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PEDAGOGICAL AND CULTURAL PHENOMENA OF ON-DEMAND WRITING INSTRUCTION

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PEDAGOGICAL AND CULTURAL PHENOMENA OF
ON-DEMAND WRITING INSTRUCTION

By

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A Dissertation
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Doctor of Philosophy in Education Degree
Concentration in Curriculum and Instruction

Department of Curriculum and Instruction
in the Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
May 2012

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the field of Education

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November 8, 2011

AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

DEBORAH BELL for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in EDUCATION, presented on NOVEMBER 8, 2011 at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

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MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Marla Mallette

In 1985, 66 school districts filed a suit against the Kentucky Department of Education accusing the system of inequitable spending practices. In 1990, the Supreme Court declared the entire educational program unconstitutional, resulting in the Kentucky Education Reform Act or KERA. This new reform movement brought a plethora of changes to school districts across the state including its mode of assessment. KERA introduced new avenues of measuring student progress using writing as the main vehicle to assess content and communication skills.

Unfortunately, the majority of Kentucky's high schools showed little improvement in this tested area with only 34% of high schools reaching proficiency in the past twenty years of KERA's existence. In 2009, Kentucky passed into law Senate Bill 1, voiding the previous assessment but increasing the focus on on-demand writing for five grades rather than the three required by KERA. Preempting this new reform was the adoption of the Common Core Standards, which also includes a focus on writing. This consistent attention to writing assessment, and data identifying writing as a major weakness across the Commonwealth, prompted the impetus to examine four schools that achieve high scores in on-demand writing assessment.

This qualitative investigation employed a case study design to research these four sites, which represented four different geographic locations in the state. Data sources included observations, interviews, document analysis, and fieldnotes to explore these schools through an

interpretivist lens. The collected data were entered into qualitative research software to enable collective coding resulting in distinct categories and resulting themes.

Three themes evolved in this cross-case analysis: curriculum, learning culture, and motivation. Teachers from these schools use similar classroom strategies and the learning environments reflect corresponding characteristics. Each school addressed student motivation differently, but the analogous perception of inducing intrinsic and extrinsic student engagement in writing occurred in all four schools.

The implications of these results could be overwhelmingly positive as schools seek suggestions to improve writing scores. The findings from this investigation are relevant to the time and may serve as an impetus to improve writing instruction.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my husband who has supported me on this journey into higher academia. He encouraged me when I doubted, inspired me when I was discouraged, redirected me when I lost my way, and prayed for me when human frailty built hurdles. I also appreciate my family who were sources of encouragement throughout the process. My eternal thanks goes to my Redeemer.

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I also want to thank all of my colleagues and students who have influenced me through my years in education and writing instruction.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

In 1985, 66 *property-poor* school districts filed suit against Kentucky's educational system over perceived inequities. By 1990, the Supreme Court had declared the entire educational system unconstitutional, forcing Kentucky to transform the way it educates children across the state (Wolf & McIver, 1999). The initiation of the Kentucky Education Reform Act, a result of the state mandate, affected curriculum, school governance, teaching practices, school accountability and, most of all, assessment (Harnack, Elias, & Whitaker, 1994). The evaluation of student learning included two major writing assessments: On-demand writing and portfolio assessments.

On-demand writing assessment requires students to respond to a specific prompt in a 60-minute time frame. The students follow the process writing approach by prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing in order to complete the final draft. The administration of the on-demand assessment occurs in September for 12th grade students and in May for 5th and 8th grade students.

The writing portfolio assessment is a collective assessment that includes samples of student writing in the following areas: Personal expressive, literary, transactive, and reflective. Students work on the portfolio throughout the school year, which must be completed by the Friday before the CATS testing window in the spring. Portfolio assessment occurs at the 4th, 7th and 12th grades.

Designers of Kentucky's new assessment structure focused on writing and advocated the use of researched-based instructional practices as suggested by supporters of the process writing approach such as Calkins (1986), Graves (1994), and Atwell (1998) (Hillocks, 2002); however,

the changes in educational assessment illustrated by the media do not explicate the ubiquitous philosophical transformation in educational practice within the school itself. Schools had to transform every facet of the educational program.

This transformation forced Kentucky to prioritize the need for professional development after the legislature completed and approved the new KRS statutes on educational reform. The new mandates promoted research-based writing pedagogy in classrooms across the Commonwealth, which compelled both pragmatic and essentialist teachers to change their instructional approaches by integrating the writing workshop and process writing theory into their teaching plans. The Kentucky Department of Education even published an instructional *Kentucky Writing Development Teacher's Handbook* (KDE, 2003), which provides teachers with multiple tools that reflect best practice and includes some of the following items: Writing rubrics, student benchmark papers, strategies for writing to learn, strategies for transactive writing, and recommendations for recognizing scorer bias. Hillocks (2002) stated that Kentucky's writing model offers students an enriched curriculum and should be a model to be replicated in other states.

In spite of the training and curricular changes administered by teachers, the writing scores in Kentucky's high schools continue to plateau, demonstrating little overall improvement except from 2007 to 2008 when the scores were recalibrated to include points for high and low end papers (KDE, Achievement Gap Data, 2010). The date for administering the assessment changed from spring of the senior year to fall of the senior year, which may also have contributed to the variance in scores. The results of the 2007 NAEP writing study support this finding with data that shows the average score for 8th grade students in Kentucky in 2007 stood at 151, which did not demonstrate any significant growth since 2002's score of 149. Both of these

percentages fall below the nation's public school average, and according to Innes (2007), the 2007 proficiency rate on writing stands at only 20 percent, below the national average of 31 percent; therefore, in spite of the core content and program of studies (Kentucky's curriculum) reflecting best practice in writing standards, many high school students in Kentucky's schools have not demonstrated writing proficiency. In 2007, the percentage of students scoring at the proficient/distinguished level was 19.79, in 2008 it rose to 29.73, and in 2009 it capped at 34.97- far from the 100% mandated proficiency score (KDE, KCCT Test Files, 2009). Since the No Child Left Behind Act emerged into law in 2001 mandating school accountability and requiring schools to demonstrate school-wide proficiency by 2014, assessment continues to plague both school administrators and teachers and the lack of writing improvement suggests that on-demand instructional methodology must become a major priority for Kentucky educators.

As a result of the stagnant high school writing scores and the Kentucky State legislature's passing of Senate bill #1 in 2009, a new mandate for educational reform, the writing portfolio assessment will no longer be included in the Kentucky Accountability Index. This will increase the focus on the on-demand writing assessment, which will be administered in five grade levels rather than three. Since these assessments play a significant role in measuring a school district's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), another requisite of the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act, the focus on the on-demand assessment has intensified.

Even if the state assessment did not require assessment of writing, the attention to writing skills is still a vital element needed to improve student written communication in a world now saturated with writing. Results from a 2006 survey reveal that 81% of employers find high school graduates deficient in written communication skills (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006). It also noted that the results from this deficiency have forced companies to pay approximately

\$3.1 billion per year in order to train employees in basic writing. Most of the writing required in a post-graduation setting has direct correlation to the essential skills that necessitate adequate performance in direct writing assessment. The Governor's Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI) support this by establishing a focus on transactional writing in the English/Language Arts document, which has been approved by the Kentucky State Board of Education (Kentucky Department of Education, 2010).

The increased focus on writing provided the impetus for further study on writing. This qualitative case study research explored four different high schools located in diverse geographic regions in the state of Kentucky to examine instructional practices and related phenomena in English classrooms that have attained high scores on the KCCT on-demand assessment.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

This qualitative study investigated the writing pedagogy in four high schools that yield a high percentage of proficient and distinguished scores on the Kentucky on-demand assessment in order to better understand their success.

The following research question provided an overall guide to this study: What pedagogical strategies were used in the writing classroom that resulted in improved student performance on the Kentucky State Assessment?

Within this broad question were the following subquestions:

1. How has the school, or district, supported the writing teachers in those schools that demonstrate high on-demand scores?
2. What role does classroom or school environment play in nurturing the development of writers in preparation for the assessment?
3. What resources have been used to prepare students for writing the assessed genres?

4. How has the preparation for on-demand assessment been integrated into the curriculum?

Significance of the Study

Currently, the results of the on-demand assessments, especially in schools that traditionally place in the top twenty in the state, continue to bewilder writing educators. Questions that educators asked pertaining to the top-ranked schools include: How can our students score so well in other content areas and perform so poorly on the on-demand portion of the assessment? How can schools that don't attain high scores in other content areas do so well on the on-demand assessment? Instruction for on-demand assessment impacts student performance in numerous venues: SAT and ACT Writing Tests, Advanced Placement Exams, AP Literature and Composition Test, high school and college essay exams, and writing for audiences outside the parameters of the school. Murray (1978) once said that writing was “the least researched, the least examined, the least understood (p. 85)” subject.

This study provided insight into the pedagogical phenomena present in those English classrooms that earn high proficient and distinguished scores on the Kentucky state on-demand writing assessment. The findings of this study offer an understanding of in to the writing practices at schools that have accomplished writing programs as evidenced by their high test scores. Further, the findings from this investigation are relevant to the time and may serve as an impetus to improve writing instruction.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

What is On-Demand Writing?

When looking at the types of writing required in the “real” world, “most writing is writing on demand” (Gere, Christenbury & Sassi, 2005, p. 5). Unfortunately, high- stakes assessment and the accountability pressures linked to *No Child Left Behind* and state assessment force teachers to adjust curriculum in order to incorporate what many call, “teaching for the test.” This has led to an assessment driven curriculum rather than a standards-based curriculum (Hillocks, 2002). Therefore, teaching students to respond effectively for an on-demand prompt eliminates using the process approach to developing text. Rather, the curriculum includes instructional lessons that quickly teach students to write a plausible answer to a particular prompt without the cognitive creative context required to develop narrative (Wolcott & Legg, 1998).

How is on-demand writing assessment defined? This type of evaluation, which assesses students’ abilities to use appropriate forms, conventions and styles to communicate ideas and information, requires students to produce a final draft essay in response to a prompt within a required time frame. This research refers to Kentucky’s assessment procedures; thus, the following information describes and clarifies the on-demand writing assessment that all students in grades 5, 8 and 12 in Kentucky engaged in through spring of 2011.

Grade 12 students, the focus of this study, were administered the on-demand assessment in the fall of their senior year. Kentucky required seniors to respond to two different forms of prompt-based assessment: direct prompts and passage-based prompts. Direct prompts require students to narrate an event for a purpose, to inform, or to persuade, whereas a passage-based prompt challenges students by providing a reading passage requiring students to read and draw

from in order to respond effectively to the task. The purposes for the passage-based prompt are similar to the direct: To narrate an event for a purpose, to inform, or to persuade. The mode or formats for both types of written responses may take the form of a letter, article, speech or editorial (KDE, 2007, p. 111).

To clarify the objective and purpose of the directions, all prompts contain two parts: situation and task. The task specifies the audience, purpose, and form, and the situation provides the context for the writing. It is important to remember that the on-demand writing test assesses writing skill, not content-area knowledge or reading. To elucidate the fundamental design of each prompt, the following information defines each and provides examples from the on-demand released items found on the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) website (2009).

Prompt to Persuade

The student writer must take a stand on a topic, either for or against, and then compose a narrative to influence the reader *to* adopt a certain point of view or to take some action in response to the prompt. This assessment requires the student to persuade by establishing facts to provide support, clarifying misconceptions and the author's position, prioritizing the facts, and anticipating refutations. The following is an example of a prompt to persuade:

SITUATION:

Your school is beginning a student-operated radio station. The school council (consisting of the principal and some teachers and parents) has asked for student suggestions about the kind(s) of music to be played on the air.

WRITING TASK:

Write a speech or a letter to persuade the school council to accept your suggestions for what kind(s) of music should be played on the radio station.

Prompt to Narrate an Event for A Transactive Purpose

In order to respond to this type of prompt, students must use a narrative, or a story, in order to support an idea or opinion. This story must provide substantiation, so the reader will accept the ideas and opinions stated by the author.

SITUATION:

Procrastination, according to its Latin roots, means “putting something off until tomorrow.” Most people, at one time or another, have procrastinated.

WRITING TASK:

Write an article or a speech to tell your peers about a time when you or someone you know procrastinated. Describe the outcome, good or bad, of postponing the action. Be sure to explain the lessons that can be learned from this experience.

Prompt to Inform:

The student presents information and explanations to help readers understand a problem or topic. In order to inform, the student must communicate effectively by employing strategies and idea development to enhance the writing.

SITUATION:

Read the following quotation:

“In spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart.”—Anne Frank.

WRITING TASK:

Write a speech to present to your peers informing them of the qualities exhibited by people who are “good at heart.” Support your response with details or examples.

On-demand writing assessment in Kentucky requires students to write independently “under monitored conditions” (KDE, 2007, p. 106). Students choose between two prompts for

the direct prompt assessment, supplied by the Kentucky Department of Education, and complete the writing within the 60-minute time allotted; if more time is needed, an additional 60 minutes may be granted. Educators encourage students to plan before drafting and *to* tailor the tone, language, and voice to meet the needs of the audience. In order to help students use rich, precise wording, a dictionary and thesaurus should be available for use during the assessment. Someone other than the teacher evaluates the response, and all responses are then scored using the Kentucky Writing Scoring Criteria, which assesses purpose/audience, idea development/support, organization, sentence variety, language usage, and correctness.

Current State of Writing Instruction

In Kentucky

To comprehend the magnitude of changes incurred in Kentucky on the subject of educational assessment, it is imperative to reflect on the origination of Kentucky's educational reform movement. In 1985, after 66 "property-poor" school districts filed suit against Kentucky's educational system, the entire educational system was declared unconstitutional and the state of Kentucky introduced a transformation in its education system through the initiation of the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 (KERA). The Supreme Court stated that "Each child, every child, in this Commonwealth must be provided with an equal opportunity to have an adequate education" (KDE, 1993). The reform, documented as law, affected curriculum, school governance, teaching practices, assessment, and school accountability.

Even though each of these areas influenced the delivery of education, the most radical change occurred within the new assessment system. Writing emerged as the vehicle by which students demonstrated proficiency of content. Specifically, three areas involving writing

prevailed with the adjustments to Kentucky's assessment system in 1990: Open response, on-demand, and portfolio writing.

On-demand writing assessment forces students to respond to a specific prompt in a 60-minute time frame. The student is supposed to follow the process writing approach by prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing in order to complete the final draft. The administration of the on-demand assessment comes in September for 12th grade students and in May for 5th and 8th grade students. Writing portfolio assessment, a collective assessment, includes samples of student writing in the following areas: Personal expressive, literary, transactive, and reflective. Students work on the portfolio throughout the school year and must complete it by the Friday before the CATS testing window in the spring. Open-response assessment requires students to respond to short passages; these responses are assessed based on content knowledge, not writing ability.

As educators struggled to implement the new writing assessment, districts provided a plethora of professional development opportunities to train teachers for open response writing, on-demand writing, and writing for the portfolio. Teachers, accustomed to teaching what Hillocks (1986) calls “presentational style”, had to adjust personal pedagogical beliefs and modify instruction to employ more environmental and constructivist methodologies using a variety of newly researched contexts, like employing the workshop mode, cooperative groupings, and allocating time for socially constructive learning situations like peer revision.

Since 1986, the National Writing Project has had a definite presence with ancillary projects in seven locations of the state. The Kentucky legislature recognized the value of the projects in providing professional development in writing instruction by allotting funds in the state budget for teacher workshops. Many teachers have participated in these opportunities, which offer

training in the following: The process writing approach, digital communications, literacy pedagogy, and designing instruction. One area offered to teachers included a workshop on the three different kinds of writing proposed by the Kentucky Department of Education: Writing to learn, writing to demonstrate learning, and writing for publication. The Kentucky Writing Handbook (2009) states that, “Though all three types of writing will obviously involve students in writing, the purposes of the three types of writing differ, and teachers should prepare tasks and prompts relevant to these different purposes” (p. 29). Therefore, in the early years of KERA, teachers flocked to the sessions hoping to learn instructional approaches for the three kinds of writing.

Teachers in Kentucky learned, and continue to learn, to use “Writing to Learn” activities as instructional tools to promote learning, which might include any or all of the following: Journals, the Writer’s Notebook, entrance or exit slips, note-taking, and other devices to help students retain and comprehend through writing. “Writing to Demonstrate Learning,” offers the teacher insight as to whether or not the student understands the concepts taught. Although “Writing to Learn” is not assessed, “Writing to Demonstrate Learning” often serves as the graded assessment. Examples of this type of writing include essays, open response, reviews, summaries, and reports. The last kind of writing, “Writing for Publication,” suggests that the student have a real-world audience and authentic purpose; this piece requires students to utilize the writing process while creating the product.

These three types of writing truly found a home in the English/Language Arts classroom, but they also initiated a greater focus on writing across the curriculum. Science, social studies, practical living and other courses of study started to integrate writing into their instructional plans, producing uncertainty for those teachers who did not feel qualified to teach writing.

Therefore, professional development opportunities were extended to all teachers.

The reform of the early 90's definitely changed teachers' perceptions on writing instruction, and the reforms currently driven by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers continue to expand the focus on the importance of writing in the classroom through the development of the Common Core Standards (Commoncore.org). This politicization of writing assessment in Kentucky forced what Kuhn referred to as a "paradigm change" - a change that required teachers to transform philosophy as well as instruction from the traditional paradigm to a more progressive process-oriented paradigm (Hairston, 1982).

In the Nation

In 1973, the cover story in *Newsweek* magazine criticized high schools for failing to teach writing in, "Why Johnny Can't Write" (National Writing Project & Nagin, 2003). In fact, writing instruction has often been the subject of attack.

In 2007, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assessed sample groups of students representing the nation's 8th and 12 graders. The framework for this test included an on-demand assessment, also called an impromptu essay, or a direct writing assessment, depending on which vocabulary the reader associates. The assessment measured writing skills for the following purposes: To inform, persuade and tell stories. First used in 1998, it continues to be used to allow comparisons of student performance from previous years (NAEP, 2007).

In 2007, 82 percent of 12th grade students performed at or above the basic level, an increase from 74 percent in 2002. The average writing score also increased three points from the 1998 assessment, but the number of students considered at the proficient level showed no

significant change (NAEP, 2007). At least two thirds or more of 4th, 8th, and 12th grade students scored below grade-level proficiency (Graham & Perin, 2007). College instructors continue to complain about the lack of student preparation in the area of writing composition, and American businesses spend about \$3.1 billion annually for writing remediation (National Commission on Writing, 2004).

According to the Alliance for Excellent Education, U.S. graduates have lower literacy skills than most industrialized nations (OECD, 2004). In the 21st Century report “Are They Really Ready to Work?” 72% of employer respondents state that high school graduates are deficient in basic writing skills (Casner, Lotto & Barrington, 2006). Considering the state of our global economy, our students are not prepared to enter the workforce or post-secondary education after high school.

Applebee and Langer (2006), who researched long-term trend data for writing including the NAEP results, disclosed that literacy achievement has been “holding steady” since 1971 (p. 2). That statement indicates that there hasn’t been any significant growth in writing since 1971, a period of nearly forty years; therefore, the current writing dilemma is not isolated to the state of Kentucky. Since this widespread lack of skills in written communication affects student performance in both post-secondary education and the workplace, the issue must be addressed nationwide as students prepare for the demands of the 21st century.

Why On-Demand?

This paper often refers to both process and on-demand writing. In order to examine instructional practices related to on-demand test preparation, it is important to understand the precepts of process writing to recognize the cognitive and emotional demands involved in developing narrative.

Many writing instructors use the process writing approach, often called the “Donald Graves program,” which Daniels and Bizar (2001) suggest is implemented in writing classrooms demonstrating “best practice” standards. In *A Community of Writers*, Zemelman and Daniels (1988) found that the process approach is not utilized in many junior-high or high school classrooms. This is surprising given the fact that Calkins (1986), Atwell (1998), and Graves (1994) indicate that the process approach results in better quality writing. Even Hillocks in his 1986 meta-analysis of factors that influence good writing includes the process writing approach as a positive force. However, Zemelman and Daniels (1988) acknowledge particular issues preventing teachers from employing this writing approach. These include departmentalization accompanied by restrictive schedules permitting 45 – 55 minutes per day for English teaching. The teachers must ascertain the needs of individual students and then create four to five different learning communities, all regulated by allotted timeslots. Atwell (1998) devotes an entire chapter pertaining to the time needed to create an environment that would “establish a context that invites and supports writing and reading” (p. 90). The classroom atmosphere is a positive factor in developing young authors (Atwell, 1998). The concept of a self-contained classroom, characteristic of elementary education, allows greater flexibility for teaching process writing. High school teachers may find it difficult to allot time for process writing given the amount of literature content that must be taught in preparation for college entrance exams.

Process writing includes the following stages: Prewriting; drafting, revision, drafting, editing, and publishing (Calkins, 1986). Some writing theorists have changed the names of the varied steps to accompany their individual pedagogical philosophy. For example, Murray (2009) uses the terms rehearsal, drafting, revision, and editing, while Burke (2003) divides the process into six stages: Beginning, visualization, gathering, constructing, finishing, and presenting.

Regardless of the different titles for each segment of the process, the progression repeats in a reciprocal manner rather than linear. Additional information pertaining to the process writing approach can be found in Appendix A.

In order to compose narrative effectively, students must plan what to write and develop a rhetorical strategy, which identifies the purpose of the piece, the audience, and the mode. Often the planning stage requires students to research, investigate, and inquire in order to find the information they want to convey to readers. They must organize thoughts and clarify topics in order to develop a clear thesis or purpose and develop the main points with sufficient support. This stage is called the prewriting stage and is followed by drafting ideas on paper while discerning the needs of the audience. Revision is a complex process that forces students to revisit the text to reconsider the writing. Usually aided by peers, through peer response, the student may choose to add, reorganize, or delete information in order to communicate efficiently with the reader. Drafting and revising may be performed multiple times before the writing enters the editing stage, which focuses on correctness and conventions.

Even though the process writing approach provides students with a recursive method of composing, writers must internalize this technique so the process can be replicated in a time-tested writing situation like direct writing assessment (on-demand writing); therefore, the cognitive demands of impromptu writing surpass those found in the non-timed composing situation. Hampton and Resnik (2009) state that on-demand requires the same stages except in a compressed time frame, a challenge for most students, often forcing them to ignore some of the process. Also, the writer must be certain the final product addresses and answers the prompt while maintaining control of organization and conventions.

The significance of the on-demand writing assessment increased as the *No Child Left Behind Act* brought pervasive changes to America's schools through testing and accountability and by mandating federal funding contingent upon testing, forced all states to implement this standardized testing (Scott, 2008). In Kentucky, the scores received on the on-demand assessment determine part of the accountability index. In *Writing On-Demand*, Gere, Christenbury, and Sassi (2005), write:

We live in a world of high-stakes testing and, in the area of writing, of testing on-demand writing. This is serious for secondary school students, who must learn to write effectively within a narrow window of time. Further, because these tests often carry consequences, there is also sometimes an emotional component for students, a component we know is not conducive to good writing. Nevertheless, high-stakes tests are here to stay for the near future. Highly focused writing in response to a specific prompt, completed within a limited amount of time, and scored using a weighted rubric, is the norm for most large-scale writing samples currently required by states and schools, by the current Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and American College Test (ACT) writing exams, by some colleges, and by Advanced Placement (AP) English exams (p. 2).

After disaggregating the data from Kentucky's on-demand writing assessment in 2007-2008, 2008-2009, and reading the NAEP's report card on writing, readers of the Report Card must infer that students must learn to perform more proficiently on direct writing assessment by internalizing the scoring criteria and becoming familiar with the required modes within the context of transactive, or read-world, writing. The scoring guide is the "institutional lens through which students learn to assess their own work as they reflect" (Scott, 2008).

Recently, fifty-one states and territories joined the Common Core State Standards

Initiative. “These sets of standards define the knowledge and skills students should have to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing, academic college courses and in workforce training programs” (CCSSO, 2010). In order to identify gaps in achievement in all content areas, the standards will be assessed. Writing is one of those areas, and it will be assessed using on-demand prompts in this nation-wide effort to improve our educational system.

Dynamics of Writing Instruction

Teacher Attitude and Perceptions

In his book, *A Writer Teaches Writing*, Murray writes, “You learn to write by writing and learn to teach by teaching” (1985, p. 144). Teachers have an inherent desire to make a difference in a student’s life, to develop a sense of agency that will play an important role in the personal development of the individual (Wilson, 2009). Teacher training provides pedagogical principles in preparation for delivering instruction in the classroom setting, but rarely are teachers trained to help students cultivate agency. Seeing students as writers requires a different lens through which to see the author’s needs and transforms teachers from the paradigmatic deliverer of information to mentor and coach. Zimmerman and Cleary (2006) define the importance of adolescence and personal agency.

Adolescence is often a stressful period during development because it involves a pivotal transition from childhood dependency to adulthood independence and self-sufficiency.

One major challenge that adolescents encounter during their teenage years involves acquiring a sense of personal agency in what often seems to be a recalcitrant world.

Personal agency refers to one’s capability to originate and direct actions for given purposes. It is influenced by the belief in one’s effectiveness in performing specific tasks, which is termed self- efficacy, as well as by one’s actual skill. (p. 45)

When students write they employ cognitive, linguistic, and physical operations in order to accomplish the text and its implications of conventions, audience, and purpose. Writing is challenging for many students and may create anxiety, avoidance, and frustration toward the subject and the teacher (Troia & Graham, 2003, p. 75). Teachers must receive training to effectively teach writing skills by addressing all of the facets that may effect the curricular expectations.

