TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON MOTIVATING

STUDENTS TO WRITE ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

A Dissertation

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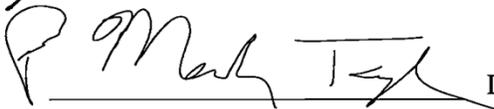
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to examine teachers' perspectives on best practices for motivating students to write across the curriculum. The data collected and analyzed from this study offer a greater understanding of teachers' perspectives on how writing across the curriculum impacts students' writing proficiency. The qualitative study consisted of data collected from open-ended, one-on-one, semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and a focus group with fifteen teachers from a middle school in rural, Middle Tennessee. The study's findings identified a list of teachers' best practices for motivating students to write across the curriculum. These best practices include: high interest topics, personal connections, student choice, collaborative groups, and teacher modeling. The study's findings also identified how writing across the curriculum impacts students writing proficiency. The participants' answers were unanimous in that students become better writers as a result of writing in the different content areas.

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I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to my committee chair, Dr. Brenda Dean, for her guidance, support, and encouragement throughout this dissertation process. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Taylor and Dr. Walker, for their feedback and support as well.

Thank you is not enough for my best friends that put up with me every day. They believed in me even on the days I did not, and for that, I am forever grateful.

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Finally, I would like to thank my son for all the sacrifices he made while mom was working. I could not have accomplished this goal without his love, support, and encouragement.

Dedication

I dedicate this study to my son, Layne. I could not have done this without you. I love you so much, and I thank God every day for choosing me to be your mom.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

"Adolescents entering the adult world in the 21st Century will read and write more than at any other time in human history. They will need advanced levels of literacy to perform their jobs, run their households, act as citizens, and conduct their personal lives" (Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, & Rycik, 1999, p. 99).

Along with learning to read, learning to write is one of the most valuable skills today's students will attain (Sundeen, 2015). Because learning to write well is so significant, Alber (2010) stated that writing should take place every day, in every academic classroom. By implementing daily literacy instruction such as writing, reading, and speaking, students' ability to use comprehension skills, writing skills, as well as absolute communication skills will become more proficient.

Maniaci and Chandler-Olcott (2010) described content literacy as implementing literacy skills across the curriculum. In the past, content area teachers focused on teaching content, not specific literacy skills that would aid them in learning the content. Bean and O'Brian (2012) explained how important it is for teachers to use rich texts in addition to digital literacy to create a literacy concentrated learning environment that is supportive of today's students. Some of these literacy requirements included: technology, speaking, listening, reading, writing, and conducting research. This learning environment must motivate, engage, and challenge students so they will be better prepared for a college or career path after graduation.

Sundeen (2015) described how the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have influenced the variation, and amount of writing today's K-12 students are expected to produce.

Sundeen also suggested that CCSS focus on skills such as gathering, synthesizing, comprehending, evaluating, and reporting through writing. These could be some of the most valuable skills students learn and improve upon as they prepare for college and/or career.

Peha (2003) agreed that students do not write enough in the English/language arts (ELA) classes to meet the demands of the literacy-rich curriculum. All students must be able to write in all content area classes. The following five reasons were given as to why students should write across the curriculum.

- Teachers can use student writing to assess knowledge on a particular subject/content;
- Students need proficient writing skills as they enter college/career life;
- Expressing students' feelings and beliefs confidently, in all subject areas, will positively influence behavior and self-esteem;
- Clear writers will become clear thinkers, and the ability to write will yield a feeling of power;
- The ability to write well will empower students so that they can take control of their future (Peha, 2003, pp. 4-5).

According to Lacina and Watson (2008), whenever writing is frequently implemented across the curriculum, students' understanding and retention of the content increases, as they remain engaged in the learning process. Efficient content area teachers realize they can teach their content through literacy practices such as: reading, speaking, writing, and research. While these literacy strategies may be used to teach content standards, educators must work diligently to increase student motivation and engagement so they can become enthralled in a literacy-based learning environment (Irvin, Meltzer, & Dukes, 2007).

When students spend a considerable amount of time writing in various content area classes, student literacy skills and academic achievement will increase (Moss, 1991). With the implementation of CCSS, an educational change has been initiated. Sundeen (2015) stated that how educators respond to these literacy standards could potentially impact the academic performance of students' K-12 education, as well as their readiness as they enter their college/career lives. Encouraging frequent writing opportunities that reflect student knowledge in the various content areas are certainly vital.

Theoretical Framework

Abraham Maslow developed a motivational theory based on the idea that students' physiological and emotional needs must be met before they reach a level of creativity and higher-order thinking in the classroom. This motivational theory is known as Maslow's self-actualization theory. Maslow developed this theory as he studied people's motivational patterns in their everyday lives. Maslow suggested that people had the ability from within to realize their full potential (Maslow, 1954). Lunenburg and Ornstein (2007) explained that Maslow's frequently used self-actualization theory is dependent on five basic human needs in a hierarchical order. These five basic needs are: physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization. In this hierarchy, once one need is met, the next one surfaces and demands to be met as well. The lower needs must be met first before one can be motivated by a higher need. Owens and Valesky (2015) described this theory as one of the most powerful ways one can understand human motivation.

Another important motivational theory is known as the self-determination theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier and Ryan (1991) identified three basic needs that are vital for self-motivation. These needs are competence, relatedness, and autonomy. This

particular motivational theory has a primary focus on promoting students' interest in learning, valuing the education community, and encouraging student autonomy and confidence in their own work. The implementation of these theories into instruction will result in the use of intrinsic motivation, which will enhance student outcome.

Statement of the Problem

According to Moss (1991), middle school students in the United States are deficient in writing skills because they spend very little time writing, or working on improving their writing skills. Moss reported that around sixty percent of students claimed they had rarely, or never been required to complete a written assignment consisting of three or more pages. The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) (2012), reported that on their first computer-based writing assessment sample, they assessed approximately 24,000 eighth-grade, as well as approximately 24,000 twelfth-grade students, with only twenty-four percent scoring proficient or higher in writing. Only three percent of eighth and twelfth grade students scored advanced in writing, while the remainder scored basic or below, which signifies only a partial mastery of writing skills needed to be successful in college and/or career.

Sundeen (2015) reported that although effective instructional strategies in writing are certainly associated with students' overall learning outcomes, writing skills alone have never been a focus with past educational reforms until the recent adoption of the CCSS. Implementing writing standards across the curriculum will address and surely improve upon students' writing deficiencies.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to achieve a greater understanding of ways teachers can motivate students to write across the curriculum, and teachers' perspectives on

how writing across the curriculum impacts students' writing proficiency. Motivation has been described as "explanations of why people do the things they do" (Owens & Valesky, 2015, p. 121). It has been explained that for students to improve upon their ability as writers, they must be motivated and engaged in literacy-rich tasks (Irvin et al., 2007). One way to motivate students to write across the curriculum is by starting with simple writing activities, and build upon those activities to gradually improve writing skills (Peha, 2003). Motivation, according to Irvin et al. (2007), is the first step in increasing students' writing skills. Students are motivated to engage when they have purpose, or they are interested in a particular subject. Also, to increase motivation, students' needs of choice, autonomy, purpose, voice, competence, encouragement, and acceptance must be met.

The goal of qualitative research is to obtain "a holistic picture and depth of understanding rather than a numeric analysis of data" (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Walker, 2014, p. 32). This qualitative research study is designed to investigate teachers' best practices for motivating students to write across the curriculum. There was a focus on the impact writing across the curriculum has on students' writing proficiency. The best motivational practices arranged in this study provide middle school content area teachers a number of valuable resources to use in their classrooms to increase students' writing proficiency.

Research Questions

1. From a teacher's perspective, what are best practices for motivating students to write across the curriculum?

2. From a teacher's perspective, how does writing across the curriculum impact students' writing proficiency?

Limitations of the Study

Volunteer sampling could be a limitation, because volunteers do not represent the total population, resulting in a biased sample (Best & Kahn, 2005). Also, teachers choosing not to participate in the research could narrow the field of potential participants, which would result in not having a true reflection of content area teachers. Finally, the researcher works at a sixth through eighth grade middle school that employs more than sixty teachers. All of the participants were selected from this school. Further research would include kindergarten through fifth grade elementary teachers as well.

Subjectivity Statement

The researcher is a middle school social studies teacher in a small, rural town in Middle Tennessee. The researcher has been actively involved in many professional development opportunities focused on the importance and best practices of integrating literacy standards with existing content standards. As a previous graduate student with a concentration in literacy, the researcher strongly believes that it is imperative to implement literacy standards across the curriculum if students are going to be able to use higher level thinking skills, and become more proficient in reading and writing. Each year, the researcher educates students with significant learning gaps and poor literacy skills. The researcher is optimistic that if over the next few years, educators will accept this challenge and begin implementing literacy standards across the curriculum, the learning gaps will start to close and the number of students with poor literacy skills will start to decrease. While in the classroom, the researcher wishes to address the literacy problem students in the United States face and help them make progress. The researcher is currently a student at a university pursuing a doctoral degree in Curriculum and Instruction, and eventually wants to help prepare other educators for this challenge.

In the past, the researcher rarely assigned a writing assignment to social studies students because the focus was mainly on social studies content. Now, due to being more knowledgeable on learning gaps, Response to Intervention (RTI), and writing deficiencies, literacy standards are implemented daily through the social studies content. Helping students become better writers is also important to the researcher as a parent. Having a middle school age child, the researcher appreciates when work is brought home that actually requires the use of higher order thinking and reasoning skills to get the answer. The researcher believes having a strong educational background has contributed to the child's strong reading and writing skills. The researcher has acknowledged and will continue to be aware of any and all positive feelings about literacy across the curriculum.

Key Words/ Operational Definitions

1. *Writing across the Curriculum* is a term that means integrating a variety of writing strategies in the content area classrooms (Jacobs, 2002).

2. *Content area* classroom is a classroom where one particular subject such as math, social studies, science, and reading/language arts is being taught (Great Schools Partnership, 2014).

3. *Common Core State Standards (CCSS) or Common Core State Literacy Standards* is the implementation of skills and strategies into classroom instruction that promotes students' ability to read, write, speak, listen, and use language (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2016).

4. *Curriculum* is the content of a particular discipline. Curriculum is what is being taught (Toombs & Tierney, 1993).

5. *Response to intervention (RTI)-*is a multi-tiered approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavioral needs. It is based on the premise of giving

students the help, or additional resources they need before students fall far enough behind academically to qualify for special education (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2016).

Organization of the Study

This qualitative research study contains five chapters. Chapter one includes the introduction to the study, theoretical framework, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, limitations of the study, subjectivity statement, key terms/operational definitions, and the summary of the chapter. Chapter two contains a review of the existing literature on the history of writing, why writing is important, different types of writing, reading and writing project, writing next, self-regulated strategy development (SRSD), writing across the curriculum, and best motivational strategies. Chapter three is the methodology section. It includes a description of qualitative research, the specific research approach used, a description of the research participants, data collection methods and procedures, the analysis of the data, and a summary of the chapter. Chapter four is a presentation of the findings from the data. Chapter five presents the conclusions drawn from the data study. Chapter five also contains the limitations and the recommendations for future research.

Summary

Writing across the curriculum is an effective way to increase student engagement in learning as well as to improve their academic success. Literacy skills are an essential part of the learning process that need to take place in every classroom. Teachers who use these literacy skills and implement these writing strategies should witness an increase in student motivation and writing proficiency. Existing research supports how important it is to motivate, engage, and challenge all students in all content areas. Research findings validate the idea that motivation plays a key role in developing writing skills. This is a qualitative research study designed to

achieve a greater understanding of ways teachers can motivate students to write across the curriculum, and teachers' perspectives on how implementing writing across the curriculum actually impacts students' writing proficiency.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Saddler, Behforooz, and Asaro (2008) reported that writing is important for all students because their ability to write impacts the academic progress made in all academic areas. Dean-Rumsey (1998) explained that when teachers encourage students to write, they are producing interactive, student-centered learning environments. This type of learning environment gave students opportunities to incorporate new information into their existing knowledge. Because the ability to communicate through writing is essential in society, writing is one of the most valuable skills students will learn and use in all content area classrooms (Sundeen, 2015).

In order to increase students' writing proficiency, teachers must implement digital literacy and rich texts so that a literacy-focused learning environment is created. Teachers must also implement literacy standards across the curriculum. Some of these literacy standards include: technology, speaking, listening, reading, writing, and conducting research (Bean & O'Brian, 2012). This type of learning environment will better prepare students for college and/or a successful career after graduation. Knipper and Dugan (2006) reported that most teachers spend a significant amount of their instructional time dedicated to helping students understand specific content standards, especially in science and social studies. Science and social studies teachers may or may not be reading specialists, but they know their subject also requires a great deal of concentration in literacy instruction. Content area teachers must determine how to implement literacy standards in their content instruction because student mastery is demonstrated through reading and writing activities. By implementing writing strategies into content

instruction, students are engaged, using higher-order thinking skills, and making meaning of the content.

Chapter 2 includes a review of the existing literature relating to writing, writing across the curriculum, and teachers' best practices for motivating students to write across the curriculum. This chapter is divided up under the following headings: (a) what is writing, (b) the history of writing, (c) why is writing important, (d) reading and writing project, (e) writing next, (f) self-regulated strategy development, (g) writing across the curriculum, (h) different types of writing, (i) best practices for motivating students to write, (j) writing strategies, (k) qualitative research, (l) grounded theory, and (m) a summary of the chapter.

What is Writing?

"The story of writing is a tale of adventure which spans some twenty thousand years and touches every aspect of human life."

—Albertine Gauer (Gauer, 1992, p. 7)

Writing is "a system of recording language by means of visible or tactile marks" (Coulmas, 2003, p. 1). Gaur (1992) described writing as a way to physically store unlimited information which can be recovered and used as long as it can be translated. Writing, along with reading, listening, and talking, is one of the four attributes of functional language (Harris, McKenzie, Fitzsimmons, & Turbill, 2003). Coulmas (2003) referred to writing as "the single most consequential technology ever invented" (p. 1). Writing began as an idea in the reader's mind, then it progressed over time. The writer became aware of an audience as the writing developed into a process. At a more advanced stage of the writing process, writing transformed an individual's personal knowledge and experiences. Writing "is used as a way to extend ideas

and reasoning and as a vehicle for the development of knowledge, philosophical ideas, and personal awareness" (Graham & Perin, p. 23, 2007).

History of Writing

Harris, McKenzie, Fitzsimmons, and Turbill, (2003) reported that the first writing systems were developed due to human's need to communicate with each other, as well as other cultures. Harris et al. also explained the evolution of writing since its origin in Mesopotamia around 3200 BCE. The people of Mesopotamia needed a way to record things such as trade, taxes, property debts, marriages, deaths, and population of city-states, so writing expressed or represented information a particular culture found to be significant. This wedged-shaped writing system was carved on wet clay tablets and became known as cuneiform. In Mesopotamia, only people with a high social status were allowed to go to scribe school to learn to write. Writing was valued, and people who learned to write were considered superior (Harris et al., 2003).

Scoville (2015) reported that the Egyptians had an advanced system of writing from around the same time period as the people from Mesopotamia. They flattened out and dried papyrus plants in order to record important events and information. This dried papyrus closely resembled paper. One of the oldest versions of Egyptian writing is called hieroglyphics. These pictorial characters included items from their everyday lives such as: reed plants, snakes, baskets, lions, eyes, and rivers. The Egyptians, like the Mesopotamians, regarded writing as very important; only people with a higher social status learned to write. Hieroglyphics were often engraved in monuments and temples in order to tell the story of a remarkable life, and an even more remarkable afterlife. They were also used to identify kings as their mummified bodies were placed in their tombs (Scoville, 2015).

Yancey (2009) explained that it is important to understand the historical perspective of writing before we can fully understand the writing of today. Shultz (1999) described what writing was like for students in schools in the United States during the early nineteenth-century. Writing was working on handwriting skills, and perhaps breaking down sentences. As society progressed in the nineteenth century, so did writing in schools. After the first couple of decades, instruction turned to grammar. A state board of education was formed in Massachusetts in 1837, and by the 1840's writing instruction was moving toward composition (Shultz, 1999).

Pritchard and Honeycutt (2005) reported that writing instruction was unsuccessful in the mid-twentieth century because educators failed to think of and teach writing as a process. Researchers suggested a three-stage process of pre-write, write, and re-write, but it was soon decided by other experts in the field that writing did not occur in any particular order (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2005). With the 1980's, came process writing. Process writing brought about a new curriculum focused on new practices such as writing, drafting, peer review, reflection, revising, re-writing, and publishing (Yancey, 2009). Yancey also explained that around 1988, the personal computer transformed writing as well as the rest of education.

Alber (2013) explained that in the twenty-first century, educators must do more than just prepare students to be good writers as the enter college and/or career. According to the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) (2008), successful students of this twenty-first century global society must

- be at least proficient with tools of technology;

- be able to solve problems collaboratively;

- be able to share and design globally;

- create, manage, analyze, and critique multimedia texts;

- be aware of and responsible of ethical responsibilities.

In the past, little emphasis was put into writing instruction. Since the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), writing has now become a major focus of an educational reform movement. CCSS provided measures for a range of writing skills from kindergarten through twelfth grade. These literacy standards are also combined with content standards so that writing will be used across the curriculum to recall, organize, analyze, interpret, and build content knowledge (Graham, Gillespie, & McKeown, 2012).

Why is Writing Important?

"At its best, writing has helped transform the world. Revolutions have been started by it. Oppression has been toppled by it. And it has enlightened the human condition" (The National Commission on Writing, 2006, p. 48). Coulmas (2003) reported that although there are millions of people that cannot read and write, society as a whole relies on writing an unprecedented amount. More communication takes place in the form of writing than any other form of communication. If one were to consider the undetermined amount of written records conserved in museums, libraries, and technology networks, it would certainly be difficult to say that writing has not greatly impacted modern life. Writing not only allows people to revisit history, but it is a critical skill for the future (Coulmas, 2003).

Writing provides a personal link with family members and friends when personal contact is impossible. People use writing to create worlds beyond their imagination, write stories, share important information with others, and record their life experiences. Writing about one's feelings and emotions can be very beneficial to his well-being (Graham, Gillespie, & McKeown, 2012).

Writing is widely used in schools for assessment purposes, and for evaluating students' knowledge. In order for students to become more proficient in writing, it must be used more for

engaging students in reasoning skills across the curriculum. Writing experts agree that during

writing, students are actively engaged in the topic and examine relationships among ideas.

Writing also contributes to formulating new knowledge, developing an in-depth understanding of

the content, cultivating concepts, and developing higher order thinking skills (Van Drie,

Braaksma, & Van Boxtel, 2015). Sundeen (2015) reported that writing enhances student learning

in the following five ways:

- Learners assess information and decide which is the most important to include in their
  compositions;

- During writing composition, writers make connections between concepts and ideas;

- Writing promotes reflection;

- Composing encourages writers to become personally connected with their topics;

- While writing, learners ponder the meaning of their writing topics and concepts (p. 198).

Writing composition is a major focus in the ELA literacy block. Components of composition

include: mechanics, structure, genre, and voice. Teachers model the writing process and ensure

that the students have time to write during the school day. Writing cannot be bound to ELA if

students are going to be successful. Teachers will have to implement more writing skills in

math, science, social studies and the arts than any other time (Fisher & Frey, 2017).

Reading and Writing Project

Lucy Calkins is the founder of the Teachers College of Reading and Writing Project.

This progression in writing instruction began in 1981, and has since trained hundreds of

thousands of teachers in the United States (Feinberg, 2007). The goal of Lucy Calkin's writing

project was to help students "become avid and skilled readers, writers, and inquirers" (Teachers

College Columbia University, 2014, The Mission section, para. 1). More than 170,000 educators

have attended week-long professional development workshops with the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, and they are taught that literacy progression happens when research-based strategies are used, a literacy-rich curriculum is developed, and when teachers work closely with students, other teachers, and educational leaders (Teachers College Columbia University, 2014).

Feinberg (2007) explained that Calkin's program is based on the premise that every student can learn to write well by following a "workshop" approach to writing. This approach allows students to learn more about writing through specific phases of the writing process, and can be implemented into every classroom with the use of a writer's notebook. Students can use a writer's notebook to write down new ideas and concepts they have recently learned, things they have questions about, or even things of interest to them (Feinberg, 2007). In this writing workshop-style atmosphere, students do a lot of writing, and students as well as teachers give a lot of feedback. Revision happens during the writing process, and teaching about the writing process happens during the writing process (Rebora, 2016).

Writing Next

Dr. Steve Graham shares the chair position of Currey Ingram Professor of Special Education and Literacy with Karen Harris, of the Peabody College of Education at Vanderbilt University. Dr. Dolores Perin from Teachers College at Columbia University is an associate professor of education and psychology (Graham & Perin, 2007). Both Graham and Perin's Writing Next, is a report written in the response to the large number of students in the United States who do not even meet basic writing standards, and the large number of educators who are at a loss for how to increase students' literacy abilities (Graham & Perin, 2007). Graham and Perin's report proposed a variety of research-based instructional techniques that benefited fourth

through twelfth grade students. This report not only focused on students with writing difficulties and disabilities, but also focused on students who demonstrated grade level writing and had the potential to be even more proficient. The basis of this study was that all students can become proficient in writing.

