."
Lola	4th	Female	Hispanic	"I like when my teacher gives me a topic because sometimes I really don't know what topic to write about."
Mary	4th	Female	Caucasian	"I write because it is claming and it's just my hobby and it Is fun to do."
Nancy	4th	Female	Caucasian	"I like my teacher's topics, but sometimes I like mine more."
Sally	4th	Female	Caucasian	"A demand write is just like FCAT almost. We have prompts, we have 45 minutes to write using that prompt, and we have to write a paragraph in complete sentences and the whole nine yards."
Shaye	4th	Female	African American	"I like reading and I like writing down words."
Vanessa	4th	Female	Caucasian	"She (teacher) would read stories that she had written in the past as an example for us."
Joe	5th	Male	Caucasian	"Because like older people say we could be learning more things in earlier grades. I'd rather do writing once in a while than one big test that takes a week out of your time."
Ryan	5th	Male	Caucasian	"You're really tense when you first start it (FCAT). You don't exactly focus like a normal test because it determines your grade and if you are going to the next grade or not. A lot of people get tense and they don't do real good, like I didn't do real good."
Ariel	5th	Female	Hispanic/ African American	"(For planning) We did a triangle like thing and we'd put, like, stuff on it like the setting, put in the setting group, problem, problem solving, and characters."
Gina	5th	Female	Caucasian	"It (teacher's modeling) kind of gave you an explanation and you knew what you were doing."
Jen	5th	Female	Caucasian	"Well, all my papers she (teacher) would put stickers and say that you're an excellent writer and that made me feel good."
Melissa	5th	Female	Caucasian	"I think she (teacher) had conferences one time in class but I wasn't in there."
Sharon	5th	Female	African American	"She (teacher) would say that most authors don't give you hints or clues to what any problem is or how they are going to solve it before it is time, so the answer keeps you wanting to read it."
Sue	5th	Female	Caucasian	"They (teachers) tell you to do an assignment and they don't give you enough time. And it's hard to think when they are talking."
Sylvia	5th	Female	Hispanic	"My 5th grade teacher didn't give us a topic. In 4th grade she sort of gave us topics because the FCAT gave you topics and she wanted us to get used to using other people's topics."
Tonya	5th	Female	Caucasian	"I just don't like it (teacher's editing) because they change a lot of thoughts and I like it the way it was."

Consent

Prior to beginning this study, I obtained permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. I was added as key personnel to Dr. Jenifer Schneider's existing IRB Application for Continuing/Final Review (See Appendix C). Dr. Schneider is an associate professor in the College of Education at the University of South Florida. She is also the person responsible for organizing and overseeing the Suncoast Young Author's Celebration.

To collect data, the designated school contacts distributed information packets to the parents of all students who attended the conference. The packets contained a letter explaining the nature of the study and official consent forms. By signing the parent consent form, signing the child's assent statement, and completing the survey, the parents verified that they had been informed about the study and would allow their child to participate in the research project.

Data Collection and Sources

Survey

The aim of a survey is to obtain information from a large number of individuals which can be analyzed and patterns extracted and comparisons made. In surveys, all respondents are asked the same questions in, as far as possible, the same circumstances. Question wording is difficult and piloting is utilized to ensure that all questions mean the same thing to all respondents (Bell, 1993).

Survey item development. Dr. Jenifer Schneider developed a survey for participants of SYAC to investigate students' perceptions of writing. The original survey

was developed based on Dr. Schneider's personal areas of interest. It was piloted with a class of second grade students at a low SES school. The original survey was used for the three years prior to this study (J. J. Schneider, personal communication, February 21, 2004). I used this survey because it was already in place and had been administered previously.

A content analysis of three years of survey data allowed many of the questions to be converted to categorical responses. This newly revised survey was administered for the first time in 2004. For the purposes of this study, questions #24, 25, and 26, which pertain to writing instruction and assessment, were added to the second revision of the survey (See Appendix D).

The survey contained 26 items which consist of 4 open response items, 2 items with yes/no responses, 7 Likert items that ask the students to respond by answering never, sometimes or a lot, and 3 items that pertain to personal information about the respondent. There are 10 items that allow students to make a selection from categorical responses (See Appendix D).

Although only three questions were added for the purpose of this study, all questions that pertain to students' perceptions of writing exams, writing assessment, the decisions children make when they write, students' views of the purposes and contexts for writing and writing instruction were analyzed. Questions #6, 11, 13, 17, 18, 19, 23, 24, 25, and 26 on the 2nd revision of the survey address my research questions (See Appendix D). Appendix E presents a chart that displays which survey questions correspond with each research question. Question #25 addresses how students' view the purposes and contexts for writing at school. Questions #6, 11, and 13 address the

decisions children make when they write at school. Questions #17, 18, and 19, address students' views of their teachers' roles in writing instruction. Questions #23, 24, and 26 address students' views of writing assessment.

Pilot. The first revision of the survey was piloted with 25 students from a local public elementary school (See Appendix F). Informed consent was received from the students' parents prior to piloting. The pilot group consisted of one Kindergartener, two first graders, four second graders, five third graders, six fourth graders and seven fifth graders. The number of students from each grade level reflects the percentage of students from each grade level who attended the 2003 Suncoast Young Authors Celebration (SYAC). Their feedback was used to revise the survey questions. For example, on questions # 5, 6, and 7 (See Appendix F) six students were unsure of the meaning of the term "paper". In the 2nd revision of the survey, "paper" was replaced with "writing". Question #20 (See Appendix D) was reworded because students were misinterpreting the question. In the pilot survey, question # 20 asked, "Does your classroom have a computer you can use to write?" A number of students only read the beginning of the question and immediately responded "yes" because all classrooms have a computer.

In addition, a professor in language arts with expertise in writing and children's literature reviewed the survey. She suggested that different examples of books should be used for fantasy and realistic fiction. She felt that *Because of Winn Dixie* was relatively new and not likely familiar to many students and that *Harry Potter* was high fantasy with such an elaborate make-believe world that students may miss less elaborate fantasies. Based on her suggestions, an additional example of a fantasy (*Charlotte's Web*) and a realistic story (*Junie B. Jones*) were added to the revised survey.

The surveys were distributed to the schools prior to the conference. The designated school contact person was asked to distribute the surveys to the students. The students were instructed to complete the surveys at home and bring the completed surveys to the conference. Parents were encouraged to assist students in reading and comprehending the questions. The students were instructed to answer the questions with their own honest opinions and the survey directions emphasized that there were no right or wrong answers. Surveys with stamped self-addressed envelopes were available at the event for children who did not complete one prior to the conference.

Return rate. Dr. Schneider e-mailed the school contact persons to confirm that the surveys were distributed and to remind them to encourage the students to return the completed surveys. In 2003, 39.1% of the SYAC surveys were returned. In 2004, 28% of the SYAC surveys (211 out of 760) were returned for analysis.

Interviews

Interviewing is a powerful interactive data collection technique. Interviews can be structured or unstructured, casual or in-depth. Typically, qualitative interviews are in-depth and can be likened to conversations with a purpose (Potter, 1996). "At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experiences of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (Seidman, 1991, p.3). Seidman (1991) stresses that preparation, planning, and structure, are crucial for in-depth interviewing. This holds true throughout the entire interview process, including the selection of participants.

The purpose of an in-depth interview study is to understand the personal perspectives and experiences of those who are interviewed (Patton, 2002; Seidman,

1991). For this study, the purpose of the interviews was to gain information about students' perspectives of writing and to provide students with an opportunity to clarify and elaborate upon responses given in the survey. The interviewer is responsible for posing questions that make it clear to the interviewee what is being asked (Patton, 2002).

Sampling. The purpose of an in-depth interview study is to understand the experiences of those who are interviewed, not to predict or control that experience. The researcher's task is to present the experiences of interviewees in enough detail that others who read the study can connect to that experience, learn how it is constituted, and deepen their understanding of the reflected issues (Seidman, 1991).

For the interview portion of my study, I utilized stratified random sampling. The purpose of a small random sample is credibility, not representativeness. Samples are randomly selected prior to knowing how the outcomes will appear. The goal of a small, random sample is not to make statistical generalizations, but to reduce suspicion about why particular cases were selected for study (Patton, 2002). This sampling approach did not allow my bias to enter during the selection process.

Stratified samples are samples within samples (Patton, 2002). For this study, the sample was stratified by grade level and public and private schools. Students in grades 4 and 5 who attended public schools served as participants in the study. FCAT Writing is administered to all fourth grade students in Florida's public schools and is therefore part of their educational environment.

After separating the surveys by grade level and public and private schools, I randomly selected 15 fourth graders and 15 fifth graders who attended public schools.

This made a total of 30 potential interviewees. This sample reflected the population of fourth and fifth grade students from public schools who attended the 2004 SYAC.

Data for this study were primarily gathered through interviews; therefore, it was important that the students were verbal. The following selection criteria were developed in order to eliminate non-verbal students as participants. If the interviewee gave one word answers, said "I don't know" or declined to respond for 90% or more of the interview questions, he/she would be omitted from the study. Fortunately, the first 20 students interviewed met the above criteria; therefore, I met my goal to analyze 20 student interviews. The interview sample consisted of 7 female and 3 male fourth grade students and 8 female and 2 male fifth grade students.

Qualitative inquiry is very ambiguous, particularly in regards to sample size. There are no specific rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. Sample size depends on numerous factors, including what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources. Patton (2002) recommends that qualitative sampling designs specify minimum samples based on reasonable coverage of the phenomena. The design should be understood to be flexible and may change as the inquiry unfolds. Patton (2002) stresses that qualitative researchers must exercise caution by not over generalizing from samples. Following these suggestions should alleviate concerns regarding small sample size.

Interview Approach. After the writing conference, audio-taped interviews were conducted at a bookstore or public library at a time convenient for the parent and child. Each interview, except for one, lasted approximately 20 minutes. The students were

interviewed individually to avoid peer influence on responses which may have altered the validity of the data. In two instances the parents elected to sit with us during the interviews. Their presence appeared to have a stifling effect on the interviews. The students were reserved and seemed somewhat uncomfortable.

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992) a key strategy for the qualitative interviewer is to avoid questions that can be answered by "yes" or "no". Details will result from probing questions that require an exploration. I utilized the interview approach that Patton (2002) refers to as the general interview guide approach. An interview guide lists questions and/or issues that are to be explored during the interview and ensures that a similar line of inquiry is pursued with each individual. "The guide helps make interviewing a number of different people more systematic and comprehensive by delimiting in advance the issues to be explored" (Patton, 2002, p.343).

Pre-determined issues and questions guided each interview (See Appendix G). These questions were relatively open-ended and focused on the research question: how do proficient intermediate grade writers' perceive writing in school? Appendix I displays a chart that shows which interview questions correspond with each research question.

The guiding questions were piloted with a primary grade student and an intermediate grade student at a local public elementary school. Their feedback assisted me in rewording questions to make them more comprehensible.

The interviews were audio taped, but this did not eliminate the need for taking notes. Patton (2002) lists four purposes that notes can serve: notes can help the interviewer formulate new questions as the interview progresses, notes can stimulate early insights that may be relevant to pursue in subsequent interviews, notes can facilitate

later analysis, and notes are a backup in the event the tape recorder malfunctions or the tape is accidentally erased. My written notes included information about the students' body language, race, and overall demeanor. I referred to my notes when I read the transcriptions from the students' interviews and transferred information from my written notes to the transcripts.

The period after the interview is a time for elaboration and reflection that is critical for the validity of qualitative inquiry. I allotted time after each interview to make observations about, reflect on, and learn from each interview (Patton, 2002). In addition, the interviews were transcribed as soon as possible which allowed me to note any nonverbal incidents that occurred during the interviews, including shrugs, gestures, pauses, and/or interruptions (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Seidman, 1991).

Member checking. I utilized member-checking at the end of each interview to ensure accuracy of responses. I restated the students' responses which provided the interviewees an opportunity to confirm their responses. In addition, after all of the interviews were completed I randomly selected 3 fourth grade students and 3 fifth grade students to contact by phone. When I called the students, their parents answered the phone and I explained who I was and the purpose for my call. When speaking to the students, I briefly reminded them about our interview and proceeded to restate the interview questions that I asked as well as their responses. All 6 students who I contacted confirmed the accuracy of their interview responses.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis entails organizing data, breaking data down into meaningful units, synthesizing data, looking for patterns, revealing what is important and

what can be learned, and determining what will be shared with others (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Wiersma (1995) describes analysis in qualitative research as a "process of successive approximations toward an accurate description and the interpretation of the phenomenon" (p. 216). The emphasis is on describing the phenomenon in its context and then interpreting the data.

The data of a qualitative study can become quite massive and the task of analyzing the acquired data can seem overwhelming, especially for beginning researchers. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) offer the following suggestions to help make analysis an ongoing part of data collection:

1. Force yourself to make decisions that narrow the study.
2. Force yourself to make decisions concerning the type of study you want to accomplish.
3. Develop analytic questions.
4. Write "observer's comments" about ideas you generate.
5. Write memos to yourself about what you are learning.
6. Play with metaphors, analogies, and concepts.
7. Use visual devices.

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) present three additional points regarding analysis in the field. First, they encourage researchers to speculate throughout the study in order to take chances necessary to develop ideas. Their second suggestion involves venting. This can be accomplished by talking about ideas with others or by writing memos, observer's comments, and eventually a text. Their final suggestion is to mark up data while reviewing it. This includes circling key words, underlining sections, and jotting down

ideas in the margins. They stress that these points, as well as the seven previously mentioned suggestions, are significant for both ongoing and final analysis.

I followed these suggestions by writing notes in a journal, using a large chart as a visual device to notate patterns in the data, discussing ideas with fellow doctoral students and my committee members, and marking up data while reviewing it for patterns.

Another mode of analysis begins after the data have been collected. The large quantity of descriptive information obtained during data collection needs to be organized and this process is called coding. Wiersma (1995) likens the organizational part of coding to the preparation for a large rummage sale of used clothing in which donations need to be sorted, organized, divided into categories and then subdivided into additional categories.

Developing a coding system entails searching through data for patterns as well as for topics that the data covers, and then writing down phrases and/or words to represent the patterns and topics (Bogdan &Biklen, 1992).

Survey Analysis

Although the majority of the data collected for this study are qualitative in nature, the survey contained items that were analyzed quantitatively. A multi-method approach was used to analyze the survey results. Responses to the yes/no questions, never/sometimes/a lot questions, and categorical question #24 were recorded on a summary sheet and tallied to determine general trends. The quantitative data provided by these responses are presented as percentages in my results. Three of the categorical survey questions (# 17, 18, and 19) were analyzed in order to index the amount of relationship between the students' survey and interview responses. Survey questions 17

and 19 contained 11 variables (responses to the particular question that students could select) and question 18 had 5 variables. I created an Excel spreadsheet that displayed a value of 1 if the students checked a variable on the survey or mentioned it during the interview and a value of 0 if they did not check the variable on the survey or mention it during the interview (See Appendix K). I created a SAS code to import in the Excel data and created table comparisons to run the phi correlations.

Narrative responses for questions 25 and 26 were examined for patterns and topics. I wrote down phrases and words to represent these patterns and topics. These phrases and words became coding categories. Sorting the descriptive data into the coding categories allowed me to summarize the main ideas of the students' responses (Bell, 1993; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Patton, 2002).

Interview Analysis

After conducting and transcribing the interviews, I organized and synthesized the data to make sense of the information. I read the transcriptions several times and searched for patterns of behavior or thinking, phrases or words, and incidents that appeared regularly or seemed noteworthy. I wrote key phrases on chart paper as categories became apparent. I also listed the transcript number and page number where the phrases appeared. If I saw a comment 3 or more times, I considered it a pattern.

After listing patterns that I deemed noteworthy, I randomly selected 3 interview transcripts for a fellow doctoral student to read. I instructed her to read the transcripts and note patterns that she saw. Next she was instructed to review my emerging categories/codes and compare them to hers. When we met to discuss her findings, we

found a great similarity between our patterns. Based on our discussion, I reworded and combined some of the pattern codes.

The words and phrases describing these occurrences became my coding categories (See Appendix I). These categories were assigned abbreviations and a color for highlighting. I read through the transcripts looking for words and/or phrases that corresponded with each coding category. I highlighted the data units with the corresponding color and wrote the coding abbreviation in the margin.

Triangulation

Patton (2002) discusses the benefits of data triangulation: using multiple data collection techniques to study the same issue. Patton (2002) stresses that the strategy of triangulation is extremely beneficial to data analysis, "not only in providing diverse ways of looking at the same phenomenon but in adding to credibility by strengthening the confidence in whatever conclusions are drawn" (p.556). Triangulation is used to check for consistency, yet various types of data may provide different results. "Finding such inconsistencies ought not be viewed as weakening the credibility of results, but rather as offering opportunities for deeper insight into the relationship between inquiry approach and the phenomena under study" (Patton, 2002, p. 556).

Triangulation of qualitative data sources provides cross-data consistency checks and enables comparisons between information obtained at different times and by different means (Patton, 2002). In this study, data triangulation consisted of comparing survey responses with interview responses. I utilized within case analysis to examine individual students' responses to the surveys and interviews. Through comparative analysis, I analyzed the similarities and/or differences between the two data bases. The consistency

and/or inconsistency of their responses are reported in my results. In addition, member checking, which is described below, served as means of adding credibility to the study.