Atwell shares her revolutionary change in self-perception as an English teacher by using the term “liberating.” She stated, “I liberated myself as an English teacher by liberating my students as writers” (1998, p. 17). Graves (1994) encourages his readers to learn from students through listening, observing, and questioning. Both Atwell (1998) and Graves (1994) endorse student choice in the selection of writing topics, and both stress the importance of creating an atmosphere that encourages and sustains writing.

Unfortunately, the high-stakes testing requirements designed by states in response to *No Child Left Behind* negatively affect student performance by forcing teachers to ignore best practice and undermine the sense of developing agency (Wilson, 2009); Hillocks calls it “The Politicization of Assessment” (2002, p. 9). Research conducted by Au (2007) on the “*Effects of High-States Testing on Curriculum*” finds that pedagogical strategies changed from student-centered to teacher-centered. One teacher commented, “I don’t get to do as many fun activities” (Au, 2007, p. 262). Au (2007) also found that the tests narrow “curricular content to those subjects included in the tests, resulting in the increased fragmentation of knowledge forms into bits and pieces learned for the sake of the tests themselves” (p. 264). Winkler (2002), in *High-Stakes Testing: Division in the Ranks: Standardized Testing Draws Lines Between New and Veteran Teachers*, observed that experienced teachers find the testing pressures to be frustrating

and the increased paperwork time-consuming, while less experienced teachers find the assessment a positive challenge offering opportunity to try new strategies and methods.

Perrault's (2000) research found that teachers have become the center of attention when students do not perform to district expectations. Therefore, it is not surprising when he states that teachers feel the pressure of the state testing program is always present, and he reports that some supervisors issue undocumented policy, "If it ain't on the test, don't teach it" (Perreault, 2000, p. 706).

Teachers, trained to adopt a more progressive pedagogy in the classroom by encouraging students to be self-directed learners, collide with legislative goals based upon the essentialist testing policy, a measurable factor (Watanabe, 2007). Writing, by its very nature, requires progressive direction as students create through process writing, and measuring a student's ability to create prose in a timed impromptu situation is unrealistic. *The Neglected "R"*, a report of the National Commission on Writing, states that the assessment of writing competence must be fair and authentic (2004).

Teachers' perceptions of how to prepare students for the state assessment vary. Currently, little writing outside of the on-demand preparation is being required and that is largely due to high-stakes testing. However, when George Hillocks (2002) interviewed Kentucky teachers for his book, *The Testing Trap*, he noted that Kentucky teachers appeared very prepared for the demands of writing instruction and even complimented the writing portfolio assessment. Now that the writing portfolio is no longer part of the accountability index, teachers may return to teaching structure (five-paragraph essay) and correctness in preparation for the on-demand writing assessment.

Time Restraints

Graves (1994) found that there is not a particular methodology for teaching good writing; rather, it is the conditions for writing that result in remarkable work. He tells his readers to “examine the amount of time your students have for writing. Rethink the way time is used in your classroom in order to have at least four days a week when they can write” (Graves, 1994, p. 105). Calkins confirmed this by stating, “set aside an hour a day, every day, for the writing workshop” (1986, p. 25).

Regular, frequent time for writing helps students write well. Writing is a skill much like a sport; the more you practice the more successful you’ll become. Creating takes time, and often, teachers hesitate to allocate a substantial amount of time to writing when they must deliver instruction pertaining to numerous facets of the English content in preparation for assessment. However, this argument dissolves with the recognition that writing enhances critical thinking, which ultimately enhances learning (Bean, 1996). Time management is crucial. “The greatest concern some teachers have about in-class, loosely structured writing activity is that it consumes much time and appears to be difficult to control or use productively” (Zemelman & Daniels, 1988, p. 166).

Classroom Environment

Antinarella and Salbu (2003) state that “creating an inviting environment, a “good place” conducive to learning, should be a primary concern of teachers” (p.14). Secondary students often arrive to a sterile looking classroom with walls meagerly decorated with artifacts to enhance literacy even though research proves this environment should be designed to stimulate creativity and a love for reading and writing. The atmosphere doesn’t solely refer to the physical

appearance of the room, but first appearances and the setting can either be inviting or disconcerting to students.

Organization is one practice teachers can employ to purposefully arrange an atmosphere for learning. Rief (1992) and Atwell (1998) discuss specific areas of the classroom that create a welcoming environment for literacy instruction. Both constructed specific reading areas containing a wide range of diverse reading materials like books, magazines, and newspapers. This allows students to have easy access to resources and also places value on the literacy process and its importance to the teacher. A shelved area in another part of the room holds multiple colors of paper in all shapes and sizes and writing tools in a variety of colors and types. Atwell (1998) also stores different types of greeting cards students can use for correspondence writing.

Students in these classrooms participate in the reading/writing workshop, which encourages autonomous decisions in the selection of reading and writing material as the rooms are complete with a publishing area, writing models, reference materials and a conference table. This classroom structure requires advanced preparation that not only adds embellishment to a bare institutionalized room, but also opens the doors to an inviting atmosphere and ultimate learning opportunity. Once these peripheral components are addressed, knowledgeable teachers attempt to “cultivate motivation and engagement, deeper conceptual and strategic understanding, higher-level thinking, productive habits of mind, and positive attitudes toward future learning” (Wilhelm 2007, p. 16).

Jim Burke (2003) identifies four components of effective teaching, which address classroom environment differently. The first component, Construction, refers to making or building things, in this case building knowledge. As writing teachers, we have a plethora of

tools to help students build a foundation of knowledge in order to learn. Burke states, “it’s the government that makes us come to school but it’s the teacher who makes us want to learn” (2007, p. 7). By having the tools to conduct a writing class with directions that define the purpose, students will construct meaning and become active participants in the class. The writing classroom needs to engage students by addressing issues that require authenticity and reveal relevancy. The second component, Occupation, fosters student involvement through speech writing, poetry, journal writing, and collaborative settings like literature and writing circles. Students interact with the content material, learning activities, and cooperative projects as Negotiation, the third component, affects teacher expectations, the surrounding culture, and the school’s standards. This negotiating process is the liberating part of the writing process as students make choices regarding topics, revising with peers, editing, and publishing. It awakens and empowers young people as they act with more responsibility (Greene, 1998). The final component mentioned by Burke (2007) provides the tool through which you get to know your students, Conversation. Conversing with the teachers and peers helps to develop tacit knowledge (Applebee, 1996). The classroom environment plays a vital role in developing young writers.

Writing Research

Research on Components of Effective Writing

Teachers must address the tenuous demands of the composing process in order to effectively teach writing to students. In 1977, Janet Emig wrote *Writing as a Mode of Learning*, which investigated the correlation between learning and writing. However, forty years before Emig, Vygotsky, during his residence in Russia, researched how thought develops through writing. What processes do students utilize during composition? Vygotsky (1978) mentions that written communication develops through “inner speech” and social interactions, which has

provided a common theoretical framework for writing research. Much of the writing research accumulated for this study connects to the intimation that writing instruction should involve self-regulated understandings (inner speech) and involvement with peers.

Three components for effective writing generated by Hayes and Flower (1983) include the following: Planning, translating, and reviewing, which do not necessarily have to be linear, but rather a recursive process. These three components emerged after a protocol study with expert and average students writers at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburg, PA (Hayes & Flower, 1983).

Research on Planning Writing

Planning is sometimes referred to as prewriting, brainstorming, or rehearsing (Calkins, 1986). Janet Emig raised awareness of the value of prewriting in composition in “*The Composing Process of Twelfth Graders*” (1971). Planning, or prewriting, leads students to generate, organize and review ideas (Hayes & Flower, 1980), and it guides students to follow, interpret and organize the “inner speech” referred to by Vygotsky. A study conducted by Worden (2009) investigated prewriting and revision strategies for timed essay responses. After coding 890 timed essays, she determined that prewriting corresponded to high scores while revision did not.

Prewriting “denotes a surface approach to writing based on sticking to a plan, closely following the rules, and preparing for writing” (Lavelle, Smith, & O’Ryan, 2002, p. 407). After conducting a study involving 398 high school juniors, in *The Writing Approaches of Secondary Students*, Lavelle, Smith & O’Ryan (2002) found that prewriting reduces student apprehension about the writing task and significantly predicted writing outcomes. Planning for the writing situation involves the student generating ideas without the restriction of grades or assessment.

Teachers guide students to comprehend the purpose of the task and the audience. Zemelman and Daniels (1988) describe effective prewriting strategies for junior and senior high school students by synthesizing work completed by Johannessen, Kahn and Walter (1982), Gawain (1978), and researchers of composition. They identified five characteristics of effective prewriting instruction (Hillocks, 1985, p. 132):

1. Prewriting uses structured activities that lead students to focus on gleaned information for the topic and assists in organization of the material.
2. Prewriting still allows the student to have a choice about what they'll write.
3. Prewriting often generates scaffolding by the student as thinking and researching information becomes sequential.
4. Prewriting requires time in the classroom.
5. Prewriting is just as important as the final product.

Students must utilize both declarative and procedural knowledge during this process (Graham & Harris, 2007). Teachers must provide engaging activities when teaching planning to compose narrative in order to develop procedural knowledge Graham & Perin (2007) investigated research over the past twenty years pertaining to adolescent writing by examining 123 documents and ascertained that strategy instruction and scaffolding writing instruction were both strong characteristics of an effective writing program.

Eight pedagogical principles identified in a 2007 meta-analysis on research in writing include (Graham & Harris, 2007):

- Teach writing strategies by modeling and then scaffolding skills.
- Create a collaborative environment through interaction between teachers and students.

- Empower students by teaching knowledge, skills, and processes required to plan effectively.
- Differentiate instruction to address the needs and diverse learning styles of all students.
- Don't place strict time limits on planning; make it criterion-based.
- Motivate students to learn and internalize the strategy.
- Teach students self-regulation procedures to use the strategy.
- Teach students when to use the strategy effectively.

In 1981, Applebee (1981), through his demographic research, found that one possible argument for student brevity in writing could be the lack of appropriate time in the planning stage. His national study followed fifteen high school students over a period of 16 months to identify the kinds of texts they wrote and strategies they used in responding to writing assignments. The results pointed to teacher effectiveness in writing instruction, but also noted the value of preparing students to write.

Research on Generating Text and Review

Another component of the model developed by Hayes and Flower (1983) refers to the actual process of generating text, often called drafting by writing scholars and teachers, and the culmination of ideas. After assiduously representing ideas and brainstorming related to the topic through planning, students must begin transcribing those thoughts in an orderly manner.

Generating text “is the mental production of a linguistic message, distinct from transcription of that message into written text” (McCracken, 1988, p. 121). Calkins (1986) compares an author and drafting to an artist with a sketchpad. Writing takes place without inhibitions related to

format, spelling, and mechanics, only “sketching” what our mind fostered during the planning stage. Drafting soon becomes review or revision as the writer interacts with the text.

This textual immersion allows students to change or alter their thoughts as they revisit the writing. “Revision strategies need to be embedded within writing tasks rather than taught as a unitary, and final process at the end” (Lavelle et al, 2002). In *The Writing Approaches of Secondary Students*, Lavelle et al (2002) conducted a two-stage study, the first involving 398 high school juniors and the second involving 49 high school juniors from a metropolitan high school in the Midwest. After categorizing the data, revision strategies and self-regulatory strategies appeared to be key indicators of effective writing. Strategy instruction that focuses on explicitly teaching skills ranked in the top eleven characteristics of effective writing instruction in middle and high schools in the meta-analysis, *Writing Next*, conducted by Graham and Perin (2007). They investigated eleven studies pertaining to low-achieving writers and nine studies involving average writers and found that teaching strategies for writing had a dramatic effect on the quality of the composition. One strategy especially had a high effect in the analysis: Self Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD). SRSD techniques guide students to consider audience and purpose, develop a plan, and revisit the writing for text generation.

The importance of teaching writing strategies for review became the impetus for the California Writing Project’s partnership with a large school district that has a majority of ESL students (93%) that come from low socio-economic backgrounds in order to implement a cognitive strategies approach to reading and writing. This study spanned eight years and involved 94 high school teachers and approximately 2000 high school students per year. Students who received cognitive strategy instruction for writing significantly outperformed the control group on GPA, standardized tests, and writing assessments (Olson & Land, 2007).

Strategies, introduced in the Pathway Project, included the following categories adapted from Flower and Hayes (1981), Paris, Wasik and Turner (1991), Tierney and Pearson (1983), and Tompkins (1997): Planning and Goal Setting, Tapping Prior Knowledge, Questioning Techniques, Constructing the Gist, Monitoring, Revising, Reflecting, and Evaluating. The results of this study provided relevant implications for instruction for all students due to its comprehensiveness and length.

Beach (1979) investigated instructional strategies and revision by comparing three treatment groups: Those receiving between-draft teacher evaluation, those completing guided self-evaluation forms, and those receiving no evaluation at all. The study found the most successful of these three groups to be the group receiving between-draft teacher evaluation. Process conferences, with student writers to revisit pieces and works in progress, helped to sustain student focus and stimulated idea development, which automatically facilitates the revision process (Atwell, 1987).

Many students identify revision with grammar and mechanical changes similar to what occurred with Tressler's (1920) study on revision 60 years earlier. In a study of 20 college freshman and 20 experienced writers, Sommer's (1980) study supported this by finding that students' concept of revision didn't embrace changes to meaning and context. However, the experienced writers in Sommer's (1980) study looked at revision as a time to discover change and style. This research supports Atwell's (1987) classroom practice of teaching specific strategies for revision. To provide an illustration of revision across diverse populations, a study conducted by The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) (1977) generated the following results: Females revised more successfully, African American students made more

mechanical changes, and students with post-high school educated parents included a greater variety of revision changes.

Research on Peer Interaction

Atwell (1987) and Calkins (1986) both wrote of the importance of creating a writing environment conducive to exploring through text. One segment of this environment included interactions with peers. Walvood and McCarthy (1990) conducted observations on how peers could augment writing development through the creation of a professional community. They determined that students become better writers through the peer revision process. Preus (1999) and Dyson (1990) concurred with this finding through their research with first-year college students and first grade students respectively. These researchers, after examining their data, determined that students of all ages could learn to ask driving questions during peer response and observed that the questions appeared to be instinctively scaffolded, which led the students to self-evaluate and correct problems in the text.

Teachers must also develop the skill to effectively question students both to model the skill for the students and to guide the young author to re-visit personal writing. After visiting teachers' classrooms Sperling (1990) found that teachers who used appropriate questioning and modeled writing tasks developed more effective writers. The value of questioning has been emphasized in most teacher education programs, but this skill must be cultivated for use with young writers.

Vygotsky (1978) supports the theory of a social learning community confirming that learning with peers provides a natural way to "determine learning potential" (p. 11). Considering these findings in relation to the writing classroom one must look at Hayes' (1996) comprehensive model of how people write, which includes the social environment and the

individual. In a socially constructed classroom, students must work together to plan, draft, revise, and edit composition. According to Graham and Perin (2007), this social interaction has a direct, positive connection to the quality of the writing. Emig (1978) discusses the importance of social exchanges in the writing process. Formerly known as “a silent and solitary activity,” it is now known as a process “enhanced by working in, and with, a group of other writers, especially a teacher, who gives vital response including advice” (p. 140-141).

Theories of Effective On-demand Writing Instruction

When referring to pedagogical principles and change, multiple theories exist in an attempt to explicate the phenomena of pedagogical principles and change. In this scientific world, a theory identifies observations and occurrences in effort to generate practical solutions. Theories are merely lenses through which to elucidate the pedagogical phenomena spawned in the instruction of writing. Regardless of the theory, it is the teacher’s responsibility to enhance the curriculum so students communicate effectively. Writing empowers students with the ability and strategic capacity to convey messages in and to a variety of situations and audiences. Theories are not prescriptive recipes meant to resolve learning deficiencies in the classroom. Knowledge of writing theory aids in the development of instructional design to efficiently scaffold and differentiate curriculum to meet the needs of all students.

Traditional or Formal Theory

Traditional or formal pedagogy focuses primarily on the writing product rather than the processes involved in the creation of the product. Daniel Fogarty coined the term “current traditional” in 1959. Current traditionalists categorize writing according to purpose such as: persuasive, narrative, compare/contrast, definition, descriptive and informative (Stewart, 1985). This view shares similarities to the classical rhetorical model in that text is organized into

invention, arrangement, and style. The primary analogous component is the focus on product through a prescriptive model of creativity (Hairston, 1982). “It is a prescriptive and orderly view of the creative act, a view that defines the successful writer as one who can systematically produce a 500-word theme of five paragraphs, each with a topic sentence” (Hairston, 1982, p. 78). Even though this pedagogy developed during the 18th century, current traditionalism continues to be a major influence in 21st century classrooms (Doran, Rosen, & Wilson, 2003).

Many individuals equate good writing with using the proper conventions, accurate spelling, and precise grammar, and often parents voice concern when their children use incorrect spelling while drafting narratives. The fact that the child is composing a rough draft using imagery, dialogue, figurative language, and an effective introduction does not seem to matter when looking at the writing through a prescriptive lens. Only superficial surface errors seem to rouse the critical attitude when reading a draft. Dodd (1996), who conducted interviews over writing with twenty-five parents in Maine, found that the parents projected improvement in their children’s writing if they were exposed to a variety of lessons targeting grammar usage. It is true that rote-learning exercises do help students at different times, but the intense focus on grammar was found to be ineffective instruction by Graham and Perin (2007) in their meta-analysis of writing instruction. In fact, of the “eleven effect sizes for grammar instruction” (Graham & Perin, 2007, p. 462) calculated in grades four through eleven, teaching grammar apart from writing shows a statistically significant negative effect. Yet, in spite of this research, many classrooms around the United States use worksheets and grammar books extensively for English instruction. This is not entirely unconstructive as some students require additional teaching aids, like handouts, to practice the skills not yet mastered; however, often these activities are completed separate from the writing context.

Another factor that provides impetus to the traditionalist paradigm is its ease at generating quantitative assessment data offering a relatively efficient method of evaluating subjective content. This is especially evident as states bear the mandates of No Child Left Behind and the accountability attached to test scores. Donald Graves states that “reviewers can decide rather quickly where the student falls within the rubrics of fluency, use of details, coherence, use of conventions, and so on” (2002, p. 46).

The traditionalist paradigm started changing in the mid-20th century. In 1957, Noam Chomsky’s book *Syntactic Structures*, offered a new lens by looking at the process by which language evolves (Hairston, 1982, p. 81). By the 1960’s, a move toward the process of writing commenced with the Dartmouth College Seminar and the participants’ attention to teaching writing in a non-prescriptive atmosphere. This initiated a movement that saw writing as a “cognitive and expressive process shaping and extending everyday experience” (Nystrand, 2006, p. 11)

Expressivism. Expressivism allows writers freedom from the confines of traditional classicism, permitting individual creativity and inventiveness by encouraging writers to search within their “creative selves” in order to discover themselves as an author (Doran, Rosen, & Wilson, 2003). This theory of composition grew in popularity during the era of Progressive Education when John Dewey brought a change to English teaching over the separation of literary and composition instruction. Dewey encouraged the concept of integrated curriculum, to merge reading, writing, and the language arts. The decision to separate reading and writing instruction is often seen today in K-12 schools as well as university English curriculum.

It wasn’t until after the Russian government sent Sputnik into space in 1957 and the emergence of the free spirit culture of the 1960’s that the perception of writing instruction started

to gradually veer from prescriptive to process expressivist approach. During this time Peter Elbow, renowned author of writing pedagogy, increased awareness in three areas: Voice and audience; the concept of freewriting; and critical editing (Reynolds, Herzberg, Bizzell, 2003). This new paradigm of process writing pedagogy may have initiated some arguments but influenced other classroom practitioners like Nancy Atwell, Ralph Fletcher, and Linda Rief. The 1980's brought another change in writing pedagogy acknowledging a unique interdependent relationship between reading and writing promoted earlier by Dewey. Many classrooms across the country evolved into "writing workshops" in which teachers facilitated students' growth as authors through the different stages of the writing process: Prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. Fisher (1995) acknowledged that students can participate in the writer's workshop as early as first grade, and Bayer (1999), who also collected survey data in a first grade writer's workshop, found that the students' desire to write increased from 25% to 71% on a 100% scale using the workshop approach. Writing instruction, delivered in this non-threatening workshop environment, now directed the focus of attention to the student as an author rather than the student's product.

This progressive process paradigm allowed writers to break free from the traditionalist rules of the classical era. In 1972, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, Murray (2009) presented a paper titled "Teach Writing as A Process Not Product" at the New England Association of Teachers of English Convention. His paper acknowledged that the preservice teacher-training curriculum, which continued to focus on the interpretation of literature or product, perpetuated traditional pedagogy and that curricular changes must occur to emphasize the teacher's primary job, critiquing final compositions. Murray appealed to the reader to consider this new pedagogical trend of teaching unfinished writing rather than finished, and he encouraged

teachers to consider writing instruction a process: “A process of discovery through language” (p. 4).

Murray’s (2009) process included three stages: Prewriting, writing, and rewriting. He emphasized that this recursive process changes the teacher’s role from deliverer of content to facilitator of learning. He stated, “We are coaches, encouragers, developers, creators of environments in which our students can experience the writing process for themselves” (p. 4). Other contributors to the development of process theory include Peter Elbow, Janet Emig, Donald Graves, and Mina Shaughnessy (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006); the process approach “was validated in 1992 by the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association” (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006, p. 278). Early criticism of this model attacked the “linear effect” the process has on creating a product as instruction became a series of routine steps and writing evaluation became dependent on rubrics; however, Peter Elbow echoed Murray’s view on the process approach and stated that the process was a series of flexible recursive steps, simulating the process that professional writers employ.

Social-cognitive process theory. The social cognitive theory is a theory, or pedagogical premise, that endeavors to explain that individuals can learn from observing models, and they learn in a social environment. Flower (1994), a well-published author and researcher, spent a vast amount of time and effort clarifying the precepts of this theory as it pertains to composition. Her primary argument stated that writing text results from both cognitive and social experiences (Nelms, 2008). In *The Construction of Negotiated Meaning: A Social Cognitive Theory of Writing* (1994), Flower identified the following characteristics associated with this theory:

1. Literacy is an action that begins with a “literate act,” and a “practice that is performed as part of a rhetorical, social, and cultural situation” (p. 20).

2. “Literacy is a move within a discourse practice” or a transaction within a text guided by a flexible social scripts (p. 21). This discourse practice is both a social and rhetorical transaction initiated by human purposes or individual goals.
3. “Becoming literate depends on knowledge of social conventions and on individual problem solving” (p. 22). These conventions include knowledge of voice, audience, and other rhetorical components. The problem solving leads writers to communicate the entire story through intellectual moves that allow construction of meaning.
4. The new “basic” should start with expressive and rhetorical practices (p. 22). Students must be provided with opportunities to write. Peter Elbow recommended the concept of free-write where students write freely on a topic for a period of time. Atwell (1998) suggested having students write for real purposes and allow them to choose the topic and genre, while Flower (1994) stated that the control of literacy in the classroom should move from the teacher to the student through the social organization of the classroom such as implementation of the workshop mode.
5. “Literate action opens the door to metacognitive and social awareness” (p. 27). This last element allows for student reflection. It also engages students in a variety of writing situations, which may include defining problems, persuading, arguing, informing, and reacting to real-world problems. It creates an opportunity for students to become more aware of societal challenges, injustices, and needs.

Flower (1994) then concluded that a social cognitive image allows another part of literacy to come into focus: It shifts our attention not only from text features to discourse practices, but from social practices to personal literate acts. She stated that literacy is a practice that involves the interaction among rhetorical, social, and cultural circumstances. This interaction, which

emulates a particular discourse community, works collaboratively in the revision process and affects the process itself as the writer's cognition changes and new goals for the composition evolve. "The cognitive processes ...will naturally follow from the social situations..." as engineered by teachers, peers or the individual (Flower, 1989, p. 284); therefore, this concept of teaching writing considered the multiple factors involved in student generated composition.

In 1981, Flower and Hayes introduced a theory pertaining one of these factors, the cognitive processes involved in composition, as a result of their five-year protocol analysis, which was "a transcript of verbalized thoughts and the sequential activities which occur as a subject engages in a problem-solving activity such as composing" (Shah, 1986, p. 110). Their study identified the following characteristics: Process writing is a set of thinking processes directed by writers while composing; the processes can be embedded within any other; composing is goal-driven by the writer; and writers create their own goals according to the writer's sense of purpose, which may also change. "By placing emphasis on the inventive power of the writer, who is able to explore ideas, to develop, act on, test, and regenerate...we are putting.... creativity .in the hands of the...writer" (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 386). Goal setting is the "keystone of the cognitive process theory (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 377). This investigation provided greater understanding of the internal processes students experience during composition.

Vygotsky called this internal goal setting, inner speech, which "enables humans to plan and regulate their activity and derives from previous participation in verbal social interaction" (Wertsch, 1985, pp. 110-111). In the composing process inner speech plays a strong factor that can affect the written discourse both positively and negatively. Immature writers often experience gaps in stories as inner speech becomes abbreviated. Vygotsky said, "a single word

is so saturated with sense that many words would be required to explain it in written speech” (John-Steiner, 1985, p. 113). Inner speech precludes writing, which can present a problem for teachers. This activity should be fostered to encourage spontaneous creativity so that the teaching of strategies to develop and enhance the writing will not diminish the amazing potential provided by this inner speech.

