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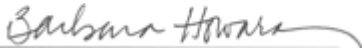
This dissertation, IMPROVING STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS IN THE AGE OF COMMON CORE: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EXPLICIT PREWRITING INSTRUCTION AND TEACHERS' VIEWS, PERCEPTIONS, AND CONCERNS REGARDING IMPLEMENTATION, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the School of Education, Concordia University Irvine.



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IMPROVING STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS IN THE AGE OF COMMON CORE:
THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EXPLICIT PREWRITING INSTRUCTION AND TEACHERS'
VIEWS, PERCEPTIONS, AND CONCERNS REGARDING IMPLEMENTATION

by

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ABSTRACT

This mixed methods research study examined the effect of explicit prewriting instruction on students' writing skills in the age of Common Core and investigated teachers' concerns about implementation of this strategy as a means of improving students' written communication skills. Explicit prewriting instruction is a derivation of explicit instruction— an instructional approach whereby teachers guide students through a series of incremental steps towards mastery of a specific learning objective. The pre- and post- writing assessment mean scores of fifty-three students in Grades 4-7 who received 6 weeks of explicit prewriting instruction during the summer of 2018 were compared using paired samples t-Test data analyses. For both the pre- and post- tests, students were tasked with writing a 5-paragraph narrative essay. Results of the t-Tests indicated a statistically significant difference in students' pre- and post- mean scores, with the implication that students' written communication skills improved by the end of the intervention. Data related to teachers' concerns about explicit prewriting implementation were collected from teachers' responses to semi-structured, one-on-one interviews, as well as from teachers' weekly journal entries. The resulting data suggested that some teachers felt ill prepared to teach writing, and that the professional development they received in explicit prewriting needed to have been slower paced. Teachers also expressed that they needed frequent and consistent modeling of the strategy in real-time classroom settings. Although 6 weeks of explicit prewriting instruction was shown to have had a positive effect on students' writing skills, it is clear that teachers require consistent, ongoing professional development, classroom modeling, and support.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this scholarly work to my wonderful parents, James and Phyllis Dozier whose relentless love, enduring faith, Godly wisdom, and continuous encouragement enabled me to attain this goal. You genuinely believed that I could achieve great things, and told me so often. I love you both so much, and pray that you are able to celebrate and rejoice with me from heaven.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Although proficiency in writing is an important life skill, especially in the era of Common Core State Standards, more than half of the nation's students continue to demonstrate a lack of grade-level mastery in this important academic domain (Sundeen, 2015). The purposes of this mixed methods research study were to explore the effectiveness of explicit prewriting instruction as an approach for improving students' writing skills in the age of Common Core and to examine teachers' views, perceptions and concerns about implementation of this strategy. In this study, emphasis is on 5-paragraph narrative essay development, as the Common Core writing standards for Grades 4-8 state that students should be able to "Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences" (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2019, p. 1). Moreover, in that teachers often approach new or unfamiliar instructional strategies differently, emphasis was also placed upon the importance of considering teachers' concerns about implementation of explicit prewriting instruction. The explicit prewriting instruction approach utilized in this study was derived from the explicit instruction model as proposed by Archer and Hughes (2011), as well as from several other proponents of explicit instruction, including Marchand, Slocum, and Martella (2004) and Rosenshine (2008). Archer and Hughes (2011) define explicit instruction as "...a structured, systematic, and effective methodology for teaching academic skills" that is "...characterized by a series of supports or scaffolds, whereby students are guided through the learning process with clear statements about the purpose and rationale for learning the new skill, clear explanations and demonstrations of the instructional target, and supported practice with feedback until independent mastery has been achieved" (p. 1). Accordingly, in explicit prewriting instruction, teachers guide students through a writing organizational sequence prior to

the actual production of a multiple-paragraph composition. The steps of this sequential process are presented in this study, as well as teachers' views, perceptions and concerns about its application in the classroom.

Chapter 1 of this dissertation begins with the background of the study, and includes an overview of cognitive constructivist theory as it relates to explicit instruction. In addition, Chapter 1 presents an overview of several theoretical perspectives relating to teachers' views, perceptions and concerns as they learn new or unfamiliar pedagogy. The problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions, theoretical framework, significance of the study, definitions of terms, limitations of the study, and delimitations of the study follow the background of the study. Chapter 1 concludes with a summary describing the organizational scheme of the dissertation.

Background of the Study

Proficiency in written expression is a formidable skill that is not only important for academic success, but also for success and advancement in business, employment and other sectors where writing is used in the course of communication (O'Farrell, 2018). However, according to National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data, as of 2017 only 28% of fourth graders, 27% of eighth graders, and 27% of twelfth graders were proficient in writing (The Nation's Report Card, 2019). This is a problem of immense proportions for matriculating students as they enter a global market that strategically seeks skilled workers who possess effective written communication skills (Neal & Conway, 2013). In addition to improving one's marketability in the employment arena, the Common Core State Standards, which have been adopted by forty-five states and the District of Columbia, emphasize writing as one of the most

essential competencies for enhancing students' academic future success in the 21st Century (Lazarín, 2016a).

Skilled writers devote a considerable amount of time to the prewriting or planning phase of composition development (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987). Prewriting strategies can include note taking, brainstorming, generating transition words, outlining, and graphic organizer development (KU Writing Center, 2019). However, when this important step is not emphasized in writing instruction, students often become frustrated with their writing tasks because they do not know how start, effectively organize their ideas, or maintain cohesion and focus (Lahl, 2008). Teachers can become frustrated as well, as their students continue to produce less than stellar writing. Explicitly teaching prewriting strategies has shown promise in a number of studies that focus on the improvement of students' writing skills (Bridge, Compton-Hall, & Cantrell, 1997; Coleman & Goldenberg, 2010; Eroglu, 2015; Gillespie & Graham, 2017). Given the specific and immediate demands of the Common Core State Standards, as well as the disappointing results from national writing assessments, it is important to explore additional research-derived approaches to writing instruction and to consider these strategies in the planning of effective lesson design and teacher professional development.

For the quantitative phase of the research study, students were administered pre- and post- writing assessments. Following the pre-assessment, students received 6 weeks of explicit prewriting instruction. The post-assessment was administered at the end of this intervention period. Pre- and post- writing assessment results were collected and subjected to data analysis in order to ascertain if there were any statistically significant differences in students' pre- and post- writing assessment mean scores. The theoretical basis for the quantitative component of the study evolved primarily from the cognitive constructivist research of Hunter (1982), Piaget

(Schunk, 2019; Peterson, 2012), and Vygotsky (Hurst, 2017). As utilized in the study, cognitive constructivism refers to a structured, step-by-step, teacher-directed approach to learning whereby students acquire new information and knowledge by making connections between the new information and previous learning experiences (Berkeley Graduate Division, 2019). In cognitive constructivism, it is the teachers' role to help students make these connections while explicitly teaching academic content.

For the qualitative phase of the study, teachers' views, perceptions and concerns about the implementation of explicit prewriting instruction were examined. Teachers who participated in the study received professional development in explicit prewriting strategies, taught the strategies for 6 weeks, recorded their experiences in journals, and participated in individual interviews at the end of the intervention period. Qualitative research methodology was employed in the collection, coding and analysis of data that was acquired from teachers' journals, as well as from teachers' responses to open-ended interview questions. The theoretical perspectives that provided a context for this component of the study were derived from the Concerns Based Adoption Model or CBAM (Hall & Hord, 2015), Senge's (2012) mental models principles, affective domain theory (Borich, 2007), and Maslow's (1970) self-actualization ideology. It was from these and other related theoretical platforms that teachers' concerns about learning and implementing new or unfamiliar pedagogy, specifically that of explicit prewriting instruction were explored.

Statement of the Problem

Written communication skills are of paramount importance in the 21st Century. Effective writing skills are necessary for academic success, as well as for prowess in an increasingly competitive labor market (Nowacek, 2005). Yet, 2017 California Assessment of

Student Progress and Performance results in English language arts and literacy demonstrated a disparity between students' writing proficiency scores and grade level expectations as articulated by the California Common Core Standards (CAASPP, 2018). These assessment results indicate that only 48.56% of California's students in Grades 3-12 were proficient in ELA (2018). The four embedded subsets for the ELA component of CAASPP are reading, writing, listening and research. Consistent with grade level expectations for the CCSS, each of these subsets requires that students, to a great extent, demonstrate their knowledge and skills through written expression (Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, 2018). The state of California is not unique in terms of students' writing performance. As previously noted, NAEP data indicate that as of 2016, only 27% of eighth and twelfth graders who attend the nation's public schools were proficient in writing (The Nation's Report Card, 2019).

Students lacking the ability to communicate effectively in writing can face several distinct disadvantages (Goldstein, 2017). First, they may experience difficulty navigating the CCSS, as interdisciplinary writing assignments are integrated into every subject area, including physical education and the arts (Lazarín, 2016a). Second, high school students who write poorly may experience difficulty managing or even passing subjects in which writing is emphasized, such as in history, the social sciences, or English (Bunch, Kibler, & Pimental, 2012). Third, when students become discouraged because the work is too challenging, this may place them at greater risk for dropping out of school (Crumpler, 2014). Fourth, at this present juncture in society, there is an increasingly high demand for employees who communicate well in writing (Moore, 2018; Lazarín, 2016b). Finally, not possessing adequate writing skills may give students less access to the more selective colleges, as well as render them less competitive in a highly industrialized, technology-driven labor market (Coplin, 2003).

Historically speaking, despite the obvious need for improvements in this academic domain, writing instruction was not assigned a prominent place in curricular reform until the publication of several documents describing the insufficiency of writing skills development in the nation's schools. Some of the most prominent of these publications have been *A Nation at Risk*, (1983), which deemed pervasive academic underachievement to be a crisis of national concern, the *National Commission on Writing* report, that described the inadequacy of writing instruction in America's schools (Magrath, et al, 2003), the Partnership for 21st Century Skills document that lists the skills individuals will need be competitive in the job sector (California Department of Education, 2013), and the Common Core State Standards initiative (2019), which outlines the writing skills required for academic achievement and success in the 21st Century. In addition to these factors, a report by the National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges determined that in the nation's public schools, writing is not taught with the same emphasis or rigor as mathematics, science or reading, nor is it assigned a comparable amount of instructional time during the regular school day (The College Board, 2003). In fact, in its report, the Commission refers to writing instruction as "The Neglected R" (The College Board, 2003, p. 9).

Subsequently, from the 1970's up to the present, several studies have identified a common denominator with regard to student academic achievement or lack thereof. That common denominator is teacher effectiveness (Goldhaber, Quince, & Theobald, 2019; Hattie, 2012; Marzano, 2003; Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). In fact, several studies have concluded that effective teachers have a greater impact upon students' academic achievement than any other facet of their educational experience (Oppen, 2019; Tucker & Stronge, 2005; Harvard University Center for Educational Policy, 2019; Engberg, 2018; Goe & Stickler, 2008;

Harris & Sass, 2007). Accordingly, Wong and Wong (2009) assert that “The effective teacher, even in an ineffective school, produces improved student learning and increased student achievement” (p. 25). Since educational research has drawn such a significant correlation between student achievement and teacher effectiveness, it is important that teachers who instruct students in writing be trained in pedagogy that enables them to be effective. Therefore, this research study not only explored explicit prewriting instruction as a means of improving students’ written communication skills, but also teachers’ views, perceptions, and concerns, with respect to learning about and effectively implementing this approach.

Purpose of the Study

The first purpose of this mixed methods research study was to examine the effect of explicit prewriting instruction on students’ written communication skills in the age of Common Core. Results from a comparative analysis of students’ pre- and post- writing assessment mean scores provided evidence as to whether 6 weeks of explicit prewriting instruction impacted students’ written communication skills. A second purpose of the study was to examine views, perceptions, and concerns held by teachers regarding implementation of explicit prewriting instruction during the summer of 2018. Teachers’ responses to interview questions and their journal notes were analyzed to determine their impressions of this strategy as a means of improving student writing. The mixed methods research design utilized in this study enabled a more thorough analysis of explicit prewriting instruction as a writing intervention in Grades 4-7, and also provided a more detailed perspective of teachers’ views and concerns as they were being introduced to new instructional approach.

Significance of the Study

In that writing is integral to all components of the California Common Core Curriculum Standards (Dalporto, 2013) it is necessary that students receive effective writing instruction at the primary, intermediate, and secondary levels (California Department of Education, 2015). This research study is significant in that it attempted to ascertain the effectiveness of a particular instructional approach – that of explicit prewriting instruction. This study is also significant in terms of identifying elementary school teachers’ perceptions, views and concerns about explicit prewriting instruction in order to plan more focused and effective professional development and training for teaching professionals. Moreover, in that there is limited amount of experimental research on effective writing practices (Graham & Perin, 2007), this study serves to augment the limited body of inquiry, experimentation, and analysis in effective writing pedagogy. The ultimate objective of the study is to provide teachers with more effective tools for improving students’ writing skills.

Definition of Terms

Accommodation: Accommodation is a term used by Jean Piaget to describe a learning process whereby individuals continuously alter their mental structures to bring them into alignment with the reality of the environment of which they are a part (Schunk, 2000).

Anticipatory Set: Drawn from the tenets of Piaget’s cognitive constructivism and later reconstructed by Madeline Hunter, the anticipatory set is an instructional strategy that enables students to make experiential connections with a targeted learning objective (Hunter, 1982). During the anticipatory set segment of a lesson, the teacher asks questions and builds knowledge about the content to be learned so that students have a point of reference as they attempt to master new material (Borich, 2007). Accordingly, constructivist teaching strategies reflect an

interactive teacher-student process that draws upon students' backgrounds, experiences, and interests in a learning environment where students are encouraged to make connections to new learning from experiential points of reference (Borich, 2007).

Assessment: In the field of education, assessment is "...the process of documenting, usually in measurable terms, knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs" (Academic Room, 2019, para. 1). Assessment can focus on the individual learner, the learning community (class, workshop, or other organized group of learners), the institution, or the educational system as a whole. According to Ainsworth, Brigg, Wiggs, Besser and Almeida (2012), the central purpose of educational assessment is "... to correctly determine student understanding of the standards in focus and then use those assessment results to inform, modify, adjust, enrich, and differentiate instruction to meet the learning needs of all students" (p. 5). With respect to writing assessments, the two main types of assessments used in Hunter's lesson design model are formal and informal assessments (Wolfe, 2015).

Formal assessments not only measure the degree to which students have mastered a specific set of pre-determined learning objectives, but they also compare students' test results with those of other students on a district, state, or national level (Williams, 2017). Examples of formal assessments include standardized state exams, end-of-chapter tests, content-based midterm or final exams, final papers, and other test instruments that indicate the level of mastery at the end of an instructional period. Criteria for mastery on formal assessments are pre-determined by the rubrics utilized by the exam-issuing entity (Williams, 2017).

Informal assessments are conducted by a teacher throughout the learning cycle, and are not used to compare students to other groups (Borich, 2007). Rather, informal assessments provide a set of blueprints of student progress, from which a teacher can modify or plan

instruction to meet students' academic needs. Examples of informal assessments include students' responses to teacher queries, work samples, and observed pupil progress during instruction (Borich, 2007). In this study, informal writing assessments were used to compare the progress students made following six weeks of explicit prewriting instruction.