Graham and Perin researched and highlighted specific writing strategies in their report, Writing Next, that were found to be successful in the classroom. Writing Next identified eleven elements of instruction that were found to be effective when teaching students to write. These elements are:

- writing strategies: teaching students planning, revising, and editing strategies for their compositions;

- summarization: teaching students how to summarize texts;

- collaborative writing: students work in collaborative groups for planning, drafting, revising, and editing their writing;

- specific product goals: sets reasonable goals for students in different stages of writing process;

- word processing: the use of computers and other technology as instructional support;

- sentence combination: teaches students the effectiveness of using complex sentences;

- prewriting: teaches students a variety of techniques in order to help generate ideas for student writing,

- inquiry activities: activities to engage students in analyzing data to help develop ideas and content for their writing;

- process writing approach: a workshop environment which implements a variety of activities for writing instruction to help with audience choice, extended writing, and even different types of writing;

- study of models: gives students an opportunity to read, analyze, and imitate good writing;

- writing for content learning: teaches students how to use writing as a tool to learn content area material (Graham & Perin, 2007, pp. 4-5).

Self-Regulated Strategy Development

Self-Regulated strategy development (SRSD) developed by Karen Harris and colleagues, is an instructional writing approach designed to assist students in learning, using, and adopting strategies used by expert writers. This approach focuses on the element of self-regulation in writing instruction. It also promotes student monitoring, evaluating, and revision of the writing process. Self-regulation strengthens independent learning (Teaching Excellence in Adult Literacy, 2011). SRSD is a flexible instructional model that aids students with the same kind of planning, drafting, and revising strategies that are used by proficient writers (Santangelo, Harris, & Graham, 2008). Santangelo et al. described SRSD as a well-established approach used with elementary, middle, and high school students in writing instruction. SRSD begins as teacher directed instruction, but the ultimate goal is to be self-directed. The element of self-regulation encourages the perception of self-as-learner. Like many other instructional strategies, SRSD is combined into the learning process (Teaching Excellence in Adult Literacy, 2011). Santangelo et al. (2008) described six steps of the SRSD instructional approach that encourage students to progress in writing. These steps are:

1. Developing background knowledge: teachers need to identify what skills are needed, and whether students already possess the skills. Teachers will identify any deficiencies and reteach, modify, and/or accommodate.

2. Discussing the strategy: teachers can have students discuss the writing process and their thoughts on writing.

3. Modeling: during the modeling stage, teachers demonstrate how to use the new strategy. This stage is the most beneficial when teachers use a "think-aloud" that describes the 'how' and the 'why' of each step. After the step is modeled, students are then given the chance to discuss how this stage is helpful, and how they can make it more effective.

4. Memorizing: this step allows students to become familiar with all the steps so they can use them automatically. Teachers can make memorization fun for the students. Students can use index cards to make notes on until they learn them.

5. Supporting: This step is when the students actually assume responsibility for the instructional model. Students can work in collaborative groups for support and feedback, as well as positive encouragement and reinforcement.

6. Independence: The objective is for students to use these writing instructional strategies independently. Teachers can encourage students to focus on how these steps improve their writing proficiency, and how to modify to make them more beneficial (Santangelo et al., 2008, p. 82).

Writing Across the Curriculum

When teachers of various subject areas such as math, language arts, science, and social studies implement writing strategies into their content instruction, they are writing across the curriculum (Jacobs, 2002). According to the Michigan Department of Education (2016), content

area teachers are responsible for teaching certain knowledge, skills, and ideas that will ultimately influence students to become productive citizens in society. When teachers implement writing strategies with content instruction, students become more engaged as they use their critical thinking skills to incorporate knowledge from various subjects and disciplines. It is essential for students to write during the learning process in order to assess what they can do with information once they comprehend and master it (Peha, 2003).

Bernhardt (2010) reported that writing across the curriculum has been progressing in the schools for more than thirty years. During this time, teachers have found creative ways to implement writing into their content area classrooms. The following are some strategies teachers use to help motivate students to write across the curriculum.

- Quick-writes: During class instruction, teachers can stop to allow students to write about the lesson, answer a question, or even document something they are having difficulty understanding.

- Micro-themes: A short essay or response can be written on an index card so that the length can be controlled. Micro-themes require a small amount of time to compose, and a small amount of time to check for understanding.

- Learning logs: They consist of two columns in a composition book or spiral notebook. One column is dedicated to summarizing the lesson or material, and the other column is for reacting to, critiquing, or questions students might have about the lesson.

- Reflective writing: Writing is an effective way for students to reflect on what they learned that day in class. Reflective writing allows students to think back on the lesson and come to terms with the new information (Bernhardt, 2010).

In recent years, writing has become a major focus in education due to a large percentage of students not scoring proficient or higher on writing assessments (Street & Stang, 2008). According to Moss (1991), this is due to the fact that in the past, students spent very little time in school on assignments that included any form of writing. The Common Core literacy standards required more writing instruction to take place in the classroom than in recent years. These literacy standards were integrated into the content standards so that students were expected to use a variety of writing strategies in all content area classes (Sundeen, 2015).

The Michigan Department of Education (2016) described how content area teachers used writing to "enhance the learning of students in all disciplines" (p. 2). Six principles were discussed that supported why teachers should implement writing across the curriculum. These principles are as followed:

- Writing promotes learning the content material;

- Writing encourages student participation and critical thinking skills;

- Writing integrates the different subject areas;

- Writing practice in all classes makes writing progress;

- Writing instruction can be implemented in every classroom;

- Daily writing could increase a student's communication skills (Michigan Department of Education, 2016, p. 2).

Students write to formulate meaning when they write across the curriculum. Writing is a powerful tool for learning content material, and it can be beneficial to content instruction in three ways. Writing helps prepare students for reading assignments, it helps students reflect on and summarize main points, and writing helps students with critical thinking skills (Knipper & Duggan, 2006).

Different Types of Writing

Descriptive

How and Larkin (2013) described descriptive writing as "a complex process depending on and integrating numerous higher and lower level processing skills, including oral language, working memory, and transcription-related abilities" (p. 362). Descriptive writing helps describe a person, place, or thing in such great detail that the reader forms a picture in his mind. Descriptive writers focus on the five senses in their writing. This type of writing is intended to keep the reader engaged throughout the story ("Descriptive Writing," 2015).

Carter (2015) explained that descriptive writing is one of the earliest types of writing students will encounter when they are asked to write about themselves, describe someone who is very important to them, or even describe a summer vacation. Having students describe a person, place, or thing using their five senses helps them get their thoughts down on paper. Having students use their five senses to describe something, gets them engaged in the writing process making it easier to visualize the topic in their minds. Once they visualize the experience in their minds, it makes it easier to write about it (Carter, 2015). Some of the most common attributes found in good descriptive writing are:

- The senses of hearing, smell, sight, touch, and taste are used to paint a picture for the reader;

- Good, descriptive words are used to describe and paint the picture for the reader;

- Figurative language is used to help describe the person, place, thing, or experience;

- Organizational strategies such as chronological, spatial, and order of importance are used to describe the experience ("Descriptive Writing", 2015).

Descriptive writing assignments are beneficial to students in all content area classes. In science, students can describe an experiment, or any other scientific event. Descriptive writing also helps students learn new vocabulary words by allowing them to write about them and explain them in their own words. In social studies, students can use descriptive writing when they are describing a historical event, or even an important person in history. This type of writing revitalizes historical events and people for both the writer and the reader ("Descriptive Writing", 2015).

Narrative

"The narrative writing process involves understanding story components, language skills, vocabulary, mechanics, conventions of print, attention to audience perspective, and the ability to focus on abstract topics" (Olinghouse & Leaird, 2009, p. 546). Students are telling a story when they use narrative writing. Like any other story, narrative accounts include a plot, setting, and characters. A narrative also includes action and the use of dialogue in order to develop story elements. A narrative piece is also filled with detail that is used to describe, and reinforce the story for the readers. The writer's purpose is to inform and entertain the reader. Good narrative writing should include the following:

- a strong beginning to engage readers,

- various story elements such as plot, setting, and characters,

- a strong story line,

- written in first or third person point of view,

- a beginning, middle, and end to the story,

- brilliant details to keep attention of the reader,

- action from dialogue and suspense,

- and the conclusion of the story (Barlow & Frances, 2006, p. 15).

Narrative writing can be a biography or an autobiography. A biography is a true story the writer is telling about another person's experiences. An autobiography is a true story the writer is telling about his own experiences. Narrative writing can also be a fictional story which is not based on true events (Barlow & Francis, 2006). Akinyeye & Pluddeman (2016) described narrative writing as the kind of writing that allows the writer to express himself through the story being told. When students use narrative writing in the content areas, they demonstrate knowledge they have acquired about certain important people, events, places, and time periods. Narrative writing is effective when describing a person's personality, character, and talents. The details of this type of writing allow the writer to portray people, places, things, or events to the reader accurately (Michigan Department of Education, 2016)

Narratives in Social Studies

Ciardiello (2012) explained that there is more to literacy than just making students more knowledgeable, and preparing them for college/career after high school. Literacy supports values and beliefs, encourages or prevents freedom, and develops or drowns out identities. When social studies teachers use narratives to teach about freedom, identity, and voice, it allows students to have a deeper understanding of concepts they cannot otherwise personally relate to. Ciardiello's article provided teachers a paradigm to assist in broadening students' thinking about how literacy can be liberating to people. Ciardiello's model started with teachers writing their own narratives about their first experiences with reading and writing and sharing it with the students. Next, the teachers help the students write their story about their first literacy experiences. These literacy narratives tell the story about how the students learned to read and write. The next step on the literacy narrative model is to have students connect with and write a

narrative based on other aspects of power and control. These narratives could be about certain powerful people in history, or even certain revolutionary events. Students get to demonstrate their knowledge about historical people and events through their writing (Ciardiello, 2012). Olinghouse & Leaird (2009) described an ideal way to create a high-quality, well written narrative in any subject area. A writer should produce and organize ideas, formulate and follow a plan, review and revise the writing, and self-monitor throughout the writing process. The literacy standards outlined in most content standards indicate that students need to write regularly, students need to write argumentative pieces with supporting evidence, write informational works that include specific details, and write narratives that are very descriptive (Fisher & Frey, 2017).

Argumentative

Argumentative writing is an integral component of recent literacy reforms in schools throughout the U.S. This type of writing has often been used in class to engage students in debates on controversial issues pressing in society (Newell, Beach, Smith, VanDerHeide, Kuhn, & Andriessen, 2011). Argumentative writing involves identifying an issue, considering the different viewpoints to that issue, choosing a viewpoint, defending that viewpoint while responding to other viewpoints (Dickson, 2004). Argumentative essays examine ideas that are relevant to the content area. This type of writing must exhibit a clear connection between the selected topic and the evidence the writer is using to support his claim. The essay must by well-organized, and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills. (Baltimore County Public Schools, n.d.).

Informative/Explanatory

An informative essay is intended to inform the reader on a specific topic. Students often write about something they are very knowledgeable about, but they are also successful when

they research a topic and present their findings to their audience (Green Paper Music, n.d.). Informational writing brings accurate information to the reader. The writer's purpose is to inform the reader about a specific topic, increase the knowledge of the reader on the subject, and to assist the reader in having a better understanding of the subject (Washoe County School District, n.d.).

Informative writing is an important part of content area instruction. Fisher and Frey (2017) reported that it is especially effective in social studies and science to compose writing in order to inform the audience about an important person or event, or to explain how something happened or how something works.

Best Practices for Implementing Writing

Motivation

Motivation has been described as "explanations of why people do the things they do" (Owens & Valesky, 2015, p. 121). There are common patterns among the many different motivational theories. These patterns are: direction in making choices, persistence, and intensity. There are also different views on motivation. The behaviorist views motivation as something that is done to people by someone else, and the humanist believes that a growth-enhancing environment brings motivation from within a person (Owens & Valesky, 2015).

Putman and Walker (2010) explained their perspectives on motivation by describing Ford's motivational systems theory (MST). Ford derived this theory by looking at the whole person within his surrounding environment. This theory included three very important factors of motivation. These factors describe motivation as being biologically part of the individual, constantly being evaluated, and focused on the future. This theory supports the idea that a

motivated person that is biologically capable of interacting with his environment has the ability to successfully achieve his goals.

A social cognitive theory was developed in which it was suggested that a lack of motivation is the result of an individual's low self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986). Bandura defined self-efficacy as the beliefs people have about themselves that cause them to make choices, apply effort, and face difficult situations. He implied that if a child had a high self-efficacy, he would put forth more effort while learning something new. He also suggested a low self-efficacy would produce little effort. In Bandura's theory, motivation was a key component to learning. He also affirmed that one's motivation could be influenced by watching others successfully complete a task.

Literacy plays a major role in many adolescent students' lives outside of the school setting. They read and send emails, they write in journals, they study for the driver's test, they send and read text messages, and they read magazines that are of interest to them. Students are motivated to participate in these actions because these topics are important to them, they are interested in the topics, or they have the autonomy to do these things when they choose. Writing instruction is not essential if motivation is not a key component, especially when it comes to the students who are unwilling to write in school. In order for students to improve upon their ability as writers, they must be motivated and engaged in literacy-rich tasks, and in a literacy-rich environment (Irvin et al., 2007). According to Graham, Gillespie, and McKeown (2012), a literacy-rich environment is crucial to promote successful writers. In order to help motivate students to write, teachers should follow these guidelines:

- Demonstrate enthusiasm for writing, and encourage students to try their best to make improvements;

- Set student expectations high, and encourage them to set personal goals;

- Use differentiation in writing instruction so that all students' needs are met;

- Plan activities that keep students actively engaged in the learning process;

- Encourage student collaboration with writing activities;

- Challenge students when they write. Ask them to step out of their comfort zones (p. 9).

Adolescent students are very inquisitive with a plethora of prior knowledge and a variety of literacy skills that may or may not be used in the school setting. In order to convince them to use their literacy skills, teachers must gain their participation by focusing on their interests and needs (Irvin et al., 2007). One way to gain participation and motivate students to write across the curriculum is by starting with simple writing activities, and building upon those in order to increase writing proficiency (Peha, 2003). Motivation, according to Irvin et al. (2007), is the first step in increasing students' writing skills. Students are motivated to engage when they have purpose, or they are interested in a particular subject. Also, in order to increase motivation, students' needs of choice, autonomy, purpose, voice, competence, encouragement, and acceptance must be met.

Choice

Patall, Cooper, and Robinson (2008) reported that choice has a positive effect on a variety of circumstances, including education. Patall et al. (2008) explained that when teachers allow students to have a choice in their writing, the students' need for autonomy is met which encourages them to successfully participate and complete the assignment. Choice positively influences a student's "effort, task performance, subsequent learning, and perceived competence" (Patall et al., 2008, p. 271). When students are allowed to make choices in the

classroom, it emphasizes the trust teachers have for their students, and the acceptance of responsibility the students have for their own learning (Erwin, 2004).

The idea of student choice is very influential in motivating students to read and write across the curriculum. Children are inclined to learn more about a particular subject if they are permitted to choose their reading materials and their research/writing topics. Choice gives students a personal interest in what they learn, so this leads to greater effort in comprehension and knowledge of the content (Putman & Walker, 2010). Student autonomy and having control over what they read and write about is a key factor in keeping students motivated and engaged in the writing process. Middle school students are seeking independence, and choosing their own writing topics is one way to feel as though they are making their own decisions (Guthrie & Davis, 2003). Faulkner (2011) reported that as a high school English teacher, allowing her students to choose their writing topics gave her a chance to read some in-depth, complex writing. It allowed the students to write about something that was important and meaningful to them.

Peha (2003) explained that not only is choice when selecting a topic important, but allowing students to choose ways to present their writing is also beneficial to the writing process. The power of choice positively influences a student's quality of writing. As teachers begin to implement more and more writing activities into their content area classes, they should guide students toward appropriate choices that align with the curriculum goals, but not set unnecessary boundaries. By allowing students to make choices about their writing topics, writing format, and audience, teachers and students are creating a learning environment in which students are empowered and responsible for their increased writing proficiency (Erwin, 2004).

Yost and Vogel (2012) reported that when students are allowed to write about their own views and feelings in different subject areas, they are both challenged and encouraged to not only

complete their assignments and learn the material, but also apply what they have learned to their everyday lives. When student writing is constant, his ability to problem-solve, think spontaneously, and use analytical thinking skills increases as do his writing proficiency (Yost & Vogel, 2012).

Collaboration

The National Commission on Writing (2006) explained that writing in the classroom often depends on group work. If students are going to become good writers, they must be willing to collaborate with other students and learn from each other. A positive environment in which students are discussing and reflecting on their thoughts and ideas before they begin the writing process, is crucial in increasing students' writing proficiency.

Students would not only be more motivated to write, but they would be more motivated to put thought and care in their writing if it were reviewed by their peers, and/or if their writing were on display (Rowen, 2015). There is no better way to improve students' writing skills than to have them share their work with their peers. Collaboration is an agreeable way for students to gather constructive responses from their classmates so they can make adjustments to their writing if necessary (Peha, 2003). A literacy-rich classroom environment consists of students regularly working together in small groups while reading and analyzing each other's writing/research assignments. Students will develop a stronger appreciation for the writing process through discussion and collaboration (Irvin et al., 2007). A successful content area classroom is one that "fosters cognitive collaboration. Reading and writing are acts of communication. In order to make meaning through texts, students must have opportunities to work together and collaborate through talk" (Lacina &Watson, 2008, p. 161).

Technology

Purcell, Buchanan, and Friedrich (2013) reported that digital technologies have shaped student writing in a variety of ways. This technology has aided in teaching writing to middle school and high school students. Digital technologies are aiding in the personal expression and creativity of students. It is broadening the students' writing topics, and encouraging students to write in different formats and more frequently (Purcell et al., 2013). Connecting writing with students' interest in technology could help students with the writing process, as well as make it more enjoyable for teaching and learning (Rowen, 2015). Rowen suggested that students get involved with internet-based writing projects, communicate with favorite book authors via email, and when learning about a specific topic such as planets, teachers can have students write to experts in that particular field. Technology plays a successful role in motivating students to read and write effectively in the content areas. Students appreciate the opportunity to write and revise on the computer, create presentations for their peers to view, and use the internet to research and write about topics of interest to them (Irvin et al., 2007). Martin (2008) stated that in order to create a challenging, yet rewarding, literacy-rich environment at the middle school level, computers, writing, and a collaborative setting must coexist. Integrating technology into writing is essential in that students think of computers in terms of communicating, and having fun. The National Commission on Writing (2006) stated that computers have completely revamped schools, workplace, and homes. They have introduced a completely different way of composing, arranging, and revising writing. Martin (2008) described that having students use computers for writing may promote them to share their work with their peers, as well as express their thoughts and ideas, which will enhance their creativity in writing. Students are both motivated and respond positively to technology. For this reason, teachers should create instructional plans that

include a technological resource or tool. When teachers create technology-rich lessons, a learning environment is created that motivates and engages the students. Motivated students will be more likely to perform at their highest levels because of the resources available in the classroom (Granito, & Chernobilsky, 2012).

Writing Strategies

Having good writing skills are a necessity for students. Good writing skills, along with good reading skills, are predictors of a student's success in school, as well as being fundamental in college and/or career (Graham & Perin, 2007). Although literacy standards have been a major focus in schools over the last few years (How & Larkin, 2013), a relatively large number of students in the U.S still graduate each year below the basic levels of writing ability required by universities and the workforce. Nearly seven thousand students drop out of high school each school day due to not having the literacy skills needed to successfully master the academic curriculum (Graham & Perin, 2007). Graham and Perin also reported that in order for students' writing proficiency to increase, it has to remain on the forefront of educational reform, and school leaders and teachers must make sure literacy standards are being implemented across the curriculum. Writing strategies are beneficial in helping students comprehend and master content area concepts and knowledge. Writing keeps learners active as they put their thoughts and ideas on paper. More importantly, writing is a good predictor of whether or not students understood the required content curriculum (Knipper & Duggan, 2006).

Guided Writing

Students make connections with their existing knowledge before reading passages from the text when they immerse in a procedure called guided writing. This is a writing strategy that involves reading, student discussion, listening, and writing about content area skills and

concepts. First, the students brainstorm a topic in order to activate prior knowledge. Ideas are listed on a whiteboard as students work together in whole-group. Students are then asked to categorize the ideas. After brainstorming, students then write on the topic individually using the information they gathered. Next, the students can then peer review each other's writing, make revisions, and then re-write their passage. The informational writing passages can then be shared with the class. Guided writing helps students use their higher-order thinking skills, as well as improves their understanding of the content knowledge (Knipper, & Duggan, 2006).

Learning Logs

Another beneficial pre-reading strategy that activates prior knowledge and promotes higher-order thinking is a learning log. A learning log consists of several well thought out writing prompt that initiate students to reflect on what they have read, or what they are going to read. Examples of learning log prompts are:

- What kind of skills will I learn from the reading passage?

- What did I learn from this material?

- What do I have questions about from the reading?

- What are my thoughts/feelings about this material?

Learning logs are an excellent writing strategy to use with science and social studies lessons before the students read passages from the text, or other available resources (Knipper & Duggan, 2006).

Micro-themes

Micro-themes are writing strategies used to summarize the main points from a reading passage or lesson. Students pull key ideas out of a reading assignment and put them in their own words. These summaries, micro-themes, are often written on index cards. Students are able to

come to the next class with a good knowledge base of the previous lesson. They are also able to look back upon and read the micro-themes from previous class discussions in order to prepare for an assessment.

Micro-themes can be developed in a number of ways. One approach is directed toward comparing, contrasting, and analyzing. Students can also analyze information from teacher selected topics, or respond to open-ended questions about the reading passages. Micro-themes help students think more in-depth and understand a specific theme or main idea (Knipper & Duggan, 2006).