Emig (1971) also researched the composing behaviors of 12th graders by recording the cognitive processes, or Vygotskian inner speech, that students experienced through interviews, products, and tape recordings. When students found themselves confronted with a school generated prompt, they began writing with little hesitation and did little revision, while occurrences of independent composing found students beginning with prewriting exercises appearing to contemplate their text development using revision as a “process of discovering” (Sommers, p. 385). This data might be relevant to the delivery of instruction for on-demand assessment.

The social cognitive theory as related to composition presents a number of vital pedagogical implications. It moves beyond the traditional content-oriented curriculum by introducing strategies that help guide students to be effective writers. The process theory becomes a part of these strategies without becoming imbedded in the curriculum as linear content and creates a social consciousness through negotiated topics.

Post-process theory. According to Kastman Breuch, proponents of post-process theory were influenced by postmodernist perspectives, and stated that the “process paradigm has reduced the writing act to a series of codified phases that can be taught” (2002, p. 97). Thomas Kent is identified as the originating scholar of post process theory in the early 1990’s. Many individuals believed that post-process theory was a response to process theory, but it actually had

very little to do with process pedagogy. The concepts behind post-process began with its definition of writing identifying it as an “activity rather than a body of knowledge” (Kastman Breuch, 2002, p. 98). Post-process theorists believe that writing cannot be taught by comparing writing to speaking; it cannot be mastered as a skill, but must be practiced through exercise with individuals (Heard, 2007). Joseph Harris wrote that one key feature of post-process pedagogy is moving the focus away from the process and turning it toward the student-writer (Taylor, 2000).

This attention to the student requires deliberate engagement on the part of the teacher through intentional interaction. Many teachers seek writing mastery for students by teaching skills and strategies rather than using the created student text to identify areas of deficiency. Through independent or group conferencing, students gain insight to textual errors within the context of the writing itself. Heard (2007) saw his students shift their emphasis in writing from mastery to analysis as they learned to question textual features and ideas in both personal and peer writings. Tobin (1994) noted that the writing process movement moved from transformation to questioning as teachers and students learned to analyze written text. The interaction with the text became a vital element of post-process theory.

Atwell (1998), known for her pedagogical text *In the Middle*, led teachers from a strict writing workshop process approach attested to in her 1987 version to a post-process approach in the 1998 edition. She still confirmed her belief in the precepts of mini-lessons, conferences, conventions with writing, and student ownership, but testified that these basic practices should not become the rules for determining progress. Rather, Atwell started focusing on interventions, which she called “knowledge-based teaching” (p. 48). She not only used teacher conferences with individuals and groups, but also demonstrated writing through modeling. Her presence provided the balance for tensions that evolved as her writers negotiated the “conventions of the

culture” (pg. 50). Atwell (1998) did not recommend throwing out process and workshop; rather she referred to teachers as the “cultivator of the garden” (p. 51). Post-process theory “pushes students toward continual cognitive and metacognitive analytical development” (Heard, p. 301). This theory provides teachers with insights for classroom instruction as it raises student awareness of their own textual formation.

My theoretical stance, based on my interpretation of the needs of my students, advocates looking through the lenses of all the theories in order to select the appropriate strategies to meet the identified needs. Even though Applebee (1986) stated that there is almost always a gap between educational theory and educational practice, being cognizant of these theoretical perspectives provides teachers with a foundation of knowledge they can use to design instruction.

Pedagogical Implications: Teaching for the Test

Reading the Prompt and Analyzing the Question

In the Kentucky Writing Handbook (KDE, 2007), teachers can study the different kinds of prompts that students will confront on the KCCT assessment. Teachers must introduce the design of the prompt before the assessment date and identify its parts: situation and task. The situation identifies the background through an invented narrative, and the task informs the student of the audience, purpose and mode. The task may ask students to do one of the following tasks: Respond to text, narrate an event, or persuade the reader. This information helps students determine the intended voice for the discourse. Finally, the task also informs students of the required mode, which may be a feature article, editorial, speech or letter.

Many teachers use mnemonics, a cognitive strategy, to direct students in an accurate interpretation of the prompt. Some use FAP, which forces students to look for the required form, audience and purpose of the task. Others, including, a KDE Kentucky writing consultant,

instruct students to use SPAM to help them focus on the situation, purpose, audience and mode. If you frequent a KY classroom you may see pictures of cans of SPAM hanging on the walls to remind students of the importance of each letter. One other mnemonic device is the use of WWF: Who (audience), Why (purpose), and Form (mode).

One teacher from Paducah Independent School District and consultant for the Purchase Area Writing Project, created an “On-Demand Tip Page” for her students. She employs WWF as a tool for initiating prior knowledge in order to answer the prompt. The simple letters trigger a cognitive response and remind students what to identify prior to writing a response to the prompt. She also has students complete the following phrase, which was developed by a Professor of English at Eastern Kentucky University:

I am writing a _____(form) to _____
(audience) for the purpose of _____(reason for writing).

In *Writing on Demand: Best Practices and Strategies for Success*, Gere, Christenbury, and Sassi (2005) write that in order to effectively respond to a writing assessment prompt, students should be conscious of five particular analysis questions:

1. What is the central claim or topic called for?
2. Who is the intended audience?
3. What is the purpose or mode for the writing task?
4. What strategies will be most effective?
5. What is my role as a writer in achieving the purpose? (p. 67)

In order for students to respond to these questions, they must have a repertoire of topics, audiences, purposes and modes, strategies, and different roles, which requires teachers to design their curriculum to include adequate instruction of these elements. When addressing those who

refute the need to “teach for the test,” the implications for instruction to prepare students for the writing assessment can not be ignored by classroom teachers.

Prewriting and Organization

Gere, Christenbury, and Sassi (2005) write that students need to practice prewriting, or invention after the analysis of the prompt, and in order for students to prewrite effectively, they must know the rhetorical demands of the purpose: Writing to persuade, inform, or narrate. Advanced organizers may serve as a guide for students to help them consider the “How” and “What” to write. Suggestions for brainstorming and prewriting include free writing, looping, journaling, clustering, cubing, listing, questioning, outlining, and webbing. For example, if the prompt is persuasive, it might read like the following: “Write an editorial expressing your opinion as to whether the animal shelter should be moved to another area of the county or whether it should remain in its current locale.” Students must first determine which side of the argument to support; therefore, before writing the text, it may help students to construct a simple T-chart listing the positive and negative aspects of moving the animal shelter.

After completing the prewriting, the student must then make deliberate cognitive decisions about how to organize the information to apply the tools of the genre and effectively communicate the message (Murray, 1985). Organization is an important role in developing the response to a prompt. Through goal-setting the student must provide a logical narrative that captures the attention of the reader and provides the needs facts to support the stance. Students must have a sense of sequential development and knowledge of leads and conclusions to recognize the interconnections of form and content (Alberston, 2007).

Drafting

Gere, Christenbury and Sassi (2005) list five context analysis questions that will help

students draft on a “timed” writing assessment:

1. What is my time limit?
2. What kinds of writing aids are available to me? Is there a rubric, a writing checklist?
3. What are the targeted skills for this particular test?
4. What kind of format is expected?
5. What specialized expectations are implicit in this writing task? (p. 138).

On Kentucky’s On-Demand writing assessment, students have 60 minutes in which to complete the response. If additional time is needed an extra 60 minutes may be granted. Due to the time restraint, students are encouraged to plan their draft. “Students who do best on writing tests are the ones who allocate a significant portion of the available time to planning” (Gere, Christenbury, & Sassi, 2005, p. 143). Teaching students to use the clock in the development of the response will help the student develop skills in goal setting. Since Kentucky reminds students about the different stages of the writing process, students should also plan time for revision and editing. “Students write under specified time limitations. Often, students are permitted to plan, draft, revise, and edit their work within the allotted time” (KDE, 2007, p. 106).

Revision and Editing

The following components taken from the 12th grade Core Content for Writing Assessment validates that students will be assessed on the entire writing process including their revision and editing capabilities in on-demand assessment. In other words the final document should be fluent and correct (KDE, 2007).

WR-HS-1.1.0

Purpose/Audience: Students will establish and maintain a focused purpose to communicate with an authentic audience by

- Narrowing the topic to create a specific purpose for writing

- Establishing a controlling idea, theme or thesis about the topic
- Choosing a perspective authentic to the writer
- Analyzing and addressing the needs of the intended audience
- Adhering to the characteristics of the form
- Applying a suitable tone
- Allowing voice to emerge

WR-HS-1.2.0

Idea Development/Support: Students will support main ideas and deepen the audience's understanding of purpose by

- Developing logical, justified and suitable explanations
- Providing relevant elaboration
- Explaining related connections or reflections
- Applying idea development strategies appropriate for the form

WR-HS-1.1.0

Purpose/Audience: Students will establish and maintain a focused purpose to communicate with an authentic audience by

- Applying a suitable tone
- Allowing voice to emerge when appropriate

WR-HS-2.3.0

Organization: Students will create unity and coherence to accomplish the focused purpose by

- Engaging the audience
- Establishing a context for reading when appropriate
- Communicating ideas and support in a meaningful order

- Applying transitions and transitional elements to guide the reader through the piece
- Developing effective closure

WR-HS-3.5.0

Language: Students will exemplify effective language choices by

- Applying correct grammar and usage
- Applying concise use of language
- Incorporating strong verbs, precise nouns, concrete details and sensory details
- Applying language appropriate to the content, purpose and audience

WR-HS-3.6.0

Correctness: Students will communicate clearly by

- Applying correct spelling
- Applying correct punctuation
- Applying correct capitalization
- Incorporating acceptable departure from standard correctness to enhance meaning when appropriate

Teachers must prepare students for revising the response by providing practice in both independent and peer revision. Students should also be cognizant of the Kentucky Scoring Guide to enable them with the assessed descriptors on the rubric. For example, one teacher teaches students to revise using POISED, an acronym for the six traits of effective writing, which also serve as descriptors on the Kentucky Scoring Guide. The “P” represents purpose for the writing must maintain an authentic and insightful focused purpose throughout even though the situation and task are fictitious. Organization “O” must demonstrate logical processing of the text employing effective transitions. The “I” reminds students of needed idea development or

support, which should provide the reader with sufficient details to comprehend the message. Students should use a variety of sentences “S”, which enhance the meaning of the text. Students should use acceptable and “E” enriched vocabulary appropriate for the audience and purpose. Finally, the “D” demonstrates control of conventions and correctness. If the students remember this cognitive device they can quickly review their paper prior to the end of the allotted time.

Graham and Perin (2007) found in their meta-analysis for the Carnegie Center that teaching students pertinent strategies for effectively planning, developing, and revising writing is vital. In a direct assessment setting, students do not have access to their peers for peer revision and editing; therefore, they must be fluent with cognitive strategies, which will empower them with the skills to independently revise.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Research Perspective

This qualitative case study used naturalistic inquiry in an attempt to understand the phenomena associated with proficient and distinguished on-demand scores on the Kentucky Core Content Test (KCCT) in Kentucky's high schools. Patton (2002) defined naturalistic inquiry as one, which "takes place in real-world settings and the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest"(p. 39). This method allowed me to discern and capture emerging patterns without predetermining or presupposing the results (Guba, 1978). This research included visits to four Kentucky high schools in order to be immersed into the natural setting.

Theoretical Perspective

This investigation, situated within a constructivist paradigm, acknowledges the complexities of several realities placing emphasis on individual perspectives (Crotty, 1998). This theory focuses on how knowledge evolves by placing value on how humans construct meaning or make sense of their worlds by processing current and prior knowledge. Learning occurs through active involvement in the learning process. By incorporating an interpretive lens, I identified pedagogical phenomena connected with on-demand writing instruction to construct meaning and understanding of writing practice (Crotty, 1998). This interpretive lens afforded me the opportunity to construct cultural interpretations or "naturalistic generalizations" of the phenomena.

During this study, participants shared instructional strategies used in the classroom, information about school climate, and perceptions about motivating high schools students to perform to high expectations. As a teacher and writing project director I had to provide an

unprejudiced description of the phenomena recorded, as objectivity is the “expression of fidelity to the phenomena investigated” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 27). Because of this, I had to bracket any preconceptions and bias that might influence the phenomena.

Research Design

This inquiry investigated the phenomena of high achieving writing programs in schools with different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. As a case study, this investigation allowed me to discover insightful perspectives about the schools’ writing programs, instructional strategies used in the classroom, and the learning environment with the potential of “making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education” (Merriam, 1988, p. 3). Using Stake’s (1995) explanation of case study analysis, this inductive study generalizes the conceptual descriptions of the observations by moving from specific observations to broader generalizations through pattern identification. This study also identified an understanding of the phenomena surrounding the particularistic analysis of on-demand writing. The descriptive analysis elucidated the phenomena related to proficient writing in the four schools involved in this study by exploring categories, the relationships between and among the categories, and uncovering patterns that might play a significant role in developing proficient writing (Bradley, 1993).

Selection of Case Studies

“Since case study research is not sampling research” (Stake, 1995, p.4), I followed the criterion Stake suggested (1995), which states that the researcher must critically analyze potential subjects that can best increase knowledge and understanding about the topic. Merriam (1988) advocated that the “purposeful sampling strategy used will be based on the assumption that one wants to discover, understand, gain insight; therefore, one needs to select a sample from

which one can learn the most” (p. 48). Therefore, the high schools selected for this study were determined by the following criteria: High test scores on the on-demand writing assessment, geographic location, socio-economic status, percentage of minority students, and the total number of students enrolled in the school.

To address the first criteria, I identified schools whose 12th grade students attained a high percentage of proficient and distinguished scores on the Kentucky Core Content Test during the 2008 and 2009 school year. I narrowed the pool to the top twenty high scoring high schools on the on-demand assessment using the released testing data on the Kentucky Department of Education website. In order to eliminate the argument that the testing pool might be an extremely intelligent class, I recorded two consecutive years of on-demand test results for each of the twenty schools.

To allow for diversity in the cultural arena, another criteria included identifying schools from different geographic locations across the state of Kentucky. Selecting schools from different parts of the state not only brought the cultural norms for that particular area into perspective; it also made the study relevant to all teachers in the state. Criteria reflecting cultural diversity included the percentage of students identified for the national free and reduced school lunch program, percentage of minority students, size of the student population, economic influence of the community, and the overall historic heritage of the region. According to Okpala, Okpala, and Smith (2001), student performance is negatively affected by low socio-economic status. After studying the test data I decided that this study should look at scores above the state average. Therefore, the sampling criterion for this study required that at least 40% of the students qualified for the national school lunch program score proficient and distinguished, which was above the state average on-demand score of 35% for all high school seniors in the state.

Based on the selection criteria, I charted the data on a table to reduce the top twenty schools that scored proficient and distinguished on the on-demand writing assessment to those that had sustained high scores for two consecutive years with a difference of no more than twenty percentage points. This reduced the number of schools to twelve, which were then plotted on a map of Kentucky to identify their location relative to geographic regions. Only one of the remaining twelve schools was located in Western Kentucky. This small independent school had a high percentage of students that qualified for the national school lunch program with over 46% of those students scoring either proficient or distinguished on the on-demand assessment. Since the school in Western Kentucky was a small rural school, I looked for one with a high urban population and a high percentage of minority students among the seven schools in the northern region of Kentucky. One school, located in the northern regions of Kentucky, matched this criterion. Three schools remained from the list of the top twenty in the Eastern region of the state, with one school in Appalachia. This small independent school showed a high percentage of students qualifying for the national school lunch program and 61% of those students scored proficient or distinguished on the on-demand assessment. Only one school matched the criteria in the south central region of Kentucky. This large rural high school also enrolled a large population of students participating in the national school lunch program and 54% of those students performed at the proficient or distinguished levels. Therefore, four schools, selected from the original twenty and representing four different regions of Kentucky, were selected for this study. For the purpose of this study, the four schools, using pseudonyms, are referred to as Blue Grass High School, Timberland High School, Falls High School, and Rolling Hills High School.

Blue Grass High School, located in an urban setting in northern Kentucky with a population of just under 2000 students, hails itself as one of the oldest public high schools in Kentucky (KDE School Report Card 2008-2009). The curriculum that students follow is based on the Traditional program, which promotes a structured learning environment and focuses primarily on academics. This school scored in the upper 5% in the state in on-demand writing on the 2008-2009 Kentucky Core Content Test and according to the assessment data released by the Kentucky Department of Education more than one-fourth of the students who took the on-demand assessment are minority students.

Nestled in the hills of Appalachia with about 300 students, Timberland High ranked as one of the high performing schools in the state on the 2009 on-demand writing assessment and consistently scores as one of the top ten highest scoring high schools in Kentucky. Over one-third of those assessed participate in the National School Lunch Program, which qualifies the school as a Title 1 school allowing them to receive federal funding to align and develop curriculum.

In the heart of Lake Cumberland, Falls High School is home to over 800 students. In 2009, this school ranked in the top twenty on the 2009 KCCT on-demand assessment. Over half of the students tested qualified for free and reduced lunch and this school scored above the Kentucky average in all academic content areas.

Rolling Hills High School, located in the Pennyryle region of Western Kentucky, has an enrollment of 295 students, which includes both junior high and high school. Over one-half of the students come from a low socio-economic background according to the number participating in the National School Lunch program. The scores on the on-demand assessment indicate that this school ranked in the upper 10% of 224 Kentucky high schools on the 2008-2009 on-demand

assessment. This school has been recognized as a Bronze Medal School in US News & World Report's Best High Schools in America.

Methods of Data Collection

In order to provide a more holistic and better understanding of the phenomenon under study, data were collected from multiple sources, which included interviews, observations, and document review. Patton (2002) metaphorically compared the term triangulation to the strong geometric shape, emphasizing the stalwart dependability of the triangle's use in construction. Denzin (1978) stressed the importance of triangulation by stating that each method of data collection employed reveals different aspects of the research project allowing for greater interpretation of the phenomena in question.

After receiving approval from the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB), I contacted the principals at each of the identified schools, via email, for permission to conduct the research in their respective high schools. Three of the four principals appeared interested in my study and referred me to those teachers who prepared students for the on-demand writing assessment. The fourth principal simply supplied the name of the school curriculum coordinator who arranged an itinerary for my visit. After receiving the names of the writing teachers, I contacted them through email to arrange for a visit and subsequent interviews and observations.

Interviews. In this study I used both formal and informal conversational interviews for the purpose of understanding the teachers' experiences and the meaning of those experiences (Seidman, 2006). As a basic mode of inquiry, I combined this strategy with the interview protocol approach to help keep the discourse on task and to utilize the interview time effectively (Patton, 2002). This combination allowed the opportunity to pose new questions to elaborate on subjects of interest as the interview proceeded. I used both digital recordings and field notes to

record the data during the classroom interviews and additional data as I followed the teacher(s) around on the school campuses. The recorder presented a disadvantage to some, while taking notes didn't appear to inhibit conversation. In fact, during a couple instances, the teachers restated comments to ensure they were written correctly.

Kale and Brinkmann (2009) list seven states of interview inquiry for the novice interviewer, which may prevent excessive emotional hardships. This list includes the following: thematizing-the purpose of the interview; designing – plan the design of the task; interviewing – interviews are conducted based on the interview guide; transcribing – prepare the interview for analysis by transferring it to written text; analyzing – decide on modes of analysis; verifying – address the validity, reliability, and generalizability of the data; and reporting – share the results of your study and the methods. These seven linear factors helped me organize and conduct this study beginning with the interview from its conception to publication. I first established the purpose for the interview, to obtain data regarding on-demand instruction, and then designed potential questions to help focus the interview on the purpose.

In addition to the teacher interviews, I interviewed at least one of the following school personnel: the principal, the Chairperson of the English Department or Literacy Coach, or the School Curriculum Coordinator. Students, selected by the teacher, participated in both formal and informal interviews. Although the teachers provided personal perspectives about the instructional strategies used in the classroom, the population of students, and the academic environment, the individual in an administrator's position supplied a different view regarding the success of the school's writing program. Finally, I interviewed students at each school as the students provided different perspectives, which added additional insights into the school's writing program and performance on the KCCT assessment.

Initially, I requested interviews with one teacher, one administrator and three students. However, I realized the need to be flexible at each site in terms of collecting data to fit their schedules and preferences. Thus, as illustrated by the numbers in Table 1, only one school agreed to my request by supplying the exact number of participants requested; yet, the other schools did offer opportunities for dialogue with additional students and school personnel.

The interviews at the four different schools included the participants as noted in the Table 1. The names of participants with an *F* beside their name participated in a formal interview (see Appendix B), while those with an *I* next to their name were informally interviewed. The formal interviews involved the use of the interview protocol, while the informal interview involved similar questions without the confines of the protocol.

Table 1

Schools and Participants

School	Teachers	Administrative Personnel	Students
Blue Grass High School	Ms. Allen (F)	Mrs. Lockhart (F)	Tom (I) Brian (I) Sharon (I) Lilly (I)
Timberland High School	Mrs. Tabors (F) Mrs. Gage (I) Mrs. Riley (I)	Mrs. Cook (F) Mr. Mead (F)	Ginny (I) Jill (F) Blake (F) Tricia (I)
Falls High School	Mrs. McGill (F) Mrs. Murray (I)	Mrs. Wilson (F)	Daysha (F) Elizabeth (F) Tony (F)
Rolling Hills High School	Mr. Michael (F) Mrs. Jones (F)	Mr. Holiday (I) Mrs. Dean (F)	Tina (F) Danny (F) Izzy (I)

Note: Names of all teachers, administrators, students, and schools are pseudonyms.

The interview protocol for the teachers and administration explored teacher practices, strategies and the implementation of the process writing approach when preparing for the on-demand assessment. The questions also addressed factors identified in the Kentucky Writing Handbook (2007) that support a successful writing program, which include the following: curriculum planning, professional development, research-based practices, instructional and technological resources, administrative support, analysis of student work, positive learning environment, opportunity to write, and sufficient staffing. As noted in Appendix C, the questions used with student participants targeted their perceptions of the reasons for success on the test.

Observations. Although interviews were the major source of data, observations were equally important in this study. I collected information through observing the classroom environment, the school facility and atmosphere, and social interactions in the classroom setting.

“Observation is the best technique to use when an activity, event, or situation can be observed firsthand, when a fresh perspective is desired, or when participants are not able or willing to discuss the topic under study” (Merriam, 1988, p. 89). Observational data focused on the setting, the activities, the people involved, and the perceived meanings of what was observed (Patton, 2002).

The Observation Protocol (see Appendix D) was created by analyzing and synthesizing information from the following sources: The Writing Observation Framework (Henk, Marinak, Moore & Mallette, 2004); The Reading Lesson Observation Framework (Henk, Moore, Marinak, & Tomasetti, 2000); The Administrators Writing Checklist found in the Kentucky Writing Handbook (KDE, 2007); The KY Department of Education’s “*Characteristics of Highly Effective English and Language Arts Teaching and Learning*” (www.education.ky.gov); and the

“Questions to Guide a School Self-Assessment of On-Demand Instruction” found on KDE website (www.education.ky.gov). The notes column on the right side of the document helped to collect observational data about ancillary classroom practices such as classroom management, student negotiated instruction, and specific resources used by the teacher. Similar to the interview protocol, this instrument served as a guide to help me focus on specific factors during the observation. I used this observation protocol during the formal observations in one classroom at each school to record the data, and then I rewrote the notes following the observation to make sure that the context and details accurately reflected the observation.

The observations for this research not only consisted of a formal observation using the protocol, but they also included informal observations during the tours of the four facilities and different classrooms. Time spent waiting in halls for interviews allowed me to note student behavior and interpersonal connections between staff and students. This time of informal examination opened a window into the cultural environment, which was carefully recorded and transcribed immediately after leaving the site in order to report the data accurately.

During the observation itself I followed the components recommended by Patton (2002) as a tool to guide fieldwork. First, I developed a descriptive visual of the classroom and school and I sketched a seating chart to note interactions between students and students and teacher within the classroom detecting verbal flow. Acheson and Gall (2003) state that verbal flow is a valuable observation technique because it identifies the verbal interchanges between students and teacher by focusing on the “initiators and recipients of verbal communication and the kinds of communication in which they engage” (p. 178). I also recorded relevant information regarding the social aspects of the classroom and the school environment.

I visited each campus twice, which follows Patton's (2002) recommendation that, "Evaluations that include brief site visits to a number of program locations may serve the purpose of simply establishing the existence of certain levels of program operations at different sites" (p. 275). My first visit, a formal visit, included time to observe the school culture and its sense of community along with the planned observations and interviews. The second visit was what I refer to as a *random* visit where I arrived on the premises unannounced to talk informally with those I spoke with during the formal visit. I did not conduct formal observations or interviews during this visit, nor did I ask for documents; rather, this second visit allowed for spontaneous observations and informal conversation, which I documented using fieldnotes. The second visit provided additional data on the contexts of relationships and behaviors, which may not have been visible during the planned visits.

Document review. Many of the teachers provided artifacts they felt were useful in the classroom and the school writing program. Since documents cannot be used in isolation (Merriam, 1998) the artifacts were kept with the data from the school where they were attained. The following items were received from the teachers and administrators: PowerPoint presentations used to teach the genres of on-demand, lesson plans, student models, the school's report card, the school's writing policy, advanced organizers used to help students organize their writing, KOSSA writing templates, and other resources that may have an impact on on-demand assessment. Often called "material culture" in anthropology, these documents constitute a rich source of information that provided information about pedagogical practices that cannot be observed. Documents prove valuable not only because of what can be learned from them, but they provide a stimulus for new areas of inquiry that can be pursued only through direct observation and interviewing (Patton, 2002).