Results of Analysis

After the data were coded and sorted, I began the final stage of analysis, writing up the research. Writing up qualitative findings is an interpretative craft and can take a variety of forms. The data analysis produced a tremendous amount of descriptions that provided a foundation and starting point for my writing (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). I described what I learned by weaving descriptions, speakers' words, survey data and my personal interpretations into a rich and descriptive narrative.

Trustworthiness of the Research

A detailed description of the research process and outcomes provides readers with a basis for judging the credibility of a study. It enables readers to look closely at the sample and procedures for data collection and analysis and adds trust in the reported outcomes.

Maykut and Morehouse (1994) describe four aspects of the research process that contribute to trustworthiness: multiple methods of data collection, building an audit trail, working with a research team, and member checks. Multiple methods of data collection increase the likelihood that the topic of interest is being understood and presented from various points of view. In addition, convergence of a major pattern or theme in the data lends to credibility of the findings.

The data acquired during the study serve as a permanent audit trail of research. This documentation allows the researcher to walk interested parties through the entire

process of his/her research so that they can understand the research path and judge the trustworthiness of outcomes.

The trustworthiness of a qualitative study can be increased by working with other researchers. Team members can act as peer debriefers, raising questions of bias when necessary.

Member checking is a process of allowing research participants to tell you if you have accurately described their experience. Members' feedback is very valuable and often helps researchers see things they may have missed.

In this study, I followed Maykut and Morehouse's (1994) suggestions for credibility by utilizing multiple methods of data: surveys and interviews, building an audit trail, conducting member checks, and working with peer debriefers.

In addition to utilizing member-checking during the interviews, after all of the interviews were completed I randomly selected 3 fourth grade students and 3 fifth grade students to contact by phone to confirm the accuracy of their responses. All 6 students who I contacted confirmed their interview responses.

To help monitor my bias in the interviews, a doctoral student in literacy served as my peer debriefer. I shared by negative views regarding high-stakes testing with her so that she would listen for possible examples of my bias in the interviews. She listened to the audio tapes of the first few interviews. When we met to discuss her findings, she stated that no bias was evident. She suggested that I increase my probing techniques by expanding more on student responses. She also suggested that I add the following question to my interview guide: Do you write during Reading class? She felt that this would add to my information about content area writing. I used her suggestions in the

subsequent interviews. I also received her feedback on the interview summaries that were utilized during the member-checking process with the interviewees.

I conferred with another doctoral student throughout the analysis segment of my study while developing coding categories and interpreting the data. To assist with the coding categories, she read several interview transcripts and noted patterns that she saw. She then reviewed the codes/patterns that I had created based on the interview data and compared them with hers. We met to discuss the patterns and agreed on appropriate wording for the interview codes. She also pointed out three areas that she viewed as self–generated by the students: FCAT, anxiety, and timed-writing. She felt strongly that student responses related to these areas emerged from the data and were not elicited from protocol questions. Her feedback led to discussions about data themes that added to the credibility of this study.

I utilized negative case analysis to further reduce researcher bias. According to Patton (2002), the understanding of patterns and trends identified in a study "is increased by considering the instances that do not fit with the pattern" (p.554). Analyzing negative cases, or outliers, adds credibility to the study by showing the researcher's openness in considering alternative possibilities. Lola was an outlier in the study. She was the only participant who stated that she did not write during subjects other than language arts. I probed and reworded the interview questions, but she maintained the stance that she only wrote during language arts. Compared to the other interviewees, Lola's responses were short and she paused often during the interview. Lola often nodded when responding to my questions instead of verbalizing her responses.

Limitations

This study is limited in several ways. First, although the sample reflects the population of children who attend the SYAC, it does not accurately reflect the demographic mix of the districts due to selection procedures previously discussed. Another limitation is the academic abilities of the sample. The students who attend SYAC most likely are strong writers. Therefore, findings can not be generalized beyond the event participants. In addition, the sample size for the study was small (20 participants).

As noted above, I used this survey because it was already created and was approved by the University. In retrospect, the survey had a few flaws. The survey questions that referred to teachers were too general. In addition, the wording of question #18 was confusing ("What does your teacher do that doesn't help you write?"). The wording of this question may have affected the students' responses and resulted in the inability to calculate a phi coefficient for two of the question's variables (This will be discussed more in chapter 4.). If I had to do this study again, I would have utilized the Writer Self-Perception Scale (WSPS) developed by Bottomley et al., (1997/1998) because it was created to measure fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students' perceptions of their own writing. The reliability estimates for the five scales on the WSPS were very high for effective measures. The reliability coefficients for the five scales: General Progress, Specific Progress, Observational Comparison, Social Feedback, and Physiological States measured .90, .89, .90, .87, and .91, respectively (Bottomley et al., 1998).

A third limitation relates to the nature of survey research. The accuracy of self-reporting can be questioned because students may not understand the survey questions or they may have difficulty expressing their thoughts (Bell, 1993). The interviews that I conducted lessened this limitation by elaborating the survey data.

Another limitation is that I did not interview the teachers or observe the teachers while they taught. I was unable to see their instructional methods. Data for my study came strictly from the students' responses on the surveys and interviews.

There is always the danger of bias entering into interviews. When one interviewer conducts a series of interviews, the bias may be consistent and therefore go unnoticed. It is easier to acknowledge the fact that bias can enter than to completely eliminate it. Bell (1993) urges interviewers that hold strong views about some aspect of the topic to be extremely careful when wording questions. It is easy to lead responses in an interview and the interviewer's emphasis and tone of voice can produce different responses. I monitored my bias by working with peer debriefers as described above.

My personal stance regarding high-stakes writing assessments is negative. I found myself leading students' responses during the pilot testing of the interview questions; therefore, I constantly kept Bell's suggestions in mind as I conducted interviews and analyzed the survey and interview data for this study. I monitored my bias by working with peer debriefers as described above. One peer debriefer who was a doctoral student in literacy, monitored my language for the presence of bias. She listened to an audiotape of my first two interviews and focused on my voice tone and inflection. She did not report any concerns.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine intermediate grade students' perceptions of writing instruction. I was specifically interested in how high-stakes writing exams impact children's perceptions and experiences in the classroom. I designed a qualitative study that entailed surveying and interviewing students who attended the 2004 Suncoast Young Authors Celebration. I collected and analyzed multiple sources of data, looking for emerging themes and patterns. Following data collection and analysis, I wrote a descriptive narrative about the findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine students' perceptions of writing instruction in order to gain insight into their awareness of the impact of high-stakes writing assessments on instructional practices and teaching strategies. The primary research question was: how do proficient intermediate grade writers' perceive writing in school? The following questions guided my inquiry:

1 What are students' views of the purposes for writing at school?

2 What are students' views of the differing contexts for writing at school?

3 What decisions do children make when they write at school?

4 What are students' views of the role of their teachers in writing instruction?

5 How do students interpret writing assessment?

6 What are students' views of high-stakes writing exams?

7 Do students' interview responses reflect their survey responses?

This chapter begins with a brief summary of participant demographics. Next, I specifically address each research question by pulling information across the three categories that emerged from the patterns. Research question #7 is addressed in a subset under each research question that survey responses pertained to (See Appendix E). This chapter concludes with a summary of the results.

Participant Demographics

The sample for this study consisted of public school students in grades four and five who attended the 2004 Suncoast Young Authors' Celebration (SYAC). These students attended public elementary schools in the university's service area. A total of 20 students (seven female fourth graders, three male fourth graders, eight female fifth graders, and two male fifth graders) were randomly selected from the total returned SYAC surveys to participate in the study. This sample reflected the population of fourth and fifth graders who attended the 2004 SYAC. See Appendix J for a brief description of each student who participated in this study.

Results

The participants in this study provided rich, descriptive data about their perceptions of writing. Their responses during the interviews were particularly enlightening. The following results reveal the participants' views on the purposes for writing, the contexts for writing, decisions they make when writing at school, the role of their teachers, and their views about writing assessment.

When analyzing the data, I found 14 distinct patterns. During this process I noticed that the patterns fell into three overarching categories: General Writing, Teacher Instruction, and Testing. Table 2 displays the three categories, the corresponding patterns, definitions of the patterns, and a data sample for each pattern.

Table 2

Overarching Data Categories and Corresponding Patterns

CATEGORY	PATTERN	DEFINITION	DATA SAMPLE
Writing	Writing Topics	Topics for students' writing assignments	"Sometimes he (teacher) would let us pick, but most of the time he would give us the topic." (Theo)
	Student Planning	Students organizing thoughts before writing	"I write down ideas before I start writing. A web or something like that." (Karen)
	Definition of Writing	What is writing?	It (writing) is a way to express yourself." (Sally)
	Why Students write	Reasons students write	"I write because it's calming and it's my hobby and it is fun to do." (Mary)
	"Good Writing"	Qualities and characteristics of good writing	"Use details, examples, some experiences, stuff that was an attention grabber." (James)
	Content Area Writing	Writing during different subjects: science, math, social studies…	"In social studies, we had to find information on the different colonies…and write a summary."(Sharon)
Teacher Instruction	Modeling	Teacher modeling writing; shared writing	"She (teacher) would get an overhead and start writing a story with us. We'd raise our hands and give her details." (Sylvia)
	Reading/Writing Connection	Use of literature, authors as examples…	"She (teacher) encourages me to write a lot and to read books. When you read books you get ideas for your own stories." (Gina)
	Conferencing	Students meeting with teachers to discuss their writing	"He'd tell us like ideas that we could do to make it (writing) better." (Nancy)
	Teacher's Role	What teachers do to help students write	"She would encourage me. She would say like that was a good sentence or I like that." (Vanessa)
	Grading	Manner in which student writing is evaluated	"She (teacher) gave us a number grade, then the percent, then the letter grade." (Joe)
Testing	Student Emotions	Feelings of tension, anxiety, and stress	"I was afraid that time would run out when I'm not finished and they don't let you take it over again. It got me kind of upset." (Sue)
	FCAT Preparation	Emphasis and influence on instruction	"She (teacher) would go over topics. We had little cards N=narrative and E=expository. We would flip the right one up." (Roberto)
	Time Restraints	Pre-set time restrictions for completing a writing task	'It (FCAT) was difficult because you have to think about things and you only have a little bit of time." (Shaye)

Research Question 1: What are students' views of the purposes for writing at school?

The primary goal of this study was to learn how the students perceived writing in school; therefore, I was very interested to find out why they wrote. I assumed that most of the students enjoyed writing because they chose to participate in SYAC. The conference provided an opportunity for the students to share their written and/or illustrated work. In addition to writing for enjoyment, I was not sure what other reasons they would provide in the interviews. In addition, I was not sure how much information they would provide in our interviews since they did not know me. I was happy with their thoughtful and detailed answers.

Interviews

According to the students' interview responses there were five main reasons why they write in school: for pleasure, to express themselves, for assignments, to acquire and share knowledge, and because they are tested. Below, I address each of these reasons and provide data samples from the students' interviews.

Students Write for Pleasure. Almost 50% of the students (9/20) stated that writing is fun and they write because they like it. Gina wrote because "sometimes it's fun just to make up stuff and I like to write make-believe stories because nothing has to be real and it doesn't have to be exactly right". Gina was free to be creative when she wrote make-believe stories. She enjoyed writing that did not have a predefined format. Gina preferred writing assignments that allowed her to "pick the characters, setting, problem and solution". Sue also wrote for fun. Sue replied, "It is fun and I think I'm a good writer and so I want to get better at it". Sue was confident about her writing ability and expressed a desire to improve her writing.

Mary found writing enjoyable for many reasons, “I write just because it’s calming and it’s just my hobby and it’s fun to do”. Mary’s response expressed different purposes for writing at school. She viewed writing as a calming and relaxing experience. Shaye also expressed her interest in writing, “Because I like to. Because I like reading and I like writing down words”. Shaye went on to tell me that she liked to write about things that happened in books that she read. These students expressed their enthusiasm for writing and considered writing a fun activity.

Students Write to Express Themselves. A large number of students, 7 out of 20 (1/3), said that they wrote to express their feelings: anger, sadness, happiness. Karen, Sharon, Sylvia, and Ryan all stated that they wrote to express themselves. Several students were more specific about expressing their feelings. Tonya views writing as a “neat way” to express herself. Tonya writes because it is “just like watching or making a video…” Tonya equated the act of writing to making a video. As she wrote, she revealed that she would visualize her writing in her mind and imagine that she was creating a video. When her writing was complete she would read her composition and “watch her video” in her mind. Sue viewed writing as a means of “letting out your feelings”. She used writing as a tool for writing down “things that you don’t want to say in words”.

Vanessa responded, “I write if I’m sad or happy, or to let out my feelings and be real”. Vanessa would often base her writing assignments on situations that really happened and “then add in some stuff that makes it fit and sound better”. When I probed her for more details, she glanced at her mother and chose not to expand on her response. One of the reasons James wrote was “just to express my anger”. When James was angry, he would often write about the situations in his journal. He said that his mother had

suggested that he do this. James did not share the specific topics of his journal, but writing helped him to express his anger in a healthy manner.

These students expressed various emotions through their writing. Their responses were mature and insightful. In addition to writing for enjoyment, many students used writing as an outlet for their feelings. These examples of students' responses revealed their positive thoughts regarding the purposes for writing at school.

Students Write Because They Have To. One third of the students (7/20), four 5th graders and three 4th graders, mentioned school/teacher assignments in their responses. Joe stated, "Sometimes in school because I'm forced to, other times for fun". When I probed him for more information about where he wrote for fun, he responded, "Every once in a while at school, but mostly home though". Unlike the students who wrote at school for fun, Joe typically wrote at school because he was instructed to. Sally responded, "…I write mainly because I have to write in school". Sally told me that her sister is the writer in the family. Her sister "has lots of ideas. She's the more creative one. That's what she wants to do when she grows up." Although Sally viewed herself as a "good" writer, she wrote at school for assignments. Unlike her sister, Sally "did not do it as a hobby". In addition to writing to express himself, James wrote, "Basically because my mom or my teacher tells me to".

These students' responses suggest that they wrote at school because they were told to. The tone of their responses was much less enthusiastic than the students who wrote for pleasure and/or to express themselves. Even Sally who was bubbly throughout the interview was matter of fact when discussing why she wrote at school. Sally stated that she wrote well, but "it is not something I choose to do unless I have to".

Students Write to Acquire and Show Knowledge. The students also wrote at school to learn and to share knowledge with others. Sharon stated, "I like to learn about different countries and things. I like to write stories and give them to people because I feel like I'm sharing my knowledge." Theo stated that he writes "because I can show people what I like to do. I write about sports and animals". Writing is a venue for Theo to share his interests with others.

Nineteen of the 20 students interviewed stated that they wrote in subjects other than language arts. During science, social studies, math, and music, these students wrote reports, definitions, summaries, notes, essays, projects, reading logs, outlines, and answers to textbook questions. According to their responses, they associated writing with numerous subject areas.

Mary talked about writing in social studies. "We had to read stuff about history and we would have to write the important things about people". Writing facts about historical events and people served as a learning tool for Mary. Jen wrote answers to math problems in sentence form. "Every workbook page it would be one that you'd have to explain that answer. Then the next day we would go over it in class to see if we got it right." Jen told me that it was helpful to write down the answers. It aided in her understanding of the math concepts she was working on. Joe shared different examples of writing that he completed during science. In addition to writing paragraphs about the subjects his class was studying, "We had a bunch of projects where we had to do some writing out different steps. And writing like kind of little speeches". Joe was enthusiastic when we discussed writing in science.

Content area writing served as a means for the students to acquire knowledge in various subjects. I will present more examples of students' responses that relate to content area writing when I address research question 2: What are students' views of the differing contexts for writing at school?

Students Write Because They Are Tested. The interviewees viewed testing and test preparation as another purpose for writing at school. I expected the students to talk more about test preparation when I asked them why they wrote at school; however, they did not mention testing until I questioned them about timed writing. Seven of the students (1/3) mentioned FCAT in their responses to questions about timed writing assignments. Four of the 5th grade students stated that they completed timed writing assignments in 4th grade for FCAT practice, but they did not have any timed writing assignments in 5th grade. When I asked Sylvia if her teacher ever gave her timed writing assignments, she replied, "Yeah that was like practice for the FCAT. I did that in 4th grade… like often, really often. We practiced a lot." When I asked her if she completed timed writing assignments in 5th grade, she responded, "no".

Tonya stated that in 4th grade she completed timed writing assignments "a lot more because you had to pass FCAT". As the FCAT testing date approached the timed writing assignments became more frequent. "Usually we had about 2 a month, until a month before the FCAT, and then she would give them once or twice a week."

Surveys

Survey question # 25 (What classroom writing activities do you do every day?) corresponded with this research question. Nineteen of the study participants responded to

this question. One of the students answered "none". One fourth grade student did not respond.

The wording of the question resulted in student responses that dealt strictly with assigned writing. Two 4th graders who happened to attend the same school listed "model writes" as a daily writing activity. Five of the nine fourth graders listed genre(s) of writing. These included narrative, expository, poetry, plays, and fantasy. Expository writing was included in 4 responses and narrative was included in 3 responses. On the 4th grade FCAT Writing students receive an expository or narrative prompt. The students' responses indicate that they practiced expository and/or narrative writing on a regular basis in the 4th grade. In contrast, poetry was the only genre of writing stated by the fifth graders. In addition to poetry, the fifth graders' responses regarding daily writing activities included writing in journals, writing letters, making books, and DOL (Daily Oral Language).

