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## **A Case Study of Two High School English Teachers Transitioning from Arkansas Writing Standards to Common Core Writing Standards in the Secondary English Classroom**

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*University of Arkansas, Fayetteville*

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A CASE STUDY OF TWO HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHERS TRANSITIONING  
FROM ARKANSAS WRITING STANDARDS TO COMMON CORE WRITING  
STANDARDS IN THE SECONDARY ENGLISH CLASSROOM

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FROM ARKANSAS WRITING STANDARDS TO COMMON CORE WRITING  
STANDARDS IN THE SECONDARY ENGLISH CLASSROOM

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction

By

Cindy M. Williams  
University of Arkansas  
Bachelor of Science in Education, 1995  
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August 2012  
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## **Abstract**

The purpose of the study is to gain an understanding of secondary English teachers' perceptions towards implementing Common Core writing standards. The study allowed me to examine how teachers' perceptions affect the *level* of implementation of Common Core writing standards in their English classrooms during the first year. The study focused on two research questions and two sub-questions centering on the perceptions of secondary English teachers and how they are responding to early implementation to the Common Core State Standards. Specific facets to consider in teachers' transitioning from state standards to Common Core standards are what pedagogical training opportunities teachers received related specifically to CCSS; how instruction was designed (or redesigned); and, how teachers were expected to adapt their teaching to meet the Common Core State Standards.

The importance of this study is that it offers and extends knowledge in the area of changing from state controlled writing standards to one set of writing standards that are available to all states. Teachers, students, educators, and perhaps educational policy makers might find this study important because many states' education departments (e.g. Arkansas Department of Education) have offered a number of assumptions about how this transition will work; but, because this particular transition is new, few studies or experiences yet exist. This study offers knowledge—based on data gathered from questionnaires, interviews, and observations—about how teachers' perceptions influenced the implementation of Common Core State Standards in a localized classroom setting. Also, one of the more relevant benefits of the study was the foundation of knowledge from the teaching fields that may inform future studies, theories, curriculum, policies, and teacher practices (among other possibilities) about implications in implementing the Common Core State Standards for any content.

This dissertation is approved for recommendation  
to the Graduate Council.

Dissertation Director:

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Dr. Christian Z. Goering

Dissertation Committee:

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Dr. David A. Jolliffe

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Refused

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Cindy M. Williams



## **Dedication**

When I consider what ‘dedication’ means, I understand that this dissertation is a representation of what I have been able to do because of the devotion, commitment, perseverance, and support that my husband has dedicated to me. Glenn, you have lovingly walked with me on a journey that transformed a distant dream into an eternal reality. We completed this journey together and never have I been more excited or proud to earn a degree as this one – with you, my husband and my friend. You encouraged me to trust the Lord and to trust you to help me through. I did, and both have been the wisest choices I could have made. I love you so much.

Also, I dedicate this accomplishment to Twilia who passed away long before my life had matured. She loved me unconditionally, and she gave me a place in her heart and her home—a place that paved the way to my having a future. I miss you every day.

## **Acknowledgements**

Dr. Christian Goering, my advisor and my friend, you brought me into a world of academe that appeared outside of my comfort zone and you encouraged me and guided me throughout the entire process – beginning with the very first conversation we had about grad school possibilities. You believed I was capable of completing this journey and you never accepted less. Your humor is refreshing and awesome; your knowledge and wisdom are inspirational. I learned important and priceless lessons from you—about being a teacher, a mentor, an encourager, and a very patient friend. Thank you, Chris, for everything. I am forever grateful for your investment in me. I hope I made your first rodeo a proud one. I wish you many wonderful blessings in your future.

Dr. Michael Wavering and Dr. David Jolliffe, thank you for your encouragement, your wisdom, your knowledge, your instruction, and your support. I have learned from you both immeasurably, and I hope that my future as a teacher and college instructor will be a worthy representation of what you both have taught me. Thank you.

For my sons and their wives: John & Paula, Joshua & Alyssa, Justin & Anna, Jerod & Frances, and Jordan & Molly– I pray my life and my pursuit of the Lord and of a better education encourage each of you to keep moving forward in pursuit of your own dreams and goals. You can do what no one can do for you. Stand firm in your faith, trust the Lord. I love you.

For my daughters and their husbands: Megan & Matt, Katie & Curt, and Chelsea & Daniel– what a gift from the Lord you are! We ladies share so much from our hearts – our love of the Lord, your dad, family, education, literature, music, and more. Thank you for sharing in this joy with me. I love you much!

For Twilene: the friend of my youth and beyond; thank you for always believing in me, for being my friend always, and for loving my children and me. You will always mean the world to me. I love you, Twi.

For Johnny: my adopted daddy, I pray my life brings you joy, and my accomplishments bring you honor and pride in knowing your love, faith, and belief in me are now ready for the Lord's harvest. You are more important to me than I could ever express. I love you, dad.

For my grandchildren: During my three years of grad school, four weddings and five grandchildren were added to the fold. I love my grandchildren and I thank Jesus for each and every one of you: Cooper, Kayleigh, Cara, Michael, Madelyn, Carson, Isaac, Emma, and Cole.

## Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	
DEDICATION	
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	
LIST OF TABLES	
LIST OF FIGURES	
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY .....	2
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND .....	3
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM .....	4
PURPOSE OF THE STUDY .....	6
RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	7
SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY .....	7
METHODS .....	9
LIMITATIONS.....	11
DELIMITATIONS .....	11
THEORETICAL SENSITIVITY.....	12
DEFINITIONS OF TERMS .....	15
SUMMARY.....	16
<b>CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE .....</b>	<b>17</b>
INTRODUCTION .....	17
HISTORY LEADING TO COMMON CORE .....	18
Impact of Reading Next and Writing Next reports.....	19
ARKANSAS WRITING STANDARDS .....	20
Arkansas writing standards: Purpose and clarity.....	22
Arkansas writing standards and teacher pedagogy.....	23
State of State Standards and the Common Core in 2010.....	24
Common Core initiative.....	24
COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS .....	25
Common Core writing standards: Content and organization.....	28
Common Core writing standards: Purpose and clarity.....	29
Common Core writing standards and teachers.....	29
Comparison of Arkansas writing standards and Common Core writing standards.....	30
Arkansas' transition to Common Core state standards.....	30
MAJOR INFLUENCES ON TEACHER PEDAGOGY.....	31
Bruner's spiral curriculum.....	33
Grammar: The great debate.....	35
Sentence combining.....	36
Writing process.....	36
Writing to learn & writing across the curriculum.....	38
INFLUENCE OF INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS: NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT.....	40
NATIONAL COMMISSION ON WRITING AND TESTING ACCOUNTABILITY .....	40
Writing Next recommendations.....	41
Testing accountability.....	42
Writing instruction and testing.....	43
EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION .....	43

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT .....	44
NWP influence on professional development.....	45
NWP & Common Core State Standards. ....	46
TEACHER PERCEPTION OF CHANGE .....	47
SUMMARY .....	49
<b>CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>51</b>
INTRODUCTION .....	51
RESEARCH DESIGN .....	52
SITE SELECTION .....	53
PARTICIPANTS.....	55
CLASSROOM SETTING AND DEMOGRAPHICS .....	56
RESEARCH PROCESS .....	57
DATA COLLECTION .....	59
Artifact acquisition.....	60
INSTRUMENTS .....	61
Questionnaire. ....	61
Questionnaire item construction. ....	62
Semi-Structured interviews.....	63
Non-Participant Observation. ....	64
DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES .....	67
Coding.....	67
Triangulation.....	72
SUMMARY .....	73
<b>CHAPTER 4: DATA RESULTS AND ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>74</b>
INTRODUCTION .....	74
DATA FINDINGS .....	76
TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF STANDARDS .....	79
Research question 1. ....	79
Standards and Transition.....	83
Subquestion a. ....	85
Subquestion b.....	89
Research question 2. ....	94
TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS .....	95
Research question 1. ....	95
Research question 2. ....	103
TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF ADMINISTRATION & FELLOW FACULTY.....	104
Research question 1. ....	104
Research question 2. ....	113
TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THE WRITING CURRICULUM.....	114
Research questions 1 and 2.....	114
TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF PEDAGOGY .....	127
Research question 1 and 2.....	127
QUESTIONNAIRE .....	138
Likert scale comparisons.....	138
Teacher ranking instruction. ....	144
SUMMARY .....	145

<b>CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS .....</b>	<b>147</b>
SUMMARY OF THE STUDY .....	147
FINDINGS .....	149
Research question 1. ....	149
Subquestion a. ....	151
Subquestions b. ....	152
Research question 2. ....	153
Summary. ....	154
IMPLICATIONS .....	156
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH .....	160
CONCLUSION .....	161
REFERENCES .....	163
APPENDIX A .....	173
APPENDIX B .....	174
APPENDIX C .....	176
APPENDIX D .....	179
APPENDIX E .....	180
APPENDIX F .....	182
APPENDIX G .....	183
APPENDIX H .....	184
APPENDIX I .....	187
APPENDIX J .....	188
APPENDIX K .....	189
APPENDIX L .....	190

## List of Tables

Table 1	Arkansas Writing Standards: Content & Organization.....	21
Table 2	Writing Standard 5: Purposes, Topics, Forms, and Audiences .....	23
Table 3	Common Core Writing Standards.....	27
Table 4	Suhor’s Charting Trends in English Teaching.....	33
Table 5	Categories of Instructional Strategies That Affect Student Achievement .....	44
Table 6	Teachers’ Schedule of Classes and Student Numbers .....	57
Table 7	Observation Protocol Notes from English Class .....	66
Table 8	Qualitative Instrumental Case Analysis Chart for Interview Data .....	70
Table 9	Steps and Stages in Inductive Analysis .....	71
Table 10	Pattern of Categorical Headings for Open and Axial Coding .....	77
Table 11	Comparison of Responses to Same Questions.....	78
Table 12	Teachers’ Perceptions of Standards.....	80
Table 13	Comparison of Teachers’ Responses to Subquestion <i>a</i> from Questionnaire.....	86
Table 14	Comparison of Teachers’ Responses to Subquestion <i>a</i> from Interviews.....	88
Table 15	Teachers’ Perceptions of Students.....	96
Table 16	Teachers’ Perceptions of Administration & Fellow Faculty .....	105
Table 17	Teachers’ Perceptions of Writing Curriculum.....	115
Table 18	Teachers’ Perceptions of Pedagogy .....	129
Table 19	Isaac’s Perception via Ranking of his Curriculum .....	144
Table 20	Cara’s Perception via Ranking of his Curriculum .....	145

## **List of Figures**

Figure 1	Sketches of Cara's and Isaac's classrooms .....	56
Figure 2	In-depth Portrait of Cases .....	69
Figure 3	Comparison of Teachers' Responses to Likert Scale Questions .....	139



## **CHAPTER 1: Introduction**

Secondary English teachers who have taught for any length of time are accustomed to changes in the ways they are required to teach. Teachers must often modify their expectations, standards, philosophies, pedagogies, classroom practices, assessments, and reading and writing instruction to meet both students' various academic needs and state mandates. As assessment requirements have become the driving force behind instruction (Alliance, 2007; Applebee & Langer; 2006 Hillocks, 2003), teachers have been forced to modify their teaching to ensure students meet these more stringent state standards via assessments. Sometimes the required changes come to teachers more quickly than the provisions for making those requirements successful. Often English teachers are required to find their own methods of making the new requirements work—both in attitudes and actions. In this sense, “change” in the English classroom is analogous to a gradual transformation as opposed to a sudden “extinction of a former state” (Hewson, 1992, p. 3). Moreover, teachers often interpret change differently. Some consider change to mean an abandonment of previous teaching pedagogies and philosophies, while others simply adjust their pedagogy and philosophy to mean an extension of what they are already teaching (Hewson, 1992).

One specific change affecting the way teachers teach writing is the implementation of the Common Core State Standards. “In 2009, 48 states, 2 territories and the District of Columbia signed a memorandum of agreement with the National Governors Association (NGA) and Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), committing to a state-led process – the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI)” (Achieve, 2011) which will be mandated to take the place of state standards in grades 9-12 by the 2013-2014 school year (ADE, 2011b). What this means for teachers is a definitive change in writing content and instruction in the

secondary English classroom. However, English teachers' perceptions of this forthcoming mandate may indirectly determine their level of implementation as part of their writing instruction. Consequently, this study focused on two high school English teachers whose school had opted to implement Common Core earlier than required.

### **Background of the Study**

Almost 30 years ago the publication of *A Nation at Risk* had indeed been a response to the assessment of what was happening and should be happening in our nation's schools in the way of academic achievement—in both reading and writing. However, this had not been the first response to academic crises and it would not be the last (Nystrand, 2006). Prior to *A Nation at Risk* and *No Child Left Behind*, educators and teachers alike sought to find effective methods for teaching writing in the secondary schools. The desire to improve writing instruction for students – especially on the heels of Sputnik—brought numerous techniques, strategies, fads, trends, interests, movements, etc., into the English language arts classrooms. While many of these trends, fads, and movements have come and gone (Suhor, 1982), several remnants or spin offs from these have led to key transformations in the way writing is taught in today's secondary classrooms.

The quest to teach students to write well leads lawmakers, administrators, and teachers to an awareness and understanding that writing instruction is an often “overlooked key to transforming learning [...] Writing is not simply a way for students to demonstrate what they know; It is a way to help them understand what they know” (National Commission on Writing, 2003, p. 13). Nevertheless, significant changes in the way we teach writing have come, although slowly. “Our history as a profession tends to be cyclical, and perhaps each cycle, with all its fads and follies, wherever born, sends off a few chips that fall in the next, thus bringing about

creeping change” (Burton, Alm, Tchudi, Donelson, & Nilsen, 1987, p. 35). Teachers often view these fads and follies as requirements that come around about every 20 years. Nonetheless, when fads and follies become trends and transformations, they affect the way teachers teach writing.

## **Historical Background**

In 1983, President Ronald Reagan’s National Commission on Excellence in Education released a report that

posited as its principal thesis that downwardly spiraling pupil performance had rendered the U.S. education system dysfunctional, thereby threatening the nation’s technological, military, and economic preeminence. The report came to a disturbing conclusion: our education system was falling behind the rest of the world. ‘Our Nation is at risk,’ [the report stated]. The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people. (Guthrie & Springer, 2004, p. 8)

As a result, the Commission made 38 recommendations for reform that included “Content, Standards and Expectations, Time, Teaching, Leadership and Fiscal Support. These recommendations set off a series of efforts on a local, state and federal level” (Public Broadcasting System [PBS], 2008b, para. 4).

On the federal level, the most well-known reform (and often hailed as a landmark follow-up to President Lyndon Johnson’s Elementary and Secondary Education Act [ESEA] of 1965) was President George W. Bush’s *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) which was signed into law in 2002. His education law, “aimed at improving our public schools,” (PBS, 2008a, para. 2) set a 2014 deadline for students’ reading and writing proficiency. According to Sharon Kagan, Associate Dean for Policy at Teachers College, Columbia, University,

No Child Left Behind had ambitious goals of promoting services and educational opportunities for all children. In that sense it was a very important piece of legislation. It eliminated any sense that some children could not and should not be educated to the levels of all children. Now, the dilemma is what happened in the implementation. And we now know that we walked a very long mile between the vision and the reality. (PBS, 2008a para. 1)

NCLB, consequently, “placed an unprecedented emphasis on accountability which required states to develop a set of standards for what every child should know and learn in reading and math” (PBS, 2008a, para. 3).

This study focused on writing instruction, in part, because “the role that writing now plays in the everyday experience of the average American is unprecedented. The typical high school graduate [lives in a world that is] saturated with writing” (Alliance, 2007, p. 1).

However, the role of the teacher in writing instruction is less clear and often leaves teachers with more responsibility than preparation regardless of the current educational mandates.

### **Statement of the Problem**

“If the goal of education is to influence and inform teaching and learning then standards [. . .] are merely the starting point (Fuhrman, Resnick, & Shepard, 2009, para. 3). Among the many facets to be considered in the transition from state standards to Common Core standards are how instruction will be designed, how teachers will be expected to adapt teaching, and how curricula, tests, textbooks, lesson plans, and teachers’ on-the-job training will all have to be revised to reinforce the standards. Teachers will also need preparation and professional development tied to new curriculum guides, and instructional materials will

have to be redone to reflect the standards and the most effective progressions of learning. (Fuhrman, Resnick, & Shepard, 2009, para. 3)

Thus, as Arkansas English Language Arts' frameworks or student learning expectations (SLEs) are replaced with Common Core State Standards [CCSS], Arkansas Department of Education [ADE] offers their perceptions of what this means for teachers and students in Arkansas (ADE, 2010) However, the teachers themselves will be left to decide what will be the differences between the content of what they have taught and the content of what they will be required to teach. Moreover, the teachers will also be the ones who decide exactly how the transition from Arkansas writing standards to Common Core writing standards will transpire.

In deciding which ideas from the discipline to emphasize, and how to situate those ideas in real-world phenomena, teachers must draw on several sources of knowledge, weighing not only what is most important for students to know from a disciplinary perspective, but also what students are best equipped to learn and what they as teachers are best equipped to teach. (Prawat, 1992, p. 388)

Consequently, teachers will need adequate training and preparation for learning about the CCSS and its differences from the state standards if they are to make the transition successful for both students and themselves.

Considering the changes facing teachers via CCSS, I used data from the study to gain an understanding of secondary English teachers' perceptions towards implementing Common Core writing standards. In addition, the study allowed me to examine how these two teachers' perceptions affect the level of implementation of Common Core writing standards in their English classrooms during the first year. Thus, the objectives were (a) to gather and analyze data from participants; (b) to explain and describe the data in such a way as to build on the knowledge

base of what is known about how teachers implement new writing standards (c) and, to build on the knowledge base of teachers' perceptions of the educational transformation in secondary English classrooms.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore trends in teachers' perceptions of implementing the Common Core writing standards and to examine the extent, if any, to which teachers' perceptions affect the *levels* of implementing those standards. In addition, to better understand teachers' perceptions towards implementation of the Common Core Standards, I considered the role that other criteria (i.e. outside pressures, professional development opportunities, assessments, years of teaching experience, etc.) had on the level of implementing the Common Core writing standards.

Other goals considered during this study:

- (a) to discover how or if secondary English teachers modify their teaching to meet required writing standards;
- (b) to understand the effects that transitioning from ADE's ELA writing frameworks for grades 7-12 to CCSS—will have on teachers, instructional practices, content, and other concepts which emerged from the study;
- (c) to refine our current understanding (based on teachers' experiences in writing instruction using ADE's ELA writing standards) of how CCSS will be utilized in writing instruction;
- (d) to provide a new interpretation of the Common Core writing standards based on the experiences of those who transition to CCSS and implement the writing standards into their classrooms;

- (e) to understand the factors that influence this transition from ADE's writing standards to Common Core writing standards in student learning expectations – among other expected unknowns.

## **Research Questions**

This study focused on the following research questions:

1. What trends appear in English teachers' perceptions of implementing the Common Core writing curriculum and how do these perceptions relate to the *acceptance* of the Common Core writing curriculum?
  - a. How are teachers reacting to outside pressure to change instruction?
  - b. Why, if given the opportunity, did teachers voluntarily offer to implement CCSS before it was mandated?
2. How are English teachers implementing the Common Core writing curriculum and does this differ from Arkansas writing frameworks with respect to methods of instruction, class preparation time, assignments, assessments, and pacing guides?

## **Significance of Study**

This study examined how two teachers in secondary English language arts classrooms altered their pedagogy and/or teaching philosophy to accommodate the induction of the Common Core writing standards into their English classrooms. Informally, After having called several schools in Northwest Arkansas, I learned that many in the region—like this one in the study—have opted to implement the CCSS a year earlier than required. Abroad, some states are waiting to implement CCSS, but other states and cities in the country are implementing Common Core in segments; for instance, Hawaii, implemented Common Core for English language arts in grades 11-12 this year (Hawaii Department of Education, 2011, para. 1) and New York City Department

of Education (NYCDOE) introduced “instructional expectations for 2011-2012” that include preliminary measures for implementing CCSS in stages.

The importance of this study was to discover and extend knowledge in the area of changing from state controlled writing standards to one set of writing standards offered to all states. Teachers, students, educators, and perhaps educational policy makers will find this study important because many states’ education departments (e.g. Arkansas Department of Education) have offered a number of assumptions about how this transition will work, but because this particular transition is new, few studies or experiences exist. This study offers knowledge—based on data gathered from the study—about how teachers’ perceptions influence the implementation of Common Core State Standards in a localized classroom setting. Also, one of the more relevant benefits of the study is the foundation of knowledge from the teaching fields that may inform future studies, theories, curriculum, policies, and teacher practices (among other possibilities) about implications in implementing the Common Core State Standards for any content that is transitioning from individualized state standards to the Common Core set offered to all states.

In this study, I gathered and recorded data to infer to what extent Common Core State Standards are informing teacher pedagogy. One of the goals indicated from the CCSS document is that when students have been exposed to teaching based on CCSS for several years, they (the students) will be prepared for success in college and the global workforce. This study will offer information based on first year implementation which, in turn, may be used for future analytical studies that may help determine whether these Common Core standards are valid in their claims.



## Methods

Following IRB approval, I located two rural schools in Northwest Arkansas that were participating in early implementation of Common Core writing standards. Both of these schools were in close proximity and both were locations of convenience. I contacted the principal of both schools by phone to ask about conducting the study at the prospective schools. After the larger of the two schools agreed to the study, they suddenly found themselves with personnel issues and withdrew their agreement to the study citing the time was not best for a research study. Therefore, I spoke again with the principal of the smaller rural school, by phone, who agreed to allow me to conduct the study at her school. I then attended a school board meeting to ensure interested stakeholders were aware of and in agreement with my conducting the study at J.M. Hendricks High School (pseudonym). Once the principal procured agreement with the school's two English teachers, I contacted both of the English teachers via e-mail to set up our first meeting and discuss the study.

The next step was to meet the two English teachers and to give each one a questionnaire to begin the study. At the same time, we scheduled times for interviews and observations. A week after having received the questionnaires from the participants, I conducted and digitally recorded interviews with the high school principal (Appendix A), and with the two high school English teachers (Appendix B). The interviews took place before the district began winter break so I did not begin observations (at the teachers' requests) until after the break was over.

I conducted research as a non-participant classroom observer in the two teachers' high school English classrooms over a period of four weeks. Hatch (2002) explains that direct observations of a "social phenomena permits better understanding of the contexts in which such phenomena occur" (p. 71). During this time, I gathered field notes and data that would offer

insight and information in relation to the research questions. The amount of time spent in each classroom was determined by the amount of time needed to gather sufficient data (discussed in detail in Chapter 3) that would adequately address the research questions. Following classroom observations, I conducted post-interviews by asking follow-up questions via e-mail at the request of the teachers. The data from the questionnaires, interviews, and observations were analyzed and coded to find trends: themes, ideas, concepts, methods of instruction, etc.

I observed what was happening in the way of writing instruction based on the Common Core writing standards. I used the data collection/field notes to determine what role the standards played in teaching and learning to/for the people who are involved in them because “the perspectives or voices of participants ought to be prominent in any qualitative report” (Hatch, 2002. p. 7). Also, Jones et al. (2006) recommend that “consistency of epistemology must exist between the research question, data collection, and analysis procedures. The research question[s] should drive data collection techniques and analysis rather than vice versa” (p. 119). Consequently, the research in the classroom came directly from the research questions. In addition, to support trustworthiness, I have firm background knowledge of Common Core Standards and current ADE English language arts frameworks, and a multitude of experience in teaching English language arts in secondary classrooms using ADE frameworks. I also included “multiple data sources, methods, and theoretical schemes” which Lather (1991) identifies as one of four types of validation (qtd. in Creswell, 2007, p. 204). Finally, I “articulate[d] the value of this study to practice in a language that is accessible to a wide range of readers, [thus, allowing] for the necessary opportunity for debate within the discipline” (Jones et al., 2006, p. 120).

## **Limitations**

The greatest limitation to the study may be the problem of generalizability. Limitations may include the small sample size in that the study was conducted inside one rural high school English classroom within Northwest Arkansas. This small sample and demographic location may not adequately represent the experiences and differences of other secondary English teachers. Furthermore, the small sample “may reduce the trustworthiness of the findings and the transferability of the study’s conclusion” (Morse, 2010, p. 361; Sandelowski, 1995). As one of the more important purposes of the study was to inquire into the teachers’ perspectives of implementing Common Core writing standards in place of ADE ELA writing standards, the study may be limited in the scope (or breadth) of other styles, approaches, pedagogies, philosophies, etc.

## **Delimitations**

Although this transition from state writing standards to Common Core writing standards affects more states than just Arkansas, it is impossible to gain representations from a vast array of schools that will be affected by this transition since it is yet to be required by law. Consequently, as I gathered data, coded and interpreted the samples, field notes, etc., I understood that this procedure may have lent itself to some bias. However, in an effort to address possible bias, I used “rich description and many quotations from transcripts [. . .] so that the reader may join the researcher on the inside of the data” (Jones et al., 2006, p. 168).

In addition, as a secondary English teacher who has taught using the Arkansas English language arts frameworks, I considered methods and measures (e.g. checks and balances) to avoid excessive subjectivity in expectations of pedagogies and content teaching. And, even though I made a conscious effort to be aware of others’ understanding of teaching the standards

whose experiences differ from mine, I understand that my constructivist theoretical lens may have precluded me from being purely unbiased in my interpretations of the data. Other limitations might include the inability to establish a deep rapport and trust with teachers within the time spent with the teachers (Berg, 2009). Also, because the focus of the study was to examine both teachers' perceptions of the transition from state writing standards to the Common Core writing standards and their implementation strategies, I considered the teaching of reading and literature only when it was a direct component of the writing.

### **Theoretical Sensitivity**

As a constructivist teacher, I have maintained my philosophy of encouraging students to respect and reference others' ideas through reflection and analysis. In addition, I encourage them to welcome the restructuring of their ideas through the reflection of new information, ideas, and experiences, hence they inadvertently interact with the concept, according to Yager (1991), that "learning is the product of self-organization and reorganization" (p. 55; Brooks & Brooks, 1999). This (cognitive) constructivist theory of learning and instruction was inspired by the research of several theorists including that of "Jean Piaget who believed that children construct their own knowledge and values as a result of interactions with the physical and social world. [In addition, this] theory assumes that learning is due more to the reorganization of the ways of thinking than to development alone or to the accumulation of facts alone" (Cunningham, 2006, p. 3). Piaget's theory of learning is similar in nature to several constructivist perspectives of learning, and he is often referenced as a leader of the constructivist theory. His theory of cognitive development consists of a constant effort on the part of the learner to adapt to the environment in terms of grappling with knowledge to make sense of one's learning (Brooks & Brooks, 1999; Gredler, 2009). Piaget contends that students' "growth of knowledge is the result of individual

constructions made by the learner's understanding”(Kim, 2005, p. 9) and he supports that learning as a process, is a continual construction and reorganization of the ways in which people interact and make sense of their world (Kim, 2005).

When teaching in a constructivist classroom, teachers “seek out and use student questions and ideas to guide lessons; [they] accept and encourage student initiation of ideas” (Yager, 1991, p. 55). Teachers structure teaching and learning around fundamental, relevant concepts in which students want to seek out understanding and investigate their own ideas, thus, students are invited to ask questions. Teachers also encourage and value students’ perspectives, speculations, leadership, and understanding. Constructivist teachers “use student thinking, experiences, and interests to drive [their curriculum, which] means frequently altering [their teaching and their plans]” (Yager, 1991, p. 56); and, both teachers and students are involved in assessing learning (Brooks & Brooks, 1999; Yager, 1991).

Creswell (2009) stated that “one of the chief reasons for conducting a qualitative study is that the study is exploratory” (p. 26). Qualitative research is a “naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings” (Golafshani, 2003, p. 600). For example, Patton (2001) explains that such context-specific settings are “real world [where] the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest”, (p. 39). Because Common Core is new to the field of education, little or no literature exists in support of how teachers will transition from current state standards to implementing Common Core standards. Thus, as the transition from state writing standards to Common Core writing standards presents a great number of questions, I conducted the exploratory study from a constructivist perspective without attempting to manipulate the phenomenon. Because I adopt the constructivist philosophy, my perception may be biased in this approach, but I perceive the proposed qualitative paradigm to be

that which “claims that meanings are constructed by human being as they engage with the world they are interpreting” (Jones et al., 2006, p.18). This approach allowed for issues and concepts to emerge which may offer some insight into the proposed questions as multiple realities were constructed. The goal of this qualitative research was (a) to gain insight into teachers’ perceptions of implementing the Common Core writing standards; (b) to glean ideas for understanding how they will implement the Common Core writing standards as a part of their writing instruction; (c) and to discern the extent that teachers’ philosophies and pedagogies will be affected, changed, and/or constructed to accommodate Common Core writing standards. Also, I considered what teachers sought to achieve and how they measure or assess their own writing instruction for success while they wait for a more formal assessment. A constructivist epistemology would contend that the knowledge acquired during research is based on human construction; moreover, throughout the observation, I remained only an observer, collecting data that allowed me to construct understandings based on a combination of the observations, questionnaire data, and interviews.

I chose to observe and study the secondary English classroom because of my experience as a secondary English teacher and literacy coach for 13 years. I am familiar with the content, pedagogy, and assessments based on state requirements. My experience and philosophy of education are qualities that permit sensitivity to elements of transitional change in the classroom. I was cognitive of my educational philosophy so that I could minimize any bias towards the quality of instruction in the non-constructivist classrooms. In reference to the scope of this study, I focused on elements of change which may or may not be related to a teacher’s decision to use constructive teaching methods.

## Definitions of Terms

**Common Core State Standards** [...] are designed to build upon the most advanced current thinking about preparing all students for success in college and their careers [. . .]

In English-language arts, the Standards require certain critical content for all students [. . .] crucial decisions about what content should be taught are left to state and local determination. In addition to content coverage, the Standards require that students systematically acquire knowledge in literature and other disciplines through reading, writing, speaking, and listening. (CCSSI, 2010)

**Key transformation** (in the teaching of writing in the secondary school) is similar to that which leads to a paradigm shift; it is a series of events, each making a contribution to a change in the ways in which educational law-makers, administrators, and teachers think, believe, act and react to writing instruction in the secondary classroom. Evidence of key transformation may include (a) cognizance of the social circumstances which precipitated the need for the changes and through a discernible series of processes (i.e. remnants or spin-offs) that brought about the change(s) (Suhor, 1982) ; (b) longevity of an ongoing metamorphosis; (c) and changes in classroom writing instruction that continually produce positive results.

**Rural area** “defined as a Census Block Group with a density less than 500 people per square mile” (NDIC, 2008). “According to official U.S. Census Bureau definitions, rural areas comprise open country and settlements with fewer than 2,500 residents” (United States Department of Agriculture [USDA], 2012, para. 1). Often, rurality means a “built-up territory around small towns and cities” (para. 3) and “rural area consists of all territory located outside of urbanized areas and urban clusters” (para. 4).

Economic Research Service researchers and other who discuss conditions in ‘rural’ America most often refer to conditions in nonmetropolitan areas [ . . . ] and are defined on the basis of counties. Counties are typically active political jurisdictions usually have programmatic importance at the Federal and State level, and estimates of population, employment, and income are available for them annually. They are also frequently used as basic building blocks for areas of economic and social integration.

(USDA, 2012, para. 6)

## **Summary**

Chapter one provides an overall look at the study through the introduction by presenting a background to the study, the historical background of the issues, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, and significance of the study. This chapter also includes an overview of the methods, limitations, delimitations, theoretical perspective, and definition of terms—all of which contributed to the overall research study.



## **CHAPTER 2: Review of Literature**

### **Introduction**

As the Common Core State Standards are adopted in a majority of states across the nation, few are more concerned about how its implementation will impact teaching than teachers. The central purpose of this study was to examine how teachers adapt their instructional practices to support the new Common Core writing standards in their classrooms. Although CCSS are not required to be implemented into the secondary schools until 2012, many schools in Arkansas have opted to implement them a year earlier which provides the framework for this study.

To build a better concept of what is happening in writing instruction in the secondary schools, the literature review begins with an examination of the Arkansas English Language Arts (2006) writing standards and the Common Core writing standards both for secondary levels. This chapter will review the literature on the theories and content behind each of the documents. The section following a review of the writing standards will be a review of several major influences that have affected teacher pedagogy and have in some way led to the foundation of how writing is taught in secondary schools today. In addition, the literature will examine the National Writing Project's influence on instructional methods as it relates to these major influences affecting teacher pedagogy. The next section will review the National Commission on Writing's recommendations for writing instruction and on testing accountability. Beyond the recommendations, the literature review examines the results of a meta-analysis of effective writing instruction and how it might be considered as a lens for viewing effective pedagogy. Also, by considering how teachers are being adequately trained to teach writing in the secondary classroom, I examined the literature that looks at the role of professional development as well as the National Writing Project's contribution to preparing teachers to teach writing. Finally, the

literature review will consider the effects of extraneous influences on teachers' willingness to modify their teaching practices to implement a different set of writing standards into their classrooms.