Data Analysis

The data for this research were analyzed to identify unique patterns and/or themes shared across the different sites. Initially, I assumed the focus would point strictly to the instructors' pedagogical methods, but after visiting the schools and revisiting the data, the connections to the cultural environment indicated that it, too, must be considered in this analysis. Thus, all data were analyzed to identify any patterns or commonalities that may offer insight to high performance on the on-demand assessment.

Lindolf and Taylor (2002) identified three key sections to data analysis: decontextualize, recontextualize, and interpretation. Decontextualizing included gathering data, analyzing the information, and creating codes to aid in the next step, recontextualizing. In this step, I categorized findings into specific groups. This inductive content analysis was used for data reduction and sense-making to identify core consistencies and meanings, which evolved into themes during the interpretation stage of analysis.

More specifically, the search for understanding the pedagogical and cultural phenomena of on-demand writing instruction was guided by Srivastava's (2009) reflective framework for qualitative analysis by addressing three questions: (a) What are the data telling me? (b) What is it I want to know? and (c) What is the dialectical relationship between what the data are telling me and what I want to know? This question-driven analysis created a manageable classification or coding scheme that provided a framework for organizing the data and identifying themes (see Figure 1), which led to synthesis and the evolvment of naturalistic generalizations pertaining to the phenomena.

I imported all of my interview transcriptions, field notes, and writing protocol observations as text files into four folders, one for each site in the study. Seidel (1998) shares

that qualitative data analysis embraces three parts: noticing, collecting and thinking. The “noticing” elements yielded raw materials through observations, interviews, and documents, which included written notes, sketches, descriptive records of setting, school writing plans, instructional artifacts, and completed observation instruments. “Collecting” refers to the process of sorting “puzzle pieces into groups” (Seidel, 1998, p. 3), and thinking connects to the interpretation stage of examining the data.

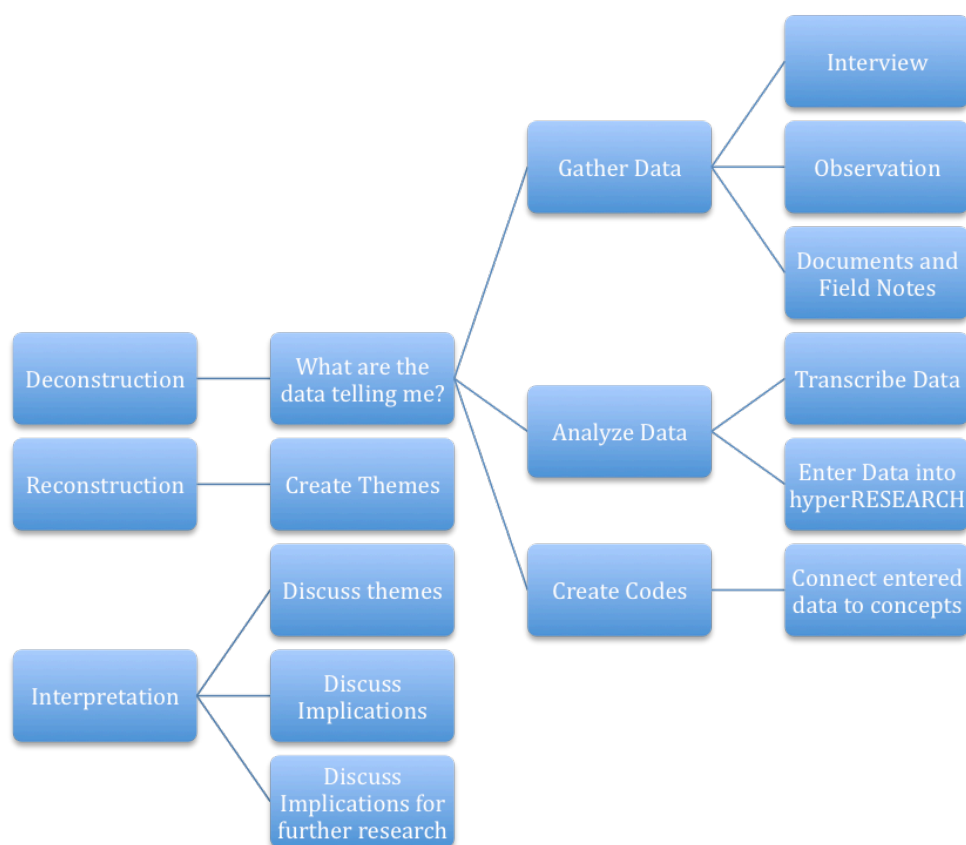


Figure 1 *Data Organization Chart*

To begin this “collecting” process, I added the data into Hyper RESEARCH, a CAQDAS (Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software) tool for open coding, as four text files

giving me four cases with which to work. I combined the data from the four cases and read through it to reacquaint myself with the material as the software recorded it. The second time I read the data, I coded the data by labeling characteristics or ideas found in the text. For example, I labeled text that referred to planning for writing as *planning/prewriting*; when I read the quotes referring to explicit grammar instruction, I coded the section *direct instruction*. Yin (1984) describes this analysis as the act of refining. The data then went through the process of integration into categories as similar patterns were identified. This process, known as selective coding, included writing narratives around identified elements, creating illustrations, and reviewing field notes. The software automatically listed and saved the codes in a code bank, or master list as seen in Table 2, which reminded me of the terms I used as I progressed through the data.

Table 2

Analysis of Codes

Awareness of Prompt	Critical thinking	Direct instruction	Form/format	Formative assessment
Narrowing the focus	Planning	Prewriting	OD teacher created materials	Special Needs
Student models	Student negotiated instruction	Genre instruction	Teacher modeling	Family involvement
Student Behaviors	Campus facilities	Disaggregate data	Teaching environment	Principal involvement
School community	Teacher perceptions	Incentives	Reading strategies	Socioeconomic status
Three kinds of writing	Writing Process	Administrative support	Expectations	Schedule
Colleague support	KY Scoring Guide	Acronyms	Professional development	Demographics
Revision	Tutoring	Grades	Grammar Instruction	Essay development
Student response	Texts	KDE materials	Teaching time element	Types of English courses
Paragraph development	Mechanics	Practice writing	Writing Policy	Critical Thinking
Writing curriculum	Teacher attitude/personality	Writing Plan	Teacher qualification	Expectations

After rereading and checking the accuracy of the codes, I ran a frequency report to identify high occurrence codes or the codes that were assigned most often in the data. The codes showing the most occurrences included the following: school community (environment and climate), teacher perceptions, principal involvement, awareness of the prompt, teacher and student modeling, student negotiated instruction or student choice, process writing, teaching the genre, high expectations, incentives, direct instruction, and writing plan/policy. It is important to note that high frequencies do not signify that the other codes lacked importance in this study; rather, it suggests that I observed or experienced these areas more often.

Table 3

Categorization of Themes

Curriculum	Learning Culture	Motivation
Awareness of Prompt Student and Teacher Models Writing Process Direct Instruction Teaching the Genre	School Community/climate Teaching Environment Teacher Perceptions Writing Plan/Policy High Expectations Principal Involvement	Student Negotiated Learning or student choice Incentives

With the 12 areas identified as high frequency characteristics of the schools involved in this study, and in order to continue the “sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings” (Patton, 2002, p. 453), I again studied the 12 codes and grouped them based upon similarities. This data reduction analysis led to the following three themes: (a) curriculum, (b) learning culture, and (c) motivation (see Table 3). Five areas were identified under *curriculum*, which centered on guiding ideas within classroom instruction. The second theme, *learning culture*, also encompassed five areas;

however, different from curriculum, these areas were broader, comprising beliefs, attitudes, and school practices and policies. The final theme, *motivation*, included just two areas, yet was quite prevalent in the data. Therefore, through this comparative analysis and categorical aggregation, similar patterns shared among the four schools were identified. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) describe this as “shifting from describing separate phenomena to searching for their common essence” (p. 27).

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) maintained that trustworthiness in qualitative research is essential. Similarly, Yin (1984) suggested that researchers consider several criteria in designing and implementing exemplary case study research, and he discussed the importance of the completeness of the case study. This included the collection of relevant data and the documentation and organization of that data. The triangulation of data collection (observation, interview, and collecting documents) strengthened the reliability of this study (Merriam, 1988). Using the interview introduced the phenomena from the subject’s view (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) as it opened the window from the perspective of the practitioner, while the observation provided the environmental perspective. Then, collecting documents used by the instructor to teach on-demand writing provided another view. Thus, relevant data were collected to study the phenomena of on-demand writing instruction.

While the relevancy of the data provided a foundation for trustworthiness, Patton (2002) states that “the credibility of qualitative inquiry depends on three distinct but related inquiry elements: rigorous methods; credibility of the researcher; and philosophical belief in the value of qualitative inquiry” (p. 552). Being involved with the National Writing project, I am aware of the basic premises of writing instruction, which gives me, as the researcher, some credibility. It

may also pose barriers to this study. I also teach English composition and methods courses for preservice teachers, which again provide some foundation for interpreting best practice writing instruction. Therefore, I have had to bracket any preconceptions or biases that may affect data analysis and the interpretation of that data. During the interviews I have restrained from leading the subject to respond to questions from my viewpoint in order to collect unprejudiced data. I understand that “value-free inquiry is impossible” (Patton, 2002, p. 93), but I tried to take steps to alleviate the influence of bias by acknowledging it. The use of supporting audio recordings and field notes provided some neutrality over the collection of interview data as it was transcribed word for word rather than written using my interpretation and recollections from memory. I also had to be cautious not to have a “tendency to over identify with the people being studied” (Merriam, 1988, pg. 95) because of my connections with writing pedagogy. This connection to writing provided credibility, and by recognizing potential bias, the value of qualitative inquiry was maintained.

Another ingredient that adds to the trustworthiness of this research rests in the knowledge that the understandings and findings of this study can ultimately influence on-demand writing instruction in Kentucky’s high schools after the results are disseminated across the state. As a holistic educator, I realize that naturalistic inquiry illuminates phenomena that positivistic studies cannot. Regardless of the subjectivity involved in qualitative inquiry, knowledge can emerge as patterns are identified limiting naturalistic generalizations (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

Limitations

Stakes (1995) states that the case study “champions the interaction of research and the phenomena” (p. 95). In other words, most of the gathering and interpreting of data relied on my ability to maintain the role as researcher. With this role must come a bracketing of any bias or

preconceptions that I might have had regarding on-demand instruction. Another limitation pertains to my ability to write the description with accuracy and attention to audience. I have an affinity to allow my voice to actually cloud the meaning of the text by sometimes rambling and rushing through the writing process. The actual writing could be shaped by mood, interference during the observation or interview, and subjectivity leading to false generalizations. Therefore, I have had to focus on the purpose of this research without allowing peripheral interference by internal or external factors.

Along with researcher bias, I had to be cognizant of the human constraints that may skew the data due to the willingness of the subjects, interviewees' honesty, and over generalization by the teacher and students interviewed. The school administration may be in favor of the interview and research due to the acknowledgement of the school's success and may coerce the teacher to capitulate, thus creating a precarious situation for gathering data. Yin (1984) addresses similar constraints that might affect the research itself. For example, case studies cannot be bound by artificial conditions. If the case study suddenly encounters such constraints, it will not be considered exemplary due to the unexpected demands placed upon the researcher.

Another concern includes the possibility of observer effect, or the manner in which the individual is affected by being observed. The teachers or students involved in the study may have behaved in an "atypical fashion" when they know they were being observed (Patton, 2002 p. 306). The observations were also limited by the sample of activities actually observed. Kazdin (1982) gives three explanations why observations might be altered: (a) if the subjects are nervous about being judged, they try to be socially accepted, (b) if the teachers feel they are being assessed, they will behave in a more social acceptable manner, and (c) "participants may regulate

their behavior from feedback obtained from observers” (Merriam, 1988, p. 95). Therefore, it was necessary to be cognizant of observer effect during my formal visit to each school.

Documents may have limitations because they may provide inaccuracies or be incomplete. The schools and teachers provided many documents, and they may have only given me the records that emphasize the strengths of the program thus limiting the researcher’s examination of those that may provide a wide perspective of the school’s writing program. Also, the researcher may not fully comprehend how the classroom documents are used within the instructional context.

As with observations and collection of documents, interviewing and its limitations are “complex phenomenon” (Merriam, 1988, p. 76). Both the researcher and the interviewee bring biases, different pedagogical beliefs, and individual theoretical perspectives to the interview. Patton (2002) states that even the emotional states of both parties can ultimately affect the quality of the responses. Because this research involved discussion over assessment results and the implications of those results for the teacher and the school, the interviewee may have provided self-serving responses thus skewing the data.

However, taken together, all three data collection techniques provided valuable information to my understanding of the phenomena of writing instruction and student success on the on-demand writing assessment. As Denzin (1978) states, “The rationale for this strategy is that the flaws of one method are often the strengths of another, and by combining methods, observers can achieve the best of each, while overcoming their unique deficiencies” (p. 308). These diverse data have helped me uncover meaning and insights on pedagogical practices relevant to my research problem by providing a holistic picture through triangulation.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of the naturalistic study was to illuminate and identify phenomena through perceptions from information received through qualitative methods (Lester, 2006). The case studies in this research propagated data through the triangulation of observations, interviews, and relevant documents.

During the fall of 2010 and spring of 2011, I visited the four schools selected for this study. The unusual inclement winter weather in Western Kentucky postponed the scheduled interviews due to the cancellation of classes; however, meeting with teachers later in the school year afforded me opportunity to question participants about their perceptions of the challenges pertaining to on-demand writing assessment incurred by Senate Bill 1, the new mandates for KY educational reform, for the 2011-2012 school year. The conversations provided additional dialogue on the pedagogical issues encountered by teachers regarding instructional applications used to prepare students for the on-demand assessment. This chapter provides descriptive narrative of data collected in the pursuit of identifying pedagogical and cultural phenomena associated with high performing test results on the on-demand writing assessment.

Seidel (1998) stated that in research thinking is analogous to examining and comparing and contrasting data to discover similarities and differences as potential theory evolves. As stated in chapter three, I identified similarities within the data by categorizing those factors that shared characteristics and grouped the findings according to similarities using the data gleaned through this categorical sorting. The data for this study were collected through interviews, observations, documents review, and field notes. These data were gathered to provide insight

into the pedagogical and cultural factors present in the writing classroom that results in proficient and distinguished student performance on the Kentucky State On-Demand Assessment.

This first section, “Investigation of School Sites,” provides narrative descriptions of the four high schools in this case study analysis. These descriptions contextualize the individual schools providing a vicarious conception of each site involved in this research.

Investigation of School Sites

Blue Grass High School – Northern Kentucky

Established in the mid 19th century, Blue Grass High School maintains its position as the one of the oldest public schools West of the Alleghenies. Located close to the historic Falls of the Ohio, this school is known as one of the first magnet optional programs in this northern county school district. The school’s philosophical foundation embraces the belief in a structured learning environment in order to prepare students for post-secondary education (School Report Card, 2009).

Nestled in an urban network of highways and economic arteries, this highly successful school has an enrollment of slightly under 2000 students in its four grade levels. In spite of the distractions of the busy thoroughfares surrounding the campus, this school’s student body demonstrates impressive test results, especially in on-demand writing assessment. Currently, Blue Grass High School ranks in the top 5% in Kentucky in proficient and distinguished writing on the KCCT (Kentucky Core Content Test) on-demand writing assessment, a ranking that may reflect its mission to create critical thinkers and communicators. Students in Kentucky can achieve one of four scores on the on-demand writing assessment: distinguished (the highest score), proficient, apprentice, and novice (the lowest score). In 2009, 87% of seniors at this school either scored proficient or distinguished on the writing assessment, while no student

scored in the novice category (Kentucky Testing Reports Archive, 2009). The Kentucky Department of Education's 2008-2009 disaggregated released data reported that over three-fourths of the African American seniors at Blue Grass scored proficient and distinguished on the on-demand assessment. Slightly more than 80% of those students qualified for free and reduced lunch challenging the findings by Caldas and Bankston (1997) who found that student participation in the federal free/reduced school lunch programs have a negative impact on student achievement.

The school's clean facilities were recently updated with a newly designed entrance that provides a welcoming introduction to the learning environment. Often, schools with a high percentage of students on the federal school lunch program are associated with deteriorating buildings as found by Kozol in *The Shame of the Nation* (2005). The halls were quiet other than the chattering of students from the lunchroom, which was located off the main entrance hall. The long front office, easy to find, welcomed visitors with smiling secretaries and student workers. A very polite 2011 graduating senior, Tom, escorted me down the hall to the English classroom where I would meet the 12th grade English teacher. "Hello, I was sent to take you down to Ms. Allen's room. If you'd just follow me, please." As we walked I noticed the cleanliness of the building, mannerisms of the students, and freshly painted walls.

I stopped to peer through the door of what appeared like a small college bookstore before continuing down the hall. I'm sure other high schools in Kentucky maintain a school store but of the four involved in this study, this high school was the only school that provided this option. As we walked, I informally questioned Tom about his impressions of the school, and his perception of why the school produces high scores on the on-demand assessment:

Well, I think this school is the best school to get me into the college I want to go to. It has a reputation of being good, which already gives me a good advantage to receive scholarships...plus the teachers are nice...the school is nice...I just like it.

The test? Well, I just took the test myself this fall and I don't know how I did yet. But, we write all the time, and our teachers expect us to write correctly. They are preparing us for college.

Because of a meeting called by the principal in reference to Senate Bill 1, the Kentucky reform bill that will be mandated beginning the fall of 2011, Ms. Allen was unable to be in the room, and I relished the time to observe the classroom noting projects hanging on the walls, desks in rows facing each other, and cluttered bookcases lining the walls screaming of engaged learning. Books dangled precariously from the book holders beneath the student desks and I noticed grammar handbooks, similar to those used by freshman college composition classes. Soon, Ms. Allen, a young teacher currently pursuing her Rank 1 in Administration at a local university, entered the classroom, obviously in a hurry to meet me and flustered that she couldn't be in the room when I arrived.

Both of us sat in student desks and she inquired as to how she could help me with my research. I simply asked her perspective as to why the seniors at this school outscored other schools in the state on the on-demand writing assessment. Without hesitation she shared, "The culture here is an academic culture and most students who attend this school hope to attend college. We just try to prepare them to get there...Because of that drive to go to college, the kids will do anything for points."

She didn't elaborate any further as if that alone should explain the high performance sustained by the twelfth grade class. As she continued talking more about the instructional

practices at the school, the blueprint for student proficiency came to be revealed. Ms. Allen stated, “The kids know they have to attain a high ACT score, and they really believe if they do well in their classes here, they’ll do well on the ACT. They are devoted to their studies.”

As she explained the students’ devotion to learning, she painted a picture of a highly motivated student body with one goal in sight, achieve high grades in order to be accepted into a college or university upon graduation. According to Ms. Allen, “ We try to keep the reading emphasis in the 9th and 10th grades so we can focus on writing in the 11th and 12th grades. We try to prepare them (students) for that first year composition course and other writing required they will have to do. We don’t want them just to get into college; we want them to finish college.”

I asked Ms. Allen about pedagogical strategies, methods, and resources used by the teachers at Blue Grass High School. She noted, “We teach the basics of composition. I start at the beginning with how to write a paragraph and then move to developing a five-paragraph essay. I like to have them start with an outline, move to the topic sentence, and end with how to write an effective conclusion.”

Ms. Allen shared that the faculty believe that by teaching the structure of the essay, students will be able to transfer the organizational pattern in any compositional situation. “Some of the kids don’t like to stay with the five-paragraph essay, but I just tell them, ‘you don’t have to like it...you just have to know it, this is one of those things that will help you in your classes in college.’”

I continued prodding about strategies in order to build a picture of what occurs in the classroom. She referred to herself as the coach rather than teacher and resumed sharing. “Sometimes, I have them leave the introduction until last. I think this helps students to spend more time on developing the points. Otherwise they spend far too much time trying to design a

catchy intro., which may have to be changed after they write their points. Another thing I look at when teaching paragraph structure is transitions. I want them to learn how to use transitions between points, and they have to supply evidence for those points. I know I probably shouldn't; I know it isn't best practice, but I teach grammar, mechanics and paragraph development using direct instruction. They have to have a good foundation before they can really write. Also, it provides a common discourse for revision. I think if they can write a good five-paragraph essay, they'll be able to use that in any writing situation."

As she paused between answering questions I noticed texts like *Rhetorical Grammar* by Kolln and Prentice Hall's *Grammar and Composition* located under the students' chairs providing the students with a resource to learn syntactical conventions. I asked if she used them for instruction. She replied, "Oh, yes, we use them. The students do when they have to look something up, and I give assignments from them for practice."

When specifically discussing on-demand preparation and performance she shared a strategy that is taught in sixth grade to prepare students for the critical thinking required for answering an on-demand prompt. She continued, "I teach students to "break down" the prompt in order to make sure they answer the questions. Beginning in sixth grade, students learn to write answers to prompts and open-response questions using SRE. S stands for the statement; R stands for reasons; and the E stands for evidence. This helps them to think deeper than just a statement; they have to give support and then examples. It helps them to find their evidence. I think this strategy helps students when they come to high school and have to write an essay in any class, especially this new focus on argumentative writing. The students practice writing to on-demand prompts a lot, which helps them to feel comfortable during testing. We have the

juniors take a common on-demand assessment every six weeks. This helps us to know what we need to reteach.”

Asked if she used the materials from the Kentucky Department of Education, website, she stated, “We have materials we can use on the district’s website. There’s a page devoted to “On-Demand Assessment Structure,” which informs students about the types of on-demand prompts and other resources. I also have resources on my webpage like PowerPoints over the different genres, a timeline to help them gauge the time restraints of the test and other things students can use (see Appendix E).

One area of focus includes teaching students a tentative timeline to develop a formatted essay in the 60-minute timeframe allotted in the state testing procedures. Allen believes this goal-oriented strategy helps students focus on the task. The “Writing on Demand Timeline” designed by Ms. Allen (see Appendix F) includes reminders for students to: Check the accuracy of their name and personal data; identify the format: speech, editorial, article, or letter, and write the characteristics of that genre on draft paper; select the task and use either a standard thesis outline or a narration outline to plan; write the DRAPES strategy: Dialogue, Rhetorical Questions, Analogies, personal experiences, examples, and statistics; write the intended audience on draft paper; write the outline; and begin the draft.

She looked at the clock, and we left her room to walk down the hall to a little room off the library where I met Mrs. Lockhart, the school curriculum coordinator. Challenges for the teachers appear to be met with supportive administrators, learning teams, and imbedded professional development (PD). Lockhart shared, “The school-based decision making committee, voted on a school-wide writing policy, which is mandatory for all schools in Kentucky. This

policy explains the items students should have in their writing portfolio, which includes samples from writing to learn activities, writing to demonstrate learning, and writing for publication.”

She was referring to the policy passed in June of 2010 in response to the mandates of SB 1. Literacy is the primary focus of the plan, as reading is also addressed in the policy and clearly states that students should be using the writing process at all grade levels. The policy calls for the incorporation of technology, vertical and horizontal alignment of the writing curriculum, and the provision of professional development to improve areas of writing and communications in all content areas. Mrs. Lockhart shared that every teacher was now required to maintain student portfolios, which should include writing samples of writing to learn, writing to demonstrate learning, and writing for publication, as well as the student’s reading record. Other content area teachers send the student uploaded literacy portfolios to the English teachers for storage and scoring. Since the school governing body establishes the requirements and expectations, teachers know exactly what is expected regarding student portfolios.

Since these identified changes occurred in 2010, I asked about the School Improvement Plan (CSIP) for 2008-2009, the year that generated the data for this study. I noticed that Ms. Allen was a member of the committee that wrote the CSIP and shared that the plan does not specifically target writing as a need, but it does address reading and the intent to increase reading scores for the African -American population. The plan also included monitoring student work and a tutoring plan to work with the targeted students.

Mrs. Lockhart also shared resources available on the district website that might facilitate on-demand instruction. Asked if teachers use the items, “I encourage them to use them with the students. If the scores for the on-demand practice sessions aren’t high enough, I send them back to these resources.” Mrs. Lockhart emphasized that teachers have a support system providing

imbedded PD for discussing literacy strategies and needs. Another support structure for teachers includes a weekly one-hour meeting for *learning* teams to discuss issues related to curriculum and assessment, and all teachers must have a literacy folder, or teacher binder, that provides examples of assignments and gives evidence of using the three types of writing. As the Curriculum Coordinator, Mrs. Lockhart, uses these binders to monitor the implementation of the writing policy requirements, and also identifies areas where teachers may need additional training. When professional development is indicated, she schedules the teacher for upcoming workshops and training events. This continuous assessment of instruction serves as individual professional development as teachers discover new avenues for written assessment, formative and summative, within their curriculum.

Some of the on-line resources she handed me included a chart identifying the “Four Common Purposes or Tasks in On-Demand Writing,” which provides a simple visual that describes the types of writing required on the assessment: Writing to inform, writing to persuade, writing to narrate an event for a transactive purpose, and writing to inform or persuade with a provided passage (see Appendix G). It also includes recommended lesson models to introduce students to the language of the Kentucky Scoring Guide in grade 11 and a model prompt with student model responses representing each score on the scoring guide. One strategy used in this packet called “WWF” provides the foundation for determining the rhetorical strategy for the prompt, and this simple acronym represents: What is the purpose of the task? Who is the audience? and What form is required?” Ms. Allen shared that she also uses other models of student writing found in the texts used in the classroom.

I asked about specific incentives teachers use to motivate the students. Mrs. Lockhart responded, “Well, students can’t graduate from this school unless they have an apprentice

portfolio. Students can also be exempt from exams if they score a distinguished on the assessment.” Yet, as noted by Ms. Allen, “...the main thing that drives these students is the goal to go to college.”