Only one student's answer specifically addressed testing. Sally, a fourth grader, responded "In my classroom we don't do a writing activity every day now that Florida Writes is over. But occasionally we will do a demand write or other writing to stay in practice". If the other students were in fact completing daily test preparation activities, they were not aware of it and/or did not mention it during the interviews.

Research Question #2: What are students' views of the differing contexts for writing at school?

As a whole, the students expressed keen awareness regarding the differing contexts for writing at school. I expected the students to associate writing with language

arts and not with other subject areas; however, with the exception of Lola, the students were very aware of content area writing.

Interviews

During the interviews, I asked the students if they wrote during science, math, social studies and reading. Lola was the only interviewee who said she did not write in any of these subjects. I gave her examples of different types of writing that she might have completed in these subjects (reports, stories, answers to word problems) to get her thinking. After extensive probing, she still responded, "In math we wrote things like multiplication. We didn't really do science and social studies".

The other 19 students all shared examples of content area writing with me. Their responses presented specific examples of writing in science, social studies, math, reading, and music. It was evident from their responses, that the students enjoyed content area writing and attained a great deal of knowledge as a result of these writing experiences.

Science

In regard to science, 18 of the students told me that they wrote summaries, steps for experiments, reports, definitions, projects, notes, and/or answers to textbook questions. Theo was the only student besides Lola who said that he did not write anything in science. The other students shared many examples of science-related writing assignments that revealed their excitement and knowledge.

Gina spoke extensively about writing in science. She told me how her teacher made the science room "look like underwater and we had to pick a fish or something and we had to write a report on it. And when we did space, we did the same thing…And then we did a garden and we had to pick a plant and write a report on it". She also spoke

about science experiments, “we wrote what the materials were, like what the conclusion was and stuff like that. When I asked her if she enjoyed writing in science, she said, “Uh huh, cause it is fun and always different”. Her enthusiastic responses revealed her excitement about writing in science.

Sharon told me about group projects that she completed in science class. “We did projects and we had to give a presentation on the board and we had to read the textbook and summarize it in our own words and give a presentation on it.” Sharon stated that her class worked in groups of two or three people and that, “it took a while (to share) because we had a lot of groups so we only did it twice”. The amount of time it took for all of the groups to present their projects to the class limited the number of group science projects that her class completed. Despite Sharon’s disappointment that she only had an opportunity to work on two group projects, she said that she “enjoyed doing that kind of writing and learned a lot from the other students’ presentations”.

Roberto talked about writing in the science lab. “Every Thursday we’d go down to the science lab and we’d take notes about stuff. We had hermit crabs, all males, and later we learned that wasn’t a good idea cause they killed each other…” After I got him back on topic, Roberto told me about the animal center in his school’s science lab that contained guinea pigs, centipedes, crabs, and birds. The students would observe the animals and write notes about their observations. “We would go back to class and share our notes. Our teacher would add stuff we missed. I learned lots.” Writing notes about the animals and listening to his classmates’ observations served as a learning device for Roberto.

Writing during science was a positive experience for the students. According to their responses, they acquired a great deal of knowledge as a result of these assignments.

Social Studies

Fifteen of the students interviewed said that they wrote stories, reports, projects, outlines, essays, time lines, and/or summaries during social studies. The students shared examples of specific social studies writing tasks. Writing about historical events and people seemed to help the students learn and retain important information. Mary told me about class newspapers that her class read "that would talk about the different wars in Florida and like the great discoveries". The class would complete activity sheets after they read the newspapers. "Sometimes we wrote paragraphs, some stories, and some just answers." According to Mary, this aided in her understanding of the wars. Karen said, "We have to read important stuff about history and we would have to write the important things about people".

When I asked Gina if she wrote in social studies, she responded "We outline every chapter that we read. One time we had to write a report on an explorer." She proceeded to tell me that her teacher assigned an explorer to each student and a format for the report. "She'd (the teacher) say like the first paragraph is about the life, the other ones about what they did and stuff." The students shared their completed reports with the class. As a result of this assignment, Gina "learned lots about explorers that I never knew".

Sharon told me about a social studies project in which she had to find information on the different colonies. "She (the teacher) gave us a list of questions that we had to answer in our summary." Jen responded "In social studies we'd do a lot of like in-school

projects where we would do writing and stuff. We'd do like little time lines and stuff and you had to draw pictures to your writing. We did a lot of writing." Both Sharon and Jen said that they enjoyed these activities and that they contributed to their learning.

The remaining 5 students stated that they did not write in social studies. I provided examples of writing that they may have completed in social studies. I asked them if they wrote reports or essays and they all responded, "Not really."

Math

When I asked the students if they wrote in math, most of the students had a difficult time expressing how they wrote during math. The students were very vague in their responses and I was forced to probe for answers. Sixteen of the students mentioned writing answers to word problems, definitions, explaining answers, and/or FCAT.

Six of these students responded that they were instructed to answer word problems in complete sentences. Shaye told me that she wrote "the definitions that the teacher gave us" and some answers to math problems "in complete sentences". She would not expand on her responses. Theo said the only writing that he did in math was definitions of math terms. Only one student mentioned FCAT when I asked if they wrote during math. Joe replied, "Not really, other than FCAT. Just how I got certain stuff (answers to problems)".

Sue was an exception. She enthusiastically shared details about a career project that she completed in math class. "We had to buy a car with fake money and stuff. We had a job online and we had to just do everything like you have to when you are older and we had to write all of it down in our notebook." Sue's teacher incorporated writing

into a math project about creating a budget. It was apparent from Sue's responses that she both enjoyed and learned a lot from this activity.

Sally, Sylvia, Ariel, and Nancy stated that they did not write during math. Gina replied, "I don't think we really did writing in math, except for writing down numbers." Further probing did not result in additional responses from any of these students.

Other

In regards to reading, the majority of the students interviewed viewed reading and writing as the same subject area, language arts. When I asked Jen if she wrote during reading, she replied "Reading was kind of like language arts. It was like, I think it was together, reading and language arts. So we'd do the same things". According to the interviewees, the only types of "writing" that they did during "reading" were book reports and reading logs.

To my surprise, two students mentioned music when we were talking about content area writing. Nancy responded "not really" when I asked her about writing during science, social studies, and math. She proceeded to tell me that she only wrote in music class. "In music we'd have to write all the notes and we'd have to do them until they were right." Nancy viewed writing down music notes as content area writing. Ariel also shared her experience with writing in music. "In music we'd watch the movie (The Trumpet and the Swan) and then we'd watch the rest of it in class and write like a summary."

Overall, the students were very aware of the differing contexts for writing at school. They shared numerous examples of content area writing with me during our

interviews. Based on their responses, their teachers incorporated writing throughout the curriculum and the students enjoyed these writing experiences.

Surveys

Survey question # 25 (What classroom writing activities do you do every day?) corresponded with this research question. The students' responses to this survey question did not provide much data about differing contexts for writing at school. As mentioned above in response to research question 2, the students' survey responses dealt almost exclusively with language arts activities. Only one student stated a content area in his response. Ryan, a 5th grader, wrote "Write about History (World War II, Civil War, Presidents)".

Research Question #3: What decisions do children make when they write at school?

Interviews

As I interviewed the students it became apparent that they were not given many opportunities to make decisions about writing at school. According to the students, the only decisions they were able to make were related to writing topics and planning devices. I made two incorrect assumptions about school writing topics. First, I assumed that most of students would be given assigned writing topics the majority of the time and not be able to select their own writing topics. I also anticipated that most, if not all of the interviewees would prefer to select their own writing topics so that they could be creative and write about topics that they found interesting. The students proved my assumptions wrong. Although many of the students (13) liked to choose their own writing topics, seven of the interviewees preferred assigned writing topics.

Writing Topics

When I asked the students how often they could select their own writing topics at school, nine of the students responded less than ½ of the time, nine students responded more than ½ of the time, and two students said ½ of the time. According to the their responses, more than 50% of the students(11/20) were able to make their own decisions regarding what to write about at school at least 50% of the time.

Thirteen of the students interviewed (2/3) stated that they like to choose their own topics. When I asked, "Why do you like to choose your own topic?" Mary responded, "Because then I have a chance to be creative and just think for myself." Sue replied, "Because you don't have to write about what they tell you. Like if it's not that interesting to you (the teacher's topic) you can write about what interests you". Karen said, "If we picked our own topic we would know more about what we were going to write about and stuff". Roberto did not like the "fixed" topics that his teacher assigned. He stated, "I don't like it when topics get fixed, like no freedom". Roberto preferred to select his own writing topics. Ryan also liked to choose his own writing topics. Unlike the other students quoted above who wanted to use their creativity, Ryan did not like the topics that his teacher assigned. "Normally I think the topics she gives us are mainly boring." He felt that he could select more interesting topics. These responses are a few examples of why the interviewees liked to decide what they wrote about in school.

Seven students (1/3) preferred assigned writing topics as opposed to selecting their own topic. James stated, "I'm not really a good thinker. Most of the time, I ask somebody what to write." Sally replied, "Sometimes, I prefer to have a topic because sometimes I'm just brain dead and I don't think of anything to write about". Jen liked the

topics that her teacher selected. "I like when I get the topic, she mostly gave the topics and they were fine. Yeah, they were good ones." Based on their responses, these students had a difficult time deciding what to write about and/or they liked the writing topics that their teacher(s) assigned. They did not view assigned writing topics negatively as I had predicted.

Planning

Students' responses related to planning also addressed this research question. Ten interviewees (50%) shared their planning techniques with me during the interviews. When I asked students, "What makes you a good writer?" five students mentioned planning in their responses. These students shared various planning techniques that they utilized when writing. For example, Karen responded, "I write down ideas before I start writing and stuff. A web or something like that". Sally stated, "I think of how I'm going to put things down (on paper) way before I write…then as I go along, I try to remember sort of what I thought about". James replied, "I always plan it and I write almost a whole story on a practice sheet. I draw a picture about it (the topic), and then wherever I am on the picture while I am thinking about the paragraphs, I put a 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 as in the paragraphs". They viewed planning as an integral part of the writing process. They decided how to plan their writing and their planning was one aspect of how they viewed themselves as "good" writers.

Three interviewees utilized planning tools for timed writing and FCAT practice. Sue told me about the planning device she used for timed writing assignments. "We usually made a web, where you do the topic, then 3 main ideas…It helps me remember what I am going to write about…" Sylvia discussed planning for FCAT practice. "They

would give us a plan sheet and we would write ideas down before we wrote the paper." When practicing for FCAT, Joe also chose to utilize a planning sheet. Joe made "a planner to help stay on topic". According to these students, they were encouraged, but not required to use planning devices. These students also viewed planning as a vital step in the writing process. Planning prior to writing helped them organize their thoughts and stay focused on the writing topic.

According to the students' interview responses, the decisions they made when they wrote at school were about their writing topics and planning techniques.

Surveys

Survey questions # 6, 11, and 13 pertained to topic choice. Question # 6 asked if the students received a prompt for the paper they submitted for SYAC. Eighteen of the 20 participants responded to this yes/no question. Five of the students (28%) responded "yes" and 13 students (72%) responded "no". These responses were similar to the students' interview responses provided above in which more than 50% of the students stated that they were able to select their writing topics at school.

Survey question # 11 asked "How often does your teacher give you topics for writing?" The students could select "never, sometimes, or a lot". None of the students responded "never", 13 students (65%) responded "sometimes", and 7 students (35%) responded "a lot".

Survey question # 13 asked "How often does your teacher let you pick your own topic for writing?" Two of the students (10 %) responded "never", 12 students (60%) responded "sometimes", and 6 students (30%) responded "a lot".

The students' responses to survey questions #6, 11, and 13 were similar to the students' interview responses provided above in which more than 50% of the students stated that they were able to select their writing topics at school at least 50% of the time.

Research Question #4: What are students' views of the role of their teachers in writing instruction?

Interviews

Overall, the students viewed their teachers as an integral part of their writing development. The students mentioned their teachers frequently during the interviews. When I asked the students what they did that made them "good" writers, they constantly mentioned writing skills and strategies that their teachers taught them. It was apparent that their teachers had a significant influence on their perceptions of themselves as writers.

What teachers said

James considered himself a good writer because he followed the suggestions of his teacher. James told me that his teacher "was one of the best teachers in writing at the school, so that's one of the reasons I'm so good at it. I don't want to take all of the credit because she did most of it". He went on to share various writing strategies that he learned from his teacher. "My teacher taught me to use fee-po, where "f" is for fact, "e" is for explanation or example, "p" is for personal experience, and "o" is for opinion." James stated that he thought of fee-po when he wrote which contributed to his "good writing".

In addition to James, many students shared their teachers' writing tips/strategies with me. Lola's teacher taught her about "hamburger writing" and making the story juicy so that people would enjoy reading it. Mary considered herself a good writer because she followed her teacher's suggestions. "She told us to paint a picture in the reader's mind and just to describe it really well, have it easy to read, and put in organized paragraphs."

Sally was extremely enthusiastic about writing. She had "a really good writing teacher". "She said it's not about quantity but, quality. It's not about how much you write, it's about what you write." Sally was enthusiastic about other writing techniques she learned from her fourth grade teacher. These included using her senses and "exploding the moment, which is explaining the different things about one particular moment". Sally gave her teacher credit for her love of writing.

Their teachers also encouraged them to use details in their writing. The majority of the students (14/20) said they were good writers because they followed their teachers' advice and used details when they wrote. Jen mentioned the importance of using details 3 times during our interview. "She (teacher) would always say use a lot of details because that's what helps you." When I asked Jen what she did to earn a good score on a writing assignment, she responded "Of course, write a lot of details". The students did not elaborate on their responses about using details; however, the fact that they constantly mentioned the importance of details suggests that it was emphasized as a component of "good" writing.

In addition to using details, 9 students shared that their teachers emphasized the importance of staying on topic when writing. When I asked Gina what made her a good writer, she said that she followed her teacher's advice to "stay on topic and focus on the

topic". When completing writing assignments, Ryan's teacher told him "to think happy thoughts and the only thing you should think about is the writing". Staying focused on his writing helped Ryan earn "good grades on writing assignments".

What teachers did

In addition to these "writing tips", the teachers helped the students' writing development by modeling writing, reading orally, and conducting writing conferences.

Modeling. Many students are visual learners which makes it vital for teachers to "show" students what they are teaching. Britton(1993) stresses that effective teachers collaborate with students by modeling learning processes and involving students in the process. All of the students except one stated that their teacher modeled writing.

Gina's teacher "would write the topic on the board and write examples of paragraphs and stuff." Her teacher talked about her ideas as she was writing them in front of the class. Gina found this helpful "because it kind of gave you an explanation and you knew exactly what you were doing". Sharon also found her teacher's modeling to be helpful. "It showed me different styles of writing and what and when to use which words…"

The writing examples that Ryan's teacher modeled made the writing assignments clearer to him. "That (writing examples) helped me because I would know what she was talking about and I wouldn't have to go up there and ask her." When Ryan actually saw his teacher writing, it made it easier for him to understand. James' teacher would often write example stories on the overhead projector. The examples "really helped" James.

The visual writing models provided by the teachers aided in the students' ability to write on their own. Seeing an example of what was expected of them, made it easier for the students to complete their independent writing tasks.

Reading/writing connection. Literature should be an integral part of the writing curriculum. Literature can serve as a scaffold to children's writing. When students read and are read to daily, the connection between reading and writing becomes apparent (Calkins, 1994; Chapman, 2006; Dyson, 1990; Graves, 1994; Lensmire, 1994; Thomason & York, 2000). Due to mandated curricular requirements and limited time during the school day, I did not think that many of the students would be read to on a regular basis. I was surprised when the majority of the students who I interviewed (18/20) stated that their teachers read to them. In addition, many of the students shared specific information about the connections between reading and writing.

Students mentioned getting ideas from books that their teachers read. Ariel told me that her teacher read "big books" to her. When I inquired how that helped with her writing, Ariel said that she would "get ideas" from the books. Gina said, "When you read or your teacher reads books you get ideas for your own stories and stuff". Sue also used books as a springboard for writing. When you read, "you learn new words, and you learn a lot of new situations and stuff, that you can think about".

Nancy and Shaye wrote poems modeled after poetry that their teachers' read in class. Nancy's teacher "read this one poem and it was a story of alliteration". After reading and discussing the poem, Nancy incorporated alliteration in her own writing. Shaye's teacher talked about what poets did to make their poems interesting. "She taught us how to write poems. It was fun."

The students' teachers discussed what "good" authors did when they wrote. James' teacher told him that the authors of the books she read out loud in class, "made sure that they put examples and personal experiences in their books". Theo's teacher taught him that authors made connections. When I asked him to explain what making connections meant, Theo provided an extremely detailed response. "Like if something that has actually happened to me, like, if you went to the beach, tell what you did. I would make connections to what I did and if it was an expository and I had to write about what I did, I would connect it to another book that I have read." Theo learned to make connections between events that happened in his life to stories he read.

The literature presented to the students at school had a tremendous influence on their writing. As the previous quotes illustrate, the students made the connection between reading and writing and displayed this in their writing.