### **History Leading to Common Core**

In 1983, President Ronald Reagan's National Commission on Excellence in Education released a report that indicated the downward trend of student performance had rendered the U.S. education system as unable to perform on a competitive level "thereby threatening the nation's technological, military, and economic preeminence. [The report concluded that] our education system was falling behind the rest of the world. 'Our Nation is at risk,'" (Guthrie & Springer, 2004; PBS, 2008). The report also added that the future of our Nation was being threatened by the rise of mediocrity in the Nation's educational foundations. As a result, the Commission made 38 recommendations for reform that included "Content, Standards and Expectations, Time, Teaching, Leadership and Fiscal Support. These recommendations set off a series of efforts on a local, state and federal level" (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; PBS, 2008b).

On the federal level, the most well-known reform (and often hailed as a landmark follow-up to President Lyndon Johnson's Elementary and Secondary Education Act [ESEA] of 1965) was President George W. Bush's *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) which was signed into law in 2002. His education law, "aimed at improving our public schools," (PBS, 2008a, para. 2) set a 2014 deadline for students' reading and writing proficiency. According to Sharon Kagan, Associate Dean for Policy at Teachers College, Columbia, University:

No Child Left Behind had ambitious goals of promoting services and educational opportunities for all children. In that sense it was a very important piece of

legislation. It eliminated any sense that some children could not and should not be educated to the levels of all children. (PBS, 2008a, para. 1)

However, the quandary became what happened in the implementation. There were some distinct differences between what NCLB had envisioned and what actually took place as a result. NCLB, consequently, “placed an unprecedented emphasis on accountability which required states to develop a set of standards for what every child should know and learn in reading and math. To measure that knowledge, NCLB made the education system more reliant on testing than ever before: mandating that every student from third to eighth grade and one high school test [– currently eleventh grade in Arkansas] take a state test every year – a total of approximately 45 million annual tests” (PBS, 2008a para. 3, citing No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002).

### **Impact of *Reading Next* and *Writing Next* reports.**

Among those foundations and stakeholders influential in creating and revising ELA state standards were two reports in response to education reforms. On the first report, the Alliance for Excellent Education and Carnegie Corporation of New York turned their attention to a “research-based as well as practice-based knowledge in *Reading Next: A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy*” (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). This monumental report was intended as a “call to researchers in this area to exchange a bit of their self-determination in the service of producing more interpretable findings, and a call to funders interested in educational reform to forfeit a bit of their programmatic autonomy to increase the returns on their investments” (2006, p. 2 ).

In a second report for Carnegie Corporation—*Writing Next: Effective Strategies to Improve Writing of Adolescents in Middle and High Schools*, Graham and Perin (2007) accentuated the relevance and role of writing in student education. Reports by the National

Commission on Writing brought the importance of writing proficiency into many levels of public and government awareness. These reports have provided beginnings of conversations and ideas for how educators might work to improve writing instruction for all students. Moreover, while *Reading Next*, (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006) commissioned by Carnegie Corporation of New York, used up-to-date research to highlight a number of key elements seen as essential to improving reading instruction for adolescents, *Writing Next* set out to provide guidance for improving writing instruction for adolescents, a topic that has previously not received enough attention from researchers or educators. (Graham & Perin, 2007)

### **Arkansas Writing Standards**

In 1996, Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) responded to NCLB on the state level by releasing a set of English language arts frameworks (ELA) and in 1998, a revised set, which would provide some accountability for reading and writing standards in kindergarten through twelfth grades. In 2003, these ELA frameworks for secondary schools (grade 6-12) were revised again and in 2006, ELA frameworks for grades 9-12 were amended to expand on various student learning expectations (SLEs) and to become a separate document from the English Language Arts K-4 and 5-8 frameworks. According to ADE, characteristics of the 2003 and 2006 amended ELA frameworks differed greatly from 1998 in that they included the following:

- Delineation of curriculum standards specific to each grade K-12
- Further delineation of standards that explain and extend the strands
- Conceptual Organizers to group SLEs (e.g. left column, Table 1)
- SLEs numbered differently from past frameworks (Table 1)
- Glossary of words and terms (located at the end of the ADE ELA document)

Table 1

## Arkansas Writing Standards: Content &amp; Organization

Strand: Writing  
Standard 7: Craftsmanship  
Students shall develop personal style and voice as they approach the craftsmanship of writing.

THE GOAL FOR EACH STUDENT IS PROFICIENCY IN ALL REQUIREMENTS AT PREVIOUS AND CURRENT GRADE.

	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Purposefully shaping and controlling language	<p>W.7.9.1 Use figurative language effectively with emphasis on simile and personification</p> <p>W.7.9.2 Use a variety of sentence structures, types, and lengths to contribute to fluency and interest</p> <p>W.7.9.3 Consider purpose, speaker, audience, and form when completing assignments emphasizing narration</p> <p>W.7.9.4 Demonstrate organization, unity, and coherence by using direct transitions and sequencing</p> <p>W.7.9.5 Use extension and elaboration to develop an idea emphasizing the use of appositives</p> <p>W.7.9.6 Use concrete information for elaboration</p>	<p>W.7.10.1 Use figurative language effectively with emphasis on metaphor and symbolism</p> <p>W.7.10.2 Use a variety of sentence structures, types, and lengths to contribute to fluency and interest</p> <p>W.7.10.3 Use such elements of discourse as purpose, speaker, audience, and form when completing narrative, expository, or descriptive writing assignments</p> <p>W.7.10.4 Demonstrate organization, unity, and coherence by using embedded transitions and sequencing</p> <p>W.7.10.5 Use extension and elaboration to develop an idea emphasizing the use of participial phrases</p> <p>W.7.10.6 Distinguish between and use concrete and commentary information for elaboration</p>	<p>W.7.11.1 Use figurative language effectively with emphasis on extended metaphor and symbolism</p> <p>W.7.11.2 Use a variety of sentence structures, types, and lengths to contribute to fluency and interest</p> <p>W.7.11.3 Apply such elements of discourse as purpose, speaker, audience, and form when completing narrative, expository, persuasive, or descriptive writing assignments</p> <p>W.7.11.4 Demonstrate organization, unity, and coherence by using implied transitions and sequencing</p> <p>W.7.11.5 Use extension and multi-level elaboration to develop an idea emphasizing dependent clauses</p> <p>W.7.11.6 Combine concrete and commentary information for elaboration</p>	<p>W.7.12.1 Use figurative language effectively with emphasis on extended metaphor</p> <p>W.7.12.2 Use a variety of sentence structures, types, and lengths to contribute to fluency and interest</p> <p>W.7.12.3 Apply such elements of discourse as purpose, speaker, audience, and form when completing narrative, expository, persuasive, or descriptive writing assignments</p> <p>W.7.12.4 Demonstrate organization, unity, and coherence by using implied transitions and sequencing</p> <p>W.7.12.5 Use extension and multi-level elaboration to develop an idea emphasizing models from professional writing</p> <p>W.7.12.6 Balance concrete and commentary information within a piece</p>

17

Key: W.7.9.1=Writing, Standard 7, Grade 9, 1<sup>st</sup> Student Learning Expectation

Writing: Craftsmanship Grades 9-12  
English Language Arts Curriculum Framework Amended 2006  
Arkansas Department of Education

Source: ADE English Language Arts, 2006, p. 17

The general organization of the Arkansas English Language Arts (ELA) Curriculum Frameworks (standards) “are divided into four strands: Oral and Visual Communications, Writing, Reading, and Inquiring/Researching” (Carmichael, Martino, Porter-Magee, & Wilson, 2010, p. 52). Each strand is divided into standards and sub-standards that are common across all grades. For example, the writing strand is divided into four standards—process; purpose, topics, forms, and audiences; conventions; and craftsmanship. Each standard is then divided into sub-standard topics (e.g. left column, Table 1) and each sub-standard is supported with numerous Student Learning Expectations (SLEs) (Carmichael et al., 2010; Table 1).

**Arkansas writing standards: Purpose and clarity.**

Carmichael et al. (2010) reports that “The islands of good content in Arkansas’s standards [ . . . ] are surrounded by a sea of disjointed and unclear expectations in almost every strand” (p. 1). The writing SLEs support this finding to a great degree. Many of the sub-standards and student learning expectations lack sufficient guidance to ensure that writing is being addressed for a specific purpose (i.e. communication and expression). Furthermore, the expectations in other writing SLEs overemphasize un-measurable strategies, such as SLEs that read “Adjust levels of formality . . . ; Write expository compositions; Use effective rhetorical techniques, etc. (ADE ELA, 2010, pp. 10-15).

In a 2007 report prepared for the National Assessment Governing Board, National Assessment of Educational Process (NAEP) commented about the importance of purpose and clarity in student writing expectations:

Tasks in almost all writing situations may have several different purposes implied in their instructions [ . . . ] Each writing task should have one overarching purpose; that is, the task and the instructions should clearly be focused on eliciting writing for one purpose.

While it is likely that some students will draw upon approaches commonly connected to purposes other than the one specified in the writing task, it should be clear to students what text structures and features are appropriate given the purpose and audience stated in the task. (p. 36)

NAEP also explains that in order to help students from being consistently confused about exactly what the purpose of the writing task is, the language used to describe the purpose should be directly related to that purpose. “Thus, the word ‘explain’ would only appear in *To explain* tasks” (p. 36).

### **Arkansas writing standards and teacher pedagogy.**

Table 2

*Writing, Standard 5: Purposes, Topics, Forms, and Audiences*

W.5.9.3 Write expository compositions, including analytical essays and research reports that:	W.5.10.3 Write expository compositions, including analytical essays, and research reports that:	W.5.11.3 Write expository compositions, including analytical essays and research reports, that:	W.5.12.3 Write expository compositions, including analytical essays and research reports, that:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assemble and convey evidence in support of the thesis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assemble and convey evidence in support of the thesis</li> <li>• make distinctions between the relative value and significance of data, facts, and ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assemble and convey evidence in support of the thesis</li> <li>• make distinctions between the relative value and significance of data, facts, and ideas</li> <li>• employ visual aids when appropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assemble and convey evidence in support of the thesis</li> <li>• make distinctions between the relative value and significance of data, facts, and ideas</li> <li>• employ visual aids when appropriate</li> </ul>

Source: ADE English Language Arts, 2006, p. 10

In regards to pedagogical strategy recommendations, the writing standards continue to provide a “to do” list in the form of student learning/writing expectations. For example, from

Table 1, students are asked to “use figurative language effectively . . .” but each level simply adds or removes a figurative device—similar to the modest changes in Table 2. In 9<sup>th</sup> grade, students emphasize simile and personification, but by 12<sup>th</sup> grade the SLE is upgraded to only “emphasis on extended metaphor” (Table 1). Teacher pedagogy is relatively open to assign and assess based on these student learning expectations. Once the students have “covered the SLE” teachers move to the next one and this becomes the purpose for writing.

### **State of State Standards and the Common Core in 2010.**

ADE’s website provides a link to a lengthy document titled “What Every Arkansas Educator Needs to Know about Common Core State Standards” (ADE, 2011c) Among several sources of information for CCSS listed in ADE’s document is a reference to the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation’s report, *The State of State Standards--and the Common Core—in 2010*, regarding the Fordham Foundation’s assessment of Arkansas State frameworks. In this report, a team of professionals from the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation—having graded all states’ ELA frameworks—gave Arkansas’ (K-8) 2003 & (9-12) 2006 ELA standards a D claiming that Arkansas “standards include some good content but lack specificity and, in many strands, a clear progression, making it hard to determine real levels of rigor” (Carmichael et al., 2010, p. 52). Thus, with its grade of D, Fordham Foundation’s team of professionals considered Arkansas’s ELA standards to be among the worst in the country, while those developed by the Common Core State Standards Initiative earn[ed] a B plus. Carmichael et al., (2010) also contend that the CCSS are significantly superior to what Arkansas currently has in place.

### **Common Core initiative.**

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of



Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The standards were developed in collaboration with teachers, school administrators, and experts, to provide a clear and consistent framework to prepare our children for college and the workforce. (CCSSI, 2010)

As a part of this initiative, CCSS—using “effective models from states across the country and countries around the world—[expect to] provide teachers and parents with a common understanding of what students are expected to learn (2010). The CCSSI also insist that “consistent standards will provide appropriate benchmarks for all students, regardless of where they live” (2010).

### **Common Core State Standards**

On June 02, 2010, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were released following several revisions that Achieve (2011a) and CCSSI (2010) assert were based on feedback and support from a wide range of leaders, organizations and members of the media. Achieve also alleges that the standards are built on the “strength of current state standards and are designed to be (a) focused, coherent, clear, and rigorous; (b) internationally benchmarked; (c) anchored in college and career—meaning ready for first-year credit-bearing postsecondary coursework [...] without need for remediation; (d) evidence and research based” (2011). Specific to the writing standards, students will be expected to

- compose arguments and opinions, informative/explanatory pieces, and narrative texts
- focus on the use of reason and evidence to substantiate an argument or claim
- emphasize ability to conduct research – short projects and sustained inquiry
- incorporate technology as they create, refine, and collaborate on writing
- [provide] writing samples that illustrate the criteria required to meet the standards

(Achieve, 2011b, p. 29).

Carmichael et al., (2010) contend that “the Common Core State Standards admirably avoid some of the pitfalls [. . . and] generally avoid the pernicious problem of overemphasizing metacognitive [. . .] strategies, particularly in the early grades; they prioritize essential writing genres, and provide annotated samples of student writing; and they include explicit guidance” (p. 19). However, with Fordham Institute’s team assigning the Arkansas English Language Arts Standards a score of D, they furthered their agenda for promoting the “need” for states (e.g. Arkansas) to adopt a seemingly more worthy and credible set of standards—claims that are yet to be verified and supported.

CCSS assert the standards that will replace local state standards and “define the knowledge and skills students should have within their K-12 education careers so that they will graduate high school able to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing academic college courses and in workforce training programs” (2010). Moreover, CCSSI also assert that the new Common Core State Standards

- are aligned with college and work expectations;
- are clear, understandable and consistent;
- include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills;
- build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards;
- are informed by other top performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society; and
- are evidence-based (2010).

Among some of stronger criticisms and suggestions regarding writing, NCTE pointed out from an early draft that CCSSI had omitted standards for narrative writing beyond 8<sup>th</sup> grade and,

in a well-supported argument, made a strong case for narrative writing to be returned to the CCSS:

To state that narrative writing is, or should be [. . .] used only as ‘a technique rather than a form itself’ is misguided for many reasons. First, narrative writing, like poetry, represents perhaps more rigor than other forms of writing because it requires the writer to create and weave multiple fictional and literary elements into a cohesive whole, all stemming from the imagination and invention of the writer. [. . .] Additionally, loss of narrative writing will undoubtedly impact the well-established relationship between reading and writing; [. . .] And finally, the role of fiction writers is profound [. . .]

(NCTE, January, 2010, p. 11)

Narrative as a form of writing was included in the final draft of the CCSS writing standards for grades 9-12 (e.g. Table 3).

Table 3

*Common Core Writing Standards*

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS & LITERACY IN HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES, SCIENCE, AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS		
Writing Standards 6-12		
Grades 9-10 students:		Grades 11-12 students:
Text Types and Purposes (continued)		
<p>3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.</p> <p>a. Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.</p> <p>b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.</p> <p>c. Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole.</p> <p>d. Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.</p> <p>e. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.</p>		<p>3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.</p> <p>a. Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.</p> <p>b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.</p> <p>c. Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome (e.g., a sense of mystery, suspense, growth, or resolution).</p> <p>d. Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.</p> <p>e. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.</p>

Source: CCSS, 2010, p. 41

“The 2011 NAEP framework, like the Standards, cultivates the development of three mutually reinforcing writing capacities: writing to persuade, to explain, and to convey real or imagined experience [...] Consistent with NAEP, the overwhelming focus of writing throughout high school should be on arguments and informative/explanatory texts” (Coleman, 2011, video). Coleman explained that neither of the most popular modes of public school writing—narrative and persuasive— will get students very far in the college and career paths. However, the narrative is embedded as a substructure, according to Coleman, meaning teachers will be teaching the narrative as a form that will double as a technique for supporting other modes of writing (Coleman, 2011).

Coleman’s assertions are also written in the sidebar narrative (*Note on range and content of student writing*) on the page listing the ten College and Career Readiness (CCR) Anchor Standards for Writing (6-12):

For students, writing is a key means of asserting and defending claims, showing what they know about a subject, and conveying what they have experienced, imagined, thought and felt. To be college-and career-ready writers, students must take task, purpose, and audience into careful consideration [. . .] They need to know how to combine elements of different kinds of writing – for example, to use narrative strategies within argument and explanation within narrative – to produce complex and nuanced writing [. . .] (CCSS, 2010, p. 41)

**Common Core writing standards: Content and organization.**

Each page of the Common Core Readiness Anchor Standards includes a sidebar narrative, *Note on range and content of student...reading, writing, speaking and listening, language* (Italics theirs) which provides background information related to the intent of the CCR Anchor Standards within each strand (CCSS, 2011). Specifically within the writing strand, for

instance, the anchor standards remain the same while the sidebar narrative changes “to reflect an increase in the writing expectations across the K-12 curriculum” (ADE, 2011a, p. 27).

The strands in the ELA standards begin with precise CCR Anchor Standards which are the same across all grades and content areas. “Each grade-specific standard corresponds to the same-numbered CCR anchor standard. Grade-specific standards translate the broader CCR standard statement into grade-appropriate end-of-year expectations. Grade by grade, they are meant to build a staircase to achieve college and career readiness” (CCSS, *Introduction*, p. 8).

### **Common Core writing standards: Purpose and clarity.**

The CCSS for writing “[...] were developed to be fewer, clearer, higher, internationally benchmarked, and research- and evidence-based” (ACT, Inc., 2010 qtd. in ADE, 2011a, p. 4). The writing frameworks (by comparison to ADE ELA writing frameworks) have combined common expectations in such a way that the standards require a deeper learning regarding specificity, complexity, rigor, and progression.

### **Common Core writing standards and teachers.**

Arkansas Department of Education addressed the impact they perceive this transition to Common Core State Standards will have on teachers in Arkansas: “[CCSS] will provide important goals for teachers that ensure they are preparing students for success in college and the workforce (2010, para. 2). Common Core State Standards Initiative “do not tell teachers how to teach, but they do help teachers figure out the knowledge and skills their students should have so that teachers can build the best lessons and environments for their classrooms. Standards also help students and parents by setting clear and realistic goals for success” (CCSSI, 2011, para. 3) According to ADE, the standards will also provide teachers and educators with a foundation for

building a strong curriculum and relevant teaching strategies that will help them in teaching students to gain a deep understanding of the subject (2010).

### **Comparison of Arkansas writing standards and Common Core writing standards.**

The Arkansas ELA frameworks divided the writing strand into four standards and were differentiated by countless SLEs. The CCSS's writing strand is made up of ten standards (6-12) and is differentiated by few expectations under each of the "conceptual organizers" (e.g. Table 3). Specifically, each of the Common Core writing standards fall under one of four conceptual organizers: (a) Text types and purposes encompass the first three writing standards (argument, informative/explanatory, and narrative writing); (b) Production and distribution of writing encompass the next three standards; (c) Research to build and present knowledge encompass the third three standards; and (d) the range of writing encompasses the tenth standard requiring students to write routinely over extended time frames (CCSSI, 2010).

### **Arkansas' transition to Common Core state standards.**

Arkansas Department of Education offers an overview of what they believe the transition to Common Core State Standards will mean for students and educators in Arkansas:

The standards will provide more clarity about and consistency in what is expected of student learning across the country. Currently, every state has its own set of academic standards, meaning public education students at the same grade level in each state may be expected to achieve to different levels. This initiative will strive to allow states to share information effectively and help provide all students with an equal opportunity for an education that will prepare them to go to college or enter the workforce, regardless of where they live. Common standards will not prevent different levels of achievement among students, but they will attempt to ensure more consistent exposure to materials and

learning experiences through curriculum, instruction, and teacher preparation among other supports for student learning. In a global economy, students must be prepared to compete with not only their American peers in the next state, but with students from around the world. These standards will help prepare students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college and careers. (ADE, 2010)

### **Major Influences on Teacher Pedagogy**

In 1982, Charles Suhor wrote an article for *English Education* in which he discussed how he developed four categories to sort out “real trends from imagined ones [in an attempt to] distinguish between what seems to be happening, what [he] wishes were happening, and what [he] dreads outright” (p. 161) in the teaching of English. Within these categories—interests, trends, movements, and repertoire—Suhor offered a sorting of actual classroom practices as an insight into how topics and strategies move fluidly from one category to the next. For example, he stated that a trend was a topic that made its way into inservices, journals, or maybe legislation and if it was to become a movement, it would have an observable effect on “the lives of teachers and students; even after a movement decline[d], it [was] likely to have [had] nostalgia value or footnote status for years to come (e.g. “back to basics”, p.163). Suhor also pointed out that as English language arts teachers, we “tend to welcome new ideas readily, yet few of them are permitted to remain for long periods of time” (p. 165). Nonetheless, while numerous movements and trends have come and gone, all have in some way contributed to the history of teaching English. Most consequential was his observation that “we are not merely observers of educational events; we are creators of interests, trends, movements, and repertoire. Our responsibility extends to a continuing assessment of what is happening and beyond” (p. 165).

Table 4, from Suhor's (1982) article, indicates his perception of the position of English teaching. As noted in the next sections from the five major influences on writing instruction, the position of these "topics" has changed from Suhor's original category. This will be discussed more as each of the major influences is expanded upon. The arrows in each column are Suhor's indication that these topics "appear to be moving to a lesser or greater level of [exchange] among English teachers. The items are called "topics' only as a convenience" (1982, p. 163).



Table 4

*Suhor's Charting Trends in English Teaching*

Interests	Trends	Movements	Repertoire
schema theory	computer instruction	→ -back to basics	-literary classics
-miscue analysis	→ writing process instruction	← -competency testing (students)	-contemporary literature
-writing across the curriculum	→ sentence combining	→ performance testing in writing	← -multiethnic literature
thinking skills	→ mastery learning		-adolescent literature
small group discussion	-holistic and primary	censorship	-children's literature
semiotics	↘ trait scoring		-thematic units
improvisation, role-playing	-elective English		-traditional grammar
film/media study	competency testing (teachers)	→	-usage worksheets, drills
the "new grammars"			-writing models
programmed texts			-journal writing
			--class discussion

Source: Suhor, C. (1982). Charting Trends in English Teaching. *English Education* 14(3), p. 163.

**Bruner's spiral curriculum.**

In 1960, during the Woods Hole Conference made up of "physicists, biologists, mathematicians, psychologists, educators, and historians" (Applebee, 1974, p. 195), Jerome Bruner's *The Process of Education* presented a detailed argument for the concept of sequence through a "spiral curriculum" which stressed that students learn the fundamental principles of a subject and that those principles or ideas would be "returned to again and again but at successively higher levels of complexity" (Applebee, 1974, p. 195; Squire, 2003) instead of teaching in a linear fashion. He contended that students respond to environmental influences,

“so, teaching does not have to follow the course of cognitive development, but can lead it by providing challenging, usable opportunities for the child to forge ahead in development - tempting the child into more powerful modes of thinking. Bruner was suggesting that learning should start from where the learner is already” (Research for Teachers, 2006, p. 6) Bruner’s idea of “leading teaching” was also considered similar to Vygotsky’s ‘zone of proximal development’ (ZPD) in that it “refers to the difference between what a person can achieve by him/herself and what s/he can achieve with the assistance from a more skilled person” (p. 6). And, also similar to Vygotsky, Bruner thought learning and effective teaching “involved starting from what children know already and providing them with guidance that moves their thinking forward” (p. 10). Bruner advocated learning through problem solving and discovery which required students to ask questions and discuss lines of inquiry (2006).

Following the seminar on the teaching of English held at Dartmouth College, in 1966, researchers offered an alternative writing structure emphasizing “personal growth” in place of the formulaic writing which greatly supported components of many educational philosophies including Bruner, Vygotsky, and Piaget—among others (Nystrand, 2006). Along these lines, Moffett—a member of the Dartmouth Seminar –“borrowing from Piaget’s model of cognitive development [... and similar to Bruner’s theory of learning,] supported a pedagogical sequence of writing development that was based on increasing levels of thought “at which the experience [of the writer/learner] is handled” (p. 13).

Implementing a writing curriculum that “revisits ideas and reinforces genres is one way to help tie a curriculum together and enable long-term conversations about its content. It is also important not to isolate either language or writing instruction from other curricular strands, as

often happens, particularly with grammar” (Smagorinsky, Johannessen, Kahn, & McCann, 2010, p. 184).

### **Grammar: The great debate.**

Sometimes the work to remove a deeply rooted obstruction from a progressive position in writing instruction is, indeed, transformational. “Over the years, *grammar* has probably generated more discussion, debate, acrimony, and maybe even fistfights than any other component of the English/language arts curriculum” (Tchudi & Tchudi, 1991, p. 164). Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer (1963) stated that “one of the most heavily investigated problems in the teaching of writing concerns the merits of formal grammar as an instructional aid” (p. 37). However, these grammar debates and investigations led to a transformation in the way English teachers teach students to write.

Earlier, more vehement research presented grammar as harmful: “The teaching of formal grammar has a negligible or, because it usually displaces some instruction and practice in actual composition, even harmful effect on the improvement of writing” (Braddock et al., 1963, p. 37). In *Writing with Power*, Elbow claimed that grammar interfered with writing:

Learning grammar is a formidable task that takes crucial energy away from working on your writing, and worse yet, the process of learning grammar interferes with writing: it heightens your preoccupation with mistakes as you write out each word and phrase, and makes it almost impossible to achieve that undistracted attention to your *thoughts* and *experiences* as you write that is so crucial for strong writing (and sanity). For most people, nothing helps their writing so much as learning to ignore grammar. (p. 169)

### **Sentence combining.**

Although grammar instruction remained dominant in many secondary schools throughout the 1950s and the early 1960s, there were movements that led away from grammar dominance in the teaching of writing. For example, Mellon (1969) conducted a study in which he “theorized that applying knowledge of transformational grammar to concrete sentence combining problems would result in greater syntactic fluency” (qtd. in Hillocks & Smith, 2003, p.731).

While sentence combining had offered promising research in student writing, criticism of sentence-combining was engulfed by “the idea that any pedagogy based in form rather than in content was automatically suspect” (O’Hare, 1973, p. 110; Connors, 2000). In his classic text, *Teaching the Universe of Discourse*, James Moffett (1968) asserted that “teachers must leave the sentence within its broader discursive context” (p. 186). He criticized “traditional writing pedagogy for moving from ‘little particle to big particle toward the whole composition’” (p. 186; Connors, 2000, p. 110). Nonetheless, “Hillocks (1986) reported that more than 60% of the sentence-combining studies performed between 1973 and 1985 produced significant results on measures of syntactical maturity” (qtd in Saddler, 2007, p. 165) and thus advocates its being a part of teacher’s instructional pedagogy.

### **Writing process.**

Many researchers and educators who questioned the “linear-prescriptive view of the composing process” embraced the “recursive and more complex” writing process (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006, p. 277). In a summary report of National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Goldstein and Carr (1996) described process writing as one in which writers make multiple decisions:

“Process writing” refers to a broad range of strategies that include pre-writing activities, such as defining audience, using a variety of resources, planning the writing, as well as drafting and revising. The activities, collectively referred to as “process-oriented instruction,” approach to writing as problem-solving (p. 1).

Although the 1970s endured a ‘back to the basics’ movement, the end of the 1970s saw a dominance of “process approaches with composition” (Kolln & Hancock, 2005, p. 11; Nagin, 2003; Roen, Groggin, & Clary-Lemon, 2008). At the same time, as teachers and educators became more aware of students’ different needs, interests, and backgrounds, they began to consider how they might individualize instruction through writing curriculums (“Teaching...”, 2011). One study “considered the major catalyst for the process movement” (Roen et al., 2008) and that also began a series of studies on writing and writing instruction was *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders* (Emig, 1971). “[Emig] pioneered the think-aloud protocol as a way of studying how writers compose” (Dyson & Freedman, 2003, p. 974).

In addition, the numerous published articles (on composing processes) in NCTE journals from the 1970s and 1980s—*Language Arts*, *English Journal*, *English Education*, *College Composition* and *Communication*, and *Research in the Teaching of English*—had a “major impact on the teaching of writing, shifting the focus from product to process” (p. 354).

The shift in research from studies that focused on pieces of writing—written products—and moved towards how writers write was also associated with process writing that came on the heels of Emig’s research. Many of these researchers began to “investigate what writers think about and the decisions they make, in essence how they manage the complex task of putting thoughts on paper. This shift from studying writing itself to studying how writers write has been accompanied by a similar shift in the orientation of many classroom teachers” (Dyson &

Freedman, 2003, p. 974; Applebee, Langer, & Mullis, 1986a, 1986b); and, it led to a more individualized understanding of students' writing.

From the process approach to teaching writing, “Calkins (1994) and Graves (1994) developed writer’s workshop that included student choice of topics, writing for real audiences, developing revision strategies, and sharing work with peers. Conventions such as capitalization and punctuation are taught through minilessons and in the context of students’ own writing” (McCarthy, 2008, p. 468). This approach led to a clearer recognition that “discrete grammar instruction [did] not reliably enhance student writing” (“Teaching...”, 2011, p. 2) and, therefore, allowed teachers to address style and correctness in context of the students’ writing as polished their final drafts. During this period, student interest and choice in writing, the mini-lesson, writer’s notebooks, among other strategies all gained momentum finding their way into the writing curriculum to motivate students to want to write (Calkins, 1994; Graves, 1994; MacArthur, Graham, & Fitzgerald, 2006; 2003).

### **Writing to learn & writing across the curriculum.**

In continual attempts to improve writing and to improve learning through writing, many educators and teachers “have turned to constructivist theories of language and learning [. . . in that they] share a view of knowledge as an active construction [. . . and they] see learning in context (e.g. when students take positions on topics and issues presented by others)” (Newell, 2006, p. 236). This view of teaching supports some of the “underlying process-oriented approaches to writing instruction” (p. 236). Constructivist theories are also relevant to the role of writing-to-learn which, despite its popularity, “has been based more on favorite activities such as freewriting or dialogue journals rather than on broad principles of effective teaching across content areas” (p. 237). Nonetheless, this has become a modern theme for writing in many

courses to improve learning on every level (Russell, 2006). Writing instruction and responsibility for students' abilities to write well has, until recently, belonged to the English language arts teacher in secondary schools (Tighe & Koziol, 1982).

In reference to writing in other content areas, Applebee (1984) reported that “[s]tudies of instruction in the early 1980s suggested that while English language arts classes are the most likely to focus on writing, students write more for their other subjects combined than they do for English” (qtd. in Applebee & Langer, 2009, p. 22). Thus writing in the content areas greatly affects how students develop as writers – especially regarding the kinds of writing they are being asked to do. When writing-to-learn, teachers may ask students to generate new ideas, theories, or reflect on their thinking in journals and during quick writes. More formal writing assignments “provide opportunities to learn the discourse conventions of particular disciplines – especially in middle schools, interdisciplinary teams are creating promising venues for language-arts teachers to assist subject-area colleagues in integrating writing activities across the curriculum” (“Teaching of Writing”, 2011, p. 2).

The writing-to-learn movement can be traced back to studies from the mid-1960s in which Britton (1970) asserted that “expressive writing’ fostered learning (McCutchen, Teske, & Bankston, 2008, p. 463).

Applebee, Lehr, and Auten (1981) conducted a study in which they observed a year’s writing assignments and related instruction in two high schools. They also conducted a national survey of teachers in secondary classrooms regarding writing instruction. What they found was that “eighty-two percent of the teachers in the survey felt that writing instruction should be a shared responsibility. Even among mathematics teachers surveyed, who were least willing to accept writing as part of their tasks” (p. 81).

In another study, *How Writing Shapes Thinking*, Langer and Applebee (1987) explored the relationship between writing and learning in which they reiterated that “manipulation involved in the analytic writing led to the best retention” (p. 127).

### **Influence of Instructional Methods: National Writing Project**

One of the most prominent programs “in changing the teaching of writing in [...] secondary schools has been the National Writing Project (NWP)” (Roen et al., 2008, p. 353) which began as the Bay Area Writing Project at the University of California Berkeley in 1973 (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006; Simmons & Carroll, 2003). The Berkeley project was formed in response to the fact that nearly half of incoming freshmen at UC Berkeley campus in 1973—selected from top graduates in the nation—were being placed in remedial writing classes. “Clearly, writing was the short straw in teacher preparation courses, because most teachers had no idea, beyond the red-penciled papers of their past, how to teach writing [... And regarding the teachers whose students were successful writers] it seemed a shame—no a tragedy—that outstanding teachers went unheralded and unobserved by the very people who could benefit from their teaching approaches: other teachers” (Smith, 1996, p. 122; qtd. in Simmons & Carroll, 2003).