Assimilation: Assimilation is a term used by Piaget to describe a process in which individuals acquire new knowledge by experiencing events in their environments, converting those experiences into mental images, and using them to make comprehensible connections (Block, 1982).

Body of Multiple Paragraph Composition: Fawcett (2004) describes the body of an essay or composition as being comprised of "...one, two, three, or more paragraphs, each one making a different point about the main idea" (p. 170). The body supports the topic sentence and thesis through the use of details, examples, ideas and concepts (Fawcett, 2004). In this research study, students were guided through the process of developing supportive paragraphs, which in turn led to the creation of a cohesive body of information.

Brainstorming: Brainstorming is a technique used by writers to generate ideas about a single topic (Purdue University, 2019a). The goal of brainstorming prior to writing a composition is to "...pour your thoughts onto paper without worrying about whether they make sense or how they fit together" (Fleming, 2019). Brainstorming involves listing whichever ideas come to mind about a specific topic. For example, if students were asked to think of all of the ways to care for a puppy, they would simply list each idea that came to mind, such as bath, feed, shots, potty-train, etc. Brainstorming can become an effective motivational tool in the hands of reluctant writers who find producing even a first sentence to be painfully difficult.

California Common Core State Standards: The California Common Core State Standards document is a compendium of statements about what students in K-12 should know and be able to do in each academic content area (California Department of Education, 2015). These standards are consistent throughout the state of California and are designed to ensure that students will be college and career ready upon matriculation from high school.

California English Language Development Test: Previous to 2017, the California English Language Development Test or CELDT was an assessment administered to English learners in Grades K-12 to determine their levels of English language proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking (California Department of Education, 2017). By law, students whose parents have indicated on what is called a *Home Language Survey*, that more than one language is spoken in the home must be administered the CELDT assessment. The results of this assessment determine the level of English language development instruction that will be necessary to ensure that students are English language proficient. As of 2018, this test was renamed English Language Proficiency Assessments or ELPAC (California Department of Education, 2018).

Checking for Understanding: Checking for understanding is an instructional strategy used throughout lesson implementation to determine the degree to which students are grasping the targeted learning (Ybarra, 2014). Some methods teachers can use to check for understanding include student responses on personal whiteboards, sharing information with table partners, choral response, examining students' written work, individual questioning, and computer-generated responses to questions (Fisher & Frey, 2011).

Closure: Closure is an important step in the implementation of Madeline Hunter's lesson design. It is during this instructional phase that a teacher revisits the lesson objectives and re-

articulates what was previously taught (Finley, 2015). During closure, students are asked pertinent questions in a variety of ways about a lesson's objectives in order to determine their degree of mastery. Student responses become data teachers can use to plan more successful lessons if mastery does not occur.

Cognitive Constructivism: Cognitive constructivism is a theoretical platform that has been influenced by learning theorists such as Piaget (Schunk, 2000), Vygotsky (Beliavsky, 2006), Hunter (Rea & Mercuri, 2006), and others. Cognitive constructivism is based on the idea that students are able to assign meaning to new information when teachers activate students' prior knowledge and experiences (Hein, 1991). In cognitive constructivism, teachers disseminate academic content and build knowledge through strategies such as modeling, hands-on learning, student-to-student discussions, technology-based education, and the sharing of realia (Abdal-Haqq, 1998).

English Language Development (ELD): In the context of K-12 education, English Language Development or ELD is an instructional approach that utilizes the principles of language acquisition theory and specialized instructional practices to improve the literacy of students whose home language is other than English (California Department of Education, 2018). Saunders, Goldenberg, and Marcelletti (2013) explain that "ELD instruction is designed specifically to advance English learners' knowledge and use of English in increasingly sophisticated ways. In the context of the larger effort to help English learners succeed in school, ELD instruction is designed to help them learn and acquire English to a level of proficiency (e.g., advanced) that maximizes their capacity to engage successfully in academics studies taught in English" (para. 6).

English Language Proficiency Assessments (ELPAC): The English Language Proficiency Assessments or ELPAC is a test instrument used in the state of California to measure the language proficiency of students in kindergarten through twelfth grade (California Department of Education, 2018). ELPAC replaced the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) in 2018 and is designed to be more closely aligned with the Common Core State Standards (2018). English learners are tested two times annually in the areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Students receive what is called a performance level descriptor for each of these categories. There are 4 levels. The levels are

Level 1 – Well-developed language skills in a category,

Level 2 – Moderately developed language skills in a category,

Level 3 – Somewhat developed language skills in a category, and

Level 4 – Minimally developed language skills in a category.

English Only Students (EOs): In the context of this research study the term, English Only Students or EOs refers to students for whom English is the primary language. In addition, this term distinguishes native English-speaking students from those who are learning English, and from students who originate from homes where English is not the primary language (Hill, 2012).

English Learners (Els): A publication entitled, *The Nation's Report Card: Writing 2011* describes English learners or Els as students who have not yet acquired grade-level-appropriate English language skills and knowledge in written expression, reading, writing and listening (IES: National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). In the state of California, the designation, English learners or Els refers to K-12 pupils whose primary language is other than English and who require additional academic support through specialized English language development instruction (California Department of Education, 2014).

Explicit Instruction: Explicit instruction, also sometimes referred to as explicit direct instruction, is a term denoting a process by which teachers use the approach of structured scaffolding to deliver instruction (Education Services Australia, 2016). According to Gersten et al. (2007), explicit instruction has been demonstrated through applied research, to be an effective strategy for advancing student achievement, especially with respect to English learners and other underrepresented student groups. In this research study, teacher participants used the principles of explicit instruction to teach students prewriting strategies and essay development.

Feedback: (Wiggins, 2012). Hattie and Timperley (2007) describe teacher feedback as one of the most powerful tools educators have at their disposal for improving students' learning outcomes. Feedback is the information communicated to students about the progress they are making towards attainment of academic goals. Teachers can provide feedback to students through cues, prompts, or the use of strategic questioning strategies.

Freewriting: A concept largely attributed to the research of Elbow (1998), freewriting is a type of writing warm-up exercise that sets the stage for a future writing task. In freewriting, individuals take 3-5 minutes to write down whatever comes to mind in an effort to prepare themselves for a more demanding and specific writing assignment (The Writing Center, 2019a). According to Elbow (1998), freewriting unshackles students from the conventions of English grammar, punctuation, mechanics, spelling, structure, organization, or theme, thus enabling them to exercise their thinking skills in preparation for more formal writing. Elbow further maintains that such an endeavor reduces anxiety and helps students produce more focused writing.

Intervention: With respect to education, an intervention is a program, practice, process, or approach designed to strategically address the needs of a student who is not making adequate academic progress (Lee, 2017). Interventions are generally specific to academic domains such

as reading or mathematics, but can include other disciplines as well (Lee, 2017). Some examples of broadly implemented reading interventions include fluency-development programs such as Read Naturally (Morgan, McLaughlin, Webe & Bolich, 2016), reading comprehension programs such as Reading Recovery (Lipp & Helfrich, 2016), and computer-generated reading fluency programs such as Accelerated Reader (Siddiqui Gorard, & See, 2016).

Paragraph: “A paragraph is a series of sentences that are organized and coherent, and are all related to a single topic....paragraphs show a reader where the subdivisions of an essay begin and end, and thus help the reader see the organization of the essay and grasp its main points” (Indiana University Bloomington, 2019). A paragraph can consist of as few as four sentences to as many as ten or twelve (The Writing Center, 2019b). For the purposes of this research study, standard paragraph length for fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh grade pupils was four to five sentences.

Prewriting: Prewriting refers to the planning phase of the writing process (Kelly, 2018). Prewriting includes a series of steps leading to completion of a finished written product (2018). These steps include identification of a purpose and an audience, freewriting, brainstorming, and outlining or graphic organizer development. The objective of prewriting activities is to provide a roadmap for the development of an organized, coherent multiple-paragraph composition.

Process Writing: This term is interchangeable with process writing, and is described in the following sections under the heading, *Writing Process*.

Thesis Statement: With respect to multiple-paragraph compositions, “A thesis statement is a sentence that states the topic and purpose of your paper. A good thesis statement will direct the structure of your essay and will allow your reader to understand the ideas you will discuss within your paper” (Ashford University, 2019, para. 2).

Whereas a topic sentence is the main idea within a single paragraph, the thesis statement is a statement of the overarching theme in a multiple-paragraph essay. Usually appearing in the first or last sentence of the introductory paragraph, the thesis statement specifies what the writer will focus upon in the essay. Each supporting paragraph should contain a message or idea that has evolved from the thesis statement (Ashford University, 2019).

Topic Sentence: The topic sentence is statement of the major thematic component of a paragraph or multiple-paragraph composition (Nordquist, 2018). Topic sentences are important because they are derived from the main idea inherent in the thesis statement and serve as cohesive elements that direct and guide the writing product. According to the Purdue University Online Writing Lab (2019b) also called the Purdue OWL, each paragraph within the body of an essay, report, or other type of written composition should have a topic sentence that introduces the contents of the paragraph. In addition, “A paragraph’s topic sentence must be general enough to express the paragraph’s overall subject. But it should be specific enough that the reader can understand the paragraph’s main subject and point” (Purdue University, 2019b, para. 2). Topic sentences serve several specific purposes. A topic sentence “...substantiates or supports an essay’s thesis statement; it unifies the content of a paragraph and directs the order of the sentences; and it advises the reader of the subject to be discussed and how the paragraph will discuss it. Readers generally look to the first few sentences in a paragraph to determine the subject and perspective of the paragraph” (Indiana University Bloomington, 2019, para. 3).

Writing Across the Curriculum: Also referred to as interdisciplinary writing, writing across the curriculum denotes an instructional practice in which students are challenged to write in every discipline, including science, mathematics, the social sciences, English language arts, history, and other subjects (National Writing Project & Nagin, 2003). With the advent of

California Common Core State Standards, writing across the curriculum now occupies a prominent place in every subject area in kindergarten through twelfth grades (California Department of Education, 2015). Students are expected to be able to write organized, coherent summaries, produce essay-type responses to texts or other forms of media, and create technical reports.

Writing Process: The writing process or process writing are interchangeable terms used to describe a set of steps undertaken by writers that lead them to the completion of a finished writing product (Lenski & Verbruggen, 2010; Parady, 2019). Many of the fundamental elements of process writing emerged from the theories and pedagogy of Peter Elbow, Professor of English Emeritus at the University of Massachusetts (University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2019). Elbow's process writing model presents several phases of writing development (Elbow, 1998). The first phase is prewriting, consisting of freewriting, brainstorming, goal setting, planning, and organization. The second phase of the writing process involves using information that was organized during the planning phase to produce a rough draft of the composition. Revision and editing of the draft are the final steps in the Elbow model. The purposes of these latter stages are correction or refinement of standard writing conventions, organization, and coherence.

Theoretical Framework

Cognitive Constructivist Theory

The quantitative component of this explanatory mixed methods research study was grounded by cognitive constructivist learning theory as it relates to explicit prewriting instruction. There are divergent characterizations, definitions, and interpretations of constructivism. However, the universal train of thought about constructivism is that learners construct meaning in an interactive, graduated, step-by-step manner, continuously extracting

meaning from elements in their environments and building upon this newly acquired information (The University of Sydney, 2018). Cognitive constructivism, as applied in the context of this research study is founded upon the principles of Piaget's theory of cognitive development (Teachnology, 2018), Vygotsky's zone of proximal development theory (Shabani, Khatib, & Ebadi, 2010), and Hunter's instructional design model (Wolfe, 2015). Reference is also made to explicit instruction evolving from the research of Hollingsworth and Ybarra (2018). Each of these theories has elements of cognitive constructivism to varying degrees and represents a compendium of perspectives that comprised the basis of this research study.

In general, behaviorists assert that improved learning emanates from the passive absorption of information through targeted behavioral modification tasks and interventions. Cognitive constructivists on the other hand, maintain that improved learning outcomes are the result of students being able to continually make connections with newly presented information and past learning experiences (Berkeley Graduate Division, 2019). This suggests that in cognitive constructivism, students actively construct and reconstruct knowledge to accommodate and assign relevance to newly presented concepts. Cognitive constructivists hypothesize that learning is elicited when teachers make connections between the targeted learning and students' background knowledge and experience, also called schemas (University of California Berkeley, 2017). As these connections are made, teachers gradually lead students in a structured, stepwise progression in order for students to more successfully process, acquire and apply new academic content (2017). Throughout this process, teachers monitor the degree to which students are mastering the concepts and adjust their instructional strategies as appropriate.

Piaget

Piaget, who is considered to be one of the most prominent authors of constructivism, postulated that children's interactions with their environments, as well as children's maturity are major determinants in their ability to construct and reconstruct knowledge (McLeod, 2018a). Piaget embraced a concept he called the principle of equilibrium (Simatwa, 2010). He maintained that in a learning environment, individuals use their intellectual faculties and affective sensibilities to relate and adapt to new information. As they are presented with new academic content, adjustments are made in their perception and thinking to accommodate the new information. Piaget called these cognitively-driven processes assimilation and accommodation (Mooney, 2013). The teacher's role in this process is to help students build upon their existing schemas, so that they are able to cognitively absorb unfamiliar subject matter.

Zone of Proximal Development

Vygotsky used the term, *zone of proximal development* or *ZPD* to describe the space that exists between what an individual is capable of learning on his or her own, and what that person can learn only with guidance from a teacher (Blake & Pope, 2008). That teacher can be another student, parent, sibling, mentor, or any other individual from whom knowledge can be received. When teachers introduce new academic content by building upon students' existing knowledge and experiences, they are applying ZPD theory. In contemporary educational vernacular, ZPD is synonymous with scaffolding (Northern Illinois University Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center, n.d.). According to Vygotsky's ZPD theory, students are more capable of learning new information when connections are made to what they already know and have experienced (van De Pol, Volman, Oort, & Beishuizen, 2015). In this research study, scaffolding was utilized in each step of the explicit prewriting instructional sequence.

Explicit Instruction

Although there are many variations and interpretation of the explicit instruction model, in general, explicit instruction refers to a teacher-guided, systematic approach to instructional delivery that draws heavily from constructivist research (Hollingsworth & Ybarra, 2018). In the context of this research study, explicit instruction consisted of building upon students' background knowledge and experiences, teachers' input of content, modeling, feedback, guided practice with high student engagement, independent practice, closure, and assessment. Hollingsworth and Ybarra (2018) proposed that student mastery of information is enhanced when instructors help students connect new information to their experiential and cultural schemas, adjust their cognitive backgrounds to accommodate new information, and constantly interpret and absorb targeted learning from the perspective of previously learned material (Berkeley Graduate Division, 2019). While some explicit instruction models are highly structured, teacher-directed, and inflexible with respect to variance from scripted lessons, this was not the model employed or advocated in this research study.