Conferencing. I assumed that all of the students would be familiar with writing conferences; however, when I asked the students if their teachers talked to them before they completed a final draft, only 12 responded "yes". The other eight students said that they did not meet individually with their teachers to discuss their writing. After Melissa told me that she never had a writing conference with her teacher, I probed to determine if she was unclear about the term "conference". I asked if her teacher ever talked with her one on one about her writing and she responded, "I think that she did one time in class, but I wasn't there".

Of the 12 students who did have writing conferences with their teachers, nine responded that the conferences were helpful. During the conferences, teachers discussed grammar, punctuation, vocabulary, details, and offered suggestions to make the writing

better. Gina's teacher complimented her work and offered suggestions. "She would say, "oh, that is really good" or "you should work on it." Gina's teacher would "give me ideas to make it better". Sharon also thought writing conferences were helpful. "She (the teacher) would go over it with me, tell me how I could improve, or what she liked. She would give her opinions on things, tell me to take things out and put things in…" Jen's teacher helped with editing and offered suggestions, but Jen seemed to benefit more from the praise her teacher gave. "She'd say you're an excellent writer and that made me feel good." The individual attention that Jen received during writing conferences seemed to boost her self-esteem.

I was also surprised by the frequency of writing conferences. The majority of the students who participated in writing conferences stated that they only had conferences "sometimes". When I probed to determine exactly what "sometimes" meant, the students' responses included: "at least two times", "a couple of times", "a few", and "not much". Sylvia and Ariel were the only students who recalled having writing conferences on a regular basis. Sylvia had a conference with her teacher "every time we wrote a story, we'd go up to the teacher and she'd go over everything and we would re-write it". Ariel's teacher would meet with her "every day that we wrote a story". Although it is not feasible to conference individually with every student every time they write a paper, I was surprised that conferences did not occur on a more regular basis.

It was refreshing to hear what a positive influence many of the teachers had on their students' writing development. I expected the emphasis on high-stakes writing assessments to impact the individual attention that the students received; however, according to the students, their teachers' provided a great deal of support and guidance.

Sylvia's teacher was a prime example of this. Her advice to Sylvia and her classmates was to "enjoy writing".

Surveys

Survey questions #17, 18, and 19 corresponded with this research question. To index the relationship between students' interview and survey responses, phi coefficients were calculated for questions 17, 18, and 19. The phi coefficient is a measure of association between two dichotomous variables. Phi coefficients range from -1.00 to +1.00, where 0 indicates no relationship between the variables. The effect size shows the strength of relationship (Kotrlik & Williams, 2003). Davis (1971) uses the following guidelines to describe effect size of correlation coefficients: .70 or higher = very strong association; .50 to .69 = substantial association; .30 to .49 = moderate association; .10 to .29 = low association; .01 to .09 = negligible association.

The strength of the association is determined by the absolute value of the phi coefficient, whereas the direction of the relationship is indicated through the sign of the coefficient, positive or negative. For example, if the coefficient is positive, this suggests that students responded the same way on both the survey and the interview (i.e. a positive phi coefficient for the response "gives spelling help" indicates that students who reported this option on the survey also tended to report this in the interview). If the phi coefficient is negative, the relationship is reverse; student responses on one format tend to be different from their responses on the other format (i.e. a negative phi correlation on "provides vocabulary help" would indicate that students who reported this option on the survey were less likely to report it in the interview or visa versa).

Appendix K is a spreadsheet which displays how each student responded to the surveys and interviews. A "0" indicates that the student did not select that variable on the survey and/or mention it during the interview. A "1" indicates that the student did select and/or mention this variable. For example, student 1 did not select variable 1 (models writing) on survey question #17 (S1_17), but did state that his/her teacher models writing during the interview (I1_17).

Table 3 presents the proportion of students who selected each variable during the surveys and interviews. For example, for question #17, variable 2 (assigns topics) 35% of the students selected this response on the survey and 45% of the students mentioned this in the interviews.

Table 3

Proportion of Students Who Selected and/or Stated Question Variables

Question/Variable	Survey	Interview
# 17 - How does your teacher help you write?		
1 - Models writing	**45%**	**75%**
2 - Assigns topics	**35%**	**45%**
3 - Gives me ideas	**55%**	**80%**
4 - Explains the assignment	**95%**	**20%**
5 - Gives me feedback	**45%**	**95%**
6 - Gives practice time	**45%**	**10%**
7 - Encourages me	**55%**	**55%**
8 - Reads literature	**40%**	**60%**
9 - Gives spelling help	**40%**	**45%**
10 - Gives grammar help	**40%**	**40%**
11 - Gives vocabulary help	**50%**	**25%**
#18 – What does your teacher do that doesn't help you write?		
1 - Sets time limits	**60%**	**50%**
2 - Assigns required topics	**10%**	**30%**
3 - Assigns required words	**0%**	**0%**
4 – Talks too much/interrupts my concentration	**25%**	**20%**
5 - Provides too much information	**0%**	**0%**
#19 – What could teachers do to help kids become better writers?		
1 - Model writing	**40%**	**70%**
2 - Give more practice time	**40%**	**5%**
3 - Provide spelling help	**30%**	**10%**
4 - Provide grammar help	**30%**	**10%**
5 - Provide vocabulary help	**30%**	**20%**
6 - Give more teacher topics	**15%**	**25%**
7 - Give more ideas	**45%**	**35%**
8 - Allow more self-selected topics	**50%**	**55%**
9 - Provide encouragement	**40%**	**55%**
10 - Give more feedback	**35%**	**40%**
11 - Read literature	**30%**	**55%**

Survey question #17 “How does your teacher help you write?” provided eleven variables for the students to choose from. The phi correlations for this question’s variables ranged from –0.25 (#4-Explains the assignment) to +0.38 (#10-Gives grammar help). The phi coefficient for variable #4 indicates a negative relationship. In other words, the students responded in an opposite fashion on the surveys and interviews about the helpfulness of teachers explaining assignments. There was a positive relationship (students’ responded the same way) between the students’ responses on the surveys and interviews regarding teachers providing grammar help.

Survey question #18 “What does your teacher do that doesn’t help you write?” provided five variables for the students to choose from. The phi correlations for this question’s variables ranged from 0.00 (#4-Talks too much; interrupts my concentration) to +0.41 (#1-Sets time limits). The phi coefficient for variable #4 was 0.00 which indicates that the variables were independent (uncorrelated), in other words, there was no relationship between how students responded to the surveys vs. how they responded to the interviews. The strong positive correlation for variable #1 indicates that the students’ responded in a similar fashion on the surveys and interviews about teachers setting time limits. The statistical program was unable to calculate phi coefficients for two of the variables for this question: #3-Assigns required words and #5 -Provides too much information because none of the students selected these variables on the survey or discussed them during the interviews. This may have resulted from the wording of the survey question which will be discussed in chapter 5.

Survey question #19 “What could teachers do to help kids become better writers?” provided eleven variables for the students to choose from. The phi coefficients

for this question's variables ranged from -0.05 (#5- Provide vocabulary help) to +0.53 (#1 – Model writing). The phi coefficient for variable #5 indicates a negative relationship. In other words, the students responded in an opposite fashion on the surveys and interviews about the helpfulness of teachers' providing vocabulary help. There was a strong positive relationship (students responded the same way) between the students' responses on the surveys and interviews regarding teachers modeling writing. Davis (1971) would describe this effect size as having a substantial association. Table 4 displays the phi coefficient value for each question variable. The results will be discussed and explained further in chapter 5.

Table 4

Phi Coefficients for Survey and Interview Responses

Question	Variable	Phi Coefficient
# 17 - How does your teacher help you write?	**1 - Models writing**	**+0.29**
	2 - Assigns topics	**+0.18**
	3 - Gives me ideas	**+0.05**
	4 - Explains the assignment	**-0.25**
	5 - Gives me feedback	**-0.03**
	6 - Gives practice time	**+0.03**
	7 - Encourages me	**-0.10**
	8 - Reads literature	**+0.17**
	9 - Gives spelling help	**+0.29**
	10 - Gives grammar help	**+0.38**
	11 - Gives vocabulary help	**+0.12**
#18 – What does your teacher do that doesn't help you write?	**1 - Sets time limits**	**+0.41**
	2 - Assigns required topics	**+0.14**
	3 - Assigns required words	**Unable to calculate ***
	4 - Talks too much/interrupts my concentration	**0.00 (No relationship)**
	5 - Provides too much information	**Unable to calculate ***
#19 – What could teachers do to help kids become better writers?	**1 - Model writing**	**+0.53**
	2 - Give more practice time	**+0.28**
	3 - Provide spelling help	**+0.15**
	4 - Provide grammar help	**+0.15**
	5 - Provide vocabulary help	**-0.05**
	6 - Give more teacher topics	**+0.08**
	7 - Give more ideas	**-0.03**
	8 - Allow more self-selected topics	**+0.30**
	9 - Provide encouragement	**+0.12**
	10 - Give more feedback	**+0.26**
	11 - Read literature	**+0.15**

Note. N = 20; *= None of the participants selected this variable.

Research Question #5: How do students interpret writing assessment?

Assessment is a central component of the current school reform movement. Although writing assessment is subjective, it has become an important part of many states' school grading systems. Considering the high-stakes of the FCAT, I was interested in how the students in my study interpreted writing assessment.

Interviews

During the interviews I questioned them about how their teachers graded their writing and about what they were instructed to do in order to earn a good score on a writing assignment.

In response to the question, "How does your teacher grade your writing?" six students' initial responses dealt with components of their writing. For example, James answered, "She would grade by the examples that we gave, personal experiences, stuff like that". Vanessa responded "By neatness, organization, and if we stayed on topic". Sue's teacher graded "on spelling, and like, the subject we wrote about and if we stayed on topic." Sylvia said "She would check it, go over the letters, the spelling. You could get at least 1 or 2 words wrong…look at commas and everything…Melissa had a similar response, "Spelling, commas, punctuation, and ideas". Ariel referred to her teacher's physical act of grading. "She would read it and she would get her red pen and like correct some of my stuff…spelling and punctuation." These students did not think about specific grading techniques when I posed this question.

After I probed them for information about types of grading, the students' shared 4 different types of grading techniques that their teachers' used when assessing their writing. These included: comments, number grades 1 – 6, letter grades, and rubrics.

According to the students, most teachers used a combination of these grading methods when assessing their writing.

Comments

The majority of students (14/20) stated that their teachers wrote comments on their writing assignments. The teachers' comments ranged from positive phrases to specific suggestions. When I questioned the students about what types of comments their teachers' wrote, they typically shared positive/encouraging phrases with me first. If Gina's paper "was really good, she'd (the teacher) say like you did a really good job and stuff". When I probed further, Gina told me that "sometimes she'd (teacher) say to put in more details or change something to make it better". Ryan's teacher would write "great job" or "I don't understand something". Ryan stated that he did not have an opportunity to edit his writing if his teacher did not understand something. Jen's teacher also wrote positive comments on her writing assignments. "She'd (teacher) say like you did a great job, I really like it, it had a lot of detail and stuff." These students reacted positively to their teachers' words of praise and encouragement. Although the positive comments were great for the students' self-esteem, I question the value these general comments provided in their writing development.

Some of the students' teachers provided more specific feedback. According to the students, the most common teacher advice pertained to using more details. James' teacher "always wrote comments" on his writing assignments. "Some of them were more opinions, more examples, better examples, more details…" James found his teacher's suggestions very helpful. Sometimes he was able to make revisions based on his teacher's comments. Otherwise, James would "use her ideas the next time I wrote".

Sylvia's teacher also wrote comments on her rough drafts. Sylvia's teacher "would write like use more detail". Her teacher would provide examples of details and Sylvia was allowed to edit her writing.

Mary's teacher would write "good job, but you could use a little more enthusiasm in this part of your writing". Mary said that her teacher would circle the portions of her writing that pertained to her comments. Mary was them able to revise/edit those portions of her writing.

Sharon's teacher was extremely specific in her comments. "She (teacher) would tell me that if I used a word more than four or five times, not to use it again. Or tell me it was a good story and why it was a good story. Or tell me if she didn't like it, and tell me why she didn't like it." Sharon's teacher made specific suggestions on how she could improve on future writing assignments. Sharon kept her graded writing assignments in a notebook and referred to them when she wrote.

The students were very positive about their teachers' comments and found them beneficial. The teachers' specific comments provided concrete suggestions for the students to refer to when editing their writing and/or completing future writing tasks. This supports Standard 1 of the NCTE's *Standards for the Assessment of Reading and Writing* which states "The interests of the student are paramount in assessment (p.1)". The rationale for this standard stresses that "assessment must provide useful information to inform and enable reflection. The information must be both specific and timely (p.2)". The specific comments that the students' teachers provided when assessing their writing, promoted learning.

Number Grades 1 – 6

Thirteen of the twenty students shared that their teachers graded some or all of their writing assignments with the numbers 1 – 6. All of the fourth grade interviewees mentioned this grading technique. The students typically mentioned FCAT in conjunction with their responses. The students assumed that I knew that the scores 1 – 6 coincided with the FCAT Writing test. For example, when I asked Karen how her teacher graded her writing, she said "sometimes 1 – 6". When I asked her why her teacher wrote these numbers on her writing, she replied, "Because the grades might be like between a 1 through 6 and like if it's like above 3, you would pass. And to help us know what our grades are so whenever FCAT comes and it says, like 1 through 6 or whatever, we could know our score for FCAT and know if we need to make it better so we can pass". Vanessa said that her 4th grade teacher graded her writing with the "numbers 1 – 6 because that is what we would use on FCAT. She wanted us to get used to it". Nancy's teacher would also grade writing with 1 – 6 "so we could practice for the FCAT".

Many of the fourth graders' teachers apparently shared details with the students about this grading technique. Sally shared that her demand writing "would be graded for FCAT either a 1 to a 6, 6 being the best one, 1 being the worst. Also, there were unscorables". When I asked her about "unscorables", she said "it's when she (teacher) can't score it, it's so horrible, she can't score it". Theo's teacher also explained the 1 – 6 grading technique. When I asked Theo why his teachers used 1 – 6, he said "because if you got 1, like you need a lot more details, you misspelled a lot of words, you missed punctuation, and 6 would be you were right there, you were big on topic, you had all

punctuations, you didn't miss any capitals, and it would be like that". His teacher apparently provided examples and non-examples of "good" writing. Theo's phrase "you were right there", sounded like he was repeating/echoing what his teacher said.

Only three fifth grade students mentioned that their teachers graded with 1 – 6. Two of them said that their teachers used 1 - 6 in 4th grade, but not 5th grade. I found it interesting that these students recalled this and shared it with me even though it had been over a year since they were in 4th grade. Joe was the only fifth grader who stated that his 5th grade teacher graded his writing assignments with the numbers 1 – 6. He associated the numbers with percentages. "A 6 is the best you can get, a 100%. Then 5.5 and that's just under that…" When I asked Joe why his teacher used those numbers, he replied, "I think that they score that way on FCAT."

Letter Grades

The majority of students (13/20) said that their teachers' used letter grades when assessing their writing. According to the students, letter grades were used in conjunction with other grading techniques.

Letter and 1 – 6. A few students stated that their teachers' assigned a letter value to the numbers 1 – 6. In Sally's class, "A 1 or 2 is a U, which is worst. And then a 3 is a C, 4 is a B, and 5 and 6 are the best." Shaye was also cognizant of the letter equivalent. "If you got a 6, you got an A+." Theo concurred, "If I got a 5 he gives me a B+."

Letter and comments. Three fifth grade students stated that their teachers graded their writing assignments with letter grades and comments. Their teachers provided specific ideas on ways to improve their writing. Sylvia's teacher "would write like use more details" and she would "put her ideas in a bubble and I could go back and add that".

Each of these students stated that they were able to edit their writing based on their teachers' comments/suggestions.

Letter and check, plus, or minus. Melissa's teacher used check, plus, or minus in conjunction with letter grades. "A + equals an A, a check+ equals a B, a check equals a C, a check – equals a D." She was the only student who mentioned this grading technique.

Multiple grading techniques

Several students stated that teachers utilized a number of grading techniques. Gina and Joe initially stated the same three techniques: percentage, number grade, and letter grade. When I asked them if their teachers wrote comments on their papers Gina shared specific suggestions that her teacher made on her papers whereas Joe shared comments that his teacher verbalized to the class, but not to him specifically.

Rubrics

Two fifth grade students stated that their teachers used rubrics when grading their writing assignments. Tonya replied that "she (teacher) used a rubric. She would have a scale and check things off you did." When I probed Tonya for more information about the rubric she could not express any more details. Sue was a little more specific. "They would usually use 1, 2, or 3 on each different topic. Like there would be spelling, then each different thing and they would do the highs and the lows". Sue explained that her teacher would give points for different components of her writing, but she had a difficult time verbalizing what type of scale her teacher used.

Surveys

Questions # 23, 24, and 26 on the survey corresponded with this research question. Survey question #23 asked "Does your teacher write comments and suggestions when grading your writing?" None of the students responded "never", 12 students (60%) responded "sometimes", and 8 students (40%) responded "a lot". According to the students' survey responses, all of their teachers wrote comments on at least some of their writing assignments. This is a much higher percentage than during the interviews in which only 14 students stated that their teachers wrote comments on their writing.