### **National Commission on Writing and Testing Accountability**

According to the National Commission on Writing, (2003), that “despite the neglect of writing instruction, it would be false to claim that most students cannot write [. . .] the problem is that most students cannot write with the skill expected of them today” (p.16). NAEP data referenced in the National Commission on Writing policy, *The Neglected “R”*, indicated that most students have mastered a basic level of writing, but “few can create prose that is ‘precise, engaging, and coherent’” (p. 16).



### ***Writing Next* recommendations.**

In 2006, Carnegie Commission issued a report called *Writing Next* that presented a bleak picture for students and teachers regarding writing:

American students today are not meeting even basic writing standards, and their teachers are often at a loss for how to help them. In an age over-whelmed by information [. . .] we should view this as a crisis because the ability to read, comprehend, and write—in other words to organize information into knowledge—can be viewed as tantamount to a survival skill. (Graham & Perin, 2007, p. 2)

According to Graham and Perin (2006), attention to the writing crises of younger generations will serve to improve the present writing proficiency crisis because “writing well is not just an option for young people –it is a necessity [. . . as well as] a predictor of academic success and a basic requirement for participation in civic life and in the global economy” (p. 3).

Graham & Perin report in *Writing Next* that adolescents continue to graduate “unable to write at the basic levels required by colleges or employers” (p. 3). NAEP reported that since it began reporting in 1975, writing scores have been essentially flat (Applebee et al., 1986a; Daniels, Zemelman, & Steineke, 2007). So research on the writing process, for example, provides some insight on how individual students write, and these studies help teachers gain a better understanding of the writing processes of their individual students (Dyson & Freedman, 2003; Graham & Perin, 2006).

“This teacher knowledge, coupled with an understanding of how writing functions for and is used by writers, can lead to suggestions for reforming the teaching and learning of writing” (Dyson & Freedman, 2003, p. 976). In addition, writing instruction can be improved through knowledge of current research on writing (e.g. Langer & Applebee, 1987; Levy &

Ransdell, 1996; MacArthur et al., 2006; Smagorinsky, 2006) as well as a familiarity and understanding of *Writing Next*'s eleven recommendations for elements of effective adolescent writing instruction.

### **Testing accountability.**

As testing accountability increased, teachers and students reported a shift in focus from the process of writing to a “focus on the production of first and final drafts with less scope for an elaborated writing process” [. . . Teachers also reported that they had significantly lessened how often they required students] to write more than one draft, to plan before they write, and to check proper spelling and grammar” (Applebee & Langer, 2009, p. 24). In 1994, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) reported that 70% of state standardized tests were multiple-choice; but, in 1999, ETS “acknowledged efforts to broaden tests beyond multiple-choice items to include open-ended questions” (Ruth, 2003, p. 104). And, even though testing is being aligned to “new higher content standards” (p. 105), serious problems still exist.

Currently, state standards have not been clear on their expectations for writing. And “while open-ended writing activities are now included in nearly every state’s accountability system, state achievement tests [continue to] place far greater emphasis on multiple-choice and short answer items than on independent writing—to the extent that writing is included, students tend to be rewarded for writing quick, superficial essays” (Alliance, 2007, p. 4). However, as the writing process continues to be used for learning, and because “writing varies considerably across tasks and contexts” (“Teaching of Writing”, 2011) developing a standardized test to accurately measure “achievement and growth” is challenging (Alliance, 2007, p. 2).

### **Writing instruction and testing.**

Writing teachers must often lean towards ‘teaching to the test’ by using drills and formulaic writing to help students learn the ‘right way to write for the test.’ Unfortunately, when teachers teach writing in this format, they do so at the “expense of learning to write clearly and for a variety of purposes,” (Hillocks, 2003, qtd. in Alliance, 2007) thus insufficient attention is given to the quality of students’ writing (Applebee & Langer, 2006; “Teachers of Writing” 2011). So, educators seeking to improve writing instruction must create standards and standardized tests that “encompass the range and complexity of the kinds of writing [students] do in their lives beyond school (“Teachers of Writing” 2011, p. 2).

### **Effective Instruction**

Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (2001) assert that “individual teachers can have a profound influence on student learning even in schools that are relatively ineffective” (p. 3). [ . . . ] This book presents and exemplifies instructional strategies that [they] have extracted from the research base on effective instruction. Teachers can use these strategies to guide classroom practice in such a way as to maximize the possibility of enhancing student achievement” (p. 3). Marzano et al., (2001) used a meta-analysis “which combined the results from a number of studies to determine the average effect of a given [teaching] technique” (p. 4). Table 5 is the chart that Marzano et al., (2001) provides that shows nine research-based strategies that they found to positively affect student achievement.

Table 5

*Marzano's Categories of Instructional Strategies That Affect Student Achievement*

<b>Categories of Instructional Strategies That Affect Student Achievement</b>				
<b>Category</b>	<b>Avg. Effect Size (ES)</b>	<b>Percentile Gain</b>	<b>No. of ESs</b>	<b>Standard Deviation (SD)</b>
<b>Identifying similarities and differences</b>	1.61	45	31	.31
<b>Summarizing and note taking</b>	1.00	34	179	.50
<b>Reinforcing effort and providing recognition</b>	.80	29	21	.35
<b>Homework and practice</b>	.77	28	134	.36
<b>Nonlinguistic representations</b>	.75	27	246	.40
<b>Cooperative learning</b>	.73	27	122	.40
<b>Setting objectives and providing feedback</b>	.61	23	408	.28
<b>Generating and testing hypotheses</b>	.61	23	63	.79
<b>Questions, cues, and advance organizers</b>	.59	22	1,251	.26

Source: Marzano, R. J., Pickering, D. J., & Pollock, J. E. (2001). *Classroom instruction that works: Research-based strategies for increasing student achievement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, p. 7.

Ding and Sherman (2006) assert that “Although effective teaching is fundamental to learning, over emphasis on the importance of teaching methodology in the process of learning may imply that we should ignore the dynamic learning process in which students are the significant players, not just teachers” (p. 45).

### **Professional Development**

Educational historians and researchers have written explicit texts on the history of English language arts, writing instruction, and composition in American public schools covering periods since “school” as we know it first began (e.g. Applebee, 1974; Braddock et al., 1963; Hillocks, 1986). Following the end of World War II, expanding school enrollments had grown so

fast that “the liberal arts faculties had gladly relinquished their traditional responsibility for teacher training” (Applebee, 1974, p. 187).

The National Writing Project has also emerged as one of the earliest and longest lasting professional developments for teachers in regards to learning to teach writing—primarily because of what it offers secondary English teachers in the way of instruction. Applebee and Langer offered data from a 2002 study that suggested English language arts teachers are greatly aware of and benefit from professional development that links instruction to standards; and, a large percentage of teachers from this study also indicated that professional development, especially that offered by NWP, regarding writing instruction greatly influenced their teaching practices in the classroom.

#### **NWP influence on professional development.**

Since the mid-1980s, process-oriented instruction had been reported as the central part of instruction. Applebee and Langer (2009) cited several studies (1992, 1998, 2002, & 2007) that have supported the emphasis of process writing instruction which the NWP continues to advocate. And, although many teachers use the process approach to teach writing, Dyson and Freedman (2003) assert that it is still difficult to “evaluate the degree to which the approach in the country as a whole has improved students’ writing [. . . However,] there is some indication from the [1999] NAEP results that drafting processes are correlated with higher test scores for [secondary] students” (p.976; Greenwald, Persky, Campbell, & Mazzeo, 1999). Other studies of process approaches to writing have also found that when students wrote more often, were exposed to well-written literature, were given time to write in class, and allowed to conference with teachers and peers, they exhibited stronger writing qualities (Goldstein & Carr, 1996; Sadoski, Wilson, & Norton, 1997). That said, empirical studies on the NWP’s impact on writing

instruction have been difficult (although many studies exist) because “NWP principles are so instantiated in schools, and in textbooks, that it is a challenge even to define a control group unaffected by the NWP to conduct experimental studies about its impact on student achievement” (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006, p. 284).

In the study, *A Meta-Analysis of Writing Instruction for Adolescent Students*, Graham and Perin (2007a) observe that NWP has had a “positive impact on professional development in the process approach to writing” (p. 467), and although more research is required to verify the impact of the NWP on writing instruction

it is interesting to note that many of the components included in recent description model of the National Writing Project model (e.g. peers working together, inquiry, the role of reflection, the sub-processes of writing, standardized assessments, writing with special populations, and technology and blogs in the writing class) were found to enhance [students’] writing in Graham and Perin’s meta-analysis (2007, p. 467; see also Nagin, 2003; Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006).

### **NWP & Common Core State Standards.**

In response to the incoming Common Core writing standards, the NWP reported that after having received a \$550,000 grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, “teacher-leaders of the National Writing Project are developing high-quality curricula that align with the Common Core State Standards Initiative” (NWP, 2010, para. 1). Sharon J. Washington, Executive Director of the National Writing Project, explained the role and perspective that the NWP organization takes in regards to helping its teachers for the incoming Common Core writing standards:

We are honored to bring Writing Project teachers' expertise to the question of how to improve the quality of writing among all students in every subject area. These teachers have built and refined their teaching and curriculum through daily work with students, and their results demonstrate that Writing Project approaches can help students achieve the high-level outcomes that the Common Core Standards demand. (NWP, 2010, para. 3)

“Because of the attention to writing in the CCSS, the NWP provides a number of ways to help districts and teachers get the necessary professional development to successfully implement the standards in the classroom” (NWP, 2011, para. 4). Thus, NWP continues to look for ways to help educators in providing “high quality professional development for teachers and administrators in their regions” (para. 2) by focusing on standards that address writing instruction, “which received little emphasis in testing and accountability mandates under NCLB” (para. 2). NWP also surmises that writing is “a central emphasis in Common Core State Standards” (para. 2) and, according to Elyse Eidman-Aadahl, Director of National Programs and Site Development for the NWP, “sites across the country are eager to be part of efforts to strengthen the teaching of writing and are well-versed in the kinds of expectations and approaches the Common Core emphasizes” (NWP, 2011, para. 3).

### **Teacher Perception of Change**

The essence of this literature review has been based on transformation, or change, – from educational policies to writing pedagogy. According to Fullan (2001), leading in this “culture of change means creating a culture: (not just a structure) of change” (p. 7). These changes are directed, ultimately, to improve student learning; and, the central agent to the assigned changes are teachers. So, how do teachers react to creating a culture of change? Oberg (2003) explained that before districts could implement new standards, they had to consider “the context of that

implementation, that is, the culture of [their] schools” (p. 23). Understanding a school culture is tantamount to gaining insight into how teachers perceive and/or accept change.

In relation to teachers’ perceptions of change and understanding the variables that affect the acceptance or rejection of change, Stolp (1994) defines school culture as “the historically transmitted patterns of meaning that include the norms, values, beliefs, ceremonies, rituals, traditions, and myths understood, maybe in varying degrees, by members of the school community [. . . a] system of meaning [that] often shapes what people think and how they act (qtd. in Oberg, 2003, p. 23). Thus, teachers' willingness to modify or change writing instruction, for example, to fully implement Common Core writing standards will vary based on their perceptions of Common Core writing standards and on extraneous variables (e.g. years of experience, gender, socio-economic status of school, sociocultural understanding, perception of validity, etc.).

A teacher’s attitude toward a culture of change can serve as a model for success in implementing that change or, according to Zimmerman (2006), can serve as a barrier to change. A teacher’s perception toward change “is a variable that has been linked to employee acceptance or new procedures/policies (Calabrese, 2002; Clawson, 1999; Duke, 2004; Greenberg & Baron, 2000; Robbins, 2000; Zimmerman, 2006, p. 239). Prawat (1992) argues that a pedagogical barrier is just as relevant:

Teachers are viewed as important agents of change in the reform effort currently under way in education and thus are expected to play a key role in changing schools and classrooms. Paradoxically, however, teachers are also viewed as major obstacles to change because of their adherence to outmoded forms of instruction that emphasize



factual and procedural knowledge at the expense of deeper levels of understanding.

(Prawat, 1992, p. 354)

“[Teachers’] interest in maintaining the status quo will undoubtedly take precedence over their willingness to accept change” (Greenberg & Baron, 2000; qtd in Zimmerman, 2006, p. 239) as one barrier when they are not simply helped to understand and realize the need for change in their schools. Moreover, Fullan (2002) suggests that these barriers – which are often defined as resistance – be redefined “as a potential positive force” (p. 6). He also adds that part of changing the culture means leaders must look for ways to address teachers’ concerns.

In an attempt to address the need for change agents and educational change, Fullan, Cuttress, and Kilcher (2005) offer a conceptual framework they call ‘8 Forces for Leaders of Change.’ Fullan says these 8 forces do not ensure successful change, but absence of these concepts would most assuredly mean failure for those who hope to initiate change in an educational setting. They are (a) engaging people’s moral purpose, (b) building capacity, (c) understanding the process, (d) developing cultures for learning, (e) developing cultures of evaluation, (f) focusing on leadership for change, (g) fostering coherence making, and (h) cultivating tri-level development of school and community, district, and state levels. “The change required is in the culture of what people value and how they work together to accomplish it. There is no step-by-step shortcut to transformation; it involves the hard day-to-day work of reculturing” (Fullan, 2002, p. 6). How teachers perceive change or themselves as change agents has as many variables as those who are encountering the changes.

## **Summary**

This chapter reviews how the history of writing instruction contributed to the formulation of state standards and how those state standards are being replaced by the Common Core

standards. Among the many constructs that have influenced how teachers teach writing—aside from being guided by standards—is the changes in writing pedagogy. How teachers teach, the processes that influence their teaching, and several extraneous factors that may impact teachers' attitude towards these influences and changes are also reviewed in this literature.

## CHAPTER 3: Research Methodology

### Introduction

This chapter describes a multi-case study approach to research as a valid alternative for addressing the research questions through qualitative means (Creswell, 2007) in which I collected data from two teachers in a rural high school English department in Northwest Arkansas. The purpose of this study was to examine secondary English teachers' perceptions towards implementing the Common Core writing standards and to explore how their perceptions impact their transitioning from Arkansas writing standards to meet the requirements of the Common Core writing standards. This chapter includes a detailed description of the participants, procedures for data collection, instrumentation, and data analysis.

This study focused on the following research questions:

1. What trends appear in English teachers' perceptions of implementing the Common Core writing curriculum and how do these perceptions relate to the *acceptance* of the Common Core writing curriculum?
  - a. How are teachers reacting to outside pressure to change instruction?
  - b. Why, if given the opportunity, did teachers voluntarily offer to implement CCSS before it was mandated?
2. How are English teachers implementing the Common Core writing curriculum and does this differ from Arkansas writing frameworks with respect to methods of instruction, class preparation time, assignments, assessments, and pacing guides?

The objective of this study was to answer the research questions through examination and exploration of secondary teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards teaching writing while

transitioning from state writing standards to Common Core writing standards (Rubin and Rubin, 2005).

Teachers have become accustomed to teaching writing for specific purposes (i.e. benchmark prep) and forms (i.e. writing as a process), so the study inquired into what inspired or motivated teachers to adapt their writing instruction techniques to meet the new Common Core standards. The study also inquired about teachers' perceptions regarding the professional development opportunities in their preparedness in teaching writing as well as its role in adapting their writing instruction.

### **Research Design**

Creswell (2007) explained case study research as a methodology or “object of study, as well as a product of the inquiry [. . .] is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (*a case*) or multiple bounded systems (*cases*) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection, involving multiple sources of information” (p. 73). This design strategy was multi-case, “within-site” (p. 73), “purposive sampling of participants” of convenience (Berg, 2009; Collins, 2010, p. 359) in which I selected one local rural school district whose two teachers in the high school English department assert they are implementing Common Core writing standards on some level – fully or partially. The principal’s participation was limited to an interview. The rural high school in the study is centrally and conveniently located in Northwest Arkansas. Ease of access allowed me to work around and respond to teachers’ schedules more sinuously.

The central phenomenon in this study is the teachers’ transitioning from state standards to CCSS. Creswell (2009) points out that in developing a sampling procedure in qualitative studies, purposeful sampling is used “so that individuals are selected because they have experienced the

central phenomenon” (p. 217). The goal of the purposive design study was to “add to or to generate new theories by obtaining new insights or fresh perspectives about the phenomenon of interest” (Collins, 2010, p. 357; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

### **Site Selection**

J. M. Hendricks High School [JMHHS] (pseudonym) was chosen for the study for several reasons. The school is a small Northwest Arkansas high school that serves as one of several districts in the county. In this county, two of the districts had begun early implementation of the CCSS on the high school level. At first I chose the larger of the two schools, thinking it would provide a larger amount of data for the study, but prior to the beginning of the study, the larger school encountered administrative personnel issues and, thus, became unavailable to conduct the study. So, I contacted the principal of JMHHS, the smaller of the two high schools, and asked about conducting my study there. Upon the principal’s agreement, I visited the local school board meeting to ensure all stakeholders were on board with the study as well.

J. M. Hendricks School District is state accredited, has one high school, one middle school, and one elementary school. At the time of the study, the school was serving 575 students K – 12 with 214 of those students in grades 9 – 12. During the 2011-2012 school year, 60% of the students were economically disadvantaged (as defined by the number of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch) and minority made up less than 12% of the school’s population. Academically, JMHHS met Adequate Yearly Progress, a requirement of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 11<sup>th</sup> grade literacy in years between 2008 – 2011, and the high school’s scores surpassed the state average each of those years by an average of 10% a year (Normes, 2012).

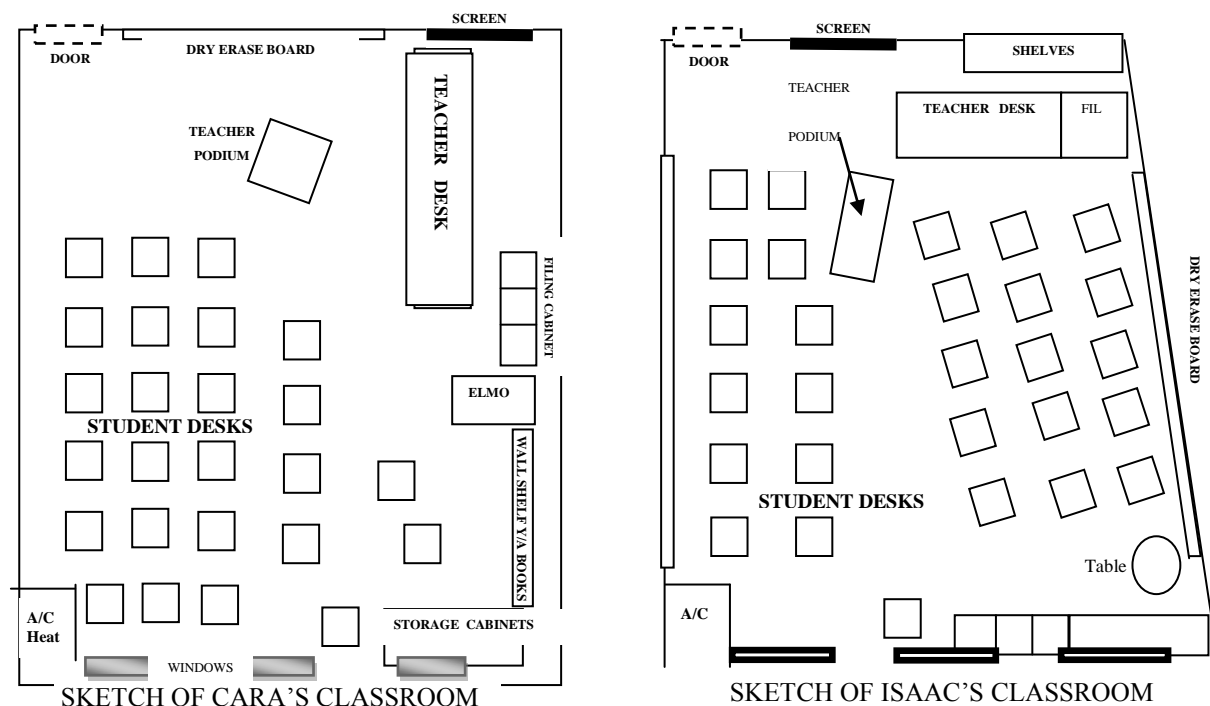
JMHHS boasts of two different academic tracks their students may pursue while attaining credits for graduation. According to the JMHHS's handbook, "all students are required to participate in the Smart Core curriculum unless their parents or guardians, or the students if they are 18 years or older, sign an 'Informed Consent Form' not to participate. Those students not participating in the Smart Core curriculum will be required to fulfill the Core curriculum [...] to be eligible for graduation" (JMHHS Handbook, 2011, p. 9). The schedule of classes differentiates between these two academic tracks by referencing one as "vocational" and the other as "college bound". In order to graduate, students must earn a total of 25 credits in grades 9 through 12. Among these requirements, students must complete four units of English – one course per year.

As a former teacher in the county where J. M. Hendricks High School is located, I was familiar with some of the employees in this district as well as with the eclectic setting of the school and its students. I did not have a relationship with either of the two teacher participants, but I was acquainted with the teacher who had been there for many years. As students would sometimes transfer from one high school to another in the county, she and I were familiar with one another's positions at the respective high schools. A familiarity with the district, the area, and its convenient location were among factors for my choosing this school for my study. Because this school had often served as a front-runner to academic innovations in the county, I was not surprised when the principal stated they were implementing CCSS two years earlier than required in the high school. With these considerations, I purposefully chose this site for the study.

## Participants

Cara (pseudonym) is considered the veteran teacher. She identifies herself and one other teacher as having been in the district for over thirty years. She has a Master of Arts degree in English and a Specialist degree in education from a local university. Cara stated in her interview that she plans on retiring in two years following this study, and interestingly, as Cara pointed out, she had taught in the same classroom for 28 years (Figure 1). Her room is decorated mainly with pictures, photos, and mementos marking her 28 years in that classroom. Within her years of teaching at JMHHS, Cara has been an active participant in the local teacher's union. She said that this did not always gain her popularity with administration, but she always believed in standing up for who and what was right. Cara also explained that this often places her in a leadership role—one she takes quite seriously. Her academic reputation—as indicated by her principal, Madelyn (pseudonym)—was strong in that she was known as the “tough teacher.” When I first talked to Cara about doing the study with her as one of the participants, she was agreeable and careful. She openly discussed how her veteran experiences contributed to her being on board with the early implementation of the CCSS and how the transition was “no big deal.”

Isaac (pseudonym) is the second of the two teachers in the study. Although the 2011-2012 school year marked Isaac's second year of teaching high school English, he taught math for four years previously at this school for a total of 5½ years of teaching experience. Isaac's classroom is decorated sparsely. His filled bookshelves line various places along the oddly shaped room (Figure 1). During both the interviews and the questionnaires, Isaac stated that he had “minimal experience” in teaching English and even less experience teaching writing. He has a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Master's degree—both in English Education. His aspiration is to spend the duration of his teaching career at JMHHS.



*Figure 1* Sketches of Cara's and Isaac's classrooms

### **Classroom Setting and Demographics**

Because the school population has declined in recent years, administration was forced to reduce the size of their English department from three teachers to two. With a smaller student population, both teachers had fewer students but each teacher had five different preparations (Table 6).



Table 6

*Teachers' Schedule of Classes and Student Numbers*

English	Grade	Track	Boys	Girls
1 <sup>st</sup> hour	9 <sup>th</sup>	Vocational	6	16
2 <sup>nd</sup> hour	11 <sup>th</sup>	Vocational	15	7
3 <sup>rd</sup> hour	12 <sup>th</sup>	College bound	3	7
4 <sup>th</sup> hour	12 <sup>th</sup>	AP Lang	4	7
6 <sup>th</sup> hour	11 <sup>th</sup>	College bound	7	8
7 <sup>th</sup> hour	9 <sup>th</sup>	Vocational	17	6
Cara's classes		Total: 103	52	51
English	Grade	Track	Boys	Girls
1 <sup>st</sup> hour	10 <sup>th</sup>	Vocational	11	6
2 <sup>nd</sup> hour	9 <sup>th</sup>	College bound	7	7
3 <sup>rd</sup> hour	9-12 <sup>th</sup>	Math enrichment		
4 <sup>th</sup> hour	12 <sup>th</sup>	Vocational	11	3
5 <sup>th</sup> hour	10 <sup>th</sup>	College bound	11	13
7 <sup>th</sup> hour	10 <sup>th</sup>	College bound	6	6
Isaac's classes		Total: 81	46	35

**Research Process**

As I began the study at JMHHS, I conducted multi-case studies as a qualitative researcher and I took careful measures to neither disrupt nor interfere with normal daily teacher/student routines (Berg, 2009). I began by having teachers complete a questionnaire (Appendix C) and then I conducted a formal interview, which I digitally recorded, in two parts on different days with each of the participants. Next, I observed each teacher in his and her English classes to gather field notes and data; this included an interaction with each teacher where I was free (and encouraged) to ask questions or to ask for clarifications in anything I heard or observed as each

teacher was teaching. During my time at the school, the district did not provide any trainings or meetings specific to implementing the Common Core Standards or inservice otherwise.

Nonetheless, the observations, thus immersion, (Berg, 2009) into the teaching lives of these individual cases provided considerable insight to the research questions.

The four weeks I spent observing Cara's and Isaac's English classes was determined based on several factors. First, in working with the teachers, they offered what they considered classes worthy of observation. Both teachers understood that the study's focus was on writing instruction and they both explained that not all of their classes were involved in writing. However, each teacher had a class where I spent a majority of the observations—a class that each teacher recommended—but I observed all of their classes at least once. Second, when considering how much time would be needed to reach data saturation, (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Morse, 2010), I considered Miles' and Huberman's (1994) recommendation to using multipliers to get a rough estimate of time available and needed to conduct all pieces of the study. From this recommendation, I considered the relationship between data and research questions and the concept of sufficient data to address the research questions. Once I had collected and analyzed data to the point that additional observations provided little or no new information “that [could] be incorporated into the thematic categories” (Collins, 2010, p. 360) and that gathering more data would neither add to nor take from the data already gathered, then time spent in the classroom ended (Guest et al., 2006; Morse, 2010). During the four weeks of observations, I spent a total of 19.5 hours in Cara's classes and 11.5 hours in Isaac's classes. I also spent additional time with both teachers during preparation periods (with no students) and during their lunch time which added an additional 6 hours.

**Confidentiality.** IRB approval, approval number 11-11-297, was obtained prior to contacting the schools or participants. I have taken the appropriate measures throughout the study to protect participants' rights to privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality. As the researcher, I supported this confidentiality by assigning each participant a pseudonym to which all references and data refer. I addressed any questions regarding the study to ensure this procedure was maintained. I specifically guaranteed that no identifying information was included in the report of the study. I assured the participants that all data would be kept in a secure place to which only I will have access and the same level of confidentiality will be maintained even after the study is finalized.

After the study was approved, I talked with the principal and gave her a letter indicating IRB approval for her records (Appendix D). Following the approval of the principal, I met with the two teachers who had agreed to participate in the study at which time each person signed an informed consent form (Appendix E). The study consisted of a questionnaire, interviews, and observations which were all conducted in support of the rights of the participants as outlined in the informed consent form as well as the University of Arkansas' IRB approved application.

### **Data Collection**

School Visitation Itinerary:

- Contact principal of J. M. Hendricks High School
- Meet with principal, and teachers in the high school English department
- Have all participants sign informed consent form
- Have high school English teachers complete a questionnaire
- Conduct formal interview with principal
- Conduct formal interviews with both English teachers prior to observations

- Observe teachers during instruction
- Conduct informal interviews throughout observation periods.
- Follow-up questions after observations via e-mail (as per teachers' request)

The first step was to meet with the principal and English teachers to discuss the study, to answer any outstanding questions, to make clarifications, and discuss a schedule for interviews and observations. The instruments for this study included a questionnaire, observations, and interviews. The first means of data collection were questionnaires. I gave teachers the option of completing the questionnaires electronically or by providing them a hard copy. One teacher completed the questionnaire electronically; the other preferred a hard copy. I stressed confidentiality of all information gained from questionnaires, interviews, and observations throughout each piece of correspondence.

Following teachers' completion of the questionnaires, the next step was to conduct the interviews with the participants and then set up a schedule of observations with the teachers. Because of the length of the interviews and the participants' schedules, the interviews had to be conducted at two different times for each teacher and principal for a total of six different interviews. In keeping with the semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendices B, F, and G), I asked questions to gain information that would help me understand the CCSS implementation at that district, school, department, and classroom through each case's perspective and I asked questions that would also help to provide insight into the research questions.

### **Artifact acquisition.**

"In-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information" Creswell, 2007, p. 73) supported a clearer insight into some of the ways teachers have prepared to transition to

CCSS—whether it be their training, their basic knowledge of CCSS, or an accumulation of literature regarding CCSS. So, I sought insider information (Berg, 2009; Hatch, 2002) by asking the principal and/or teacher participants of the school for access to any data (artifacts) that would support their preparation for transitioning to CCSS. Yin (2003) recommends six different types of information to collect when conducting case studies. Among these six, I collected artifacts that included documents, interviews, direct observations, and physical artifacts, specifically: teacher notes, school policies regarding the implementation of CCSS, school demographics, lesson plans—archived and current, copies of teachers’ lessons (including worksheets, quizzes, lecture notes, etc.), e-mails that included information on CCSS, high school student handbook, class schedules, and a school calendar.

Once I completed interviews with the participants, I gathered field notes from observations and I attained as much artifact data as allowed by the school. After four weeks of classroom observations, I determined that I had reached a satisfactory level of data saturation because all of the research questions had been addressed and because the observation information had become repetitive (Guest et al., 2006; Morse, 2010) and I concluded my time in the school and with the participants.

## **Instruments**

### **Questionnaire.**

The degree to which sampling decisions impact various steps of the research process support a conceptual framework for the researcher’s use of the questionnaire (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). Thus, by addressing the research questions and “by choosing the sampling frame (questionnaire) and the sampling boundary (open-ended--qualitative) ensures that the questionnaire instrument will generate “adequate and sufficient data source to enable the [. . .]

researcher to formulate conclusions and interpretations [which were] integrated into meta-inferences (Collins, 2010; Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). Therefore, the questionnaire in this study consisted of a combination of open and closed-ended questions which asked the participants specific information about their perceptions of the transition from state writing standards to Common Core writing standards and of their experiences related to writing instruction. Their responses were coded and then analyzed qualitatively (Creswell, 2007) which is discussed in data analysis section.

To help establish a well-written questionnaire instrument and to strengthen its validity, the questionnaire (Appendix C) received several revisions and recommendations from my committee. So, the questionnaire designed for this research (Creswell, 2009), consisted of mostly opened ended questions that allowed participants to respond frankly and openly about their perceptions and experiences with the state and Common Core standards as well as with their writing pedagogy. In addition, because I am interested in the how teachers rank and classify the importance of writing instruction and writing strategies, one section included ordering of topics by importance – according to the participants’ experiences and perceptions—and one section uses 5-point Likert scale items (Creswell, 2009), to allow participants to rank their perceptions and experiences regarding writing instruction. These items range from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree with 3 = neutral as some participants may not agree nor disagree with a particular statement.

### **Questionnaire item construction.**

I wrote the questionnaire instrument using several criteria. Overall, I followed Creswell’s (2009) recommendations for survey and questionnaire designs in which he outlined components of a survey method plan and a checklist of questions for designing the survey. Variables for the

questionnaire's statements were based on the research questions from the study. I focused on three categories for the teachers' perceptions in transitioning from state writing standards to Common Core writing standards: (a) teachers' knowledge of standards; (b) teachers' perceptions of their methods of writing instruction; (c) and teachers' perceptions and knowledge of what is actually taught in their classrooms. Next, I constructed statements based on existing research about those three topics or categories (Appendix H); and third, I wrote each statement based on Creswell's (2009) recommended format for a 5-point Likert scale that would elicit teachers to respond by ranking. Finally, following my committee's recommendations for revisions, I revised a majority of the statements to become open-ended questions, but each question continued to be based on the research for the three categories –each of which directly elicited information that addressed the research questions.

### **Semi-Structured interviews.**

Berg (2009) explains the interview is “an especially effective method of collecting information for certain types of research questions [. . .] especially when investigators are interested in understanding the perceptions of participants or learning how participants come to attach certain meanings to phenomena or events” (p. 110). My goal for the teacher interviews was to understand the teacher's perspective and experience in teaching writing (Creswell, 2009). In addition, I interviewed the principal in order to gain pertinent information as to contributory variables that may or may not support teachers in their implementation of Common Core writing standards. Semi-structured interviews allowed the teachers to talk about their perspectives and experiences while allowing me to gain valuable information that I might not otherwise be privy to. Seidman (2006) conducted a series of three in-depth interviews for which he established a guide for interviewing. His first interview sought to look at the interviewees' past experiences;

the second interview wanted to bring out more current details of their experiences; and the third interview attempted to gain meaning from the interviewees' experiences. Similarly, I conducted multiple interviews where I attempted to combine these three interview concepts.