Blue Grass High School offers an eight-session writing workshop prior to the on-demand assessment for students who want to improve and prepare for the assessment. If a student attends the workshop and receives an apprentice score, he/she will be exempt from senior finals; if a student attends and receives a proficient score, the student is exempt from senior finals and receives a half-price prom ticket. As Ms. Allen explained, “Students who get a proficient or distinguished score on the on-demand will be exempt from finals regardless if they attend the workshop.”

Also, the school gives away a number of different items to encourage student success. Therefore, students are motivated intrinsically by their desire to attend college, and extrinsically through exemptions from finals and tangible items like a half-priced prom ticket.

After returning to Ms. Allen’s classroom, I was able to observe a class where students were revising a writing, which required peer interaction. Prior to the observation, I was able to informally talk with students in the classroom about the school and the on-demand assessment.

Brian shared, “She (the teacher) makes us write a lot. She won’t accept our work if it isn’t done correctly. They (the teachers) help us a lot. I like that.”

“I work on it a lot at home, even after the ballgames so it’s right,” said Sharon, a high school senior.

Lilly, Sharon’s friend who is also a senior, interrupted, “I have to do well on all of the assessments. I want to go to college and if I don’t do my best, I won’t get to go. I have to have

scholarship money to go; my parents won't be able to afford it. Ms. Allen just expects us to do it. We don't complain because we know she's helping us."

"You don't do it? You fail," Brian added as class began.

The conversation that ensued confirmed their desire to do well in order to attend college upon graduation. They knew the teacher wouldn't expect anything but their best, but would help them if they needed assistance in developing or revising writing. I noted that none of the three mentioned incentives as a motivating factor, and none of the students mentioned exemption from final exams as their goal to refining performance.

The students filed into the class sitting in chairs that were in six rows, three rows facing the other three rows. In the middle of the room there was a path for the teacher to walk and peer down at student work as she talked and as they worked. Before the bell rang, all students sat prepared in their desks with the writing assignment ready to revise. On the walls hung student made posters of Dante's *Inferno*, and other displays of student work. Mobiles hung on one wall, which explained the process of writing an effective essay. In the front of the room, a bookcase held a number of books for reading and the back bookcase held resource books like dictionaries. Their assignment for the day pertained to writing an argument, "Everything's an argument," shared Ms. Allen as students waited for instruction on revision.

The students retrieved their writings from their notebooks in preparation for revision. At that time, an instructor from a local college entered the room to help the students with their pieces. When Ms. Allen told them to begin revising, they immediately started sharing with the student closest to them about their writing and the areas they thought needed attention. Both teachers and students filled the role as reviser as the class worked together to improve student writing.

Writing is an important tool for learning at Blue Grass High School, and the students have traditionally scored high on the state on-demand assessment. The desire to attend college appears to be a major motivating factor in student performance; however, Ms. Allen's strict expectations for students seem to be another. The use of direct instruction to present grammar, paragraph development, and basic writing principles are part of Ms. Allen's pedagogical construct, while the workshop method of developing composition engaged students in a collaborative approach to writing. Teachers receive support and network with each other to improve pedagogy and learn from each other. In addition, the administration requires accountability portfolios for teachers as well as students. These factors woven together seem to support student success with on-demand writing performance.

Timberland High School – Eastern Appalachia Region

This small town, located in the heart of Appalachia in Eastern Kentucky, once boasted of a booming coal industry and, due to the arrival of the railroad, this unique town grew to more than 7000 in population. After the stock market crashed and the Great Depression swallowed American prosperity, the economy plummeted and never again experienced the wealth and prosperity of the early 1900's (A Brief History). Now, with a population of 4800 people, this town boasts of a school that attains high scores on Kentucky's state assessment. The released scores on the 2009 KCCT on-demand writing assessment lists this school in the top 10 %, outperforming over 200 high schools in the Bluegrass state (Kentucky Core Content Test, 2009).

Located in a hollow, Timberland High School sits just off the by-pass that circumvents the little town. Directly behind the school, extending up the hill, lay a very well kept football field, which attests to the school's interest in the sport. Since it was early morning when I

arrived to the school campus, I observed students being dropped off at two different locations: the side door facing the by-pass, which led to the cafeteria; and the front, which led to the offices.

A chilly winter breeze waft down off the Appalachian hills as I walked into the single story brick building. Immediately, I was situated in a large foyer, holding bookcases filled with various trophies, which then led to doors that opened to the main body of the school. As I opened the inner door I could not immediately identify the location of the office so I asked a passing student for directions. Politely he pointed me in the right direction. Students quickly passed going down either side of the hall in an attempt to arrive to class before the first bell of the day caught them tardy. In a little room to the right surrounded by glass windows sat the school secretary busily signing in late students and answering phones. Two offices located on the left of the hall housed the guidance counselor and the Vice Principal. Stacks of papers rested on tables, on the floor, and desks. The office, too, appeared to be a little disheveled with piles of papers covering the desk and chairs. I walked into the office and introduced myself but felt a little uncomfortable fearing I intruded on the busy part of the morning; however, I followed the secretary's lead and waited for Mrs. Cook, the Vice Principal, in one of the offices across from the main office.

A lone desk sat in the middle of the large room and soon a petite woman rushed in and warmly greeted me. The interruption of morning announcements momentarily halted our discussion, and it wasn't long until Mr. Mead, the principal, entered. A tall welcoming man, he appeared pleased that I wanted information related to his students' success. While sitting in Mrs. Cook's office, the three of us discussed the curricular schedule and the determined efforts that the principal took in the placement of students in particular classes to help them succeed while in high school. Mr. Mead explained the school's deliberate attention to individual student success,

“We don’t take the scores lightly. We work at it all year. We follow individual progress in grades. We also study the PLAN and ACT test results to see which kids need additional help.”

This meticulous practice of studying grades and assessment results by charting student performance on a table identified academic strengths and weaknesses, providing the foundation for developing curricular decisions. Mr. Mead continued, “I use the information to build the class schedule. I try to match teachers to classes that need extra help to utilize their professional expertise, so to speak. Then the teachers help students improve by reteaching the material. Students can “test out” of particular classes after they’ve proven they know the content.”

Therefore, at Timberland High School student data drive the curriculum by placing emphasis on individual student performance. The course schedule allows for tutoring, reteaching and coaching for those students requiring interventions in preparing for college readiness, and also builds in rigor for those students who require challenging curriculum. Students are not locked into these curricular decisions. As students demonstrate they have met content expectations they can move to a different class. The driving force appears to be helping students grow in college and career readiness skills.

When asked about the new regulations mandated in Senate Bill 1, Kentucky’s new educational reform bill, Mr. Mead did not appear concerned and had already designed the 2011-2012 class to comply with state regulations and accommodates student needs. He explained, “Education is what it is...don’t complain. This next year I want to include a common planning time for departmental teachers.”

While we sat in the office both Mr. Mead and Mrs. Cook shared some of the circumstances many of the students confront outside of school as well as the impact poverty has on student academic performance. Currently over 60% of family households in the region live

below the poverty line (Kentucky 2011) and yet over half of the students who qualified for free and reduced lunch through the Federal School Lunch Program scored proficient and distinguished on the on-demand writing assessment (Kentucky Testing Reports Archive). Mr. Mead further elaborated:

Right now five federal housing projects are located in our school district. The grandparents raise some of these kids. Some of them don't even have a place to live. One kid, a good kid, was kicked out of his house by his stepfather and he lives in his car. I try to make sure every student has a good pair of shoes to start school with in August. Sometimes I just have to pay for them myself.

They also spoke of the financial needs of the district and how the faculty, students, and administration work together to see that the students' needs are being met. Mrs. Cook added, "I remember last year when we were going to set up a computer lab. We had the computers, but no desks to put them on. Well, one teacher found tables at a surplus sale that would be perfect for the new lab. She bought them and the staff delivered them to the school and refurbished them to look new." Mrs. Tabors shared, "I wanted new texts for the English class and Mr. Mead told me to order them. I had enough budgeted money for the texts but the delivery charge was awful. Mr. Mead used his truck and traveled to Chicago to pick them up, and bring them back to the school so we could have the new books."

I detected a caring network of teachers who worked together to cultivate a family-type of environment, one that cares about the students and student learning. These relationships between faculty and administration provided a positive atmosphere for both teachers and students. As we continued talking they led me to the hall and proceeded to share their school, their learning culture.

When I asked Mr. Mead what drove the students to perform well on the on-demand writing assessment, he gave others the credit, “It’s the teachers; they’re great! They work hard, come before school to help kids, stay after school to help kids, all without extra pay from the district; I couldn’t ask them to do more.”

Then, when I asked the same question of the teachers they responded with praise for their principal. “It’s Mr. Mead. He’s great. He’s our biggest cheerleader,” emphasized Mrs. Tabors.

Mr. Mead graciously led me on a tour of the building, which I noticed to be clean with freshly painted cinderblock walls. “We paint the walls every year. It helps to make the school look good...I ask students and teachers to hang art and pictures of the students in the halls because it’s so dark in the building. There aren’t any windows or outside light, so we use the students to decorate the halls,” he proudly explained as he led me down the halls.

Large poster-frames featuring pictures of students participating in a number of school and class activities hung on the walls. Students’ pictures, some with candid shots, representing a variety of activities adorned every hall, and no one activity appeared to reap more attention. From senior prom to band, to sports to the community “senior” prom, all facets of student involvement could be found hanging on the walls showcasing student involvement in academics, sports, extracurricular activities and community endeavors. The principal placed great emphasis on success in all areas of school participation and academics, not just athletics or high profile teams. He showed me students’ jerseys with “Just Win” emblazed on the front, which are worn to celebrate every activity, not only athletics. This support structure exemplifies the pride both student and faculty have for the “school” and in belonging to the school family.

As we walked, the students and staff appeared to have a high regard for the principal greeting him warmly and respectfully. The entire school community addresses him by a nickname rather than Mr. Mead and I noticed he called each student by name; he also knows their individual academic potential and any needs they may require for successful completion of high school. There definitely appears to be a unique bond between the administration, the faculty, and the student body. I heard no criticism or negative remarks from students, or faculty. Mr. Mead gave one of his faculty, Mrs. Tabors, an English teacher, most of the credit for the students' success on the on-demand assessment. He shared that the schedule for the students rotates so one English teacher focuses on writing and grammar, and two on different facets of literature. Mrs. Tabors, the instructional leader for the writing program, warmly welcomed me to her classroom and we discussed her plan for leading students to writing proficiency.

First, she strongly supports the belief that all students must learn the different formats and the appropriate conventions required on the on-demand test. "It's important to teach students the basic premise of the five-paragraph essay and how to use that design in the four different formats required on the state assessment. I created my own packet to use as "the text" for teaching on-demand. Of course, I took a lot of the material from the Kentucky Department of Education website, but I thought it was important for kids to have," she shared.

The packet introduces students to the possible formats that may be assessed: feature articles, editorials, letters, and speeches and it also includes WWF (Why – purpose of writing; Who – audience; and Format – type of writing) to introduce students to a rhetorical strategy (Appendix H), a strategy also used at Blue Grass High School. Mrs. Tabor's handwritten annotations help to focus students' attention to the different formats. For example, next to letters, she writes, "Address the audience," and under speeches, she underlined "nouns of direct

address.” Then, within feature articles, she circled subheadings bringing attention to a specific formatting technique that she believes produces high scores.

“I know some teachers don’t think it makes a difference in how you format a feature article. But...just as soon as I required students to write using formatting techniques, their scores improved,” she stressed.

The Kentucky Writing Scoring Guide, also included in the packet, contains her annotations that identify descriptors and characteristics for each level of achievement. On-demand responses are scored a one, a two, a three, or a four, with four being the highest, and Ms. Tabors instructs students on the components of each cell on the scoring guide, and then leads them through sample-released items from the Kentucky Department of Education, which provides students with concrete examples of responses and the accompanying scores along with a justification for the scores. In preparation for writing, the teacher spends significant time leading students through the planning process or prewriting so students comprehend the structure of well-developed essays. She shared with me four different advanced organizers she uses with students: The persuasive letter, the double-triangle sheet from Abell & Atherton (Appendix I), WWF, and the four-block method from Abel and Atherton (Appendix J).

Mrs. Tabors looked around her room and continued, “I begin teaching on-demand writing by having them “break down” the prompt, and then they practice writing an answer. Of course we use the writing process and spend a lot of time on revising the response and scoring the answer. If students don’t receive a proficient or distinguished, they have to rewrite the response. One reason the kids did so well is because we worked and studied the format for each genre. I had them use the same prompt, but answer the task using all four of the genres of on-demand.”

Posters, identifying the conventions of each format, hung on her walls. The students shared their perspective of on-demand success at Timberland High School, and they confirmed that Mrs. Tabors required a lot of practice and has very high expectations regarding their writing performance including legibility. One girl, Ginny, said, “Mrs. Tabors makes us practice a lot. If it’s not written correctly, she hands it back for a rewrite.” A student sitting next to her added, “I had a pretty good writing for this last on-demand practice, but she wouldn’t accept it because of my handwriting.” One senior student, Blake, spoke of the opportunity to rewrite his writings until they met Mrs. Tabors expectations, “I must have re-written my writing at least five times until I got an A on it. Mrs. Tabors also allows you to rewrite the answer for a better grade. I always try to do that.” Another student, Tanner, added to Blake’s comments, “When I have trouble with my writing, Mrs. Tabors will help me in tutoring. We have a good teacher who requires lots of practice.”

Asking the students about their perceptions on why their senior class scored so well on the writing assessment, Tricia summarized the groups feelings, “I think there are four reasons for our high scores: using a lot of different prompts, getting grades for the writings, having a very hard teacher, and keeping a positive attitude.”

After speaking with the students, I asked Mrs. Tabors about her concern for handwriting and she smiled, “I make them write in pencil and if the writing can’t be read, I refuse to grade it.”

Mrs. Tabors shared that she feels that students learn more by preparing for the on-demand assessment than they did by developing a writing portfolio because the students learn the difference in the format requirements for each genre and how to “break down” a prompt.

The practice of learning the genres also extends to grammar and vocabulary taught both in isolation through direct instruction and in connection to the writing completed in class. “My students must have a foundation for writing and as unpleasant as it may be, students do learn grammar and vocabulary in isolation. They have to have this foundation before we can expect proficient writing,” she stated. She integrated direct instruction and writing workshop through isolated tasks for grammar and form, and she then meshed the skills learned with independent and collaborative writing practices.

Mrs. Tabor’s pedagogical strategies for teaching writing mirror the school’s writing policy, which was handed to me by Mr. Meade. The policy records the responsibilities of three targeted groups the administration, teacher, and student. The teacher’s responsibilities include integrating the three types of writing into classroom instruction, providing opportunities for students to publish written work, guiding students in developing authentic pieces, practicing open response questions throughout the year and providing feedback to students. The administration’s responsibilities clearly stipulate the procedures for monitoring the writing policy, which is reviewed yearly by the school council, and demonstrates the school-wide responsibility for writing instruction.

In a neighboring English classroom, students reviewed *Romeo and Juliet* as part of the literature curriculum. Even though Mrs. Tabor’s responsibilities include the writing and grammar instruction, Mrs. Gage, also integrates a lot of writing into her curriculum. She shares, “I think we expect a lot out of the kids. Also, Mr. Mead is the reason for any success...I expect students to write well.” This again confirms the positive influence the principal appears to have over the learning environment. Her room, filled with colorful posters and signs provides a welcoming environment for students.

Mrs. Riley, the teacher in the room next to Mrs. Gage, led students into analysis by asking higher order thinking questions using Blooms taxonomy. The students participated in the discourse obviously understanding the vocabulary of analogies and the taxonomy. Both teachers of literature support the writing instruction led by Mrs. Tabors and maintain high literacy standards for complex discussions regarding literature as observed during my visit.

Mrs. Tabors also shared one extrinsic motivator that encourages students, exemption from exams if they score proficient or distinguished; however, it appeared that the primary motivator for students to complete proficient writing rest in the relationship between the individuals in the school. Students did not want to disappoint the teachers, and the teachers wanted success for the students. The mixture of a strictly followed structured environment, a welcoming school and faculty, high expectations, and administrative support provides an seemed to provide an environment conducive to success.

Falls High School - South Central Kentucky

Located off the Cumberland Parkway, deep into the Pennyrile Region, sits Falls High School, a large rural school with over 800 students that scores in the top 10% in Kentucky's on-demand writing assessment (KDE: Kentucky Core Content Test). Of that population, over 60% qualify for the federal free and reduced lunch program. This picturesque rural area offers tourists access to many waterways that lure fishermen from all over the country. Agriculture and other industry keep the unemployment level low and statistics indicate this area will continue to grow (Jamestown, 2009).

When I first entered the high school, I easily identified the office and confirmed my appointment with Mrs. Wilson, Curriculum Specialist at Falls High School. Mrs. Wilson warmly welcomed me and led me down the many crossroads of halls to her office. As we

walked, I learned a little about this energetic professional. A writing project fellow from Western Kentucky University's Writing project, Wilson served as a state reading consultant during the early years of KERA (Kentucky Education Reform Act). Along with her responsibilities at the school, she offers private consultation work for surrounding schools; however, her primary concern focuses on preparing students for successful transition for life after high school in the area of literacy. The extra hours she spends preparing PowerPoint presentations and helpful handouts enable teachers, especially those who feel unqualified to teach reading or writing, to effectively integrate literacy instruction into the curriculum. Always pursuing helpful strategies for teachers at Falls she discovered the Center for Research and Learning in Kansas and introduced the lesson-planning template found on this site to the faculty. Every subject area and grade level uses the templates for planning instruction, which include a focus in written communication and reading. According to Wilson, "this planning brought teachers together as nothing else has." Initially, she started with two Spanish teachers willing to try the template, but their excitement for the planning model spread quickly to others and soon gained favor with most of the faculty.

Ms. Wilson escorted me to a 10th grade English class where Mrs. McGill, the English teacher, was beginning a lesson on on-demand instruction. The teacher asked questions to initiate discussion about the assignment. "What are the four types of on-demand? ... How do you know your audience? ... Someone identify the situation... Now, someone tell me the task."

Other questions followed that reacquainted students with the basic concepts of on-demand assessment. I looked around at the posters that hung on the walls, some student created and others purchased to accompany units, but all showed evidence of literacy and content instruction. Some pertained to different pieces of literature, and others reminded students of the

writing process. The teacher's desk was positioned in the far corner of the room while bookshelves and filing cabinets filled the opposite corner. On the filing cabinets located by the entry door sat four boxes filled with working folders that held current student writings. Literature anthologies, used by the students when reading literature selections and published by McDougal-Little leaned in the baskets under each of the twenty-five desks that swallowed the small room. I sat in an empty desk and listened to the discussion between Mrs. McGill and her students. One asked, "Will you give two or three prompts?" Another inquired, "Aren't you supposed to restate your thesis statement in your conclusion?"

The common discourse used in on-demand writing juxtaposed with the cultural vernacular merged to create a favorable atmosphere for young authors. The teacher with her dramatic and demonstrative instructional style kept the students engaged as she read the prompt choices orally to the class. She reminded them that if they should receive a three (out of four) on the writing assessment, they would be able to drop one grade from the semester's grades, and if their writing scored a four, they would be rewarded by dropping two grades. Mrs. McGill proceeded to reiterate the need to check for transitions and spelling errors. "Don't forget the story about the man who killed his first Buick," she warned with a laugh.

Both the teacher and students laughed as she began to read the prompt. After reading each prompt, she led students in brainstorming potential responses for each using driving questions while acknowledging and valuing the individual student responses. When the discussion stopped the students immediately started planning and drafting their responses without asking additional questions. Mrs. McGill walked around the room peering over students' shoulders giving hints on how to respond to the prompt.

After observing the on-demand practice session, I spoke with Ms. Wilson who shared information about professional development for teachers. “All teachers are trained in writing every summer. All receive a workbook, which contains all of the on-demand strategies, student models as well as suggestions to improve those papers, templates, transitions, and the different formats. The student models are annotated in different colors to identify audience, purpose, task, and transitions. Teachers use these with students so they can annotate their own responses for revisions. One thing required is that students totally understand the Kentucky Scoring Guide. They have to be able to point out characteristics in student writing that are proficient or distinguished characteristics, and provide suggestions on how to improve a writing taking it from apprentice to proficient.”

As the Curriculum Specialist, she invited a writing specialist, an English teacher from Eastern Kentucky University and a widely published author on teaching writing, to lead professional development for the teachers at Falls High School in the wake of educational reform in Kentucky. The changes in assessment in Kentucky influenced the teachers at Falls to integrate on-demand instruction into all content areas. Even the special education teachers use the same core standards, unit organizers, and attend the same professional development workshops as the regular classroom teachers. These educators of students with special needs play a unique role by providing assistance in their content specialty rather than grade. Mrs. Wilson stated, “Some teachers still don’t know how to use writing in their content area. I try to provide help and suggestions through mentoring these teachers myself, or by assigning different teachers as mentors.”

While touring the school, I met Mrs. Murray, a teacher in the Agriculture Department, who shared the importance of writing in her program. KOSSA, the Kentucky Occupational

Skills Standards Assessment, is a motivating force in developing proficient writers at Falls High School. The three kinds of writing (writing to learn, writing to demonstrate learning, and writing for publication) are taught in all KOSSA classes including allied health, child development, culinary arts, financial services, horticulture, livestock, and marketing.

When I asked Mrs. Murray about this attention to writing in her agriculture class she responded, “I pay special attention to teaching them how to write a speech. I think it transfers to on-demand writing more than any other format. A large percentage of students are involved in the KOSSA program, and if they want to compete in state KOSSA competitions, they have to be able to write answers to situations.”

To teach students how to respond to a KOSSA prompt, Mrs. Murray uses a template that is very similar to the one used for teaching students how to respond to an on-demand prompt. Students in these classes must complete scenario writing and study the situation, audience and purpose using some form of prewriting before drafting. Mrs. Murray and Mrs. Wilson both agreed that the preparation for KOSSA and FFA competitions naturally transfers to proficient on-demand results. Currently, all of the KOSSA classes are full as students appear to be drawn to the practical, hands-on curriculum. Mrs. Murray, due to her high expectations, demands proficient communication skills in all of her classes. “After all...these are career related skills. I have to expect the best from them.”

To motivate students to focus on the on-demand assessment and encourage them to perform to the school’s high expectations, students may earn rewards by receiving points for achieving a proficient or distinguished score on the state assessment. If a student receives a distinguished, the highest score, he or she will receive nine points to claim the following choices as a reward: personal parking space with the students name, 3 pts; lunch pass, 1 pt.; an

additional college day, 1 pt.; a season pass for all sports events, 3 pts.; prom ticket, 3 pts.; movie pass, 2 pts.; \$20 gas card, 3 pts.; certificate for 50 additional points to add to daily, quiz, or test grades, 1 pts.; and a certificate to drop the lowest test score in the class of your choice, 3 pts. If a student scores proficient, five points is awarded to select from the following: personal parking space in a numbered reserved section, 2 pts; lunch pass, 1 pts.; an additional college day, 1 pts.; season pass for all sports events at 50% off ticket price, 3 pts.; free movie pass, 2 pts.; \$10 gas card, 2 pts.; and certificate for 25 additional points that may be added to any daily, quiz, or test grade in the class of your choice, 1 pt.. These writing rewards, designed by students, seem to generate a lot of excitement and subsequent motivation for high performance.

I had the opportunity of interviewing three students regarding their impressions on the school's success in on-demand writing assessment. Daysha, a senior, quickly responded, "We write everyday. We do at least one on-demand per week, if not two." Following her response, Tony, another senior, added, "We practice writing for real audiences so much; we have to learn it. We practice all the time."

I quickly grasped the idea that students frequently faced writing to prompts. "We also have to revise our writings to meet the expectations of the scoring guide and the teacher. The teacher sometimes revises with us one-on-one to help us understand the format. I like peer revision because we get to talk with a friend over our writing," stated Elizabeth, another graduating senior.

Tony added as an afterthought, "Oh, don't forget the rewards. Everybody wants to have their own parking space with their name on it." All three of the students laughed. "Yea, everybody knows if you scored a distinguished by your parking space. If you only score

proficient, you can have your own parking place but not the nameplate that goes with it,” said Elizabeth.

Without pausing, all of the students said they preferred to write speeches over any other kind of format. This may be due to the influence of the KOSSA program, which requires speeches in state competitions.

Instrumental in designing learning tools to differentiate instruction for on-demand writing, Mrs. Wilson creates organizers and tools to facilitate learning content through writing. The materials for the KOSSA program assist students in preparing for responding to a problem-based scenario, which is developed similar to an on-demand prompt. Other materials in the packet include the following items: Directions on How to Write a Letter, How to Write an Article, How to Write a Basic Essay, How to Write a Memo and a Scenario Writing Template.

Along with these resources created for high school students and teachers, Mrs. Wilson presented me with a copy of the District Writing Program and Review. KDE defines a writing program review as “a systematic method of analyzing components of an instructional program, including instructional practices, aligned and enacted curriculum, student work samples, formative and summative assessments, professional development and support services, and administrative support and monitoring” (KRS 158.6453). Falls High School maintains that student writing folders must include writing to learn, writing to demonstrate learning, writing for publication and on-demand writing at all grade levels. The grade level requirements gradually increase in expectations and skills development as students get older. For example, 11th grade students must write to demonstrate learning through the personal essay and application essays. Students are expected to write for publication through the completion of a short story as well as transactive writing (real-world writing) in the form of lab reports, letters, proposals, brochures,

PowerPoints, speeches, editorials, essays, reviews, and articles. The plan states that transactive writing should be completed in all content area classrooms in preparation for the on-demand writing assessment using the following formats: letter, article, editorial, and speech. The last selection in the grade level portfolio focuses on reflective writing, which students complete at the end of every reading unit and each writing for publication.