Paragraph Frames

Some students are intimidated by writing long passages and summaries. For those students, paragraph frames supply guidance through a 'skeletal' paragraph that allows students to critically think and write a summary about an idea or concept. These 'skeletal' paragraphs have words strategically placed throughout the paragraph. These words guide the students to a particular way of thinking. Students fill in the missing words on the paragraph frames after reading a passage from the textbook, or after a lesson on a specific topic. Paragraph frames are especially beneficial to use in the beginning of the school year in order to gradually motivate students to write about skills and concepts they learn in their content area classes. Paragraph frames are great writing tools for higher level students as well as the lowest performing students in the class. They give low level learners the support they need to be successful (Knipper & Duggan, 2006).

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Qualitative Research

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Qualitative research is often referred to as being a form of scientific research. The characteristics of scientific research include:

- Pursues answers to research questions;

- Follows a plan of action in order to answer questions;

- Gathers evidence;

- Research findings were not pre-determined;

- Findings generally go beyond the boundaries of the study (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005, p. 1).

Grbich (2013) described qualitative research as one that is conducive in advancing knowledge in many different areas such as culture, phenomena, structural processes, and historical changes. By advancing knowledge in qualitative research, the researcher is intent in getting closer to the 'truth'. Grbich explained that the 'truth' fluctuates depending on whose 'truth' is being pursued and whether the 'truth' is considered

- Researcher's truth (subjective);

- Researcher's truth compared to others' truth (relative);

- A distant viewpoint (objective);

- Logical arguments (absolute) (p.4)

Qualitative research warrants an in-depth and detailed study. It allows the researcher to confront fieldwork without the boundaries of having a pre-determined theory which contributes to the detail and the openness of this type of research (Patton, 2002). Qualitative research aspires to understand a problem from the perspectives of the people who are affected by it. This type of research approach is especially favorable "in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviors, and social contexts of particular populations" (Mack et al., 2005, p. 1).

Grbich (2013) reported that qualitative research prefers certain styles of research designs, methods, and data analysis. The basis behind this qualitative research philosophy is as followed:

- Subjectivity has worth. Both the researcher's and the participants' views are recognized, respected, valued, and included in the data. Also, the data interpretation will include both the participants and the researcher. The researcher is an active part of the study in qualitative research;

- Trustworthiness is considered as seeking out the truth. Reliability is ensuring dependability, which is crucial for sound research;

- Power lies primarily with the participants. In qualitative research, the participants are the ones considered specialists in the field of research being conducted;

- A holistic view is essential so that all aspects of the research problems are addressed. Taking a holistic approach ensures that instead of just specific topics being addressed, a world view is approached;

- Due to the nature of qualitative research, replication and generalization is unlikely to occur in other studies (Grbich, 2013, pp. 4-5).

Why Choose Qualitative Research

"Qualitative methods are often used in evaluations because they tell the program's story by capturing and communicating the participant's story" (Patton, 2002, p. 10). Qualitative research is appreciated in that it provides personal descriptions of the participants' experiences with the given topic. It supports and emphasizes the humanitarian side of an issue such as opinions, emotions, beliefs, and relationships. Researchers often choose qualitative research

because it is productive in identifying relevant components of the research such as social norms, socioeconomic status, gender, ethnicity, and religion (Mack et al., 2005).

A qualitative research approach was used to get a better understanding of teachers' perspectives on motivating students to write across the curriculum. This study was conducted using teacher interviews, classroom observations, and focus groups. These methods of data collection aid in connecting the reader with the experiences of the participants. "They capture and communicate someone else's experience of the world in his or her own words. Qualitative data tell a story" (Patton, 2002, p. 47).

Grounded Theory

Creswell (2007) explained that a characteristic of grounded theory is that the theory does not "come off the shelf", but is "grounded" in the data gathered from the experiences of the participants (p. 63). Creswell reported that this design often used in qualitative research was developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in 1967 because they suggested that other theories often used in research were incompatible for some study participants. The basis for the original Glaser and Strauss theory was that theory should come from field data such as the interactions and actions of the people participating in the research (Creswell, 2007). Grounded theory data can come from multiple sources such as participant observations, face-to-face interviews, video tapes, newspapers, focus groups, and government documents. Even though grounded theory allows researchers some flexibility, there are distinct procedures to follow for data collection and data analysis. These grounded theory procedures include:

- Data collection and analysis are interrelated processes. Analysis is necessary from the start of data collection;

- Concepts are the basic units of analysis. Theories are derived from conceptual data not the actual incidents;

- Categories must be developed and related. Categories are essential in developing theories;

- Sampling proceeds on theoretical grounds. In grounded theory, concept representation is crucial. The goal is to build a theory based on a phenomenon through action/interaction and the consequences that result from it;

- Constant comparison method is used in analysis. Incidents are compared with other incidents for similarities and differences throughout the process of analysis;

- The researcher must account for patterns and variations. This aids in keeping the data in order;

- The analysis process should be built into the theory. Process has multiple meanings in grounded theory. It can mean breaking down a phenomenon into stages. Process can also be described as interactions that change in response to certain conditions;

- It is essential to write theoretical memos during grounded theory. The use of memos can help keep track of categories and properties during the analysis process. Memo writing should begin with the first coding session and continue throughout the research process;

- Theories about category relationships should be developed constantly during the analysis process. Axial coding is a key feature of grounded theory;

- A researcher conducting grounded theory does not work alone. An essential part of this research is to test concepts and compare them with experiences other researchers have encountered. This also helps with bias;

- Broader conditions such as political trends, economic conditions, and even cultural values should be analyzed, as well as the physical setting of the phenomena (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, pp. 6-11).

Two favored grounded theory approaches are Strauss and Corbin's systematic approach and Charmaz's constructivist approach. Strauss and Corbin's systematic approach seems to favor the development of a theory which defines the action, process, and the interaction of society and a phenomenon. Charmaz's constructivist approach focuses more on the values, beliefs, and perspectives of the participants than on research methods (Creswell, 2007).

Summary

Writing first began more than 5000 years ago in southwest Asia and northern Africa. A written language was originally needed for the following reasons: to keep track of trade, to record important information for government officials such as taxes, property debts, and population, and to record important life events such as marriages and deaths (Harris, McKenzie, Fitzsimmons, & Turbill, 2003). As civilizations became more sophisticated, so did their writing systems. People in ancient Mesopotamia needed a written language for recording the first law code, Hammurabi's Code, and the first literary work, The Epic of Gilgamesh (Spielvogel, 2014). The ancient Egyptians used their hieroglyphics to record their religious beliefs on temples and tomb walls. These stories informed historians about their remarkable lives, and their journey to the afterlife (Scoville, 2015).

Writing evolved past handwriting skills and toward composition around the middle of the nineteenth century, but it wasn't until the later part of the twentieth century before writing was called process writing and brought about a new curriculum focused on new practices such as drafting, peer review, reflection, revising, re-writing, and publishing. It was also around this time

that the personal computer greatly impacted student writing (Yancey, 2009). Digital technology also shaped writing in a number of ways. It positively influenced personal expression and student creativity in writing (Purcell, Buchanan, & Friedrich, 2013). Writing fluency has always been essential in education, even when writing reform was not a main focus. Writing has been considered, someone's thoughts and feelings on paper. Increasingly in this high-tech, complex society, writing is also someone's thoughts and feelings on screen. Either paper or screen, writing has played a significant role in the transformation of learning in this country (The National Commission on Writing, 2006).

Students are actively engaged during writing. Writing also contributes to new knowledge, concepts, and higher order thinking skills being developed (Van Drie, Braaksma, & Van Boxtel, 2015). When writing strategies are implemented into math, language arts, science, and social studies classes, students will become more engaged as they gain knowledge from various subjects and disciplines (Peha, 2003). Students are motivated and engaged in the learning process when they have purpose. In order to increase motivation, students' needs of choice, autonomy, purpose, voice, competence, encouragement, and acceptance must be met (Irvin et al., 2007).

When teachers have students write across the curriculum, students become increasingly engaged in the content as they use their critical thinking skills to incorporate knowledge from various subjects and disciplines. It is essential for students to write during the learning process in order to assess what they can do with information once they comprehend and master it (Peha, 2003). Literacy standards are implemented in today's classrooms more than any other time in educational history. These literacy standards are integrated into the content standards so that students are expected to use a variety of writing strategies in all content areas (Sundeen, 2015). A

consolidated approach to all literacy components, including reading, writing, and speaking, in all

content areas, will most likely be the most effective on student learning outcomes (How &

Larkin, 2013).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to achieve a greater understanding of ways teachers can motivate students to write across the curriculum and teachers' perspectives on how writing across the curriculum impacts students' writing proficiency. One of the most important skills students will learn in the classroom is writing. Students' ability to communicate knowledge of content through writing is also a good predictor of future success. Having proficient literacy skills will also prepare students for college and/or career. Many professions rely heavily on a person's ability to read and write well (Sundeen, 2015). Although writing is essential in school, and in many professions, Graham, Capizzi, Harris, Hebert, and Morphy (2014) found that only 30% of eighth and twelfth grade students were proficient or higher in writing. With those statistics, it is imperative that teachers reflect on their successful instructional strategies and compile a list of best practices for motivating students to write across the curriculum so that the development of student writing is promoted nationwide (Moss, 2013).

Research Questions

This qualitative study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. From a teacher's perspective, what are best practices for motivating students to write across the curriculum?

2. From a teacher's perspective, how does writing across the curriculum impact students' writing proficiency?

Qualitative Research

The researcher chose a qualitative research study to get a better understanding of teachers' perspectives on motivating students to write across the curriculum. This study was conducted using teacher interviews, classroom observations, and focus groups. According to deMarrais and Lapan (2004), interviews are used when the researcher requires extensive knowledge about a particular topic or experience, from the participant. During an interview, the researcher asks the participant specific questions regarding a topic, with the intentions of eliciting authentic, detailed responses that can be used during data analysis. In a productive interview, the participant does most of the talking because the focus should be the participant's perspectives and/or experiences with a particular topic or event (deMarrais & Lapan, 2004).

Observations are another valuable way to obtain information for a qualitative research study. deMarrais and Lapan (2004) reported that observations are especially useful while conducting research associated with schools or classrooms because interaction among teachers and students is better understood when it is observed. Observations allow the researcher to get a more extensive, first-hand account of the research participants and the research setting than if solely relying on interviews alone (Patton, 2002).

Patton (2002) described focus groups as interviews consisting of six to ten people, with similar backgrounds, coming together to share their perspectives on the research topic. Focus groups are not used to solve problems, nor should participants be expected to agree on the topic of the focus group. The objective is to obtain data from the participants as they consider their perspectives, while considering the perspectives of others in the group. Patton viewed focus groups as high-quality collaborations among participants.

Research Approach

This qualitative research was conducted using grounded theory. Grbich (2013) described grounded theory as "an approach that was developed in the 1960's in order to generate theory from observations of real life as these were occurring" (p. 79). Grounded theory uses an inductive approach which is very dependent on observations to establish meaning. Grounded theory allows the researcher to look closely at the participant's experiences while interacting with society (Grbich, 2013). Throughout the research process, grounded theory aspires to make certain that the theory comes directly from the actual data and not a different source (Crotty, 2011).

Research Setting and Participants

The participants in this qualitative research study work in a public, sixth through eighth middle school in rural, Middle Tennessee. This middle school employs over sixty teachers, and serves around 900 students. The researcher asked fifteen teachers to participate in this study. These teachers were selected from all content area classrooms, as well as RTI and other intervention classes. The interviews took place in the school setting because each participant chose his interview location. The focus group, as well as the classroom observations were also conducted in the school setting. This particular school was chosen because the researcher works at the middle school and has a good relationship with fellow teachers.

Sampling

A sample has been described as "a small proportion of the population that is selected for observation and analysis" (Best & Kahn, 2005, p. 13). This study's sample consisted of teachers who volunteered to participate in the interview process, participated in the classroom observations, or participated in the focus group. Permission was granted to conduct the research

from both the superintendent of the school district and the middle school principal. Before data collection began, permission from Carson-Newman's Institutional Review Board (IRB) was also requested and granted. The researcher began the process by emailing English language arts (ELA), science, social studies, and RTI reading teachers to inform them about the nature of the research project, and to request that they respond if they are interested in participating in the research study. After the willing participants responded, the ELA and RTI population was narrowed by using purposeful sampling, and all science and social studies teachers who responded were invited to participate in the study. Purposeful sampling involves the researcher recruiting participants based on his intuition that the selected participants will provide the most interesting information (Best & Kahn, 2005). According to deMarrais and Lapan (2004), a list of characteristics is constructed in advance by the qualitative researcher, and the potential participants who share these characteristics are selected as participants. The criterion used for selection was that the potential participants implemented writing into their curriculum, and the frequency in which writing was implemented. deMarrais and Lapan (2004) described the difficulties in knowing how many participants are needed for a qualitative research study. The number of participants depends on the quality of the interviews, and the participants' willingness to openly respond to the interview questions. The researcher anticipated asking approximately fifteen participants, who share common ideas and beliefs on writing across the curriculum. The selected participants were interviewed by the researcher regarding their perspectives on writing across the curriculum. The researcher also conducted observations in the classroom setting while taking observational notes. Last, the researcher held a focus group to obtain data from the participants.

Data Collection Methods

This qualitative study focused on the implementation of writing across the curriculum. Individual interviews with participants were conducted in order to gather each teacher's perspective on this topic. Each participant chose his interview location. The researcher recorded the interviews and took notes throughout the process so that the accuracy of the participants' perspectives was reflected. The researcher observed the participants' pedagogy in their classrooms and held a focus group with the participants. The educational background of the participants were identified. This included years of experience in the classroom, the amount of writing being implemented in the content area, as well as the different strategies used to implement writing. Next, the researcher reviewed and transcribed the individual participant's interview. This included field notes made by the researcher during the interview or about the interview. Classroom observation notes, as well as focus group notes, were analyzed. During data analysis, recurring themes discussed among the participants while giving their perspectives on the implementation of writing across the curriculum were recognized. Thematic data coding was significant for this study because of the desire for knowledge on best practices for motivating students to write across the curriculum. By organizing data thematically, the researcher was able to identify a possible connection among the participants regarding writing across the curriculum.

Data Analysis

Inductive analysis is a form of qualitative research inquiry in which themes, patterns, and specific categories develop as the data is being analyzed. "The qualitative analyst seeks to understand the multiple interrelationships among dimensions that emerge from the data without making prior assumptions or specifying hypotheses about the linear or correlative relationships

among narrowly defined, operationalized, variables" (Patton 2002, p. 56).

Bogdan and Biklen (2003) suggested that research findings emerge after interviews have been conducted, time has been spent with participants, and after going through the transcription process. "You are not putting together a puzzle whose picture you already know. You are constructing a picture that takes shape as you collect and examine the parts" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 6).

Constant Comparative Method

The researcher analyzed data using an inductive approach. One form of inductive analysis chosen is called constant comparative method. Merriam (1998) described this approach as a method "with a particular incident from an interview, field notes, or document" and comparing with "another incident in the same set of data or in another set" (p. 159). Merriam (1998) described this method as one created by Glaser and Strauss (1967), the original creators of grounded theory, where incidents are constantly being compared to other incidents from the data during a process known as coding.

Coding

Similar thoughts and ideas that attract the attention of the researcher as he reads through the interviews and observations are called codes. These codes are then given names to represent the recurring thoughts or ideas (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999). Charmaz (2002) described codes as being "the pivotal first analytic step that moves the researcher from description toward conceptualization of that description" (p.683). The coding process helps the researcher determine what information is relevant from the interview. Charmaz (2002) also explained the steps in which the researcher should follow the coding process. These steps include the following:

1. Study the data before consulting the scholarly literature.

2. Engage in line-by-line coding.

3. Use active terms to determine what is occurring in the data.

4. Follow leads in the initial coding through further data gathering (p. 684).

After comparing incidents or codes from the different data sets, commonalities emerged from the data. These commonalities are known as categories (Merriam, 1998). Strauss and Corbin (1990) explained the importance of putting common themes into categories: "It enables the analyst to reduce the number of units with which he or she is working. In addition, categories have analytic power because they have the potential to explain and predict" (p. 113). Glaser and Strauss (1967) stated that categories are not representations of data because the data indicates what the categories will be. "A 'category' is considered to 'stand by itself' as a conceptual element of the theory; whereas a property is a 'conceptual aspect or element of a category" (as cited in Dey, 1999, p. 7). LeCompte and Preissle (1993) discussed how a researcher builds a baseline of his study. The first step is to put data from the interviews, observations, and focus groups in a category. The incidents, or codes, that arise most frequently in the data will be the first categories. While comparing and contrasting the different categories, the researcher can determine the properties for the categories. After determining the properties for the categories, the researcher will then define the categories. "In predominately inductive studies, abstractions must be integrated with both data and theory to create a coherent system by which to explain or convey the meaning of the study" (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 278).

Inductive analysis was chosen as the analysis for this research study because it aligned with the methods the researcher used to obtain data for the study. Since interviews were used as the primary data source, the researcher wanted the information to emerge as the data was analyzed. The categories came straight from the teacher interviews, observations, and focus

group so none of the information was manipulated. The constant comparative method and coding was used during data analysis to answer both research questions, what are teachers' best practices for motivating students to write across the curriculum? From the teachers' perspective, how does implementing writing across the curriculum impact students' writing proficiency?

The researcher enhanced the credibility of the qualitative study by using a strategy called member checks. Ary et al., (2014) described member checks as asking the question, "Do the people who were studied agree with what you have said about them?" (p. 533). The researcher met with each participant after the data collection process in order to review the interview transcripts, focus group transcripts, and field notes, in addition to the researcher's interpretations of the data. The researcher asked for feedback from each participant, as well as any other useful data (Ary et al., 2014). Data triangulation was also used during data analysis because classroom observations, focus groups, and teacher interviews were used as data sources. Triangulation enhanced the dependability of the research study because the researcher was able to collect and analyze data from multiple points of view (Ary et al., 2014).

Limitations

The data were limited to fifteen teacher interviews, a focus group, and classroom observations from one rural, Middle Tennessee middle school. This could be a limitation because the data is only representative of teachers' perspectives from one sixth through eighth grade middle school and did not include other kindergarten through twelfth grade teachers throughout the district. Volunteer sampling could also be a limitation because the participants did not represent the total population, which could result in a biased sample (Best & Kahn, 2005).

Ethical Consideration

Permission to conduct research in this school district was granted by the school superintendent. Permission to conduct research in this particular middle school was granted by the school principal. Before any data collection began, Carson-Newman's IRB granted the researcher permission to conduct the research. Before any interviews, classroom observations, or focus groups were conducted, the participants signed informed consent forms. These forms reminded the participants that they volunteered to participate in the research, and they could choose to quit at any time. The participants were also reminded that no incentives would be offered to them for their participation, the interviews and the focus groups would be audio-recorded, and the transcriptions, field notes, recorded interviews, and any other related materials would be secured on a password protected computer, or a locked filing cabinet for seven years. The participants were also informed that the name of the school would not be shared, and they would be given pseudonyms throughout the study in order to remain anonymous.

Summary

The goal of this study was to achieve a greater understanding of ways teachers can motivate students to write across the curriculum, and teachers' perspectives on how writing across the curriculum impacts students' writing proficiency. Qualitative research was chosen because it allowed the researcher to compile a list of best practices for motivating students to write across the curriculum from the perspectives of teachers who regularly implement writing in their content area classrooms. For this study, individual interviews, classroom observations, and focus groups were used as data collection methods. An inductive approach was used to analyze the data. Inductive analysis is a form of qualitative research inquiry in which themes, patterns, and specific categories come directly from the data as it is being analyzed.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this grounded qualitative research study was to examine teachers' perspectives on best practices for motivating students to write across the curriculum. The data collected and analyzed from this study offer a greater understanding of teachers' perspectives on how writing across the curriculum impacts students' writing proficiency. The qualitative study consisted of data collected from open-ended, one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with fifteen middle school teachers, classroom observations with two of the fifteen participants, and a focus group with five of the fifteen participants. The interview questions ranged from describing a daily lesson in which writing was implemented while teaching a content standard, to teachers' perspectives on the impact of writing across the curriculum on students' writing proficiency.

Presentation of Participants

All fifteen participants from this study work in a public, sixth through eighth-grade middle school in rural, Middle Tennessee which employs over sixty teachers, and serves approximately 900 students. Sample selection began with the researcher emailing all English Language Arts (ELA), social studies, science, and Response to Intervention (RTI) teachers to inform them about the nature of the research, and to request that they respond if they would be willing to participate in the study. The ELA and RTI population was narrowed by using purposeful sampling, and all of the social studies and science teachers who responded were invited to participate in the study. Purposeful sampling involves the researcher recruiting participants based on her intuition that the selected participants will provide the most interesting information (Best & Kahn, 2005). According to deMarrais and Lapan (2004), a list of

characteristics is constructed in advance by the qualitative researcher, and the potential

participants who share these characteristics are selected as participants. The criterion used for

selection was that the potential participants implemented writing into their curriculum, and the

frequency in which writing was implemented. A one-on-one, semi-structured interview was

conducted with each of the fifteen participants. The researcher also used purposeful sampling in

order to select the participants for the focus group and for the classroom observations. Both took

place after the individual interviews so the researcher was able to recruit participants for the

observations and the focus group that she felt would provide the most useful data for the

qualitative study. All interviews, classroom observations, and the focus group took place in the

school setting. Before the study began, a sixth-grade math teacher and a seventh-grade ELA

teacher assisted the researcher with a pilot by reviewing the interview guide for any

misunderstandings or questions that could be confusing to the participants.

Research Questions

The researcher conducted the grounded qualitative study to examine teachers'

perspectives related to the following research questions:

1. From a teacher's perspective, what are best practices for motivating students to write
   across the curriculum?

2. From a teacher's perspective, how does writing across the curriculum impact students'
   writing proficiency?

Analysis of Interview Data

A sixteen-question interview guide was used to collect data from the fifteen research

participants. The first question collected data regarding each participant's years of teaching

experience, grade level, and subject area taught. Table 4.1 displays information gathered from

the participants pertaining to question one from the interview guide.