One proponent of explicit instruction is Hattie, who stresses the importance of continuous teacher feedback and active student interactions throughout instructional delivery (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). In addition, Hattie (2007) posits that the explicit teaching of skills, student note taking, and concept mapping have positive impacts upon student learning and student mastery of content knowledge and concepts. Archer and Hughes (2011) refer to these strategies as explicit direct instruction or simply explicit instruction. Their assessment that feedback and student engagement are essential elements of teaching and learning mirrors that of Hattie (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Moreover, Archer and Hughes (2011) have adopted the aspects of constructivist theory that target accessing, building, and developing students' background

knowledge and experiences. This latter instructional strategy, also referred to as the anticipatory set or activation of prior knowledge is an important determinant in ensuring that diverse learners have basic, foundational points of reference with respect to the academic content to be presented (Ainsworth, 2012).

During the building of background knowledge, also called the anticipatory set, Hollingsworth and Ybarra (2018) suggest that some type of graphic organizer be implemented in order to help learners visualize the lesson's objectives and criteria for mastery. In addition, they advocate teacher modeling, active student engagement, guided practice, independent practice, and closure. Marzano (2003) also stresses the importance of continuous teacher feedback and guided practice with high student engagement as a means of improving student academic achievement.

Explicit instruction as proposed by Hollingsworth and Ybarra (2018) reflects Piaget's premise that children use their existing schemas to interact with, interpret, and make decisions about the world around them (McLeod, 2018a). Two of Piaget's key ideas with respect to how children learn are related to the complementary phenomena of assimilation and accommodation. Although articulated differently by Piaget, Hollingsworth and Ybarra (2018) embraced the idea that through the codependent processes of assimilation and accommodation, learners infuse information from the environment into their existing schemas and make room for the acquisition of new information. Explicit instruction and direct instruction are not synonymous terms (Ybarra, 2014). Explicit instruction outlines a series of steps teachers follow in the conveyance of information, but is punctuated by engagement of students in peer-to-peer interactions, class discussions, differentiation of instruction, hands-on experiences, and other types of learning activities. On the other hand, direct instruction is highly structured, scripted, and inflexible with

respect to modification of, or variance from the scripted lesson (Ybarra, 2014). This instructional approach that was employed in this research study is more closely aligned with explicit instruction.

Hunter Instructional Design Model

Hunter's constructivist-oriented instructional design model consists of several steps in the instructional process (Gibboney, 1985). At the beginning of a lesson, students are presented with the lesson's objective and purpose. This is followed by the teacher's input of information, modeling, and guided practice with frequent checks for understanding. Students are then released to work independently on an assignment in order to demonstrate mastery. Upon completion of the independent assignment, the teacher introduces closure by revisiting information and concepts previously presented. This is followed by formal or informal assessment to ascertain the degree to which students have achieved the targeted learning objective (Gibboney, 1985). In this research study, teachers employed the Hunter's model to provide explicit prewriting instruction.

Concerns-Oriented Educational Change Theories

The qualitative component of this explanatory mixed methods research study is grounded by theories which maintain that individuals learn and perform more optimally and embrace change more readily when their views, perceptions and concerns are first taken into consideration and addressed. To address the research question that sought to determine how teachers' views, perceptions and concerns evolved over the course of the prewriting intervention, four concerns-oriented educational models were referenced. They are the Concerns-Based Adoption Model or CBAM (Hall & Hord, 2015), the affective domain postulate as it pertains to motivation and learning (Kirk, 2019), Maslow's, self-actualization theory describing how individuals recognize their full potential (Maslow, 1979), and Senge's mental models theory

which offers suggestions for facilitating sustainable educational change (Senge et al., 2012). The aforementioned theoretical references provide rationales for why change is sometimes difficult for individuals to embrace, especially teachers who are presented with having to learn a new instructional practice, process or curriculum. These theories are further elucidated in following sections of this dissertation.

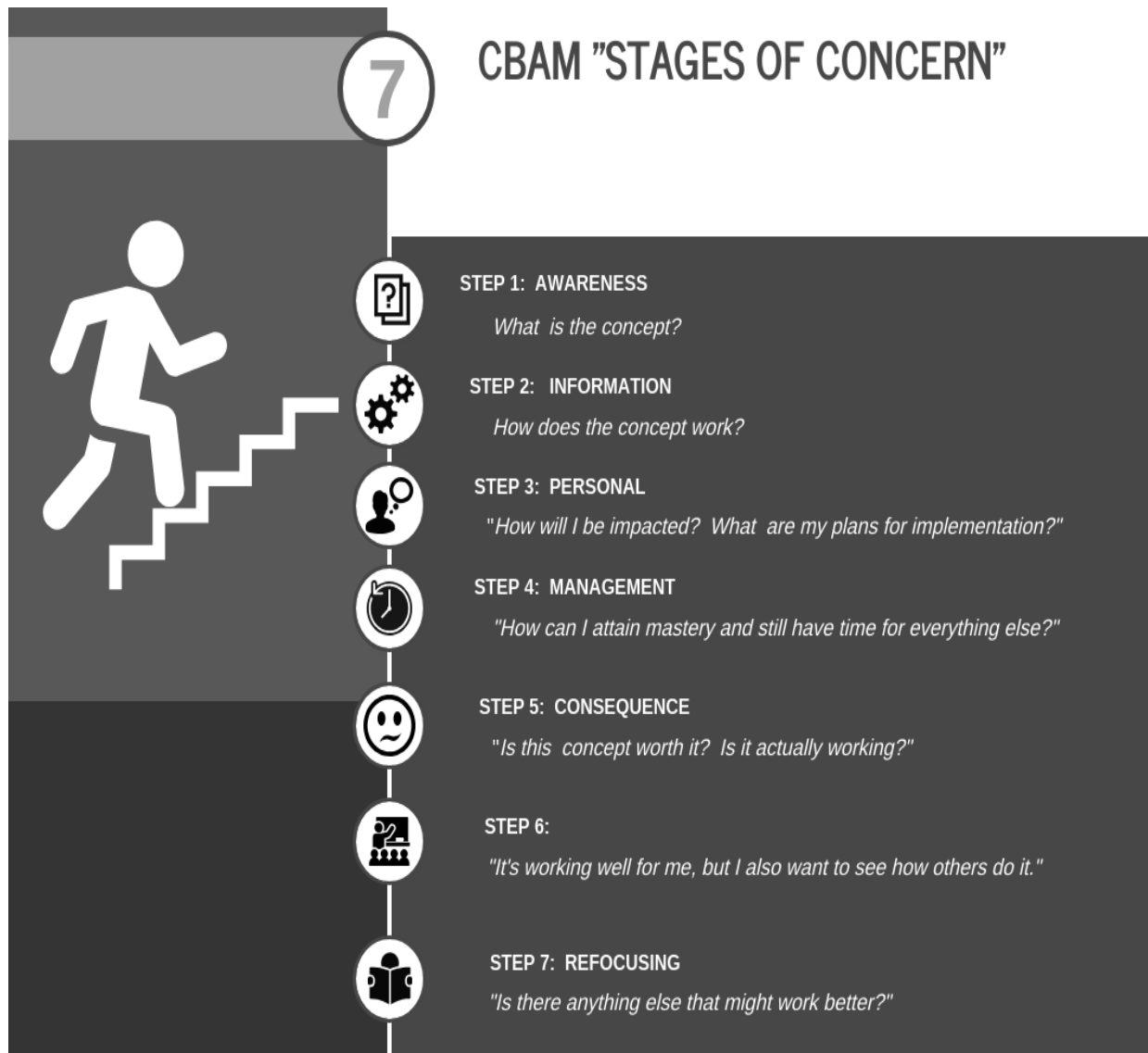
Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) Stages of Concern

In the field of education, the Concerns-Based Adoption Model, also referred to as CBAM, is a process in which change agents represented by state legislatures, school districts, site administrators or other entities consider the potential effect a reform might have on the individuals expected to adopt the reform, and then take steps to address, accommodate, support, and resolve any concerns those individuals have so that the initiative can be successfully implemented (Hall & Hord, 2015). Descriptors that are synonymous with the term, *concern*, include emotional duress, anxiety, worry, fear, nervous or emotional arousal, unease, disquiet, apprehension, and trepidation (Oxford University Press, 2018). According to Fuller (1969), teachers who are tasked with learning about and being expected to implement a change are often wary of the change, especially with respect to how it will affect them and their students. This can lead to manifestation of a range of concerns and emotions, as well as outright refusal to engage in the process involved in instituting a reform (Fuller, 1969).

Proponents of CBAM make seven key assumptions (Hall & Hord, 2015). First, for a reform to be effective and sustainable, the change agent must take time to understand and empathize with teachers' points of view and concerns. Second, change agents must recognize that change is a process that may proceed slowly over time. Thus, it is not a one-time event. The third assumption is that as a change process proceeds, change agents can anticipate with some

degree of accuracy, issues and problems that may arise along the way and address them as necessary. Fourth, innovations can be represented by tangible assets such as curricula, textbooks or even a change in environments. Innovation can also include virtual learning, contemporaneous pedagogy, diverse procedures, or new processes. Fifth, innovation and implementation are two entirely different mechanisms. Whereas innovation is an idea that has yet to be birthed, implementation is the actual birthing of the innovation. Each of these concepts is constrained by antecedents that must be first put into place. Sixth, antecedents of innovation should reflect strategic planning that includes identifying steps that must be taken to enhance successful implementation (Hall & Hord, 2015). Antecedents of innovation also include taking teachers' concerns and perspectives into consideration and ensuring that teachers receive timely and continuous support at every juncture in the implementation process. Seventh, change agents must recognize that for meaningful change to occur, individuals also have to change. Thus, consideration and attention must be given to those individuals who are inclined to be non-participants. Without full participation of its implementers, innovations will not lead to the desired outcomes – the most relevant being that of student achievement. Finally, administrators are not the only individuals who can assume the role of change agent. In fact, Fullan (2010) proposes that educational reform is more sustainable when teachers, parents and other stakeholders become co-facilitators of change. Fullan (2010) calls this process *collective capacity* (p. 37, 45), and describes it as "...working collaboratively on (1) exactly what is it we want all students to learn, (2) how we will know when each student has acquired the essential knowledge and skills, and (3) what happens in our schools when a student does not learn" (p. 55).

A previously mentioned, CBAM attempts to address teachers' concerns before an initiative that might affect their lives or professions is launched. In this way, trainers can plan professional development that more closely aligns with the needs of participants. One of the analytical tools that can be used for this purpose is the CBAM Stages of Concern process (AIR, 2018). The elements of process can include administration of a teacher survey, formal or informal interviews, and open-ended commentary about specific topics. Data collected from these assessments provide information to change agents about how to proceed with professional development and subsequent implementation of a new strategy, program, curriculum or other innovation. In this research study, adaptation of two components of CBAM Stages of Concern analytical tools were employed in order to gain an understanding of teachers' concerns with respect to learning about and implementing explicit prewriting instruction. Specifically, teachers who participated in the study responded to interview questions that focused on their previous knowledge and experience with writing instruction, as well as questions which related to teachers' concerns before, during, and after the 6-week writing intervention. In addition to these interviews, teachers maintained daily journals in which they wrote about their experiences as well as those of their students. Figure 1.1 is a graphic depiction of the CBAM Stages of Concern process.



*Figure 1.1. Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) Stages of Concern. Adapted from information contained in "The Teacher's Point of View: Stages of Concern," in *Change in Schools* by G.E. Hall and S.M. Hord, p. 60. Copyright 1987 by State University of New York Press, Albany.*

Affective Domain

Affective domain is a term used to describe the feelings, perceptions, emotions, viewpoints, motivations, values and attitudes of an individual when that person is confronted with learning a new skill (Kirk, 2019). These internalized attributes form the basis of a person's

decision to embrace or reject new learning, and occur in 5 stages (Borich, 2007). These stages are receiving, responding, valuing, organization, and internalization (Clark, 1999).

In the receiving stage, individuals are aware that a concept exists, but do not necessarily respond to it. In the responding stage, the person is responding in some way to the concept but is not fully committed to it. The valuing stage is marked by a decision on the part of the learner to assign value to the learning. At the organizational stage, individuals demonstrate greater commitment to the concept by beginning to formulate ways of implementing it. Finally, internalization, also referred to as the characterization stage, is marked by the individual's assigning of value to the concept and by a willingness to implement it appropriately (Borich, 2007).

Even powerful corporate entities such as Google, American Express, PepsiCo, General Electric, Dell, Toyota, and Apple have increasingly recognized that affective dimensions of the industrial and technical workforce must be addressed in order to improve the work quality, productivity, and morale of individuals and teams (Liker, 2004). For example, American Express recently received accolades by Fortune 100 Best for allowing employees to work from home, granting flexible work schedules, affording parents generous maternity and adoption leave, and offering competitive retirement benefits, medical insurance and vacation leave (Fortune, 2017). Likewise, CEO, Jack Welch's restructuring efforts at General Electric included his cognizance of, as well as taking actions to address employees' fear of change (Krames, 2005). He accomplished this by infusing empathy and understanding into his restructuring plan through open, candid discussions with GE managers and team members about what they wished to achieve – a high performing organization. These and similar strategies are reflective of the affective domain theory. For this research study, it was important to study the affective domain

with respect to teachers' participation in and perspectives about learning pedagogy with which they had little or no familiarity. Figure 1.2 conceptualizes the affective domain paradigm, and further elucidates the underlying principles of this theoretical concept.

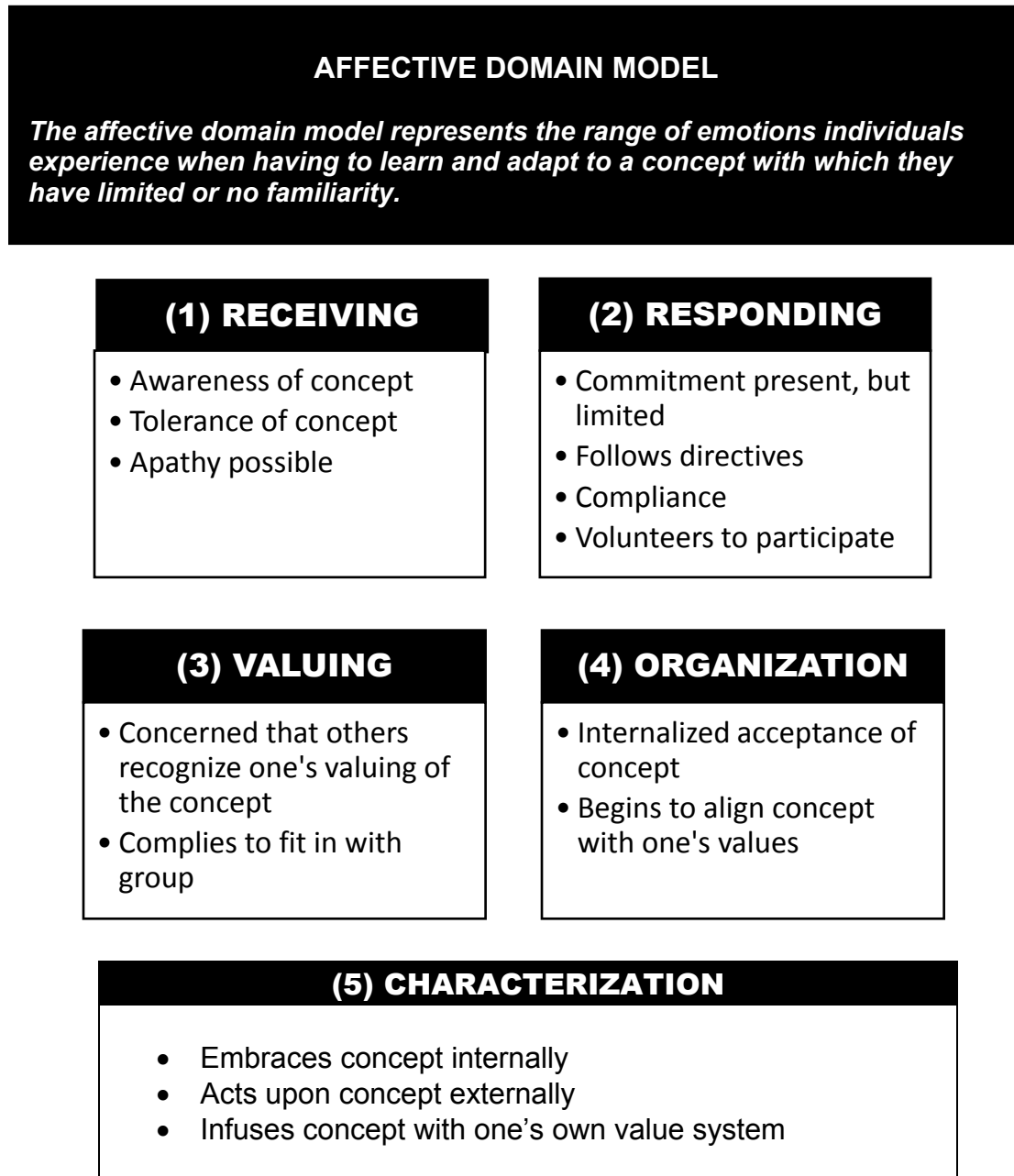


Figure 1.2. Affective Domain. Adapted from “Effective Teaching Methods: Research-Based Practice” by G. Borich, pp. 96-100. Copyright 2001 by Pearson Education, Inc.