This school writing program provides the necessary information to conduct internal audits regarding the school's writing plan. Mrs. Wilson hopes this plan leads to improved teaching practices, equal access to literacy skills for all students, and provides a demonstration of student writing that reaches beyond the positivist paper-and-pencil test.

Rolling Hills High School – Western Kentucky

At one point in history, an Indian Village resided where this school now rests, which became an important trading post inviting tribes from the north of the Ohio to trade their goods with those in the south. (History, 2010). The small town where Rolling Hills High School is located intrigued visitors in the late 19th century as a popular health resort due to its mineral springs. This “golden era” saw a population growth that gave root to more than fifty hotels and boarding houses. Then, in the early 20th century a national baseball team held spring training in the area, once again generating growth in the Pennyrile region. After the relocation of the railroad, and the spa's loss of popularity, coal mining became the primary industry until the last coal mine closed in 1960. In spite of the economic adversities faced by this town, the schools have successfully endured. In 2009, Rolling Hills High School ranked in the top 20 percent in the state in on-demand writing assessment, one of the highest scores in western Kentucky.

Located off a major highway in the Western Kentucky coalfield region, a visitor will find the elementary, middle and high schools on the same campus providing a quaint family-type

community. Upon entering Rolling Hills High School, I walked across the busy entry hall to the office, separated from the busy thoroughfare by a glass wall. The secretary, busily completing morning chores and fielding students as they appeared with questions, sat behind a desk that took up much of the small room. After introducing myself, I told her that I was there to visit Mr. Michael, upon which she called his room to notify him of my presence, and then proceeded to leave the organized chaos, walk around her desk, and guide me to his room. Because of the many halls that required numerous turns, I was extremely grateful that she volunteered to lead the way. As I followed, I noticed the cleanliness of the building and well-behaved adolescents in the hall mulling through lockers in preparation for class. At no time did I notice students “kidding” with one another through physical interaction or loud voices. In fact, I was captivated by the maturity with which students prepared for the next class. Yes, they interacted with one another, but they appeared totally focused on preparing for class.

I entered the classroom during Mr. Michael’s journalism class as students completed tasks related to the production of the school newspaper. Mr. Michael warmly welcomed me to his classroom, which held few posters that identified the environment as “the English classroom.” In fact, the white painted block walls held little evidence of anything except a clock hanging on one wall and an Ayn Rand Essay Contest poster on a small bulletin board by the door to the hallway. I also noticed the lack of student writing hanging on the wall; however, student writings hung outside his doorway. Many novels graced the shelves of the bookcase in the corner of the room providing diverse reading selections for the students; most of the books had more than one copy of a particular selection. Test Preparation books for the ACT and AP tests leaned precariously on the shelves and three computers sat close to the far wall providing access

to the Internet for research. In the opposite corner of the room sat a filing cabinet surrounded by strewn papers, and appeared to be a catchall for papers and notebooks.

Rather than individual student desks, Mr. Michael grouped students around six separate tables. As I observed the class discussion, the structure of the classroom invited shared dialogue between students and teacher and students. While sitting at one of these group tables, I noted that the students appeared immersed in the conversation, and even though they sat in close proximity around a table, I never noticed inappropriate banter or interrupting disturbances.

Mr. Michael teaches two AP classes, one dual credit English class, a regular English class, and journalism. The dual credit class evolved from the efforts of the teacher, who volunteers teaching English as an adjunct at the local community college without pay so his students receive credit for their English class. According to the teacher, the majority of the students at the high school sign up for AP classes even though the curriculum is difficult. Most teachers wear many hats in the school environment and Michael is no different; he coaches the academic team and serves as the Beta Club sponsor along with his teaching responsibilities.

Prior to the observation, I asked him why he thought his students performed so well on the on-demand assessment. He responded, “This school has developed a writing culture and tries to teach all students how to think critically. The principal supports my teaching style, and we all work together to help students learn.”

Mr. Michael introduced me to the principal, Mr. Holiday, the guidance counselor, and the special collaborative educator, Mrs. Dean, who supports the concept of a writing community. The principal eagerly shook my hand obviously delighted that I was visiting the school campus because of his students’ academic success. He complimented Mr. Michael on both his

instructional methodology and high expectations for his students by stating, “As long as he continues to produce students who can write, I’ll leave him alone in his classroom.”

Prior to teaching at Rolling Hills High School, Mr. Michael quickly learned that high expectations in some school districts is not the preferred norm; his previous employers desired high grades with little focus on the challenging curriculum. He informed me that his prior school expressed concern with his difficult curriculum and high expectations; parents at these schools complained when their children did not receive their usual A’s. He smiled and said, “I have finally found a place that allows me to truly teach and expect the most from students. Not one of my AP students received an A during the first nine weeks of school, but Mr. Holiday supported me. I believe you have to teach students to think on their own, help them determine what they believe, and then lead them to support those beliefs.”

His curriculum for on-demand instruction, based on critical thinking and learning basic writing format, begins with the Rhetorical Triangle and the origin of rhetoric. His 11th and 12th grade students do not write literary pieces; rather, they compose expository writing in preparation for college level writing. I asked him to explain his teaching style, “I don’t allow students to just copy support for a stance...they have to research, formulate an opinion, and support that opinion using the sources. I also allow students to select their own topics. For example, when my students started to do analysis writing, I let them choose their own topic to analyze. I might have twenty-five different topics in my class. It provides a challenge for me, but the kids like it.”

Helping to differentiate and guide the students, Mrs. Dean, the collaborative teacher, shared how she purposely follows Mr. Michael’s curriculum, but adds modifications so her students can master the content. “I review the writing genres covered in class and show my

students what those genres look like through student models. When Mr. Michael gives a prompt, I show students how to “break down” the prompt to find the purpose, audience and task. When I collaborate in his class, I help all students to “break down” the prompt. All of my students are in the regular classroom, which is why I collaborate with Mr. Michael. I try to find real-world examples of the formats rather than rely on textbook examples. Of course, the released items from KDE are really valuable to help prepare them for the on-demand assessment...Of course, sometimes my students forget the different formats so I have to review what the prompt is asking: What opinion are you going to give? Are you going to write for or against?”

Mrs. Dean takes the time to lay the foundation for on-demand writing by reviewing the formats for the required genres. She models responding to prompts by showing students how to prewrite. “You have to know the form you must use.” Through repetition students gain confidence in their ability to respond effectively to the question. She continued, “There are always those questions that look different causing them to freeze, but if they learn to break down the prompt they can respond to any type of question. While working collaboratively I often break things down for other students and I tell them if you go to college you’re going to have to do this. Just break down what you’re asked to do... I appreciate the way Mr. Michael really praises the students. That really means a lot to my students.”

Mrs. Jones, guidance counselor and Assessment Coordinator, provided an extensive background about the student body as a whole. She raised my awareness about the overwhelming number of students living in low-socioeconomic conditions and how the school works to provide for individual needs and how families support the school due to a strong desire to want their children to succeed and attend college. She shared about an activity she directs prior to the opening of school; “We host a family activity that provides food, games, and free

school supplies for all children in attendance. No one can tell the haves from the have-nots if you hand out food and supplies to all students.” She spoke highly of Mr. Michael noting that he voluntarily takes time to tutor students when they fall behind or do not understand the literature being discussed.

Given the economic struggles faced by students, I asked Mr. Michael about teaching writing specifically, especially in dealing with the writing process. He said he doesn’t stress prewriting, but rather he teaches a few different strategies for planning and organizing writing and then allows students the freedom to use any form of prewriting they prefer. He does not provide advanced organizers and does not use worksheets unless absolutely necessary. In fact, while I was sitting in the room he asked the students, “Have we had any worksheets to complete recently?” The students looked at one another and responded sporadically, “No, I don’t think so.” “Yea, we had one at the beginning of school.” “No, I have nothing but writing in my folder.” Mr. Michael utilized the board for modeling planning and then allowed the students to individually develop a prewriting style. One student might list ideas to use in a writing, while another creates a web; each student was at liberty to develop a composition style.

I watched Mr. Michael lead the students in a clever note-taking strategy, which was to serve as a guided reading technique. They used double entry notebooks to summarize the reading assignment, Hamlet, and he also emphasized taking annotations while reading. Prior to discussing the reading assignment, students took a quiz as a formative assessment to check for comprehension; however, Mr. Michael permitted the use of the text to find the answers. I could not help but notice how difficult the quiz seemed because at least two answers could have been selected as correct; he challenged them to identify the best answer. Students had the exact time constraints of the AP exam. The teacher counted down the seconds so students would have some

idea of the time. Each student then graded his or her own quiz, and not one received a 100; however, the students did not appear angry or frustrated when they missed questions, as many students would have been. As he reviewed the answers I noticed they were all engaged in learning the correct answer and followed the teacher's logic in how the response was chosen. If students could provide support for their choice as the best answer, Mr. Michael would count it correct. In other words, students were encouraged to be engrossed in critical thinking in order to substantiate their choice of answers. Even though he appears demanding, the students seem to be comfortable with the learning environment, and the class discussion that ensued provided evidence of critical thinking and comprehension of the material.

I was interested in what he would say about grammar instruction so I asked him to share how he teaches language rules in his classroom. "I use mini-lessons to integrate grammar with writing. However, I do review common grammatical errors and the key principles of grammar using direct instruction. This provides a foundation for common discourse when we revise."

My discussion with a group of students revealed varied perceptions about why they performed so well on the on-demand writing assessment. Those enrolled in the dual credit classes attested to the frequency of writing in order to prepare for college as the primary reason for high writing scores. Tina shared, "We keep a writing portfolio of all of our work. I think we all want to get good grades too, so we get the college credit for this class." Danny added, "I think our favorite kind of writing is argumentative. Mr. Michael allows us to discuss any topic in class even when we don't agree. He gives us the freedom to talk and explain why we think the way we do." Another student, Izzy, said, "Mr. Michael gives us practice doing the on-demand to make sure we understand how to answer the prompt."

When I asked the class as a whole why they thought they scored so well on the state assessment, one girl responded while pointing at Mr. Michael, “Because of him.” I could see nodding of heads as the students agreed with the statement.

The day closed with the ringing of the school bell, as most schools end, and I left Rolling Hills High School amazed at the outstanding student body and dedicated faculty housed in the little rural school.

Cross Case Analysis

The three themes found in the cross-case analysis were (a) curriculum, (b) learning culture, and (c) motivation. In the following section, I discuss the findings from each theme within the context of the pedagogical and cultural factors that provided insight into understanding the high performance on Kentucky’s on-demand assessment.

Curriculum

Oliva (2009) suggested the following definition for curriculum:

Curriculum is perceived as a plan or program for all the experiences that the learner encounters under the direction of the school. In practice, the curriculum consists of a number of plans, in written form and of varying scope, that delineate the desired learning experiences. The curriculum, therefore, may be a unit, a course, a sequence of courses, and the school’s entire program of studies— and may be encountered inside or outside of class or school when directed by the personnel of the school. (p. 7)

In addition, Hanson (2001) added that the concept of curriculum includes social implications.

The construct of curriculum in this research embraces these definitions, as the broad interpretations of curriculum effectually encompass all interactions students have for learning.

Under the theme of curriculum, each of the following high frequency codes that evolved during the data analysis will be discussed (a) process writing, (b) teacher modeling and use of student models (c) teaching the genres, (d) addressing the prompt, and (e) direct instruction.

Process writing. Hillocks (1984), in his perception of the process model of writing, stated that the teacher moves from direct instruction or giver of information to facilitator. He recognized that writing involves procedural knowledge and knowledge of many other strategies like activating schemata to access prior knowledge, learning self-regulation strategies, understanding genre, providing feedback, guiding revision, and developing awareness of audience, purpose, and tone. There is much debate over the effectiveness of the process writing approach in an educational world filled with assessment, and because of the tensions created by testing and school accountability, teaching the process model requires careful scaffolding and planning to reduce the potential for “artificial writing.” My visits to these schools found teachers using the process model to prepare students for the demands of testing, and also prepare them for the rigors of college and career writing. These schools embraced the concept of integrating multiple strategies to nurture the high school writers.

To prepare a foundation for implementing the process writing approach, these teachers focused first on the “basics of rhetoric.” One teacher stated that this broadens the perception of teaching writing; rather than just a means to score well on the state assessment, this instruction prepares students to communicate in writing for life beyond high school. A visitor to these schools might find teachers using Aristotle’s Rhetorical Triangle to introduce the trinity of persuasive appeals: ethos, pathos, logos and studies on fallacious statements enabling students with a greater understanding of using persuasive techniques. One teacher I interviewed also shared a more personalized triangle to illustrate this his philosophy of teaching writing (Figure

2). Teaching students to think critically, located at the top of the triangle, is his primary goal for his students in order to prepare them for the rigors of college. Then, he teaches them to use that thought process in writing. The last, and minor part, of the triangle is the test itself.

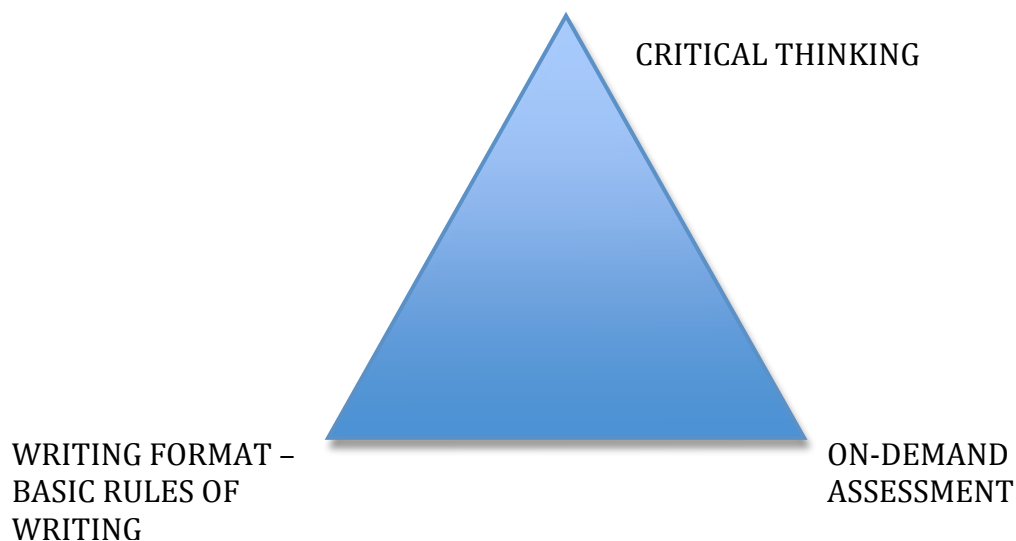


Figure 2 *Mr. Michael's Rhetorical Triangle for on-demand*

Since critical thinking is the foundation for the process approach paradigm (Flower & Hayes, 1981), it wasn't surprising to observe the teachers involved in this study leading students to broaden their perceptions of their topics. Teachers integrated logic and analysis in order to prepare students for complex discussions over literature. These teachers value critical thinking while preparing students for "real-world" writing as seen in the students' writing participation in KOSSA related student organizations like FBLA, FFA, and others, and Bluegrass High requires in-depth college-level reading to spur analysis.

The four schools' adherence to the process writing approach led students to develop a rhetorical strategy for writing by considering the purpose, audience and mode. They ask themselves the following questions: What are you writing? What is the purpose of the writing? and To whom are you writing? Some authors refer to this as the rhetorical context, by placing

the Who? What? and Why? into perspective before the pencil actually begins drafting a composition. Three of the four sites studied used specific planning organizers to help students cognitively rehearse the task. The acronym WWF was one resource used for focusing on the task as part of the prewriting step of the Writing Process.

WWF reminds students of the following:

W – Why are you writing? What is the purpose? “What do you want to have happen as a result of this? (Woolever p. 9)

W – To whom are you writing? Who is your audience? What do they need or want from this writing? This allows you, the writer, to see the situation from the reader’s point of view.

F - What format is to be used? In on-demand writing assessment, the options are: speech, letter, editorial, or feature article. What does that particular format require?

The teachers also mentioned using SPAM occasionally, another acronym to help students plan for reading and planning for on-demand writing assessment.

SPAM is an acronym for the following:

S – What is the situation? Every on-demand prompt has a situation that provides background information related to the task.

P – What is the purpose of the task? What are you asked to do?

A – Who is the audience? The audience determines the tone and voice for the writing.

M – What is the mode? Which formats are you expected to write? A letter? A speech? An editorial? A feature article?

Bluegrass High School scaffolded this cognitive process by initiating the process in the 6th grade. Students in the 6th grade must respond to questions use SRE, statement, reason, and example. This task requires students to think critically and provides a foundation for using support in writing in the higher grades. Students may also be asked to complete the following statement introduced by an Eastern Kentucky University professor when the Kentucky Education Reform Act increased its focus on writing pedagogy: I am writing a (form) _____ to (audience) _____ for the purpose of (reason for writing) _____.

Templates used for writing in the KOSSA programs at Hills High School provide guidance not only for planning, but also for actually initiating the draft by bringing attention to basic paragraph development. All of the sites placed emphasis on constructing paragraphs, developing engaging introductions and conclusions, and using support for the points addressed in the topic. Students must remember the different requirements for each genre and ascertain which to use in a given situation; therefore, practice using a variety of prompts and tasks, reinforces student understanding and expectations for each format. These teachers also found that feedback is vital to help students develop as writers, “they turn in the prewriting (for advice) and then start writing to the prompts. We rehearse those almost every week.” Graham & Perrin (2007) affirm that teaching students to plan (or prewrite) before writing the draft requires students to use both declarative and procedural knowledge increasing overall learning and critical thinking skills. Regardless whether students employ acronyms, templates, or strategies to enhance critical thinking, the emphasis on the preparation stage of the writing process was prevalent in all of the schools.

Teaching preparation for writing was then followed by “practice,” which appeared repeatedly during the interviews with both teachers and students. Urbanski (2006) states that

when “we do not allow time for drafting and revision in our classrooms, our students do not see them as important parts of writing “ (p. 84). Students at these high schools rewrite responses to prompts to meet teacher expectations; they practice the process until they produce a proficient writing. One school permits students to improve their grade with rewrites as a mastery learning approach while another revisits this part of the writing process in order to perform well in the KOSSA competitions. “The practice field is the most important place in the development of athletes and writers” (Urbanski p. 97). Zemelman and Daniels (1988) state that revising offers students an opportunity to look critically at the draft of their completed work. This practice with writing, revising, and rewriting shows evidence that writing is a recursive process, one that the teacher and the student must value in order to improve the narrative.

To become familiar with the process of writing the teachers and students commented on frequency of writing. One student from Timberland High School laughingly shared that he had “re-written his on-demand writing at least five times.” On-demand writing is designed as a regular element of instruction in the schools observed rather than an “extra” component added a few times during the school year for test preparation. Students also immerse themselves in the revision process by reviewing their on-demand responses, identifying areas of strength and weakness. Bluegrass High requires 11th grade students to take a common on-demand assessment every six weeks to practice responding to different prompts, and learn to effectively compose in a given time period. Ms. Allen’s website has a link to her “Timeline for On-Demand Assessment,” where she has effectively broken the test down so students clearly understand the boundaries placed on their writing by time, which requires students to plan, draft, revise, and write a final draft in 60 minutes.

Teaching students to write, using the entire process, within a timed framework must also be practiced and taught as a skill. Students should practice repeatedly how to use the process writing approach to include planning, drafting and revising within a given time frame rather than once or twice before the test. The teachers in this study introduced students to time management during testing, a skill that would benefit students for college-level exams. One teacher has her timeframe outline posted on her webpage for easy access and requires her students to use it during on-demand-like testing situations. Another handout looks like a divided clock identifying what should be accomplished in each sector. Leading students to practice time-related tests transfers the concept of time management from declarative knowledge to procedural knowledge, a college-readiness skill, which may be a factor in student performance on the writing assessment.

The teachers at these sites appeared to do more coaching than actual instructing. Students often selected their own topics for writing; the teachers provided them with instruction in the basic skills pertaining to the writing process; students practiced in order to perfect performance; and students ultimately received affirmation through high scores. Urbanski (2006) addresses this issue by stating that we can't expect students to perform at high levels if we only want students to:

...regurgitate the information given to them... If we mean to help all children in the way that they need to be helped, we must step out from behind our desks and coach them.

There are so many people in the world telling our children that they can't succeed, we need to be a consistent voice telling and showing them that they can. (p. 164)

Teacher modeling and use of student models. Graham and Perrin (2004) found the use of models to be valuable in writing instruction. Modeling in the classroom can build community.

Tom Romano (1987) wrote:

The sharing of my messes, my writing under construction, had a salutary effect on classroom atmosphere. I came to look upon my students differently. From a judge ready to pronounce a sentence I metamorphosed into an advocate of student writers, helper and fellow crafter. And their view of me changed. They began to perceive me as one who wrote and knew about writing, not merely as someone who was a stickler for standard usage and punctuation and who always had in mind an ideal way of writing something. The teacher they saw, wrestled with the same problems they did—a comforting fact for a learner. (p. 40)

All of the teachers in this study share models, or examples, of proficient student writing with students. “It helps them to see an example of what a letter or editorial looks like,” one teacher commented, also bringing attention to teacher modeling. This collaborative teacher shared that the English teacher at Rolling Hills serves as the most effective model for students. When the students write, this teacher writes. When the students share, this teacher shares. An openness to share, allowing students to see the vulnerability of the teacher, leads students to mimic the practice of how to write. Routman (2005) finds that, “One of the most powerful ways for students to grow as writers is to watch you (the teacher) write – to observe you plan, think, compose, revise, and edit right in front them” (p. 45). I observed this particular teacher conduct a “writing to learn” activity in the class; it reinforced note-taking. After a certain amount of time elapsed, he opened the floor to discussion on what they had learned using only their notes. He referred to his notes and if a student made an observation on the material that he didn’t have in

his notes, he added it showing students that ‘writing to learn’ requires active participation. When they read literature together as a class this teacher read orally and then required his students to follow his example. Students were expected to emulate the teacher’s actions, thereby learning the basic skills required for reading and writing. Having the teacher as a model for literacy appeared to enhance the learning curve in this class.

Three of the schools created school writing handbooks to prepare for on-demand writing assessment, while the fourth school used materials found on the Kentucky Department of Education website. One of the handbooks contained sample released prompts found on the Kentucky Department of Education website along with teacher-created prompts. Also included with the prompts are student models, or examples, of proficiently written responses to facilitate students’ understanding of the different genres and the expectations incurred by those genres. Annotations on the models elucidate the rationale for scoring and provide a visual representation for each scoring level listed on the Kentucky Scoring Guide. Students not only use these models to emulate, they identify characteristics of good writing through critical analysis of the text. They look at the writing and ask, “What did the writer do to develop the purpose of this piece?” Through analysis of the models, exemplifying the models in their writing, and recognizing the attributes of proficient writing, students seem to become better writers.

Another school’s workbook contains on-demand strategies, templates, transitions, information on required formats, and student models of responses accompanied by color-coded annotations that identify audience, and purpose. Teachers in all content areas become familiar with the attributes of the models in order to use them effectively with the students who also learn to color-code effective and ineffective responses. Mrs. Wilson states that this practice not only enhances the understanding of the writing assessment, but it adds to the students’ conceptual

knowledge of appropriately used techniques in expository writing. This practice involving critical analysis provides a depth of understanding that seems to provide a foundation for good writing in this high school.

In keeping with the mission to prepare students for college, another school created a packet of material developed by one of their teachers, which also includes models of students work. This information is used in Grade 11 in order to build a foundation for writing in preparation for the assessment, which up until 2011 has been administered at the beginning of the 12th grade school year. One of the teachers shared models found in the texts used in the classroom, which focuses on writing complete essays and argumentation for first year composition in college. All four schools appear to utilize the concept of modeling in their curriculum.

Teaching the genres. “All students must learn the different formats and the appropriate conventions required on the on-demand test,” stated a teacher from one of the schools in this study. The argument that all students must learn the required formats of the test has inspired the four schools to integrate the teaching of these genres into the curriculum. Elbow and Belanoff (2000) share that “a genre can serve as a way to generate or invent content...language is inherently both form and content” (p. 55). The Curriculum Specialist at Falls High School recognized this theoretical concept and designed student handouts that provide descriptions reminding students of the format for writing an article, letter and basic essay. This material and accompanying templates adhere to the Kentucky Occupational Skills Standards Assessment, which requires students to respond to a scenario and task rather than the situation and task used on the on-demand assessment. Students practice writing to a plethora of KOSSA prompts proceeding through the steps of the writing process to compose, which includes pausing to revise

and edit. Using templates to remind students of the formats peculiar to the different genres provides a concrete structure to help with organization and to generate the development of the essay.

The teachers interviewed provided students with an organizer, which helps students focus on the three purposes the on-demand prompt might require: to narrate an event, persuade, or inform. It's important for the student to recognize the purpose before composing the appropriate response. Routman (2005) states that teachers must have "meaningful purposes for real readers" (p. 193) before composing in the genre or the "vehicle for getting the message across to the intended readers" (p. 192). Another resource used by these teachers and released by the Kentucky Department of Education lists the process writing steps reminding students how to create a response and also identifies the requirements of the letter, editorial, article, and speech, the formats students might be asked to write. Routman (2005) provides a framework for teaching writing genres, which includes determining preexisting knowledge about the different genres, using examples of the genres, practice writing in the genre, conferring with students about their writings, and encouraging students to write frequently.