Survey question #24 asked "How does your teacher grade your writing?" The answer choices were: Letter Grade (A, B-, C), Score of 1-6, and Other (Please explain). The directions stated that the students could select more than one answer. Thirteen students (65%) selected "Letter Grade". During the interviews, the same number of students, 13, stated that their teachers used letter grades when assessing their writing.

Eleven students (55%) selected "Score of 1-6". Nine fourth graders (90%) and 3 fifth graders (30%) selected this response on the survey. The students' interview responses were similar. Thirteen interviewees shared that their teachers graded some or all of their writing assignments with the numbers 1 – 6. All of the fourth grade interviewees mentioned this grading technique.

Four students (20%) selected "Other". Of the 4 students who selected "Other", 3 students wrote % and 1 student wrote minus, check, and plus.

Eight students (40%) selected more then one response indicating that their teachers' utilize multiple grading techniques.

Survey question #26 was an open response item. It asked "What does your teacher tell you to do to get a good score on writing?" The majority of the students' responses dealt with the components of their writing. Eleven students responded that their teachers told them to elaborate and/or use details. Six students responded that their teachers told them to stay on topic/stay focused. A few students' survey answers were about writing mechanics: punctuation, spelling, and grammar.

These responses were very similar to the students' initial responses to the interview question, "How does your teacher grade your writing?" They equated their teachers' suggestions with their teachers' grading techniques.

Only 2 students responded that their teachers' told them to "do your best". I was surprised that more students did not write about teacher encouragement when responding to this survey question because the students talked about their teachers' encouraging comments during the interviews.

Roberto's response to this question was different from the other students. He wrote "She (the teacher) tells us to use voice, look back over our writing, plan our writing first". Roberto's teacher apparently stressed the importance of using voice and her instruction had an impact on him. I expected more of the students' responses to include planning. The students' discussed planning frequently during the interviews and viewed it as an important part of the writing process. When responding to the survey question, the students did not associate planning with getting a "good score" on a writing assignment.

Research Question #6: What are students' views of high-stakes writing exams?

As mentioned previously, the participants of this study all attended public elementary schools in a district that administers FCAT writing to all 4th graders and was therefore a part of their educational environment. The results of Florida's Comprehensive Test are used to calculate the grades on a state report card and a federal pass/fail measure (Brown, 2006). As the student responses above reveal, many of the students referred to FCAT when discussing how their teachers graded their writing.

Interviews

In the latter part of the interviews I posed questions about the FCAT to the students. I began with a general question "What do you know about the FCAT?" I concluded with the question "How do you feel when you complete a timed writing assignment?" (See Appendix H for a complete list of interview questions.)

A number of students described the FCAT as hard. For example, when I asked Ryan, a fifth grader, what he knew about the FCAT he replied "Um, just it's hard". When I asked him to be more specific his response was filled with emotion. "First of all, you're pretty tense when you start it so you don't exactly focus on it like you would a normal test because it determines your grade if you actually go on to the next grade or not. So a lot of people get tense and they don't do real good, like I didn't do real good." Ryan proceeded to tell me that his friends and family thought that his grade was good, but he did not like it. He wanted to do better, but felt tense because there was so much pressure to do well. Sue, another fifth grader, replied "I know the county does it (FCAT). I know its hard most of the time. I know that it counts on your report card." James, a fourth grader, echoed this feeling, "It's pretty hard for some of the kids who do writing.

Personally me, I don't like writing that much so I'm not really good at it. But when I want to write, I'm pretty good at it." Even though James did not necessarily like writing, when he did his best, he did well.

Mary, on the other hand, told me that the FCAT "wasn't really that hard". She was extremely confident about her performance on the FCAT. "My teacher prepared our class so well that we were ready for it, well at least I was. And, it was really easy cause we had learned all the different things so we could figure it out." Mary viewed the FCAT in a positive light and gave her teacher credit for her preparedness.

Some students described the actual components of the FCAT Writing assessment to me. Joe stated "I know that there are two topics given out randomly to be graded with the numbers 1 – 6 and you have 45 minutes to finish." Theo said "You have to get at least a 3 and next year you have to get a 3.5. We had 45 minutes to write a paper". Sylvia said "You get a topic, they tell you what it's about, like you are on a desert island, you're stranded, and you just write about it…"

Other students described the FCAT in general terms. Vanessa said "I know that it is a test and it grades your school. Also, it would see how well you are doing in school." Gina agreed "It tests how much you have improved." Sally and Jen both described the FCAT as a "big test". Sally said "I know it's a big test and if you don't pass it, basically, you have to pass it to go to the next grade." Jen replied "We have to study for it a lot, and that it's just a big test and there are a lot of questions." These students voiced the significance of the FCAT that was relayed to them from their teacher(s).

Tonya and Karen's responses, on the other hand, were low-key. Tonya said that she did not know much about the FCAT. "They told us it was timed, do your best." Karen stated "If you don't pass, it doesn't really matter. It matters about the grades in school, your behavior and stuff like that." They did not seem to view the FCAT as a major assessment; however, I do not know whether this can be attributed to their individual personalities or their schools' emphasis on the test.

The students' responses related to timed writing assignments and assessments contained a great deal of emotion. When the students discussed how they felt during timed writing assignments, they voiced words such as pressured, nervous, frustrated, uncomfortable, tense, confused, scared, and stressed.

Sue's response contained a great deal of emotion. "I was very stressed because I was afraid, like, that time would run out when I'm not finished and they don't let you take it over again or anything. And it got me kind of upset." Nancy agreed "I felt pressured. Because sometimes you don't get enough time to work on it, and then it just feels uncomfortable because you are going to get a bad grade." Sharon voiced fear about timed writing assessments. "I feel a little more scared than when I don't have a time limit. I am afraid I won't be able to finish it or that I wouldn't be able to fit it all in the lines." Joe felt pressured to complete the writing task in the allotted time period. "Sometimes I feel stressed when I don't really like the topic, I can't come up with something for it. So I don't have a lot of time when I finally do, so I'm under a lot of pressure to complete it."

It was upsetting to me to hear them express such emotionally charged responses.

The students' feelings about high-stakes writing assessments echoed the feelings of the teachers from the Darling-Hammond and Wise (1985) study in which teachers felt extreme pressure. Their feelings also support the following powerful statement by Shelton and Fu (2004): "Educators, teachers, parents, and students have never felt more stressed from testing at every grade level (p.120)." The students in this study definitely internalized the significance of the assessment.

In contrast, when the students discussed how they felt after they completed timed writing assignments, they used words such as proud, good, happy, and relieved. James said "I felt proud of myself because I finished it. And I felt proud because I had written a really good paper." Mary echoed James when she replied "I'd feel really good that I've accomplished it." Shaye agreed "It felt good…because I did it. I did the whole thing and in the time."

Several students expressed relief that the test was over. Vanessa said that she felt "Happy! It was over with and I didn't have to do it anymore." Sally agreed "I felt relieved. When I found out my grade, I felt relieved that I knew what it was and I passed and everything." Gina's response was similar "Oh, I'm glad it's over."

Sylvia and Tonya expressed pride in their work. Sylvia said "I was happy because I went through and thought it was a good story." Tonya agreed "I felt like I did a really good job." The students' expressed a sense of relief and accomplishment.

During the interviews, the students shared various suggestions that their teachers and parents made regarding test preparation and behaviors to adhere to the night before a writing test.

Teachers' suggestions regarding testing

According to the students, teachers stressed that they get a good night sleep, eat a healthy breakfast the morning of the test, and do their best. Sharon provided a detailed response about her teacher's suggestions. "She (teacher) said to go to bed a little bit earlier than usual and make sure to eat dinner the night before and if you took any kind of vitamins, to do that. And she said if you didn't eat breakfast at home, eat it at school, they would provide something for you." Based on my teaching experience, these suggestions are typical of what schools encourage students to do prior to a test.

Sally's teacher and school on the other hand blatantly acknowledged the stress that high-stakes assessments put on students. According to Sally "On the day of the test, she gave us a worry stone and we would have to rub it. And we also got cards from the other grades for good luck." The fact that the students were given a "worry stone" clearly addresses the emotional toll that high-stakes assessments put on students. Although the letters of encouragement were nice, it seems that they might cause more stress for the students by reminding them of the significance of the test.

Parental advice regarding writing assessments

The students' parents also encouraged the students to get a good night's sleep and eat a healthy breakfast. Joe's parents told him "don't eat too much sugar or have too much caffeine, and go to bed early". In addition to these suggestions, their parents urged them to relax. Mary's mom told her to "Be calm and just do my best and to really focus on the prompt." Sally's parents urged her to "Relax and do your best." Ryan's parents also told him to "do your best". Sharon's parents told her "not to panic and just pretend it was not a test, but that you were just doing it for fun. They said to use everything that

I've learned." Shaye's mother also told her "don't panic". The fact that parents anticipated that their children might "panic" was a little disturbing.

Surveys

Once I began analyzing the survey data I realized that none of the survey questions corresponded with this research question. In retrospect, I should have included a question that specifically asked the students about high-stakes writing tests. Fortunately, I obtained a great deal of data about this during the interviews.

Summary

The students in this study provided enlightening responses about writing instruction. Their awareness of the importance of high-stakes writing assessments and the subsequent impact on instructional practices varied across the sample. The following chapter pulls all of the data together and provides a synthesis of the study.

I created a model that displays the three overarching categories and corresponding patterns that I found when analyzing the data as well as what the students' said in the study and what the literature says about each writing component (See Table 5). In chapter 5, I refer to Table 5 as I reflect on the major findings of the study.

Table 5

Graphic representation of the research model

What Students Said	What Literature Says
WRITING	
Definition of Writing	
*10/20 students defined writing as a way to express your feelings. *4/20 students described writing as fun. *4/20 students defined writing as writing down words. *3/20 students defined writing as using your imagination to describe something to the reader.	"Writing is a meaning making process in which writers negotiate meaning with texts they are producing. The process is recursive rather than linear, with writers moving back and forth among stages… Throughout, they draw on heir life experiences, including their experiences with literature and their knowledge of written language conventions" (Strickland, et. al., 2001, p.387).
Why Students' Write	
Students wrote for pleasure, to express themselves, for assignments, to acquire and share knowledge, and because they were tested.	*NCTE/IRA Standards for the English Language Arts (2007) states "Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information)." * Kinneavy (1971) claimed that a writer's purpose guides his/her choice about diction, organizational patterns, and content.
"Good Writing"	
*Students described "good writing" as staying on topic, using details, using good vocabulary, being organized, and being creative. *The majority of the students (14/20) said they were good writers because they followed their teachers' advice and used details when they wrote.	*"Students and teachers recognize that "good writing" is a horizon to aim for, knowing that the horizon has a limitless ability to change" (Portalupi, 2000, p.33). *Fourth grade students in Fang's (1996) study said that "a good piece of writing must have lots of details, be mechanically neat, contain challenge words, adventure, fun, and be interesting" (p.253).
Content Area Writing	
*19/20 students discussed writing during science, social studies, math, and music. *Students did not mention writing in art. *Students shared more examples of writing in science than any other content area.	*"Writing is effectively used as a tool for thinking and learning throughout the curriculum" (NCTE, 2006, p.2). *Fecho et al (2006) found more studies connecting writing to art than any other content area. Of the major content areas, science was the most strongly represented in the studies they reviewed.
Writing Topics	
*13/20 students liked to choose their own topics. *7/20 students preferred assigned topics. *55% of the students were able to select their own topics at least 50% of the time.	*"In order to create interest and promote ownership of their writing, students need to be able to choose the topic and genre" (Higgins et. al., 2006). *"Children write more on self-selected topics than on assigned topics and have significantly more content knowledge about topics they want to write about than about assigned topics" (Chapman, 2006, p.34).

Table 5 (Continued)

What Students Said	What Literature Says
Student Planning	
*10/20 students shared planning techniques. *Five students mentioned planning when responding to the question "What makes you a good writer?" *Students stated that they were encouraged, but not required to use planning devices.	*"Research indicates that younger children may not separate planning from text generation and may need to prepare to write in groups. Social interactions with other writers may help young writers think about plans and consider ways to organize their writing" (Dahl, 1998, p.135). *"Even when explicitly asked to plan in advance, children often have difficulty separating planning from writing" (McCutchen, 2006, p. 117).
TEACHER INSTRUCTION	
Modeling	
*19/20 students stated that their teachers modeled writing. *Students' expressed the benefits of modeling.	*Effective teachers collaborate with students by modeling learning processes and involving students in the process (Britton, 1993).
Reading Writing Connection	
*18/20 students stated that their teachers read to them. *Students got ideas from the books and poems that their teachers read. *Teachers discussed what "good" authors did.	Literature should be an integral part of the writing curriculum. Literature can serve as a scaffold for children's writing (Calkins, 1994; Chapman, 2006; Dyson, 1990; Graves, 1994; Lensmire, 1994; NCTE, 2004; Thomason & York, 2000).
Conferencing	
*12/20 students stated that they had writing conferences with their teachers. * 9 of these 12 students found the conferences helpful.	*"Children need regular response to their writing from the teacher and other readers" (Graves, 2004, p. 91). *"In writing conferences, teachers can describe their intentions for providing feedback, offering explanations for comments or asking students for their perspectives" (Beach & Friedrich, 2006, p. 228).
Teacher's Role	
*Students viewed their teachers as an integral part of their writing development. They were very verbal about things their teachers did to help them progress in writing.	The NCTE (2004) offers the following principles to guide effective teaching practices in writing: Everyone has the capacity to write. People learn to write by writing. Writing is a process. Writing is a tool for thinking. Writing grows out of many different purposes. Conventions are important to readers and writers. Writing and reading are related. Writing has a complex relationship to talk. Literate practices are imbedded in social relationships. Composing occurs in different modalities. Assessment of writing involves complex, informed, human judgment.

Table 5 (Continued)

What Students Said	What Literature Says
Grading	
*Students shared 4 types of grading techniques: comments, number grades 1-6, letter grades, and rubrics *14/20 students said their teachers wrote comments on their written assignments. *13/20 students said their teachers graded some or all of their writing with 1-6. *13/20 students said their teachers used letter grades alone and/or in conjunction with other grading techniques. *2/20 students said their teachers used rubrics to grade writing.	*"Positive feedback, together with specific suggestions and support, foster children's growth toward writing with competence and confidence" (Chapman, 2006, p. 38). *In Hillocks' 1996 review of writing research, he found that when teachers' comments were focused on a specific issue, students' writing quality showed marked improvement (Dahl, 1998). * "Students seem to find two types of comments most helpful: comments that suggest ways of making improvements and comments that explain why something is good or bad about their writing" (Beach & Friedrich, 2006, p. 227).
TESTING	
Student Emotions	
Students voiced words such as pressured, nervous, frustrated, uncomfortable, tense, confused, scared, and stressed.	"Educators, teachers, parents, and students have never felt more stressed from testing at every grade level" (Shelton & Fu, 2004, p. 120).
High-stakes testing	
Students shared suggestions that their teachers and parents made about things to do before a test.	*On high-stakes writing assessments, students write on an assigned topic, in a set period of time, and in a testing situation (Dyson & Freedman, 1990). *These conditions are in stark contrast to what researchers consider best practices for writing instruction (Hillocks, 2002).
Time Restraints	
*19/20 students discussed time restraints during the interviews. *The frequency of timed writing assignments ranged from every day in 4th grade to not at all in 5th grade.	Students must learn to write without time limits before they are expected to write an effective piece in a predetermined amount of time (Thomason & York, 2000).

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section addresses Table 5 that was introduced at the conclusion of the previous chapter. I refer to Table 5 while reflecting on the major findings, conclusions and implications of this study and how those conclusions helped to answer the primary research question: How do proficient intermediate grade writers' perceive writing in school? This section addresses each of the following questions that guided this study:

1 What are students' views of the purposes for writing at school?

2 What are students' views of the differing contexts for writing at school?

3 What decisions do children make when they write at school?

4 What are students' views of the role of their teachers in writing instruction?

5 How do students interpret writing assessment?

6 What are students' views of high-stakes writing exams?

7 Do students' interview responses reflect their survey responses?

The second section discusses the limitations of this study. The third section discusses areas of possible future research. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Conclusions and Implications

The purpose of this study was to examine students' perceptions of writing instruction in order to gain insight into their awareness of the impact of high-stakes writing assessments on instructional practices and teaching strategies. As Table 5 reveals, the students' responses were typically in agreement with what literature says about writing. Below I discuss my predictions and what I found based on the study data.

Students' Purposes for Writing at School (Why Students Write)

During the interviews, the students discussed five purposes for writing at school: for pleasure, to express themselves, for assignments, to acquire and share knowledge, and because they are tested. Although their responses revealed that practicing for FCAT Writing was one of the reasons they wrote during school it was not mentioned as much as I had anticipated. The students discussed testing when questioned about timed writing, but did not emphasize testing as a purpose for writing at school. Since there is such a great deal of emphasis in Florida on achieving "good" test scores, I assumed the students would view testing as one of the major reasons they wrote at school.

A possible explanation for this is that their teachers did a great job balancing the writing curriculum. As I pondered this possibility, I thought of Thomason and York's (2000) book, *Write on Target: Preparing Young Writers to Succeed on State Writing Achievement Tests.* In their book, the authors provide practical ideas for teachers to implement that promote test success without compromising students' growth as writers. York was an elementary language arts supervisor for one of the school districts represented at the 2004 Suncoast Young Authors Celebration. It is possible that the study participants' teachers attended her workshops and/or received materials based on her

book. It is obviously impossible to confirm this, but it could explain the students' perceptions of a "balanced" writing curriculum.