Self-Actualization Theory

Maslow (1970) is frequently cited in educational research that seeks to understand human motivation. Maslow's theory of motivation is used to explain how individuals learn, as well as how to optimize their learning experiences. Maslow constructed a hierarchy of needs pyramid to explain the experiential steps individuals must transverse in order to reach their full potential. These needs in order are (a) physiological or basic survival needs such as food and water, (b) safety and security needs such as personal, emotional, social, mental and financial well-being, (c) the love and belonging needs of personal acceptance and gratifying social interactions with friends and family members, (d) one's needs of esteem as determined by valuation, respect and recognition by self and others, and (e) self-actualization which is characterized as the experiencing of one's full potential. Figure 1.3 is a representation of Maslow's hierarchy of needs pyramid with a depiction of self-actualization as the pinnacle of self-fulfillment.

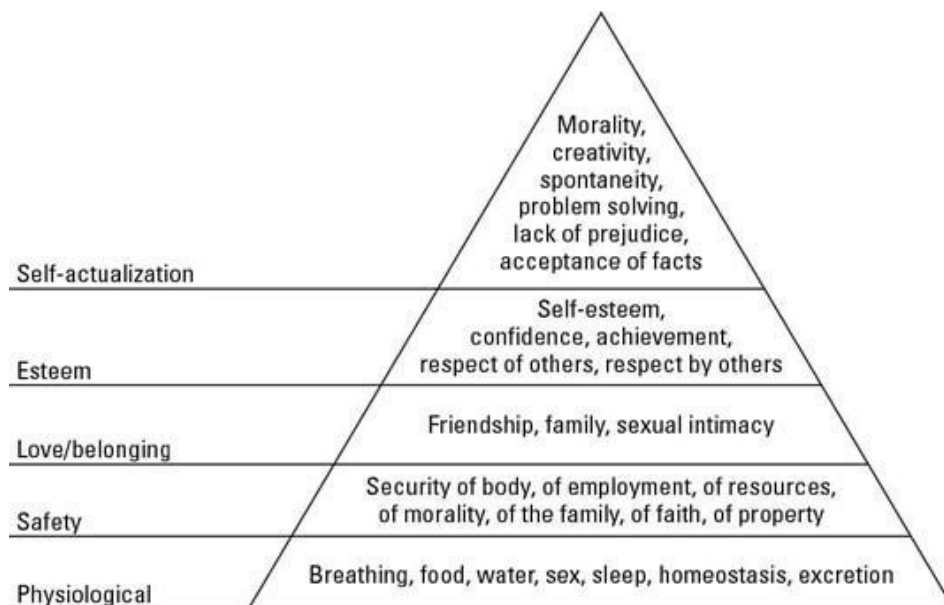


Figure 1.3. Maslow's hierarchy of needs theoretical pyramid. Adapted from information contained in "Maslow's study of self-actualization: A reinterpretation," in *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, (31)1, 114-135.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs pyramid indicates that self-actualization is the highest level of attainment in terms of personal motivation. Self-actualization is what humans experience when they believe they are experiencing their full potential (Chapman, 2017). This attribute had significance for this research study in that one of the objectives was to support teachers in their efforts to implement a writing program with which they had no previous familiarity and to help them attain a certain degree of self-actualization and self-mastery upon commencement of the six-week pre-writing intervention period.

Mental Models

Senge advances the supposition that humans inherently operate from mental models - ways of thinking and believing that are based upon their backgrounds, experiences, and previous learning (Senge et al., 2012). Mental models shape how individuals perceive the world and their place in it. Senge explains that mental models are building blocks that serve to shape individuals' beliefs, attitudes, views, and perceptions. He refers to these ways of thinking about and perceiving the world as mental imagery.

Senge maintains that the importance of mental models should not be underestimated as a significant factor in educational reform. He recommends that change agents consider the mental imagery that define peoples' ways of thinking and how they see the world before embarking on any type of educational change. Once these mental models are identified through self-discovery experiences, the presentation of alternative viewpoints, or other catalysts, a change agent can begin to address them. Bringing peoples' mental models to the forefront represents the first step in the change process. This step is followed by offering individuals' alternative or modified ways of looking at an idea, concept, or process, and helping them make gradual changes in their mental imagery and ultimately, their behaviors. With respect to this research study, it was

important to consider mental models theory in planning for and developing professional development in explicit prewriting instruction - a writing strategy with which teachers had limited or no background knowledge. A graphic representation of Senge's mental model paradigm is presented in Figure 1.4.

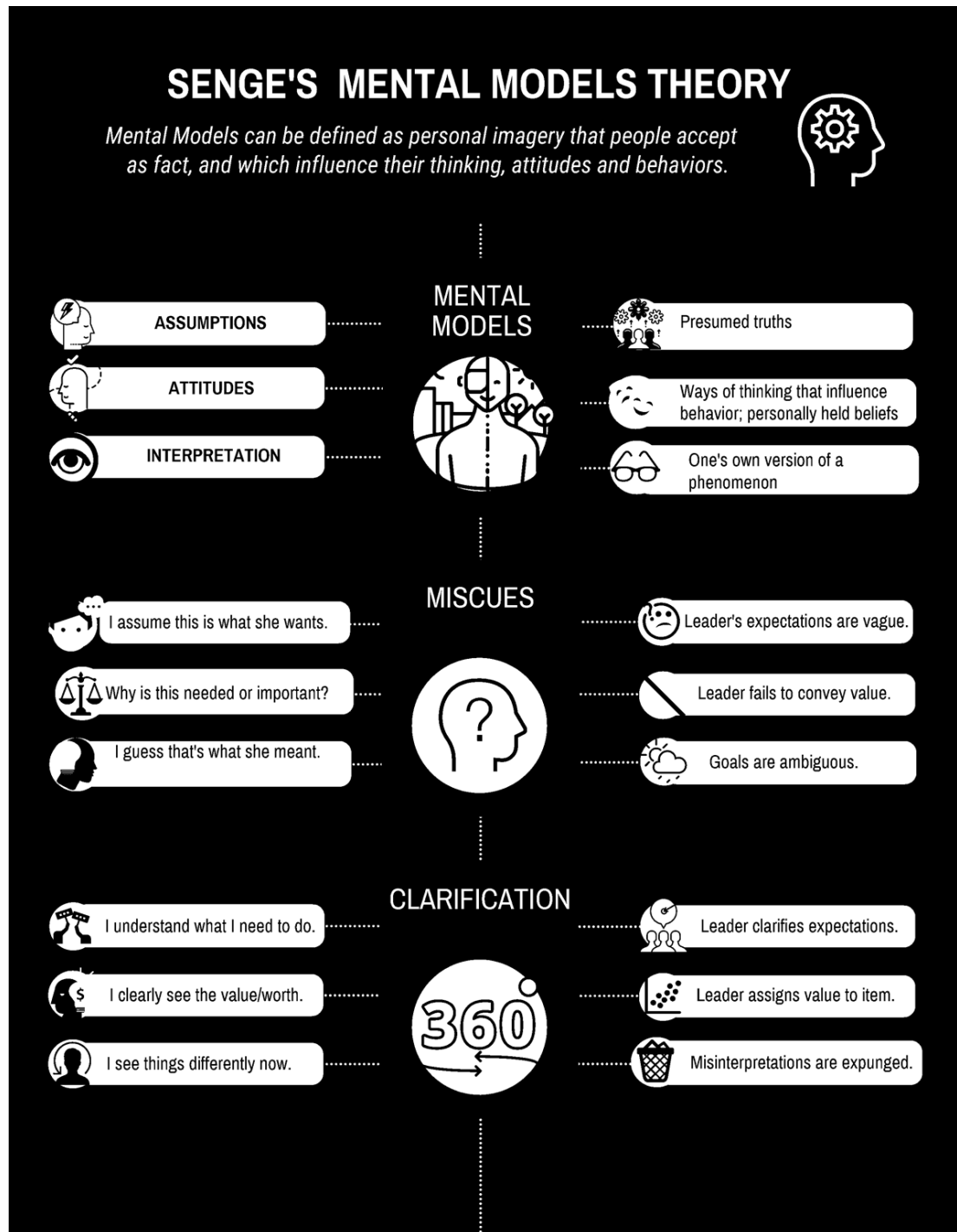


Figure 1.4. Senge's Mental Models Theory. Adapted from information contained in "Schools that Learn: A Fifth Discipline Fieldbook for Educators, Parents, and Everyone Who Cares About Education," by P. Senge, et al (Eds.), pp. 101-114. Copyright 2012 by Crown Business.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

Research Question 1: *Was there a statistically significant difference in the pre- and post- writing assessment mean scores of students who received six weeks of explicit prewriting instruction?*

Research Question 2: *What were teachers' views, perceptions and concerns about implementation of explicit prewriting instruction as a strategy to improve students' written communication skills?*

Limitations

This research study had several limitations. First, the sample of students was derived from a single school in the state of California. Hence, there may be a lack of generalizability throughout the district as well as throughout the state. Next, the writing intervention was implemented over a period of six weeks. Although this may have been enough time to observe some student growth in writing, a study conducted over a longer period of time would have been more ideal. In quantitative studies, the larger the population size, the better opportunity the researcher has to arrive at a statistically significant revelation. However, the experimental group in this research study was comprised of only 53 students. Since 300-400 students would have garnered more data from which to extract more statistically significant findings, the study's smaller population size presented yet another limitation. Finally, other limitations included logistical considerations such as teacher or student absences, student transiency, and the inability or failure of teachers to execute every part of the writing intervention with fidelity.

Delimitations

The delimitations applied in this research study were determined by a desire to examine the impact of explicit instruction in prewriting on the writing skills of students in Grades 4-7.

Students from these grades participated in the study because according to the Common Core Standards (2019), students should learn to develop multiple-paragraph compositions beginning in Grade 4. In addition to this delimitation, student participants from charter, magnet, and private schools located within the same city were not accessed in the study, since many specialized schools have a curricula or pedagogy that is different from regular public schools. Lastly, a review of the literature in Chapter 2 did not cover every type of writing model, as such a pervasive review would have extended well beyond the scope of the research topic.

Assumptions

This research study included several assumptions. First, the students whose pre- and post- writing assessment scores were accessed were heterogeneously grouped in terms of gender, ethnicity, SBAC achievement scores, mild to moderate disability designation, and English language proficiency as determined by the 2017 CELDT. Second, the students whose scores were analyzed were representative of fourth through seventh grade students in the district of which the participating school was a part. Third, teachers participated in twelve hours of professional development in explicit prewriting instruction and in the use of writing rubrics. Fourth, students received two hours per day of explicit prewriting instruction over a period of six weeks during the summer of 2018. Finally, the assumption is that data collected from teachers' interviews accurately reflected their views, perceptions and concerns about explicit prewriting instruction as a viable strategy to help students improve their written communication skills.

Summary

In summary, this explanatory mixed methods research study had two primary goals. The quantitative phase of the study sought to ascertain if there was a statistically significant difference in the pre- and post- writing assessment mean scores of students who received six

weeks of explicit prewriting instruction. The qualitative component of this study was grounded by the theoretical platforms of educational change theorists who contend that in order to bring about systemic, institutional or individual change, it is important to consider the views, feelings attitudes, and concerns of the people who will be affected by the change. Thus, qualitative methodology was utilized to evaluate teachers' concerns about implementation of explicit prewriting instruction. The juxtaposition of two frames of reference - cognitive constructivism and concerns oriented educational change theory, provided the theoretical frameworks from which to extrapolate deeper knowledge and understanding of explicit prewriting instruction as an effective instructional strategy.

Organization of the Study

This research study is comprised of five chapters. Chapter 1 presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, definition of terms, theoretical framework, research questions, limitations, and delimitations of the study.

Chapter 2 of the dissertation presents a review of the literature, and includes theoretical principles of cognitive constructivism, explicit instruction, and concerns-oriented educational change theories. Chapter 3 describes the quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches utilized in the study. These approaches consisted of participant selection, instrumentation, collection of data, and the procedures used in data analysis.

Chapter 4 presents findings of the research study. These include information about the backgrounds and experience of participants, findings from the quantitative and qualitative data analyses, and how the findings addressed the research questions. Chapter 5 presents a comprehensive summary of the research study, a discussion of the findings, theoretical and

practical implications of the study, and recommendations for future research in explicit prewriting instruction.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Chapter 2 of this dissertation presents an overview of literature that is relevant to the goals and objectives of the study. This research study embodied two primary objectives. The first was to use quantitative methodology to examine the effect of explicit prewriting instruction (Berkeley Graduate Division, 2019) on students' writing skills in the age of Common Core. The second objective was to investigate teachers' views, perceptions and concerns about implementing explicit prewriting as a strategy to improve students' written communication skills. Moreover, the aim of this study was to rekindle and promote active discussion about improved writing pedagogy, with an emphasis on explicit prewriting instruction.