All four schools make certain that students are cognizant of the expectations for the different genres used on the on-demands assessment. They introduce students to the KY Scoring Guide and teach the language of writing assessment by having students read and score sample writings from each genre. Knowing the descriptors of a "4" and understanding those descriptors helps students evaluate personal responses and learn metacognitively how to change or revise writing behaviors to achieve a higher scores on the assessment.

One teacher created a website so students can locate instructional guidelines for writing the different genres as well as accompanying PowerPoints that describe the process for

responding in the different formats. The speech blueprint provides an organized approach for writing a speech through a schematic outline. The introduction identifies the lead, topic, and proceeds to the focus or thesis. Then the outline indicates major headings and supporting points. Even though the resources provide assistance for on-demand preparation, this teacher emphasized the need to teach students the basics of essay writing, which would transfer to the different genres.

Addressing the prompt. Pike-Baky and Fleming (2005) state “prompts are writing test topics. Prompts themselves are departure points to get students writing. They come long and short, sometimes attached to cryptic quotes, paired with literary excerpts, or as stand-alones. They can sometimes be remote from students’ experiences (even preposterous) or so general that they’re mortifyingly boring and students find themselves hard-pressed to respond with engagement or enthusiasm” (p. 8).

The teachers in the schools in this study specifically taught strategies to learn and remember how to respond to a given prompt. Graham, MacArthur & Fitzgerald (2007) define a strategy as “a course of action for accomplishing a specific objective... a conscious decision to undertake a series of actions to meet a desired goal” (p. 126). The strategies used to write in the formats required by the different genres contain procedural knowledge, or the “how to” knowledge. Graham & Harris (2007) found that teaching writing strategies has a significant effect on the product. Taking instructional time to teach students how to comprehend the prompt and respond in the appropriate format may be factors in developing proficient student responses.

“The prompt sets the stage for the writing task” (Graham, MacArthur & Fitzgerald, 2007, p. 276). Teachers from the schools in this study agreed with the concept that students need to “break it down” when referring to the prompt. These three words showed a significant

reoccurrence in the data, as the major emphasis appeared to be in teaching students how to read the prompt sufficiently to design an adequate response. All teachers focused on guiding students to identify the most important requirements in a prompt, which include purpose, audience and mode.

The teacher at Rolling Hills High School initiates this analytical process by stressing the need to teach students to read critically. Critical reading helps students discover the purpose and audience of the writing assignment. One pedagogical strategy employed during the writing process includes teaching students the acronym WWF: Why are you writing? To whom are you writing? What format should you use? Of course, the connection to wrestling might intrigue students to immerse themselves in the prompt, but this attention to the prompt during the prewriting stage of the writing process guides students to focus on what the test is asking them to do. One student commented that the repetition of practicing sessions helps students internalize how to read the prompt critically and “break it down” to effectively plan a response.

The KOSSA Scenario Writing Template designed by Mrs. Wilson includes questions students must answer to proficiently respond to the prompt. These questions include the following: What is your purpose? Who is your audience? Circle the form (or genre) requested. The methodical sequence of steps guides students as they respond to the prompt. As I sat in the classroom at Falls High School, the teacher asked students to explain the situation, which is always identified on the Kentucky on-demand assessment. The students responded, summarizing the background information needed to effectively write a response. Then she asked them to explain what they were being asked to do. All of the students answered with the correct response. The four schools in this study appear to concentrate on developing skills in critical analysis by having students break down the text into different parts.

As I researched this concept of prompt analysis, I found that two states, North Dakota and Texas, stressed in their statewide released materials that teachers must include prompt identification and analysis in classroom instruction. However, few pedagogical texts actually identified this as an important skill to teach students. Gere, Christenbury and Sassi (2007) state that “Prompt analysis not only helps you understand what is required of you, it also helps you start generating ideas for your essay, thereby allowing you to sidestep the dreaded “writer’s block” and move toward writing a successful essay” (p. 76). It seems that teaching students strategies to analyze the prompt may be a factor in producing proficient responses.

Direct instruction. A number of grammar texts, similar to college handbooks, were found in the English classroom at Bluegrass High School, some under student chairs, others in bookshelves that line the room. The accessibility of these resources provides students with tools to revise and edit writings. The English teachers located at the four sites teach grammar through the direct instruction (DI) model and then supplement grammar coaching through mini-lessons pertaining to grammar errors in student writings. Direct Instruction has five basic precepts: orientation, presentation, structured practice, guided practice, and independent practice (Joyce, Weil & Calhoun 2004). This teaching method has often been criticized due to its presentation style: the teacher as the giver of information and the student as the receiver. Few, if any, interactions between students occur during this type of instruction; however, the teachers at these sites determined that DI provides the most complete way to maximize student learning in a brief time frame in order to lay the foundation for common discourse. This teaching model provides a high degree of teacher direction with high expectations for student performance. Allen maintained that, “I know what research says about direct instruction (negative), but the structured format helps students learn grammar faster.”

This teaching style was also used to teach students the fundamentals of the five-paragraph essay and the essentials of designing paragraphs. Along with teaching the basics of composition and the critical foundations of grammar, the teachers in this study agreed that students must know the principles of the writing discourse community so that they can proficiently edit and revise writings. This integration of conceptual writing begins in sixth grade at one school as students learn to respond to open-response questions using the SRE method (statement, reason, evidence). Answers to questions must include representation and support teaching students to write for a purpose with an awareness of audience. As students enter the composition classes in the 11th and 12th grades, they already understand that expository writing is based on a foundation of reason and evidence. “It’s important to teach students the basic premise of the five-paragraph essay and how to use that design in the four different formats required on the state assessment...my students don’t like it, but I tell them they don’t have to like it, they just have to do it. I promise them it will help them their first year of college,” shared one of the teachers.

This glimpse into the curricular similarities between the four schools in this study revealed that they embrace writing as a content area. This writing across the curriculum gives value to the importance of writing in all classes, and the focus on using the process writing approach includes recognizing writing as a recursive process.

Learning Culture

In order for true learning to occur, teachers must be aware of “how the environment and emotional connections affect the reader (student)” (Chapman & King, 2003, p. 22). The Kentucky Board of Education recently developed a document titled, “Characteristics of Highly Effective Teaching and Learning,” which identifies five components or areas that effect learning

in the classroom. The first component listed relates to the learning climate defined as, “a safe environment supported by the teacher in which high, clear expectations and positive relationships are fostered; active learning is promoted” (KDE, Instructional Resources). It appears as though the environment, or culture, within the four schools in this study fostered high expectations, nurtured positive relationships, and promoted active learning.

School culture pertains to beliefs and attitudes that give the school its identity, while school climate characterizes the physical and psychological aspects that could change (Tableman & Herron, 2004). This theme, Learning Culture, combines these two concepts by addressing the physical environment, the emotional atmosphere, and the educational beliefs and philosophy that those who teach there adopt.

The physical structures of the facilities in this study were clean, neat, and orderly. The noise levels were low and teachers appeared to be collegial with one another interacting with an attitude of respect and professionalism. Expectations were high for all students regardless of ethnicity, socio-economic status, and influences from the culture surrounding the school including family influence. Timberland High School showcased student involvement with framed collages of pictures showing students interacting not only with other students but also community members. These pictures adorned the walls of the halls helping to create an ambiance associated with home.

Another characteristic of the environment was the sense of community in each school. The schools appeared to be respected and valued by teachers, administration, staff and students. The principal at Timberland High School definitely developed positive relationships with students and teachers. This relational connection appeared to sustain a supportive and respectful rapport. One principal was perceived as a “cheerleader” for learning as he encouraged teachers

and students to work together to learn while another opened its doors for all students at the beginning of the school year with a “Back to School Bash” where all students received school supplies to reduce stigma associated with low socioeconomic status. Every school involved in the study appeared to have a propitious relationship with students encouraging diversity, individual growth, and academic support.

Support for the writing program in these schools started with the administrative personnel who made curricular decisions by disaggregating student test scores to identify gaps and individual student weaknesses. With this information the class schedule was designed so the student need corresponded with the individual teaching specialties. Even though teachers may have found themselves in a precarious situation by not be fully aware of their teaching load until after the analysis of the PLAN, ACT, and CATS results, the faculty expressed support for these academic and teaching challenges. The academic culture in these schools placed the emphasis on the students first, the curriculum second, and the teachers last. However, because of the administrative and collegial support, the teachers and students have developed a culture that embraces the importance of writing and learning.

One aspect noted in this culture included high expectations, often referred to by the participants in the interviews. The teacher at Rolling Hills High School demonstrates consistent high expectations, forcing students to rise to higher levels. “It may have been difficult for the students (and parents) at first, but eventually, they effectively completed the assigned work,” stated the teacher. High expectations stimulated students for various reasons: entrance to college, high achievement in KOSSA competitions, and maintaining a positive relationship with nurturing teachers and administrators. High expectations were a common characteristic in all four schools.

The students in the four schools appeared to understand that writing is a process. They were aware that the first draft written is typically not the final draft, which required them to revisit the writing multiple times. The schools in this study encouraged students to rewrite their responses until their on-demand writings met expectations. This rewriting experience was accompanied by teacher expertise as students met for conferences with teachers.

Rather than punitive actions to change a students' perception about writing, the teachers in this study took proactive measures by offering additional conferencing before, during and after school. Atwell states that "when students have regular, frequent time set aside to write, writing can also play a crucial role in helping them grow up, making it possible for them to capture who they are, then come back and measure themselves against their earlier selves "(p. 93). The four schools involved in this study provided ample time for students to write and receive feedback. Their comments in the classroom indicated their willingness to share their writings and rewrite responses until the writing was acceptable to the teachers.

At Falls High School a strong literacy emphasis was placed on those content areas involved in the KOSSA program. A high percentage of students took part in the different course offerings, which include Agribusiness, Horticulture, Production Livestock, Production Crop, Consumer and Family Management and more. Situated in a rural area, it only seemed appropriate and natural for students to be interested in agriculture; however, the school capitalized on these interests to teach oral and written communication skills. Students not only participated in high-interest learning experiences, they learned valuable skills that benefited them personally and academically. As a result, this may be a factor in increased test scores as it proves that developing positive relationships with teachers enhances student achievement (Rimm-Kaufman et al, 2007).

Student choice also appeared to be a prevalent factor in planning the curriculum in these schools. Mr. Michael allowed students to discuss and choose writing topics and gave them a voice in curricular decisions and assessment. This open community provided a respectful environment that accepted and valued the opinions of the students. Burke (2007) calls this negotiation and occupation as students determine educational needs and become consumed in the learning process. The learning culture found in these schools appeared to provide a supportive environment for learning and writing.

Power of Motivation

“Motivated students can be defined as those who value and are willing to use writing as a worthwhile activity or means of expression, communication, and elaboration” (Graham, MacArthur, & Fitzgerald, 2007, p. 205). The students involved in this study wrote because they believed the activity would lead them to the following results: succeed in their first semester in college, perform well on the KOSSA competitions, and prepare for career pursuits after high school. As I observed the classrooms, I didn’t observe a single student who wasn’t engaged in the writing activity. When they asked questions of the teacher, they used the vocabulary associated with writing and the process of writing indicating confidence in the writing process.

Writing self-efficacy also appears to impact writing performance and can be increased by providing interventions and strategies that can improve writing (Graham & Harris, 1993). “Self-efficacy increases as a result of interventions that provide students with tools for improving their writing skills” (Bruning & Horn, 2000, p. 5). Students at these four high schools learned specific strategies for analyzing the prompt and for organizing their writing according to the formats required by specific genres. The packets and workbooks created by the teachers in these schools contained a number of strategic tools to guide students through the process of writing. For

example, acrostics like WWF and SPAM, methods to interpret the prompt, led students to understand the purpose and adjust the voice for the intended audience.

Writing for an authentic purpose intrinsically motivated students by giving them the opportunity to express themselves to a real audience. Elbow (1994) stated that text students' produce for a genuine reader show evidence of more voice and authority. An authentic purpose also produces interest, which helps to generate ideas and invention in the development of the text. This interest can be nurtured through feedback and peer conferences (Lipstein & Renninger, 2007). Student choice in writing territories played an important role in the classrooms I visited, which may be a factor in maintaining high writing scores.

Even though the teachers wanted students to be intrinsically motivated to excel in academics, the extrinsic rewards used at these four schools appeared to motivate students to produce high quality writing. A favorite of the students has little to do with academics, but having a private parking place with a placard bearing the student's name rates high on the list of favorite rewards. One school allowed students to design the motivational and reward plan for students receiving a proficient or distinguished on the Kentucky on-demand writing assessment. A point system rewarded students with a number of points for proficient or distinguished and students "buy" the reward, which included a private parking place, exemption from taking a final, adding points to a test, a free prom ticket, free movie tickets, a gas money card, and more. Exemption from final exams appeared to be a common reward among the schools, and the teachers interviewed did mention other motivational practices like providing opportunities for students to write to initiate change, writing collaboratively, novel and challenging assignments using digital writing, writing circles, and more; however, the extrinsic motivator of having your own parking place with a nameplate seemed to trump all other ideas.

Conclusion

The three themes found in this cross-case analysis, curriculum, learning culture and motivation, were seamlessly integrated at all four schools. The teachers from these schools use similar strategies, similar resources, maintain similar environments, and employ similar motivational techniques, although they did so with unique variations at each site. The faculty and administration work diligently to cultivate a learning environment that produces critical thinking as students prepare for college and careers beyond high school. After studying the characteristics that these schools share, it became apparent that they all embrace a holistic writing culture, which spans all content areas. The implications of these results could be overwhelmingly positive as schools seek suggestions to improve writing scores in a time when Kentucky and other states increase emphasis on assessment and accountability.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In 1990, Kentucky's Supreme Court declared Kentucky's educational system unconstitutional forcing change in finance, school governance, and curriculum (Karnack, Elias, & Whitaker, 1994). However, the radical attention to writing, which included the writing portfolio and the on-demand writing assessment, presented educators with exigent needs. The state of Kentucky provided a plethora of opportunities for teachers to receive professional development to integrate writing into the curriculum. Teaching multiple genres for the portfolio and writing assessment became a driving curricular force. The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* connected federal funding to state assessment, including Kentucky's writing assessment, and introduced Kentucky's teachers to the era of accountability. If students had made substantive gains in scores, these reform movements could have been considered successful, but scores in writing assessment indicate no considerable improvement at the high school level. In 2009, only 34.97 % of high school seniors scored either proficient or distinguished on the on-demand writing portion of the Kentucky Core Content Test. Another disconcerting factor evolved after disaggregating scores when examining high and low performing schools; not all high performing schools performed at the proficient level on the on-demand writing assessment and not all low performing schools performed below proficiency. However, across the Commonwealth, only a small percentage of schools, regardless of socio-economic status and minority ratio, gained momentum and increased the number of students scoring proficient and distinguished on the writing assessment.

This study was conducted in the fall of 2010 and spring of 2011, twenty years after the Kentucky legislature passed the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA), to examine the

pedagogical practices used by high performing schools on Kentucky's on-demand writing assessment. This chapter will briefly summarize the study, discuss insights gained from the research, identify implications for teachers of writing, and address potential issues that warrant further research.

Discussion

Chapter I provided background information regarding the state of writing assessment in Kentucky beginning with the 1990 reform movement that directed attention to writing instruction. By clarifying the state mandates and describing the profound need to focus on improving student writing performance, the purpose for this research evolved through a natural progression as writing scores on the state assessment pointedly indicated that over 60% of Kentucky's seniors could not communicate proficiently in writing. In 2009, when this investigation started, Kentucky's state legislature passed Senate Bill 1, a bill to reform Kentucky's education, which once again focuses on writing instruction and assessment. Even though the writing portfolio will no longer be calculated into the accountability index, it continues to be an important facet of instruction as each school must maintain student portfolios and may potentially face state audit of school writing practices. SB 1 increased the focus of on-demand writing assessment by adding two extra years of assessment in high school. Previously, 5th, 8th, and 12th grade students sat for the on-demand writing assessment. Senate Bill 1 changed this to 5th, 6th, 8th, 10th and 11th grades beginning the 2011-2012 school year. Then, in February of 2010, the Kentucky Board of Education, the Education Professional Standards Board, and the Council on Postsecondary Education agreed to adopt the Common Core Standards for English/Language arts and math (KDE, Kentucky Accepts Core Standards). These standards, which target college and career readiness skills, include significant attention to writing, especially expository and argumentative

writing indicating the focus on writing instruction will inevitably increase as schools design curriculum to address literacy requirements. Therefore, educators need to study pedagogical strategies and cultural characteristics of schools that demonstrate high scores in the on-demand writing assessment in order to replicate practices that may improve assessment scores. Given this increased attention to writing assessment, the importance of this study and its findings has intensified as teachers seek methods and strategies to improve student performance in writing.

In the following section, I will discuss the results from this study framed within the research questions that guided the study.

What pedagogical strategies and methods are used in the writing classroom that result in improved student performance on Kentucky's on-demand writing assessment?

English teachers at all four sites created a structured learning environment designed to specifically teach the basic elements of writing and the structures of different genres. Rather than using writing as a supplementary activity to English content, writing was considered a major part of the curriculum, writing as content. Teachers purposefully integrate writing to learn, writing to demonstrate learning and writing for publication into the curriculum stressing the overall importance of writing in acquiring knowledge while preparing students for writing assessment and college level composition. These writing instructors faithfully used the process writing approach, a factor that Calkins (1986), Atwell (1998), and Graves (1994) have found results in better quality writing. The importance of using a process approach to writing, supported by Hillocks (1987) and Graham and Perin (2007), suggests that the writing process influences good writing practices.

The maxims of grammar and paragraph development, taught in isolation, built a foundation in the basic precepts of composition and were then re-taught through mini-lessons

during the revising stage of the writing process. As teachers in this study presented writing principles through direct instruction, students learned writing with the same intensity as other content areas through scaffolding and differentiation allowing for formative review, guided instruction, and independent learning. This instruction accommodated for students' diverse needs through exposure and implementation of resources and strategies to help students to focus, organize, and revise. These resources included the following: (a) templates for writing, (b) acronyms for focusing, (c) directives in time management, (d) lessons for comprehending the scoring guide, and (e) student models for analysis of on-demand responses. The teachers, as instructional designers, prepared material so students learned the basics of rhetoric and then they built the writing curriculum introducing strategies and skills until students could use the entire conceptual process to respond to an on-demand prompt.

How has the school, or district, supported the writing teachers in those schools that demonstrate high on-demand scores?

Each school appeared to have a supportive principal, curriculum specialist, or other administrative staff that contributed to a propitious learning environment, each different and yet effective. Browning (2003) contends that the principal's role should be "promoting and supporting effective literacy practices" (p. 6). The principal at one of these schools exhibited a commitment to encourage both students and faculty who gave him credit for any success in assessment, academics, and extra curricular activities. Another school principal respected the professionalism of the teachers, allowing the instructors to mold the curriculum to meet the needs of the students, and yet another school had a champion for assessment who facilitated teachers in preparing students for assessment and sought to enable teachers with effective strategies to motivate students. Further, McGhee & Lew (2007) suggest, "that principals who

have sound rudimentary knowledge of writing instruction are more likely to work in concert with their faculty members rather than in time-wasting discord” (p. 375). The schools in this study currently have established writing polices that place responsibility on all teachers for integrating writing in all content areas giving evidence that the school culture embraces a culture of writing.

What role does classroom environment play in nurturing the development of writers in preparation for the assessment?

Initially, I perceived this question to include the structure and appearance of the room as well as the resources and instructional supplies available to students and teachers. However, after spending time in the classrooms, the conceptual definition of environment transposed to include the physical, social, cultural, and instructional areas that shape learning. Elementary and middle school classrooms have walls adorned with bright creative posters, lists of rules, and student work embellished with stars and stickers. These high school classrooms, though decorated with a few teacher-created items and student work, embraced a learning culture built around goals, respect, and expectation as evidenced through the interactions between the students and teachers. Students respected the teachers regardless of the challenges associated with the writing curriculum. Students at these schools thrived in a community of critical analysis and independent thinking, while focusing on goals like college admission and success in vocational curricula. Even though the academic challenges appeared arduous, the students persisted with a nurturing and encouraging faculty. This supports Wilson’s (2009) claim that teachers have an inherent desire to make a difference in a student’s life. The atmosphere in each school held unique qualities molded by the school community and the geographic culture, however, the coalescent factor common to these schools pointed to teacher expectations. Each school expected students to perform at high levels, and teachers and administrators worked together to

sustain that impression. As Atwell (1998) concurred, teachers need to create an environment that would “establish a context that invites and supports writing and reading” (p. 90).

What resources have been used in preparing students for writing the assessed genres?

After conducting interviews at all four schools the data identified that all of the teachers instructed students on how to “break down” the prompt in order to effectively respond in the assessed genres. Students used templates designed by the teacher, the Kentucky Board of Education, or some outside source, in order to identify purpose, audience, and the required mode. The most commonly used acronym for generating a rhetorical strategy, or a plan for responding to the prompt, was WWF, which directed students’ attention in determining the situation (What?), to whom the writing would be sent (Who?), and the format required in the task (Form?). Teachers also used a number of sample prompts and responses to lead students to a greater understanding of the assessment and an awareness of the expectations for each genre. Then, students responded to practice prompts expecting to receive feedback to improve performance. The teachers taught the format for each genre using templates, student models, and PowerPoint instructional slide shows, and the curriculum used to teach on-demand writing required the same intense preparation as teaching British Literature or other content found in the English classroom.

How has the preparation for the on-demand assessment been integrated into the curriculum?

Writing instruction played a considerable role in the school curriculum at each of these schools. These schools appeared to embrace writing across the curriculum. Teachers worked to prepare students in grades eleven and twelve for the expository writing required in college entry courses by providing a foundation for the basics of composition, which may transition to proficient performance on the Kentucky on-demand writing assessment. This concentration on

writing in all courses provided ample practice in the planning, drafting, revising, and publishing of responses to a variety of subject-oriented prompts. The strategies used by teachers in this study focused primarily on prewriting exercises to direct students' attention to the prompt which reflects Hillocks (1975) use of structured activities to organize the material, scaffold instruction, provide time for practice, and place as much importance on prewriting as the final product. Students were immersed in the writing process and the three types of writing: (1) writing to learn, (2) writing to demonstrate learning, and (3) writing for publication. Hillocks (1975) contends that teachers should write for publication. Considered best practice by Daniels and Bizar (2001), the writing process appeared to be integrated into all writing instruction. The data from this research supported the research conducted by Hayes & Flower (1983) and Emig (1971) on the importance of the writing process.

Conclusion

Even though each of the four schools designed their writing curriculum to address their specific student population, the common attributes of curriculum, learning culture, and motivation were found to be essential attributes in this research for understanding the development of proficient writers. Figure 3 provides an illustrative overview of each area along with key findings within each area.

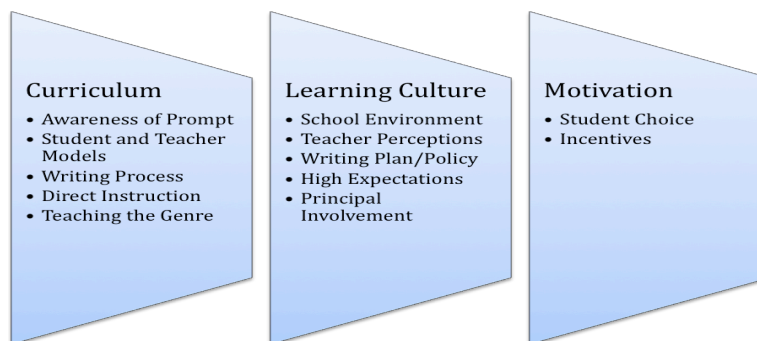


Figure 3 *Key Areas of Successful On-Demand Writing Programs*

In addition, the eight pedagogical practices, identified by Graham and Harris (2007) as characteristics of effective writing instruction, were found in the schools in this study. The teachers at the schools taught writing strategies by modeling and scaffolding skills, and the learning environments at the schools exhibited collaborative settings that encouraged positive interactions between teachers and students. Students learned basic approaches to writing through explicit instruction, as well as learning to write using the process approach. Further, the needs of the students were addressed through curricular decisions and strategic planning. Olson & Land (2007) found in their eight-year study that students taught writing by implementing a strategy approach significantly outperform other students on writing assessments. Similarly, these schools immersed students with a number of strategies that allowed them to enhance critical thinking, read and analyze prompts, plan text, revisit the text, and appear to be rewarded with high scores on the on-demand assessment.

The schools involved in this study seemed to holistically embrace writing. Murray (2009) explains the role of the teacher, “we are coaches, encouragers, developers, creators of environments in which our students can experience the writing process for themselves” (p. 4). These schools have developed a writing culture that incorporates writing in all content areas, and places value on students’ procedural knowledge of the processes utilized in developing text. The schools, teachers, administrators, and students exhibit commonalities relative to all three of the themes: curriculum, learning environment, and motivation.

Implications for Schools

As schools seek to improve writing, they should first identify writing as a valuable tool for learning. Then, they may consider how to implement the curricular elements found in these high performing schools.

Recognizing the value of teaching the basics of composition, which focuses on invention, arrangement, and style provides a foundation for the writing classroom. Even though this appears to be a “prescriptive and orderly view of the creative act” (Hairston, 1982, p. 78), the teachers in this study valued building a common discourse community upon which to develop a community of writers. The concepts taught under this paradigm include paragraph development, genre study, critical analysis, and grammar.