Another possible explanation is that test preparation is so ingrained in the writing curriculum that the students were not aware of it. If demand writing is introduced during the primary grades and utilized on a regular basis, students may become socialized into this instructional method. If this is the way that students are taught and/or learn to write they might not associate the purpose as test practice.

Another explanation is that the students may have been trying to please me during the interviews and their responses were contrived. I conducted guided interviews and as a result the students responded to my interview protocol. Although the interview questions were open-ended and I avoided leading questions, the students may have responded with answers that they thought I wanted to hear. Seidman (1991) urges interviewers to avoid manipulating their interviewees to respond to an interview guide. He also states that "interviewers must try to avoid imposing their own interests on the experience of the participants" (Seidman, 1991, p.70). I attempted to "step back" during the interviews and allow the students to respond to the questions without imposing my views on them; however, this does not guarantee that students responded in a completely candid manner.

According to Graham et al., (2007) one of writing's most important features is that it lets people communicate with others. The students in this study did not state that they used writing as a tool to communicate with a real audience. They predominantly wrote for their teachers. This supports findings from an investigation of audience which was conducted by Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod, and Rosen (1975). They rated

more than 2,000 pieces of school writing by students aged 11 to 18 as being in one of four audience categories: self, teacher, wider audience (known), and unknown audience. The ratings showed that between 87% and 99% of the writing was written to the teacher as an audience despite the classroom instructional objective for young writers to learn to write to communicate with various audiences. Britton et al.'s study was conducted over 30 years ago yet the data from this study supports their findings. It appears that FCAT Writing is dictating communication processes in the classroom.

Contexts for Writing at School (Content Area Writing)

The students spent a great deal of time during the interviews discussing and sharing details about content area writing with me. I did not anticipate that the students would verbalize how much they enjoyed content area writing. The students were very enthusiastic when discussing various writing projects that they worked on in science, social studies, and math.

The students discussed writing in science more than any other content area. Eighteen of the twenty students discussed writing summaries, steps for experiments, reports, definitions, projects, notes, and/or answers to questions in science. The students' viewed writing during science as a positive experience. I was pleasantly surprised by the enthusiasm and detailed responses that the students provided about writing in science. The students' responses echoed the findings of Fecho et al (2006). Science was the most represented content area in the teacher research in writing classrooms that they reviewed. They found numerous examples of effective writing occurring in elementary school science classes.

I assumed that test preparation and /or mandatory curriculum requirements imposed by the state would interfere with content area writing. This was yet another assumption of mine that was negated by the data obtained from this study. According to the students, content area writing did occur in their classrooms and they viewed it in a positive light. The students' expressed enthusiasm when talking about content area writing. Content area writing is not as artificial because students are not given a prompt. They are able to write about "real" things. There was an obvious difference between their perceptions of language arts writing and content area writing.

The students shared examples of working with and learning from their peers during content area writing. Peer interactions were not discussed as part of language arts writing; however, providing a variety of kinds of social interaction around writing is considered a current best practice in teaching writing. "Children need opportunities to share ideas, collaborate, and respond to one another's writing" (Chapman, 2006, p. 38). These social interactions provide meaningful support to the writing development of children. In retrospect, I should have questioned the students specifically about peer interactions and participation in cooperative groups during writing activities across content areas. This may have produced a great deal of data about their perceptions of writing.

Decisions Students Made When Writing at School

According to the students, the only decisions they made in regards to writing were related to writing topics and planning devices.

Writing topics. I made two incorrect assumptions about school writing topics. First, I assumed that the majority of students would be given assigned writing topics the

majority of the time and not be able to select their own writing topics. I also anticipated that most, if not all of the interviewees would prefer to select their own writing topics so that they could be creative and write about topics that they found interesting. The students proved my assumptions wrong. Although many of the students (13) liked to choose their own writing topics, seven of the interviewees preferred assigned writing topics.

Writing research recommends that students write on topics of their choice (Atwell, 1987; Chapman, 2006; Dyson & Freedman, 1990; Graves, 1975, 1983, 1994, & 2003; Ray, 2004; Schneider, 2001; Wolf & Davinroy, 1998; Wolf & Wolf, 2002). Graves (1983) stressed the importance of listening to children and allowing them to select their own topics. Pressley, Mohan, Fingeret, Reffitt, and Raphael-Bogaert (2007) agree that effective teachers provide students with choices about their writing. Ray's (2004) research in a first grade classroom supports this recommendation. When Ray observed a student in the class, she determined that one of the reasons he wrote so well in a particular piece is because he was writing about a subject that he was passionate about. Ray (2004) found that the classroom teacher encouraged "Cauley and his classmates to choose topics that matter to them…" In addition, the teacher who Ray observed stressed that "before she can ever expect them (her students) to care deeply about *how* they write, they must care deeply about *what* they are writing" (p.101).

There is also research that's supports assigned writing topics. When given topic choice, children are often inclined to write in certain genres and styles. Providing students with a range of opportunities to write in different genres enables students to draw on other discourses from their lives (Chapman, 2006).

As I stated previously, I assumed that the students would express strong negative feelings about teacher selected writing topics; however, most of the students did not mind their teachers' topics. More than 1/3 of the students in this study preferred assigned topics. Theo was one of the students that preferred assigned topics. When I asked him what his teacher did to help him write, he replied "They give me topics I've never done before and that helps me give more details because I am writing about new things". I found his response to be very insightful. It definitely made me reconsider my position about the negative aspects of assigned writing topics.

The phi coefficient of +0.30 for the response "allow more self-selected topics" for the question "What could teachers do to help kids become better writers?" indicates that students who reported this option on the survey also expressed this during the interview (See Table 4). This supports the literature in favor of writing topic choice that was cited previously.

Student planning. One half of the students shared planning techniques with me that they used when writing. Five of these students considered planning to be one of the characteristics that made them "good" writers. The students said that they were encouraged, but not required to using planning devices. As a teacher, I strongly encouraged my students to use planning techniques because I thought that it would help them organize their thoughts. Although I personally plan throughout writing, I assumed that children needed to plan before they wrote. After reviewing the research on planning by Dahl (1998) and McCutchen (2006) I reconsidered my view of planning. According to their review of writing research, children's plans can be made prior to writing or evolve during writing. McCutchen (2006) found that "even when explicitly asked to

plan, young children often have difficulty separating planning from writing" (p.117). Dahl (1998) concurs with this finding. Students' "plans" often become their written text. Dahl (1998) suggests that young writers might benefit from social interactions with other writers to help them think about plans and ways to organize their written work. I incorporated whole class brainstorming in my writing instruction with elementary students, but I did not utilize small group planning. Preparing to write in small groups is a technique that seems valuable because it allows children to learn from each other through talk. This reinforces the importance of peer interactions during writing.

Teachers' Roles in Writing Instruction

The students' responses illustrate that they viewed their teachers as paramount in their development as writers. The model writing presented in class, the reading/writing connections, and the writing strategies introduced by the teachers had a significant impact on the students.

Modeling. According to the students, the majority of their teachers demonstrated at least one of the qualities that Graves (2004) uses to define "first-rate teachers" (p. 92). Graves (2004) states that in addition to other characteristics, "They (first-rate teachers) teach by showing" (p.92). He further explains that "students acquire much of their learning by observing as their teacher or their peers share their work in progress (p.92). This supports Britton's (1993) stance that effective teachers' model learning processes and encourage their students to participate in the process. I am a visual learner and agree with the significant benefits of modeling. Good models of writing can enhance students' knowledge. In addition, students are given an opportunity to share ideas with the group

and receive responses from their teacher as well as their classmates. This encourages a supportive writing environment

The students in this study liked modeling of writing and responded positively to this instructional method. The students were working towards closer approximation to their teachers' writing models. The phi coefficient of +0.53 for the response "model writing" for the question "What could teachers do to help kids become better writers?" indicates that students who reported this option on the survey also expressed this during the interview (See Table 3). The effect size value of .53 is considered a substantial association (Davis, 1971). This correlation was high compared to the other correlations which further supports the finding that teacher modeling is deemed an important writing instructional strategy by the students

Reading/writing connection. According to the students, their teachers read orally for pleasure and emphasized the reading/writing connection more than I anticipated. Once again, I assumed that the rigid curricular requirements enforced by the state would interfere with teachers' oral reading. Eighteen of the students stated that their teachers read to them on a regular basis and/or discussed what "good" authors did. The teachers used literature as a scaffold for their students' writing. Reading is a vital source of information and ideas. The students verbalized the benefits of reading which included: improves vocabulary, promotes idea generation, and introduces various genres and writing styles.

I anticipated that the students would express more examples of using "voice" in their writing. Pritchard and Honeycutt (2007) define voice as "an author's unique style and personality as reflected in his or her writing (p 39)". A writer's voice is composed of

tone, syntax, expression, and vocabulary. The students did not discuss these aspects of their writing during the interviews. Despite the fact that their teachers presented the reading/writing connection and utilized literature as a scaffold for their writing, the students did not share many examples of imitating the voice of professional writers.

Conferencing. I assumed that all of the students would be familiar with writing conferences. As a former elementary language arts teacher, I believe that writing conferences give teachers an opportunity to offer individual support to their students. According to the students, writing conferences did not occur as frequently as I anticipated. Only 12 of the students stated that they had writing conferences with their teachers. Literature on best practices in writing stresses that children need regular response to their writing (Beach & Friedrich, 2006; Graves, 2004). A primary purpose for responding to students' writing is to help improve the quality of their writing. Beach and Friedrich (2006) present the benefits of writing conferences. They state that conferences provide teachers with an opportunity to offer feedback to students as well as providing students with an opportunity to "voice their purposes, practice self-assessment, and formulate alternate revisions" (p. 228). Although writing conferences are time intensive, they provide needed support to students.

Teacher's role. The students viewed their teachers as an integral part of their writing development. In addition to modeling writing and utilizing literature in the classroom, the teachers introduced numerous writing techniques. The students enthusiastically discussed techniques such as fee-po, hamburger writing, and exploding the moment. I was familiar with hamburger writing and exploding the moment, but I had never heard of "fee-po" prior to this study and was curious to learn about this technique.

James explained that “f = fact, e = example, p = personal experience, and o = opinion”. He went on to share that he “always plans and uses examples, experiences, attention grabbers, and details” in his writing. What a vivid example of a student who considers himself a “good” writer because he uses his teacher’s ideas and techniques. This further supports Fang’s (1996) findings regarding the strong impact that teachers have on students’ perceptions of literacy.

The wording of survey question # 18 “What does your teacher do that doesn’t help you write?” may have affected the results and/or caused confusion for the students. The word “doesn’t” was not in bold font and it is possible that the students were confused by the question. This may have resulted in the inability to calculate the phi coefficient for two of the variables for this question: #3-“Assigns required words” and #5-“Provides too much information”. None of the students selected these variables on the survey and none of the students discussed these variables during the interviews. In reflection, I should have questioned students about each survey question during the interviews.

There was a lack of agreement between survey and interview data, but Patton (2002) says that inconsistencies are ok. “Finding such inconsistencies ought not be viewed as weakening the credibility of results, but rather as offering opportunities for deeper insight into the relationship between inquiry approach and the phenomena under study” (Patton, 2002, p. 556).

Students’ Views of Writing Assessment (Grading)

The data presented in chapter 4 detail the types of grading techniques the students’ teachers utilized when assessing their writing. According to the students, most teachers used a combination of these grading methods when assessing their writing.

These included: comments, number grades 1 – 6, letter grades, and rubrics. As I stated in the previous chapter, the students assumed that I knew that the scores 1 – 6 coincided with the FCAT Writing test. This grading method was only explained when I questioned what 1 – 6 meant.

Although all of these grading techniques were addressed in the interviews and surveys the students provided a great deal of data regarding the comments that their teachers made on their writing assignments. Beach and Friedrich (2006) state that this supports research that "finds that teachers' respond to student writing by making comments. Unfortunately, these comments are often too vague (p. 225)." Teachers' general comments may boost students' self-esteem yet provide little guidance for improvement and growth. According to Beach and Friedrich (2006) "Students seem to find two types of comments most helpful. First, they favor comments that suggest ways of making improvements. Second, they prefer comments that explain why something is good or bad about their writing (p.227)."

All of the grading shared by the students was FCAT based. The teachers' verbal and written comments can be traced to FCAT Writing scoring components which emphasis four content areas: focus, organization, support, and conventions. The students said that their teachers emphasized grammar, punctuation, vocabulary, and details. Teachers may not have overtly mentioned FCAT, but their comments reflected the four content areas. As a result, the students deemed these characteristics of writing to be important.

Overall, the students were happy with their teachers' written comments. Beach and Friedrich (2006) state "a primary purpose for responding to children's writing is to

help them improve the quality of their writing (p.222)." If comments are predominately based on FCAT Writing, can the overall quality of students' writing improve? I also question the helpfulness of teachers' written comments to poor readers. If students are unable to read their teacher's comments, how can their writing improve?

Revision is an important aspect of the composing process yet the types of feedback that the teachers provided did not promote revision. MacArthur (2007) says that revision is important for two reasons. First, it is an important part of the composing process. Second, revision provides an opportunity for teachers to guide students in learning about effective writing skills. If revision is not occurring, teachers are missing important instructional opportunities. As a result, students are missing vital instruction to further develop their writing skills.

Students' Views of High-stakes Writing Exams

Testing was not viewed as a major purpose for writing at school like I had anticipated. The students did not dwell on testing in the interviews; however, they expressed various emotions regarding timed writing assessments. They used words such as pressured, nervous, frustrated, uncomfortable, tense, confused, scared, and stressed when they discussed how they felt during timed writing assessments. Apparently, the high-stakes associated with the FCAT was part of their educational environment.

It was upsetting to me to hear them express such emotionally charged responses. The students' feelings about high-stakes writing assessments echoed the feelings of the teachers from the Darling-Hammond and Wise (1985) study in which teachers felt extreme pressure. Their feelings also support the following powerful statement by

Shelton and Fu (2004): “Educators, teachers, parents, and students have never felt more stressed from testing at every grade level” (p.120).

The phi coefficient of +0.41 for the response “sets time limits” for the question “What does your teacher do that doesn’t help you write?” indicates that students responded the same way on both the interview and survey (See Table 3). This high correlation supports the students’ emotional interview responses as well as the literature on time restraints.

The data from this study do not specify whether or not teachers and/or administrators overtly discussed the significance of the FCAT, but based on the students’ interview responses, the students internalized the significance of the assessment. Things influencing the students’ perceptions could be things teachers say to them and/or do for them.

How the students’ parents support and/or talk about testing could also impact their perceptions of high-stakes tests. I recently received an email from my children’s pediatrician’s office that contained an article titled *Your Kids and School Tests: Do’s and Don’ts for Parents.* The article was provided by the US Department of Education and included a list of suggestions for parents. One of the most notable suggestions was “Don’t judge your child on the basis of a single test score. Test scores are not perfect measures of what a child can do. There are many other things that might influence a test score. For example, a child can be affected by the way he or she is feeling, the setting in the classroom, and the attitude of the teacher. Remember, also, that one test is simply one test.” This is a very powerful suggestion. It seems like common sense, but the current high-stakes of testing makes it difficult to take test scores lightly.

This is a major contradiction. This article was created by the US Department of Education which also mandates the NCLB Act which includes state-mandated testing. What an example of conflicting perspectives from the same governmental office.

Another suggestion that mirrored the students' interview responses was "Make sure that your child is well rested on school days and especially the day of a test. Children who are tired are less able to pay attention in class or to handle the demands of a test." These suggestions are very similar to the students' responses to the interview question "What do your parents tell you to do the night before a test?"

Due to my personal interest in the area of testing, I immediately read the article; however, I am curious about how many other parents read the article and whether or not they instituted any of the suggestions. Also, did the US Department of Education provide this article to schools? I would be interested in the reactions of administrators, teachers, and parents.

The data from this study show that teachers have a strong influence on students' perceptions of writing. The students in this study shared detailed information about their perceptions of writing in school. Despite the informative data that were acquired, this study has limitations which are presented below.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited in several ways. First, although the sample reflects the population of children who attended the SYAC, it does not accurately reflect the demographic mix of the districts. This study can not be generalized to a large population of elementary grade students. The conclusions are only relevant to the students who attended SYAC. The intent of this study was to determine how proficient intermediate

grade writers perceive writing in school. Data were collected on only 20 students. The intent was to gain insight into their awareness of the impact of high-stakes writing assessments on instructional practices and teaching strategies. The data show that high-stakes testing is not viewed as a vital component of writing at school.

A second limitation is that the students were selected from a group of students that likes to write. It is assumed that the students selected to attend SYAC are the "crème de la crème". Different results may have been obtained if the participants were not interested in writing and/or their teachers did not consider them proficient writers.

A third limitation is that during the interviews, I did not directly question students about each question/ variable that was on the survey. In reflection, I should have asked students about each area under the surveys questions for correlation/analysis purposes.

A fourth limitation is that this study only looks at students' perceptions of writing instruction. The students' teachers and parents were not interviewed for the purposes of this study. However, teachers and parents might influence students in the following ways: things teachers say to them, things teachers do for them, school writing situations, and how parents support them and talk about writing and testing.