Chapter 2 begins with a background of the study that includes a brief synopsis of initiatives that have been enacted over the past three decades in order to address persistent achievement deficits among the nation's public school students, including the most recent 21st Century Skills and Common Core initiatives. Explicit instruction and explicit prewriting instruction are explained through the lenses of cognitive constructivist theories, such as those proposed by Piaget (Schunk, 2000), Vygotsky (Beliavsky, 2006), Hunter (1982), and others. Literature that focuses on concerns-oriented educational change theory is also prominently featured in this chapter, especially the work of Hall and Hord (2015) and Senge et al. (2012). Affective domain theory as proposed by Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia (Borich, 2007; Clark, 1999) and self-actualization theory as explained by Maslow (1970) are also presented from the literature, in that certain aspects of these theories can lead to a better understanding of how teachers think about and respond to unfamiliar instructional approaches, procedures, or processes. The chapter concludes with a summary of the presented literature.

Background of the Study

Among the most prominent 21st Century Skills undergirding the California Common Core Curriculum is the ability to communicate clearly and articulately in writing (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2018). However, in 2011, the National Center for Education Statistics (2016) reported that only 24% of the nation's 8th and 12th grade public school students scored Proficient on the National Assessment of Educational Progress writing assessment and that only one of every four students is grade-level-proficient in writing. Even more disconcerting is the indication that on the same assessment, only 13% of 8th and 12th grade English learners were proficient in writing (2012).

English learners comprise 9.3% of the nation's public school population (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016), and in the state of California, 38 % of public school students are so designated (Hill, 2018). In fact, California has the largest and most rapidly expanding English learner population in the country, and 85% of California's English learners are Spanish-speaking (Payán & Nettles, 2016). Despite the fact that the school population of Els continues to grow, the disparities in their achievement, as well as among students with disabilities, African American students, and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, continue to increase (Crumpler, 2014).

As a response to the growing concerns about students' writing proficiency in California and the rest of the nation, as well as the disparity that exists among underrepresented student groups, this research study sought to examine explicit prewriting instruction as one means of addressing these challenges. Chapter 2 of this study begins with an historical overview of the nation's evolutionary efforts to improve student academic achievement over the past forty-five years, including the more recent 21st Century Skills and Common Core initiatives. In addition,

In Chapter 2, explicit prewriting instruction as a viable approach to improving students' writing skills is examined from the context of cognitive constructivist theory. Moreover, this chapter examines teachers' views, perceptions, and concerns about implementation of explicit prewriting instruction from the context of concerns-oriented educational change theory. Chapter 2 concludes with a summary of the chapter.

Efforts Improve Student Literacy in the United States

Since publication of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (1983) more than three decades ago, politicians, legislators, and educators at federal, state and local levels have sought to elevate students' basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Generated by the Department of Education, this report provided research-cited documentation that the nation's public schools had failed its protégés. Although the Commission's findings were grave, what was missing from the report was a tangible, viable process for reversing mediocrity and failure in America's schools. Instead, the recommendations were to increase student learning time, raise college admission standards, augment teacher salaries, and provide additional federal funding to districts with significant populations of students who were socioeconomically and linguistically disadvantaged.

Since 1983, several initiatives and legislative actions have been enacted to address the persistent deficiencies in the nation's public schools as detailed in *A Nation at Risk*. Some of these have included the (a) No Child Left Behind Act or NCLB, which sought to close the achievement gap among diverse student groups (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2001), (b) Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which among other recommendations, encouraged school districts to adopt one of several models, including replacing staff, replacing school administrators, or closing low-performing schools (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2010), and (c) Every Student Succeeds

Act (ESSA). The latter enactment provided for more autonomous governance and decision-making authority by local school districts and made recommendations for college and career preparedness, increased academic rigor, innovation, and investment in best educational practices (Fabian, 2015). These legislative policies have had some impact, but as of 2015, the United States continues to rank below many developed nations in reading, writing, math and science (Pew Research Center, 2015). A more recent Pew Research Report indicated that fourth and eighth grade students have only shown slight improvement since 2009, and in fact, 8th graders have regressed in English language arts and mathematics (Pew Research Center, 2016).

In response to the failure of federally-mandated legislation to positively impact student achievement in the United States, a non-governmental entity called the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, n.d.) was formed in 2008. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills or P21 is an organization comprised of business leaders, educators, and legislators that advocates infusion of specific skills into the nation's public school systems in order to ensure a highly trained, competent future workforce (Torlakson, 2013). This objective was born out of a concern that traditional curriculum-driven pedagogy as instituted by the nation's schools was not sufficient to prepare secondary students for a highly competitive, skills-driven employment landscape. In fact, when a sample of human resource directors and senior executives were asked to identify the most prevalent skill deficits among new hires, 81% responded, "written communication skills" (The Conference Board, Partnership for 21st Century Schools, Corporate Voices for Working Families, & Society for Human Resource Management, 2006). The mission of P21 is to "Serve as a catalyst to position 21st Century Skills at the center of U.S. K-12 education by building collaborative partnerships among education, business, community and government leaders" (Bishop, n.d., p. 2). As of 2019, there are 16 states that

have partnered with the P21 initiative, as well as prominent corporations such as Disney, Verizon, Dell, Apple, Microsoft, the National Education Association, Adobe, Cisco, Ford Motor Company and several others (California Department of Education, 2019; National Education Association, 2015). Members of this partnership have committed to improving public education by way of several mechanisms. These include (a) identifying the competencies students will need in order to succeed in global economic markets, (b) promoting research that seeks to improve student learning, (c) making recommendations with respect to research-derived, best educational practices, (d) infusing technology into education domains, (e) and generating capital to forward strategic initiatives (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, nd.).

While there are several versions of 21st Century skills, there are at least five common skill domains. They are critical thinking, problem solving, creativity and innovation, communication, and collaboration (Torlakson, 2013). With respect to this research study, the communication skills category has particular relevance. Communication in the context of 21st Century skills relates to one's ability to demonstrate the appropriate use of conventional English language structures to compose text for targeted audiences (Mayhew, 2017). In fact, Wagner (2014) has identified written communication as one of the seven survival skills for viable employment in both national and international sectors. The 21st Century Skills require that students be able to write different types of essays and research reports and to formulate logical, written arguments (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2018). Consequently, students who have not been taught to competently communicate in writing are at a distinct disadvantage in light of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills recommendations.

The Common Core Imperative

As educators, legislators, and research-driven think tanks emblazoned the 21st Century skills mantra across public domains, what emerged as a result of these forums were the Common Core State Standards or CCSS (ASCD, 2018). Adopted in 2009 through legislative actions in 48 states, two U.S. territories and the District of Colombia, the CCSS articulate what students must know at every grade level in order to be prepared for postsecondary experiences in college and the labor force. The primary objectives of the CCSS are to promote literacy in the core disciplines of reading, science, math, writing, and history, while at the same time, infusing the 21st Century learning objectives of collaboration, innovation, critical thinking, communication, and problem solving into learning environments (McKnight, 2014).

The CCSS indicate that students should be able to demonstrate knowledge of conventional English in both oral and written communication. In kindergarten through 8th grades, the CCSS writing anchor standards require that students be able to use written communication to analyze text, frame arguments, explain concepts or ideas, support claims made by an author, and create experientially-derived narratives (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2018). Student writing must reflect coherency and organization, as well as a style that is appropriate for the task or targeted audience. In addition to the preceding criteria, the CCSS recommend that teachers provide opportunities for students to improve their critical thinking skills, experience more rigorous academic demands, read more complex texts, assume diverse writing tasks, and work collaboratively with peers (California Department of Education, 2012).

Challenges for Els

Some of the cognitive demands and academic expectations required of all students may

prove to be even more challenging for students who are learning English (Hollibush, Matt, & Bixler, 2014).

Short and Fitzsimmons (2007) state that these challenges are twice the cognitive demand and workload experienced by students for whom English is a primary language, in that at same time ELs are learning to read, write and speak English, they must also learn unfamiliar academic vocabulary and content in literature, math, and the sciences. Further exacerbating this issue is the fact that the rigor and complexity of the CCSS become much more advanced with each ensuing grade level (Kenji, Santos, & Fang, 2013). van Lier and Walqui (2012) aver that the increased rigor inherent in the CCSS requires that teachers create communication-rich learning environments where students continuously exchange information with their peers throughout the instructional day. These researchers also advocate that teachers carefully scaffold instruction so that English learners can build foundational skills that will have the effect of transcending their lack of experiential knowledge. Common Core also requires that students have certain prerequisite skills in order to access the grade-level-specific CCSS (Baily & Wolf, 2012). Thus, English learners have the voluminous challenge of navigating more complex academic content, striving to enrich their experiential schemas, and building foundational skills, while simultaneously learning to read, write and speak a new language. In light of these challenges, it is important that teachers become cognizant of the necessary steps they must take in order to ensure that ELs are able to successfully meet the requirements of the CCSS essential elements. Teachers can acquire this knowledge from strategic professional development and training in this area.

Common Core College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing

For the purpose of this research study, focus was placed upon the college and career readiness CCSS writing anchor standards for Grades four through seven. The CCSS outline ten standards for written language expression in grades K-12 (California Department of Education, 2013). These are designated as College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing. The anchor standards are designed to foster students' ability to produce purpose-specific compositions, construct arguments through the citing of textual evidence, create expository and narrative essays, navigate specific aspects of the writing process, and engage in research-derived writing projects.

Purpose-specific writing relates to alignment of appropriate writing genres with relevant contextual themes. For example, students might use argumentative writing to support a claim, write a letter to the editor, frame discussions, address a specific audience, or influence the opinions of others (Myracle, 2014). In argumentative writing the anchor standards require students to support their claims with evidence from literature or other types of media.

Contrariwise, expository writing is used to explain a concept, idea, process or procedure (Lenski & Verbruggen, 2010). Textual examples of expository writing which support the goals of CCSS include summarizing the steps of a mathematical problem, describing the attributes of individuals or things, detailing the cause and effect of an historical event, or comparing and contrasting people, objects, concepts, processes, or phenomena. Expository writing should be supported by facts that students have gleaned from such sources as literature, class discussions, educational videos, field trips, and other experiences. Loosely related to expository writing, narrative writing is derived from writers' past experiences or from phenomena with which they have familiarity. Primary grade school teachers often assign narrative writing at the beginning of

the school year to initiate discussion about students' summer vacations. Other types of narrative writing include personal biographies, journal writing, and personal letters.

What the Common Core State Standards Do Not Address

The CCSS outline the skills students must acquire at every grade level in order to demonstrate mastery of academic content (Lafond, 2009). These are called the Essential Elements (University of Kansas Center for Research, 2013). The Essential Elements are essentially a delineated list of skills students in Grades K-12 must learn in order to become proficient in each academic subject area. These elements do not feature instructional guidelines, teaching strategies or curricular blueprints, nor were they ever designed to do so. The utility of the standards is simply to inform schools of the skills students need to in order to achieve academic success. The CCSS have been adopted by forty-six states and the District of Columbia (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2019). However, CCSS implementation has not been devoid of challenges. Specifically, there have been at least three critical areas of concern for educators, especially teaching professionals.

First, the CCSS do not provide instructional guidelines for classroom implementation of the standards (Meador, 2017). This factor has proven to be a source of frustration for both new and veteran teaching professionals who not only must familiarize themselves with the new standards, but also figure out how to teach them. For example, since Common Core requires that students be able to communicate in oral and written discourse in every subject area, teachers will need to be able to support students in the achievement of these objectives. However, participants in this research study, as well as other teachers with whom the researcher has communicated have indicated repeatedly that neither their teacher preparation programs nor subsequent

professional development and training adequately trained them to successfully implement the CCSS, especially with respect to interdisciplinary writing skills development.

Next, the CCSS do not provide or recommend specific curricula from which teachers can retrieve academic content (University of Kansas Center for Research, 2013). Instead, schools and districts are granted the autonomy to create or purchase curricula and resources they believe meet the requirements of Common Core. Some districts have purchased commercial products, but others create their own materials. In some instances, teachers are only provided websites from which to retrieve instructional resources, which can be yet another source of frustration for educators who already spend a great deal of time in planning (University of Kansas Center for Research, 2013). At the time of this research study, the site where the study was conducted – a school site that is part of a large, urban California district - paid teachers during the summer months to create curriculum. With the exception of a K-3 reading program, no other commercially produced curricula were adopted or purchased for K-8. Moreover, what is remarkable to many is the fact that the CCSS do not include content for K-8 science and social studies. Again, educators must glean from a variety of sources in order to create viable curricula for these two domains (California State Board of Education, 2013). Finally, although writing is prioritized in the CCSS, teachers are not provided a set of guidelines for teaching writing skills (Mo, Kopke, Hawkins, & Troia, 2014). The standards do not focus on writing as a process, explain how the writing standards should be taught, or provide recommendations for increasing student motivation and engagement in composition development (Mo, Kopke, Hawkins, & Troia, 2014). These functions are left up to the discretion of school districts or other educational bodies, who must develop curricula that will enable students to meet these criteria.

These aforementioned challenges have been problematic for site and district level administrators who strive to ensure that students meet proficiency targets. As the CCSS become more entrenched as educational doctrine, it is important that districts provide effective professional development and support to help teachers deliver instruction that is consistent with the goals of this initiative (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2017). Teacher training at the university level must address the limitations of the CCSS and ensure that teachers understand and are prepared for instructing students in a manner that may differ from the manner in which they were previously taught.

The Writing Process

Before embarking upon a discussion about explicit prewriting instruction, it is prudent to present a general overview of the writing process and what it entails. Smagorinsky, Johannessen, Kahn and McCann (2010) describe the writing process or process writing as a teacher-facilitated, structured approach to writing instruction that features a set of incremental steps used in the development of a composition from beginning to end. Results from several studies conducted on effective writing instruction indicate that explicit instruction in the writing process significantly contributes to student success in the development and organization of multiple-paragraph compositions (Graham & Perin, 2007). In this dissertation, the terms writing process and process writing are used interchangeably. In general, the writing process consists of prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing (Cox, 2019). Within each step there is a circumscribed set of elements. According to Graham and Perin (2007), each of these elements is important for the development of well-organized, coherent compositions. Although process writing is primarily teacher-directed, student input from questions, discussions, and collaborative activities are equally important facets of this instructional approach (Graham & Perin, 2007).

Incremental Steps of the Writing Process

In the prewriting phase, students are engaged in activities such as identifying the audience, acquiring background information from literature or media, participating in class discussions, freewriting, brainstorming, outlining, and other creative means of developing a topic (Fawcett, 2004). The next step in the writing process is drafting. During the drafting stage, writers extract information from notes, outlines, or graphic organizers and use this information to draft a composition (Capella University, n.d.). Next, writers advance from the drafting phase to editing. Editing presents writers with an opportunity to ensure that their compositions are focused, organized, coherent, reflective of the targeted audience, and supported by facts or examples (Lenski & Verbruggen, 2010). The writing is also checked for errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and other standard conventions of English. It is at this juncture that collaborative peer reviews, teacher feedback, and self-reflection come into play. Lenski and Verbruggen (2010) maintain that editing should occur throughout the course of a process writing activity. The final step of the writing process is publishing, during which time writers disseminate their final product to the general public or to a targeted audience (Cox, 2019). Some of the ways students can share their writing are via online platforms, physical displays, apps, blogs, webinars, web videos, and oral presentations (Friedlander, 2010).