Berg (2009) describes semi-structured interviews as

- More or less structured
- Questions may be reordered during interview
- Wording of questions is flexible
- Level of language may be adjusted
- Interviewer may answer questions and make clarifications
- Interview may add or delete probes to interview between subsequent subjects (p. 105).

The content of the interviews was an extension of the questionnaires and an expansion of questions that might probe more deeply into their responses to the questionnaire. Also, the interviews were based on both the research questions and my review of literature regarding standards, writing instruction, and factors affecting the implementation of CCSS. Because the interview questions correlated to the research questions, they improved trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Also, to control for internal validity, I followed a semi-structured interview guide for each of the participants in the study (Appendices B, F, and G).

### **Non-Participant Observation.**

To control for the internal validity of my observations, I used a chart based on Marzano's (2001) instructional strategies and Common Core writing standards (see Appendix I). This chart allowed me to quickly note if the teacher was using researched strategies and if so, how the strategies supported student learning based on the research provided in the charts. I also



constructed a chart (see Appendix J) to both help me to vary my focus and to use as a reference as to how writing instruction may be sorted according to recommendations for *Best Practices in Writing Instruction* (Graham, MacArthur, & Fitzgerald, Eds., 2007).

During the observations, I modified a version of Creswell's (2007) observational protocol to record information from each observation. As shown in Table 7, this protocol contains "descriptive notes" in the left column that served as my "attempt to summarize, in chronological fashion, the flow of activities in the classroom" (p. 138). The "reflective notes" in the right column is where I recorded "speculation, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions, and prejudices" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 121). The top line of the chart contains the data related to time, date, course, and grade observed.

Table 7

*Observation Protocol Notes from English Class*

1-11-12	10:40 – 11:40	Observation: “Cara”	AP Literature English – 12 <sup>th</sup> grade
Descriptive Notes		Reflective Notes	
<i>On the board: Analyze a poem as a class</i>		I’m excited to see them analyze a poem and then possibly turn it into a writing assignment.	
Cara told me before class that she is going to show Ss how to analyze a poem by beginning with annotation of the poem. She said she will be modeling how to annotate a poem for AP so that Ss can answer the prompt.			
Cara: “Look for meaning first, <b>then</b> you can go back and see how you got there.”		I’m sure she’ll make this clearer soon when she models the analysis process – maybe that’s what she means.	
‘process of writing about reading’ a poem			
Ss were given the poem; they read it to themselves, and then they had to answer a series of multiple choice questions about the poem (AP released Q’s). Once they finished, Cara went back over each of the questions and gave the Ss the answers.		I guess this part was for practice on the M/C – although, Cara gave me a copy (I get a copy of everything now without asking) and I read the Q’s – some are quite “rigorous”.	
Cara clarified that the M/C helps Ss learn about the content of the poem so they would pay closer attention for the annotation process.		Makes sense, but I don’t know enough about the AP exam to know how that might work. Students seemed comfortable with this process	
Ss were given two copies of the poem; each copy had already been annotated – Cara looked at me and said that she had annotated one a long time ago and the other had been done by another secretary who was taking notes for her.		No modeling, just show and tell.	

I used data collection/field notes to determine what the standards mean in teaching and learning to/for the teachers who are involved in implementing Common Core writing standards because “the perspectives or voices of participants ought to be prominent in any qualitative report” (Hatch, 2002. p. 7). Consequently, the research in the classroom came directly from the research questions. To support trustworthiness, I have firm background knowledge of Common Core Writing Standards and current ADE English language arts frameworks, as well as experience in teaching English language arts in secondary classrooms using ADE frameworks. Finally, I

“articulate[d] the value of this study to practice in a language that is accessible to a wide range of readers, [which will allow] for the necessary opportunity for debate within the discipline” (Jones et al., 2006, p. 120).

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Creswell (2007) defined qualitative analysis as preparing and organizing the data (i.e., text data as in transcripts, or image data as in photographs) for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion (p. 148).

Because this is a multiple-case study, I provided a “detailed description of each case and themes within the case called a *within-case analysis*, followed by a thematic analysis across cases, called a *cross-case analysis*, as well as assertions or an interpretation of the meaning of the case” (p. 75). (See Figure 2).

**Coding.** In order to analyze the data gathered at different points in the study, (e.g. questionnaire, interview transcript, and field note data), I used open coding which Corbin and Strauss (1990) define as “the interpretive process by which data are broken down analytically” (p. 12).

I modified and followed a step by step process that Tesch (1990) recommends during the coding process and which I explain more fully following the outline:

- 1) To get a sense of the whole, I read all the transcripts carefully – jotting down notes as they came to mind.
- 2) I picked one interview transcript – the shortest, went through it and asked myself “What is this about” and I wrote my thoughts in the margins as I read.

- 3) When I completed this task for both participants, I began to compile a list of topics (themes) and I clustered together similar topics. I began to place these topics into a chart that I had created (Appendix K).
- 4) Then I took my chart of themes and went back to the data. I went through the chart again changing topics and themes to match the appropriate segments of the text. I used this organizing scheme to see if new categories and codes emerged or should be collapsed into smaller segments.
- 5) In order to find the most descriptive wording for my themes and categories, I used *in vivo* terms (Creswell, 2007, p. 153) when possible and I looked for ways to reduce my total list of categories by grouping themes that related to each other. At one point, I drew lines among three categories from different core phenomenon to show the interrelationships.
- 6) In making the final decision about how to abbreviate the categories, I modified Strauss and Corbin's (1990) popular, systematic approach to open and axial coding from grounded theory in which I used the four categories "identified around the core phenomenon" (cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 64) as headings to group and categorize the themes from the data analysis. By following these categorical headings, the unfolding of the data began to read as a narrative.
- 7) The assembled data that belonged to each category represented a narrative for how each of the participants' responses correlated to each of the research questions and from this perspective, I was able to "perform a preliminary analysis" of my existing data. (cited in Creswell, 2009, p. 186)

I looked for and grouped together events, actions, interactions, key phrases, paragraphs, words, etc. to form conceptual labels (Figure 2). “In this way, conceptually similar ones [were] grouped together to form categories and their subcategories” (p. 12). Case context and descriptions for case 1 (Cara) and case 2 (Isaac) are discussed in Chapter 3; analysis of both cases are discussed in Chapter 4; assertions and generalizations are discussed in Chapter 5.

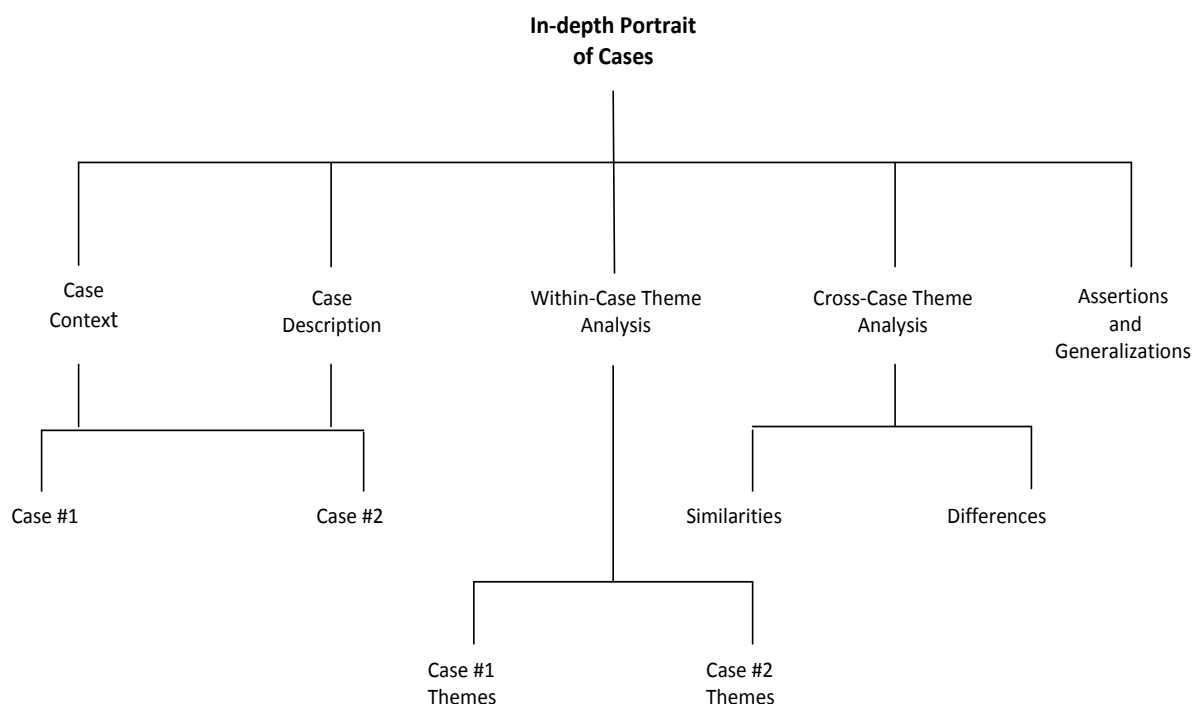


Figure 2 *In-depth Portrait of Cases* (Creswell, 2007, p. 172)

Strauss (1987) recommends following four basic guidelines when conducting open coding: “(a) ask the data a specific and consistent set of questions, (b) analyze the data minutely, (c) frequently interrupt the coding to write a theoretical note, and (d) never assume the analytic relevance of any traditional variable [...] until the data show it to be relevant” (p. 30). While analyzing data, I considered a conceptualization that allowed for “codes on topics that readers would expect to find; codes that are surprising and were not anticipated at the beginning of the

study; codes that are unusual; and, codes that address a larger theoretical perspective in the research” (Creswell, 2009, p. 187).

Once open coding was complete, the next step was axial coding where the “categories are related to their subcategories, and the relationships tested against the data” (Corbin and Strauss, 1990, p. 13). In this way, I sorted the cases into subsequent subdivisions using constructs that were shaped by certain questions asked during the course of the interviews and the observations (Berg, 2009; Creswell, 2007). With open coding as unrestricted coding of the data, I “carefully and minutely read the document[s] line by line and word by word to determine the concepts and categories that fit the data” (Berg, 2009, p. 358). As the coding continued, I read through the data and established categories of emerging ideas, patterns, themes, etc., noting also that “no apparent pattern [was] a pattern” (p. 362). I determined a methodical process (Table 8) for selecting and sorting data into chunks, thus sorting through use of axial coding (Berg, 2009; Corbin and Strauss, 1990).

Table 8

*Qualitative Instrumental Case Analysis Chart for Interview Data*

Question	Interview divided into phrases (Participants’ actual statements)	Formulated meaning (Researcher’s interpretation based on statements)	Theme (Re-occurring theme from participant phrases & Researcher’s interpretations)
A	_____		
B	_____		
C	_____		

To explain and support Creswell's coding template (Figure 2) through open and axial coding, I merged stages in Berg's (2009) content analysis with steps in Hatch's (2002) inductive analysis.

Table 9

*Steps and Stages in Inductive Analysis*

Identify research question		
Determine analytic categories		
Read through data and establish grounded categories	Case 1, 2 – context & description	Read the data and identify frames of analysis
Determine systematic (objective criteria of selection for sorting data chunks into the analytic and grounded categories		
Begin sorting the data into the various categories (revise categories or selection criteria, if necessary, after [...] cases have been completed	Within-case theme analysis	Create *domains based on semantic relationships discovered within frames of analysis
<del>Count the number of entries in each category for descriptive statistics and to allow for the demonstration of magnitude</del>	<i>[Creswell recommended that the researcher not count number of entries (2007)]</i>	Identify salient domains, assign them a code, and put others aside
Review textual materials as sorted into various categories seeking patterns		Complete an analysis within domains
Consider the patterns in light of relevant literature and/or theory (show possible links to theory of other research).	Cross-case theme analysis --similarities --differences	Reread data, refining salient domains and keeping a record of where relationships are found in the data
		Decide if domains are supported by the data and search data for examples that do not fit with or run counter to the relationships in domains
		Search for themes across domains
		Create a master outline expressing relationships within and among domains
Offer an explanation (analysis) for your findings	Assertions and generalizations	Select data excerpts to support the elements of outline
Relate your analysis to the extant literature of the subject		*Domains: any symbolic category that includes other categories is a domain (Hatch, 2002, pp. 163-165)
(Berg, 2009, p. 362)	(Creswell, 2007, p.172)	

One example of how I sorted data into categories was to use field notes from observations of what was happening in the way of writing instruction based on the Common Core writing standards and compared that data to the “Categories of Instructional Strategies That Affect Student Achievement” (Marzano, 2001) to possibly locate an intersection and correlation between these recommended pedagogical strategies and the observed teacher’s writing instruction methods (within and across cases).

**Triangulation.** Denzin (1978) defines triangulation as “the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon” (p. 291). Jick (1979) traces the use of triangulation to Campbell and Fiske (1959) where they argued that “more than one method should be used in the validation process to ensure that the variance reflected that of the trait and not of the method. Thus, the convergence or agreement between two methods” [sic] (p. 602). One such technique is what Denzin (1978) refers to as “within-method” which “uses multiple techniques within a given method to collect and interpret data” (Jick, 1979, p. 603; Denzin, 1989) and often used to illustrate how “methodological triangulation was used” (Casey & Murphy, 2009, p. 40). There are assumptions, however, that using triangulation methods may compensate for the weaknesses in each method. “Although it has always been observed that each method has assets and liabilities, triangulation purports to exploit the assets and neutralize, rather than compound, the liabilities” (Jick, 1979, p.603).

Jick (1979) discusses the tradition of research methods that “advocates the use of multiple methods” (p. 602). He describes this tradition as one of convergent methodology or what is also referred to as triangulation. This tradition of thought asserts that “qualitative and quantitative methods should be viewed as complementary rather than rival camps” (p. 602). He also supports that two purposes for triangulation are the confirmation of data and the



completeness of data. “Confirmation is a process of examining and comparing data gathered from multiple sources to explore the extent to which findings converge or are confirmed” (Casey & Murphy, 2009, p. 41) and Jick (1979) implies that using triangulation to reach completeness of data enhances a more “holistic and contextual portrayal of phenomena, which may enrich understanding. Completeness of data is concerned primarily with gathering multiple perspectives from a variety of sources so that as complete a picture as possible of phenomena can be built and the varied dimensions revealed” (Casey & Murphy, 2009, p. 42).

To enhance trustworthiness, I used an instrumentation chart (see Appendix F) to ensure that research questions had a direct purpose and relationship to the processes being used to gain answers to the questions. By using a combination of questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations, I was able to triangulate information with an instrumentation outline which correlated responses and observations to specific research questions. The data gained from a triangulation of instruments provided rich information. “The greater the triangulation, the greater the confidence in the observed findings” (Denzin, as qtd. in Hales, 2010).

### **Summary**

This chapter discussed the research methods I used for the study. The discussion included a description of the participants, sample, and the rationale behind the small sample. This chapter also included procedures for receiving permission from the participants and a detailed plan for how I collected data from participants. I have also referenced several appendices in this chapter for a clearer perspective of the direction of my study. The discussion regarding instrumentation also included relevant sources supporting the instruments’ use in a multi-case study. Finally, I concluded with the data analysis procedures.

## **CHAPTER 4: Data Results and Analysis**

### **Introduction**

This study presented the results from of multi-case study of two teachers and their perceptions towards implementing the Common Core writing standards into their classrooms earlier than the state requires. In this study, I used a combination of questionnaires, semi-structured interviews (formal and informal), and classroom observations to triangulate information with an instrumentation outline in the study of the same phenomenon. The triangulation of information was also used to connect responses and observations to specific research questions (Denzin, 1978) and to build a more complete picture of the phenomena (Jick, 1979). The study took place over approximately three months which started with questionnaires and ended with informal interviews.

Because interpreting meanings and significance of data are heavily inferential, the researcher must make these interpretations carefully (Hatch, 2009). Thus, the results and analysis are explained in terms of each research question which includes all data instrumentation used in the study. The multi-case study included two teachers “Cara” and “Isaac” in a rural school “J.M. Hendricks High School” in Northwest Arkansas. The data collected to address the research questions were in the form of questionnaires, interviews, and observations. Participants’ names and school site are protected through the use of pseudonyms. The principal, “Madelyn” was interviewed, but no other data were collected from her.

Both teachers completed the questionnaire, formal and informal interviews, and allowed observations for a period of four weeks in their classrooms as they taught. The first step in analyzing the data was creating a chart based on recommendations and modifications of several methodologists (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Creswell, 2009; 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) that

allowed me to complete a within-theme analysis and a cross-theme analysis. Both of the research questions and sub-questions focused on the perceptions of teachers in different areas. These data topics which had emerged as a result of open coding were placed in the chart – all data led back to or through this core phenomenon, which I refer to as a “subject’s way of thinking about people and objects” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 64). The data are divided by these five core phenomena:

1. Teacher perception of standards
2. Teacher perception students
3. Teacher perception of administration, faculty, fellow teachers
4. Teacher perception writing curriculum
5. Teacher perception of pedagogy

These five core phenomena are the contextual and intervening conditions. Strauss and Corbin (1990) also referred to this as “broad and specific situational factors that influence the strategies” (qtd. in Creswell, 2007, p. 64).

The types of categories identified around the core phenomenon emerged from axial coding (Creswell, 2009; 2007; Creswell, Hanson, Plano-Clark, & Morales, 2007) and are sorted into a visual model (Creswell, 2007) of the axial codes (Appendix K). The type of analysis that supports the multi-case study is the analysis of these data as an “embedded analysis of specific aspects of the case[s]” (Yin, 2003; cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 75). Through this analysis, a “detailed description of [each] case (Stake, 1995) emerge[d]” (Creswell, 2007, p. 75). In the final interpretive phase, I used within-theme analysis and cross-theme analysis to “report the meaning of the case[s]” (p.75), that Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to as “lessons learned” from the case (p. 75).

## **Data Findings**

The findings in this study are addressed according to each of the research questions and subquestions and their interrelationship to the five core phenomena. In order to examine how Cara and Isaac, the two teachers from J. M. Hendricks High School implemented Common Core writing standards two years earlier than the state would require in place of the currently mandated state standards, I asked the participants questions through questionnaires and interviews in which I sought information that might lead to answers or perspectives to the research questions. I also observed these two teachers in their classrooms in order to gain more insight into their teaching lives and to use that insight as a correlation to the other means of data collection. The data that were collected from both teachers revealed both similarities and differences in their implementation processes and choices.

In all questions and observations, the core phenomenon centered on the two teachers' perceptions of the standards, their students, the administration and faculty, their writing curriculum, and their writing pedagogy. The teachers' responses to each phenomenon presented a narrative of each teacher's approach to making changes or adaptations in several areas in order to meet their perceived expectations of Common Core writing standards. For example, each teacher offered his and her perspective on the questions asked, but because each teacher has different experiences and backgrounds, their perspectives were more often different than the same in how they approached early implementation of the Common Core writing standards. These differences and, in few cases, similarities, affect the way she and he view and handle changes in their teaching lives.

In an effort to maintain a methodical, yet narrative approach to the data, I followed a pattern of four categorical headings (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to support the open and axial

coding processes. When reading the chart, or matrix (Miles and Huberman, 1994), I begin with the first heading of the “subject’s way of thinking about people and objects” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 64) to describe the contextual and intervening conditions which Strauss & Corbin (1990) explain as “broad and specific situational factors that influence the strategies” (cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 64) (Table 10). In the second box, I consider the causal conditions as “what factors caused the core phenomenon” (p. 64). As these themes emerged from the data, they were categorized based on setting and context codes (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, pp. 166-172). In other words, these are reoccurring themes of context or lens that the teachers used to channel their perceptions about the core phenomenon. The third box categorizes the reoccurring codes that qualified as strategies: “actions taken in response to the core phenomenon” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 64). As themes emerged that indicated what strategies teachers used or addressed in relation to any of the five core phenomenon, they were placed accordingly in the chart. In the fourth box are the codes that were sorted as consequences or “outcomes from using the strategies” (p. 64). During data collection, themes categorized as consequential to an action were sorted into the fourth column (Table 10).

Table 10

*Pattern of Categorical Headings for Open and Axial Coding*

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<i>Subject’s way of thinking about people &amp; objects: (core phenomenon)</i> <b>Contextual &amp; Intervening Conditions:</b> <i>broad and specific situational factors that influence the strategies</i>	<b>Causal Conditions:</b> <i>what factors caused the core phenomenon</i>	<b>Strategies:</b> <i>actions taken in response to the core phenomenon</i>	<b>Consequences:</b> <i>outcomes from using the strategies</i>
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As I recoded and reevaluated the matrix of the teachers' perceptions, I found that the five core phenomenon needed to have an order as well. Once I had sorted data into the appropriate categories, I rearranged the rows related to the core phenomenon based on the teachers' perceptions of least complex to most complex. In order to determine the level of complexity, I noticed patterns in their descriptions where if the phenomenon was less complex, the teachers tended to offer more textbook, unemotional answers. In addition, when the question was asked in different ways (reworded from the questionnaire to the interview), they were more apt to repeat the answer with little variation. For example, one question addressing the standards on the questionnaire was reworded to ask basically the same thing during the interview (Table 11). In both instances teachers' responses to both questions were quite similar and simple. They also repeated this concept anytime a question or discussion led back to their perception of the standards (Table 11).

Table 11

*Comparison of Responses to Same Questions*

<b>Questionnaire:</b>		<b>Interview Question:</b>	
<i>Explain your experience teaching writing using the ADE ELA writing frameworks?</i>		<i>Talk about your thoughts on having taught writing under the Arkansas frameworks during your teaching years.</i>	
Isaac	Using the ADE frameworks was confusing and convoluted; not clearly defined; repetitious	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• they were so convoluted that, uh, I mean I would call them up on the website and try to figure out</li> <li>• but it's just so hard to get through one because I'd read a framework here and a little later, I'd think 'is that the exact same one?'</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• transition to ADE ELA frameworks was relatively easy for me since I had been using the NCTE standards since I started teaching;</li> <li>• Common Core standards align to NCTE;</li> <li>• relatively easy to learn the new language, but frustrating to have to realign everything;</li> <li>• When it comes to writing frameworks and instructional expectations, I feel like they are constantly trying to reinvent the wheel</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• when I was using the Arkansas frameworks, I was actually using the national standards;</li> <li>• the same things are covered; you have to cover this, you have to cover forms of support, you have to cover that gonna take my lessons, find where it is I'm supposed to cover that and put a checkmark by it</li> </ul>	

Following teachers perceptions of standards were perceptions of students, administration and faculty, writing curriculum, and pedagogy. Additional criteria I used to sort the core phenomenon from least to most complex were the relationship that each phenomenon had with the one above or below. For example, teachers' perceptions of writing curriculum and pedagogy were both complex and in many instances, the cross-theme analysis revealed several overlapping similarities.

### **Teacher Perceptions of Standards**

#### **Research question 1.**

What trends appear in English teachers' perceptions of implementing the Common Core writing curriculum and how do these perceptions relate to the acceptance of the Common Core writing curriculum?

The first trend that emerged in teachers' perceptions of implementing Common Core writing standards was their perceptions towards both the current state standards and the incoming CCSS (Table 12). Both teachers viewed the current state frameworks as a mandated set of standards, and they agreed that the state frameworks were "convoluted" and difficult to manipulate. Often, both teachers agreed that the state frameworks served as more of a checklist for teaching skills than as a document to teach particular concepts and that creating lessons meant they both would find and match the SLEs to their lessons.

Table 12

*Teachers' Perceptions of Standards*

Contextual & Intervening Conditions: <i>broad and specific situational factors that influence the strategies</i>	Causal Conditions: <i>what factors caused the core phenomenon</i>	Strategies: <i>actions taken in response to the core phenomenon</i>	Consequences: <i>outcomes from using the strategies</i>
<b>Teacher Perception of Standards</b>	(ADE) State Frameworks	"fitted" to match lessons	justification checklist of skills
		mandated	"convoluted" frustrating
		transition	gap in SLEs
	CCSS (specifically, Common Core writing standards)	early implementation	"matching" CC: "realign" re-sequencing choice no risk
			"very general" "more rigorous"
			new texts/no money indifference
		mandated	

Isaac's perception of ADE state frameworks was limited to his brief experience, thus limited interaction with the ADE writing standards. His explanation may exemplify what the transition to Common Core writing standards may mean for novice teachers who are not as familiar with previous sets of state standards.

I did not really consciously go 'ok where' or when I used the textbook, I assumed they overlapped so I didn't look for which framework . . . they were so convoluted that, uh, I mean I would call them up on the website and try to figure out – I mean on occasion or on a weekly basis, ok, so I'd have to put the framework on my lesson plan so I'd make sure 'this applies to what we're going to be doing.' Um, but it's just so hard to get



through one because I'd read a framework here and a little later, I'd think 'is that the exact same one?' Anyway, it was not an ideal or effective situation as far as making sure I met the frameworks. (Interview, December, 2011)

In Isaac's perception of the current state standards, he was cognizant of the fact that his school had committed to early implementation of CCSSS; so, he did not make a strong attempt to understand or work with the ADE frameworks because he did not see the need to learn them (during his first year of teaching English) and then the next year have to learn CCSS:

The other thing was that I knew the next year we'd be switching over to Common Core; There'd been talk that Arkansas was going to be adopting Common Core; they were talking already at the elementary school about implementing it for K-2. So, I was like 'I'm just gonna wait' because Common Core is coming; And, me being new to the department was like why bother learning all those old ones if we're going to be switching over. It just seemed like a more effective choice. The other thing was that I knew the next year we'd be switching over to Common Core. (Interview, December, 2011)

Isaac also made this point in the questionnaire about the ADE frameworks. "Being a new English teacher, I didn't want to learn a new curriculum, then do it all again in another couple of years (Questionnaire, 2011). When he was asked about his experience teaching writing using the ADE frameworks, Isaac replied that he had "minimal experience" with both the standards and teaching writing (Questionnaire, 2011).

In both the interview and the questionnaire, Isaac's perception of the state standards was affected by his understanding of early implementation. The fact that he considered them to be frustrating and convoluted gave him credence in being able to discard their relevance in the classroom in lieu giving his attention to the Common Core writing standards that would be

implemented within his second year of teaching English. Also, I was able to obtain four weeks of lesson plans from the previous school year and four weeks of lesson plans during my time of observations. The lesson plans from the previous year listed only two different reading strands for that period of four weeks; lesson plans from the current year revealed that Isaac was teaching the same unit (i.e. Shakespearean plays), but no frameworks or SLEs were listed with the exception of one week's lessons for the 10<sup>th</sup> grade college bound class where I had requested to observe Isaac teaching a writing lesson using Common Core writing standards. Isaac's perception of the state frameworks led him to make decisions about addressing the standards early on. His knowledge of the state writing frameworks was limited because he had made a conscious choice to wait to learn the Common Core writing standards. Isaac also noted in the questionnaire that he "hadn't really learned the ADE standards" and when asked about teaching writing under the ADE standards, Isaac stated that was "not applicable".

Cara's perception of ADE frameworks:

When I was using the Arkansas frameworks, I was actually using the national standards. The same things are covered; you have to cover this, you have to cover forms of support, you have to cover that. It's just a matter of my going back in my lessons –finding the places in the frameworks that were fitting into the lessons rather than the other way around. Writing the lesson to the framework? I've never done that once; I thought 'here's my lesson, which framework does it cover; does it make sense there'? (Interview, December, 2011)

Cara had indicated in her interview and in the questionnaire that her foundation for teaching writing came from her use of NCTE language arts standards. Her perception of the state frameworks was that they were a list of skills meant to be checked off once they had been taught

or embedded in writing lessons. Cara also pointed out that the state frameworks required a lot of reteaching which, in her perception of implementing the Common Core writing standards meant that reteaching would be a thing of the past – a fact she understood, but doubted its feasibility.

[T]he big issue is that some of the things we're reteaching in high school that are dealt with, with the benchmark [ADE state writing standards], the assumption is 'it's in there, it's done, they know that.' The benchmarks didn't make that distinction. You were still reteaching. The Common Core does make that distinction. It's like 'we're going to spend the whole year on them if we need to but you will know them.' And so, that's going to be the difference – making sure everybody's in line because you're not gonna go back and teach anymore. (Interview, December, 2011)

Because Cara said she had always followed NCTE standards, citing the use of the state frameworks on lesson plans was more of a formality to meet administrative requirements. However, I was not able to obtain any copies of Cara's lesson plans because she was "revamping the lesson plans" [to meet CCSS] (interview, December, 2011). What I learned about Cara's work under ADE writing frameworks was based on what she told me in the interviews and on the questionnaire. No mention of standards or framework numbers were mentioned nor posted on the board in her classroom with the daily lessons.

**Standards and Transition.** While coding the teachers' perceptions of the standards, I was able to identify that many of their responses directly referenced the "transition" from state writing standards to Common Core writing standards which I added as a divider between the state and Common Core writing standards (Table 12). Their perceptions of both sets of writing standards were filtered through this transition piece because it seemed to serve as both a causal condition and a strategy or "action taken in response to the core phenomenon" (Bogdan &

Biklen, 1992; cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 64). Both teachers perceived the transition from one set of writing frameworks to another as ultimately creating one consequence to the transition: the revelation of a major gap in student learning expectations. As part of the with-in case analysis (Creswell, 2007) this perceived gap, and emergent theme, appears to have a relationship to teachers' perceptions of students and their abilities based on what the teachers perceive as the gap between what students had been expected to do and know under ADE frameworks and what students will be expected to already know and be able to do under the Common Core writing standards.

Isaac's comments regarding the gap (no mention of gaps was made in the questionnaire):

- The thing that just keeps leaping to my mind from the Arkansas standards to the Common Core is that the things we've traditionally taught at 9<sup>th</sup> grade, that's now in lower middle school level;
- So, that would be the main differences—just where they [CCSS] placed this skill and that skill; it seems like it's all been kind of pushed down;
- Here [Common Core writing standards] it's more on can a student write this type of piece and like the mechanics, and spelling, and grammar seems to be less emphasized – that's the greatest gap. (Interview, December, 2011)

Cara's comments regarding the gap (no mention of gaps was made in the questionnaire):

- Why are we waiting to reinvent the wheel? We know we aren't going to be tested on the, the benchmark is not gonna test us on the Common Core yet, so we know there's gonna be huge gaps between what they can do and the Common Core; but at least we can get ready.
- With what I am doing there are so many gaps between Common Core and benchmark;

- I am really looking to see how huge that gap is going to be on the Common Core to the benchmark; I just think it's going to be enormous; I may be wrong – if I'm wrong, yay, but I don't think so. I don't think I'm going to be that wrong.
- We are attempting to fill in those areas that will be advanced over the next several years; my partner and I felt that we were better off filling in gaps than we were waiting years to begin teaching on a higher level and then expecting students to make the adjustments in a relatively short period of time. (Interview, December, 2011)

### **Subquestion a.**

How are teachers reacting to outside pressure to change instruction?

The teacher-participants indicated that many factors motivated their early implementation and each time they addressed the concept of early implementation, they pointed out their rationale for early implementation. In their responses, they both signified that each had somewhat volunteered for early implementation. As each core phenomenon is discussed, other factors involving the rationale behind their volunteering to implement Common Core writing standards earlier than required will be further explained. However, in these previous responses neither pointed out any outside pressures as a component to implementing CCSS. So this led to the first sub-question.

Because the two teachers are implementing the Common Core writing standards two years early, I wanted to find out if there were any existing outside pressures on these teachers that might have influenced either of them to go ahead with Common Core writing standards and/or to change their instruction to accommodate the Common Core writing standards. If so, how were these teachers reacting to that outside pressure? In order to address this sub-question, each participant was asked two questions on the questionnaire and three questions in the

interviews. This allowed the teachers multiple opportunities to denote various types of outside pressures. The chart below shows how the sub-question was asked and answered by both teachers on the questionnaires (Table 13) and in the interviews (Table 14).

Table 13

*Comparison of Teachers' Responses to Subquestion a from Questionnaire*

Sub-question: How are teachers reacting to outside pressure to change instruction?		
Questionnaire:	<i>How did you learn about Common Core writing standards?</i>	<i>Describe the most difficult part of transitioning from ADE ELA writing frameworks to Common Core writing standards?</i>
Isaac:	My principal mentioned the standards early in 2010-2011 school year; I received a copy from another teacher in the department in 2011; and I found and printed my own at the end of 2011 school year	I haven't really learned the ADE standards, so I'm not sure
Cara:	I actually learned about them by following the news and reading professional publications. I am a believer in national testing. I think that each state devising its own test and determining its own cut off scores is counterproductive and encourages subjective assessment of skill and proficiency. JMHHS English department has already begun teaching to the Common Core this year. We are attempting to fill in those areas that will be advanced over the next several years in the middle school and the elementary school. However, my partner and I felt that we were better off filling in gaps than we were waiting four years to begin teaching on a higher level and then expecting students to make the adjustments in a relatively short period of time.	Choosing new materials for examples. Allotting the proper amount of time for mastery. Keeping students from shutting down when they think things are getting much harder (because they are), Many students are resistant to change and to rigorous academic demands.