Table 4.1
Participant Information

Participant number	Years taught	Grade level	Subject area
1	6	6th	ELA
2	8	6th	Social studies
3	11	6th	ELA
4	20	8th	Social studies
5	10	6th	Social studies
6	19	7th	ELA
7	5	6th	ELA
8	9	8th	Science
9	10	6th	RTI
10	8	8th	Social studies
11	21	6th 7th 8th	Librarian - ELA
12	9	6th 7th 8th	RTI Reading
13	15	7th	ELA
14	10	8th	ELA
15	17	6th	Science

In order to answer the first of the two research questions, the participants were asked the following five questions:

1. Describe a daily lesson implementing writing while teaching the content standards.

2. What are best practices for motivating students to write in the content areas?

3. Why are these strategies effective?

4. How do students respond to these strategies?

5. How has high-stakes testing influenced teachers' perspectives on writing in the content areas?

The following seven questions were asked in order to answer the second research question:

1. How important is writing across the curriculum and how often is it implemented?

2. How is writing instruction different in the content area?

3. Provide an example of one of these best practices and describe the impact on student learning of the content.

4. How do writing strategies help make the content more meaningful to students?

5. How is writing assessed and feedback given?

6. What are some of the benefits of writing across the curriculum?

7. How does writing across the curriculum impact students' writing proficiency?

The researcher also asked three additional questions to benefit the study:

1. What is the greatest challenge in implementing writing in the content areas?

2. What are your thoughts on teacher preparation and the amount of professional development you have received on writing across the curriculum?

3. What are examples of other cross-curricular assignments incorporated throughout the various subject areas?

Daily Lesson Implementing Writing

Because writing is a life skill, and writing well is a good predictor of academic success, it is imperative that writing standards are being implemented across the curriculum (Graham & Perin, 2007). TNReady, Tennessee's standardized assessment, measures students' writing ability and critical thinking skills across the content areas. The participants were asked to describe a daily lesson in which they had implemented writing strategies while teaching their content standards. During analysis of the participants' responses, five themes emerged regarding daily lessons including writing strategies. These five themes included: text-based questions, rewrite text/document in students' perspectives, three types of writing (narrative, explanatory, and argumentative), quick writes, and vocabulary development.

Text-based Questions. Four of the fifteen participants identified one of their daily writing lessons as having students answer open-ended, text-based questions. Participant 1 recalled a recent daily lesson on teaching theme. She explained that the writing portion of the lesson came after teaching students the concept of theme. Students then read several small passages and identified the theme for each passage. The students were then expected to explain their theme selection in writing. Participant 1 acknowledged that this lesson was intended to check for knowledge and understanding of the concept taught.

Participant 2 also described a daily lesson in which students answered questions based on a passage or a text pertaining to one of the social studies content standards. They were then expected to answer questions with two or three solid sentences. The students were required to pull evidence from the text to support their answers.

Participant 3 also recalled students responding to text-based questions while writing about a particular content standard. Participant 3 emphasized the importance of explaining in

detail and using evidence to support their answers because those are strategies the students will be expected to demonstrate in order to be successful on the TNReady assessment. Participant 3 discussed a daily lesson on main idea in which students had to pull evidence from the text to answer questions, and explain their answers using details.

Since Participant 12 teaches RTI reading, her lessons are skill based for each individual student. Since comprehension and fluency are deficiencies common to all of her sixth-grade students, Participant 12 described using daily writing activities to check for understanding of what the students read. This writing includes responding to open-ended questions based upon novels or reading passages.

Answering text-based questions was a theme that was common to Participants 1, 2, 3, and 12 as they implemented writing in a daily lesson. A commonality between Participant 2 and Participant 3 was that they expected students to explain using detail, and use evidence from the text to support their answers. A trend in the participants' data was that they were using text-based questions to check for understanding of the content or skill in which the passage, text, or novel was written.

Rewrite Text or Document in Students' Perspectives. Two of the fifteen participants described using a rewrite strategy during their instruction while teaching complex texts. Both Participant 4 and Participant 10 are eighth-grade social studies teachers with a focus on American history. Participant 4 expressed the complexity of a document like the Declaration of Independence, and he described the difficulty for eighth-graders to understand it the way that it was written, as well as the difficulty of the wording of that time period. Participant 4 and his students had a discussion on the Declaration of Independence and the impact it had on people of that time. Participant 4 asked his students to write parts of it in their own perspective. He asked

them to look up the words they did not understand and write it in their own words. Participant 4 also stated how he and his students looked at the Preamble to the Constitution and picked out important details and wrote about them. They also discussed the principles and how they apply to the people in the United States today.

Participant 10 had a very similar response when he described a daily lesson in which writing was implemented while teaching his content standards. He revealed that his class was doing a lesson on the Declaration of Independence. He explained how it is, "hard to read anyway," so he had his students rewrite the document so they could have a better understanding of the meaning. Participant 10 stated, "We use dictionaries and we have Chromebooks and look up these magnanimous, and all these ridiculous words and then make it into your own and make it make sense to you."

Both Participants 4 and 10 use a rewrite strategy in their daily lessons when students are learning about historical, complex texts like the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Both participants suggested that this strategy aids students in understanding the meaning of these documents, how they impacted people in history, as well as how they are applicable to students' lives today.

Narrative, Explanatory, and Argumentative Writing. Three of the fifteen participants recommended having students write a narrative, explanatory, or informative, or an argumentative piece while implementing writing strategies in their daily content instruction. Participant 5 affirmed that while teaching about ancient India, one of the content standards required the students to write a narrative about Siddhartha Guatama, or Buddha's, life. Participant 5 explained that she checked out the computer cart from the library so her students could use one 55-minute

class to research and gather evidence on Buddha before spending the remaining four days writing the narrative and sharing their work with their peers.

Participant 7 recalled a daily lesson in which she used social studies content in her ELA class while teaching the students how to write an informative piece. This informative writing lesson took approximately two weeks to complete. Participant 7 explained that her students were expected to write about King Tut. Since this assignment was the first informative assignment, Participant 7 worked closely with her students as they wrote each paragraph together. She suggested that it was hard for them at first because it was something new. The students became more familiar with informative writing as they worked on one part at a time, not moving on to the next step in the writing process until everyone had an understanding of the part they were working on.

Participant 14 indicated that her students recently worked on a teen brain unit which became an argumentative essay assignment. Participant 14 began by showing her students an image with a caption and asked them to respond to it in writing. They had to write about whether they agreed or disagreed with the person who drew the image. They watched a video about the image and the purpose and were allowed to go back to their writing and change it if necessary. Participant 14 stated:

> They are doing writing in the process of their thinking. While they are thinking of their argument, while they are thinking about what the author is saying, while they are thinking about the point of view, they are thinking about their claim and what the author is trying to say. Looking at something, writing. Listening to something, writing. Using both of those senses to write even more.

Participants 5, 7, and 14 explained how they implement essay writing during their classroom instruction. All three participants agreed that this type of writing assignment is lengthy and extends over several days, but is helpful in teaching their content and preparing students for the essay portion of the TNReady assessment.

Quick Writes. Three of the fifteen participants revealed that quick writes are often used in their daily instruction. Participant 6 indicated that quick writes are often used as bell work activities for daily writing lessons in her class. She explained that her students write about whatever content standard they are learning. For example, theme is the most recent quick write her students completed. Her students were required to write a "good" paragraph and put into their own words the meaning of theme. While completing their quick write, Participant 6 also reported that her students must answer questions about the topic such as: what do you think about theme? What did you learn about theme? What clues help us determine the theme of the story?

Participant 11 recalled having her students do quick writes at least three days a week in her ELA classroom. She gave the example of assigning characterization as the topic of a quick write. Her students would read either fiction or non-fiction and she would ask them to describe a character from the story and how they knew about that character. The students would have to explain whether they inferred the information about the character or if it was directly stated in the text. Participant 11 indicated that a quick write would be a typical lesson in her class for many of her content standards.

Participant 13 implemented very similar writing assignments in her seventh-grade ELA class as Participant 6 and Participant 11. Participant 13 described possibly having a quick write for bell work, or posting a statement for the students to respond to. As the students' writing

progressed, she would have them write a paragraph in response to a statement or text. She explained that a major writing standard for seventh-grade is backing up with evidence. Participant 13 asserted that she will use evidence sentence starters in order to help strengthen students' skills in pulling supporting evidence.

The trend in the data collected from Participants 6, 11, and 13 supported that quick writes were favored by the participants because they do not take up a lot of time, and writing about topics such as characterization and point of view requires students to think more in-depth about the topics or skills.

Vocabulary Development. Four of the fifteen participants recommended vocabulary development as they explained what a daily writing lesson might look like in their content area classroom. Participant 8 recalled having students write notes as she taught lessons focused on academic vocabulary. Before a new concept is taught, students are required to familiarize themselves with the vocabulary related to that concept or skill. Participant 8 suggested that when students write about something, they get a better understanding of it, and it makes it more applicable.

Participant 9 teaches sixth-grade RTI reading so she reflected on lessons involving individualized skills not content standards. She explained that a daily writing lesson for her would start with a lot of scaffolding and pre-teaching. Next, her students would work on vocabulary development and parts of speech of a story. Participant 9 stated that writing is one of the highest levels of thinking, and a lot more processing has to take place for students to create a piece of writing they can be proud of.

Participant 10 described his students using Chromebooks to look up vocabulary word meanings and type the information up as he described a daily writing lesson. He explained that

all eighth-grade students have Chromebooks assigned to them and it makes the experience more positive for students because they can look up information on the web and then respond by typing it on their Chromebook.

Participant 15 discussed a recent daily writing lesson using the computer cart from the school's library. His students were researching science vocabulary words such as producers and consumers, and writing about what they learned from the research. He stated:

Most students wrote a good paragraph about each, but I had a few that wrote more. Their research was accurate, and you could tell by reading the paragraphs they had a good understanding of producers and consumers, and they could give examples of each.

The integration of vocabulary development with writing was common to Participants 8, 9, 10, and 15. All four participants acknowledged that when students have to look something up to determine meaning and then write about it, students acquire a better understanding of the vocabulary and the content they are writing about.

Motivating Students to Write in the Content Areas

Over the last few years, writing has become a major focus in every subject, in every classroom. All of the study's participants have overcome challenges while implementing writing in their content areas. The participants were asked to identify best practices for motivating students to write across the curriculum. During data analysis, five recurring themes emerged from the interviews regarding these best practices. These themes include: high interests, personal connections, student choice, collaborative groups, and teacher modeling. Some of the participants' answers fell into more than one of the themes of best strategies for motivating students to write.

High Interests. Five of the fifteen participants indicated that assigning topics of high interest is a best practice for motivating their students to write in the content areas. Participant 1 reported that motivating students to write is hard because students are not "super excited" about writing. However, she stated that they do get motivated when they are interested in what they are writing about. According to Participant 1, students can be motivated with exciting content.

When asked about best motivational strategies, Participant 4 did not hesitate to answer that providing students with questions or subject matter they are interested in will motivate them to write about it. He also added that each student having a Chromebook helps because the students can use them for more opportunities to research subjects that interest them and learn more about the topic in order to write about it.

Participant 9 suggested that if teachers want students to write, they have to give them something they can be excited about. She explained that if students do not have an interesting topic to write about, they will not produce writing that is best effort. Participant 9 also stated that when a teacher finds a writing topic students are interested in, the teacher should make sure the students have all the resources they need such as media, prints, or magazines in order to make them feel comfortable with their writing.

When Participant 13 was asked about best motivational practices, she explained that all topics will not be super exciting, so teachers should locate articles or other additional resources to turn a boring subject into one that is more interesting. She stated: "They are going to be writing and they are not even going to realize they're doing it because they enjoy it."

Participant 15 described that motivating students to write can be difficult. For this reason, he suggested that his subject area is a huge motivator for students. Participant 15 stated,

"When students are interested in a subject, they will have more to say about it, and more to write about it. Most of my students enjoy science, and most of them do really well."

All five participants concurred that students are motivated to write when they are given topics of interest. Students are more likely to learn more about the content as well as put forth their best effort while writing about topics of interest.

Personal Connection. Three participants suggested that students are motivated to write when they have a personal connection with the topic or content they are writing about. Participant 2 proclaimed that students must be able to tie their writing back to something they are familiar with or can relate to. She even suggested that when students write about something that happened in history, it is important to find a way to connect it back to their lives. She recalled a recent lesson on Judaism in which her students had read and were expected to respond to a document describing Hanukkah. This document included a picture of President Obama, Michelle Obama, and the president of Israel lighting a menorah to commemorate Hanukkah. She recalled how her students were stating that this was "cool" because it was something they had been learning about in history, and they were able to tie it back to modern day with the picture of President Obama. Participant 2 confirmed that personal connection helps to keep the students motivated and interested in their writing.

Participant 7 acknowledged that motivating students is very hard because writing is hard in general. She also indicated that since there is such an interest and push for writing across the curriculum, teachers must find ways to motivate students. One way to do that is to make a connection between the student and the writing.

Participant 11 proposed that in order for students to be motivated, teachers must make the complex, content come alive for the students. She stated:

If the writing is not so rigorous or structured, and if you could relate what was going on in history with an event or person to a student's life, then I think that would help them to be motivated to write more.

Participants 2, 7, and 11 identified personal connections as their best practice for motivating students to write across the curriculum. The participants agreed that it is important for students to be able to tie their writing back to something familiar in their lives. This helps give students a purpose for writing and makes it more meaningful.

Student Choice. Four of the fifteen participants confirmed that student choice is their best practice for motivating students to write in the content areas. According to Participant 3, a student will choose something to write about that they can relate to over writing about something they cannot relate to. Participant 3 expressed that students have to be engaged in the writing because they are going to be re-reading the passages, taking evidence from the passages, and taking evidence from their own life experiences to put into their writing. She explained that students must have choices when it comes to something as complex as writing.

Participant 5 revealed that the best writing she gets from her students comes from them having a choice in their writing topic. She recalled that she normally gives them a list of topics they can choose from and if it is a topic of choice, they are vested in the writing and they want to learn more about it. Participant 5 stated: "the writing is just better."

Participant 8 revealed that her students get a lot of choices when it comes to writing in her science class. Students get a choice on "how to write it and what to write about." Participant 8 asserted that students experience empowerment when they get to choose their writing topic.

Participant 14 recalled a recent writing lesson in which she had students write using a meme, catch me outside, that was popular with the students. Students were expected to rewrite

the meme in different verb voices because according to Participant 14, "they say it all the time and so I said, let's use that in our writing instruction today." Participant 14 stated, "I think you have to meet them where they are and pull in the things they enjoy and think are funny and are interested in."

The participants agreed that when students have a choice in their writing topics, they will choose something they have experiences with or are interested in which will give them pride in their writing and make it more meaningful.

Collaborative Groups. Two of the fifteen participants identified students working in collaborative groups as a best practice for motivating students to write. Participant 6 expressed that students do not want to be outdone by their peers so their competitive nature motivates them to have a product they are going to be proud to share with their peers. In her ELA class, Participant 6 concluded that her best student work comes from anything that has been peer reviewed.

When it comes to working in collaborative groups, Participant 15 also recommended group work as a motivator for students to not only write in his science class, but to do their best work. An example of this would be:

Sometimes after I teach a lesson, my students will share their thoughts or ideas with a partner, then we will come back together as a whole class and share. Other times, they will share their thoughts with a partner and then write a reflection on their own. So, student interest and working in groups with their peers are my big motivators.

For the most part, middle school students are social in nature and enjoy sharing their work with their peers. For this reason, collaborative groups are successful instructional strategies used by both Participant 6 and Participant 15.

Teacher Modeling. Teacher modeling was also a theme that emerged from the data associated with the question relating to best practices for motivating students to write across the curriculum. Three of the fifteen participants' answers fell into this theme. Participant 7 regarded modeling as a motivational tool for student writing. She explained how she writes to the prompts with the students when she assigns them in order to model for the students what her expectations are for each writing assignment.

When Participant 10 was asked about his best practices for motivating students to write across the curriculum, his unique response was, "Well, that's the million-dollar question." He agreed that showing or modeling for students is also one of his best practices for motivating students. He supported his answer by explaining that if he writes when the students are writing, they will hopefully understand that writing is important, they can apply it to certain situations in their life, and that writing is necessary for future success.

Participant 12 explained that all of the students in her RTI reading class struggle with reading and writing. Therefore, it is difficult to motivate students to write that have a written expression disability. She stated, "I don't see it as they don't want to do it because they can't do it, I see it as they don't know how to do it." Participant 12 indicated that modeling and hurdle help are both strategies used with her reading intervention students. Hurdle help is identifying the problem (hurdle) and helping the student to overcome the problem. Hurdle help and sentence starters are both effective motivational strategies for Participant 12 to implement in her RTI reading classroom.

All three participants acknowledged that teacher modeling is a successful motivational practice that is often used in their classroom when students are asked to write. Modeling allows students to know what is expected of them, it shows students that writing is important when they

see their teacher writing, and it gives the students with written expression disabilities the additional help they need to successfully complete the writing assignment.

Reasons Motivational Strategies are Effective

When the fifteen participants were asked why they thought their best motivational practices were effective, their answers fell into three main themes: high-quality/much improved work, student ownership, and students' best effort. Again, a couple of the participants' answers fell into more than one category.

High-Quality/Much Improved Writing. Five participants explained that student writing is higher quality or much improved when their best motivational practices are effective. When Participant 1 was asked how she knew her motivational strategies were effective, she responded by saying, "you can tell it in their writing." She explained that she can tell the difference in the quality of work when the student is interested in the topic versus not interested in the topic. Participant 1 also reported that the work is more detailed, elaborate, and the student's passion for the subject comes through in the writing.

Participant 2 immediately identified student growth as a predictor of the success of her motivational strategies. She described the amount of growth she has seen with her current students from the beginning of the school year to winter break is considerable. She indicated that all of her students' writing has improved. She explained that they are not struggling when they are asked to sit down and write two or three sentences, or even a paragraph.

Participant 10 revealed that student work is verification that his modeling strategies work as student motivators. He stated, "I think it's effective because their work shows me that they can apply what they are learning to their situation today." He discussed the "political arena" of today when referencing teaching students about the Constitution. He expressed that it is very important

for student work to demonstrate an understanding of how government should assist in certain aspects and not assist in others, and how this pertains to them right now.

Participant 12 asserted that she uses progress monitoring in her RTI reading class. She keeps a notebook on each student and looks at their progression from the beginning of their time together until they test out of her class. Participant 12 revealed that her progress monitoring confirms that modeling and hurdle help increase students' writing proficiency. She has witnessed her students' progression from a single sentence to answering open-ended questions with two or three sentences, and perhaps by the end of the year, she predicted, they would be writing paragraphs.

Participant 15 replied by saying, "Some of my students' best work comes from group work." He did report that group work has to be closely monitored in order for students to stay on task, but best effort student work is evidence to Participant 15 that collaboration is very effective. As far as student interest goes, Participant 15 indicated that many students will only give their best effort if it is something of interest to them. He expressed that it is very hard for students to write about something if they have no interest in the topic.

All five participants suggested that much improved work is an indicator that their best motivational practices are effective when students are writing across the curriculum. They indicated that students were hesitant to write at the beginning of the year, but now students know they have the ability to write. Students produce higher quality work when they have choices, personal connections, high interests, teacher modeling, and work in collaborative groups with their peers.

Student Ownership. Five participants revealed that student ownership is a predictor of successful motivational strategies. Participant 5 explained that when students get a choice in

what they are learning or writing about, they take more ownership in their work. She stated, "When they take ownership, it shows a lot more of what they can actually do, and it's more enjoyable for them to write in different classes".

Participant 7 indicated that modeling strategies demonstrate what is expected of students. She expressed that her students know the importance of following the same procedures for writing so that when students write, they are familiar with the rubric used for assessment, and they become more comfortable with the writing. When the students understand what they are doing, they will have an end product they can be proud of. Participant 7 affirmed that it is much easier for students to take ownership of their work when they are successful.

Participant 8 also acknowledged that taking ownership of the work is important for student success. She explained that when students get to choose and write about what interests them, they have some control in the classroom and their work demonstrates a pride and quality.

Participant 9 acknowledged that students in her RTI reading intervention class struggle with so many skills, especially reading and writing, they have to own their work and be proud of their accomplishments in order to progress. She revealed that the students must take ownership in their work before she gets students' best effort.

Participant 13 explained that when students take ownership, or show pride in their work, she is assured that her motivational strategies are effective. She discussed the fact that she always has a few that do not like to write, but for the most part, students find something that is relevant to them and they use that in their writing. The more they write, they more they have success with it. Eventually, when she gives them a quote or saying to respond to, they start doing it and they are comfortable with it. Participant 13 stated, "I guess it's about confidence."

Best Effort. Seven of the fifteen participants affirmed that students give their best effort when they are motivated to write. Participant 3 expressed that her motivational strategies are effective because the students stay engaged in writing that interests them. The writing then seems less complex and the students put forth more effort. Participant 3 described this as:

> So when they're allowed to choose, most of the time it would be a narrative. You see more creativity when they have choice. They actually are excited about what they write. They want to show you and tell you stories, but you've got to make sure your writing is still structured but yet have fun with your writing.

Participant 3 indicated that writing in general is difficult for students, and sixth-grade state writing standards are very rigorous, so teachers have to find ways to keep them engaged in the lessons when it is not high interest.