Klein (1999) suggests that process writing is motivational device for struggling or reluctant writers, in that this model employs teacher modeling, ongoing student guidance, consistent corrective feedback, and other instructional supports that are specific to this method. When facing a writing project, individuals can become stuck, unsure of how to begin, overwhelmed by the perceived enormity of the task, and even cognitively immobilized (Lachs, 2016). However, according to Troia (2007), when teachers clearly articulate the procedural

guidelines for writing, accompanied by modeling, guidance and feedback, the opportunity for students to successfully complete a writing project is maximized.

In one study, a paired samples t-test was conducted to compare the pre- and post- writing assessment scores of fifth grade students following implementation of explicit instruction in process writing (Gillespie, Olinghouse, & Graham, 2013). Analysis of the results demonstrated statistically significant improvement in students' scores following the intervention. Moreover, a meta-analysis research study that focused on explicit instruction in process writing at the secondary level found this instructional approach to be highly effective in improving students' writing skills (Rogers & Graham, 2008). Figure 2.1 illustrates the writing process.



Figure 2.1. Stages of the writing process. Adapted from *Excelsior Online Writing Lab*. (2018). Free online resource downloaded from <https://owl.excelsior.edu/writing-process/writing-process-overview/writing-process-activity/>

Prewriting

Prewriting is described as the planning stage of writing (Langan, 2013). During the prewriting phase writers use techniques such as identifying the audience, researching topics for background information, discussing ideas, freewriting without restrictions, brainstorming, and

outlining (Langan, 2013). According to Caswell and Mahler (2004), the goal of prewriting is to provide an apparatus from which students can explore the dimensions of a topic before creating the actual composition. It is through this process that students become aware of what they do not yet know about a topic, and engage in actions that will enable them to learn more about it.

Prewriting has been shown through several studies to be a precursor to the development of well-constructed compositions (Carrier, 2005; Flowers & Hayes, 1980; Gomez, 2014; Graham, 2008). In fact, writing can become an extremely challenging and arduous, if not impossible task without a writer first having developed an architectural outline of how ideas will unfold and be presented (Hughey & Slack, 2001). Prewriting activities involve freewriting, identifying the composition's audience and purpose, building background knowledge through research, brainstorming, and creating a graphic organizer or outline. Figure 2.2 illustrates the stages of the explicit prewriting instruction process implemented in this research study.

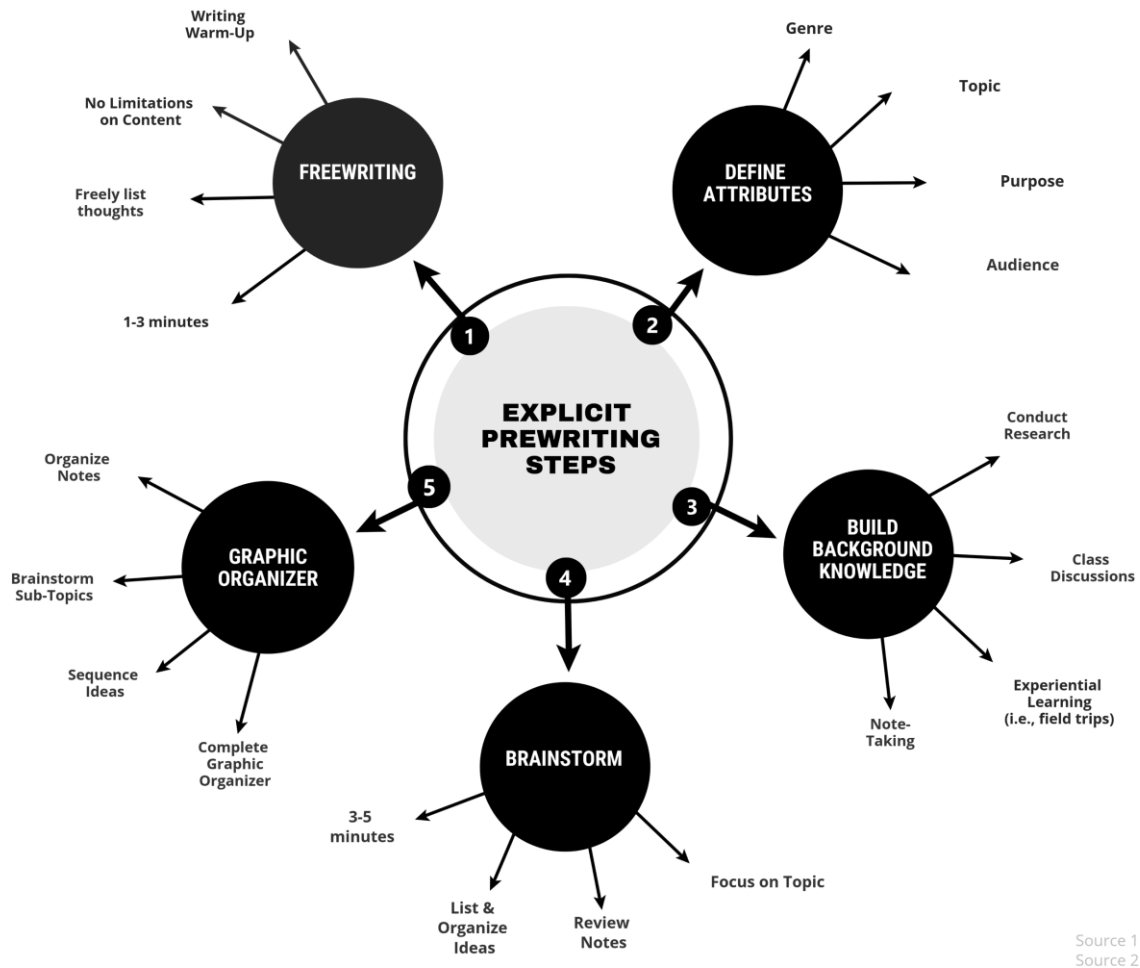


Figure 2.2. Steps of explicit prewriting instruction. Adapted from information compiled from Evergreen: A guide to writing with readings by S. Fawcett. Copyright 2004 by Houghton Mifflin, pp. 8-14.

The first step in the prewriting process is freewriting. Freewriting is a type of writing warm-up activity that takes approximately two to five minutes (Langan, 2013). In freewriting, students write down anything that comes to mind without having to focus upon a specific topic. In fact, ideas can simply be jotted down as a bulleted list. Freewriting does not necessitate the use of standard conventions such as correct spelling, grammar, punctuation, or sentence structure

(Langan, 2013). According to Fawcett (2004) there are several advantages to using freewriting as a writing technique. The first benefit is that there are no restrictions or limitations of what or how to write. Thus, ideas can flow freely and are only limited by one's imagination. A second benefit is that freewriting has the potential to remove the passivity or fear children have about writing because their ideas are theirs alone and will not be subjected to any type of evaluative commentary, judgment, or grading criteria (Klein, Boscolo, Kirkpatrick & Gelati, 2014). Furthermore, freewriting can remove mental blocks that students as well as adults often experience. Thus, rather than staring blankly at a sheet of paper, students can write single-word ideas ranging from what they had for breakfast to what they plan to do after school.

The next step in the prewriting process is identification of the purpose of the assigned writing and the audience for whom it is being written. These concepts are intertwined and co-dependent. First, the purpose of a writing project is considered from the standpoint of genre (De La Paz & McCutchen, 2017). In other words, will the composition be consistent with narrative, expository, persuasive, comparison-contrast, descriptive writing, or otherwise? Once this aspect of the writing project has been defined, the topic is identified. The writer then researches the topic by accessing literary texts, participating in class discussions, viewing videos, or engaging in other means of information gathering (De La Paz & McCutchen, 2017). Throughout the process of acquiring information about the topic and taking notes, writers are building background knowledge and expanding their schemas. It is from this information that the topic will later be expounded upon and subsequently used to develop a graphic organizer or outline. Identification of the purpose provides the writer with a guidepost and focus that can be referred to throughout the writing process (Hughey & Slack, 2001).

Closely aligned with identification of a composition's purpose is determination of the audience with whom the writing will be shared (Graham & Harris, 2005). Wray (2018) explains that good writers should not only identify their audience; they must also have an appreciation for factors such as the audience's opinions, values, sensibilities, gender, age, ethnic background, education level and other attributes. For example, if the writing will be presented to children under the age of eight, the language and vocabulary will be much different than if the audience were comprised of adolescents. Or, if for example, the writing will be read by predominantly Latino parents in a school setting, ideas may be phrased in a way that is more enlightening and comfortable for that population of individuals.

From the notes acquired during exploration and researching of the topic, the writer can move forward to brainstorming activities. Brainstorming is similar to freewriting, with the exception that the writer focuses upon a specific topic (Farnan & Dahl, 2003; The Writing Center, 2019a). As ideas about the topic come to mind, the writer lists them on a sheet of paper as bulleted ideas. Some of the ideas that are generated as a result of brainstorming can be used as key points in the composition that will later be developed. For grade school students, approximately five minutes of brainstorming should be enough time to generate ideas related to a topic. For high school and college students, 15-30 minutes are recommended. Brainstorming can also evolve from class discussions, collaborative development of ideas, literature, surveys, news reports, or other mediums.

After brainstorming, the final step in the prewriting phase is outlining or graphic organizer development. Graphic organizers and outlines are templates with which to plan, develop and organize ideas and information prior to formal composition development (Hill & Miller, 2013). Graphic organizers can have many different types of configurations, such as

arrows indicating processes, tables, Venn diagrams, figures, pictographs, or other non-linguistic representations (Hylerle, 1996). The type of graphic organizer used in this research study is presented in Appendix E of this dissertation.

In summary, this research study focused on explicitly teaching students prewriting strategies as a means of improving their writing skills. Prewriting is an integral component of the writing process, as this activity helps students plan for the final composition product. In the first step of prewriting, students are able to warm up for writing through the process of freewriting, whereby thoughts are written down or listed as they come to mind. Once the genre, topic, purpose and audience are communicated to students, they can then engage in research, class discussions, and readings to acquaint themselves with the topic. During these activities, students engage in note taking. The notes are used for brainstorming the topic, which serves the purpose generating ideas about the topic. Lastly, ideas extracted from notes, class discussions and brainstorming are used for the development of an outline or graphic organizer.

Cognitive Constructivist Theory as it Relates to Explicit Prewriting Instruction

Cognitive constructivism refers to a compendium of learning theories which posit that children acquire knowledge by assimilating information from, and interacting with their environments (Powell & Kalina, 2009). As Kafai and Resnick (1996) explain, “One of the main tenets of constructivism is that learners actively construct and reconstruct knowledge out of their experiences in the world” (p. 1). Cognitive constructivist theories that were relevant to this research study were those of Piaget (Berkeley Graduate Division, 2019), Vygotsky (Karpov, 2014), and Hunter (1982). Each of these theorists has contributed to unique perspectives of how students learn, as well as how teachers can promote optimal learning through the implementation of prescribed pedagogical approaches and enhanced classroom environments. This research

study is grounded in specific aspects of the work of these and other learning theorists who proposed that children acquire knowledge when teachers facilitate the process of helping them connect prior experiences with newly presented information. In explicit instruction, when presenting new information, teachers build upon students' pre-existing background knowledge and experiences, and use this pre-existing knowledge to help their students make sense of unfamiliar content (Hollingsworth & Ybarra, 2018).

From the perspectives of various educational theorists, cognitive constructivism is not a tightly defined philosophy, and as such is subject to more than one interpretation. However, for the purposes of this research study, references to this term will be extrapolated primarily from the theories of Piaget (Berkeley Graduate Division, 2019), Vygotsky (Karpov, 2014), and Hunter (1982). Moreover, before fully exploring the aspects of constructivism as it pertains to explicit instruction, it is important to demarcate the distinction between cognitive constructivist theories that advocate the teacher's role as the primary purveyor of knowledge and information through a guided instructional sequence (Siegler & Ellis, 1996) and constructivist theories which suggest that children learn best in environments where there is minimal teacher guidance or intervention (McLeod, 2018).

Some constructivists theorize that in classroom settings where there is minimal teacher guidance, learners construct meaning on their own through the mechanism of self-discovery. Such a minimalist approach was famously proposed by Papert, who posited that children learn by constructing mental models of new information (Kafai & Resnick, 1996). They then apply this newly acquired knowledge to more novel and complex learning tasks. Pedagogy in which there is less emphasis upon teacher-directed instruction has several appellations. Among these are problem-based learning (Savery & Duffy, 1995), discovery learning (Bruner, 2017), inquiry-

based learning (Silva, Southerland & Abrams, 2008; Center for Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Education, 2000), experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) and various interpretations of constructivism. Problem based learning is an instructional method whereby a small group of students is given a complex topic to unravel (Savery & Duffy, 1995). The group then applies principles from previously learned material to solve the problem. In discovery learning, students learn concepts and relationships through self-directed inquiry (Bruner, 2017). They make sense of their world by exploring their learning environments and making assumptions about concepts as they encounter them (Bruner, 2017). Inquiry-based learning involves students' use of critical thinking strategies to research, analyze, and draw conclusions about topics, problems or issues (Nevárez-LaTorre, 2010; Center for Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Education, 2000). Finally, the premise of experiential learning is that students learn through the transference of knowledge acquired during personal experimentation (Abdi, 2014). In other words, learning will ensue as a result of individuals' experiential interactions with their environments.

According to Moreno (2004), several empirical studies have implied that minimal instructional guidance does not lead to improvement in students' learning outcomes. For example, Klahr and Nigam (2004) conducted a study that compared the test scores of high school science students who were instructed using inquiry-based pedagogy (also called discovery learning) and those who were instructed with greater teacher guidance. In that study, the teacher-guided groups significantly outperformed the inquiry-based groups. Further, Brown and Campione (1994) noted in their own inquiry vs. guided approach study, that when students were taught science strictly through inquiry-based learning, they often became lost, confused, and frustrated. Moreover, upon review and comparison of multiple studies in inquiry-based and guided instruction, Kirschner, Sweller and Clark (2006) concluded that guided instruction was a

superior strategy in terms of advancing student academic achievement. In separate empirical studies by Roblyer (1996) and Perkins (1991), students were taught computer technology with minimal guidance or intervention from instructors. The conclusions drawn from these studies suggest that minimal guidance was less effective in communicating pertinent content to students or in ensuring that they would be able to apply newly acquired knowledge and skills in real life settings.

One of the models from which minimal instructional guidance pedagogy is derived is that of problem-based learning or PBL (Barell, 2007). PBL replicates an approach used by many medical schools, and is described as “...the learning that results from the process of working toward the understanding or resolution of a problem. The problem is encountered *first* in the learning process” (Barrows & Tamblyn, 1980, p. 1). In the medical school problem-based learning model, small groups of medical students are provided information about a patient’s symptoms. They then use deductive reasoning strategies in an attempt to arrive at a medical diagnosis.