Another limitation is that I did not observe the teachers while they taught. I was unable to see their instructional methods. Data for my study came strictly from the students' responses on the surveys and interviews because I wanted to investigate their perceptions of writing in school. Results may have differed if I had observed classroom instruction.

An additional limitation is that I did not probe specifically about social interactions and writing. The students only mentioned peer interactions when discussing

content area writing. Numerous studies document the ways in which peer interactions support elementary students' writing. Writing is a social activity and therefore, writing should be imbedded in social contexts (Chapman, 2006; NCTE, 2006). It is likely that more data would have been obtained if the participants in this study were questioned directly about social interactions and writing.

Future Research

This study was limited to a sample of 20 students who were perceived as competent writers. Similar work should be conducted with struggling and/or average writers. Their perceptions of writing in school may support and/or refute the findings of this study.

The study participants were not questioned about working with peers during writing. Literature shows the positive impact that social interactions can have on writing. The following questions might guide future research: How does peer discourse influence intermediate-grade students' writing? What role does collaboration play in their writing?

All of the participants in this study took the FCAT Writing test in the fourth grade. The students' and their parents were provided with the number score (1-6) that they earned on the assessment. Are students and/or their parents aware of why they earned that score? How can writing be assessed in ways that inform the student, parents, and the teacher?

The students talked at great length about writing in various subject areas. Additional research that explores strategies for writing in subject areas is needed. How is writing taught in other content areas? Do teachers follow what literature deems "best practices" in content area writing?

A different and/or expanded method of data collection for a similar study could include analysis of students' talking in groups while they work on writing assignments. In addition, students' writing samples could be collected and analyzed.

These are all research topics that could significantly add to the existing works on writing in the intermediate grades. If I were to look at any of these areas further for a future study, I would be interested in peer interactions and student discourse in relation to writing instruction.

Summary

Teachers have a strong influence on students' perceptions of writing. The students in this study shared information about their perceptions of writing in school. It was refreshing to hear what a positive influence many of the teachers had on their students' writing development. This may be a result of the participants' self-concepts since they were considered good writers and they enjoyed writing..

I expected the emphasis on high-stakes writing assessments to impact the individual attention that the students received; however, according to the students, their teachers' provided a great deal of support and guidance. Although the data did not produce what I expected, when I began analyzing the data it became apparent that FCAT Writing does influence many facets of the writing curriculum including grading, feedback, conferencing, and general writing instruction.

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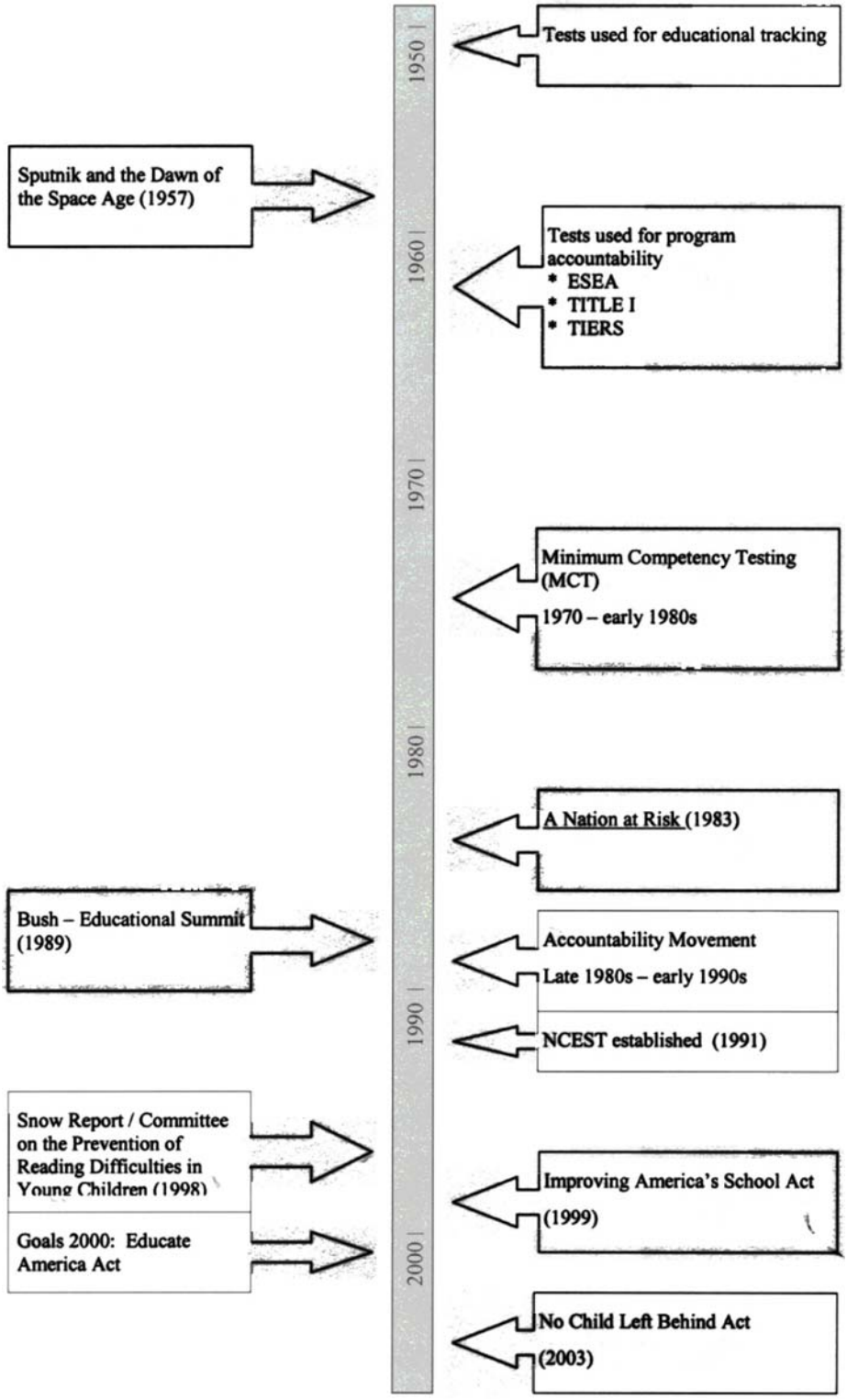
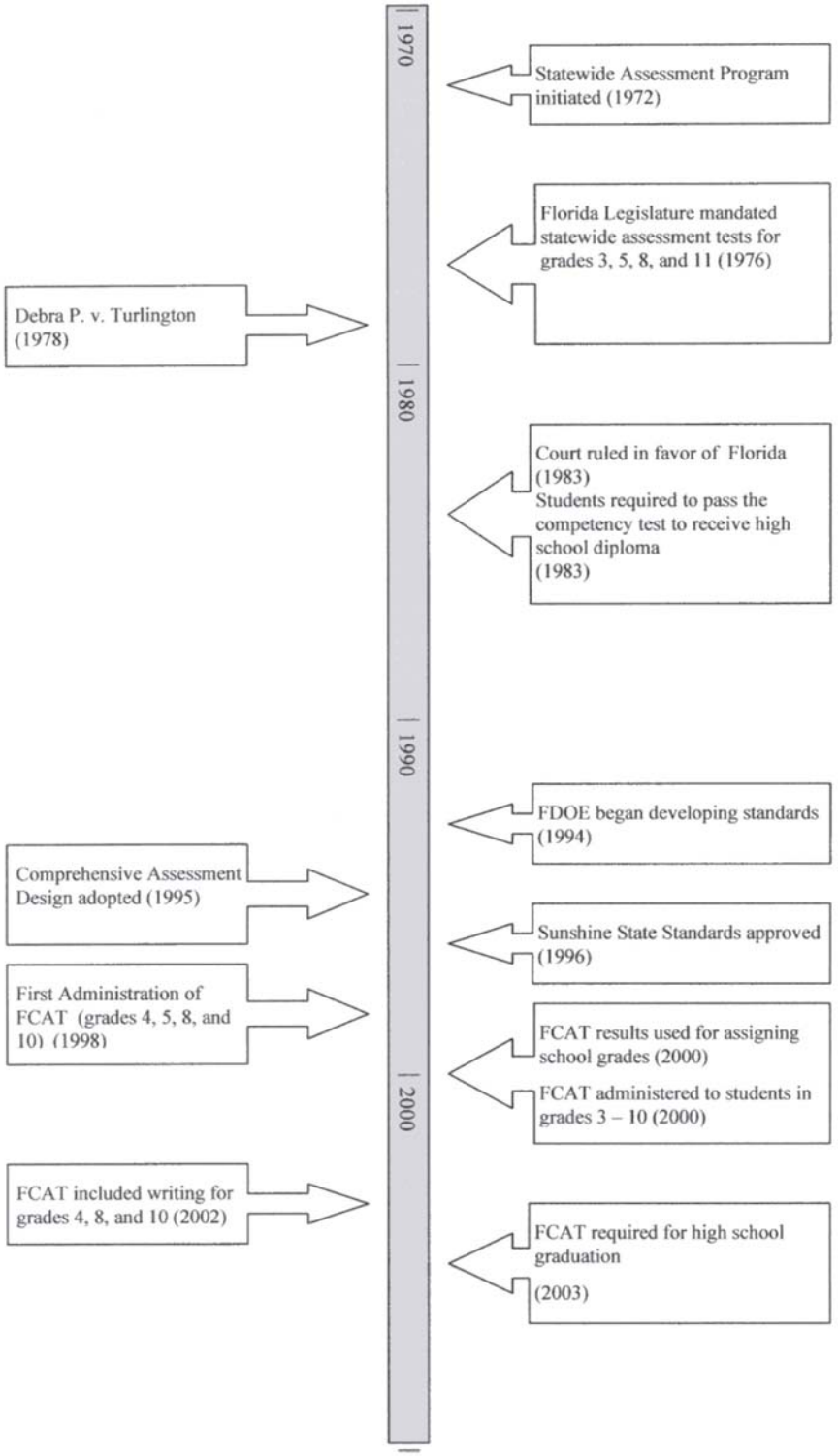
Appendices

Appendix A: National Education Reform Timeline



Appendix B: Florida Education Reform Timeline



Institutional Review Board

University of South Florida--Assurance No. MPA 1284-02XM

Change in Procedure Application

Type all answers

NOT TO BE USED TO CHANGE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

IRB File No. 99.507 Date of last IRB review: January 4, 2002

Local Sites to be Notified: (Circle) A&L xEDU FMHI Other

Please check appropriate changes: (Attach a complete copy of all additions/revisions, changes highlighted.)

- [ ] Addendum
- [ ] Amendment
- [x] Modification
- [ ] Other:
- [x] Revised protocol
- [x] Revised Informed Consent
- [ ] New Title

1. General Information

Principal Investigator: Jenifer Jasinski Schneider [x] USF [ ] Non-USF

Address: 4202 E. Fowler Ave.

Dept./College: EDU Box No. 162 Tel./Fax #: 974-1057

Co-Investigator(s)

2. Protocol Information

Title of Project: Suncoast Young Authors Celebration Survey

Sponsor/Grant agency: College of Education

3. Amendment Information - Please Complete Entire Section

Describe the proposed additions/revisions in appropriate detail: *(Tab to indented next line)*

I have received IRB permission to survey the children who attend the Suncoast Young Authors Celebration at the University of South Florida. The survey asks children to describe their experiences of learning to write in school. I would like to amend the protocol by interviewing selected children who complete and return their surveys. Through interviews, I anticipate that I can receive more detailed reflections on the students' writing processes and the type of writing instruction they receive in school. I would like to interview a sample of 30 children who have completed the surveys and represent the demographics of the population of Suncoast Young Authors. I anticipate that interviews would be held at the children's homes, their schools, or any public place that would be convenient to parents, such as the public library.

Describe any significant change in the risk/ benefits ratio for the subjects from these additions/revisions *(Tab to indent)*

By including interviews of particular children, I anticipate very minimal risks/benefits. Because the students will be interviewed, they may feel special. They may feel that they are important and they were selected because they are good writers. On the other hand, children may feel as if they were selected because their answers on the survey were wrong. I will make clear to the individuals whom interview that they were selected because their answers were interesting and I needed to learn more from them.

Have you revised the Informed Consent to include any of the additions/revisions?

Rev3.98 I:\Wordapps.Change02

[x] **Yes** [ ] **No** If yes, please attach a copy of the revised consent form and **highlight** all revisions.

4. Addition of New Co-Investigators to Protocol

Your acknowledgment is requested to assure the University of South Florida's Institutional Review Board that you are aware of the existence and status of this research activity and that you agree to the statements made in the original IRB application including the "Statement of Assurance."

Co-Investigator-Print Name	Co-Investigator-Signature	Date
Tammy Weiss Schimmel		

4. Principal Investigator Statement of Assurance

"I understand that I can not initiate any changes in my approved protocol before I have received approval and/or complied with all contingencies made in connection with that approval."

Signature of Principal Investigator	Date

Please return this application and any attachments to:

USF Campus: MDC 035
Off-campus: Division of Compliance Services
Attn: IRB MDC Box 35
12901 N. Bruce B. Downs Blvd.
Tampa, FL 33612

Affiliate institution as indicated on the first page.

Appendix D: Second and Final Revision of SYAC Survey

A. Please answer the survey questions by giving your own, honest opinions. There are no right or wrong answers. No one will see your answers including your teacher. You will need to check some answers and write for the others. Just answer the questions the best way you can. If you need more space, write on the back of the page.

1. Age_____ Grade_____ School_____ Girl/Boy_____
2. Circle every race that you are:
African American Caucasian Asian Hispanic Other_____
3. Have you ever attended the Suncoast Young Authors Celebration before? _____
If so, when did you attend? _____

B. These questions are about the writing (book, paper, story) you submitted for the *Suncoast Young Author's Celebration*. Please answer the questions while thinking about that writing.

4. What is the title of the writing you are bringing to Young Authors?
5. Was this assigned by your teacher? ___Yes ___No
6. Did you receive a prompt for your writing? ___Yes ___No

7. Who or what is your Young Authors writing mostly about?	___Animals ___Imaginary Beings (such as monsters or fairies) ___Events or people in your life ___Objects (such as dolls or cars) ___Places	___Famous People ___Made up characters (such as Harry Potter) ___Things to do (such as ballet or soccer) ___None of these. It is about… _____
8. What type of writing is your Young Author's paper?	___Fantasy (such as *Harry Potter* or *Charlotte's Web*) ___Realistic Story (such as *Because of Winn Dixie* or *Junie B. Jones*) ___Biography ___Autobiography ___Poetry	___Narrative Essay (such as "Tell about a time you had an adventure.") ___Expository Essay (such as "Explain things you enjoy doing." ___Letter ___Don't know ___None of these. It was… _____

C. These questions are about writing at any time. Please answer the questions while thinking about all of the writing you do in school.