Participant 4 suggested that when students write about things of interest they will take the opportunity to expand on what and how they feel. They are able to discuss what their opinions are and they have the ability to back up their opinions with supporting evidence. When students learn by inquiry and voice their opinion, they are willing to put forth more effort. Participant 4 also described how high interest helps students relate things that happened long ago to their lives. It makes them wonder about events in history and whether or not they could happen today as they did hundreds of years ago. Participant 4 affirmed that most eighth-graders are mature enough to make connections with events in history and how they have impacted today's society, especially in American history.

Participant 6 asserted that students must be motivated in order to give their best effort. She explained that she sets goals for students that do not have goals for themselves. She also offers incentives for the students that give their best effort and show academic growth.

Participant 11 recalled how creative students can be when they are interested in a topic. "Not only are students creative when they write about topics of interest, but teachers can also be creative when they are trying to spark interests with students." She explained that when students have meaningful writing assignments, it will show through in their writing. Their best efforts will show through as they put their thoughts on paper.

Participant 13 recalled that interest is a good motivator because it is fun for the students to write about something they enjoy. She stated, "It's an interest for the kids and it's not just something boring out of a textbook." Participant 13 also discussed that by making connections, students are encouraged to learn even more. "I mean, you could take something scientific and it be a standard, but then find something fun and interesting that is happening right now that kind of ties into it." She understood that when learning is fun for the students, they do not even realize they are learning. "It is like their brains are little sponges soaking up information and they don't even realize it. All of a sudden, they just know it."

Participant 14 discussed that students are not going to give their best effort if they do not enjoy what they are writing about, or if they are not interested in the topic. She stated:

You have to meet them where they are with the topics that they are interested in somehow. I mean, you are obviously not going to be able to do that all of the time but I think if you are ever going to get best effort writing from them, you have to meet them where they are.

While discussing interest as a motivator, Participant 15 explained that it is really hard to write about something if there is absolutely no interest in the subject. He recalled his writing experiences as a graduate student and explained that even as an adult, he had a horrific time writing papers if he did not have interest in the topic. He confirmed that this has helped him as a

teacher to understand how important it is to make the content interesting for students when it comes to writing. He discussed how excited students get when they are allowed to do research on computers, so he tries to get the class set of computers and let them do as much of their writing on those as possible. Participant 15 described how much better student work is when they put forth their best effort, and how much clarity they get from the curriculum when they write about science content.

How Students Respond to Motivational Strategies

There were four recurring themes that emerged from the participants' interviews when asked about how students respond to motivational strategies. The four themes were positive response, better writing, more enjoyment from writing, and writing with confidence. Two of the fifteen participants' answers fell into more than one category.

Positive Response. Three of the fifteen participants described positive student responses in regards to motivating students to write in the content areas. Participant 2 explained that her students know what her expectations are when it comes to writing. For this reason, most of them write without hesitation.

Participant 4 agreed that writing provides opportunities for the students to expand on learning, and to expand on the way they feel about a topic. He explained that because they are interested in the topic, they are more interested in the writing.

Participant 15 asserted that his students respond well because most of them like science. He explained that he has a few students who cannot read or write very well, but his students know that he will assist them in their writing and help them with writing proficiency.

The three participants indicated that student interest and knowing the teacher expectations contribute to positive student responses when it comes to writing in the content areas.

Better Writing. Four of the fifteen participants explained that better writing is a response to their best motivational strategies for writing in the content areas. Participant 1 suggested that her students do a lot better when they like what they are writing about. She described student writing as being longer, more detailed, and better. According to Participant 1, if she finds things of interests for her students to write about, they will learn more from their writing.

Participant 6 also expressed that her students respond well to her motivational strategies. Students like to share their work with peers, and it is very important for them to share good work because they do not want to be outdone. According to Participant 6, her students will work hard to produce good writing because they want a product worth sharing.

When Participant 10 was asked how his students responded to his motivational strategies, he had to pause and think for a brief moment. He then replied, "Across the board, it would be hard to answer. That really goes back to maybe how well I've tried to model the work." He then went on to explain that some students respond well, but some students do not respond as well. Participant 10 explained that he is always trying to find ways to make his social studies content apply to his students' life. Students exhibit better writing when he models for the students, and his students do better when they can relate to what they are learning.

Participant 11 explained that her students always seemed to respond pretty well to her motivational strategies. She stated, "I can think of several instances of kids that really liked it." She discussed having to find out about all the different ways to incorporate writing which allowed students to write and be more creative with their responses. Participant 11 acknowledged

that the increase in students' writing proficiency can be credited to the increase in writing across the curriculum since the introduction of the common core standards.

More Enjoyment from Writing. Four participants acknowledged that students respond to their motivational practices with more enjoyment from their writing. Participant 3 explained that when her students get to choose what they write about, or they are assigned a topic that interests them, their writing is more enjoyable. It is more enjoyable for the students to actually research and write about and it is more enjoyable for the audience to read.

Participant 5 also suggested that students definitely enjoy writing more when they have a choice in what they are writing about. She stated that students dig deeper for more information which leads to a deeper understanding of the knowledge. Since the content is more interesting, it is more enjoyable for students to write in science and social studies than in ELA class. She stated, "I think that the more opportunities our students have to write, the better it is for them in the future."

According to Participant 8, some students love having a choice when it comes to writing. Those are the students who are going to do well. They are going to give their best effort and produce writing they can share with their peers. For the most part, choice gives them some control in the classroom and most students get enjoyment out of having a voice.

 Participant 14 explained that her students love having a choice and because of this, their writing is infinitely better than if she would have said, "This is what I want you to write about." Getting to choose makes students work that much harder. So, according to Participant 14, the response to instructional strategies is that students respond well to choice and it shows in their writing.

More enjoyment in the writing was clearly a trend in the participants' answers regarding responses to best practices for motivating students to write across the curriculum. Student interest, choice, and sharing their work with their peers contributed to students enjoying their written assignments, and producing work that is more enjoyable for the reader.

Writing with Confidence. Another theme that emerged from the data relating to response to instructional strategies was writing with confidence. Five participants identified confidence as a response to their best practices for writing in the content areas. Participant 2 described how she can see a big difference in student writing from the beginning of the school year to the end of the first semester. She stated that student writing is much improved because they learned that they have the ability to write. Confidence is not a word Participant 2 would have used to describe her students' writing early in the year, so hopefully with practice, good motivational strategies, and best effort, she will continue to see growth in student writing through the end of the school year.

Participant 7 explained that sometimes students still have a hard time with writing, but once they get started on it, they are more comfortable with it. She uses the same rubric to grade student writing so she is hopeful the students will become familiar with the rubric and understand that she has the same expectations for writing every time students write. Following familiar procedures and having the same expectations lead to writing with confidence.

When Participant 9 was asked how her students responded to instructional strategies, she responded by saying:

> With questioning a lot of times. Questioning and a lot of revision. I think that when they are more comfortable with it, they have more questions and they make more revisions and they have better output. They become a more confident writer.

Participant 11 indicated that because students are getting so much writing not only in ELA class, but in other content area classes as well, it is giving them more confidence about their writing capabilities. Students are responding pretty well by writing and being creative with their writing.

Participant 12 explained that through modeling and lots of practice, her RTI reading students do much better. She stated:

> They feel more confident because that's a lot of what I see is just that they don't know how to write…but when you show them how to do it and practice with them, they catch on a lot better. They seem to be able to be successful and that's what we are looking for.

Participant 13 described her students' response to motivational strategies by stating that if she could just find something that is relevant and of interest to the students, and they would just do it without complaining, their writing would be better and the students would be more confident with writing.

Influence of High-Stakes Testing on Writing in the Content Area

The final question that supports the first research question of the qualitative study is associated with the influence of high-stakes testing on writing across the curriculum. The fifteen participants had mixed feelings on how teachers' perspectives are influenced by high-stakes tests such as TNReady. The fifteen participants' answers were divided up under one of the two themes, positive teacher perspectives or negative teacher perspectives. Nine of the fifteen participants suggested that high-stakes testing has a positive influence on writing while six participants had a negative perspective on testing and writing in the content area.

Positive Influence on Writing in the Content Area. Nine of the fifteen participants affirmed that high-stakes tests have positively influenced teachers' perspectives on writing in the

content areas. Participant 1 explained that because teachers want students to do well on those tests, they have put more of a focus on writing in the different content areas. She suggested that even math teachers should be more focused because students are having to respond in writing on math tests as well.

Participant 2 stated that it should have changed everybody, every person no matter their content area should have focused more on writing because it is so important for the students' scores. She also explained that teacher evaluations are based on test scores so if teachers want to appear successful as far as data goes, they will have students writing, and writing well. She stated, "I think high-stakes testing, as it always does, changes the landscape of a classroom."

Participant 3 declared, "It's influenced teachers a lot because… students would write but it was not essay after essay, and now, that's more of the focus." The test has also influenced teachers' perspectives greatly because teachers have to make sure students are prepared for the tests at the end of the year.

Participant 4 explained that he has implemented writing more in his class over the last two or three years than any other time before. He began implementing writing because the standardized tests in ELA and social studies changed from multiple choice to include extended response questions and essays. He continued to implement writing because his students demonstrated a deeper understanding of his content through their writing. Participant 4 explained that implementing writing, because of the tests, has made him more prepared as a teacher, and has helped prepare his students for the tests in all of the subject areas.

Participant 8 explained that other subjects might be affected more by high-stakes tests because other tests are totally different than the science test. The 2016-2017 standardized test for science is multiple choice. She acknowledged that her test will probably change in the next

couple of years to include more writing. Along with the test changes, her instruction and her formative assessments would change to include more writing.

Participant 12 regarded that it is like any other high-stakes test, teachers are going to pay more attention to it because it impacts them personally and professionally. She also affirmed that TNReady has definitely impacted her, as well as put a movement in all teachers to write more and prepare students more.

Participant 13 agreed that high-stakes testing has made teachers more aware. She also replied that if teachers do not teach writing, they are setting students up to fail. She stated:

> They are going to get that test in front of them and they are just going to freeze up because we have not given them the tools to write the paper. It's going to reflect on us but it's also going to reflect on the kids. They are going to use seventh-grade scores for the six- year plan and they're going to say well, some of these kids can't write. Well yea, they can't write but it's not…it might not be all their fault.

Participant 13 suggested that teachers must implement writing in all classes because it is going to affect both teachers and students in the long run.

Participant 14 explained that it is her hope that the tests have forced teachers' hands to make writing happen in all content classrooms. She discussed that just a few years ago, after common core was introduced, there was an expectation that teachers would be graded on student writing. Participant 14 stated, "This is coming and this is going to be part of my scores, you know, it makes people more vested in it."

Participant 15 affirmed that because of testing, more and more teachers are implementing writing in the content areas. He stated that the state standardized science test would still be multiple choice, but because the items on ELA and social studies TNReady will be

extended response, he can help students be more successful on those tests by giving them opportunities to write in his classroom. He indicated that tests have influenced most teachers to include more writing because of accountability. He also indicated that writing is a life skill and teachers should implement it into their daily lessons if no other reason but that.

Nine of the fifteen participants agreed that high-stakes testing has positively influenced teachers' perspectives on writing in the content areas because teachers want students to be prepared for the tests, teacher evaluations are dependent on students' scores, and writing is a life skill that should be taught across the curriculum regardless of testing.

Negative Influence on Writing in the Content Area. Six of the fifteen participants had a negative perspective on the influence of testing on writing in the content area. Participant 5 stated that TNReady has not influenced her at all. She explained that she implements writing because she knows it is important, not because of a test. She suggested that it is an important concept and students should be able to write and that is why she teaches it.

Participant 6 explained that she has learned not to focus on one thing. According to Participant 6, the focus on testing has made teaching somewhat difficult. She explained that it is very difficult to get students who are not on grade level with writing to at least at grade level because the time needed to do that is not available. She also asserted that it is very frustrating for teachers because they want to make students better and get them on or even above grade level. Participant 6 stated, "It is a challenge to get it all done and do it in such a way that you are actually moving the kids and helping them get better."

When Participant 7 was asked how TNReady has influenced teachers' perspectives on writing in the content areas she quickly answered, "I think has hurt. I think it has hurt a teacher's perspective on writing because …it makes teachers nervous." Participant 7 explained that

teachers do not feel as if they are doing a good job when it comes to writing based on the results they have seen from previous writing assessments and TNReady practice tests. She stated, "We got the results back and it was very discouraging." Participant 7 suggested that she does not know how to implement writing correctly and they (state) does not tell her how to do it.

Participant 9 responded to the question on teachers' perspectives on high-stakes testing and writing in the content areas by saying, "I think it's been more frustrating than beneficial." She explained that she does not have a score to claim for accountability so she has to take the school's measures. She described how she took a three for last year's school measure and she did not agree with that. Testing has caused her to write more with her RTI reading students. She wants to give them more opportunities to write because of the state assessment but she finds it frustrating.

Participant 10 responded by saying he was not anti-writing in class, but he does not like the unknown. He stated, "Okay TCAP, what are you looking for? How do you want me to teach these kids and I'll do it?" He expressed his frustrations with the state assessment changes over the last few years. He also discussed the fact that teachers have added stress because of testing. He asked, "Am I doing enough? Are my kids going to be ready?"

Participant 11 had a totally different reason she is not a big fan of high-stakes testing. She stated:

> Well, I think we are kind of cynical about it. How writing is so subjective. Even if you
> have a rubric, it is still so subjective. I think it's a good idea and for the most part
> teachers have realized they do need to spend more time writing because it is very
> beneficial, but as a group, I think we're kind of cynical too in thinking, you know, this is

just someone's opinion as far as state testing goes. So, as far as the state testing over

writing, I don't know. I'm not sure about that, if I think that's a good indicator or not.

Six of the fifteen participants concurred that high-stakes tests have a negative influence on teachers' perspectives regarding writing in the different content areas. The participants explained that writing should be taught regardless of a standardized test. Testing has contributed to additional stress and frustration due to the writing portion being subjective, and due to the uncertainties of what the students will see on the tests.

The following sections answered the second research question regarding the impact writing across the curriculum has on students' writing proficiency.

How Important is Writing across the Curriculum

The researcher had established before the study began that all participants thought writing was important and that all participants implemented writing into their instruction. Through data analysis, the researcher established how important writing was to the participants, and how often it was implemented in the content area classrooms.

Writing is Very Important. Thirteen of the fifteen participants indicated that writing across the curriculum is very important. Participant 1 expressed that reading and writing together are the most important things students can learn. Participant 1 teaches an ELA class, and she has her students for two 55-minute blocks each day. She suggested that writing takes place in her daily instruction four out of five days a week in some way. She stated, "now that could be extended response, or answering simple questions but there is writing going on almost every day.

Participant 2 informed that writing in any subject area is essential for student success not only in middle school and high school, but for students going to secondary school. She implied that students who have the opportunity to write across the content areas in middle school will be

better prepared when they get to the next level of education. Participant 2 stated that students write daily in her class. The writing usually includes answering questions based on a document or text from her social studies content.

Participant 3 teaches ELA and she suggested that writing is very important across the curriculum because the students have to have it in order to be successful on the high-stakes test at the end of the year. She explained that students go to the different content classes and build on the writing strategies they learn in her class. She stated, "We do write every day in some form or fashion whether it be a quick write or answering higher-order questions, we write daily."

Participant 4 explained that within the last five or six years, he finally realized how important writing is. He has his eighth-grade social studies students write daily whether it be a question for bell work, or response questions they must answer during the lesson. Participant 4 stated, "I just think it prepares them better for what's coming up in their life, so it's extremely important to do and we do it daily."

Participant 5 stated that writing is not only very important, but writing is crucial for students to be able to learn in a proficient way. She has her students write about her social studies content daily.

Participant 6 asserted that writing across the curriculum is very important because it gives students opportunities to work on skills that are often isolated to ELA. She has students for two 55-minute blocks so writing is probably going to take place in one of those blocks once a day. In the least, her students write three out of five days, but her intention is to write daily.

Participant 7 explained that writing is very important because it is requiring a student to really think about something. "I love making connections when it comes to writing because they're thinking and you can see their thinking process as they're writing." Participant 7 stated

that her students write daily in her classroom to some extent. "It's not always writing a narrative or an argumentative, but we write daily."

Participant 9 understood that writing is one of the most important things across the curriculum because that is how she knows her students understand. She implements writing daily with her students in her RTI reading class. She stated, "I think it is the hardest thing to do but I think it is when it all comes together."

Participant 11 took a new position this school year as the school librarian. She responded to the interview questions based on her 21 years as an ELA teacher. She explained that reading and writing are the most important things students can learn. She recalled that due to the implementation of the common core standards, over the last five years, her students' writing frequency gradually increased. Last year in the ELA classroom, her students were writing every day.

Participant 12 concluded that it is very important for students to write in all subjects, across the curriculum. In her RTI reading class, it is evident, through progress monitoring, that the more practice students get with writing, the better they will be at it. She explained that her students have open-ended questions to answer daily.

Participant 13 stated, "I feel it is very important across the curriculum. Every class should be doing it to some extent." She implements writing in her seventh-grade ELA class every day.

Participant 14 explained that reading and writing go hand in hand. She suggested that students need both reading and writing in every single subject. Students in her eighth-grade ELA class write every day. She explained that it will not be an essay every day, but they will write in some form every day.

Participant 15 also regarded reading and writing as the most important skills students will learn. He stated, "Students have to read and write in order to be successful in learning science, social studies, and even math." Participant 15 explained that he is getting better at incorporating writing in his science lessons. He stated that his students write in his class at least three times a week, sometimes more depending on the standard being taught.

Writing is Important. Writing is important to both Participant 8 and Participant 10. Participant 8 described that many people assume that writing is primarily assigned in ELA, but she has her students take notes in her science class, students often write sentences reflecting on their lessons, students also have to write an essay in her science class at the end of the year. Participant 8 indicated that her students write in some form at least two to three days a week.

Participant 10 confirmed that writing is important as well. He agreed that it is important to at least try to get students to write. He explained that he has not implemented writing as much this year as in the past because he does not know what state testing will look like this year. If he had to put a number on it, he would say students write in his class maybe two times a week. Writing in his eighth-grade social studies class would look like answering document-based questions or responding to a historical event.

Thirteen of the fifteen participants suggested that writing is very important, even crucial to student success and they demonstrate that belief in their daily implementation. Two of the fifteen participants find that writing is important and they at least try to implement it two to three times weekly.

How is Writing Different in the Content Area

The participants were asked their perspectives on how writing is different in a content class as opposed to a class where writing foundations and mechanics are taught. All participants'

answers were focused on writing with a content focus. Two themes emerged from data focused on content writing. These themes are extra practice for writing foundation and check for understanding of content knowledge.

Extra Practice for Writing Foundations. Two of the fifteen participants explained that writing is different in the content areas because it is additional writing practice. Students can build on their writing foundations with additional practice in their content area classrooms. Participant 1 explained that when students are only answering content-based questions, they have a lot more freedom to answer. They seem to do a lot better when they are not worried about writing structure or mechanics. It is easier for them to answer questions focused on content, and it gives them more practice so that they can build up their writing. Participant 1 indicated that with this practice, they become better writers so they can successfully complete more complex writing.

Participant 6 expressed that hopefully content writing just has a different focus so the students can get more practice with writing. She stated, "It's extra practice because once you build the skills in about how the paragraph and how the writing should be, you take the content and apply that to the writing."

Checks for Understanding of Content Knowledge. Thirteen of the fifteen participants acknowledged that writing is different in the content area because it is primarily focused on the acquisition of content knowledge. Participant 2 described writing in her social studies class as writing about a historical text or document. Sometimes they write about a person or event in history. Students have to refer back to the text or document to gather evidence for their writing. The finished product should demonstrate students' knowledge of that particular person or event.

Participant 3 suggested that content writing requires less time and is less structured than narrative or informative writing pieces. She explained that content writing can be a response to a particular standard taught such as theme. Students are expected to pick out the theme in a passage and explain in writing why it is the theme. The written explanation should demonstrate understanding of what theme is.

When asked how writing is different in the content area, Participant 4 stated:

For me, I am just concerned with content, their description, the validity of what they're saying. I don't care about punctuation or spelling, and some people might, but for me, I just want them to be able to give me their idea and to expand on it…I don't feel like I'm qualified to grade them on anything grammar wise, I just want them to give me their ideas and I don't worry about commas and stuff.

Participant 5 explained that she is focused on content knowledge in her social studies class. She wants her students to be able to get their ideas across and not have to worry about sentence structure or writing techniques. "I want them to be able to write something down and know how they feel about it, or what they think about it, or what they've learned."

Participant 7 discussed that teachers can have different requirements and expectations for writing. According to Participant 7, there are a variety of ways to write and there is no wrong way to teach it. She also suggested that content area teachers can implement different ways of writing as they teach their science and social studies standards. Since writing requires a lot of thinking, students will learn what they are writing about and it will show through in their writing.

For Participant 8, writing in her science class is focused only on the content and not grammar. She recounted that writing in her class is less structured than that of an ELA class. She

described how that is another way to persuade students to write because they do not have the pressures of worrying about grammar or mechanics, they only have to focus on the topic or skill.

According to Participant 9, "Writing is one of the highest orders of thinking and a lot more processing has to take place for them to create writing that aligns with the task you have given them." She suggested that writing is a good predictor of content knowledge because, "They're having to take several different things to create something of their own."

Participant 10 described that whenever he has assigned writing, his focus is on the understanding of the content material. The writing could be focused on an important document in history, an important battle, or even an individual, and those things are always the focus. He explained that his students should be taking a passage and pulling evidence from it, or even getting to the mind of an individual, and then put it into writing.

Participant 11 explained that content writing would be incorporating writing into math, science, or social studies. She expressed that the focus would be on the content itself and not the mechanics. She stated that the teacher would probably be assessing the quality of what the students have written or the understanding of the specific content.