When I asked Isaac and Cara how they learned about the CCSS, each one indicated s/he learned about them from outside sources, but neither acknowledged that he or she had been told or instructed to learn about CCSS at this point. In fact, when discussing the early implementation, each teacher often referenced the other as a part of a “team” in the process. For example, in Cara’s response above, she stated “my partner and I felt . . .”; and, in an interview question, I asked Cara “When you agreed to implement [CCSS] this year, did administration ask you or did you go to them and say ‘let’s do this?’” Cara responded with “Isaac and I said ‘Let’s do it.’”

Table 14

*Comparison of Teachers' Responses to Subquestion a from Interviews*

Sub-question: How are teachers reacting to outside pressure to change instruction?			
Interview questions:	<i>Describe how you came to learn about the CCSS.</i>	<i>Talk about some of the obstacles to transitioning from ADE state writing standards to Common Core writing standards</i>	<i>Talk about others' reactions and expectations to early implementation of CCSS in your English classroom (e.g. other teachers, administrators, school board, and community)</i>
Isaac:	Teachers, principal, and letters from the superintendent saying 'this is the direction we're going to be heading	For me, probably just getting kids up to speed on where they need to be –especially if they come in behind grade level, getting them up to grade level would be the biggest obstacle. I don't think there's any—there's not any administrative or practical obstacles. Maybe just time to—number 2 on the list would be time to fully understand them and know what I have to do to communicate that to the kids. That's just time to not only familiarize myself with the new curriculum, but the new standards	Across the board, it seems like everyone is supportive. I have not heard any negative voices [saying] 'no, you need to wait and keep these Arkansas standards. It's either positive comments or no comments. That's all I've heard so far; not everyone has voiced an opinion. But the ones I hear are 'yeah, let's do it.' Yeah, either strong support or at least a show of support.
Cara:	A couple of years ago I heard about it. Well, first of all I heard about it on Public television. yeah, that they were looking at so many states going to a Common Core of curriculum, blah, blah, blah, then I kept hearing more about it and then they were going to have- - two of our teachers went to inservices somewhere about the Common Core. [Faculty], about four years ago, she said 'this is coming, whether anybody likes it or not.' so then I started looking at what's coming . . . and then, well, I'll be going [laughs]	It's going to be time. In making sure what was happening before – that we are <b>all</b> on the same page from <b>K</b> [heavy emphasis on bolded words] through 12 <sup>th</sup> . That's why the Common Core is so much smaller in terms of when it's written out; the benchmarks take pages and pages and pages for all the strands [sound gesture: plttttth]; Common Core takes two pages or four – whatever. You're not doing all that stuff all the time. It's assumed that you've done it. I'm thinking [laughing]'okaaaay.'	



### **Subquestion b.**

Why, if given the opportunity, did teachers voluntarily offer to implement CCSS before it was mandated?

The transition from ADE writing standards to Common Core writing standards set up Isaac's and Cara's perceptions of the Common Core writing standards. As mentioned earlier, both participants filtered their understandings of the Common Core writing standards through their perceptions of the gap created by differences between ADE SLEs and Common Core writing standards' expectations. Both participants viewed the early implementation as a means to "get ready" and to lessen the size of the gap in students' abilities. This directly addresses the second sub-question of research question one where participants offered information about why they were implementing Common Core writing standards before they were mandated. From the questionnaire (2011), Isaac stated that he "didn't see much point in waiting" to implement the Common Core writing standards and "being a new English teacher, I didn't want to learn a new curriculum, then do it all again in another couple of years." Isaac's response is linked to his perception of the CCSS themselves:

[O]ne is that the standards are easier to manage, clearer, uh, more rigorous, you know they're just better standards; and [Cara] she said, well, when the Arkansas state frameworks were around, she said she always used the NCTE standards anyway and then the Common Core Standards are a lot more closely aligned with the NCTE standards so she was pretty much already there; it just made more sense to get a head start on it, and they were more easily managed standards, clearer, better written, stronger standards; students seem to be needing more rigor. Uh, the ability coming up from lower grades

have been dropping over the years; we thought we might as well do it now. (Interview 2 with Isaac, 2011)

In the interviews, both teachers offered additional information about why they implemented CCSS earlier than required. Cara's response to the same sub-question from the questionnaire was more complex:

I will be retiring in 2014. I have been a member of this faculty since 1977. I wanted to make sure that everything was in line and ready to go when I left. Also, my teaching partner is planning to be in the district for some years to come. He wanted my input and I wanted his in developing a writing curriculum that everyone could live with and adjust to. This plan is keeping us both on track, but very busy. Our lesson plans are probably our biggest problem; I know that they are mine. I am constantly having to adjust the emphasis and the assignment. I think that the process will be a little less messy next year. (Interview with Cara, 2011)

Although Cara's question in the interview was not asked exactly the same as Isaac's, she did indicate that administration [principal] had talked with her about her willingness to go forward with early implementation of Common Core writing standards. "That's why I was willing, when they said 'would you be willing to try Common Core this year?' I said 'of course' because quite frankly, 'Yeah, of course, I'll do that'. The only thing is, the thing that's taken me the longest and the greatest amount of time is revamping lesson plans. . . [pause] that makes sense— That actually make sense" (Interview with Cara, 2011). Up until this point, Cara had indicated that early implementation of CCSS had been a decision that she and Isaac had made.

In an interview with the principal of JMHHS, Madelyn (pseudonym) explained that she had had the discussion of incoming CCSS with the entire high school faculty during the 2010-

2011 school year. She said that many of the newer teachers were afraid that it would cause them more work, but that the English teachers –Isaac and Cara—were frontrunners in wanting to bring them in with the 2011-2012 school year.

From questions asked about why early implementation of CCSS in one of the interviews, Isaac often deferred to Cara as his source of information and motivation for starting now. Cara and Isaac both stated that early implementation was their idea and administration was supportive of their wanting to do this two years early (Interview with Cara, December, 2011). Isaac stated that he “had received a copy from the other teacher [Cara]” and although he spent several weeks in the summer with Cara reading over the CCSS, Isaac stated in his interview that he “kind of recognized them, [but was] not deeply familiar with them.” He also added that he has spent a lot of time reading them and that they are “very general” (Interview, December, 2011). In order to gain some clarification, I asked Isaac, in a series of follow-up questions, what he meant by reading CCSS, but not being familiar with them. Isaac said that his lack of familiarity was in actually using them in the classroom (e-mail correspondence, February, 2012).

Both teachers were also asked on the questionnaire and in the interviews what steps they had taken to help them prepare to teach writing under the Common Core writing standards. Both teachers explained that once they decided to implement the CCSS early, they met at the school twice a week for several weeks and read over each CCSS – reading and writing.

When asked about major obstacles in transitioning from one set of standards to the other, neither teacher responded with the standards themselves as being an obstacle. Instead, both pointed out other core phenomenon which is discussed in later sections. While I asked the question in anticipation of their responses being focused on the standards themselves, their responses supported an earlier emerging theme centered on effects brought about by the

transition. Their descriptions of the Common Core writing standards included their perceptions of the mandated document as a whole and offers ideas as to why neither of the teachers consider the Common Core writing standards to be an obstacle in and of themselves. Again, they point out that the difficulty of implementation is the perceived gap in SLEs (see Table 13).

The consequence of the strategy (Table 12) – early implementation – was supported through the participants’ explanation and rationale of the process that each participant was taking for early implementation of Common Core writing standards. Isaac and Cara both indicated that the early implementation was easier when it was a choice, thus the risk of penalty through some type of formal assessment was not a problem because, as Cara had pointed out, ADE would not be testing students on Common Core writing standards for quite some time. This would give both teachers time to “realign” what they were teaching to meet Common Core writing standards (Interview with Cara, December, 2011). In addition, several of their comments in the interviews indicated that early implementation of Common Core writing standards also meant thinking about what to do next year. They both continually referenced their awareness of what they were doing and teaching according to the standards and continually weighed their current use of the standards against the need for more change in the curriculum to meet Common Core writing standards.

Isaac’s overall perception of early implementation of Common Core writing standards seemed to rest on that of “an ongoing kind of awareness” in which his goal is to continually adapt his lesson plans so that the “Common Core framework matches” (Interview, December, 2011):

[W]e’re already looking at next year—starting with, instead of grammar or parts of speech, sentence construction, blah, blah, blah – we’re going to start in 9<sup>th</sup> grade with

writing—how to compose a piece, and that’ll also carry over into 10<sup>th</sup> grade. They’re definitely going to be writing more based on the standards and that’s why we’re choosing to do that. I mean we’ve already realized that next year when we start the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, we don’t have time to teach parts of speech. We need to move it up, for one, increasing their non-fiction content. Especially in writing, um, you know the grammar, usage, that’s gone, that’s down here in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>. Because, you know in 9<sup>th</sup> grade we spend a lot of time learning about nouns and verbs, adjectives and parts of speech and that’s going away.

(Interview with Isaac, 2011)

Cara’s thoughts about next year’s preparation may be contributed to her years of experience in knowing what may be required as a part of full implementation of CCSS. As a part of “getting ready” Cara stated that the students would need new textbooks: “Why would we adopt [a textbook] on anything but Common Core?” (Interview, December, 2011). Like Isaac, Cara also talked about next year’s ninth graders and how an adjustment of the curriculum would be necessary. Her overall perception of the Common Core writing standards seemed to rest on her concept of the similarities between CCSS and NCTE standards. Because she asserts that she has taught using NCTE for years, her claim that they are similar to Common Core writing standards mean that her modifications of her curriculum will be minimal.

Cara: The transition [from] ADE ELA frameworks was relatively easy for me since I had been using the National Council of the Teacher’s of English standards since I started teaching. While the rubrics and educational language and jargon may have changed, the principles of good writing have not. It was relatively easy to learn the new language, but frustrating to have to realign everything. When it comes to writing frameworks and instructional expectations, I feel like they are constantly trying to reinvent the wheel. The

new Common Core standards align to NCTE. Great news for me since I can go back to what I was used to in terms of expectations. (Questionnaire, 2011)

While professional development is more strongly connected to other core phenomenon and will be discussed at length then, Cara did not attend any training nor did she receive any extra materials or information to help her prepare for Common Core writing standards. Her indifference – a consequence of the mandated CCSS-- towards the overall CCSS is based on her explanation and multiple comments regarding the CCSS as ‘more of the same, blah, blah, blah.’ She talks about the fact that the CCSS are coming and that she is interested in only seeing them introduced and helping her fellow English teacher be as successful as possible. The mandated, incoming CCSS have solidified her intent to retire, “and then, well, I’ll be going” (Interview, December, 2011).

Isaac has participated in one inservice provided by the ADE where he was given information about CCSS, but received no training. His perception is that he has much yet to do in really getting ready to use the Common Core writing standards in his classroom.

### **Research question 2.**

How are English teachers implementing the Common Core writing curriculum and does this differ from Arkansas writing frameworks with respect to methods of instruction, class preparation time, assignments, assessments, and pacing guides?

In the second research question, various components of the question are addressed in the discussions of the other four core phenomenon more completely. For example, the question asks about methods of instruction which will be answered in the section regarding teachers’ perceptions of pedagogy and writing curriculum, as well as other corresponding phenomenon. When addressing this research question, the data gathered from the study reports both the

similarities and differences in the two teachers' transition from ADE writing standards to Common Core writing standards. In this section, Isaac offers his understanding about how the future writing curriculum as one that will require "less reading and more writing; [and they are] definitely going to be writing more" (Interview 2 with Isaac, December, 2011) than what Arkansas state writing standards currently require. Isaac reiterates that some of the changes are his "looking at next year" and how he will start the 9<sup>th</sup> graders writing which will be in place of his grammar unit. Cara also iterates that Common Core writing standards will require more writing, but she points out that one of the major effects of writing under CCSS will be that CCSS will test students more carefully regarding their writing so "you're going to have to be writing on a much higher level. More and higher" (Interview 2 with Cara, December, 2011). Thus, Cara's perspective, similar to Isaac's, situates itself on what to do next year and what to be aware of for next year. This year, the first year of early implementation regarding the standards appears to be about the awareness of what will need to be done—next year.

### **Teacher Perceptions of Students**

#### **Research question 1.**

What trends appear in English teachers' perceptions of implementing the Common Core writing curriculum and how do these perceptions relate to the acceptance of the Common Core writing curriculum?

The second core phenomenon to emerge was the teachers' perceptions of students. The factors (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) were divided into two parts (Table 15). The first causal condition is the gap in student learning expectations and abilities that emerged from teachers' perceptions of transitioning to Common Core writing standards and became a lens for teachers' perceptions of students. The second causal condition that teachers expected students to know in

terms of basic knowledge skills and teachers’ perceptions of what they thought students are capable of learning. The actions that both teachers chose as a direct response to their perceptions of students were to adjust and/or lower the writing curriculum as well as their pedagogical strategies. The consequences or outcomes from adjusting and lowering the writing curriculum meant that both teachers had lower expectations in what students should know and in their abilities—what teachers believe they are capable of actually doing and learning. Thus, the gap that serves as a causal condition also becomes a consequence because the more the gap is used as a lens for perceptions of students’ abilities, the more that gap widens – becoming part of the consequence of its own condition.

Table 15

*Teachers’ Perceptions of Students*

Contextual & Intervening Conditions: <i>broad and specific situational factors that influence the strategies</i>	Causal Conditions: <i>what factors caused the core phenomenon</i>	Strategies: <i>actions taken in response to the core phenomenon</i>	Consequences: <i>outcomes from using the strategies</i>
<b>Teacher Perception of Students</b>	gap in SLEs & abilities	adjust/lower curriculum & pedagogy	expectations (what they should know)
	college bound v. vocation		abilities (what they are capable of doing or learning)

First, the context of Isaac’s and Cara’s perceptions of their students was situated in what they both perceived to be a gap in transitioning from the ADE writing frameworks to Common Core writing standards. Both teachers explained that the gap created in this transition translated into a gap in student learning expectations and abilities. For example, Common Core writing standards would require students to be familiar with “critical thinking and writing skills”



(Interview with Cara, December, 2011) that the Arkansas writing standards did not require them to know. Many of Isaac's perceptions of students' abilities were connected to his responses regarding the standards, but his word choices indicated that he was not as certain of his perception as, perhaps, his fellow English teacher. When asked about early implementation, Isaac connected his perception of the Common Core writing standards to his perception of students' expectations and abilities through 'rigor' by explaining that "they were more easily managed standards, clearer, better written, stronger standards; students seem to be needing more rigor. Uh, the ability coming up from lower grades have been dropping over the years"

(Interview, December, 2011). As support for Isaac's acceptance of the Common Core writing standards, his perception of students' lower abilities is transformed into the creation of a need of "something" to bring up the students' low abilities—a solution he finds by implementing CCSS:

[I]f anything it just showed the need for increased rigor across the board; yeah, I haven't focused on writing; I'm just thinking globally. Yeah, like where we are as a nation compared to the rest of the world; the dropping of – the lowering of ability I've seen in our own school; I'm like, yeah. We need to do something. (Interview, December, 2011)

He also reiterates his perception of students' low abilities when he explains that "just getting kids up to speed on where they need to be –especially if they come in behind grade level, getting them up to grade level" (Interview, December, 2011) as an obstacle to implementing Common Core writing standards into his classroom. When asked to clarify his perception about the gap he perceives in students' abilities and expectations, Isaac explained the gap as being two-fold:

[A]t least where our kids are in grade level ability [... and] just where they placed this skill and that skill—it seems like it's all been kind of pushed down. Here it's more on can a student write this type of piece, and like the mechanics, and spelling, and grammar

seems to be less emphasized – that’s the greatest gap.—just where our kids, developmentally, are. Uh, seems like the biggest gap. (Interview 2, December, 2011)

Isaac did not mention any perceptions of students on his questionnaire, but during several hours of observations of Isaac’s classes, I learned that although he had both college bound and vocational track classes, he did not differentiate his instruction based on his perceptions of students’ abilities. In fact, the classes were organized in a rather procedural setting. Each Monday, all students in grades 9 through 12 would copy vocabulary words, define them from the text and then a class discussion would commence to ensure that “all students are on the right page” (Observation, January, 2012). This meant that Isaac would go over the definitions with the classes, and the students would write down the “agreed upon, best” definition (2012). Each Wednesday, all students would turn in sentences using each of those words in a sentence. Once a week each class would be given one prompt to which s/he would have a week to respond in a journal. When asked in a follow-up question, how he differentiated between college bound and vocational tracks, Isaac’s response was more elusive in that he talked about skills that all students needed like “working with them to get that process” which he defined as clarity, word choice, and grammar (Interview, December, 2011). He added that “in this stage of my development [as an English teacher], we haven’t done much formal writing things” (2011) in any of his classes.

Each of Cara’s perceptions of students’ abilities and expectations followed on the heels of her responses to questions about the standards. As she explained several obstacles to transitioning to Common Core writing standards, Cara included in her response her perception of her students:

[T]he gaps are the result of trying to do too much too fast without letting the kid really understand something. And so, now when we're asking them to think critically with something that they were supposed to have learned in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, they still haven't learned it and they can't think with it. They can't use it as part of the critical thinking process because it's not there. I mean it's like asking them to use dividing fractions on a higher level mathematical problem and they don't know how to divide the fraction. In our case, they don't know how to organize the sentence structure so that their varied. That's gonna be the problem. There's the problem. (Interview, December, 2011)

Cara makes a point that not all students are college bound. She wants for the student who will be going to work, "to be able to write clear, concise expository and persuasive paragraphs and essays" (Interview, December, 2011) because, she says "they have to know, for their life, how to be informative and persuasive" (2011). Cara also points out that she has the lower ability students in her classes which prevents her from teaching on the same level as she might if they were more advanced, and capable:

Here was my problem, I have the lower end, he [Isaac] has the upper end so we're not dealing with apples and oranges here [laughs], no, we **are** dealing with apples and oranges and his, what he can do right at the beginning of the year, I said 'I can't do that. I'm going to have to back down on this and we're going to, I'm going to have to go back to some real concrete stuff.' Um, and he needs to go on. I, generally speaking, we used to teach *Huckleberry Finn* to all the kids in the ninth grade— I'm not going to teach it to this group that I have. *Huckleberry Finn* will be completely lost on them; I need something shorter; I need something less political, um [laughs] something that doesn't

require them to evaluate people's behavior based on, you know, they won't get it.

(Interview, December, 2011)

Cara's perception of her students' abilities and her perception of what Common Core writing standards will expect of students are less supportive of her acceptance of Common Core writing standards. Nonetheless, she claims that she prefers Common Core over the current state frameworks as discussed earlier, but she does not see how the Common Core writing standards will work as they are presented for each student.

On the questionnaire Cara was asked her overall opinion of Common Core writing standards as compared to ADE writing standards. She indicated several points that affect student learning expectations and she addressed her perceptions of students' abilities by providing examples of how transitioning to Common Core writing standards is leading to the perceived gap in SLEs to widen.

Consequently, it requires that students be given time to think and the tools/knowledge to think with. I am afraid that we are not preparing students for "thinking"; we are preparing them for "doing" and "producing". Common Core requires more synthesis and evaluation. Without a strong foundation, that type of thinking is impossible. I know that the middle school and the elementary will have to take far more time teaching English than they do now; this is necessitated by the number of skills that must be mastered before they can adequately respond to the high school Common Core curriculum. This may prove to be highly problematic. (Questionnaire, 2011)

During several observations, I was able to observe Cara's philosophy of teaching based on what she expected of her students. During one observation of her AP English class of seniors, her expectations were higher—requiring more synthesis and evaluation—in that she left some of

the content of her instruction for the students to work out as small groups and then as a class. In this one class I observed, students evaluated people's behaviors based on two essays written by the same author (Virginia Woolf). The class had a meaningful discussion in that several students realized some problematic issues with their writing and together with fellow students, figured out how to correct the problems and how to synthesize their thoughts in writing about the essays. Cara did not present a "top-down" type of instruction. Rather, she encouraged the students to move in the direction of discovery based on what they had read and what they had written.

By contrast, an observation of a ninth grade class that Cara considered to be "low-ability", vocational students, was a much different type of instruction. Students read aloud from a textbook – taking turns per paragraph. Some students were not required to read because it was too difficult for them to read aloud; others did not have a book so they sat quietly with their heads down. As the students read, Cara would explain a word or symbol or situation more clearly. Few students asked any questions, and when they did, the questions were knowledge based questions that I learned was to help them to pass a multiple choice quiz they would take at the end of the story.

The second context of Isaac's and Cara's perceptions of their students was also greatly influenced by their school's own tracking system of requiring all students to choose between the college bound curriculum and the vocational curriculum. Both teachers' perceptions of their students were in relation to the difference between what Arkansas writing standards has required of students as opposed to what Common Core writing standards will require students to already know as they enter each grade level. The gap that the teachers perceive is compounded by the college bound and vocational tracks in which each student chooses upon entering the ninth grade. The action the teachers choose in response to the perceived gap is to adjust the curriculum

which often means lowering expectations so that students can operate within their learning abilities (Interview with Cara, December, 2011). The consequence of this adjustment is a lowering of student learning expectations and a widening of the perceived gap which appears to create a cyclical perception of what students will be able to do in response to Common Core writing standards. The teachers' concerns lie in the reality that Common Core writing standards will require the same level of understanding and knowledge regardless of the track they are on. Cara explained her perception of this unequal requirement:

No, Common Core **does not** [emphasis Cara's] differentiate. I'm afraid of it; that's what I'm afraid of. It's nice to say that all of your kids should be here, but they're not going to ever be there. And I'd like to see them come up with a common practical core **and** a Common Core for college bound students. 'Here's a common practical core'; I'd love to see that and these kids are making a choice—maybe at 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> grade – 'yes, I'm going to be a plumber, that's what I want to do' ; It's like the vocational educational programs. Because when you look at these standards, let me give you a writing standard [pauses to look through CC standards] "write [inaudible] thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extending definitions, concrete details, quotations" and all that –my, my concrete kids have lots of trouble doing that. If I can get them to say, you know, if I can get them to give me two baseline examples of something. They always want to give me a generalization as an example. I mean, and that's so different from what my college bound kids can do. And the Common Core doesn't address the difference. It's 'all students will be able to do this'; and I think, 'No they won't. No they won't.' (2011)

## **Research question 2.**

How are English teachers implementing the Common Core writing curriculum and does this differ from Arkansas writing frameworks with respect to methods of instruction, class preparation time, assignments, assessments, and pacing guides?

In both situations, Isaac's and Cara's perception of students' expectations which they credited as coming from the standards and their perceptions of students' abilities which emerged as a response to the perceived gap between state and Common Core writing standards presented limited views of their students' abilities. Each of them has begun to unpack their writing curriculum as one that should be "revamped" for next year. Both teachers have become focused on the perceived gap and their implementation of Common Core writing curriculum is more in a state of 'pending the new year.'

The teachers' perceptions of students' expectations and abilities also have a relationship with the teachers' perceptions of the writing curriculum – as the secondary context for the gaps in students writing abilities – and a relationship with the teachers' perceptions of pedagogy – how they both have to adjust teaching to address the gaps in student learning expectations and abilities. Through examination of the teachers' perceptions of the standards and the students, Isaac has admitted that he has not "focused on writing" and basically, his lesson plans have not changed from last year when he was referencing ADE standards (Interview 2, December, 2011). Cara's implementation seems to be focused on "revamping the lesson plans", but her lessons – according to the dated data and handouts I acquired – have not changed from previous years either (Observations, January, 2012).

In relation to the teachers' perceptions of the standards and the trend that has emerged as a result of these perceptions seems to revolve around the awareness of where they are in relation

to the transitional gap. Isaac and Cara are having conversations about Common Core and about what they can and should do next year; thus, their conversations and references to ‘next year’ encapsulate their current perceptions of early implementation of Common Core writing standards.

### **Teacher Perceptions of Administration & Fellow Faculty**

#### **Research question 1.**

What trends appear in English teachers’ perceptions of implementing the Common Core writing curriculum and how do these perceptions relate to the acceptance of the Common Core writing curriculum?

The third core phenomenon to emerge was the teachers’ perceptions of administration and fellow faculty members. My decision for combining the teachers’ perceptions of administration – defined as principal, school board, and superintendent – with their perceptions of fellow faculty members was based on Isaac’s and Cara’s similar responses to the questionnaires and interview questions. Both teachers responded to various questions based on the current school culture in which they grouped administration with fellow teachers. Their responses, thus perspectives, appeared to be influenced greatly by the sociocultural theory based on the work of Vygotsky in which he believed “that parents, caregivers, peers, and the culture at large were responsible for the development of higher order functions” (Cherry, 2012, para. 2). Both Isaac’s and Cara’s perspectives were encapsulated by the social context in which they worked, and in Cara’s situation, one she had been actively involved with for more than 30 years. The teachers’ perspectives of the context of their school were also similar to Vygotsky’s work in that they “focused on the connections between people and the sociocultural context in which they act and interact in shared experiences” (Crawford, 1996, para. 5).



The administrative context of JMHHS was multifaceted. The principal had been serving in this capacity for only a year and a half and prior to that, she had not been a principal elsewhere. The district had just undergone a major turnover in their school board members which changed the vision and overall culture of the district from both teachers' perspectives. Then, as I was beginning my study, the superintendent decided to retire mid-year. Among all of that, the district was enduring some major financial struggles and setbacks, according to Cara. Within this culture, the themes that emerged began with teachers' perspectives about how they had been prepared through professional development or other means for early implementation of Common Core writing standards (Table 16).

Table 16

*Teachers' Perceptions of Administration & Fellow Faculty*

Contextual & Intervening Conditions: <i>broad and specific situational factors that influence the strategies</i>	Causal Conditions: <i>what factors caused the core phenomenon</i>	Strategies: <i>actions taken in response to the core phenomenon</i>	Consequences: <i>outcomes from using the strategies</i>
<b>Teacher Perception of Admin &amp; Fellow Faculty</b>	source of information	moral support	"supportive"
		training & P.D.	time to implement
	financial	improvise	insufficient
	Teaching experience	decision-maker	superiority

When asked about professional development and how the English department teachers had been told and prepared for implementing Common Core writing standards, neither gave much credence to their administration, but neither teacher portrayed administration negatively either. Both teachers seemed to expect or, "it was understood" that early implementation was

entirely up to them. In that sense, both teachers indicated that administration was quite supportive of their desire to want to implement CCSS. However, as mentioned earlier, the only training provided for the teachers was a fall leadership conference over CCSS in which only Isaac attended from the English department. The conference was informative, at best, but did not include any instructive measures nor did it provide any information for the teachers on how these standards would be implemented. Cara did not attend any training nor did she attend the conference. Her source of information was what she attained on her own. She shared her information with Isaac – who considered her a major source of information for himself. Their perspective of the administrative role in early implementation of the Common Core writing standards was that administration really had a limited role if they had one at all. In fact, outside of “understood” support, both teachers appeared to be on their own in the early implementation process. In the interview, Isaac explained how he came to know about the CCSS, professional development regarding Common Core writing standards, and administrative support all of which he stated in his questionnaire as well:

[How did you learn about CCSS?] Teachers, principal, and letters from the superintendent saying ‘this is the direction we’re going to be heading.

[Professional development?] They did send us to the AAEEA conference on the upcoming changes that dealt with Common Core—what is Common Core, how are you going to deal with it; with all sorts of little break-out sessions, so, in that two-day conference, uh, what’s the assessment going to look like. And some –I wouldn’t call it training—but discussion about how it’s going to affect us locally – during inservice, you know, we had an hour at inservice in October and then they gave me and one other teacher an hour for reporting back on how these things might change; I don’t remember if we had a session

back at the beginning of the year, but I know it's been ongoing talked about – maybe not so much formally, but informally a lot. So, what has the district provided? Inservice [of] sharing that information with others.

[Administrative Support?] There's not any administrative or practical obstacles; Across the board, it seems like everyone is supportive. I have not heard any negative voices [saying] 'no, you need to wait and keep these Arkansas standards. It's either positive comments or no comments. You know, there have been some personality conflicts, between teachers and administration; but as far as curriculum and teaching—total support. (Interview 2 with Isaac, 2011)

Isaac acknowledged that the strongest influence in his preparing to teach Common Core writing standards was “the other teacher in [his] department” [Cara] (2011). He explained that he relied on her for information and confirmation of the direction that they should go when implementing Common Core writing standards or writing instruction in general. Isaac's perception of Cara was that of an experienced, veteran teacher, but one who seemed to wield more power than was common for a classroom teacher. When examining the relationships among the teachers' perceptions of the core phenomenon, I found that Isaac's perception of Cara and her position as a veteran English teacher had a great impact on the strategies he used in his writing curriculum and in his own pedagogy in that he looked to her as a source of information and direction—both of which will be discussed further in the following sections. Isaac's perceptions of administration and fellow faculty members were determined by what he perceived as his source of information and his adherence to the teacher [Cara] with more experience. Both Cara and Isaac gained moral support from one another, and in some instances where Isaac

appeared to be a leader in the math department, he too, served as one who offered moral support for other teachers.

Cara: Isaac is really new to teaching English. He's a math person. Well, actually he was a speech and drama person, that's what he was first and foremost—And an English person. That was his major and then he had a math thing and they hired him as a math person; he was in there as math because everybody needed a math teacher but one came available. I said 'let that boy teach what he wants to teach. He wants to teach English; he doesn't want to teach math'. And I'm sure he'll be a good English teacher because that's, his love is literature and performance and it's not, it's not math; I mean, he likes it ok, but it's not his thing. (Interview, December 2011)

In neither of their responses, did Isaac or Cara indicate they sought out administrative personnel for moral support or in the decision making processes that they were facing during early implementation of the Common Core writing standards. Even as noted in the interview excerpt with Cara above, she seemed to have great influence in Isaac's being a part of the English department.

Cara's perception of administration is somewhat different from Isaac's in that her perception of her own knowledge and abilities –based on her years of experience—seems to allow her some room for discounting the current administration. She alludes to this perception in the interview more so than on the questionnaire. However, responses to the questions indicated the she did not receive professional development training and that she is constantly improvising or “revamping” ways to implement Common Core. The consequences of those strategies (Table 16) reveal a self-empowered superiority over administrative roles and recommendations. Cara does not view the administration as supportive in the same way that Isaac does. Her idea of

supportive is in their not interfering with her teaching the way she knows best. Isaac's idea of supportive administration is that they encourage him to implement Common Core and they will help with provisions if he asks. The fact that they both received little or no professional development before trying to implement Common Core writing standards would again authorize Cara and Isaac to capitalize on their own improvisations, thus becoming the ultimate decision-makers –reiterating a superior perspective over administrative roles. However, as Cara's responses indicate below, if administration had offered professional development (as they are planning to do beginning the summer of 2012), Cara had already decided that she would not need to attend any trainings because she will be retiring in a couple of years and she thinks the time and money would be wasted on her.

Cara: [W]e've had very little, you know, any kind of PD on this at all. I didn't go [to the AAEA conference] because Isaac is going to take over when I'm gone so I'm sending him to everything. It's stupid to send me to anything. [Laughs]. Well, it is; it's just gonna cost them money. They really need to identify who's going to be with Isaac and start sending them. I mean she [principal] said 'You have to go to literacy lab this summer.' I said 'That's insane! Why am I going to literacy lab now? I said, 'Send somebody to literacy lab who's going to be here for the next ten years.' I said, 'I already know what they do in literacy lab.' Yeah, lots of encouraging all kinds of reading. I said 'reading is a part of everything you do; and I'm totally on board with it and from what I've heard, it's a great little time away. But, you're wasting your money on me. (Interview, 2011)

[I]n a small school, I wouldn't hire anybody with less than five years experience. I mean, we've had to do that, but it's very difficult when you don't have a core of teachers to help the new teacher to take out a little at a time until they grow and learn to differentiate their

curriculum. It's very difficult to do because you can't mentor somebody 24/7 and that's what they need. They need time to grow and time to learn and small schools don't give it to them and then they just rip 'em a new one if they can't do it right away. (Interview 2 with Cara, 2011)

The reliance that each English teacher had on the other in implementing Common Core came about largely because they were not offered opportunities in training or formal discussion opportunities, etc. from administration and, therefore, they do not rely on those which have not been able to help them implement Common Core. Both were given the option to go ahead with CCSS, but administration did not offer any means of help outside of their dependence on one another. When I asked the teachers on the questionnaire to explain what kind of professional development they had regarding Common Core, Cara's response indicated her overall perception of administration and its role in the usefulness of their offered professional development opportunities in the past:

We have only had one PD session on the Common Core, and it was an overview with the accompanying reams of paper and acronyms. I would love to see someone take a unit designed for the Arkansas frameworks and realign it to fit Common Core. I want to see real assignments, lessons and assessments. Then, I want discussion, lots of discussion about how this differs and I want people who have taught writing successfully in a high school setting to conduct it. This is my "pie in the sky" PD. And, we would then have time to think about what was said, digest it, play with it and then come back to share again. We have some excellent PD, but we never have the time to think, align, or implement. Change takes more time than one lesson, one day, or one week. The stress

created by some of these changes is going to burn some good teachers out.