9. What makes you think that you are a good writer? *(You may pick more than one.)*	___I get good grades. ___My teacher(s) tell me. ___My parents tell me. ___I win contests.	___I get good FCAT scores. ___My friends tell me. ___I don't know. ___None of these. This is how I know…_____
10. What do you do that makes you a good writer? *(You may pick more than one.)*	___I work hard. ___I stay on topic. ___My writing is creative. ___I use details.	___I have a good vocabulary. ___My writing is organized. ___I don't know. ___None of these. This is what I do…_____

11. How often does your teacher give you topics for writing?	___Never	___Sometimes	___A lot

12. When your teacher gives you a writing assignment, and YOUR TEACHER picks the topic, how often are the topics…			
a. Fantasies	___Never	___Sometimes	___A lot
b. Realistic Stories	___Never	___Sometimes	___A lot
c. Biographies	___Never	___Sometimes	___A lot
d. Autobiographies	___Never	___Sometimes	___A lot
e. Poetry	___Never	___Sometimes	___A lot
f. Narrative Essays	___Never	___Sometimes	___A lot
g. Expository Essays	___Never	___Sometimes	___A lot
h. Letters	___Never	___Sometimes	___A lot

13. How often does your teacher let you pick your own topic for writing?	___Never	___Sometimes	___A lot

14. When your teacher lets you pick your own writing topic, how often do you write about…			
a. Fantasies	___Never	___Sometimes	___A lot
b. Realistic Stories	___Never	___Sometimes	___A lot
c. Biographies	___Never	___Sometimes	___A lot
d. Autobiographies	___Never	___Sometimes	___A lot
e. Poetry	___Never	___Sometimes	___A lot
f. Narrative Essays	___Never	___Sometimes	___A lot
g. Expository Essays	___Never	___Sometimes	___A lot
h. Letters	___Never	___Sometimes	___A lot

15. If you DO like it when your teachers give you topics, please tell why you DO like it. *(You may pick more than one.)*	___It gives me time to practice. ___My teacher's topics are hard. ___My teacher's topics are easy. ___I like my teacher's topics.	___I don't have to think. ___I don't know. ___None of these. This is why I like my teacher's topics…_____

16. If you DO NOT like it when your teachers give you topics, please tell why you DO NOT like it. *(You may pick more than one.)*	___I do not need to practice. ___My teacher's topics are hard. ___My teacher's topics are easy. ___I don't like my teacher's topics.	___I like to think for myself. ___I don't know. ___None of these. This is why I do not like my teacher's topics…_____

17. How does your teacher help you write? *(You may pick more than one.)*	___ Models writing ___ Assigns topics ___ Gives me ideas ___ Explains the assignment ___ Gives me feedback ___ Gives practice time ___ Encourages me	___ Reads literature ___ Gives spelling help ___ Gives grammar help ___ Gives vocabulary help ___ Nothing ___ I don't know. ___ None of these. My teacher helps me by_____

18. What does your teacher do that doesn't help you write? *(You may pick more than one.)*	___Sets time limits ___Assigns required topics ___Assigns required words ___Talks too much/interrupts my concentration	___Provides too much information ___Nothing ___I don't know. ___None of these. My teacher doesn't help me write when she or he…

19. What could teachers do to help kids become better writers? *(Pick your top 3 choices.)*	___Model writing ___Give more practice time ___Provide spelling help ___Provide grammar help ___Provide vocabulary help ___Give more teacher topics ___Give more ideas	___ Allow more self-selected topics ___ Provide encouragement ___ Give more feedback ___ Read literature ___ Nothing ___ I don't know. ___ None of these. Teachers could help kids if they…

20. How often do your teachers let you do the following when you are writing?			
a. Draw	___Never	___Sometimes	___A lot
b. Talk	___Never	___Sometimes	___A lot
c. Act out your writing	___Never	___Sometimes	___A lot
d. Use a computer	___Never	___Sometimes	___A lot

21. Do the following things help you when you are writing?			
a. Drawing	___Never	___Sometimes	___A lot
b. Talking	___Never	___Sometimes	___A lot
c. Acting out your writing	___Never	___Sometimes	___A lot
d. Using a computer	___Never	___Sometimes	___A lot

22. How many computers can <u>you</u> use in your classroom? _____

23. Does your teacher write comments and suggestions when grading your writing?	___Never	___Sometimes	___A lot

24. How does your teacher grade your writing? *(You can pick more than one.)*	___Letter Grade (A+, B-, C)	___Score of 1-6	___Other Please explain…_ ___

25. What classroom writing activities do you do every day? _____
_____

26. What does your teacher tell you to do to get a good score on writing? _____
_____

Thank you for completing this survey!
Your ideas and opinions are very important.
Please return this survey to Dr. Jenifer Schneider
when you attend the Suncoast Young Authors Celebration.
Or, you can mail it to Jenifer Schneider,
USF, 4202 E. Fowler Avenue.
EDU 162, Tampa, FL 33620.
If you have any questions, please call me at (813) 974-1057 or email jschneid@tempest.coedu.usf.edu

Appendix E: Correspondence Between Research Questions and Survey Questions

	1. How do students view the purposes for writing at school?	2. How do students view the differing contexts for writing at school?	3. What decisions do children make when they write at school?	4. How do students view the role of their teachers in writing instruction?	5. How do students interpret writing assessment?	6. How do students view high-stakes writing exams?
Survey Questions						
#6			X			
#11			X			
#13			X			
#17				X		
#18				X		
#19				X		
#23					X	
#24					X	
#25	X	X				
#26					X	

Appendix F: First Revision of SYAC Survey/Pilot Survey

Thank you for participating in the Suncoast Young Author's Celebration.
We need you to answer some questions for us so we can learn more about children's writing!

A. Please answer the following questions about you by putting an 'X' in front of the best answer:

1. How old are you?	____ 5 years old	____ 9 years old
	____ 6 years old	____ 10 years old
	____ 7 years old	____ 11 years old
	____ 8 years old	____ 12 years old or older
2. Are you a boy or a girl?	____ Boy	____ Girl
3. What race are you ***(for this question, you can pick more than one)***	____ African American	____ Hispanic
	____ Asian	____ Other
	____ Caucasian	
4. Have you ever attended the *Suncoast Young Author's Celebration* before?	____ Yes	No

B. These questions are about the paper you submitted for the *Suncoast Young Author's Celebration.* Please answer the questions while thinking about that paper. If you need more space write on the back of the page.

What is the title of the paper you are bringing to *Young Author's*? _____

2. Was this paper assigned by your teacher?	____ Yes	____ No
3. Did you receive a prompt for this paper?	____ Yes	____ No

4. **Who or What** is your Suncoast Young Author's Paper **most** about?	____ Animals	Famous people
	____ Imaginary characters (such as aliens or monsters)	Made up characters (Such as Harry Potter)
	____ Events or people in your life	Things to do (such as ballet or soccer)
	Objects (such as dolls or cars)	None of the Above. It is about: _____
	Places	
5. What **type** of writing is your Suncoast Young Author's Paper? ***(Only pick one)***	____ Fantasy (such as *Harry Potter*)	____ Narrative Essay (such as "Tell about a time you went on an adventure."
	____ Realistic Story (such as *Because of Winn Dixie*)	____ Expository Essay (such as "Explain things you enjoy doing.")
	____ Biography	____ Letter
	Autobiography	Don't Know
	Poetry	None of the Above : _____

C. These questions are about writing at any time. Please answer the question with your own, honest opinion. There are no right and wrong answers. If you need more space, write on the back of the page.

1. What makes **you think** that you are a good writer? ***(You can pick more than one)***

- ____ I get good grades.
- ____ I get good FCAT scores.
- ____ My teacher(s) tell me.
- ____ My friends tell me.
- ____ My parents tell me.
- ____ I don't know.
- ____ I win contests.
- ____ None of the above: _____

2. What do **you do** that makes you a good writer? ***(You can pick more than one)***

- ____ I work hard.
- ____ I have a good vocabulary.
- ____ I stay on topic.
- ____ My writing is organized.
- ____ My writing is creative.
- ____ I don't know.
- ____ I use details.
- ____ None of the Above: _____

3. How often does ***YOUR TEACHER*** give you topics?

____ Never ____ Sometimes ____ A lot

4. When your teacher gives you a writing assignment, and ***YOUR TEACHER*** picks the topic, how often are they:

a. Fantasies	____ Never	____ Sometimes	____ A lot
b. Realistic Stories	____ Never	____ Sometimes	____ A lot
c. Biography	____ Never	____ Sometimes	____ A lot
d. Autobiography	____ Never	____ Sometimes	____ A lot
e. Poetry	____ Never	____ Sometimes	____ A lot
f. Narrative Essays	____ Never	____ Sometimes	____ A lot
g. Expository Essays	____ Never	____ Sometimes	____ A lot
h. Letters	____ Never	____ Sometimes	____ A lot

5. How often do teachers let ***YOU*** pick the topic?

____ Never ____ Sometimes ____ A lot

6. When your teacher gives you a writing assignment, and ***YOU*** can pick the topic, how often are they:

a. Fantasies	____ Never	____ Sometimes	____ A lot
b. Realistic Stories	____ Never	____ Sometimes	____ A lot
c. Biography	____ Never	____ Sometimes	____ A lot
d. Autobiography	____ Never	____ Sometimes	____ A lot
e. Poetry	____ Never	____ Sometimes	____ A lot
f. Expository Essays	____ Never	____ Sometimes	____ A lot
g. Narrative Essays	____ Never	____ Sometimes	____ A lot
h. Letters	____ Never	____ Sometimes	____ A lot

7. If you ***DO*** like it when your teachers give you topics, please tell why you ***DO*** like it:

____ It gives me time to practice.
____ My teacher's topics are hard.
____ My teacher's topics are easy.
____ I like my teacher's topics.
____ I don't have to think.
____ I don't know.
____ None of the above--this is why I ***DO*** like it: _____

8. If you ***DO NOT*** like it when your teachers give you topics, please tell why you ***DO NOT*** like it:

____ It does not give me time to practice.
____ My teacher's topics are hard.
____ My teacher's topics are easy.
____ I don't like my teacher's topics.
____ I like to think for myself.
____ I don't know.
____ None of the Above--this is why I ***DO NOT*** like it: _____

9. How often do your teachers let you do the following when you are writing:	a. Draw	____ Never	____ Sometimes	____ A lot
	b. Talk	____ Never	____ Sometimes	____ A lot
	c. Use a Computer	____ Never	____ Sometimes	____ A lot

10. Do the following help you when you are writing:	a. Drawing	____ No	____ Yes
	b. Talking	____ No	____ Yes
	c. Computers	____ No	____ Yes

11. Does your classroom have a computer you can use to write?	____ No	____ Yes	
12. Does your teacher write comments and suggestions when grading your writing?	____ No	____ Yes	
13. How does your teacher grade your writing?	____ Letter Grade	____ Score of 1-6	____ No Grade

D. These questions ask you about your opinions and ideas about what helps you and others learn to write. If you need more space, write on the back of the page

1. What classroom writing activities do you do every day? _____

2. What do your teachers tell you to do to get a good score on writing tests? _____

3. What do your teachers do that helps you write? _____

4. What do your teachers do that does not help you write? _____

5. What could teachers do to help you or other kids become better writers? _____

Thank you for completing this survey!
Your ideas and opinions are very important.
Please return this survey to SYAC.
If you have any questions, please contact:
Jenifer Schneider
(813) 974-1057
jschneid@tempest.coedu.usf.edu

Appendix G: Interview Guide

1. What is writing?
2. Why do you write?
3. What do you do that makes you a good writer?
4. Who helps you write?
5. What do your teachers do to help you write?
6. What do your teachers do that does not help you write?
7. What classroom writing activities do you do everyday?
8. Does your teacher talk with you about your writing before you complete a final draft?
9. What does he/she talk about?
10. What does he/she say that helps you with your writing?
11. How often does your teacher read out loud to your class?
12. Does your teacher talk about what good authors do?
13. Do you write during science? Do you write during math? Do you write during social studies? Do you write during reading?
14. How does your teacher grade your writing?
15. Does he/she write letter grades, number grades or no grades?
16. What does your teacher tell you to do to get a good score on a writing assignment?
17. Does your teacher assign timed writing assignments? How often?
18. Does he/she grade these assignments? If so, how are they graded?

19. Do you like to write when you can choose the topic? Why or why not? How often does this happen (more than half the time or less)?
20. What do you know about the FCAT?
21. What does your teacher tell you about prompts?
22. Do you practice taking writing tests?
23. What does your teacher tell you to do to get a good score on a writing test?
24. What do your parents tell you to do the night before a writing test?
25. Do you practice writing to prompts at home?
26. How do you feel when you complete a timed writing assignment?

Appendix H: Correspondence between Research Questions and Interview Questions

	1. How do students view the purposes for writing at school?	2. How do students view the differing contexts for writing at school?	3. What decisions do children make when they write at school?	4. How do students view the role of their teachers in writing instruction?	5. How do students interpret writing assessment?	6. How do students view high-stakes writing exams?
Interview Question						
#1	X	X				
#2	X					
#3			X			
#4				X		
#5				X		
#6				X		
#7			X	X		
#8				X		
#9				X		
#10				X		
#11				X		
#12				X		
#13		X				
#14					X	
#15					X	
#16				X	X	
#17						X

#18					X	
#19			X			
#20						X
#21						X
#22						X
#23						X
#24						X
#25						X
#26						X

Appendix I: Interview Coding Categories

DEFINITION	CODING CATEGORY	SPECIFIC AREAS
	WRITING	
Topics for students' writing assignments	Writing topics	*student choice *assigned by teacher
Students organizing thoughts before writing	Planning	
Students' views of the meaning of writing	Definition of Writing	
Reasons students write	Why Students Write	
Qualities and characteristics of good writing	Good Writing	*Students' views *Teachers' views
Writing during different subject areas	Content Area Writing	
	TEACHER INSTRUCTION	
Teacher modeling writing for students/ shared writing	Modeling	
Use of literature, authors as examples of good writing	Reading/Writing Connection	
Students and teachers meeting to discuss writing	Conferencing	*Editing
What teachers do to help students write	Teacher's Role	*positive *negative
Manner in which student writing is evaluated	Grading	
	TESTING	
Students' feelings of tension, anxiety, and/or stress toward testing	Student Emotions	
Preparing for the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Writing Test	FCAT Preparation	*teaching to the test *influence on instruction *writing prompts *Parent and teacher suggestions for the night before the test
Pre-set time restrictions for completing writing assignments	Time Restraints	

Appendix J: Students' Pseudonyms and Descriptions

NAME	DESCRIPTION
4th Graders	
James	A Caucasian male. He was extremely verbal and expressive. According to his responses, his teacher had a strong positive influence on him.
Karen	A talkative Caucasian female. Her responses were detailed and she used specific vocabulary when discussing writing.
Lola	An extremely quiet Hispanic female. She asked me to repeat questions a few times and paused often when responding to my questions.
Mary	A verbal Caucasian female. She gave her parents and sister credit for her confidence and strong writing skills.
Nancy	A Caucasian female. Her responses were to the point, but lacked detail.
Roberto	A Hispanic male. He was extremely verbal and frequently spoke off topic. I spent a great deal of time keeping him focused on the interview questions. Our interview lasted over 60 minutes while the other 19 interviews were approximately 20 minutes long.
Sally	A Caucasian female. She was very verbal and provided a great deal of information in her responses.
Shaye	A timid African American female. Her mother sat wit us during the interview which seemed to make her nervous. She needed a great deal of probing throughout the interview.
Theo	An out-going African American/Caucasian male. He was very enthusiastic about writing and his responses were animated.
Vanessa	A reserved Caucasian female. Her mom sat with us during the interview which may have contributed to her brief responses. During the interview, I told her mother that it was not necessary to stay, but she wanted to stay.
5th Graders	
Ariel	An African American/Hispanic female. She was very verbal and sometimes went off on tangents about her summer activities when responding to my questions.
Gina	A shy Caucasian female. She had a difficult time making eye contact, but provided thoughtful responses to my questions.
Jen	A bubbly Caucasian female. She provided detailed responses throughout the interview.
Joe	A verbal Caucasian male. He was extremely opinionated about high-stakes tests and expressed his dislike of these assessments.
Melissa	A Caucasian female. She had a difficult time remembering details about school, but tried to answer all of my questions.
Ryan	A reserved Caucasian male. His responses were concise and he expressed tension regarding the FCAT.
Sharon	An enthusiastic African American female. She was verbal and responded to my questions with specific vocabulary.
Sue	A reserved Caucasian female. She talked a great deal about her emotions, specifically about her anxiety with time limits.
Sylvia	A personable Hispanic female. When I called her home to schedule the interview, her mother was unable to understand English. Sylvia interpreted our conversation for her mother and expressed her excitement about participating in the study. Her bilingual father signed the consent forms.
Tonya	A talkative Caucasian female. She expressed her displeasure of her teacher's editing her writing.

Appendix K: Spreadsheet for SAS Program

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
1	Student	S1_17	S2_17	S3_17	S4_17	S5_17	S6_17	S7_17	S8_17	S9_17	S10_17	S11_17	I1_17	I2_17	I3_17	I4_17
2	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
3	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
4	3	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
5	4	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
6	5	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
7	6	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
8	7	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0
9	8	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
10	9	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
11	10	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
12	11	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0
13	12	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0
14	13	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0
15	14	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
16	15	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
17	16	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0
18	17	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
19	18	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
20	19	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
21	20	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0

	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA	AB	AC	AD	AE	AF
1	I5_17	I6_17	I7_17	I8_17	I9_17	I10_17	I11_17	S1_18	S2_18	S3_18	S4_18	S5_18	I1_18	I2_18	I3_18	I4_18
2	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
5	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
6	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
7	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0
8	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
10	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
11	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
12	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
13	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0
14	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
15	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
16	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
17	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
18	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
19	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
20	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
21	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1

	AG	AH	AI	AJ	AK	AL	AM	AN	AO	AP	AQ	AR	AS	AT	AU	AV
1	I5_18	S1_19	S2_19	S3_19	S4_19	S5_19	S6-19	S7_19	S8_19	S9_19	S10_19	S11_19	I1_19	I2-19	I3-19	I4_19
2	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1
3	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
4	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0
5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0
6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0
8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
9	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
10	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
13	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
14	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
15	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
17	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
18	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
19	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
20	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0

	AW	AX	AY	AZ	BA	BB	BC
1	I5_19	I6_19	I7_19	I8_19	I9_19	I10_19	I11_19
2	0	1	1	0	0	0	1
3	0	1	1	0	1	0	1
4	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
5	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
6	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
7	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
8	0	1	1	0	1	1	0
9	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
10	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
11	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
12	0	1	1	0	1	1	0
13	1	0	1	1	1	1	0
14	1	0	0	1	0	1	1
15	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
16	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
17	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
18	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
19	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
20	0	1	0	0	1	0	1
21	1	0	0	1	0	0	1

About the Author

Tammy Weiss Schimmel earned her undergraduate degree in Elementary Education and her master's degree in Counselor Education from the University of South Florida. She taught elementary school for ten years in Tampa, Florida.

While pursuing her doctorate at the University of South Florida (USF), she was a Graduate Assistant for the Childhood Education Department. During her assistantship, she served as editorial assistant for the *Florida Reading Quarterly* and was a liaison between USF and Pizzo Elementary School (A Professional Development School on the University's campus.). She was also a Supervisor of Student Interns for the University of Tampa and the University of South Florida. While completing her dissertation, she was appointed to the position of Reading K-12 Curriculum Consultant by the University of Tampa. Her duties entailed developing a content reading comprehension workshop for current and future M.A.T. (Masters of Arts in Teaching) teachers.