Moving toward individual creativity and a more constructivist pedagogy, students would next be taught the recursive nature of the writing process. Students could be coached to learn the following steps of composition: rehearsal (prewriting), drafting, revision, and editing (Murray, 2009). This process should be internalized so it can be replicated in a time-tested writing situation like on-demand assessment. The use of student models, noted as one of eleven elements to improve student writing, could be used to provide students with example writings that demonstrate the expectations of effective writing (Graham & Perrin, 2004). Of course, Atwell (1998) states the best model is the teacher, substantiated by the modeling the teachers in these schools did with students.

Writing ought to be integrated throughout the curriculum and embedded in all content areas. This integration will allow opportunities for students to use writing to learn and writing to demonstrate learning while offering students more time to write. Graves (1994) suggested that teachers need to rethink how writing is used in their classroom since, “You learn to write by writing” (Murray, 1985, p. 144). This additional time also provides students with opportunity for practice by revisiting the text enhancing critical thinking (Bean, 1996). The integration of writing not only enhances written communication, but it also promotes learning content.

To adopt the practices used by these schools, teachers must provide students with a number of strategies to empower them with the tools for effective writing. These strategies might include learning the required formats, developing a rhetorical strategy by *breaking down* the prompt, using acronyms that may help students focus on the prompt, planning the text, and employing time management.

Though purposeful instruction of strategies is important, another important element these schools typified was disaggregating data to plan curriculum and meet the academic needs of the students. All of the schools in this study investigated student weaknesses to provide assistance for academic improvement; however, they also addressed the economic needs of the students.

Schools desiring to improve writing scores could benefit from evaluating the learning culture and how that culture might be improved to enhance and nurture writing as teachers and administrators develop compatible teaching philosophies on writing to drive instruction. A writing policy is merely a directive, but a relationship built on shared responsibility and shared expectations provides students with consistent expectations and a support group of individuals who nurture academic growth and celebrate student achievement. This learning culture might also encourage critical thinking and allow students to freely brainstorm topics of choice during the writing process.

The following attributes were found in these successful writing programs: faculty and staff developed and sustained supportive relationships; faculty and staff maintained extremely high expectations for all students; faculty and staff focused on student preparation for life after high school rather than preparation for testing; schools developed school-wide writing plans; schools created welcoming campuses for students, parents, and members of the community; and schools made every effort to sustain positive perceptions about the school, faculty, and students.

Educators have always sought techniques to motivate student engagement. The schools involved in this study employed both intrinsic and extrinsic approaches to immerse students in the learning process. Many of the students involved in this study developed into proficient writers in order to do well in college and to perform well on the KOSSA competitions. Student choice, self-directed goals, respectful discourse, conscientious attention, and teacher expectations may have contributed to actuating student interaction with writing, but all schools provided extrinsic rewards for high achievement in writing assessment. Exempting students from finals, dropping unsatisfactory grades, personalizing parking spaces, issuing prom tickets, purchasing movie tickets and even providing gas cards may have served as motivating incentives for students to perform at high levels. This research did not focus primarily on the use of incentives and its connection to student performance, but motivation was identified as a common factor used by all schools to improve on-demand scores.

Based on the data gathered during this investigation, the three elements identified as common characteristics found in schools in which students demonstrate high levels of performance on Kentucky's on-demand writing assessment included curriculum, learning environment, and student motivation. Schools seeking strategies to improve student performance in writing may want to explore the three areas and the accompanying aspects discussed previously. Focused attention on these elements may have a positive effect on writing performance.

It is important to consider that the characteristics found in this naturalistic study were not isolated factors, but rather representative of holistic writing programs. Further, these characteristics were not isolated in controlled conditions to measure improvement and do not represent a checklist of items for schools to incorporate into their writing instruction. Although

utilizing these elements could lead schools to writing improvement, in this study, they were seamlessly integrated at each site.

Recommendations for Further Study

Since the focus of this study investigated instructional pedagogy relative to student performance, additional research could be conducted to explore the value of these findings. A controlled investigation to determine the overall effectiveness of some of the resources would provide quantitative data to these qualitative assumptions. It would also be advantageous to survey teachers in high performing schools to clearly comprehend their perceptions of administrative support and identify characteristics of support. The interviews with teachers clearly recorded positive connections to the administration, but the small number of individuals interviewed doesn't provide a comprehensive understanding of administrative support for the writing program. Teacher perceptions of administrative support from a random sampling of schools might provide valuable data when comparing the assessment results of the schools represented in the study.

Motivating students continues to be a concern faced by K-20 educators. Isolating factors that both motivate and generate high performance would provide teachers with methods to engage and motivate students. A survey of teachers across the state to inquire about successful motivational strategies would provide a more comprehensive overview of potential methods to employ in classrooms. Further, it would be especially interesting to explore the relationship of these practices with writing scores.

When regarding learning culture, a study involving control classrooms and those used as research samples to record and investigate environmental factors that may inhibit or promote student writing performance would provide valuable information for teachers.

Closing Comments

Now that Senate Bill 1 is changing the constructs of education in Kentucky, on-demand writing assessment will also experience changes. The focus of the new assessment will target informative and argumentative writing, however, regardless of the modes required for the on-demand writing assessment, students must still learn to break down prompts, utilize appropriate rhetorical skills, require models to enhance instruction, practice writing the given genre, and plan for writing on a time-related assessment. The specific required genres may differ, but the foundation for written discourse remains the same. The findings from this investigation are relevant to and may serve as an impetus to improve classroom writing instruction. This naturalistic study initially investigated the pedagogical phenomena of on-demand instruction in four high performing schools, but the data revealed the phenomena encompassed more than pedagogy. Both pedagogy and school culture must be taken into consideration when addressing this writing phenomena.

This study afforded me the opportunity to meet amazing educators in all four regions of Kentucky who teach their students to excel in writing. Their willingness to share their insights provides ideas for schools struggling with low on-demand writing assessment scores.

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Appendix A

Process Writing Approach

In *A Community of Writers*, Zemelman and Daniels (1988), found that the process approach has not been utilized in many junior-high or high school classrooms. This is surprising given the fact that Calkins (1986), Atwell (1998), and Graves (1994) indicate that the process approach results in better quality writing. Even George Hillocks in his 1986 meta analysis of factors that influence good writing, included the process writing approach as a positive force. However, Zemelman and Daniels acknowledge particular issues that affect high school instruction (1988). High schools are usually departmentalized with a schedule that often allows only 45 – 55 minutes per day for English teaching. The teacher must try to create four to five different community environments as classes change during the school day, rather than just focusing on one. Nancy Atwell (1998) devotes an entire chapter pertaining to the time needed to create an environment that would “establish a context that invites and supports writing and reading” (p. 90). The classroom environment is a positive factor in developing young authors (Atwell, 1998). Also, a high school English teacher has four or five classroom sets of writings to grade rather than just the single self-contained classroom found in the elementary setting.

Process writing includes: prewriting; drafting; revision; drafting; editing, and publishing (Calkins, 1986). Some writing theorists have changed the names of the varied steps to accompany their individual pedagogical philosophy. For example, Donald Murray uses the terms: rehearsal, drafting, revision and editing (1985), while Jim Burke titles the stages: beginning; visualization; gathering; constructing; finishing; and presenting (2003). Regardless of the different title for each segment of the process, the progression repeats in a reciprocal manner rather than linear.

Fifteen Characteristics Found in Process-Oriented Classrooms

In order to explain the writing process paradigm, Zemelman and Daniels (1988) outlines a list of fifteen characteristics or conditions found in process – oriented classrooms, which may or may not be present in the case study schools. The first refers to teachers having high expectations for all students in the area of writing achievement. The Pygmalion study in San Francisco’s schools demonstrates that inflated teacher expectations often results in superior scores on the IQ test (Snow, 1989). The second element relates to the necessity of having students write a lot. The Commission on Writing in America’s Schools and Colleges, recommends the following after the compilation of *The Neglected “R”* publication that schools should “underscore the importance of writing by developing clear, unambiguous, and comprehensive policies that aim to double the amount of time students spend writing”(2003 p. 26).

The third and fourth elements concern process-writing and writing for real audiences maintain that students must recognize the value of an audience in stimulating passionate writing, which improves with personal relevancy. Lavelle, Smith and O’Ryan,(2002) after studying over 400 4th grade language arts students, found that when teachers tailor writing instruction to meet the needs of students by promoting relevance, performance increases. Bruning and Horn (2000) affirm earlier research that states authentic literacy activities must engage students. In the 2004 meta analysis research, *Writing Next*, Graham and Perin (2004) provides a quantitative measure of effective instructional methods in adolescent writing instruction. One of the strengths of this study includes determining the effect size of the particular intervention or instruction. Their research found eleven writing interventions to be effective: writing strategies; summarization;

collaborative writing; specific product goals; word processing; sentence combining; prewriting; inquiry activities; the process writing approach; study of models; and writing for content learning.

Appendix B

Interview Protocol For Teachers

1. Why did you become a writing teacher?
2. What's your training background in writing instruction?
3. What do you feel are the ideal conditions for teaching writing?
4. How has the on-demand writing assessment has influenced the curriculum?
5. Can you explain what pedagogical principles you feel are important for writing instruction?
6. What pedagogical strategies have been employed to improve student performance writing performance?
7. Which advanced organizers are used that guide students cognitively in planning for on-demand prompts and writing in general?
8. Explain the instructional strategies used to teach students to elaborate through integration of idea development in writing?
9. What place has grammar instruction had in the school's writing pedagogy?
10. How do you prepare students for vocabulary usage in writing?
11. What instructional strategies are used for teaching independent revision and editing?
12. If you could select one thing, what do you feel is the most important ingredient in teaching students to write proficiently in on-demand writing assessment?
13. How do you motivate reluctant writers to perform?
14. What professional development activities have been offered that has helped teachers effectively integrate writing into the curriculum?
15. What support has been offered by the school administration to help implement the writing program and design a writing policy?
16. What texts are used as resources in the writing classroom?
17. Why do you feel the students performed so well on the on-demand assessment?
18. If you could change one thing about your instruction in preparing students for the on-demand assessment, what would it be?
19. How is the assessment data used to adjust the writing curriculum?
20. What is the policy regarding writing portfolios now that Senate Bill #1 has passed?
21. What is the policy regarding writing folders?

**Interview Questions for Dir. Of Curriculum and Instruction/principal/or English
Department Chair.**

1. How does your school promote literacy at all grade levels and all-content areas?
2. Does your school have a writing policy? What are the major points of the policy?
3. How does your school track writing vertically and horizontally?
4. What kind of training is offered to teachers to improve writing instruction?
5. Is your writing curriculum aligned?
6. What kind of resources are available for teachers to use in the classroom?
7. How is the assessment data used to adjust the writing curriculum?
8. Why do you feel the students performed so well on the on-demand assessment?
9. Is writing identified as a need on your CSIP? If yes, why and what changes does your school hope to make?

Appendix C

Interview Protocol for Students

1. What kinds of writing do you do in your classes?
2. Tell me about your writing folder or portfolio.
3. What motivates you to participate in activities that require writing?
4. How do you revise or improve your writing?
5. Describe an assignment that would excite most students to complete.
6. How does your teacher prepare you for the on-demand writing assessment?
7. What do you feel are the most important qualities in being a good writer?
8. Why do you think students in your school do so well on the state on-demand assessment?

Appendix D Writing Observation Protocol

School _____

Date _____

Teacher _____

Subject _____

Observer _____

Time of Observation _____

Grade Level _____

Number of Students _____

 Gender _____ #Male
 _____ #Female

 Ethnicity
 _____ #Caucasian
 _____ #African American
 _____ #Asian
 _____ #Hispanic
 _____ #other

Instructional Environment	✓	Comments
1. Print-rich wall environment		
Posters		
student writing published		
2. Availability of multiple reading materials:		
Magazines		
Newspapers		
Novels		
Nonfiction		
websites/computer generated programs		
3. Classroom contains multiple writing tools		
Dictionary		
Thesaurus		
Paper		
pens/pencils, etc.		
teacher created resources for revision/editing		
check-off sheets		
graphic organizers		
Computers available/ or access		
4. Area available for reading and conferencing		
5. Availability of technology		
6. Students are trained in the different areas of the writing process: prewriting, drafting, peer conferencing; revision; and editing		

Instructional Environment	✓	
7. Students and Teachers use the language of the scoring rubric		
8. Teacher uses models of student writing with students		
9. Teacher models writing skills by writing with students		
10. Classroom climate demonstrates positive and supportive interactions: student/student and student/teacher		
Instructional Practices	✓	
11. Evidence of Writing to Learn		
mini-lessons		
response to reading		
exit/entrance slips		
Freewriting		
Summarizing		
double entry notebooks		
journals/writer's notebooks		
other?		
12. Evidence of Writing to Demonstrate Learning		
academic essays		
lab reports		
open-response items		
13. Creates strategies for individual participation and collaborative group participation		
literature circles		
Debates		
writing and reading workshops		
inquiry projects		
project-based instruction		
connections to content from other classes		
14. Teacher scaffolds instruction		
15. Teacher orchestrates effective classroom discussion, questioning and learning tasks that promote higher order thinking.		
16. Teacher employs strategies for all strands of literacy:		
Reading		
writing		

speaking		
listening		
viewing		
visually representing		
17. Teacher effectively differentiates instruction		
18. Teacher links learning to prior knowledge, experiences and understandings.		
19. Teacher provides strategies to learn and use:		
<i>Prewriting/ Brainstorming</i>		
Identifies purpose, audience, mode		
Use of concept maps, advanced organizers, webs, lists, or outlines		
Given adequate time to prewrite.		
Instructs students in identifying purpose of argumentative, narrative, and informational writing.		
<i>Drafting</i>		
Teacher uses mini-lessons to clarify weak areas of need identified by student writings. This may be conducted through direct instruction, group activities, individual conferencing, and modeling.		
Teacher guides in use of correct format.		
Teacher encourages students to write thoughts on paper without the restriction of conventions.		
<i>Revision</i>		
Teacher uses multiple approaches including developing leads, employing rich vocabulary, limiting use of passive tense, paragraph development, designing a thesis, effective conclusions, etc.		
Teacher provides constructive feedback.		
Teacher conferences		
Peer-revision conferences		
<i>Editing</i>		

Teacher guides students in mechanical and punctuation errors with the use of a checklist.		
Students participated in peer-editing.		
<i>Writing for Publication</i>		
Students are encouraged to publish writing in the classroom or school, or outside the classroom in community venues.		
20. Teacher provides instruction on:		
Reflective Writing		
Personal Writing: memoir, narrative, vignette		
Literary Writing: short story, poetry, drama		
Transactive Writing: letters, editorials, reports, articles, proposals, etc.		
21. Teacher effectively incorporates 21st Century Learning Skills		
Critical thinking		
Effectively communicate with others		
Articulate verbal and written thoughts effectively		
Listen for meaning		
Promote inquiry		
High Expectations		
Use of technology		
22. Teacher demonstrates command of content		
23. Instruction and objectives connect to core standards.		
Student Demonstrators	✓	
24. Students demonstrate growth through reflection and writing products.		
25. Students work effectively in collaborative groups.		
26. Students respond effectively to questions and discussion.		
27. Students appear to understand the teacher's expectations.		

28. Students demonstrate the application of critical thinking.		
29. Students are actively engaged.		
30. Students utilize available technology.		
31. Students are goal driven.		
32. Students use teacher and peer feedback to improve work.		
33. Students appear to understand the criteria for proficient work.		
34. Students appear to be motivated.		
Specific Instruction for On-Demand Writing		
35. Teacher guides students in understanding a prompt driven writing assessment.		
36. Teacher scaffolds instruction to develop a response for the prompt.		
37. Teacher instructs students on how to narrate an event in a letter, article, editorial, or speech for a real-world purpose.		
38. Teacher instructs students in persuasive and informational writing.		

Additional Comments:

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Appendix E

On-Demand Assessment Structure

On-Demand Assessment Structure

Part One: Passage Based Prompt

Students will be given one passage to read and one corresponding prompt that indicates the topic, purpose, and audience. They will have a **CHOICE** of two forms for their response.

Writing Task Directions for Passage-Based Prompt

This part of the test contains a reading passage and one writing task. You may use the information in the passage to help you complete the writing task. You will have 60 minutes to complete this task. You may not work or conference with anyone.

- Read the passage below.
- Then read the writing task.
- Think about what you want to write and what form you want to use.
- Use your Writer's Reference Sheet to guide you in planning, revising, and editing your response.
- Use a prewriting/planning activity such as making notes, outlining, webbing, mapping, clustering, or brainstorming on paper provided by your teacher.
- Write a draft on paper provided by your teacher.
- Review the scoring criteria on the following page. These criteria will be used to score your work.
- Revise and edit your draft. You may use a dictionary and/or thesaurus.
- Write the FINAL copy in the space provided in your Student Response Booklet.

Part Two: Direct Prompt

Students will be given a **CHOICE** of two prompts, each with a given purpose and audience. They will have a **CHOICE** of two forms for their response.

Writing Task Directions for Direct Prompt

This part of the test contains two writing tasks. Read the two writing tasks carefully. Choose ONE of the writing tasks to complete. You will have 60 minutes to complete this task. You may not work or conference with anyone.

- Think about what you want to write and what form you want to use.
- Use your Writer's Reference Sheet to guide you in planning, revising, and editing your response.
- Use a prewriting/planning activity such as making notes, outlining, webbing, mapping, clustering, or brainstorming on paper provided by your teacher.
- Write a draft on paper provided by your teacher.
- Review the scoring criteria on the following page. These criteria will be used to score your work.
- Revise and edit your draft. You may use a dictionary and/or thesaurus.
- Write the FINAL copy in the space provided in your Student Response Booklet.

Appendix F

On-Demand Writing Timeline

Writing on Demand Timeline

1. After you receive the materials and check the accuracy of your name, and other personal data, **make sure you have several sheets of scratch paper. Look at the response**
 - a. Identify the level one task: which outline form will you use – narrate or standard thesis? Remember, use the standard thesis outline unless you are given some type of context clue about narration. A narration clue will look like the following: “Tell about a time . . .,” “Recall an experience when. . .” “Think about a pivotal mistake that taught you. . .” **Basically anything that asks you to tell ONE story about yourself or something from your experiences is a “narrate an event” clue. EVERYTHING ELSE REQUIRES A STANDARD THESIS OUTLINE.**

<p><u>Narrate outline</u></p> <p>A. Introduction/thesis B. One story with show details/dialogue C. Interpret the story; connect it to thesis D. Conclusion</p>
<p><u>Standard thesis outline</u></p> <p>A. Introduction/thesis B. Major point one a. Evidence b. Generalizations C. Major point two a. Evidence b. Generalizations D. Major point three a. Evidence b. Generalizations E. Conclusion</p>

- b. Identify the level 2 information: is the prompt asking you for a speech, editorial, article, or letter.

(5 minutes)

2. Now do the preliminary work on your draft paper.
 - a. Identify which type of outline you will use by writing **“thesis”** or **“narrate”** on your draft paper (level 1)
 - b. Identify which type of transactive writing is required (**speech, letter, editorial, article**) and **WRITE ALL OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THAT GENRE ON YOUR DRAFT PAPER**

- c. Write the **DRAPES** strategy
 - Dialogue
 - Rhetorical Questions
 - Analogies
 - Personal experiences
 - Examples
 - Statistics
- d. **Identify the target audience** by writing it on your draft paper
 - i. Sketch a few quick things that come to mind that this particular reader/group of readers would be interested in as it related to the topic
 - ii. Identify any potential opposition the reader may have, if writing a letter or editorial

(15 minutes)

- 3. **Outline** (this is the point where you will re-read and analyze the prompt)
 - a. Jot down ideas that come to your mind about the prompt
 - b. Arrange them into three separate major points
 - c. In the outline form, fill in evidence you will use to support the major point
 - d. Write a brief generalization/explanation for each piece of evidence
 - e. After you have the major points, evidence, and generalizations filled in, generate a thesis that speaks to the audience and tells them what to **THINK, DO, OR BELIEVE**.

(40 MINUTES)

- 4. **Begin drafting** in the response booklet
 - a. Now the hard work is done, all you have to do is follow the notes from your outline for the structure of your paper. This way you won't forget what your idea was for major point three.
 - b. Make sure you've **included the DRAPES** in your paragraphs.
 - c. Make sure you've **connected with the audience** by speaking to them, if appropriate, and by relating information/ideas that are relevant to them.
 - d. Make sure the **conclusion is strong**. This is the reader's last impression of you.
 - e. Read over your work to check for **cohesive paragraphs, solid word choice, clear wording in the thesis and major point statements, good generalizations that explain each piece of evidence and clear connections to the audience.**

(60 minutes)

Appendix G

ON-DEMAND WRITING: possible formats include **FEATURE ARTICLES, EDITORIALS, PERSUASIVE LETTER, AND SPEECHES.**

The writing may be persuasive in nature. Use persuasive techniques. Remember to use transition phrases or words.

WWF OF ON-DEMAND WRITING

W: Why (purpose of writing)

W: Who? (Audience)

F: Format? (Type of writing)

FORMAT FOR ON-DEMAND WRITING

LETTERS: Format: inside address, return address, greeting, short introduction (state the problem), closing, signature, paragraphs. Introduction, Body, Conclusion *Address the Audience*

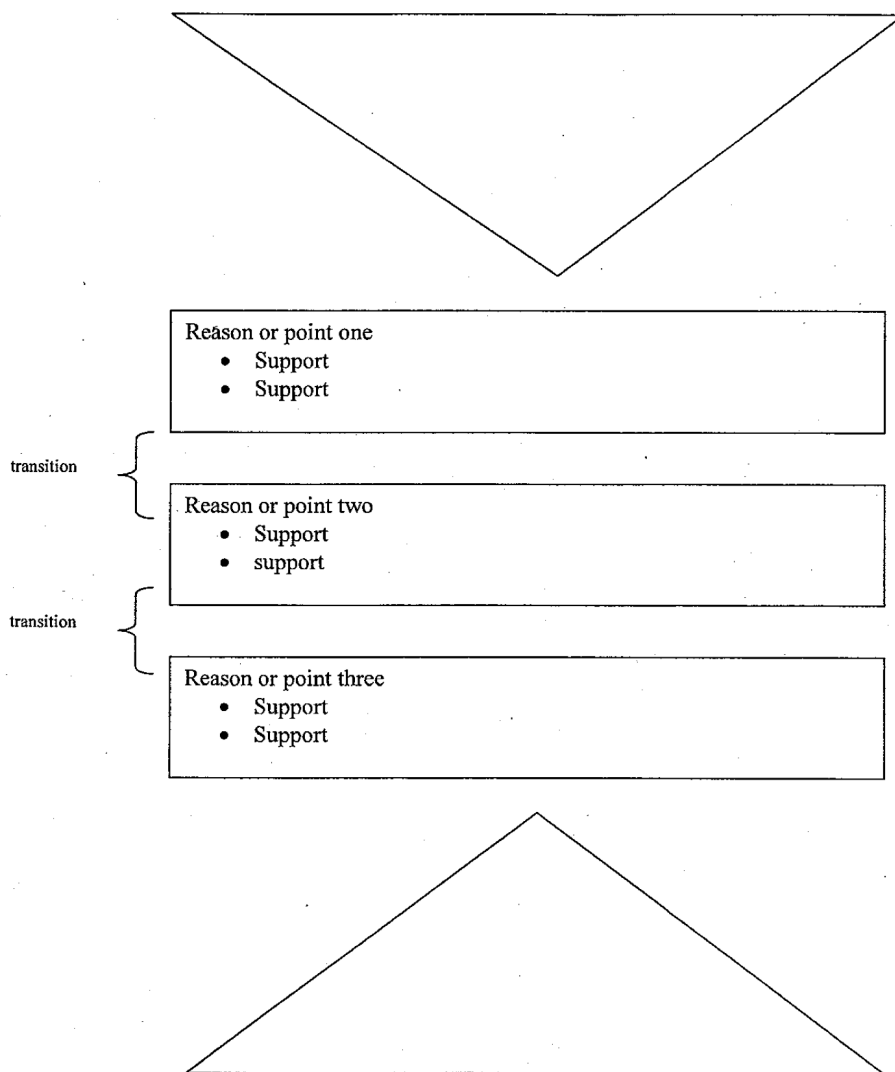
SPEECHES: Clear introduction addressing the audience. Use: Nouns of direct address, Command Sentences, Personal Pronouns. Support your points. Introduction, Body, Conclusion *Circle*

EDITORIALS: Format: *underline questions* dropped cap, columns, textbox, kicker, catchy title (can be a double title), Introduction should not be too long. Internal references may be needed. Take one side and convince audience. Introduction, Body, Conclusion *command sentences*

FEATURE ARTICLES: Format: columns, bullets, subheadings, textbox, dropped cap, publication info. In footer, internal references may be necessary. Introduction, Body, Conclusion

Appendix H

Planning your way to effective transactive writing



Appendix I – Four Block Organizer

<p>Body Paragraph 1; MAIN IDEA -</p> <p>Details (Examples, reasons, connections, description, quotes, etc.):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * * * * * * * * 	<p>Body Paragraph 2; MAIN IDEA -</p> <p>Details (Examples, reasons, connections, description, quotes, etc.):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * * * * * * * *
<p>Introduction: LEAD & PURPOSE STATEMENT</p>	
<p>Body Paragraph 3; MAIN IDEA -</p> <p>Details (Examples, reasons, connections, description, quotes, etc.):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * * * * * * * * 	<p>Conclusion: Restates the PURPOSE & 3 MAIN IDEAS Ties back to the LEAD with an interesting ending</p>

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