(Questionnaire, 2011)

In the interview with the principal, Madelyn stated that her role at this early stage was to be supportive and to help get the word out to teachers and parents about the CCSS. Similar to the position of the teachers, Madelyn's representation of administration seems to indicate that early implementation is awareness or education of CCSS and a beginning plan for how this awareness unfolds: "I have a leadership team that's working. I have a math, literacy, and social studies on the team. We're going to with our PLCs [Professional Learning Communities] next semester we're gonna start working with—math and science will work together and social studies and English teachers will work together" (Interview with Madelyn, 2011). Again, Madelyn did not explain what this team would be doing as they worked together other than really looking at the CCSS and what they might mean for teachers in a cross-curricular sense. However, when asked about her support of her teachers regarding any kind of resources, Madelyn said

[W]hatever they need. In fact, with Cara—of course this is for AP class—but, um, one thing I've tried to get away from is the actual text books. Um and get more of um, uh, oh, I'm drawing a blank, but ok . . . oh, it'll come to me. But, but I'm trying to get, whatever they need if, if , if they see something they can utilize in their classrooms for writing other than just, uh like Step Up to Writing I mean that's not effective for all students. If you have a student who can't do anything and you're 'ok here's the green and the yellow and you do this' but again, if you do that, you're getting pretty much the same. (Interview with Madelyn, 2011)

Madelyn's perspective of how CCSS will unfold in the English classroom over time as compared to how the ADE state frameworks had been implemented supported the context for which both

teachers based their perceptions. In her explanation of the how teachers will actually implement the CCSS is based on her understanding of how teachers adapted to using the Arkansas standards:

Ok, let's look at how our EOCs have been, and our benchmark exams have been and our grade 11 literacy exam. When we first began, back in what was it 1999, I think? Yeah, I think it was 1998. And everybody was 'Oh, we're not gonna be able to do well, our kids don't know' and then gradually, everyone started gearing their tests with multiple choice, constructive response, open response, whatever. Ok, and they started using that format and gradually using some released items and gradually the students were used to it and, you know, the scores shot up. Now, the teachers are saying 'they're watering down the test; they've done something to it because the scores are too high and the cut-off scores' or whatever, and so it's ridiculous. Ok, so the same thing is going to happen with the Common Core. In the beginning, students aren't going to be [long pause] familiar with it and it's going to be totally different for them. And the teachers are going to have to actually be doing what they say they're doing because they're going to have to have whatever activity it is that they're going to be grading that they have, what, a semester to work on that they'll submit; And then, of course the online assessment; but it'll be different for them. But the teachers are gradually going to hear their teaching style-- which they should have all along in my opinion—because instead of teaching to the test, uh, and I don't know that our teachers have done that so much . . . teach to the test here, so I think we're going to be in pretty good shape; but in five years, it's going to be like [snap fingers] second nature to them. They're gonna know what to do; they're going to be doing all of the assessments –whatever class assessment it is and they're going to be well



aware of it when school begins and ‘ok, we gotta get on this project’. And they’re going to be fine. I’m not worried. Not worried at all. (Interview with Madelyn, 2011)

Isaac’s and Cara’s acceptance of Common Core writing standards as related to administration and fellow faculty is supported by their perceptions that administration is optimistic and believes in each of the teacher’s abilities to make the transition to CCSS successful. Both teachers see the role of administration in early implementation as limited to verbal support, which the principal maintains with an overall positive attitude towards the early implementation process. The actual early implementation, however, falls to each teacher; thus, by their engaging the concept of awareness of what will need to be adjusted and changed allows both teachers time to implement the concept of change as well as time to implement to CCSS as a whole. As Cara indicated in the statement above, time to implement any type of change has been detrimental to its success. By embracing the early implementation of Common Core writing standards, they are giving themselves that time needed to make the transition to Common Core a success.

### **Research question 2.**

How are English teachers implementing the Common Core writing curriculum and does this differ from Arkansas writing frameworks with respect to methods of instruction, class preparation time, assignments, assessments, and pacing guides?

Isaac’s and Cara’s perceptions of their administration and fellow faculty members do not address how they are implementing the Common Core writing standards. There is no connection between their perceptions of administration and how they are implementing Common Core outside of the consequence of the teachers taking an authoritative role over the decision making processes regarding Common Core writing standards. I will address the second research question

more completely in the sections regarding teachers' perceptions of the writing curriculum and pedagogy.

### **Teacher Perceptions of the Writing Curriculum**

#### **Research questions 1 and 2.**

What trends appear in English teachers' perceptions of implementing the Common Core writing curriculum and how do these perceptions relate to the acceptance of the Common Core writing curriculum?

How are English teachers implementing the Common Core writing curriculum and does this differ from Arkansas writing frameworks with respect to methods of instruction, class preparation time, assignments, assessments, and pacing guides?

The fourth trend for discussion is the teachers' perception of their writing curriculum which emerged throughout the entire study. Because the questions and observations were centered on writing instruction in Common Core, the two teachers revealed three causal conditions through which they perceived in their own writing curriculum: (a) what to teach regarding writing content; (b) assessments of student writing; (c) and their experiences with writing instruction (Table 17).

Table 17

*Teachers' Perceptions of Writing Curriculum*

Contextual & Intervening Conditions: <i>broad and specific situational factors that influence the strategies</i>	Causal Conditions: <i>what factors caused the core phenomenon</i>	Strategies: <i>actions taken in response to the core phenomenon</i>	Consequences: <i>outcomes from using the strategies</i>
<b>Teacher Perception of [Writing] Curriculum</b>	Teaching experience	planning	insecure
		resources/ materials (texts, rubrics, technology)	total reliance on textbooks
	what to teach (Content)	prescriptive writing (study guides, vocab, grammar)	safe – (textbook “answers”) objective
		process writing – (“you need a plan”) all with a thesis (paragraphs/essays)	T- controlled (or authoritarian)
		Writing across the Curriculum	rationale; justification
		Writing to Learn	frustration
	assessments (includes grading/editing writing)	creative writing	proficiency
		test-prep (open- response)	measureable

When determining the teachers' perspectives on what writing content should be taught, each teacher had different ideas on what writing in the classroom looked like. Isaac's philosophy towards being a writing teacher meant that the writing instruction was “a large portion of the English curriculum [and] it's probably the area I'm least experienced with and still developing” (Interview, 2011). He maintained that in his “development” as a writing teacher he was having students to write in journals; but, his rationale for using the journals as “the bulk of the writing [. . . was to] just kind of see where their skills are and what I need to react to” (2011). Isaac said that his idea of teaching writing to his students was “a reactionary philosophy” (2011). As far as

what should actually be taught in the writing classroom, Isaac responded that he hasn't "really focused on writing" (2011) since college—several years ago.

In my masters program at Missouri, there were – you know I had to do some of the –well, it was a masters in English education, but due to my undergrad not having been in education, I had to take some basic education courses, but the teaching writing, um, there were a couple of classes that were sort of specific in focus like one was teaching writing as healing class which was really interesting – I mean like getting kids to write to deal with various traumas or even like not traumas but painful episodes in their lives. Another was teaching the writing of poetry, um, so, those were specific and a long time ago. Although for the first time next semester, we'll be writing poetry so I'll get to dig all that out. (Interview, 2011)

Isaac's sense of what should be taught in the writing classroom was loosely based on his experiences as a college student which Borg (2004) explains as similar to a phenomenon called "apprenticeship of observation" coined by Dan Lortie (1975).

Whereby student teachers arrive for their training courses having spent thousands of hours as schoolchildren observing and evaluating professionals in action [. . .] One of the consequences of this apprenticeship period is that, whereas people entering other professions are more likely to be aware of the limitation of their knowledge, [new] teachers may fail to realize that the aspects of teaching which they perceived as students represented only a partial view of the teacher's job (p. 274).

Borg goes on to explain that the way new teachers see others teaching provides them "with default options, a set of tried and tested strategies which they can revert to in time of indecision or uncertainty" (Tomlinson, 1999; cited by Borg, 2004, p. 274). In this respect, Isaac's learned

love of literature is his instruction by default which he also contributes to lack of experience; and when incorporating a writing lesson, he “digs out” his notes from college. He has yet to build his repertoire of writing content because as he points out, he hasn’t really given writing instruction much attention. When asked how he outline major steps in creating writing lessons, Isaac said that more than anything he needed support because he “didn’t know what to do, exactly” (Interview with Isaac, 2011).

I will usually just go to the framework or, you know, Common Core standard just to see what the overall objective is; then I would find what I’ve got in the material here, textbook, uh, [not clear] that can support that; and I search online for ideas or resources or whatever that would help get that objective taught. That would be the main thing to getting started. (Interview, 2011)

Beyond the standards, Isaac relies totally on the literature textbook and vocabulary exercises (each Monday).

In response to the research question, Isaac’s limited scope of content and teaching experience meant that he did not embrace nor look forward to the type of writing curriculum that he perceived would come with the Common Core writing standards. Under the ADE writing standards—although he called them “convoluted”—Isaac was comfortable “doing a grammar unit [ . . . ] every year” in all grades 9 – 12. He said that during his first year and a half as a high school English teacher, he used a grammar book for each grade in addition to the literature text. When asked his thoughts about fully implementing Common Core writing standards he said,

It’s intimidating just because I’m going to have to, you know, for the third year in a row, learn how to do something new--learn something, or teach something new, I guess. But at the same time, I know it’s necessary and I need to do it. Yeah, it doesn’t make much

sense in this day and age to spend so much time on literature analysis when, you know, they need different skills these days. It makes sense; I'm on board; so, I can adapt.

(Interview, 2011)

Isaac's understanding of what should be taught in the writing classroom is broader than were his actions taken in response to his perception of the writing curriculum (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), in the classroom this year. His willingness to accept the Common Core writing curriculum was that he could, futuristically, adapt. During the study, however, the overall early implementation of Common Core writing standards included an "awareness anyway, amongst all the fields and disciplines to get writing increased" (Interview, 2011). Isaac's predominate classroom curriculum is literature study and having the students to respond to their reading on text-book generated study guides:

I mean they do write—we complete—if we're reading short stories, long fiction, or non-fiction pieces, there's always a study guide thing. It's not original kind of writing; if we're talking about writing, writing, they should be writing, you know, seven days a week. There's always some element of putting pencil to paper. (Interview, 2011)

Isaac's actions or strategies filtered through his perception of what to teach were mostly prescriptive writing assignments (i.e. study guides, vocabulary exercises, grammar, etc.). His resources were solid and as dependable as his prescriptive means for his writing curriculum. The consequences left him with a safe-haven for a tried and true curriculum (Lortie, 1975; Tomlinson, 1999) as well as a total reliance on textbooks born of insecurities and frustrations with his own inexperience in knowing what to teach (Tomlinson, 1999).

After three weeks of observations, I had seen no evidence that Isaac was actually using the Common Core writing standards in any of his classes although he still referenced their use on

his lesson plan documents in place of ADE standards. There were no references to Common Core writing standards either in the lessons or in the conversations. So, after watching one particular discussion about a scene from *Julius Caesar*, I asked Isaac if he would consider creating a writing assignment based on that particular lecture using only Common Core writing standards so that I might observe how he works with the CCSS. He eagerly agreed and had a full week's plan by the next day. After the second day of the writing lesson, Isaac realized that students were confused and he was quickly becoming frustrated, so he changed from one Common Core writing standard to another. I observed during these four days and noted that Isaac seemed to become overwhelmed when students questioned him on what they were supposed to do and how the writing was supposed to turn out. He would often respond "I don't know yet. Let me think about it and I'll let you know tomorrow." When the next day came, Isaac had a revised writing agenda, but it was quickly abated when the barrage of student questions began again. Two days later, he informed me that he was abandoning the writing lesson altogether. When I asked about why he thought the lesson using the Common Core writing standards did not work, he asked if he could write a reflection which would allow him time to think more about what happened. His perception of the writing lesson encapsulates his overall experience with early implementation of the Common Core writing standards:

After the first day, I realized that my choice of standard did NOT meet what I was trying to do. Or else my goal evolved after the first day, I'm not sure which. So I chose a standard more in line with what the teaching goal was: CC Writing Standard #4 (gr. 9-10). *Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to the task, purpose, and audience* [italics his]. I was much happier with that objective. It made sense to me, and I felt I could better develop a way to

evaluate the written pieces with those goals in mind. Is the writing clear and coherent? Is it developed, organized and written in the appropriate style? Is the style appropriate to the task, purpose, and audience? They even had to identify their audience as part of the ‘speech.’ In reading the student responses, it became clear this was a much bigger project than I had expected. As a result, I had the students stop at the rough draft phase, and graded the assignment as their weekly journal writing. It was ultimately evaluated not on whether or not the Common Core Standard was met, but rather by the length of the piece and a general sense of whether or not they wrote convincingly about their topic.

In general, I was not really satisfied with my ability to understand what the standard wanted me to teach. I felt that what I thought I was doing, what the kids were writing, and what I was reading from them were not approaching the objectives of the standard. I felt a lot of frustration and anger in the process because I was unmoored and floating, making things up on the fly. That’s not to say it was a total failure. I think with some time and experience, I will have a better idea of how to achieve these goals, and I have an idea of what the standards look like and sound like, and a destination to aim for. The process has started. (Written reflection via e-mail, February, 2012)

Cara’s perceptions of writing curriculum differ greatly from Isaac’s. Her perception of being a writing teacher is explained through “all of [her] experience” (Interview, 2011). Where Isaac’s perspective of being a writing teacher was related to the curriculum, Cara’s philosophy in being writing teacher meant that all students must be able to write and express clear thoughts whether they are college bound or not; and, she addresses Common Core’s change in writing terminology as mostly insignificant.



All students [must] be able to write clear, concise expository paragraphs and essays and persuasive paragraphs and essays as essential; but to me, it's most important that [students] can write and if [Common Core] wants to call it informative writing, that's fine, but I too often think of process writing as – they get process writing in there and I don't see – informative writing can be informative and not be process oriented. And so, I think you have to teach the different kinds of informative writing, so—especially for those kids who are not college bound. Uh, but being able to develop an argument and being able to express ideas that are your own and other people's in a way that informs is really imperative for all writers. (Interview, 2011)

Cara's approach to what should be taught as a part of her writing curriculum was predominately focused on process writing components (Goldstein & Carr, 1996) that centered on writing as “always having a plan”, thus a thesis statement— “process approach with composition” (Kolln & Hancock, 2005, p. 11; Nagin, 2003; Roen, Groggin, & Clary-Lemon, 2008) similar to the dominate teaching approach of the 1970s (see Chapter 2). Having taught process writing using ADE writing standards and then transitioning to Common Core writing standards, Cara explained that the transition to Common Core did not require her to change her writing curriculum.

It probably isn't [different from ADE frameworks . . .] because the same things are covered, you have to cover this, you have to cover forms of support, you have to cover that, you have – well, it's all there already. So, it was, it was just a matter of my going back in my lessons – finding the places in the frameworks that were fitting into the lessons rather than the other way around. (Interview, 2011)

Because Cara's perception of the writing curriculum meant that she would have to make minimal adjustments in transitioning to Common Core writing standards, her acceptance was much more favorable. The strategies (Table 17) Cara used in response to her perception of the writing curriculum also related strongly to her perceptions of pedagogy (Table 18). She often chose the writing content (i.e. argumentative and persuasive writing techniques) because she considered herself to be good at both. She pointed out that she had been a strong and successful debater during her high school and college years and, therefore, determined that students would benefit from knowing how to write argumentatively and persuasively based on how one debates. By contrast, Cara considered herself "too much of a debater to be a creative writer" (Interview, 2011) and consequently, did not teach or support the need for creative writing skills. "I learned every bit of organizational skill and support that I know from debating; from debating, that's where I learned it" (2011). Cara attributed her yearlong writing curriculum to a "going back to a three to six week unit on just writing" (Observation, January 13, 2012). She explained that in this three to six week unit students would learn the different forms of writing – including various types of essays. This unit included comparison/contrast essays, process writing with some descriptive writing, cause and effect essays; but "writing with a thesis –that's what it is – writing always with a thesis, whether it's descriptive, narrative, it always has a thesis –that's the core" (Interview, 2011). From this unit, she would instruct students to return to this unit to find the appropriate "form" in which they would have to write in response to the given assignment.

For example, when we, uh, when we were doing American lit with the revolution, I made them sell an idea and they had to use a persuasive form; they had to make a claim, they had to support it, they had to use language that, uh, that I taught them – language of emotion as opposed to the language of logic, you know, and that kind of stuff, so . . . I

make reference to ‘take out your writing notes’ this is where we are here, this is what you’re supposed to be doing – claim, fact, or fallacy—so that I put the writing unit in by itself, then I can just make reference back to the writing unit. (Interview, 2011)

In addition to students learning the various types of thesis-oriented writing assignments, Cara incorporated her perception of students’ writing frequency to help them to learn to write better. In her curriculum, similar to Isaac’s, she said that she used journals, vocabulary exercises, and occasional “bell-ringer” writing. Although I did not observe students writing in journals during the four weeks of observations, I did observe students working on various vocabulary worksheets and activities throughout the week. The vocabulary assignments were based on a program called *Wordly Wise* in which students were given worksheets with a list of 20 words each Monday. Each Wednesday, students would have to submit a list of sentences using those words, and then on Fridays, students would take a quiz generated from the *Wordly Wise* books which were made of matching, multiple choice, true/false, and fill-in-the-blanks. In a brief interview following several days of observations (Observation, January 13, 2012), Cara stated that she had used this program for over 15 years and that she believed these vocabulary activities contributed greatly to students writing frequency as well as the content of their writing abilities. “It’s practice, they just need practice. They need to write and write and write and write until – you know, it’s practice on all of it” (Interview 2, 2011). Cara indicated that when writing is taught solely using Common Core writing standards, she said that more writing would be expected and “nobody has the time to read that much writing. I don’t. I’m not sure how, what’s going to happen when we come down to who, who’s going to grade all of this” (2011).

A strong filter or causal condition for Cara’s perspective on the writing curriculum was the assessment involved in grading and editing student writing. The strategies that she

implemented in response to the amount of grading involved all forms of the writing curriculum (Table 17). The consequences of the strategies that Cara used in response to the core phenomenon was the frustration and, sometimes justification, for the frequency of assigning writing based on the amount of grading that goes with what students are writing. Often, this determined how much writing students would actually be assigned. Other strategies that relate to pedagogy are discussed in the next section, but one related strategy that often helps teachers alleviate some of the pressures of grading writing is peer revision processes. However, Cara explained that that strategy had neither worked to help her writing curriculum nor did she see how that could help students in their writing.

I don't have a lot of luck with peer reviewing. I don't know if you did. I've had next to no luck with it. They don't know what to say to one another; they don't have the terminology at their disposal to say; they know there's something wrong with it, but they don't know what it is. So, they can't identify it. And then they get so they don't want to be offensive. They're not honest with each other and so often, they don't see the error. So, I've had very little success with that and as a consequence, I end up doing –because I don't trust it – I end up doing all the grading myself. (Interview, 2011)

In her discussion of the amount of grading involved in her writing curriculum, Cara pointed out that in implementing the Common Core writing standards, more problems would occur because if they're [students] really ready to write when they come to me—if Common Core says they're ready to write—and I'm going 'who is it that's going to be grading those? If you've got 135 kids a day and they all come to you ready to write—what do you do with that?' (Interview, 2011)

She explained, too, that she has attempted to cut back on the amount of grading she does, but has been mostly unsuccessful even using the ADE writing standards. She perceives that with Common Core writing standards requiring students to write more frequently, the frustrations and problems involving grading the writing will be greatly compounded.

Every night, there's not a night I'm not reading; so I'm not sure I'd know what—I've tried to cut back, but at the same time they need to write. I just, I think the Common Core may have to, you may have to have more teachers or hire readers or something. If you're really going to have them writing like this—like they suggest in the Common Core—you've got to have good editors, you've got have good readers who know what error is—can spot it and correct it without rewriting for the kid and that's really hard to do. I have **real** [emphasis hers] problems doing that; I mean I have to force myself not to rewrite sentences and say [verbal gesture] mmmm. Yeah, and identify what's wrong with it because they still don't know how to change it. (Interview, 2011)

When I asked Cara to compare her rationale for having students “write to learn” versus “learning to write” she divided the two concepts by students’ grade level: “First, the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade it's learning to write and then by my 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders, it's more writing to learn” (Interview, 2012). Her 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders learn to write about what they are reading (American literature and her AP class), whereas, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders were not ready to use writing as a learning tool until they learned how to write; hence, one of the components of her writing curriculum is based upon her perception of students’ abilities. During several observations of the AP literature class, I noted that they often read a short piece of fiction and then would respond to some aspect of the piece. These responses, however, were completely controlled by practice AP exam questions and prompts. Students were writing to learn about what they had read, but all

writing was assessed based on AP exam standards. During observations of the 11<sup>th</sup> grade American literature class (college bound), I noted that their writing was in response to various short stories they had read. Mostly, their writing had been worksheets, but during the observations, they reviewed for a test that would require them to answer open-ended questions about their readings.

As a guide to what Cara used as part of her writing curriculum, she explained that textbooks were “going the way of everything else –online” (Interview, 2011). Because of financial reasons, the school would not be investing in new textbooks until Common Core had produced some recommendations for adopting texts that would correlate to their standards. During the four weeks of observations I noted that all of Cara’s classes used the literature textbooks with the exception of the AP literature English class of 12<sup>th</sup> graders. The writing for these classes—during observations—was limited to reading quizzes. One class of 11<sup>th</sup> graders on the vocational track, however, was assigned to read *The Outsiders*. As the students read through the book, they were given “packets” which consisted of study guides. Cara considered this to be their “writing about their reading” (Observation, 2012). From the copies of the packets I had been given, I noted that each packet had approximately 18 questions that asked them to answer basic knowledge and identity questions about each chapter. None of the questions were open-ended.

While Isaac had little experience with the testing under ADE standards, Cara had both experience and thoughts on how testing may affect the transitions to Common Core writing standards. Her perception of this transition correlated to her perception of the gap between student abilities and SLEs by transition to Common Core writing standards. She anticipated that

the scores from the first Common Core writing assessment would be represent the gap in what students had been able to learn during that transition.

It's ridiculous; it's, and so, the Common Core is like this and what's gonna happen is they're gonna give the test and the test scores are going to be in the toilet including the best schools in this country—unless, so, well you look at the whole school, not just the elite in the school; you look at the whole school and nobody gets to touch it and nobody gets to manufacture any ways to cheat the statistics, they're gonna say 'Oh my god, what are we doing? Look at all these kids who can't do this.' (Interview, 2011)

Based on Cara's perceptions of students' abilities, the standards, and the writing curriculum, she taught the kinds of writing she had been teaching for many years—"a set of tried and tested strategies" (Borg, 2004, p. 274; Tomlinson, 1999). She addressed the change in terminology, but asserted that there was no immense revision needed in her writing curriculum. She had become a writing teacher by "writing debate briefs" and by "surrounding [herself] with literature that reflects excellent writing" (Interview, 2011). Cara's overall writing curriculum was a collection of experiences that she had built over a long career of teaching, and implementing Common Core writing standards would not alter the essence of that curriculum because "you learned how to do what you were doing and I thought, 'I'm already doing that'" (Interview, 2011).

## **Teacher Perceptions of Pedagogy**

### **Research question 1 and 2.**

What trends appear in English teachers' perceptions of implementing the Common Core writing curriculum and how do these perceptions relate to the acceptance of the Common Core writing curriculum?

How are English teachers implementing the Common Core writing curriculum and does this differ from Arkansas writing frameworks with respect to methods of instruction, class preparation time, assignments, assessments, and pacing guides?

The final trend of teachers' perceptions of pedagogy emerged from responses to the second research question regarding how implementing a writing curriculum based on the Common Core writing standards might differ with respect to methods of instruction. Once the teachers assumed a consensus about what should be taught in the writing classroom, they had to decide how that writing content would be delivered or taught (Table 18). The factors through which both teachers' perceptions of writing pedagogy were derived include how to teach writing, how often writing should be taught, and how the teaching experience affects writing instruction.



Table 18

*Teachers' Perceptions of Pedagogy*

Contextual & Intervening Conditions: <i>broad and specific situational factors that influence the strategies</i>	Causal Conditions: <i>what factors caused the core phenomenon</i>	Strategies: <i>actions taken in response to the core phenomenon</i>	Consequences: <i>outcomes from using the strategies</i>
<b>Teacher Perception of Pedagogy</b>	How to teach	absence of writing instruction	insecure
		“evolving” “developing”	anxious
		professional training	overwhelmed
		vary writing instruction (differentiation)	proficiency
	Frequency (how often writing should be taught/instructed) — collapse?	write	indifference
		model	skeptical
		use students' interests	assertive
	Teaching experience	build rapport	confident
		strategies to accommodate CCWS: Socratic method,	trust
		strategies to accommodate CCWS: Socratic method,	teach to strengths
			engaged

For Isaac, the skills required for teaching English differed from his few years of experience in teaching math. His perception of successful writing instruction was based on what he thought it should look like and he says that his fellow English teacher, Cara, is and has been his greatest influence in how to teach writing. During the study, Isaac agreed to teach a week long writing assignment based on Common Core writing standards as discussed in the previous section. Outside of that, he said he had not taught students to write using either ADE standards or Common Core writing standards. His experience with writing in college did not impact him in such a way as to influence his perception of the importance of writing, and therefore, he limited

writing instruction to reading response assignments and vocabulary exercises. “[My writing] hasn’t been very influential at all. So far, I haven’t talked about my own writing experiences with them; so far, I’ve not really introduced myself to them as a writer” (Interview, 2011).

Isaac’s philosophy towards writing instruction is strongly related to his philosophy and perceptions towards his writing curriculum. Although he supported that writing is a “large portion of the English curriculum” (Interview, 2011), he also reiterated that his brief experience in teaching English meant that his teaching writing was limited to a “reactionary philosophy; it’s evolving; it’s developing and definitely reacting to what I see the students’ weaknesses are” (2011). He also explained that because of the long gap between having taken any writing courses in college and actually teaching English courses he felt completely unprepared to teach writing.

A lot of things got left behind [...] I don’t feel well-prepared to teach writing –just mainly not enough practice; you know my training was a long time ago. I’ve forgotten a lot. I feel like I’m doing it on the fly a lot. So even just teaching writing itself as far as a unit on that is something I’m trying to build in. And the current curriculum is mainly reading comprehension, literature analysis; but as far as a unit on just writing – that’s something that needs to be worked in – especially with that emphasis on the Common Core. So no, I don’t feel very well prepared. (Interview, 2011)

When asked about the difference between learning to write and writing to learn, Isaac explained that learning to write is the most influential aspect of his writing pedagogy. His rationale is that students need to know how to write correctly and formally “I’m interested in mastery of formal writing, effective communication –especially for students going on to college. They will need it professionally too” (Interview, 2011). Isaac also supports formal and correct means of writing in preparation of state mandated testing. As a writing teacher, he reacts to

students' errors whether they are in the sentences they write for vocabulary words or in the journal entries they complete once a week—a concept that Isaac understands is not supported in CCSS.

I've not been actively writing to learn. I actually took a class in grad school on writing to learn, years ago. Unfortunately, there was a long gap between my finishing my masters in English and actually teaching English; but yeah, we've definitely been making a school wide effort to increase the amount of writing [. . .] every year there's always a thing on cross-curricular getting literacy increased across the board and making sure that in math, we're making a focus on writing especially in preparation for open response questions on exams and stuff like that. But, uh, from my own class as for learning to write, uh, that's probably more heavily attacked than writing to learn. Um, and pieces I get back – especially those I get back on vocabulary—and weekly they turn in sentences, so with the vocabulary word they have to create their own original sentence. And there is some mechanics and punctuation – those things get attention as well as how to use the words; you know, like they tried to use verbose as a verb: 'she verbosed me very bad' yesterday. So, I showed them how to use it as a noun instead of a verb. So, their learning to write is definitely the primary method, I guess. (Interview, 2011)

The strategies that emerged as part of what Isaac used in response to his perception of writing pedagogy involve an absence of writing instruction as either a process or product. His pedagogy, although “evolving and developing” (Interview, 2011), does not support that of a constructivist teacher as discussed in the literature review (Newell, 2006). Isaac's perception of writing pedagogy and practice supports the National Writing Commission's (2003) assertion that students have mastered a basic level of writing, but “few can create prose that is ‘precise,

engaging, and coherent”” (p. 16) – a concept that supports writing to learn (Newell, 2006). Isaac continues to teach writing on a basic level, but perhaps based on lack of teaching experience and training, he avoids writing instruction that would teach students to think and write critically – a requirement of Common Core writing standards—because he does not know how to teach critical writing skills. His absence of writing instruction as a tool for learning emerged as a reoccurring strategy in his perception of pedagogy – this was the action he chose in response to how to teach writing. Isaac’s perception of his writing pedagogy is correlated to his perception of his writing curriculum in that he taught using prescriptive means (i.e. study guides, vocabulary exercises, etc.) which led to safe and measurable consequences.

Consequences of these strategies leave Isaac insecure in his teaching which, as pointed out in his perception of writing curriculum, allows Isaac to be totally dependent on textbooks for methods of instruction as well as content and that, in turn, gives him a sense of proficiency. During the one week he attempted the writing assignment based on Common Core writing standards, he became so overwhelmed that he abandoned the lesson only to return to the study guides – a safe and easily measured method. In a final follow-up interview, I asked Isaac about his final thoughts and opinions towards early implementation of the Common Core writing standards (including his struggle with the writing lesson) and he replied with a metaphor the seems to sum up his insecurities and skepticism towards what he thinks this early implementation process has required him to do.

I feel like someone has given me a photograph of a cake and said, ‘Make me one of these.’ And I have no recipe, just a kitchen full of raw ingredients, in jars with no labels.

Okay, maybe I took the analogy too far. I know what the end result is supposed to be, and I have some, maybe all, of the ingredients (if I can find them), but I don't really feel like I

know how to put it all together to make the cake. I've made them before using a recipe, and I can wing it, but it's still challenging. It would be a lot easier if someone handed me a recipe and I didn't have to write one myself. (Interview via e-mail, 2012)

Isaac also added that the early implementation of Common Core writing standards has taught him that he is “woefully under-prepared. That our current school curriculum does not focus on teaching writing. There’s a lot of reading and grammar and literature analysis, but not a lot of writing” (Interview via e-mail, 2012).

For Cara, assurance and strength in her perception of writing pedagogy seem to rise from having had more than 30 years teaching experience. Her perception of successful writing instruction was based on what she had experienced as a writing teacher – as well as how she had learned to write (Lortie, 1975; cited by Borg, 2004, p. 274). Cara, like Isaac, had not received any formal training or professional development in how to teach writing, although Cara did say that throughout her career she had attended many inservices that said students should be writing more, but those PDs did not come with instructions for how to teach and grade more students writing.

I learned to do it [teach writing] by watching other people do it and I learned to do it by people kind of doing it to me. So, I guess I’m hoping they’ll learn to do it that way—by people doing it for them, teaching them in the same way—Because I’ve never had anybody continually showing me how to change my own sentences. They changed them. They said ‘Look, this is better this way;’ And I say ‘Oh yeah, it is.’ The other thing that taught me how to structure sentences correctly is reading all the time. If you read a lot, you’ll write better. And that is probably one of the pluses of Common Core is it encourages close reading—very close reading. (Interview, 2011)

The strategies that Cara used most often emerged as her perception of writing pedagogy (Table 18). However, Cara's perception of writing pedagogy was also related to her perception of the Common Core writing standards, students' abilities and expectations, administration, and her writing curriculum. While the five core phenomenon seemed to be disconnected at times for Isaac, the opposite seemed true for Cara. Her years of experience seemed to have woven her perceptions of all five of these phenomena together in some form (causal conditions, strategies, or consequences). Her perceptions, thus relationships, among these phenomenon reveal that she has acquired a sense of self-empowerment that allows her to be assertive and confident in making choices regarding how to teach writing as well as how and when to implement Common Core writing standards.

Cara's perception of pedagogy related to both the Common Core writing standards and the perceived gap created by the transition from ADE writing standards in that her instructional methods were often in response to the standards and the students' abilities. This led to her teaching writing based on what she perceived students' abilities and expectations to be which she also said was beginning to come from that gap. Cara explained early on that she and Isaac were already working through an awareness of how they would try to close the gap so that the mandated CCSS would not be so difficult for students or for Isaac when "takes over when [she's] gone" (Interview with Cara, 2011). The closest relationship among Cara's perceptions of the five core phenomenon is between the writing curriculum and pedagogy. Cara's curriculum and pedagogy often related so closely that it was difficult to discern whether she was teaching writing based on the content or the instruction. For example, Cara talked about modeling as a strategy for teaching the writing process which she said must always be controlled by a thesis.

She favored this method for teaching writing and would often model and lecture regardless of the writing content.