Participant 12 suggested that if it is a reading or writing class, the focus is on the writing process, but if it is a science or social studies class, the focus is on the content of the writing or the explanation of the content.

Participant 13 interpreted that the difference in writing in the content area is how it is taught and to what extent. The students should be able to write based on their experience in ELA, but most content teachers are going to concentrate on evidence that backs up their writing, and whether they demonstrated an understanding of the writing topic.

Participant 14 also confirmed that the focus is different in the content area classroom in regards to writing. She indicated that teachers will be more likely to grade student work based on content knowledge and not spelling and grammar.

When Participant 15 was asked about the difference in content area writing, he stated:

For one thing, in my class, students don't have to worry so much about the grammar and the mechanics of writing. When I look at or grade their writing assignments, I am strictly looking at their content knowledge. Maybe that relieves some of the pressures some students have about writing…I think the biggest difference would probably be the focus.

Impact of Best Practices on Student Learning

When the fifteen participants were asked to describe a best practice in action and describe its impact on students' learning of the content, their answers were very similar. The following two themes emerged from the participants' data: strengthening skills and greater understanding of the content or concept.

Strengthening Skills. Four of the fifteen participants' answers fell under the theme strengthening skills. Participant 1 recalled a lesson in which her students were writing in response to a short story, *The Lift*. She stated that it is a story the students are always excited about reading and that really shows through in their writing. She explained that their writing was better, they focused more on details, and they understood the elements from the story because they could answer the questions correctly regarding story elements. Writing is better when students enjoy what they write about. Participant 1 acknowledged that her students' learning is impacted because their writing is progressing. She can see the gains they are making in writing.

Participant 2 explained that she uses and models close reading with her students. She starts at the beginning of the year so the students will become familiar with the way she wants

their documents to look when they are reading through passages. She shows them what to highlight in the text, how she wants them to make notes in the margins, and what she is looking for in their answers. She chose this example because she is certain that learning is impacted when students follow the same procedures when they do document-based questions, as they do when they complete the close reading assignments. Students learn what to do early in the school year, and they continue to brush up their skills throughout the year so they know how to pull evidence, and what kind of evidence supports their answers.

Participant 3 also selected a short story lesson as an example. She explained that students had extended response questions to answer after the reading, and they made a fake Instagram page based on facts from the time period the story took place. She described how pulling evidence to answer the questions and doing research from the time period helped increase student learning. Her students were excited to make a fake Instagram page based on the story. According to Participant 3, this type of lesson solidifies concepts the students have learned.

Participant 6 explained that some kids do not have a purpose and it is her responsibility to help them find one. She recalled her reward party that most of her students attended and took great pride in their work to get there. She acknowledged that she has to make learning fun and give students assignments to increase their learning. Many of her students have worked hard and moved beyond the goals and expectations they set for themselves earlier in the year. Participant 6 concluded that teachers' best practices cannot leave students where they are, they have to make them better.

Understanding of the Concept. Eleven of the fifteen participants identified understanding of the content as an impact of best motivational practices on student learning. Participant 4 recalled a recent lesson on The Louisiana Purchase. He explained how his class

discussed the impact on the environment, the impact on the Native Americans, as well as the other cultures there. Participant 4 explained that his students usually respond well to this lesson, but this year it seemed they were even more interested. He stated, "They definitely learn the content and get a better understanding through writing about things of interest because their written responses to Louisiana Purchase were incredible."

Participant 5 described a lesson in which her students were writing about early religions. She gave them a list of topics related to the major world religions and they selected one to write about. Participant 5 affirmed that she could determine by their writing that they were more expressive with their writing, and there was a clear understanding of the concept.

Participant 7 discussed a model essay she did with her students. The students had to identify all of the parts of an essay and explain them in the writing. Near completion, they could identify the parts of an essay and use details to describe them. Participant 7 indicated that the model essay was beneficial for the students to see one in construction, "so they didn't have to go into it blindly." The model essay gave them a better idea and understanding of essay writing.

Participant 8 described a media project a couple of students did on density. They were able to choose their topic and choose the presentation for the project. They put together a video that included music, transitions, and even a story that described what was happening in the video. Participant 8 expressed how entertaining it was to watch, and how it showcased their talents, but more than that, how it demonstrated students' knowledge of the concept.

Participant 9 revealed a study she did with her RTI reading class on Martin Luther King Jr. They watched a recording of the march on Washington and read letters he wrote from jail. She had students select words from the letters they did not understand in order to look up the word meaning. She gave them a few open-ended questions to answer based on everything they

learned. The answers to the questions demonstrated understanding of the events. She affirmed that by giving them all the resources they needed, and having them answer essential questions, they had a complete understanding of an event from history.

Participant 10 recalled having his students rewrite the First Amendment. Many students got really involved in the lesson and their work was really impressive. He stated, "I didn't know he or she could write like that. I didn't know they could express themselves like that." He was surprised at how thorough their writing was and how well they understood the First Amendment.

Participant 11 explained that she was teaching story elements and discussing details with her students when she asked them to write about a place that was important to them. She reminded them to use details in the description because they were going to go around the room and see if they recognized any of the places. She recalled how much the students enjoyed that activity, and how the students gained a deeper understanding of using details.

Participant 12 described teaching theme to a small group in her RTI reading class. She went over it verbally, they discussed it as a group, and they made a graphic organizer to use to create an outline. She expressed how good the outlines were and how much they learned about the skill through writing.

Participant 13 recalled analyzing a poem together with her students. They looked at the poem line-by-line in order to determine meaning of the poem and understand how to find words to support that meaning. After practicing several lines together, the students began to make progress on something that was very difficult for them. Participant 13 affirmed that by working together, analyzing, pulling evidence, making inferences, finding evidence to back it up, and then writing about it, students demonstrated that they were making improvements on a skill they

normally have difficulties with. She indicated that it often takes many different strategies together to grasp a concept.

Participant 14 discussed a lesson on bias the students really responded well to. The students chose one of three different activities related to a fake news story. They researched fake news and found several examples of it. They were then asked to write a fake news story. One of the choices was to post it to social media and see how many likes they received. Participant 14 stated, "I feel like after doing one of those projects, they understand in and out what a credible source is."

Participant 15 recalled a vocabulary lesson in which his students worked in pairs to familiarize themselves with academic vocabulary before they started the lesson. The students have to use one of Larry Bell's power words with each vocabulary word. Participant 15 stated:

> So the students were describing, analyzing, comparing, contrasting, identifying, and there are a few others, but they have to really get in depth with the vocabulary, and they are sharing their ideas with their partner which leads to a greater understanding. You know, when they have to analyze, or break down, what a word means, they are getting a better understanding of it and that is when they really learn it.

How does Writing make Content Meaningful

When the participants were asked how writing across the curriculum makes the content more meaningful, once again, the participants' answers shared many similarities. The different categories were able to be combined into two themes. These themes are greater clarity and Connections.

Greater Clarity. Seven of the fifteen participants agreed that writing across the curriculum gives the content more clarity. Participant 1 indicated that when students have to

respond in writing, they have to put more thought into it. When they have to think about it, they get a better understanding of it.

According to Participant 2, when students write without thinking, they express how they view a topic, and their opinion on a topic. Whatever they are thinking is reflected in their writing. That is how some students are impacted by writing. That is how writing affects the way some students learn.

Participant 3 expressed that if students are not taught the strategies that help them with writing, they will be lost when it comes to writing. She recalled using step-by-step instructions with her students through the process of writing a narrative. She explained that by being walked in steps from the beginning to the end, they better understood how to write the narrative. Participant 3 stated, "That is why those strategies are meaningful, they help them understand how to write."

Participant 8 explained that certain strategies like UNRAAVEL help the students because they are not looking at a huge text and they are less likely to feel overwhelmed. UNRAAVEL is a strategy that was introduced to the school a few years ago by its founder, Larry Bell. UNRAAVEL and the twelve power words are commonly used in the participants' school to assist with reading complex texts and writing activities. Participant 8 affirmed that by implementing writing strategies and starting out really small with writing, students will respond and understand the writing as well as the content material.

Participant 12 suggested that even students with written expression disabilities can fully understand the content if they can write about it. She stated, "If you can sit down and put something on paper and apply that knowledge, then it shows full understanding."

Participant 13 described that the strategies she gives her students helps break the prompts down for them so it does not seem so broad, and it makes it less scary for them. Participant 13 will use these strategies to help students because it makes the content clear, and helps students become better writers.

Participant 15 discussed that having students write about content material just helps reinforce what they are learning. He indicated that writing helps students recall facts from the lessons, and the writing practice helps build their writing skills. Participant 15 added that when students do research before writing, the content that seemed difficult and complex suddenly becomes clear. He concluded that if students can write about it, they can learn it in-depth.

Connections. More than half of the participants (8 out of 15) agreed that writing helps students make connections with the content. Participant 4 affirmed that writing makes the content more meaningful because students can write about something that happened in history and make it relevant and important to their lives. He recalled talking about laws with his students and he stated that they were "dumbfounded" over an actual law that still exists. He had them write about how the Alien Sedition Act could affect them or people they might know. He explained that it was meaningful to them because they could relate it to their lives.

Participant 5 described that students are more vested in the learning when they write about it. She explained that when students have a better understanding of the content, they can apply it to their lives. Making it applicable is important for her content because so many of the standards taught happened thousands of years ago.

Participant 6 reported that writing strategies are meaningful because she can focus on student interests. She explained that writing does not have to be about a particular standard,

students can write about their lives. She tells the students they will never run out of a subject to write about when they can write about themselves. Making it personal is important.

Participant 7 resolved that it goes back to connections. She stated, "I feel like you can make a connection to anything when it comes to writing and text."

Participant 9 explained that you have to make it relatable. She referred back to Martin Luther King Jr. Her students connected with the lesson when they saw him as a boy, as a teenager, that he was once a student just like them. It made it relatable and meaningful.

Participant 10 explained that it is hard sometimes to relate a historical event to students' lives but when he does, the students learn it so much better. He affirmed that he can tell when the students make that connection with the past. When that happens, he is more excited than they are. He stated, "I have to think sometimes, it's all interesting to me."

Participant 11 reported that it is often difficult to implement writing in social studies or science because they are discussing people or events that happened hundreds or even thousands of years ago, so that makes it hard to establish a connection between the students and the events. Participant 11 suggested having students write about important events in history such as civil rights. Students could watch a video or read an article and respond to it. Teachers could also have students respond as if they witnessed something happening first-hand and discuss how it would make them feel.

Participant 14 explained that writing makes her content more meaningful because they are learning while making connections to their lives. She referred back to the fake news activity. She discussed how they learned so much about bias and credible sources while doing something that was very familiar to them. They were using social media, cell phones, and Chromebooks while learning about something as boring as credible sources and bias. She explained that the

complex, boring content can be enjoyable for the students if the connection is made and it is related to their lives somehow.

The participants explained how writing becomes more meaningful when students make personal connections. When students write about events from the past, personal connections make the historical events relevant to their lives. The participants suggested that additional resources and even media are often necessary to make that connection, especially in social studies when students are writing about something or someone from thousands of years ago.

Assessment and Feedback

When the participants were asked how they assess and give feedback on student writing, their responses fell into three themes. The themes are Chromebooks, Individualized feedback, and Rubrics.

Chromebooks. Five of the fifteen participants discussed using Chromebooks for assessments and feedback. Participant 4 informed the researcher during his interview that all eighth-grade students have Chromebooks assigned to them. When he was asked how he assesses and gives feedback, he was quick to say Chromebooks. Participant 4 explained that he only checks for content knowledge and never grammar or writing structure. The students do their writing on their Chromebooks and the feedback is almost instantaneous. The students use google classroom and they can send their work while they are at home or during class. If Participant 4 is near his computer, he is alerted that he has work to review. Participant 4 discussed how he would never want to go back to turning in papers for teachers to grade. He expressed that he is confident that this type of feedback is very effective because students can see what they need to add or change before submitting it for a grade.

Participant 8 also teaches eighth-grade so she uses Chromebooks for feedback. She explained that whatever her students write, she uses google classroom to assess. She adds comments and feedback so the students can correct and send back. Sometimes she lets the students peer review each other's work before she assesses it. Participant 8 explained that she never counts off for grammar or mechanics; she only grades student work for content knowledge.

Participant 10 uses Chromebooks to assess many of his assignments, but he also has his students keep a notebook for assessment. He explained how he takes up notebooks periodically and gives feedback on their work. When the students write, he only checks for content. He does not assess grammar or mechanics.

Participant 11 used Chromebooks and google classroom to assess student writing while she was in the classroom. She explained that it was hard for her to look past capital letters, indentions, fluency, and coherency while assessing. She had to focus more on content and if the students got their points across to the reader and supported their writing with evidence.

Participant 14 also teaches eighth-grade and uses Chromebooks for feedback. She explained that the Chromebooks are amazing for feedback. She pops into their writing assignments and gives feedback as they are writing. Participant 14 also uses peer review and state rubrics for writing.

Individualized Assessment/Feedback. Six out of fifteen participants give individualized assessment and student feedback. Participant 1 gives feedback to each student individually. Once per week, her students write extended response so she pulls five to seven students per day and they sit down to look at their writing. She pulls out strengths and

weaknesses and discusses how to make improvements. During this time, she focuses on mechanics and content.

Participant 3 explained that she goes around and assesses student work while the students are writing. She expressed that it is not best practice to say, "Here's your whole essay, go write and I will read it at the end." She assesses in steps. "I will meet with my students and we fix their intro. I will let them go to the next paragraph and we do the same thing."

Participant 5 assesses her student writing for content only. She checks for understanding of the standard or skill. When it comes to grammar or mechanics, she asks her students to take their writing to their ELA teacher so she can help them make it better. She stated, I am so lucky to have a teacher that is willing to do that. We work together a lot."

When Participant 9 was asked about assessment and feedback, she stated, "Well the beauty of RTI is that I have a small class and we meet face to face at least a couple of times a week." She walks around talking to her students while they work. She called it an open classroom.

Participant 12 has a small class as well as she teaches RTI reading. She sits down with her students in a personal conference on how well they did or what they need help with. She explained that she is going to use modeling and hurdle help so it is, "pretty much on a personal basis."

Participant 15 assesses student writing on content knowledge. He stated, "I make suggestions on their paper and then return them back to the students so they can make corrections. I feel the feedback should be something that will make their writing better for the next assignment.

Rubrics. Five of the fifteen participants recalled using rubrics to assess student writing. Participant 2 uses a simple rubric for assessment. She explained that she uses the same rubric from the beginning of the year so the students know what her expectations are when it comes to writing. She is mostly looking at content, but her rubric does address capitalization and punctuation.

Participant 6 also uses a rubric for assessment. She explained that it is more effective when she focuses her grading on certain things at a time. She stated, "It's a matter of being a process, so that's how we try to assess it. We try to break it into parts because it becomes overwhelming to the students if everything has to be perfect."

Participant 7 explained that she also uses a rubric for assessment. She gave students a rubric to make sure they have all of the items that are required for the writing assignment. Participant 7 does not grade anything that is not on the rubric. Sometimes, she just assesses the development of the writing and not grammatical errors.

Participant 12 not only assesses with individual conferences, but she also uses a rubric. She gave students a simple rubric at the beginning of the school year, and uses that rubric all year. The students are familiar with the rubric and understand that the same rubric is used for their writing questions or writing assignments.

Participant 13 indicated that she uses a rubric for assessment. She adds the specific criteria to the rubric so students are aware of what she is looking for. Participant 13 ties the feedback to the rubric. She stated, "If the rubric is dealing with three or four pieces of evidence and you only have two, you just tie the feedback back to what they are lacking in the rubric."

The participants suggested that students should be familiar with the rubrics being used to assess their writing. They explained that it is ideal to give students a rubric at the beginning of

the year and try to use the same one throughout the year. It is also important to tie the feedback

directly to the rubric so students will know their areas of strengths and weaknesses.

Benefits of Writing across the Curriculum

Four themes emerged from the participants' answers on benefits of writing across the

curriculum. These themes are better understanding, prepared for the future, practice makes

better, and making connections.

Better Understanding. Four participants acknowledged that a better understanding of

the content is a benefit of writing across the curriculum. Participant 1 suggested that when

students write about something, they think more deeply about it. So, they are going to learn

more, and they are going to retain the information better.

Participant 10 stated that he is "a big fan" of writing across the curriculum. He explained

that when students write it out, they remember the content better. He also explained that writing

is a life skill, so that should be a good enough reason to write across the content areas.

Participant 11 described the benefits of writing across the curriculum as being a great

outlet for students to be creative, and to respond to what is being taught in order to see if they

have a good understanding of it. More than likely, if they write about it, they will understand it.

According to Participant 12, "If you can respond to a question and put it in your own

words, and write about it, that shows full understanding of the subject matter." If students can

write it in their own words, they understand it.

Prepared for the Future. Two of the fifteen participants recommended writing across

the curriculum as a way to prepare students for the future. Participant 2 discussed that writing is

vital for the students' future. They will need to communicate with other people in college or in

their career. Participant 2 stated, "No matter what they decide to go do later in life, I think they have to be able to write well."

Participant 4 explained that when students are writing in other classes, they are more prepared for his class and already have a background of knowledge of what he is teaching.

Practice Makes Better. Seven participants revealed that writing across the curriculum allows students more opportunities to write which makes them better writers. Participant 3 agreed that every teacher should be implementing writing of some kind in all content areas to help students improve on their writing skills. This additional writing practice will also better prepare students for their future.

Participant 5 suggested that writing across the curriculum solidifies the learning. She explained that if they are getting to write in more than one class, they will become better writers. She stated, "I think it makes it easier for them because they are getting it from all different angles.

According to Participant 6, "The benefits I think are practice. The more they practice, the better they get at it." She indicated that it gives them more opportunities for success. For the students who love science, they can "rock it out" on a written assignment because they enjoy what they are writing about. Participant 6 stated, "The more you do something, the better you are going to get."

Participant 8 stated, "They are getting more practice, and hopefully they're getting feedback from their writing because you can't get better unless somebody tells you, hey, this is really good." She added that students need to work on improving their writing and practice is a good way to do that.

Participant 13 explained that a benefit of writing across the curriculum is that students are writing more. She suggested that if students are writing in every class, the writing process will not be as challenging for them, and they will become better at writing.

Participant 14 explained that she truly believes in the saying, "If you do it every single day, then you are going to get better at it." Participant 14 went on to say, "If they are not writing every single day…they are not getting the practice they need. Writing all day long will be what makes them better writers."

Participant 15 agreed that students who write in all of their classes are going to get better at writing. Students will get better at expressing their thoughts on paper which according to the participant, can be the most difficult part of writing.

Making Connections. Two of the fifteen participants' answers fell into the theme making connections. Participant 7 asserted that making connections are a benefit of writing across the curriculum. Writing helps students make those connections in every subject. She stated, "When you are in the real world, you are going to have to make connections."

Participant 9 suggested that students will make connections with the content through writing, and that is how they find out what they are passionate about. She explained that it is important for students, especially students with written expression disabilities, to make those connections in math, science, and social studies because they are going to have different purposes for writing.

Impact on Writing Proficiency

When the fifteen participants were asked how writing across the curriculum impacts student writing proficiency, all participants' answers contained the word better. The theme that emerged from the data is students become better writers. Participant 1 explained that writing in

the content areas is only going to improve writing proficiency. "It's only going to make it better. The more you do anything, the better you get at it."

Participant 2 declared that content teachers are helping English teachers more than they realize. When students write in social studies, science and ELA, they are acknowledging the importance of writing, and they are going to be able to do well. She stated, "It's everywhere and it's important."

Participant 3 explained that great gains will not show in one year of implementing writing across the curriculum. She explained that the huge impact will show over time when more students have been prepared. "When we get students to grade level, and we are comfortable teaching writing, we will see greater gains in writing."

Participant 4 suggested that writing in the content areas helps students to be better prepared and to understand that they have to provide evidence and that will make their writing better. "If they are doing that in every class, they will be better writers."

Participant 5 stated, "The more you write, the better you get. Even if you are a horrible writer, you get papers back, you find out what you've done wrong, and you try not to make those mistakes again."

According to participant 6, writing in the content areas allows students to "polish up the skills" they learn in English. She affirmed, the more practice they have, the better they will be.

Participant 7 declared that writing helps students make connections and those connections make them better writers. It also helps them understand that writing is important.

Participant 8 explained that writing in content classes gives students more practice and practice should make them better. She discussed the fact that students have to get feedback on

their writing before they improve. They need to make adjustments according to the feedback and hopefully they will get better.

Participant 9 suggested that with practice and good feedback, just like anything else, the more you do it, the better you get.

Participant 10 exclaimed, "Well, it should help, right?" He agreed that if teachers are monitoring their work and giving feedback, it should help quite a bit.

Participant 11 suggested that by giving them multiple opportunities in different settings, it can only help make their writing better.

According to Participant 12, if students are writing in every subject, the more comfortable they are and the better they will become. "I think it is a good movement…because it's going to help the students just be better writers."

Participant 13 stated, "The practice, It's just the practice. It will just become natural to them because they have written it so many times and it just makes sense."

Participant 14 explained that they need practice at doing it in every class. If students are having to write in all of their classes, it is going to help them become better writers.

Participant 15 stated, "Like I said, I think they will get better with practice."

All fifteen participants suggested that writing in all content area classes will give students additional writing opportunities which will make them better writers. The participants also recommended giving good feedback on student writing so they can make improvements on their writing.

There were three additional questions asked of the participants during the interviews that were not directly related to answering the research questions, but were still valuable to the research. Two of the questions were regarding possible challenges in implementing writing in the

content areas, and the other question sought out other cross-curricular assignments implemented in the participants' classrooms.