Heavily steeped in constructivist theory, medical problem-based learning was initiated in 1969 by McMaster University School of Medicine (Kirschner, Sweller, & Clark, 2006). However, Berkson (1993) conducted extensive reviews of research studies comparing problem based medical school instruction with the more traditional medical school instructional model and found no statistical evidence that the problem-based approach was superior. Although through his research, Berkson (1993) concluded that there were no statistical differences in the achievement of PBL vs. traditionally trained medical students, proponents of this approach continue to advocate its efficacy in K-12 educational settings, especially in the era of Common Core (Vega, 2015). One of the benefits of PBL as cited by its proponents is that as

students are afforded opportunities to develop problem-solving, critical thinking, collaboration, interpersonal, and decision-making skills, they become better positioned to assume roles in fields that demand these types of competencies (Barell, 2007). Some educators, however, have cited several disadvantages of PBL, including the potential for non-congruence between what students learn through PBL and what they encounter on state assessments, lack of effective teacher training and student preparation in the approach, the possibility of skimming over or missing important content standards, and the labor-intensive tasks of developing and grading students' work (Guido, 2016). In this research study, project-based learning was not considered as an optimal instructional approach, since most of the students lacked basic fundamental written communication skills. Thus, it was necessary for teachers to build these skills in a more explicit, stepwise manner.

Piaget

Although similar in some regards to the constructivist view that children are participatory learners who acquire new knowledge from what they discover in their learning environments, the constructivist perspective as outlined by Jean Piaget assigns greater significance to children's intellectual schemas and backgrounds (Berkeley Graduate Division, 2019). From this premise, Piaget developed the theory of accommodation and assimilation. Piaget's theory of assimilation and accommodation explains that children acquire new information from their existing schemata. Schemata or schemas which are plural forms of the word, schema, consist of the background information, knowledge and experiences students bring into a learning environment. Just as a mason builds a wall, brick by brick upon an existing foundation, similarly, teachers build upon students' existing schemata by introducing new information. Students assimilate this new information and actively construct meaning, concept by concept. Accommodation occurs when

students reconstruct or reframe previous perceptions about a concept based on the newly acquired knowledge.

Although several classical learning theories are attributed to Piaget, his principles of assimilation and accommodation were more relevant to this research study. Assimilation refers to a learner's tendency to extrapolate meaning from external events by associating those events with what he or she has previously learned or experienced (Flavell, 1996). When learners discern misalignment of newly acquired information with their existing schemas, they make cognitive adjustments that align with the new learning. This is called accommodation (Flavell, 1996). Further, Piaget suggests that children acquire new information by continually interacting with their environments, and in so doing, construct, reconstruct, and refine their spectrums of knowledge (Siegler & Ellis, 1996).

According to Nyaradzo and Thiel-Burgess (2012), Piaget's cognitive constructivist-oriented theories have important implications for English learners. When teachers deliberately seek to determine and understand the backgrounds, knowledge and experiences students bring to the classroom setting, they can facilitate the process of students connecting new information with their existing schemas. With respect to English language development strategies, it is important that teachers create environments and opportunities for students to assess the attributes of the academic material being presented and adjust inconsistencies in their understanding (Hoover, 2015). Clements (1997) recommends that teachers of English learners facilitate assimilation and accommodation of knowledge by diversifying their instructional strategies. There are several means by which teachers can achieve this goal. These include creating opportunities for experiential learning, facilitating peer-to-peer discussions, promoting technology-based learning, sharing artifacts to help students conceptualize information, and planning field trips which have

the potential to illuminate more complex or nebulous concepts. Such experiences can help facilitate the process of students making connections with real life experiences and academic content.

Thus, in the context of Piaget's theoretical perspective, learning is a process whereby children become active participants in the acquisition of knowledge, and teachers serve as facilitators of this process. Historically, teachers have been viewed primarily as lecturers. However, teachers as facilitators provide guidelines for helping students comprehend unfamiliar information and lead them step-by-step in the attainment and comprehension of this knowledge. Teacher-facilitators create the conditions by which students can engage in lively class discussions, work collaboratively to share information and solve problems, and independently unravel complexities through independent research (Clements, 1997). Finally, in the era of Common Core, the teacher as facilitator has become a critical instructional centerpiece, and one that commands active learner participation.

Vygotsky

As a late nineteenth century sociocultural psychologist, Vygotsky's work in cognitive development continues to influence educational research and contemporaneous instructional practice (Verenikina, 2010). One of Vygotsky's contributions to this research study has to do with his sociocultural theory that learning emerges in the context of social interactions between teacher and student (Herb, 1997). When these interactions access students' cultural and experiential backgrounds, students use this information to form mental images, and then convert these mental images into intellectual concepts. Several researchers in the field of language development have assigned relevance to this idea. For example, in the 1980's during the height of apartheid in South Africa, a group of researchers established an English language

development school within the slums of Soweto (Stein, 1993). When students were encouraged to incorporate their own experiences and backgrounds into writing assignments, these researchers found that student motivation and interest in writing improved incrementally.

In yet another study involving English language development, American educators working in a Southeast Asian refugee camp in the Philippines were tasked with teaching children to communicate in oral and written English (Hoyt, 1993). During the 18-week instructional period, students integrated familial backgrounds and experiential knowledge into their oral and written language. The educators reported that students' interest in topics reflecting their own personal backgrounds led to writing which was more creative, complex, and productive. They also reported that students demonstrated improvement in the use of standard, conventional English (Hoyt, 1993).

Many English language development scholars regard Vygotsky's views concerning the sociocultural aspects of learning as important constructs with respect to English language development (Rea & Mercuri, 2006). Accordingly, when students are able to integrate their own backgrounds, experiences and schemas into the learning environment, they are better able to make connections with the targeted learning objectives (Snow & Katz, 2010). Teachers can do this by creating lessons that allow children to freely discuss ideas among peers, and by encouraging them to share their personal experiences in writing. In addition, it is important that teachers assign value to their students' sociocultural spheres of reference by demonstrating a respect for and interest in their familial histories and backgrounds (Snow & Katz, 2010).

Another of Vygotsky's theoretical models that has pertinence to this research study is the zone of proximal development or ZPD (Christmas, Kudzai, & Josiah, 2013). This model presumes that there exists a dimension between what a child already knows and what he or she is

capable of learning through adult intervention. The assumption is that when skills are too difficult for students to master on their own, they need academic guidance and encouragement from a knowledgeable adult or from more capable peers in a collaborative classroom setting (Christmas, Kudzai, & Josiah, 2013).

The most salient features of ZPD with respect to this research study are collaborative student engagement through development of the anticipatory set, teacher input, modeling and guided practice (Hunter, 1982). Activation of students' schemas occurs during the anticipatory set, wherein students are able to connect new information with what they have already learned or experienced. During this segment of a lesson, teachers can become aware of gaps in students' knowledge and address deficits accordingly. Following the anticipatory set, a teacher's skillful and engaging presentation of information along with modeling of the learning objective can help facilitate student learning. Since modeling provides tangible representations of the objective to be mastered, this strategy can be pivotal in bridging experiential knowledge deficits that many students bring to the learning environment, especially those from diverse backgrounds or achievement levels (Goldberg, 1990).

Explicit Instruction

Evolving from the research of theorists such as Marchand-Martella, Slocum, and Martella (2004), Marzano (2003), Rosenshine (2008), and most prominently, Madeline Hunter (1986), explicit instruction represents a compendium of teacher-guided instructional strategies that are designed to improve student learning outcomes (Rosenhine, 2008). A more comprehensive description of the term is offered by Archer and Hughes (2011) who state that, "Explicit instruction is characterized by a series of supports or scaffolds, whereby students are guided through the learning process with clear statements about the purpose and rationale for learning

the new skill, clear explanations and demonstrations of the instructional target, and supported practice with feedback until independent mastery has been achieved” (p. 1). In explicit instruction, students are presented with a lesson’s objective, modeling of the means by which the objective may be attained, and an exemplary final product that demonstrates achievement of the objective. The most salient features of explicit instruction include teachers’ use of explicit, precise, clear, and straightforward communication techniques when introducing academic content, scaffolding-breaking down complex information into more comprehensible units, step-by-step guided instruction with feedback and support, and teacher modeling of the desired skill set (Clabaugh, 2010). According to Archer and Hughes (2011) the use of clear, straightforward language during a lesson has the effect of clarifying information and minimizing confusion or misunderstanding.

In explicit instruction, teachers use scaffolding techniques to break content into more comprehensible units that are based on students’ respective levels of understanding, maturity, and prior knowledge (Archer & Hughes, 2011). As students learn new skills and concepts, teachers use students’ newly acquired knowledge and skills as stepping stones towards mastery of more complex academic material. In education, scaffolding is analogous to the technique workers use when constructing brick and mortar structures. Once the foundation has been laid, construction workers lay row upon row of brick until they have erected the building in its entirety. Once completed, the structure can stand on its own. In explicit instruction, teachers use the same scaffolding techniques to build upon students’ foundational knowledge with new units of information, and continue to introduce new content as instruction progresses.

Scaffolding is particularly important for English learners, students with disabilities, and learners who lack solid academic backgrounds because by introducing content in small,

incremental steps, a teacher can more accurately pinpoint comprehension and knowledge deficits and provide the support necessary to bridge these gaps (Swanson & Siegel, 2001). Scaffolding can also prove beneficial for students for whom the retention of information, organization, and attention prove difficult. The rate at which teachers introduce new information and the time it takes to reduce direct guidance will vary according to the unique needs of their learners. The goal is to gradually withdraw teacher guidance until learners are able to independently achieve the targeted skills.

Guided practice is the stage of explicit instruction wherein students are guided through the process of working towards an instructional goal, while at the same time receiving corrective feedback, encouragement and support from their teacher (Marzano, 2003). Hattie and Timperley (2007) describe corrective feedback as "...information provided by an agent (teacher, peer, parent, experience) regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding" (p. 102), and maintain that "...when feedback is combined with effective instruction in classrooms, it can be very powerful in enhancing learning" (p. 104). According to Hattie, corrective feedback during guided practice is a highly effective instructional strategy (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). In fact, after having analyzed approximately 8,000 studies that focused on effective instructional practices, Hattie (1992) concluded that "The most powerful single modification that enhances achievement is feedback. The simplest prescription for improving education must be *dollops of feedback*" (p. 9). According to Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (2001), guided practice with frequent checks for understanding and corrective feedback should occur simultaneously and in unison for greatest impact upon student learning.

Modeling is an instructional strategy in which a teacher uses tactile representations to demonstrate to students what they will be expected to do at the end of a lesson (Linsin, 2015).

Modeling is a means of actively communicating expectations for learning to students. During modeling students are able to see what a targeted objective or finished product looks like, as well as how it may be achieved (Borich, 2007). Examples of effective modeling strategies include kinesthetic demonstrations, the use of Venn diagrams, graphic organizers, or other types of advance organizers, compare and contrast models, and walking students through the completion of a task as it is being explained or demonstrated (Bouchard, 2005). Modeling is an important part of a lesson because it provides students with a perfect example of a completed academic product (Intel Teach Program-Designing Effective Products, 2015).

In summary, explicit instruction is a process whereby teachers guide students towards mastery of an objective through the implementation of several incremental steps (Archer & Hughes, 2011). Hollingsworth and Ybarra (2018) posited that mastery of academic material is enhanced when teachers utilize explicit instruction pedagogy in the planning and execution of their lessons. In explicit instruction, the role of the teacher is to provide comprehensible input, modeling of the targeted learning, scaffolding, and continuous feedback. As learners interact with the new learning and observe their teachers' modeling behaviors, they expand their schemas to accommodate additional information, make mental adjustments, internally create rules about new concepts, use deductive reasoning to make assumptions, and draw conclusions (Berkeley Graduate Division, 2019).

Madeline Hunter Instructional Design Model

The Hunter model not only represents explicit instruction in its purest form, but expands upon this approach by outlining a series of steps for teachers to follow during lesson presentation (Owen, 2019). These steps are the (a) anticipatory set, (b) objective of lesson, (c) lesson's purpose, (d) teacher input, (e) modeling, (f) checking for understanding, (g) guided practice,

(h) independent practice, (i) closure, and (j) assessment (Marzano, 2003). Originally, the Hunter model embodied seven, distinct steps. However, in subsequent years, educators expanded upon and enhanced the model to better represent contemporary educational practices. This research study coalesced the major tenets of the Madeline Hunter model and explicit instruction into its experimental design.

Madeline Hunter was one of the first pioneers of mastery learning. Mastery learning was a concept articulated in the 1950's by Bloom and others to describe a system of instruction whereby instructional content is introduced to students in incremental steps until mastery is attained (Guskey, 2007). Hunter expanded upon Bloom's ideas to create a model in which teachers follow a sequence of steps during instructional delivery that ideally leads to student mastery of the learning objective (Lambert, 1985). The Hunter model encapsulates the cognitive constructivist theoretical platforms of Piaget (Caruso, 2019) and Vygotsky (McLeod, 2018b) in that teachers build upon students' existing schemas through the scaffolding of instruction. Through strategic scaffolding, along with active student engagement, students are gradually released to independently navigate instructional content. Teachers frequently check for student understanding as each step in the process unfolds, and end each lesson by assessing student mastery of the lesson's learning objective.

The Hunter model instructional sequence has a theoretical basis in Vygotsky's theory of proximal development, whereby students construct knowledge from the teacher's hands-on facilitation of the learning process (Heritage, Walqui, & Linqanti, 2015). This strategy is also called scaffolding (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). During this process, the teacher frequently checks for understanding, and provides immediate feedback to students. Several components of Hunter's instructional sequence have been shown to be beneficial for English

learners, particularly the establishment of learning objectives, guided practice, corrective feedback, checking for understanding, and frequent assessment (Ybarra, 2014). However, Marzano (2003) points out that the Hunter model was never intended as a rigid blueprint for instructional design. Rather, each element of the model should be flexible enough to allow for robust student engagement, innovative critical thinking, collaborative formats, and student sharing of information (2003).

Anticipatory set. Anticipatory set is a term used to describe the instructional process of accessing and building upon a learner's existing experiential and intellectual schemas in order to help make academic content more comprehensible (Gonzalez, 2014). For English learners, this component of instruction is critical, as many of these students lack the cultural, experiential, historic, or practical perspectives necessary to ascribe relevance to a particular subject, topic, or concept (2014). According to Davis (2013), when teachers take the time to help students make connections to the targeted learning, the intentionality of such actions creates a culturally responsive educational environment that is highly beneficial to learners, especially those who are learning to read, write, and speak English. Adams (2012) argues that a lesson will be less successful if the teacher does not first establish a foundation of relevancy and connection to students' lives. Thus, as students are able to make connections to content by way of prior knowledge and experience, it is presumed that learning will ensue.

Activating students' background knowledge through the anticipatory set is a concept drawn from an aspect of constructivist thinking, particularly that of Vygotsky, which proposes that learning proceeds from interactions children make with their environments (Leong & Bodrova, 2019). These interactions occur for example, between a child and inanimate objects such as books or toys, as well as from interactions between a child and others such as parents,

teachers, siblings or playmates. Children actively construct information from these interactions and apply them in the acquisition of new knowledge and skills (Bodrova, 2019).

Teachers can activate background knowledge at the beginning of a lesson by asking students questions, connecting the learning objective to what students already know, pointing out the relevance of the lesson, having students view or read about the material they will cover, and sharing objects that make connections with students' cultures, backgrounds or experiences. Another adherent of activating background knowledge to improve student learning was Maria Montessori who made the statement, "Education is not something which the teacher does, but a natural process which develops spontaneously in the human being. It is not acquired by listening to words, but in virtue of experiences in which the child acts on his environment" (Gonzalez, 2015).