That's another thing that I would assume it [CCSS] talks about, yeah it does; but modeling is something I do all the time. Give me a thesis, I model the essay. You give me the thesis, I'll write your essay on the board. And they go 'how can you do that?'

Because I was a debater, because I can outline anything. Modeling is the approach I use most often. Using the students' ideas, I model how they should put the essay together.

'Ok, you tell me what it is you're wanting to say about this; ok, how are you going to support that? Give me an example of that.' Then I start using the examples to fill in a baseline outline. (Interview, 2011)

In addition to Cara's modeling as a dominant teaching strategy, she iterated that part of her teaching methods included using students' interests when modeling so they would be engaged in the writing instruction. Part of her strategy in engaging students was to find various models of good writing that might appeal to all of the students on some level.

I will try non-fictional material and textbooks looking for essays and examples of essays; I look for— anytime I'm reading any magazine—I look for 'wow, that's a good essay' [I] yank it out of the magazine; because they can see good—I want them to see as much good writing as they can on a huge number of topics—not just stuff that interests me. Like, um, if there's a real cool essay or something on science—and if, if they don't— it can just be a generalized article. I mean sometimes there's fascinating stuff in some of those magazines—*Psychology Today*—'oops, good one'; the brain: the teenager. Then I have them read the article— 'ok, this is persuasive, this is expository, this is—you know, so that we're using—I try to do that. The textbook often provides you with some excellent

examples of essays and short pieces that – the textbook is a good place to start.

(Interview, 2011)

In Cara's perception of writing pedagogy, building a rapport with students emerged as a strategy that she strongly supported as crucial in teaching students to write. She explained that if they trusted her to helping them to become better writers and know she had their best interest in mind, they would be more open to criticism – a corrective approach to writing instruction – without giving up all together. She considered both modeling according to students' interests and building rapport as most effective methods for teaching writing whether it was using ADE writing standards or Common Core writing standards. Having the years of teaching experience helped Cara feel prepared to teach writing using Common Core writing standards by maintaining that these strategies were as essential to students learning to write as the standards were to guiding the instruction. She also reiterates her process for marking students' writing and she establishes the context for doing so without shutting them down. At this point Cara seems to tie her overall concept of writing pedagogy together.

I told the kids, I said my best writing teacher was hell-on-wheels on our writing and he pulled no punches. Your ego meant nothing to him. And, I said most of us, I think this is important as a writing teacher—you have to establish a rapport with your students that allows you to trample on their ego because you are going to walk on their ego. But they won't see it as an affront to who they are; I talk about that to them all the time. 'This isn't personal, but your writing is.' And, when I tell you that something sounds wrong, you're going to take it personally whether you want to or not, but you just have to believe me – that I am trying to act in your best interest. Establishing a rapport with them is incredibly important for teachers of writing. But it was the rapport and I've noticed that as long as



they believe I'm working in their best interest, I can tell them anything. I can say 'no, this is really not where we need to go on this. It sounds like you don't understand the material.' And they don't get really offended. But you have to be careful because writing is personal. As much as we don't want it to be, it's personal. (Interview, 2011)

The relationships among Cara's perceptions of the five core phenomenon certainly strengthened her acceptance of the Common Core writing curriculum –based largely on her years of experience, but also on her perception that her pedagogical approach to writing would not require too much modification, if any. “Why wait to reinvent the wheel [. . .] at least we can get ready” (Interview, 2011). She explained that her teaching experiences had prepared her for whatever may come and, implementing CCSS was not a big deal. “When I look at the, when I look at the Common Core standards, I think ‘Ok, I can do that.’ I have the background, I have the materials necessary, I have a majority of information in my head that I can lecture with without having to restructure my whole life as far as lecturing is concerned” (Interview, 2011).

As one of the consequences of the strategies in how to teach writing, indifference, similar to the indifference Cara exhibited in response to the standards, emerged as a result of Cara's noted time frame that she would not be teaching much longer; so the concerns did not cause her to be overwhelmed or anxious as, perhaps, they did Isaac. Her approach to teaching writing whether it be the content or the instructional methods was that she knew how to do what she had been doing for many years and early implementation of Common Core writing standards would not cause too much change in her curriculum or practices because from her perception, they were not that different. Build rapport, appeal to student interest, model great writing of various levels and types and students will learn to write. Also, in regards to the gap created by the transition, Cara did see a difference in student learning expectations and abilities but for no longer than she

would continue to be teaching, an immediate change to address that gap could be done by using the experiences and methods she already had.

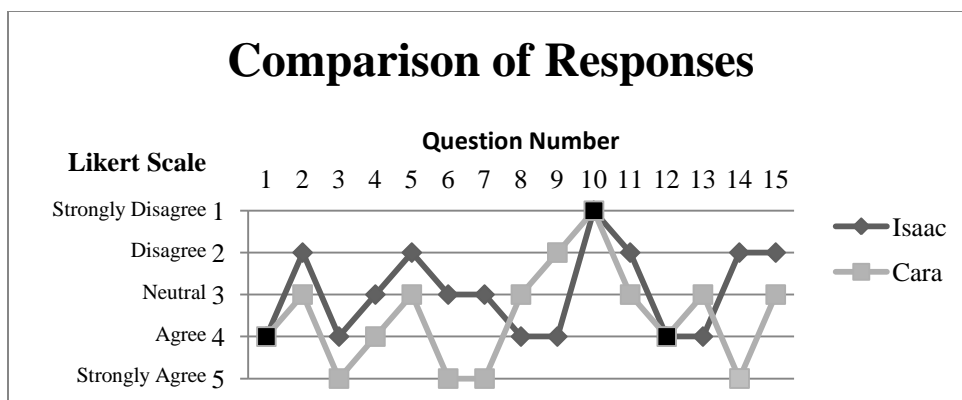
This perspective as explained in the literature review for teacher change reveals that Cara's and Isaac's willingness to modify their teaching in response to the transition to CCSS was greatly contingent on many extraneous variables especially school culture (Oberg, 2003) which is unpacked in the teachers' perceptions of the five core phenomenon. Administration had not provided professional development opportunities or provisions for early implementation of CCSS and administration seemed to inadvertently consent to Cara being the decision-maker in the early implementation process which may have allowed her to take on an administrative role regarding the English department.

### **Questionnaire**

Most of the questions from the questionnaire (Appendix C) were addressed at each point they coincided with the interview questions. However, two sets of questions from the questionnaire were asked separately and differently and they reveal relevant data related to the findings from the study.

#### **Likert scale comparisons.**

Part III on the questionnaire presented a set of 15 statements in which both teachers were asked to reply using a Likert scale of 1 to 5. I compared both teachers' responses to each of the questions by inserting their responses into a line graph (Figure 3).



*Figure 3* Comparison of Teachers' Responses to Likert Scale Questions

In comparing Isaac's and Cara's responses, they were together on only three of the statements: 1, 10, and 12. In statement 1, they agreed that both consider themselves writers. During the first interview with Isaac, his reflection of himself as writer was based on his personal interaction with writing and because he had not been writing, he thought of himself as a "failed writer. I used to, you know, I've been writing sporadically for a long time. So, um, the last couple of years especially, I have not been writing at all, but I still think of myself as a writer" (Interview with Isaac, 2011). His personal perception of himself as a failed writer is perhaps why he did not talk about his own writing experiences with his students.

In the first interview with Cara, when asked if she personally considered herself a writer, her reflection of herself as a writer was based on an academic perspective. She specified the kind of writer she considered herself to be and where Isaac felt negatively towards himself as a writer, Cara stated that she was a good writer. "I'm a good argumentative writer because I was a debater. I, I'm a good persuasive writer. If I had to write articles that took a particular point of view, yes, I can do that. Am I a creative writer? No" (Interview with Cara, 2011). In comparing the two responses, both considered themselves writers, but when writing was a personal perception it was negative and when it was an academic perception, the experience was positive.

The next statement where Isaac's and Cara's responses were together was #10. In this statement both of the teachers strongly disagreed to the statement that either of them followed a packaged writing program (i.e. Step Up to Writing, McRat, etc.) for the majority of their writing instruction. In both of the teachers' perceptions of their writing curriculum and writing pedagogy, the content of writing was embedded in relation to the daily reading assignments. For Isaac, his curriculum was what he referred to as "reactionary". All of his classes focused on text-book instruction—reading and reading responses—that came from not having enough experience to know what else to do. Cara, too, relied heavily on text books and lessons (for AP) that she had used over the span of many years. Her curriculum had been refined over time and her years spent refining the curriculum may make it more difficult to alter it – although both strongly believe they are not using a packaged program.

The third statement, 12, where Isaac and Cara were together is when they agreed that they use a rubric when grading writing. However, during the interview when I asked Isaac if he used a rubric, he said "no, not so far" (Interview with Isaac, 2011). He did add that they would be doing projects at the end of reading *Romeo and Juliet* and he thought he may need to create one for those. Cara, however, indicated in her interview that while rubrics served a purpose in the writing curriculum, they were only useful if she was assessing for something specific.

Otherwise, the rubric confines students to a type of writing that lacks style or passion.

I have a rubric that's subject specific. 'Here's the assignment, I'm looking to include the following things – looking to see if they're there.' Are there three forms of support; are there three sentences of support or three forms of support under each main support. Are there, you know, those types of things; so I use that kind of writing assessment. If I'm looking for impact, though, not just 'have you done the wonderful' – I always think about

my kids though, straight A students very often are really good at this—‘if you follow the rubric’ – they got everything on the rubric, but there’s no passion in the writing, and the style – the style is very succinct—and they use words well and all that but it **lacks** [emphasis hers] style—you know it just, there’s just something about it where you go ‘Where’s the “umpf” in this writing?’ and that, you can’t use a rubric for that. (Interview with Cara, 2011)

Mostly, Isaac’s and Cara’s responses to the 15 statements went in the same general direction although their responses differed in a level or a scale. However, on statement #14, they were farther apart on their responses than in any other statement. This statement indicated that the teacher had his/her students write something in English language arts class at least three days a week. Isaac disagreed while Cara strongly agreed. In support of both teachers’ perceptions of frequency in writing pedagogy, Isaac’s response was true to his perception and to his curriculum. He did not teach writing although he indicated that it was a major piece in the Common Core writing standards—something he was aware would have to change in response to CCSS. Cara’s perception of writing pedagogy meant that she taught writing often through various methods and because of she had done this for so long, she would, perhaps, need to adjust the sequencing of the writing lessons and revamping of some lesson plans.

I thought ‘here’s my lesson, which framework does it cover; does it make sense that it’s there? The only, sequencing, I changed the sequencing of some of the stuff. [...] These are the things that have to be done, and this is the order in which I’m doing them because it makes the most sense to me and it seems to work for the kids. ‘This didn’t work with the kids, so I changed it;’ I mean it’s just kind of like a matter of –I’ve done this long enough that I can see that some stuff works and some stuff doesn’t. So, I’m gonna make a

plan for you that says ‘ok, in the first nine weeks, this is what you’re going to do; these are the Common Core standards that it’s meeting; do this first, then this, and this, and this’; then you decide what day of the week you’re doing it. (Interview with Cara, 2011)

In an overall comparison, it appears that Isaac is less positive in his responses than Cara with the exception of statements 8, 9, and 13. On statement 8, Isaac agreed that he does not grade everything his students write whereas Cara remained neutral. In the interview with Isaac, he said that he does not always grade everything. Cara, on the other hand, indicated that she graded so much and so often that she was trying to find ways to reduce that. On statement 9, the gap was a little wider when Isaac agreed he did not teach writing like he should because of all the grading. Cara disagreed to that statement. Interviews and observations of Cara’s classroom support that she did not appear to be hindered by the amount of grading – although she had drawn attention to her perception of what Common Core writing standards would require in terms of grading writing.

Every night, there’s not a night I’m not reading; so I’m not sure I’d know what-- I’ve tried to cut back, but at the same time they need to write. I just, I think the Common Core may have to, you may have to have more teachers or hire readers or something. If you’re really going to have them writing like this—like they suggest in the Common Core.

(Interview with Cara, 2011)

On statement 13, Isaac agreed that students need to write in all of their classes in order to become good writers. Isaac indicated during the interviews that he was aware of the school’s effort to get writing increased across all of the classes. He, too, had incorporated open response items in his previous math classes as a response to writing across the curriculum. Cara remained neutral on this statement, and in the interview her perception towards writing across the

curriculum was two-fold. First, she felt that students wrote frequently in her English classes; second, she explained that the other classes have concepts they must learn and cannot stop to write.

They should be writing something in my class everyday--if it's nothing more than a sentence response to a question I'm asking. Something should be written every day [...] I think they should be writing [in other classes], but I do recognize that they do have – like math and science – they do have concept stuff that they have to cover and I realize that they can't stop and write all the time; but, almost all the teachers here are on board with the open response – at least one to two open responses on every test regardless of subject matter including art. (Interview with Cara, 2011)

As most of Isaac's responses were less positive than Cara's, Cara's responded "strongly agree" on four different statements—each finding strength in experience. Cara has taught long enough to observe teachers teach writing, to use various strategies to teach writing, to be comfortable with her ability to teach writing and with having students write more frequently. Isaac's limited experience led him to choose responses that indicated his inexperience with those given tasks and strategies. Moreover, 6 of Cara's 15 responses were neutral; this appeared to be a conservative response because she addressed each of these topics in the interviews at some point. On each of the topics (i.e. professional development, grading, writing frequency, etc.), Cara explained each of these in her perceptions of the five core phenomenon. When the statements were referencing the teachers' thoughts on what should be done in the writing classroom, Isaac tended to agree; but when the statements referenced strategies that were actually being used in the classroom, he tended to more neutral or to disagree – once again as a support for his lack of

experience and training in teaching writing either using the ADE writing standards or the Common Core writing standards.

### **Teacher ranking instruction.**

On Part IV of the questionnaire, the teachers were asked to rank five items related to their English classrooms and to rank them in the order of importance to him or her with 1 being most important and 5 being least important. Next, using the same topics, teachers were asked to indicate what percentage of time he or she spends on each of these during a school year. The teachers also had the option of writing in a topic not listed.

Table 19

#### *Isaac's Perception via Ranking of His Curriculum*

Isaac's perception of his curriculum		
	Teacher Ranking Instruction Most Important to Least	Percentage of time spent on each during a school year
1	Writing Instruction	10 %
2	Literature Study	40 %
3	Standardized Test Prep	0 %
4	Students' Independent Reading time (during class)	10 %
5	Grammar Instruction	20 %
6	Other – (written in) vocabulary enrichment	20 %

In Isaac's perception and analysis of what he sees as most important as compared with how he distributes his teaching time (Table 19), the most significant theme to emerge was writing instruction. Similar to his responses to the Likert Scale items, Isaac felt unprepared to teach what he knew to be important. Almost half of the school year is given to literature study that limits writing to study guides. More time is spent on an isolated grammar unit than on writing, although Isaac indicates it is least important of the given items.



Table 20

*Cara's Perception via Ranking of Her Curriculum*

Cara's perception of her curriculum	
Teacher Ranking Instruction Most Important to Least	Percentage of time spent on each during a school year
1 Writing Instruction	30 %
2 Literature Study	30 %
3 Standardized Test Prep	15 %
4 Students' Independent Reading time (during class)	15 %
5 Grammar Instruction	10 %
6 Other --none	N/A

In Cara's perception and analysis of what she sees as most important as compared with how she distributes her teaching time (Table 20), there were no significant surprises that had not been noted in the interviews or observations. Cara basically views reading and writing as equal in terms of time spent on both. She applies both standardized testing preparation and AP literature exam preparation as part of her instructional time.

### Summary

During the interviews, and similar to the findings presented, Isaac believed that implementing Common Core writing standards would eventually lead to changes in what he taught as well as how he taught it. During this year of early implementation, he became starkly aware of what will be required of him in teaching writing. His perceptions of the five core phenomenon indicate, overall, that he is not prepared to meet what he considers to be the rigorous demands that will be placed on him and his students through CCSS. He expects to make changes in regards to those expectations – beginning next year.

Cara's perceptions of the five core phenomenon also indicate that she has become keenly aware of the rigorous demands that will be placed on teachers and students through a fully

implemented CCSS. Because she has taught for some length of time, however, she believes that she will be able to meet those demands with less anxiety than Isaac. She expects to continue leading her department and making relevant decisions in building the Common Core writing curriculum. She expects the overall changes to her classroom curriculum to be minimal.

Chapter Four explains, in narrative form, the study of two teachers' perspectives in implementing the Common Core writing standards earlier than is required by the state of Arkansas. The findings from this study were presented as each of the core phenomenon related to each research questions that had guided the study. As is often used in qualitative studies, I used quotes from the two teacher participants to personalize the information and to illustrate the individuality and complexity of each case study (Creswell, 2009). Using the teachers' words to illustrate their perceptions of their teaching, their experiences, and their school culture showed how early implementation of Common Core writing standards was different for each teacher. I attempted to use the teachers' comments as they related to the overall understanding of the study from their perspectives. The five core phenomenon represented the open and axial coding from which the narrative was told.

## **CHAPTER 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Implications**

### **Summary of the Study**

Teachers have been asked to change or modify their writing curriculum and/or their pedagogy based on standards more than once in the last twenty years. Arkansas, for example, has required teachers follow a set of language arts frameworks since 1996 – a direct response to NCLB. In 2003, those standards were revised and in 2006, the ELA frameworks for grades 9-12 were revised, yet again (ADE ELA, 2010). Arkansas has now adopted the Common Core State Standards. These new standards will become mandatory for grades 9-12 in 2013. However, several schools are attempting to implement the CCSS early. Part of their (Isaac and Cara) desire to implement CCSS early comes from their dislike of the current ADE ELA frameworks, and part of it comes from their wanting to have a stronger grasp on using the CCSS before they are mandated. This multi-case study focused on two teachers who opted to begin the process of early implementation of CCSS. This study also focused on the writing aspect of implementing CCSS.

The purpose of this study was to explore trends in teachers' perceptions of implementing the Common Core writing standards and to examine the extent to which teachers' perceptions affect the levels of implementation of those standards. I interviewed and observed these two teachers to learn how they would implement the Common Core writing standards and to learn what extraneous factors might help or hinder their implementation of the standards within their classrooms and school. By considering the school culture or context where changes would be made, I gained insight into how the teachers' themselves perceived the changes in response to the Common Core writing standards. I also learned what effect this had on their accepting the standards as well as their perceptions of the implied and embedded changes that would come with implementing the Common Core writing standards (Oberg, 2003; Stolp, 1994).

When the questionnaires, interviews, and four weeks of observations with the two English teachers were completed, I gathered and sorted the data, typed transcripts, and then I worked through open and axial coding processes. When I was almost finished with the open coding, I began to research ways that I might make the axial coding process more significant and revealing. I found a conceptual framework by Strauss and Corbin (1990) which are usually associated with grounded theory (Creswell, 2007). However, I manipulated these four categories into a meaningful chart (Appendix L) that provided me with a combined narrative of both teachers' perspectives and experiences with Common Core writing standards as they unfolded in the study. Based on the conceptual framework created by these four categories and by collapsing and combining my open codes into this format, five core phenomena emerged as the essence of these teachers' perceptions in implementing the Common Core writing standards.

This multi-case study took place at one rural high school, J. M. Hendricks High School in two separate classrooms where each teacher taught grades 9 – 12. The questionnaire introduced the teachers to the concepts that I would be addressing in the interviews in relation to the Common Core writing standards; the interview guides were used to encourage the two teachers to expound upon and discuss subjects and ideas related to their implementing Common Core writing standards. In an attempt to increase internal validity and to provide “as complete a picture as possible of phenomena” (Casey & Murphy, 2009, p. 42), I used a triangulation of data from interviews, observations, and questionnaires (Denzin, 1989; Jick, 1979). I also gathered data from various school documents to help increase the richness of the study (Berg, 2009). The results are presented in the words and vignettes of the two teachers and descriptions and demographics are provided to give a rich presentation of the data using the teachers' perspectives.

## Findings

Based on the two research questions and the two sub-questions, the data revealed five core phenomena: (a) Teachers' perspectives of standards; (b) Teachers' perspectives of students; (c) Teachers' perspectives of administration and fellow faculty; (d) Teachers' perspectives of writing curriculum; and (e) Teachers' perspectives of writing pedagogy. I define these categories as the teacher's way of thinking about people and objects (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 64). The categories identified around the core phenomenon emerged from axial coding, and are specifically explained using categorical headings, thus the conceptual framework for sorting and reporting the data: causal conditions regarding what factors caused the core phenomenon; strategies regarding actions taken in response to the core phenomenon; and consequences regarding the outcomes from using the strategies (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 64).

### Research question 1.

What trends appear in English teachers' perceptions of implementing the Common Core writing curriculum and how do these perceptions relate to the acceptance of the Common Core writing curriculum?

Both teachers were willing to accept the Common Core writing curriculum because, ultimately, implementing CCSS two years early was their idea. Leech and Fulton (2008) explain that when teachers have some buy in or influence in decisions or required changes, the changes are often more readily received. Their perceptions of the standards were pivotal in their perceptions of the other core phenomenon. The trend that appeared through their perceptions of the core phenomena was the relationship that each of their perceptions had on other core phenomena. In other words, their perceptions were complex and often dictated their perception

of another phenomenon. One perception of both teachers, for example, was the perceived gap that was being created by the transition from ADE writing standards to Common Core writing standards. This perception had a direct impact on how each of the teachers perceived students' expectations and abilities. In turn, their perceptions of writing curriculum and pedagogy were then affected, and often determined, by their perceptions on students' abilities and expectations.

Another trend to emerge that promoted the two teachers' acceptance of Common Core writing standards was an awareness of what they and their students would be facing as a result of this gap. Cara pointed out that teachers and students are too often given mandates or new programs and are not given time to think about how to implement the changes in an effective way (Interview with Cara, 2011). By implementing the CCSS early, the teachers give themselves and their school more time to think about, contemplate, and plan how they need to address the incoming standards before they are actually mandated. However, early implementation, as noted in Chapter Four, did not mean an immediate replacement of ADE standards with CCSS.

The differences in Isaac's and Cara's acceptance of the Common Core writing standards were deeply rooted in their years of experience. As a newer teacher with less than two years experience, Isaac became aware of how his own writing curriculum would have to be completely modified to meet the requirements of Common Core writing standards. He explained that during his year and half of teaching high school English, he had concentrated his teaching on literature and did not teach writing—outside of an isolated grammar unit—because he did not know what to teach or how. As part of the early implementation process, Isaac began reading through the Common Core standards and, after attending an information seminar regarding CCSS, Isaac realized that he will have to begin to make changes regarding his curriculum and his writing pedagogy. His ultimate awakening came as he attempted to teach a lesson relying fully on

Common Core writing standards. He realized that his lack of experience and training coupled with a clearer perspective of the Common Core writing standards' stringent requirements would help him in figuring out his next steps in implementing the standards. His newfound knowledge and awareness helped his acceptance of the CCSS. He acknowledges, nonetheless, that the transition to teach writing will be the greatest change he feels he will need to make.

As the veteran teacher with more than 30 years teaching experience, Cara is also aware of her writing curriculum which she feels has been tried and modified as the needs of students and standards have led. However, Cara's acceptance of the incoming Common Core writing standards is more deeply rooted in the concept that the changes she will have to make will be minimal. She is already beginning a revision of the current writing curriculum to correlate to Common Core writing standards, but she explains that this revision is more of a rearranging of the order in which writing and reading elements will be taught. As Cara anticipates retirement in the next few years, her acceptance of the CCSS is also based on her wanting to support and to help her fellow English teacher to take over her position as lead teacher when working with the standards.

**Subquestion a.**

How are teachers reacting to outside pressure to change instruction?

Because early implementation was a voluntary move on behalf of the English department and the high school, Isaac and Cara have not been pressured to change their instruction. The fact that they are willing to begin this process early is encouraging to the administration and to the school board. The principal, Madelyn, explained that getting the information about the incoming CCSS to the community and to the parents will be much more relevant because the two English teachers will be discussing the CCSS from an informed and practiced perspective.

**Subquestions b.**

Why, if given the opportunity, did teachers voluntarily offer to implement CCSS before it was mandated?

Collectively, as mentioned earlier, part of the reason Isaac and Cara agreed to implement CCSS early was so they would have more time to learn about and work with the Common Core standards before they were actually mandated in 2013. Individually, Isaac's and Cara's reasons for early implementation differ based on the influence of their years of experience. Isaac had just begun working under ADE frameworks when he learned about the CCSS. Because he knew they would be mandated soon, he did not want to learn one set of standards just to discard them and learn a new set within a year or two. When confronted with the opportunity to begin learning CCSS at the beginning of his career, he readily agreed. He also had read through the CCSS with Cara, and together, they decided the new standards were going to be easier to manage even though they also considered them to be more rigorous than the ADE ELA frameworks.

Cara's years of experience influenced her desire to implement the standards early because she anticipated retiring and wanted to make sure she left Isaac in a good position to lead the English department using the new standards. Also, Cara had asserted that she had actually been using the NCTE standards for teaching English and transitioning to CCSS would not be that much different from what she had been doing for years. She was familiar with the ADE standards, but did not use them to guide her teaching curriculum. Believing that the CCSS were similar to NCTE standards, Cara agreed that transitioning to Common Core writing standards would be fairly simple and, thus, would allow more time to make the transition more seamlessly.



**Research question 2.**

How are English teachers implementing the Common Core writing curriculum and does this differ from Arkansas writing frameworks with respect to methods of instruction, class preparation time, assignments, assessments, and pacing guides?

Isaac's and Cara's perspectives of several of the core phenomena influenced how they actually considered themselves to be implementing the Common Core writing curriculum. Each of the teachers' perspectives towards their methods of instruction, class preparation (lesson plans), and assessments were not immediately changed to reveal either a fully or partially implemented Common Core curriculum. In fact, there appears to be no concrete evidence of how either of the teachers actually implemented the Common Core writing curriculum. Isaac taught a one week lesson, but abandoned it to return to a full literature curriculum; Cara claimed to be revising the sequencing of her writing lessons (I attempted to get a copy several times, but I was unsuccessful) in order to better meet CCSS, but she continued teaching writing as she had been in years past. The changes to either of the English teachers' writing curriculums regarding early implementation of Common Core writing standards appeared to be abstract. Isaac became aware of the changes that he said would be forthcoming to his own curriculum. He also explained how the gap created from Common Core writing standards' rigorous student expectations would require students to write more. Cara explained that she became more aware of the difference between what students were currently expected to do and what Common Core writing standards would expect them to be able to do.

**Summary.**

The axial code or core phenomenon of teachers' perceptions of writing curriculum and writing pedagogy emerged as a direct result of the questions designed in the interview for this purpose. Following the interview, the four weeks of observations, and many conversations, Isaac had become aware of his writing inexperience, anxieties, and overwhelming sense of what he will need to do to meet the writing demands of Common Core writing standards. He became more open about not teaching writing outside of study guides and vocabulary exercises. Although his methods of instruction did not change this year, he acknowledges that in order to utilize the Common Core writing standards, he will have change his writing curriculum by teaching writing and, consequently, his writing pedagogy will change as well. At this point, his awareness of what he is lacking in writing instruction is noted in the consequences of not teaching writing which are embedded in his perceptions of his writing curriculum and his writing pedagogy. His strategy for teaching writing was to avoid teaching writing. The consequences of that strategy compounded his feelings of insecurity, anxiety, being overwhelmed, and frustrated. By openly discussing and discovering his inept writing curriculum, Isaac was quite confident in knowing what he had to do to continue to prepare for next year. Similarly, Cara, too, had become aware of what was lacking in preparing for Common Core writing standards. However, unlike Isaac, her focus was on the standards themselves and her perception of the gap in students' abilities and expectations caused by transition to CCSS. Based on her years of teaching writing, she was comfortable with her writing curriculum and writing pedagogy, but she was still not sure how she would or should modify her curriculum in order to address the gap. The consequences of her perception of the gap in student learning expectations and their abilities—relating to several core phenomena—appeared as an oxymoron: indifferent, yet authoritative and assertive.

In the literature review, I noted that Fullan (2001) points out that in order for teachers to become a willing part of change, or change agents, there must be those who are willing to create a culture of change. Thus, understanding a school culture, as Isaac and Cara have attempted to do, promotes their willingness to accept change to Common Core writing standards. Stolp (1994) also supports that the values, beliefs, traditions, and myths are often understood by teachers in varying degrees and that this, in itself, “shape what [teachers] think and how they act” (qtd. in Oberg, 2003, p. 23). Thus, Isaac’s and Cara’s perception of early implementation of the Common Core writing standards, and specifically the gap in student learning expectations, present concepts for which they find different levels of concern. Their perceptions of all of the core phenomena are representations of their thinking, their actions, and their concerns. Fullan (2002) suggests that these core phenomena—which might be viewed as barriers—be seen “as a potential positive force” (p. 6) and he asserts that in order for teachers to become a successful part of the culture of change, administration and leaders must find ways to address teachers’ perceptions and concerns. He also states that creating a culture of change means “producing the capacity to seek, critically assess, and selectively incorporate new ideas and practices” (p. 7).

Consequently, both teachers’ perspectives of the Common Core writing curriculum is situated on their analysis of present concepts and on ideas of how those concepts, or core phenomena, will need to be adjusted or changed to meet the demands of Common Core writing standards. These teachers took on the responsibility of beginning to tackle CCSS while little was yet known about the standards. Even as I write this, I am aware of numerous opportunities for training teachers in how to implement CCSS that were not available when this study first began. These two teachers agreed to implement of a set of standards without training, without resources, and without fully understanding what that meant. In wrestling out abstract ideas, the

implementation of CCSS became an unpacking of concepts and an analysis of standards, administration, students, writing curriculum, and writing pedagogy in order to comprehend and approach a concrete implementation.

### **Implications**

The findings from this study were concentrated on two classrooms with two English teachers of varying experiences and varying ideals. Within the context of the small, rural school, the perspectives and experiences of the teachers are unique to them. However, while one teacher has little experience in his position and one teacher maintains a great wealth of experience in her position, other teachers who may find themselves in comparable situations or as a part of a small, rural school culture may be able to use some of the findings to help them with addressing changes related to CCSS. That said, as was noted in Chapter One, the greatest limitation to the study may be generalizability because of the small, unique sample and demographic location that may not adequately represent the experiences of other secondary English teachers (Morse, 2010; Sandelowski, 1995). However, Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out that even though a study might not be generalizable, the study may still assist others who are trying to find evidences in similar contexts as they conduct their own research. Fullan (2001) suggests that individualized case studies are often complex and cannot be generalized in the same ways regarding change:

Complexities can be unlocked and even understood but rarely controlled. The need to have different strategies for different circumstances explains why we cannot generalize from case studies of success. To recommend employing different leadership strategies that simultaneously and sequentially combine different elements seems like complicated advice, but developing this deeper feel for the change process by accumulating insights

and wisdom across situations and time may turn out to be the most practical thing we can do—more practical than the best step-by-step models. (Fullan, 2001, p. 7)

The study of the two teachers who chose to implement CCSS earlier than was required indicates several opportunities for moving a school culture forward with a positive and assertive change. According to Cara, there was no risk for early implementation because the CCSS would not be tested as were ADE ELA standards. From this study, there are no concrete, step-by-step evidences that overt changes have been made to either of the teachers' writing curriculums or writing pedagogies. However, the narrative provided through interviews and observations indicate that changes are beginning albeit abstract. That is, both teachers are having conversations, creating plans, talking, evaluating, asking questions, wondering, weighing experience against expectations, and all in respect to Common Core writing standards. The study corroborates findings and recommendations by Fullan et al. (2005) as explained in Chapter Two where they list 8 concepts that would most assuredly initiate a positive change in an educational setting. The questions and probing were not limited to the standards; rather, their means of early implementation is an open examination of the relationship of the standards to other core phenomena – all of which are affected by CCSS. Moreover, according to Fullan (2002), “The change required is in the culture of what people value and how they work together to accomplish it. There is no step-by-step shortcut to transformation; it involves the hard day-to-day work of reculturing” (p. 6). When teachers have the opportunity to really examine the factors and the variables involved in changing, their perception of the change is much more favorable.

This study investigated teachers' perceptions of what it means to implement Common Core writing standards early and discovered that their perceptions of various concepts affect the success of the implementation. The study also found, by Isaac's assertion, that he was not

prepared to teach writing and the revelation of Common Core writing standards' requirements left him feeling completely under-prepared. Cara, however, had enough experience in teaching that her concern was with the standards themselves—not the pedagogy or the writing curriculum. Nonetheless, they both feel successful in their attempt to implement the CCSS because there was no risk, and because they feel that they have discovered the beginnings of how they will work to make teaching writing under CCSS a success.