Greatest Challenge of Writing across the curriculum

The participants were asked to identify the greatest challenges they faced while implementing writing in the content areas. Through data analysis, thirteen of the participants' answers were combined into four themes. The themes are students below grade level, time, lack of motivation, and lack of confidence. Data from two of my participants did not fit into either of the four themes.

Students Below Grade Level. Five of the fifteen participants identified students below grade level as their greatest challenge in implementing writing across the curriculum. Participant 2 explained that all teachers get students whose writing is below grade level. She stated, "Their writing is not where it should be; they're not really prepared to write." Participant 2 declared that it is very difficult to get these students to understand that they can write, "that's a big challenge."

Participant 3 indicated that students without a lot of writing background and experience is what makes them non-proficient. According to Participant 3, sometimes teachers assume students know how to do everything but in all actuality, students are at all different levels in writing. She explained that it is a great challenge to bring students up to their grade level.

Participant 6 stated, "I think the greatest challenge is that the kids are not necessarily all where they need to be academically on grade level with writing." She stated that teachers and students are, "playing catch up" when it comes to writing.

Participant 12 explained that her students are some of the lowest performing students in the school, so obviously her greatest challenge when it comes to implementing writing is students below grade level due to reading and written expression disabilities.

Participant 15 also acknowledged that getting students to read and write in his science class when they have difficulties with literacy in general is a huge challenge. He stated, "There are some students who are significantly below grade level that can barely restate a question. I don't feel like I'm qualified to help these students the way I need to."

Implementing writing across the curriculum to students below grade level was a common challenge in five of the fifteen participants' answers. Teachers agreed that the difficulty lies in bringing students up to grade level while helping students on grade level become more proficient.

Time. Lack of time is a challenge for two of the fifteen participants. Participant 1 announced that it is very difficult to teach writing, and it takes a lot of time to teach it. She stated, "It's going to take them longer to write out answers than just put ABCD."

Participant 5 explained that it is difficult for her to cover approximately seventy content standards with her students, so it is extremely challenging to include writing on a daily basis along with those standards. The challenge is giving students the time they need to produce something good.

Lack of Motivation. Three out of fifteen participants identified lack of motivation as one of the greatest challenges in implementing writing in the content areas. When Participant 4 was asked to identify his greatest challenge, he stated, "Some kids just don't want to write. Maybe they can't write it down. Some kids just can't put a good sentence together." Participant 4 suggested that some kids cannot be motivated to write because they do not enjoy it.

Participant 8 agreed that her greatest challenge when implementing writing is that some students do not enjoy writing. She discussed how she has a difficult time motivating some students to write in her science class.

Participant 10 indicated that lack of student motivation is also one of his greatest challenges whenever he assigns a written assignment.

Lack of Confidence. Three of the fifteen participants identified students' lack of confidence as their greatest challenge when implementing writing in the content areas. Participant 9 suggested that her greatest challenge when implementing writing is students would rather copy something straight from the text because they are not comfortable with their own ideas, and they do not see their ideas as worthy.

Participant 11 suggested that students' lack of confidence in writing is a challenge that she often did not feel like she could overcome, or could help the students overcome. She expressed that she did not feel like she had enough training to teach those students effectively. Participant 11 discussed how she would encourage them and continue to give them opportunities to write, but there were several students who never saw their writing as good.

Participant 13 discussed her biggest challenge in teaching writing is trying to convince students that they can write. She stated, "The biggest challenge is getting them to understand it's okay to make mistakes. It's okay to get frustrated. They just want to write and never go back and look at it again."

There were two participants' data that did not fit in any of the themes listed above. Participant 7 explained that writing is just hard for students. She went on to say it is hard for them to make connections, to pull out evidence, to understand life in general. She stated, "They are still so young…I think that's a big challenge just getting them to see what's not laid out right in front of them."

Participant 14 asserted that the biggest challenge is trying to determine how to incorporate writing in content classes. She explained how difficult it would be for a science,

social studies, or math teacher to figure out how to make it about writing. She stated, "What do I have them write about? How do I incorporate that into solving a formula?"

Professional Development on Writing across the Curriculum

When the participants were asked about teacher preparation and professional development focused on writing, the only participants that agreed they had adequate training on writing across the curriculum were the ones who taught seventh or eighth-grade ELA. The remaining participants expressed that their professional development on writing across the curriculum was inadequate.

College-Ready Writer's Program. All seventh and eighth ELA participants attended several professional development sessions with the National Writing Project's (NWP) College-Ready Writer's Program (CRWP). Participant 6 described this opportunity as being a very good experience. She went on to add, "They gave us actual strategies, actual implementations we can use in the classroom…They gave us tools, they gave us units, it was definitely good.

Participant 11 explained that teachers at the middle school were very fortunate to be a part of the CRWP. Participant 11 expressed that if it had not been for that training, she would not have been able to implement writing as much as she did the last two years she was in the classroom. She went on to say, "It was a lot of training, and it was really good training." Participant 11 explained that her ELA professional learning community (PLC) was another way she was able to work with other teachers and share ideas.

Participant 14 revealed that the CRWP professional development was amazing, and it did more for the ELA teachers in the district than any other professional development she was ever involved in. She explained that this writer's program not only introduced teachers to

research-based strategies, but it also modeled for the teachers how to implement those strategies in the classroom.

Professional Development Inadequate. Eleven of the fifteen participants revealed that the professional development they have received on writing across the curriculum is inadequate if they have received any at all. Participant 1 expressed that she has not received a lot of professional development on writing specifically.

Participant 2 does not recall any training she has received as a social studies teacher. She recalls attending some ELA training on writing, but not for implementing writing in social studies.

Participant 3 agreed that teachers have to figure out their best practices on how to teach their students. She also expressed that she could use a lot more training on best strategies, best teaching, and how to come down to the students' level and teach them how to write.

Participant 4 suggested that he has prepared himself. He stated, "I don't feel like we've gotten adequate professional development on how to instruct kids how to write." He went on to say that teachers find things they think are good, and then they prepare themselves to implement them. In referring to the state, he stated, "They say to do it, but they don't provide the instructions to help you do it."

Participant 5 affirmed that she has not had any professional development on writing. She discussed how she would love to get more professional development on writing, but until then she would just continue finding and sharing resources with her colleagues.

Participant 7 explained that she could use professional development on writing across the curriculum every year because the requirements for writing on state assessments are always

changing. She would especially like for it to be centered on how to teach students with disabilities, how to teach ESL students, and how to teach gifted students.

Participant 8 stated, "I don't know if I've received as much as I need. I don't think I've received enough, but I just do my own." Participant 8 explained how she gets many of her ideas about writing from other teachers in the school.

Participant 9 stated, "I think it's poor. Period. I had the best….I've learned by doing." She explained how she looks up resources in her own time and purchases books and resources with her own money. Participant 9 revealed that she has to find things that will work well with her students and try them out. Sometimes they are good resources or ideas, sometimes they are not.

Participant 10 suggested that he has not been prepared to teach writing in his social studies class. He stated, "I know I don't have the training that could make me better. I haven't received adequate training."

Participant 12 agreed that she does not feel like she has received a lot if any training on writing across the curriculum. "We are not as prepared with how to teach children how to write and respond to things."

Participant 15 gets most of his ideas and strategies for reading and writing across the curriculum from his team teachers he meets with daily. Participant 15 does not recall having any district professional development or any state training over the last five years on implementing writing in his science class even though students are expected to respond in writing on state assessments.

Eleven of the fifteen participants indicated that they have not had enough professional development, if any, when it comes to writing across the curriculum. The participants either look

up their own resources and writing practices to implement into their instruction, or they get support and resources from their team teachers when they meet for weekly PLC's.

Cross-curricular Assignments

The analysis of the data show that writing is a common thread that binds all of these participants together. The researcher asked the question about other cross-curricular assignments to see what other commonalities these participants shared. From the data, the researcher gathered that ELA teachers often have students write about historical events, people from history, time periods, religions or philosophies, and primary and secondary source documents. Science and social studies teachers regularly implement ELA standards such as pulling evidence from the text, supporting details, primary source and secondary source documents. Science and social studies teachers collaborate to teach the jobs that work so closely together such as, archaeologists, anthropologists, historians, geologists, and paleontologists. Last, science and math work closely together when science experiments and projects require charted data.

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Analysis of Classroom Observations

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The researcher chose classroom observations as another way to obtain data from two of the research participants. According to deMarrais and Lapan (2004), observations are useful when used with studies associated with schools or classrooms. The researcher was able to get a first-hand account of the participants as they interacted with their students. During the analysis of field notes the researcher noticed many of the same themes from the participant interviews emerged from the field notes. The researcher translated this as the participants putting theory into practice.

Classroom Environment

Students entered Participant 4's eighth-grade American history classroom and got their Chromebooks out on their desks to begin work. Participant 4 informed the students that they had an assignment to start working on in google classroom. Participant 4 handed out additional resources to the students to assist them on their assignment. Participant 4 suggested that the students get into groups of two. The students were allowed to choose their partners. Choice has proven to be a favorable motivator throughout the duration of this study. Students were asked to answer extended response questions based on the documents in google classroom, and the additional resources. The documents in google classroom were: Document A: Alexander Hamilton (modified) and Document B: Letters by Federalists (modified). Students were required to answer the following question: Why did the Federalists oppose the Louisiana Purchase? Students were required to provide evidence from the document to support their claims.

Participant 2 had traditional Chinese music playing as her sixth-grade students entered the classroom. Participant 2 informed the researcher that they had been learning about ancient China for approximately one week. Her students came into the classroom, got their interactive notebooks out of the bin, and sat down to work on bell work. After a few minutes, she asked the students to return their notebooks so they could start their lesson. Participant 2 passed out a couple of documents to the students, a list of quotes and a Confucius fact sheet, and returned a partial writing assignment to the students so they could complete the assignment. They were writing a biography on Confucius. The students were encouraged to work together in analyzing their selected Confucius quotes, and organizing their data in order to begin their biography.

Writing across the Curriculum

Students were asked to write in Participant 4's eighth-grade social studies class. They were asked to respond to text-based questions, and they were asked to respond to an open-ended question at the close of the lesson.

Participant 2 implemented writing across the curriculum in her social studies class. For bell work, they were analyzing a quote from Confucius. The students were asked to write down the meaning of the quote, from their perspective, in their interactive notebooks. After this was completed, the students answered questions about Confucius's life so they could put it together in a biography. They had a fact sheet on Confucius and they had to find and highlight the answers. After all of the questions were answered, they started writing the biography.

Choice as a motivator

Participant 4 encouraged students to choose their partner at the beginning of class. The researcher interpreted that student choice contributed to the students staying on task and being focused on the work. The students interacted well with their partners, and answered the questions together which contributed to the success of the group.

Students in Participant 2's class had a choice of quotes to analyze. The students each had a list of quotes and were asked to select two from the list. Students were then encouraged to choose a person to work with while answering questions about Confucius. Participant 2 had several different pictures of Confucius available for students to pick the one they wanted to put on their biography.

Both participants used student choice as a practice for motivating students. Participant 4 encouraged students to choose and work with a partner. Participant 2 also encouraged students to

select two quotes of their choice from a list of Confucius quotes. Students in Participant 2's class were also allowed to choose a picture of Confucius for their biography.

When students are allowed to make choices in the classroom, it emphasizes the trust teachers have for their students, and the acceptance of responsibility the students have for their own learning (Erwin, 2004). The analysis of data of the classroom observations indicated that both Participant 2 and Participant 4 used choice as a motivator in their instruction. This data supported data from the participants' interviews in that choice is a recommended best practice for motivating students to write across the curriculum.

Collaborative Groups

Participant 4 encouraged his students to work collaboratively during the classroom observation. The researcher witnessed the students interacting well with their partner, and they stayed on task and worked together to answer the questions which contributed to the success of the group. Participant 2's students also worked in pairs as they analyzed the quotes of Confucius and organized information for their biography. There is no better way to improve students' writing skills than to have them share their work with their peers. Collaboration is an agreeable way for students to gather constructive responses from their classmates so they can make adjustments to their writing if necessary (Peha, 2003). The participants' interview data were supported by the classroom observation data in that both Participant 2 and Participant 4 encouraged their students to work collaboratively and it contributed to the success of their lessons and student learning.

Interest

It was apparent to the researcher that Participant 4 makes American history interesting and fun for his students. This is supported by the student responses, their focus on the work, their

eagerness to volunteer, the interaction between Participant 4 and his students, and the wealth of knowledge the students appeared to have on the Louisiana Purchase.

Students were engaged throughout the lesson in Participant 2's class. They stayed on task, interacted with their partners, and raised their hand to answer questions as Participant 2 informally assessed their content knowledge and their writing. The researcher interpreted that student engagement and on-task behavior were both products of student interest. McCarthy (2014) suggested that students are more willing to think more creatively and have a better understanding of the content when they are working on a topic of interest. The data from the observations supported that student interest is one of the participants' best practices when motivating students to write across the curriculum.

Making Connections

Participant 4 made several connections from the content material to the students and to society in 2017. One of the additional resources was an editorial. Participant 4 explained to his students what an editorial was and told them their writing assignment was their editorial. He discussed price of land in history and they compared that to what it might cost in 2017. He talked about unequal representation and what that means in the present. It appeared to the researcher that the content was meaningful, and the students were personally connected to the lesson.

Participant 2 aided her students in making a personal connection with their lesson on Confucius. She asked them to think of someone they know, or even someone in a leadership role they have respect for. She asked them to think of reasons they respect that person. She explained that some of the reasons they respect that person were some of the same reasons people in early China respected Confucius. Participant 2 also helped her students compare the list of quotes by Confucius with other things that are written down that people follow or live by. The students

were able to think of Buddhism's Four Noble Truths, and they thought of the Ten Commandments. It appeared to the researcher that the students were really engaged in the writing of the biography, and the learning of the content after the connections were made. The participants' interview data indicated that connections are benefits of writing across the curriculum. The classroom observation data also supported that connections are benefits of writing across the curriculum.

Assessment and Feedback

The students were peer reviewing each other's work throughout the lesson. Participant 4 walked around the room as students discussed and answered the questions. He would listen to conversations in the groups and give them feedback, he would prompt any students that were having difficulty answering. He would tell them when they were absolutely right, and he would help the other students make their work better by helping them find evidence to support their opinions. He informed the researcher that he would also be giving feedback to the students' written responses in google classroom from his Chromebook.

Participant 2 informally assessed the analysis of the quotes, and student writing throughout the lesson. She also checked off their interactive notebook as they worked on them. Participant 2 informed the researcher that she will use a rubric when she assesses the students completed biographies of Confucius.

Interview data identified both Chromebooks and rubrics as favored assessment tools. Classroom observation data also identified Chromebooks and rubrics as preferred methods of assessment and feedback.

Better Understanding of the Concept

Participant 4 asked higher-order questions throughout his lesson such as, "Why was Timothy Pickering disgusted with the men in charge of the government?" Students' answers to these higher-order questions demonstrated a great understanding of the content knowledge. Students had different answers and views during classroom discussion and Participant 4 welcomed the different perspectives and liked them equally. The researcher not only realized that the students knew what the Louisiana Purchase was, but they also understood the arguments surrounding it. The researcher concluded that students answering text-based questions and pulling evidence from primary historical documents contributed to a complete understanding of the content material.

Participant 2 also asked higher-order questions throughout the lesson such as, "How did Confucianism influence Chinese society and government?" Participant 2 also assisted students in making connections between people and philosophies from the past with people and religions of 2017. It was apparent to the researcher that through inquiry and analysis of Confucius's work, the students had a better understanding of Confucius and the time period in which he lived.

The data from the participants' interviews revealed that a better understanding of the concept is a benefit of writing across the curriculum. Classroom observation data also supported that writing across the curriculum promoted a better understanding of the concept or skill.

Analysis of the Focus Group

Five of the fifteen participants were asked to participate in a focus group. The focus group was the third and final piece of data collection for the qualitative research study. It consisted of five participants, Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, Participant 6, and Participant 7. The researcher asked six questions from her interview guide regarding best

motivational strategies and the impact on student's writing proficiency. The questions are as followed:

1. How do you think writing instruction is different in the content area versus teaching the components of writing?

2. In your experiences, what are the best practices for motivating students to write in the content areas?

3. Why do you believe these motivational strategies are effective?

4. In your opinion, what is the greatest challenge in implementing writing in the content areas?

5. What are your thoughts on teacher preparation and the amount of professional development you have received on writing across the curriculum?

Once the data were collected and transcribed, the participant proceeded through the data in order to perform line-by-line coding, and check for recurring themes.

How is Writing Different in the Content Area

Participants 2, 3 and 7 all agreed that in math, science, or social studies, the writing has a different focus than in ELA when the different types of writing are being taught. The focus in math, science, social studies, and even in language arts content is primarily on student knowledge of the content standards. The participants agreed that they seldom check for grammar or mechanics, they focus primarily on whether or not the students developed a deeper understanding of the concepts being taught, through the writing.

Best Practices for Motivating Students to Write

Participant 6 discussed using a reward system as a motivational strategy for implementing writing in the content areas, but student choice and teacher modeling are common

themes from the focus group data. Participant 6 described a recent reward system she used for students who were not intrinsically motivated. All of her students who made improvements on her ELA benchmark test were invited to celebrate the end of the first semester with a pizza party in her classroom. She explained that most of her students were invited, and that all of her students had pride in the improvements made. Participant 1 indicated that she has success with choice. Student writing is more detailed and more pleasing to the reader when students are encouraged to choose their topic. Teacher modeling is the strategy selected by Participant 7. She explained that she writes whenever her students write and that gives them a model as to what their writing should resemble. Participant 7 expressed that students are more comfortable with the writing when they have a model to go by which leads to confidence in the writing.

Student choice and teacher modeling are both recurring themes from the participants' interview data and the focus group data. Student choice and teacher modeling are both best practices for motivating students to write across the curriculum.

Why these Strategies are Effective.

Participant 6 expressed that students will continue to make improvements if they are rewarding for their best efforts. She explained that even if they are working for a reward, the writing will continue to get better. According to Participant 6, students are accustomed to being rewarded. Personal connections and confidence were also themes from the data. Participant 2 proclaimed that she needs to tie the writing back to students' lives. Students appreciate it more if they can connect or relate to the writing. Participant 7 suggested a level of comfort and confidence with the writing as a good indicator of an effective motivational strategy.

Greatest Challenges

Participant 7 suggested that motivating students can be the greatest challenge in implementing writing in the content areas. Participant 2, Participant 3, and Participant 6 agreed that students below grade level would be their greatest challenge in implementing writing across the curriculum. Participant 6 described how challenging it is when students lack certain skills or background knowledge that is required to write proficiently. These students are already below grade level so it is difficult for teachers to build up background knowledge and vocabulary in order to get them back to grade level, and teach them new writing skills and concepts. Both Participant 2 and Participant 3 agreed that lack of skills and a limited vocabulary are challenges for them as well.

The interview data indicated that students below grade level was one of the greatest challenges teachers faced while implementing writing across the curriculum. The focus group data supported the interview data in that students below grade level lack certain skills that is required to write proficiently which poses a challenge for both teachers and students when writing is being implemented across the curriculum.

Thoughts on Professional Development

Participant 6 affirmed the significance of the CWRP training all seventh and eighth-grade ELA teachers from the school received. The remaining focus group participants expressed that their professional development opportunities and training have been inadequate when it comes to writing in the various content areas. Participant 3 revealed that teachers have not been prepared to teach students how to write across the various content areas. She explained that this poses a huge challenge for teachers and students as students need writing practice in all of their subject areas in order to become better writers. Participant 2 also affirmed that she has not

received any helpful resources or professional development on writing across the curriculum, but expressed how she would greatly benefit from it. Participant 2 stated, "We are willing to do what they ask of us, if they would just show us what to do." Participant 6 participated in the CWRP. She described how that was some of the best professional development she has ever gotten on writing.

Benefits of Writing across the Curriculum

Participant 2 explained that a benefit of writing across the curriculum is that it affirms to the students the importance of writing. Participant 2 also suggested that writing across the curriculum gives students extra practice on writing skills. Participate 7 declared that a benefit of writing across the curriculum is that the students have to think in order to put something down on paper. She explained that when students have to really think about it, they are learning it. Participant 6 concluded that writing demonstrates a deeper understanding of what they actually know. She also agreed that if they can write about a concept or skill, they know it.

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Summary

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Throughout the qualitative study, best motivational strategies for implementing writing across the curriculum, and ways writing across the curriculum impacts students' writing proficiency were identified and discussed. The common themes identified for best motivational strategies for implementing writing are high interests, personal connections student choice, collaborative groups, and teacher modeling. The answers were unanimous for the question regarding ways writing across the curriculum impacts students' writing proficiency. This led to the single theme, students become better writers. The participants gave detailed descriptions of typical daily lessons in which motivational strategies were used to implement writing. The participants also discussed their greatest challenges in implementing writing. Chapter 5 will

discuss the qualitative study's findings, the conclusions of the findings, recommendations for future research, and the limitations of this study on motivating students to write across the curriculum.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter five is divided into five sections in order to discuss the findings of this qualitative study. The chapter begins with a summary of the study. The summary is followed by a presentation of the findings of the study, and an examination of the existing literature related to the findings. The third section explores the conclusions of the study. The fourth section of this chapter examines possible limitations to the study. The final section of chapter five suggests recommendations for future research to be conducted regarding best motivational strategies for implementing writing across the curriculum. These recommendations also include additional research on ways technology can be used to motivate students to write in a one-to-one classroom.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this grounded qualitative research study was to examine teachers' perspectives on best practices for motivating students to write across the curriculum. The data collected and analyzed from this study also offer a greater understanding of teachers' perspectives on how writing across the curriculum impacts students' writing proficiency. The qualitative study consisted of data collected from open-ended, one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with fifteen middle school teachers, classroom observations with two of the fifteen participants, and a focus group with five of the fifteen participants.