By approaching the Common Core writing standards with the idea of completing a needs assessment, the school or the educator might provide information regarding the relationships among standards, students, administration, writing curriculum, and writing pedagogy in order to discover where they are and where they need to be to meet the requirements of the standards. This study is significant to policy makers, educators, and teachers who may be at a loss as to how to begin to examine the CCSS. Teachers must have the training and, as research has shown (Applebee & Langer, 2002; 1974), they must have ongoing professional development opportunities that are meaningful to how they learn and teach. Isaac and Cara had received no preparation for implementing Common Core writing standards. Isaac is planning on attending upcoming inservices regarding CCSS, but Cara is not. What kind of training and professional development can administrators provide that would also engage and encourage veteran teachers to continue their learning? Why are teachers so disgruntled with current means of professional development? In Chapter Four, I quoted a metaphor that Isaac provided in his response to how changes are often handed down, literally, to teachers. Because his metaphor sets the theme for the findings, I include it again as part of the implication of how to manage these curricular mandates:

I feel like someone has given me a photograph of a cake and said, ‘Make me one of these.’ And I have no recipe, just a kitchen full of raw ingredients, in jars with no labels [ . . . ] I know what the end result is supposed to be, and I have some, maybe all, of the ingredients (if I can find them), but I don't really feel like I know how to put it all together to make the cake. I've made them before using a recipe, and I can wing it, but it's still challenging. It would be a lot easier if someone handed me a recipe and I didn't have to write one myself. (Interview via e-mail, 2012)

Perhaps lawmakers and PD providers have provided a picture—the CCSS—and they have included in these standards the ingredients, raw as they are. However, missing from the recipe are the directions and the background in cake making. Certainly, to extend the metaphor, Cara has made plenty of cakes so she is not daunted by what she sees as a new cake, more complicated, but doable. She has used the same spices and ingredients for years. New teachers who jump in are simply expected to “wing-it” until experience teaches them how to teach writing. Too often, training in writing instruction is an option for teachers who opt out. Preparing teachers to implement and teach Common Core writing standards is a necessity, not an option. Our students’ writing abilities and expectations are often situated, as in this study, within teachers’ perceptions of their own abilities to teach writing. If, like Isaac, a teacher cannot teach writing, his strategy becomes an avoidance of it. Preparing teachers to teach writing under Common Core, not just learn the standards, can only improve writing instruction for teachers and writing abilities for students.

It is no doubt clear by now why there can never be a recipe or cookbook for change, nor a step-by-step process. Leaders and members of the organization, because they live in a

culture of frenetic change, are vulnerable to seeking the comforting clarity of off-the-shelf solutions. (Fullan, 2001, p. 7)

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Many empirical studies exist on teacher preparation programs and on professional development. Although writers of Common Core writing standards set out to unite, at least on a basic level, the instruction across the states that have adopted them, the truth is that teachers are still being sent to the classrooms not knowing how to teach writing – under any set of standards. In Chapters One and Two, I provided an intense background and literature review of the state of teaching writing. Our teachers must have more adequate training and they need valid professional development opportunities. Continued multi-case studies in these two fields in relation to how teachers are learning to implement and use Common Core writing standards would serve as excellent data for moving through this stage of educational history. Also, on two teachers whose backgrounds and experiences are so diverse, perhaps a more in-depth study that focuses on their differences and similarities at various stages of implementing new standards would offer educators on either end of the teaching spectrum useful data in correlating experience to perspectives and teaching styles.

Additionally, a study should be conducted on teachers' perceptions of these five phenomena on a much larger and more generalizable scale. Perhaps examine, in other studies, how their perceptions of these five phenomena affect their actual classroom practices. Such a study might also provide teachers with time and opportunity to reflect on what they are teaching that will require changing to meet Common Core writing standards, and what they are teaching that might not require they change all that much. Moreover, if this study were conducted with whole school or several schools, the information about what an implementation of standards



might look like could both surprise and encourage those who are willing to step forward and take the lead. Data from these kinds of studies could be used as a needs assessment for helping teachers receive a more individualized professional development plan.

Conducting a qualitative grounded theory study that examines—through multiple interviews—how teachers implemented previous standards and how teachers were prepared to teach the standards in order to develop a theory that might be useful in helping educators and schools implement CCSS more successfully could also be beneficial. A qualitative study to examine past professional development and training in learning about the ADE ELA standards within several school cultures might also be beneficial in helping to compare and contrast various strategies and stages of implementing standards. Also, conducting a similar study using mixed methods might include a larger component of surveys across many states that are implementing CCSS. If the focus were to be on writing instruction, surveys might include an examination of teachers involved with the National Writing Project compared to those who are not NWP teachers to find differences and similarities in their perspectives towards implementing Common Core writing standards.

## **Conclusion**

The findings from the qualitative, multi-case study of two teachers revealed their perspectives of five core phenomena that contributed to a better understanding of what early implementation of Common Core writing standards entails. Through questionnaires, interviews, observations, and field notes, these teachers' perspectives emerged as complex and intricate in determining the early stages of implementing Common Core standards. Admittedly, I had anticipated observing both teachers teaching writing using the Common Core writing standards in their English classrooms – with concrete, easily recordable data. However, I observed and

learned that both teachers had his and her own perspectives and experiences in interpreting the abstract concept of early implementation of the standards. As in the opening of this study, I pointed out that teachers must often modify their expectations, curriculums, pedagogies, etc., in order to meet the requirements and mandates assigned to them through academic standards; but what I did not mention, as I learned in this study, is that before they make the concrete, measureable changes (if necessary), they must be given the time and the opportunity to form some abstract, thought processes, to examine their own practices and philosophies before they change their teaching. Teachers must be given the opportunity to do what the CCSS are asking them to teach their students to do: think critically. If they adjust or change without buy in or without the opportunity to think about where they are and where they need to be, well, to borrow from Isaac, it's like trying to bake a cake from a picture without directions.

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## Appendix A

### Principal Interview Guiding Questions

#### **Principal Perception: Writing Standards**

- Tell me about your experiences teaching writing using state standards.
- What are your experiences with the Arkansas Dept. of Education's English Language Arts Standards?
- Can you describe how you came to learn about the Common Core State Standards?
- Describe how you came to implement the CCSS into your classroom earlier than required by ADE?
- In your district, could you talk about others' reactions to early implementation of CCSS in the English classroom? [I remind them at this point of confidentiality]
  - Other teachers?
  - Administrators?
  - School Board?
  - Community/parents?

*[Follow-up questions as necessary]*

#### **Principal Perception: Writing Pedagogy**

- Can you describe what effective writing instruction should look like in English classrooms?
- Can you talk about some of your successes in regarding writing instruction? Failures or setbacks?
- What is your strongest influence when preparing to find effective ways to help your English teachers teach writing? -- Obstacles in teaching writing?
- How do you consider helping teachers become stronger writing teachers?
- Do you consider your school supportive of writing as a tool for learning in all content classrooms? Can you talk about the difference between "writing to learn" and learning to write"?
- How do you think teachers in your building think about writing as a tool for learning?

*[Follow-up questions as necessary]*

#### **Principal Perception: Writing Content**

- Tell me about writing instruction resources in your district (and in your own specific building). For instance,
  - Texts and instructional manuals, etc.
  - Teacher support (co-teaching)
  - Administration's knowledge of writing importance
  - Class size when teaching writing
  - Professional development opportunities
- Do you consider yourself to be a writer? Where did you learn to be a writer?
- Talk about your preparation for teaching writing in regards to resources.  
[Follow-up questions as necessary]-- (See survey list for more examples)
- Where do you see Common Core Standards in the classroom five years from now? Why?

*[Follow-up questions as necessary]*

## Appendix B

### Teacher Interview Guide

Research Q's	Primary Interview Q's	Secondary Interview Q's
<p>RQ #1</p> <p>What trends appear in English teachers' perceptions of implementing the Common Core writing curriculum and how do these perceptions relate to the <i>acceptance</i> of the Common Core writing curriculum?</p> <p>a. How are teachers reacting to outside pressure to change instruction?</p> <p>b. Why, if given the opportunity, did teachers voluntarily offer to implement CCSS before it was mandated?</p>	Can you talk a little about what it means to be a writing teacher?	Do you consider yourself a writer?
	Describe what "writing" looks like in your classroom?	How often do you think students should write in their classes?
	Talk about the difference between "Writing to Learn" and "Learning to Write"	What do you consider the most important aspect of students' learning to write? (Purpose)
	What is the strongest influence when preparing to find effective ways to teach writing?	Which approach do you use most often?
	Talk about your thoughts on having taught writing under the Arkansas frameworks during your teaching years.	How long have you taught using the state writing standards?
	How familiar are you with the CC writing standards?	Describe how you came to learn about the CCSS.
	How did you come to implement the CCSS into your classroom earlier than required by ADE?	What steps have you taken to help you teach writing under the CC standards?
	Talk about some of the obstacles to transitioning from state standards to Common Core writing standards.	
	Can you talk about others' reactions to early implementation of CCSS in the English classroom (e.g. other teachers, administrators, school board, and community).	

Research Q's	Primary Interview Q's	Secondary Interview Q's	
RQ #2 How are English teachers implementing the Common Core writing curriculum and does this differ with respect to --methods of instruction --class preparation time --assignments, --assessments, and --pacing guides (or curriculum maps)?	What is your favorite part about teaching writing? Least favorite?	Can you talk about some of your successes in teaching writing? Failures or setbacks?	P
	Do you feel well-prepared to teach writing? Can you talk about that some?		C P
	What kinds of provisions have your school and/or district provided to help you in preparing to teach the Common Core writing standards?	[Follow up question about teacher's perceptions of sufficiency of provisions]	C
	When preparing a writing lesson, could you outline a few major steps you consider [when creating the lesson]?		C
	What materials, if any, do you use to guide your instruction & plans besides the standards? Professional texts?		
	How much class time have you generally devoted to writing instruction in the past?	Do you anticipate Common Core writing standards requiring students to write more or less than what the state standards required [which translates into taking more or less class time than the state standards]?	S
	How do you determine if your methods for writing instruction are effective?		P
	What is method do you use most often when assessing/grading student writing?	What do you consider the most effective writing assessment in helping students learn to write or write to learn?	C
	What is one thing that you have learned about teaching writing (using the CCSS) that you would share with English/language arts teachers everywhere if you could?		S P

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**Key:**

S – Standards

P – Pedagogy

C – Content

## Appendix C

### Teacher Questionnaire:

Transitioning from state writing standards to Common Core writing standards

#### Part I. TEACHER PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Place a checkmark next to your choice.

Years of Teaching Experience	____ 1-5	____ 6-10	____ 11-20	____ 21-28	____ 29+
<b>Current teaching level &amp; course(s).</b>	____ 9th	____ 10th	____ 11 <sup>th</sup>	____ 12 <sup>th</sup>	____ College
<b>Check ALL that apply</b>	____ Reg. Eng.	____ Reg. Eng.	____ Reg. Eng.	____ Reg. Eng.	____
	____ Inclusion	____ Inclusion	____ Inclusion	____ Inclusion	____
	____ SPED	____ SPED	____ SPED	____ SPED	____ course title:
	____ ESL/ sheltered	____ ESL/ sheltered	____ ESL/ sheltered	____ ESL/ sheltered	____
	____ Pre-AP	____ Pre-AP	____ Pre-AP	____ Pre-AP	____
	____ honors	____ honors	____ AP lit/lang	____ AP lit/lang	____
	____ other, specify _____	____ other, specify _____	____ other, specify _____	____ other, specify _____	____
<b>Level of Degree Completed (check all that apply)</b>	____ B.A.	____ M.A.	____ Ed.S.	____ Ph.D.	____
	____ B.S.	____ M.S.	____	____ Ed.D.	____ Other
	____	____ M.Ed.	____	____	____
	____	____ M.A.T.	____	____	____

Please answer each of the following questions as candidly as possible. Some questions may require you to rate or rank your response. If so, choose the answer that BEST represents your response. Questions are divided by topic.

***\*Remember all answers will be kept completely confidential and no identifying information from this questionnaire will be used at any time during or after the research study.***

#### Part II. TEACHER WRITING - STANDARDS

Arkansas Department of Education English Language Arts Frameworks 2006 (ADE ELA)

1. Explain your experience teaching writing using the ADE ELA writing frameworks? Consider using one word descriptors to get you started (e.g. difficult, easy, etc.).
  
2. What kinds of professional development did you receive to help you learn to teach writing with ADE ELA writing frameworks? Please explain.



3. Explain your familiarity with the Common Core writing standards? [How did you learn about Common Core writing standards?
4. Explain what kind of professional development your school district has provided regarding Common Core Standards? What kind of PD would like to have in addition to what you have received so far?
5. What are some of the major concerns you have with learning to teach writing using the new Common Core writing standards? What is your overall opinion of the Common Core writing standards as compared to the previous state (ADE ELA) writing SLEs?
6. Since ADE is not actually requiring full implementation of the CCSS for grades 9 – 12 until 2013-2014 school year, explain what has inspired, motivated, or led you to begin using the CCSS now?

### **Part III. TEACHER WRITING - PEDAGOGY**

**The following statements are about your perceptions and experiences of being a writing teacher. Please use the following scale to choose the BEST response for each statement.**

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1	I consider myself to be a writer.			1	2 3 4 5
2	The National Writing Project has influenced my ability to teach writing.			1	2 3 4 5
3	I have seen other teachers model writing lessons.			1	2 3 4 5
4	I would like to help other teachers teach writing.			1	2 3 4 5
5	I have received sufficient professional development for teaching writing.			1	2 3 4 5
6	I am comfortable with my ability to teach writing in middle or high school.			1	2 3 4 5
7	When I teach writing, I use various strategies.			1	2 3 4 5
8	I do not grade everything my students write.			1	2 3 4 5
9	I do not teach writing like I feel I should because of all the grading.			1	2 3 4 5
10	When I teach writing, I follow a packaged program (i.e. Step Up To Writing, Six Traits, etc.) for the majority of my instruction.			1	2 3 4 5
11	If my students write well on a final draft, I know my writing instruction has been successful.			1	2 3 4 5
12	When grading students' writing, I use a rubric.			1	2 3 4 5
13	In order for students to become good writers, they must write in all of their classes.			1	2 3 4 5
14	I have my students write something in English language			1	2 3 4 5

	arts class at least three days a week.					
15	Students reading and responding to one another's writing is an important part of my instruction.	1	2	3	4	5

## Part IV.

## TEACHER WRITING - CONTENT

1. Please **rank** the following items in the order of importance to you, as an English teacher, with 1 being most important and 5 being least important.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Writing instruction
- \_\_\_\_\_ Grammar instruction
- \_\_\_\_\_ Students' independent Reading time (during class)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Literature Study
- \_\_\_\_\_ Standardized Test Preparation

2. Using the same topics as above, indicate what percentage of time (your best guess) you spend on each of these during a school year?

- \_\_\_\_\_ % Writing instruction
  - \_\_\_\_\_ % Grammar instruction
  - \_\_\_\_\_ % Students' independent reading time (during class)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ % Literature study
  - \_\_\_\_\_ % Standardized test preparation
  - \_\_\_\_\_ % Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
- 100% total (180 days of school)

3. Describe your favorite method of writing instruction?

4. How do you determine if your methods for writing instruction are effective?

5. Did you teach argumentative, informative/explanatory or narrative writing using ADE ELA frameworks? Common Core writing standards? Explain how/if your instruction differed between the state and Common Core writing standards?

6. Describe the most difficult part of transitioning from ADE ELA writing frameworks to Common Core writing standards?

7. Based on how you have interacted with the Common Core writing standards so far, explain how would think they compare to the state frameworks? Better, worse?

8. Please write any additional comments here. (i.e. questions/thoughts on Common Core writing standards, writing instruction, a previous question, etc.)

## Appendix D

### Administrator/Principal Correspondence

November 29, 2011

Mrs. “Madelyn” Cooper (pseudonym)  
Principal, J.M. Hendricks High School (pseudonym)

I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. As an English teacher and literacy coach for thirteen years in Arkansas, I became interested in writing instruction and teacher preparedness for teaching writing. Thus, my dissertation topic has emerged from this interest and study. As the Common Core State Standards are being implemented, I would like to explore and examine how the teachers in your high school English department are transitioning from the state standards to the CCSS earlier than is required by Arkansas Department of Education. Specifically, I would like to focus my study on how the English teachers are transitioning from Arkansas writing standards to Common Core writing standards.

My study would include questionnaires, interviews, observations, and a collection of documents regarding teacher inservices, mandates for teaching writing in the high school, and other data that are related to CCSS preparation.

This study has been approved by the IRB #11-11-297

Thank you,

## Appendix E

### Informed Consent

**Title:** Transitioning from Arkansas writing standards to Common Core writing standards in the secondary English classroom

**Investigator(s)**

Cindy Williams, Doctoral Student	Ro Windwalker, IRB Coordinator
Christian Z. Goering, Ph.D., Faculty Advisor	210 Administration Building
University of Arkansas	1 University of Arkansas
College of Education & Health Professions	Fayetteville, AR 72701
Department of Curriculum and Instruction	479-575-3845
305 Peabody Hall	
Fayetteville, AR 72701-1201	
479-263-7335	

**Description:** Purpose of research: This study will explore trends in teachers' perceptions during their first year of implementing the Common Core writing standards and to examine the extent, if any, to which teachers' perceptions affect the *levels* of implementing the those standards. The researcher hopes to describe these participants in terms of their perceptions of transitioning from state writing standards to Common Core writing standards, of their preparedness to teach under Common Core writing standards, and of the difficulties that may arise during this transition. The researcher hopes such research will inform interested teachers and stakeholders who have yet to implement Common Core writing standards into their classrooms.

**Procedures & Request for interviews and/or observations:**

If you agree to participate in the study, I will ask that you (a) complete a short questionnaire regarding writing instruction and standards, (b) agree to interviews –formal and informal (scheduled at your convenience) (c) and agree to allow me to observe your teaching writing lessons or any lessons related to writing using the Common Core writing standards. The questionnaire should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. The time for the interviews should take between 30 and 45 minutes as I understand that your time is valuable.

**Risks and Benefits:** A benefit of participation is contributing to the knowledge base concerning teachers' perceptions transitioning to the Common Core writing standards. There are no anticipated risks to participating in the study.

**Voluntary Participation:** Participation in the research is completely voluntary. There are no risks associated with participation in this study and there are no benefits or compensation for participating in the study. You may withdraw from the study at any time and there is no penalty for not participating or for withdrawing.

**Confidentiality:** Data will be collected through audio-taped interviews and observations. You will be assigned a pseudonym code that will be used in reporting findings. These codes will be assigned to audiotapes, subsequent transcriptions, and observation notes. Only the researcher

will know names and will not divulge it or identify your answers to anyone. All information will be held in the strictest of confidence. Codes will be destroyed at the end of the study. The data collected during this study will remain confidential and will be kept in a safe, secure place at all times. If any report of this study is published, I will not include any identifying information.

**Additional Contact Information:** I, Cindy Williams, am conducting this study. I may be contacted at [REDACTED]. My research advisor/dissertation chair is Dr. Christian Z. Goering, and you may contact him at [cgoering@uark.edu](mailto:cgoering@uark.edu). You may also contact Institutional Review Board at [IRB@uark.edu](mailto:IRB@uark.edu)

**Informed Consent:** I, \_\_\_\_\_ (please print), have read the description, including the purpose of the study, the procedures to be used, the potential risks and side effects, the confidentiality, as well as the option to withdraw at any time. My signature below indicates that I understand what is involved and freely agree to participate in this study.

Participant Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F

### INSTRUMENTATION CHART

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Data needs</b> —Questions to that help gain insight into research questions <b>Data sources</b> — <i>Secondary English/language arts teachers</i>	<b>Instrument Method</b> — <i>how will I get the answers</i>
RQ #1 What trends appear in English teachers' perceptions of implementing the Common Core writing curriculum and how do these perceptions relate to the <i>acceptance</i> of the Common Core writing curriculum?	Questions regarding Ts' thoughts on state writing standards.  Qs on thoughts, preparedness, on teaching Common Core writing standards; ~past experience teaching ADE ELA writing standards ~complexity of standards ~attitudes, perceptions, willingness to implement CCSS with or without PD	Interviews Questionnaire
b. How are teachers reacting to outside pressure to change instruction?	Qs on demographics; school demographics & school community ~motivation behind early implementation	Questionnaires Interviews
c. Why, if given the opportunity, did teachers voluntarily offer to implement CCSS before it was mandated?	~purpose(s) of teaching writing in the secondary classroom; and, <i>how writing is used to increase student achievement</i> ~perceptions of outside pressure to teach CCSS	Classroom Observations
RQ #2 How are English teachers implementing the Common Core writing curriculum and does this differ with respect to --methods of instruction --class preparation time --assignments, --assessments, and --pacing guides (or curriculum maps)?	Q's on perception of difficulty of Common Core writing standards ~Teachers' perceptions of themselves as writers ~Perceptions of relationship between reading & writing and effects on instruction  Describe perceived differences between state writing standards and Common Core writing standards  What part of writing instruction will be/has been different? Same? ~use of technology – more or less  Teacher preparation for teaching Common Core writing standards (PD) ~outside influences affecting teachers' writing instruction  Provisions for helping teachers prepare for the Common Core writing standards (Materials, teacher supports, administrative support, PD, etc.)	Questionnaires Interviews Classroom Observations Interviews Classroom Observations Questionnaires Interviews
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Processes</li> <li>♦ Activities</li> <li>♦ Assessments</li> <li>♦ Programs</li> <li>♦ Preparation Time</li> <li>♦ Professional Development</li> <li>♦ Lesson Plans</li> <li>♦ Curriculum guides</li> </ul>	Observations  Class materials (e.g. assignments, quizzes, tests, journals, lesson plans, etc.

## **Appendix G**

### Teacher Interview Guiding Questions

#### **Teacher Perception: Writing Standards**

- Tell me about your experiences teaching writing using state standards.
- What are your experiences with the Arkansas Dept. of Education's English Language Arts Standards?
- Can you describe how you came to learn about the Common Core State Standards?
- Describe how you came to implement the CCSS into your classroom earlier than required by ADE?
- In your district, could you talk about others' reactions to early implementation of CCSS in the English classroom? [I remind them at this point of confidentiality]
  - Other teachers?
  - Administrators?
  - School Board?
  - Community/parents ?

[Follow-up questions as necessary]

#### **Teacher Perception: Writing Pedagogy**

- Can you describe what writing instruction looks like in your classroom?
- Can you talk about some of your successes in teaching writing? Failures or setbacks?
- What is your strongest influence when preparing to find effective ways to teach writing? - Obstacles in teaching writing?
- Do you consider your school supportive of writing as a tool for learning in all content classrooms?
- How do you think other teachers in your building think about writing as a tool for learning?
- Would you ever consider helping other teachers become stronger writing teachers?

[Follow-up questions as necessary]

#### **Teacher Perception: Writing Content**

- Tell me about writing instruction resources in your district (and in your own specific building). For instance,
  - Texts and instructional manuals, etc.
  - Teacher support (co-teaching)
  - Administration's knowledge of writing importance
  - Class size when teaching writing
  - Professional development opportunities
- Where did you learn to be a writer?
- Talk about your preparation for teaching writing.  
[Follow-up questions as necessary]-- (See survey list for more examples)
- Where do you see Common Core Standards in the classroom five years from now?

[Follow-up questions as necessary]

## Appendix H

### Sources for Questionnaire Construction

Rationale/Source of statement construction			TEACHER WRITING - STANDARDS
<i>Writing Next</i> (Graham & Perin, 2007, p. 3)  <b>&amp; Research Question 1</b>	1		Teacher's perception of the need for teaching students' writing skills.
	2		Teacher's experience teaching writing using Arkansas' English Language Arts writing standards
Teaching experience; conversations with teachers while a literacy coach <b>Research Questions 1 &amp; 2</b>	3		Teacher's perceptions of the difficulty and complexity in teaching <i>with</i> the Arkansas writing standards.
	4		Teacher's perceptions of being able to teach all of the Arkansas writing standards' student learning expectations (SLEs)
Fuhrman, Resnick, & Shepard, 2009  <b>Research Question 1</b>	5		Teacher's experiences with professional development training regarding Arkansas writing standards
	6		Teacher's perceptions of district support and professional development regarding Common Core State Standards
	7		Teacher's perceptions of the need/desire for professional development opportunities for learning to teach writing.
	8		Teacher's current knowledge/familiarity with the Common Core State Standards
<b>Research Question 1.</b>	9		Teacher's perceptions of the need/desire to learn more about the Common Core writing standards
<b>Research Question 1&amp; 1a.</b>	10		Teacher's self-perceptions (concerns) on how to implement the Common Core writing standards.
	11		Teacher's self-perception of initiative in learning about the Common Core writing standards by themselves
CCSS, 2010, p. 41; <b>Research Question 1 &amp; 1b.</b>	12		Teacher's perceptions of flexibility in writing instruction regarding Common Core's college and career readiness anchor standards
			TEACHER WRITING – PEDAGOGY
<i>Sources for the questionnaire statements regarding writing pedagogy were a combination of the following:</i>	13		Teacher's perception of herself as a writer.
	14		Teacher's experience with National Writing Project as influential in her ability to teach writing.
<i>Reading Next</i> (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006)	15		Teacher's experiences with teachers modeling writing lessons



<i>Classroom instruction that works: Research-based strategies for increasing student achievement</i> (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001, p. 7)	16	Teacher's perception of wanting to help other teachers teach writing
	17	Teacher's perceptions of district support and professional development in learning to teach writing
	18	Teacher's perception of her ability to teach writing in the secondary school
<i>Writing Next</i> (Graham & Perin, 2007)	19	Teacher's self-perception of her use of various strategies to teach students to write
NAEP (2007, p. 36)	20	Teacher's experiences with grading writing
	21	Teacher's perception of the effect(s) that grading writing has on writing instruction
<i>Because Writing Matters</i> (Nagin & National Writing Project, 2003)	22	Teacher's experiences with packaged writing programs (i.e. Step Up To Writing, McRat, Six Traits, etc.)
	23	Teacher's perception of successful writing instruction if using the writing process
Learning to write in the secondary school (Applebee, Lehr, & Auten, 1981)	24	Teacher's experiences with rubrics as assessment tools
	25	Teacher's perception of writing across the curriculum
What is happening in the teaching of writing? (Applebee & Langer, 2009)	26	Teacher's perception of the frequency of student writing necessary to improve student writing skills
<i>The Neglected "R"</i> (National Commission on Writing, 2003, p. 16)	27	Teacher's experiences with using peer revision as part of writing instruction

## Research Question 2

TEACHER WRITING - CONTENT		
<i>Writing Next</i> (Graham & Perin, 2007)	28	Teaching writing is the most important part of my English language arts classroom
<b>Research Questions 1 &amp; 2</b>		
<i>Because Writing Matters</i> (Nagin & National Writing Project, 2003); CCSS, p.4	29	Teacher's experiences with teaching writing as a process
<b>Research Question 2</b>		
<i>Teaching the New Writing: Technology, Change, and Assessment in the 21<sup>st</sup> - Century Classroom</i> (Herrington, Hodgson, & Moran, Eds., 2009, p.198-207)	30	Teacher's experiences with technology as a part of writing instruction in her classroom.
<b>Research Question 2</b>		
	31	Teacher's perception of the importance of using technology in writing instruction

<i>1000 Writers Writing</i> (Yagelski, 2009, p. 9); Writing as a mode of learning (Emig, 1983, p.23) <b>Research Question 1</b>	32	Writing is a “mode of learning”.
<i>Because Writing Matters</i> (Nagin & National Writing Project, 2003); <b>Research Question 2</b>	33	Teacher’s experiences using mini-lesson to address grammatical issues in student writing
	34	Teacher’s perceptions of the role of grammar in students’ writing abilities
CCSS, Appendix A, p. 24 <b>Research Questions 2</b>	35	Teacher’s experiences with teaching argumentative writing
Teaching experience; conversations with veteran English teachers <b>Research Questions 2</b>	36	Teacher’s experiences with teaching students the five- paragraph essay model
	37	Teacher’s perceptions of time spent preparing writing lessons versus time spent preparing reading lessons
<i>Teaching Adolescent Writers</i> (Gallagher, 2006, p. 183); <i>Improving Adolescent</i> <i>Literacy: Content Strategies</i> <i>at Work</i> (Fisher & Frey, 2008, pp. 169-186) <b>Research Questions 1 &amp; 2</b>	38	Teacher’s perceptions regarding the relationship between reading and writing instruction
	39	Teacher’s experiences with having students respond to readings in a journal
Based on texts and recommendations from authors: Ralph Fletcher, Aimie Buckner, Donald Graves, & Penny Kittle <b>Research Questions 2</b>	40	Teacher’s experiences with using the writer’s notebook as part of writing instruction

## Appendix I

### Observation Notes for Instructional Strategies

Instructional Strategies That Affect Student Achievement	
Examples	Notes
Identifying similarities and differences	
Summarizing and note taking	
Reinforcing effort and providing recognition	
Homework and practice	
Nonlinguistic representations	
Cooperative learning	
Setting objectives and providing feedback	
Generating and testing hypotheses	
Questions, cues, and advance organizers	
Source: Marzano, R. J., Pickering, D. J., & Pollock, J. E. (2001). <i>Classroom instruction that works: Research-based strategies for increasing student achievement</i> . Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, p. 7.	

## Appendix J

### Observation Chart for Assigned Writing Process or Product

<b>Assigned writing process or product</b>				
<b>address students' emotional issues surrounding writing</b>	uninterrupted times to write	mini-lessons	blocks of time set aside for writing in class	tactics provided to help Ss overcome blank page
<b>develop students' understanding of the writing process (or assignment)</b>	Drafting	redrafting	inserts	peer comments
<b>model or teach self-regulation strategies</b>	opportunities to activate schema (prewriting & reflection)	writing as a sequence of steps	clear guidelines for writing	inquiry strategies
<b>train and monitor peer partners &amp; peer response groups</b>	teacher-student interaction/conferencing	peer interaction – pairs/small groups	instruction about audience	
<b>technology</b>	edit/revise	track changes	formatting, strike-through, comments	digital stories, music, pictures
<b>Guided writing development through targeted strategy instruction</b>	strategy composed of steps	strategies for schema activation	mini-lesson strategies	grammatical strategies
<b>Develop a composing vocabulary</b>	suffixes/pre-	word walls	sentence combining activities	writing jargon
<b>Traits for Writing</b>	organization—voice—word choice—sentence fluency -- conventions			

Source: Pritchard, R. & Honeycutt, R. (2007). In S. Graham, C. A. MacArthur, & J. Fitzgerald (Eds.), *Best Practices in Writing Instruction* (pp. 28-49). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Appendix K

Qualitative Instrumental Case Analysis from Interview Data

Question	Interview divided into phrases (Participants' actual statements)	Formulated meaning (Researcher's interpretation based on statements)	Theme (Re-occurring theme from participant phrases & Researcher's interpretations)
A	_____		
B	_____		
C	_____		

### Appendix L

<i>Subject’s way of thinking about people &amp; objects: (core phenomenon)</i>	<i>Classifying below – follows Creswell, (2007, p. 153) categories: axial codes-- “family” (Creswell, 2007, p. 64; Strauss &amp; Corbin, 1990)</i>			
Contextual & Intervening Conditions: <i>broad and specific situational factors that influence the strategies</i>	Causal Conditions: <i>what factors caused the core phenomenon</i>	Strategies: <i>actions taken in response to the core phenomenon</i>	Consequences: <i>outcomes from using the strategies</i>	
Teacher Perception of standards	(ADE) State Frameworks	“fitted” to match lessons	justification checklist of skills	
		mandated	“convoluted” frustrating	
	transition		gap in SLEs	
	CCSS (specifically, Common Core writing standards)	early implementation	“matching” CC: “realign”	
			re-sequencing choice	
		mandated	no risk “very general” “more rigorous”	
			new texts/no money	
			indifference	
		Teacher Perception of Students	gap in SLEs & abilities	adjust/lower curriculum & pedagogy
	college bound v. vocation		abilities (what they are capable of doing or learning)	
Teacher Perception of Admin & Fellow Faculty	source of information	moral support	“supportive”	
		training & P.D.	time to implement	
	financial	improvise	insufficient	
	Teaching experience	decision-maker	superiority	

<b>Teacher Perception of [writing] curriculum</b>	Teaching experience	planning resources/ materials (texts, rubrics, technology)	insecure total reliance on textbooks
	what to teach (Content)	prescriptive writing (study guides, vocab, grammar)	safe – (textbook “answers”) objective
		process writing – (“you need a plan”) all with a thesis (paragraphs/essays)	T- controlled (or authoritarian)
		Writing across the Curriculum	rationale; justification
		Writing to Learn	frustration
	assessments (includes grading/editing writing)	creative writing	proficiency
		test-prep (open- response)	measureable
<b>Teacher Perception of pedagogy</b>	How to teach	absence of writing instruction	insecure
		“evolving” “developing”	anxious
		professional training	overwhelmed
		vary writing instruction (differentiation)	proficiency
	Frequency (how often writing should be taught/instructed) — collapse?	write	indifference
		model	skeptical
		use students’ interests	assertive confident
	Teaching experience	build rapport	trust
		strategies to accommodate CCWS: Socratic method,	teach to strengths
		strategies to accommodate CCWS: Socratic method,	engaged