According to Sundeen (2015) writing skills alone have never been a focus with past educational reforms until the recent adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), although effective instructional strategies in writing are certainly associated with students' overall learning outcomes. Irvin et al., (2007) suggested that motivation is the first step in

increasing students' writing skills. One way to motivate students to write across the curriculum is by starting with simple writing activities, and build upon those activities to gradually improve writing (Peha, 2003).

The analysis of data from this study provides a greater understanding of teachers' perspectives on best practices for motivating students to write across the curriculum, and teachers' perspectives on how writing across the curriculum impacts students' writing proficiency.

Research Questions

The researcher conducted the grounded qualitative study to examine teachers' perspectives related to the following research questions:

1. From a teacher's perspective, what are best practices for motivating students to write across the curriculum?

2. From a teacher's perspective, how does writing across the curriculum impact students' writing proficiency?

Findings

All fifteen participants from this study work in a public, sixth through eighth middle school in rural, Middle Tennessee which employs over sixty teachers and serves approximately 900 students. Through the analysis of data collected from the participants by open-ended, one-on-one, semi-structured interviews, classroom observations with two of the fifteen participants, and a focus group with five of the fifteen participants, the questions for the qualitative research study were answered. The findings of the study are based on the triangulation from three different sources: interviews, classroom observations, and a focus group. Triangulation enhanced

the dependability of the research study because the researcher was able to collect and analyze data from multiple points of view (Ary et al., 2014).

The following is a summary of the findings related to the themes that developed from the transcripts, the field notes, and the classroom observations.

Daily Lesson Implementing Writing

The participants were asked to describe a daily lesson in which writing was implemented while teaching their content standards. The participants' daily lessons were organized into the following five themes: text-based questions, rewriting complex text in students' perspectives, TNReady writing (narratives, explanatory, and argumentative), quick writes, and vocabulary development.

Text-based Questions. Four of the fifteen participants identified using open ended, text-based questions as a way to implement writing while teaching their content standards. These lessons included introducing a standard or skill, giving students a passage to read that is related to the standard or skill, and having students look back in the passage to find evidence to support their answers to the extended response questions. Text-based questions should take students through the content in an orderly fashion so they will have to read the text, but they will also come out with a greater understanding of the content (Shanahan, 2015). When students revisit the passage and support their responses with evidence, they are able to demonstrate knowledge of the content through their writing (Neff, 2017). Written responses contribute to formulating new knowledge, developing a deeper understanding of the content, and developing higher-order thinking skills (Van Drie, Braaksma, & Van Boxtel, 2015).

Rewrite in Students' Perspectives. Two of the fifteen participants teach eighth-grade American history. Both participants agreed that many of their standards focus on complex

documents such as the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution of the United States. Both participants are adamant on the success of having students look up the meaning of unfamiliar words in the documents, and rewrite these complex texts or documents in their own perspectives to get a better understanding. Tankersley (2005), suggested that students who use higher-order thinking skills can analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and interpret text as they read it. Even as it gets to higher levels of complexity. These students can make inferences and interpretations based on the reading. According to the Michigan Department of Education (2016), "Students become better readers, thinkers, and learners in a discipline by processing their ideas through writing."

Narrative, Explanatory, and Argumentative Writing. One fifth of the participants discussed having students write a narrative, explanatory, or informative, or an argumentative piece while implementing writing strategies in their daily content instruction. They agreed that students need additional practice with each of these types of writing because they are required to write an essay on the TNReady ELA and social studies assessments. The participants also agreed that student success with these three types of writing depends on the amount of time they actually spend working on the writing and the step-by-step instruction they receive.

Akinyeye & Pluddeman (2016) described narrative writing as the kind of writing that allows the writer to express himself through the story being told. When students use narrative writing in the content areas, they demonstrate knowledge they have acquired about certain important people, events, places, and time periods.

Writing from textbooks and other informational sources is especially helpful when students are learning science and social studies content. Teachers should have students write informative essays in the content areas because this type of writing helps students analyze the

rigorous content material and then communicate it back to the reader with clarity (Fisher & Frey, 2017).

Argumentative essays examine ideas that are relevant to the content area as well. This type of writing must exhibit a clear connection between the selected topic and the evidence the writer is using to support his claim. (Baltimore County Public Schools, n.d.).

Quick Writes. One fifth of the research participants explained that many of their daily lessons require that students demonstrate knowledge of the content standards through quick writes. Quick writes can be done on any skill or topic, and they do not require a lot of time. The participants agreed that quick writes can be used as bell work activities, reviewing a standard or skill, or describing a character in a story. Bernhardt (2010) reported that writing in the content areas has been progressing in the schools for more than thirty years. During this time, teachers have found creative ways to implement writing into their content area classrooms. Quick writes are creative strategies teachers use to implement writing into their daily lessons. During class instruction, teachers can stop to allow students to write about the lesson, answer a question, or even document something they are having difficulty understanding. Alber (2010) explained that thinking cannot be avoided when students practice writing. They need to exercise their writing skills every day, across the content areas. Quick writes are informal opportunities for students to exercise their writing skills, and are favorable when additional time is not available.

Vocabulary Development. Four of the fifteen participants focus on vocabulary development during their daily writing lessons. They agreed that it is very important for students to become familiar with and learn the academic vocabulary associated with a new concept, a new skill, or even introducing vocabulary as a pre-reading or pre-writing activity. Brynildssen (2000) expressed that inadequate vocabulary will affect students' ability to

write well more than their ability to read well. While writing, a student cannot investigate a word in the context, because he is constructing that context.

Motivating Students to Write in the Content Areas

It is essential for students to write during the learning process, in all content areas, in order for teachers to assess what students can do with information once they comprehend and master it (Peha, 2003). In order for students to improve upon their ability as writers, they must be motivated and engaged in literacy-rich tasks, and in a literacy-rich environment (Irvin et al., 2007). During data analysis, five recurring themes emerged from the data regarding best practices for motivating students to write across the curriculum. These themes include: high interests, personal connection, student choice, collaborative groups, and teacher modeling.

High Interests. When asked about best motivational strategies, one third of the participants explained that students must have a high interest in the topic if they are expected to produce high quality writing. The participants stated that low interest in a topic will show through in their work because students will not put forth a lot of effort if they are writing about something that does not interest them. Participants suggested that whenever possible, considering students' interests should be taken into consideration when planning for a written assignment in the content areas. Students could write narratives about a person in history that interests them. Students could also write a persuasive essay in English language arts (ELA) about their favorite video games. When students have the opportunity to write about a topic of interest to them, they are more willing to think more creatively about the writing, and understand the content in a meaningful way (McCarthy, 2014).

Personal Connection. One fifth of the participants expressed that students need to be able to tie their writing back to something they are familiar with or in the least, can somewhat relate to. The social studies participants even suggested that when students write about something that happened in history, teachers should try to find a way to connect it with the present. Yost and Vogel (2012) reported that when students are allowed to write about their own views and feelings in different subject areas, they are both challenged and encouraged to not only complete their assignments and learn the material, but also apply what they have learned to their everyday lives. By encouraging students to make connections with their writing topics, writing format, and audience, teachers and students are creating a learning environment in which students feel empowered and responsible for their increased writing proficiency (Erwin, 2004).

Student Choice. Four of the fifteen participants discussed student choice as their best strategy for motivating students to write in the content areas. They explained that giving students a list of topics to choose from encourages students to select something they are familiar with and can relate to. Students are able to take evidence from their own life experiences to put into their writing. If they are writing about something they do not have any experiences with or do not have any interest in, their writing will not be as meaningful. Participants suggested that students are more vested in the writing if they had a choice in the topic. Patall et al. (2008) explained that when teachers allow students to have a choice in their writing, the students' need for autonomy is met which encourages them to successfully participate and complete the assignment. Choice positively influences a student's "effort, task performance, subsequent learning, and perceived competence" (p. 271). When students are allowed to make choices in the classroom, it emphasizes the trust teachers have for their students, and the acceptance of responsibility the students have for their own learning (Erwin, 2004).

Collaborative Groups. Two of the fifteen participants discussed that group work is socially appealing to middle school students so that could contribute to the success of collaborative groups. One participant explained that the students' competitive nature requires them to put forth best effort so they will have something favorable to share with their peers. Participant 15 suggested that some of his best student work comes from collaborative groups. A literacy-rich classroom environment consists of students regularly working together in small groups while reading and analyzing each other's writing/research assignments. Students will develop a stronger appreciation for the writing process through discussion and collaboration (Irvin et al., 2007).

Teacher Modeling. Participants described how teacher modeling is beneficial because it is an example of how the students are expected to complete an assignment, the students know what is expected of them, and when the teachers are writing, the students will recognize the importance of it. The participants explained that sometimes students have a hard time with writing, but once the teacher models it for them and they get started on it, they are more comfortable with it. Writing composition is a major focus in the ELA literacy block. Components of composition include: mechanics, structure, genre, and voice. Teachers must model the writing process and ensure that the students have time to write during the school day. Writing cannot be bound to ELA if students are going to be successful. Teachers will have to implement more writing skills in math, science, social studies and the arts than any other time (Fisher & Frey, 2017).

Impact on Writing Proficiency

When the fifteen participants were asked how writing across the curriculum impacts student writing proficiency, the answers were unanimous; students become better writers. All

fifteen participants agreed that the more students write, the better they will become. By giving students multiple opportunities to write, in different settings, with a different focus, their writing can only get better. Participants also suggested that students must have constructive feedback with their writing in order to become better writers. Frederick (1987) suggested that students have a feeling of pride and achievement when they have the ability to write. When students have more opportunities to write, they develop a greater understanding, and a connection between ideas, people, and a phenomenon. Graham and Perin (2007) also reported that in order for students' writing proficiency to increase, it has to remain a focus of educational reform, and school leaders and teachers must make sure that writing standards are being implemented across the content areas.

Benefits of Writing across the Curriculum

Students write to formulate meaning when they write across the curriculum. The participants' described many benefits of writing across the curriculum. These benefits were combined into the following four categories: better understanding, better prepared, practice makes better, and making connections.

Better Understanding. Four out of fifteen participants identified better understanding as a benefit of writing across the curriculum. Participant 1 discussed that when students write about something, they think more deeply about it which leads to retention. Participants 10 and 12 explained that if a student can write it in his own words, he understands it. Writing is a powerful tool for learning content material, and it can be beneficial to content instruction in three ways. Writing helps prepare students for reading assignments, it helps students reflect on and summarize main points, and writing helps students with critical thinking skills (Knipper & Duggan, 2006).

Prepared for the Future. Two out of fifteen participants agreed that writing across the curriculum prepares students for the future. Participant 2 suggested that writing across the curriculum helps to prepare students to write which is vital for them later on. They will need to communicate with other people in college or in their career. Participant 2 stated, "No matter what they decide to go do later in life, I think they have to be able to write well." Various writing skills should be implemented across the various subject areas in order to increase students' writing proficiency. Graham and Perin (2007) asserted that students with limited opportunities to write, and have difficulties with written expression, will not be prepared for college and or career. In order for young people to achieve success in society, writing well is a necessity.

Practice makes Better. Almost half of the participants, seven out of fifteen, asserted that when students practice writing in all of the content area classes, their writing is going to be better. The participants described that the students will have more opportunities to be successful, writing will not be as challenging for them, and they will get better at expressing their thoughts on paper. The Common Core literacy standards required more writing instruction to take place in the classroom than in recent years. These literacy standards were integrated into the content standards so that writing was an expectation for students in all content areas (Sundeen, 2015).

Making Connections. Two out of fifteen participants identified making connections as a benefit of writing across the curriculum. Participant 9 responded that students will make connections with the content through writing, and that is how they find out what they are passionate about. Writing provides a personal link with family members and friends when personal contact is impossible. People use writing to create worlds beyond their imagination, write stories, share important information with others, and record their life experiences. Writing

about one's feelings and emotions can be very beneficial to his well-being (Graham, Gillespie, & McKeown, 2012).

Greatest Challenges of Implementing Writing

When the participants were asked to identify their greatest challenge while implementing writing in the content area, thirteen of the participants' answers were combined into four themes. The themes are students below grade level, time, lack of motivation, and lack of confidence. Data from two of my participants did not fit into either of the four themes. Participant 7 reported that writing is just hard for students. She went on to say it is hard for them to make connections, to pull out evidence, to understand life in general. Participant 14 explained the biggest challenge is trying to determine how to incorporate writing in content classes. She explained how difficult it would be for a science, social studies, or math teacher to figure out how to make it about writing.

Students Below Grade Level. One third of the participants reported students below grade level as their greatest challenge in implementing writing across the curriculum. Participant 3 explained that many of her students come to her with a limited vocabulary and not a lot of writing experience, so when it comes to her writing assessments, they are non-proficient. According to Participant 3, sometimes teachers assume students know how to do everything but in reality, students are at different levels when it comes to writing. All three participants agreed that it is a great challenge to bring students up to their grade level. Graham and Perin (2007) discussed that in 2002 the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NEAP) assessed the writing skills of fourth, eighth, and twelfth-grade students. Their scores were put into one of four of the following levels of proficiency: below basic, basic, proficient, or advanced. The alarming

results demonstrated that approximately half of the students in each of the grade levels fell into the basic category while approximately only twenty-five percent were considered proficient which would be consistent with being on grade level. This research demonstrates that a large number of students in the classroom are below grade level and need additional intervention to help them become better writers.

Time. Two out of fifteen participants suggested that time was their greatest challenge in implementing writing. Participant 1 informed the researcher that it is very hard to teach writing, and it takes a lot of time to teach it. Participant 5 explained that teachers have so many things to teach that it is very challenging to give students the time they need to produce something good. Participant 5 stated, "We are so pressed for time; we just need more time."

According to de Oliveira (2011), middle and high school social studies teachers reported that time is among the top difficulties in implementing writing regularly in their social studies classes. Social studies standards across the grade levels require students to write informative pieces over significant contributions on historical events, time periods, or historical leaders. This type of writing takes a considerable amount of time to develop. de Oliveira reported that many teachers do not feel they have adequate time to teach students how to develop good informative writing, and meet the many demands placed on them through their state curriculum standards.

Lack of Motivation. One fifth of the participants implied that lack of student motivation is their greatest challenge. Participant 4 suggested that some students cannot be motivated to write because they do not enjoy it. Participant 8 and 10 also agreed that their greatest challenge when implementing writing is that some students do not enjoy it. Participant 8 explained that she does not understand why students dislike writing so much, but she cannot motivate some students to write in her science class. Although all three participants agreed that sometimes it is

really hard to motivate students to write about their content, it is necessary for teachers to motivate students with below grade level writing skills so that they do not continue to struggle with writing and feel inadequate compared to their peers (Irvin et al., 2007).

Lack of Confidence. One fifth of the participants identified lack of confidence as their greatest challenge in implementing writing**.** Participant 9 explained that her greatest challenge when implementing writing is students would rather copy something straight from the text because they are not comfortable with their own ideas, and they do not see their ideas as worthy. Participant 11 asserted that the greatest challenge in implementing writing would be students with a lack of confidence. She also suggested that it was a big challenge for her because she did not feel like she had enough training to teach those students effectively. Participant 13 also discussed her biggest challenge in implementing writing is trying to convince her students that have a lack of confidence that they can write. According to Irvin et al., (2007), for students with little to no confidence, being actively engaged in learning is a high risk. The ability to write well often depends on whether or not these students believe they are worthy of the time and effort the teacher puts in to improving their writing proficiency.

Conclusions of the Findings

The results of this qualitative study developed a more comprehensive understanding of the best practices for motivating students to write across the curriculum. These best practices are: high interests, personal connection, student choice, collaborative groups, and teacher modeling. The conclusions of this study also identified how writing across the curriculum impacts students writing proficiency. The participants' answers were unanimous in that students become better writers as a result of writing in the different content areas. The study also revealed the benefits of writing across the curriculum, as well as the greatest challenges teachers face while

implementing writing in the content areas. It is the researcher's hope that through the implementation of the identified best motivational practices, more teachers and students will reap the benefits of writing across the curriculum and not be hindered by the challenges.

Limitations

There were limitations in this qualitative research study. Volunteer sampling could be a limitation, because the selected participants do not represent the total population resulting in a biased sample (Best & Kahn, 2005). The population could also be a limitation. All of the participants were selected from a sixth through eighth-grade middle school which narrowed the field of potential participants. Further research might include a study involving third through fifth-grade elementary teachers, as well as ninth through twelfth-grade high school teachers.

Recommendations for Future Research

The researcher recommends additional research into best practices for motivating students to write across the curriculum in order to go beyond this study. One area of further research would be from the students' perspectives, what are best motivational practices for implementing writing in the content areas? Purcell, Buchanan, and Friedrich (2013) concurred that technology has aided in teaching writing to middle school and high school students in recent years. Martin (2008) described that having students use computers for writing may promote them to share their work with their peers, as well as express their thoughts and ideas, which will enhance their creativity in writing. However, the participants in this qualitative study did not identify technology as a best practice for motivating students to write across the curriculum. Another recommendation for further research would be to conduct a study identifying best practices for motivating students to write across the curriculum in a one-to-one school setting where all students have access to technology daily.

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Appendices

Appendix A

District and Principal Research Approval
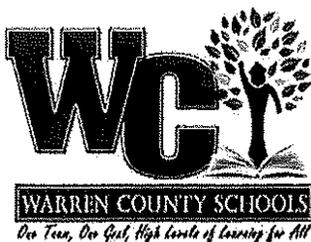
APPROVAL OF RESEARCH

The proposed research entitled: _Teachers' Perspectives on Motivating Students to Write across the curriculum._

To be performed by (Name of Researcher): _Vicki Roberts_

This proposal has been received by the Research Review Committee of Warren County Schools.

> This proposal has been **APPROVED/DISAPPROVED** (circle) as meeting required criteria

> This form should be forwarded to the **PRINCIPAL(S)/DIRECTOR OF SCHOOLS** (circle)

Research Committee
Chair Signature: _Candice Bush_ Date: _11/17/16_

> If specific school(s) or department(s) involvement in research is necessary, the approval of administrators (principals/department heads) is required. After having obtained the approval of the Research Review Committee (see above), the researcher must next obtain the approval of any administrator whose school will be directly involved. Please note, however, that preliminary approval by the Research Committee does not guarantee school administrative approval.

Principal:
I **AGREE/DISAGREE** (circle) that our school will participate in this research study. I also understand that of given my approval, this research will be conducted in accordance with Warren County School System's policies. (If multiple schools and additional signatures are needed, see next page.)

Principal's Signature: _____ Date: _11-17-16_

Department Chair's Signature: _____ Date: _____
(if needed)

> After obtaining required signatures, please return this form to the Research Committee Chair

Director of Schools:
I support the decision of the Research Review Committee and the Principal(s) of the participating school(s).

Director of Schools Signature: _____ Date: _11-17-16_

One Team, One Goal, High Levels of Learning for All

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

Title: Teachers' Perspectives on Motivating Students to Write across the Curriculum

Dear Research participant,

Please read this consent form carefully before you decide to participate in the research study. The research has be approved by Carson-Newman's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this qualitative research study is to achieve a greater understanding of ways teachers can motivate students to write across the curriculum, and teachers' perspectives on how writing across the curriculum impacts students' writing proficiency.

What you will be asked to do: You will be asked to participate in a sixteen question interview, classroom observation, and/or a focus group centered on writing practices, and best instructional strategies used to motivate students to write in the content area classroom.

Time required: 1 hour

Risks and benefits: You will be exposed to minimal to no risks throughout the duration of the research study.

Confidentiality: The interviews and the focus group will be audio-recorded, and the transcriptions, field notes, recorded interviews, and any other related materials will be secured in a locked filing cabinet and a password protected computer in which the researcher is the only one with the key/password. The name of the school will not be shared, and you will be given a pseudonym throughout the study in order to remain anonymous. Also, you will have full access to the final report before publication.

Participation: Participation in this research study will be completely voluntary, and no incentives will be offered to you for your participation.

Right to Withdraw: Participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the research at any time.

Questions about the study: If you have questions regarding this study, feel free to contact the researcher, Vicki Roberts, at any time.

Agreement: I have read the research procedures described above. I also voluntarily agree to participate in the research study. I have been given a copy of this informed consent form.

Participant: (print name) _____ **Date:**

Participant's signature: _____

Appendix C

Interview Guide

1. What grade level and subject area do you teach?

Grade level taught _____Content Area_____ Years of Experience_____

2. In your opinion, how important is writing across the curriculum, and how often do you implement writing into your instruction?

3. Describe a daily lesson in which you will or have implemented writing while teaching your specific content standards.

4. How do you think writing instruction is different in the content area?

5. In your experience, what are best practices for motivating students to write in the content areas?

6. Why do you believe these strategies are effective?

7. How do your students respond to these instructional strategies?

8. Provide an example of one of these best practices in action and describe the impact on student learning (of the content).

9. How do you think writing strategies help make the content more meaningful to students?

10. In your opinion, what is the greatest challenge in implementing writing in the content areas?

11. What are your thoughts on teacher preparation, and the amount of professional development you have received on writing across the curriculum?

12. How do you assess and give feedback on student writing?

13. What are some of the benefits of writing across the curriculum?

14. How do you think writing across the curriculum impacts students' writing proficiency?

15. How has high-stakes testing such as 2014-15 TCAP writing assessments and 15-16 TN Ready influenced teachers' perspectives on writing in the content areas?

16. Can you give me an example of other cross-curricular assignments you have or will incorporate throughout the various subject areas?