Cummins (1996) notes that the building of background knowledge is essential for making academic content more comprehensible for English learners, as well as for those students who struggle academically. He suggests that teachers can achieve this objective by availing students of voluminous amounts of rich literature, encouraging lively class discussions, and promoting shared creative writing. Other strategies teachers can use during the anticipatory set phase of a lesson include connecting previously learned material to the targeted objective, using analogies to explain complex concepts or terms, creating advance organizers, presenting real-life artifacts, showing relevant videos, experiencing learning outside of the classroom, and encouraging student-to-student verbal discourse.

Building students' background knowledge before launching into the core of a lesson is not necessarily a contemporaneous or novel instructional approach. In fact, Socrates challenged his students by first determining what they knew, and then encouraged them through continuous,

freely flowing discussions to help them make connections with the targeted learning (Wilberding, 2014). In Hunter's lesson design, the building of background knowledge, also called the anticipatory set is a necessary precursor to instructional delivery of new academic information (Rosenshine, 2012). For English learners, this lesson component is important, as many of these students enter school without extensive experiential or academic knowledge in English (Rea & Mercuri, 2006).

Objective. Whereas standards (i.e., Common Core State Standards) describe what students at each grade level should know by the end of the school year (Lee, 2019), a learning objective is a statement of what a student will be able to do by the end of a lesson (Hall, 2016). However, embedded lesson objectives can be inferred from a standard. For example, one of the Common Core writing standards for fourth grade states that students should be able to write a well-organized, clear and coherent, multiple-paragraph composition (Common Core State Standards, 2019). Obviously, teachers would not be able to teach students how to accomplish this task in one lesson. Rather, instruction in composition development would proceed in a stepwise manner, first teaching students for example, how to summarize the main idea of a paragraph in one sentence. It is therefore important that teachers first isolate a single objective, with the ultimate goal being that of standards mastery (Snow & Katz, 2010). In the age of CCSS, many teachers elect to collaboratively glean learning objectives from the broadly articulated standards. In the professional community, this process is sometimes called unwrapping the standard or standards deconstruction (Lexington School District Four, 2017). If for example, a grade four Common Core English language arts standard states that students should be able to cite evidence from text, teachers could write an objective which requires that students be able to

write details from a text in the order of relevance or importance (The Achievement Network, 2010).

During the 1960's, Mager (1962) expounded on the learning objective premise with a recommendation that three essential elements be embedded within any learning objective statement. These are a description of what the learner will be able to do, the conditions under which the learning will take place, and the criteria that will be used to determine mastery (Mager, 1962). From the time of Mager's research to the present, learning objectives have continued to hold positions of prominence on the educational landscape. However, they have been expanded upon and reconfigured into what are called SMART goals. Although several variations exist, in general, SMART is an acronym used to describe a learning objective that is specific, measurable, achievable, results-based, and time-bound. An example of a grade five SMART goal statement might be written as follows: Each student will add fractions with unlike denominators with at least 80% accuracy by the end of Unit 1, as measured by the Week 4 math formative assessment. This statement specifies what students will be able to do based on a grade-level-appropriate standard, describes the criterion for success, and establishes a timeline for goal achievement.

Marzano (2003) concluded from his research in effective instructional practices, that stating a lesson's objective has a statistically significant, positive impact on student learning. He maintained however, that there are both effective and ineffective means of introducing lesson objectives. Ineffective means of introducing an objective include writing the objective on the board and failing to reference it throughout the lesson, assuming that students know what the targeted learning is, not clearly articulating what the objective entails, not making a clear distinction between lesson objectives and lesson activities, and creating lesson objectives that are too broad. Contrariwise, effective introduction of a lesson's objective includes the teacher taking

time to fully explain the objective, revisiting the objective throughout the lesson, having students re-state the objective in their own words, and explaining the objective in a variety of ways in order to make it more comprehensible for diverse groups of learners (Marzano, 2003).

Purpose of lesson. The rationale for conveying the lesson's purpose at the beginning of a lesson is that students are afforded a more concise and focused perspective about the targeted learning (Fisher & Frey, 2011). Several studies have demonstrated that stating a lesson's purpose during instruction leads to improved academic achievement (State of New South Wales, 2014; Fisher & Frey, 2011; Skowron, 2014). As with the case of the learning objective, a lesson's purpose should also be clearly articulated to students so they understand what they will be expected to learn and why the targeted learning is relevant. Daniels and Bizar (2005) maintain that a teacher's clarification of a lesson's objective and purpose creates a path for students' success. Students who are unsure of what they are expected to accomplish by the end of a lesson may become confused, easily distracted, discouraged, and even inclined to give up. In their book, *Classroom instruction that works: Research-Based strategies for increasing student achievement*, the authors state, "Being in a classroom without knowing the direction for learning is similar to taking a purposeless trip to an unfamiliar city" (Dean, Hubbell, Pitler & Stone, 2013, p. 2). Thus, comprehensible communication of a lesson's purpose is considered by many of those engaged in educational research to be essential component of a well- structured lesson.

Input of content. Krashen postulated that students' oral, written and reading comprehension skills are enhanced by teachers' strategic introduction of academic content which has a direct link to the targeted learning objective. Although most of Krashen's research focused on improving English learners' language acquisition skills, the results of his research have application for any diverse group of learners (Young-Scholten & Piske, 2009). Krashen (1982)

coined this mode of teacher-to-student communication as *comprehensible input*. During the delivery of comprehensible input, students connect academic content with their own contextual schemas, environment, experiences, and social interactions.

Krashen's views are consistent with those of cognitive constructivists such as Vygotsky (Verenikina, 2010) and Piaget (Jean Piaget, 2019), who inferred that students acquire knowledge incrementally, as they receive information from those whose levels of knowledge and understanding exceed theirs. In modern-day pedagogical vernacular, this is called scaffolding (Heritage, Walqui, & Linqunti, 2015). Scaffolding can be described as the varying levels of support teachers provide in order to enhance students' comprehension of academic material (2015). Scaffolding involves breaking content into more comprehensible units. This approach is particularly important for students who are learning to navigate the complexities of a second language, students with disabilities, and those who struggle academically (August & Shanahan, 2006).

The Hunter model incorporates the mechanism of scaffolding throughout each phase of a lesson. This is particularly apparent during the anticipatory set, during which teachers ascertain what students already know, and build upon this knowledge through the introduction of ideas and concepts that serve to make content more relevant, relatable, relevant, and understandable. Throughout each lesson phase, the teacher continues to scaffold information, with frequent checks for understanding and continuous, clearly communicated feedback. The feedback students receive constitutes the type of comprehensible input described in Krashen's theory, and according to Marzano, is a critical tool that can be used to help students construct meaning from abstruse or unfamiliar subject content (Marzano, 2003).

Modeling. During the modeling phase of Hunter’s instructional sequence, the teacher provides an example of the targeted learning objective, so that students have a clear understanding of the expectations for mastery (Hunter, 1982). “Modeling is a teaching activity that involves demonstrating to learners what you want them to do or think” (Borich, 2007, p. 239). Hill and Miller (2013) maintain that modeling is a highly effective practice for making content more easily within the intellectual grasp of students. According to Borich (2007), “When used correctly, modeling can assist learners to acquire a variety of intellectual and social skills more effortlessly and efficiently than with verbal, gestural, or physical prompts alone” (p. 239).

One modeling strategy teachers can use is leading students through an objectives-based learning template. For example, a template for essay writing might include the lesson’s objective and purpose, step-by-step guidelines that lead to mastery of the objectives, examples of each step, and representation of a final product. Some of the other ways that lessons can be modeled are by way of peer-to-peer interaction, video tutorials, field trip experiences, and presentation of the perfect example of a completed lesson activity (Olson, Matuchniak, Chung, Stumpf, & Farkas, 2017).

Modeling is consistent with Vygotsky’s cognitive constructivist platform, which maintains that students require ongoing and repeated representations of the targeted objective during instruction, building new concepts upon those which have been previously learned (David, 2014). As previously referenced in this research study, Vygotsky called this teaching-learning scheme, the zone of proximal development (David, 2014). During the early sixties, Bruner (1961) advanced major elements of Vygotsky’s learning theory through the promotion of an instructional strategy he called scaffolding.

As previously explained, scaffolding is a process by which teachers build upon students' existing or previously learned knowledge as new concepts are being introduced. Effective scaffolding techniques meet students at their present levels of understanding, and provide additional networks of support to help them achieve mastery. Examples of scaffolding include the introduction of learning templates or graphic organizers, walking students through deductive reasoning activities, one-on-one teacher guidance, and the use technology-enhanced learning. As students acquire additional knowledge, scaffolding supports are gradually withdrawn from the learning environment (Olson, Scarcella & Matuchniak, 2015). The ultimate goal of scaffolding is independent mastery of a learning objective.

Guided practice. Guided practice entails strategically walking students through each step of a learning process, gradually withdrawing direct teacher support until students acquire the skills necessary to manage the task independently (Bouchard, 2005). In a review of research on guided practice and feedback during instruction for English learners, Lyster and Hirohide (2007) identified positive correlations between instructive feedback and improved student achievement. This feedback was in the form of prompts, cues, and recasts. A prompt is a technique used to draw students' attention to information, concepts, or models that will inform them of an error they have made. A cue is a subtle or overt signal given by a teacher to redirect students' thinking about a concept or procedural action. Recasting is an instructional technique in which the teacher repeats what a student has articulated verbally or in writing, with the expectation that the student will self-correct the error. Lyster and Hirohide (2007) found that recasting was not as effective of a corrective strategy as prompts and cues, since students might not be able to make connections between the teacher's restatement and the desired student elicitation.

Checking for understanding. Checking for understanding is a strategy whereby teachers monitor and evaluate student learning continuously throughout instructional delivery (Rosenshine, 2012). By gauging student understanding during a lesson, teachers are able to modify, adjust, or differentiate instruction as necessary (Bogdanovich, 2018). Guided practice and frequent checks for understanding with corrective feedback are actually interchangeable processes. Checking for understanding is also a type of formative assessment (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 2019). Formative assessment refers to an ongoing, informal evaluative process in which teachers determine students' progress towards the mastery of skills or concepts (Bogdanovich, 2018). Formative and summative assessments differ in that formative assessments identify the progress students are making while learning, while summative assessments measure mastery at the end of an instructional period (National Teachers of Mathematics, 2019). In order to improve student success, teachers should assess student learning frequently throughout a lesson, even if the lesson is a review of material previously taught. Thus, checking for understanding clarifies for teachers what their students do and do not know, and provides an ongoing process of support for students as they learn a new skill.

There is a broad body of research supporting checking for understanding with corrective feedback during instruction (Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001). Corrective feedback can be described as a set of actions teachers take to respond to students' inaccurate representations of academic content (Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001). Frequent checks for understanding with accompanying corrective feedback should take place throughout a lesson, thus enabling teachers to assess learning, as well as adjust their instructional approach as necessary. Research studies indicate that corrective feedback that merely corrects wrong answers or provides students with the correct response is counterproductive, and may even result in students becoming

frustrated and discouraged (Bangert-Downs, Kulik, Kulick, & Morgan, 1991). Instead, during corrective feedback teachers should help students better comprehend concepts and discover their errors through careful guidance that promotes critical thinking, analysis, and independent discovery. Such an approach has been found to correlate with increased gains in student achievement (Lysakowski & Walberg, 1982).

Even though the goal of corrective feedback is to guide students towards independent discovery, which is not to say that feedback should be vague. Rather, in order for feedback to have the desired learning outcome, it should be explicit, relevant to the objective, and provide clear criteria for success (Bunch, 2013). This strategy should be an integral component of ELD instruction, as research has demonstrated that frequent checks for understanding with corrective feedback positively affect student achievement (Holmund, et al., 2010). In fact, the effect size for constructive teacher feedback with respect to student achievement has shown to have a range of 1.15 to .49 (Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001). Some techniques teachers can use in the implementation of this instructional strategy include directly asking students questions, listening to students' discussions during cooperative learning, or observing how students solve problems individually or as a group. Table 2.1 presents some additional techniques teachers can use as they check for understanding and provide corrective feedback.

Table 2.1

Checking for Understanding Techniques

Checking for Understanding Strategy	Description	Individual Student	Peer-to-Peer or Small Group	Whole Class
Choral response	Whole class response to a query			✓
Think-Pair-Share	Student informs peer		✓	
Hand or finger signals	Hands or fingers can indicate comprehension, non-comprehension, agreement, non-agreement.	✓		✓
Philosophical chairs	Group discussions revolve around a particular issue.		✓	
Electronic clickers	Clickers can indicate comprehension, non-comprehension, agreement, non-agreement	✓		✓
Exit ticket	Students write a response of answer to a question or problem prior to dismissal.	✓	✓	✓
Entrance ticket	Students write a response to a question from the board, etc., as soon as they enter the classroom.	✓		✓
Returned homework	Check homework in order to evaluate degree of mastery.	✓	✓	✓
Sticky note flags	Students attach sticky notes to information from text or returned homework to inform teachers of challenges they may be having with a concept or skill.	✓		
KWL Chart	KWL is an acronym for: K - What I Know W - What I Want to know L - What I want to Learn Students complete the chart with teacher guidance.		✓	✓

Table 2.1. Compiled from ideas generated from *An ASCD Study Guide for Checking for Understanding: Formative Assessment Techniques for Your Classroom, 2nd Edition*, by D. Fisher and N. Frey. Copyright 2014 by ASCD.

Independent practice. During independent practice, students work with minimal or no teacher guidance or intervention. The purpose of independent practice is to determine how well students have learned and are able to apply what they have just been taught (Borich, 2007). However, teachers continue to monitor students' progress and check for understanding during this phase of the instructional sequence. Once collected by the teacher, completed student work is evaluated to determine the degree to which the learning objectives have been achieved. A teacher's ultimate goal is to ensure that students can independently and successfully perform specific academic tasks (Borich, 2007).

Most would agree that getting students to a point where they can independently complete an assigned task is the ultimate goal of every committed teaching professional. Independent practice provides students with an opportunity to demonstrate mastery of academic content (Lewis, 2018). During independent practice, teachers should be able to ascertain the degree to which students have grasped a concept. Students can be engaged in independent practice through the mechanisms of verbal or written communication, reproduction of what has been modeled by the teacher, performance of a task, or application of a procedural concept (Bouchard, 2005).

Closure. Closure refers to the process whereby teachers restate the lesson's objective, purpose and relevance, and highlight important points that were covered during instruction (Hunter, 1982). Closure and assessment can occur simultaneously, in that teachers continue to query students about what they have learned, engage them in discussion about the topic, and encourage peer-to-peer verbal interactions. Parts of a lesson that appear to be confusing to students are clarified during closure. Closure can also provide valuable information to teachers about how to plan subsequent lessons so that students can be more successful.

During closure, a teacher references the original learning objective, re-constructs crucial lesson content, clarifies concepts or procedures, provides a summary of important points, helps students see relationships, and asks cognitively demanding questions to help students critically think about the learning that has just transpired (Stiliana, 2017). When teachers quickly usher students out the door following a lesson without solidifying learning through the important mechanism of closure, students are not necessarily left with a lasting conceptualization of what was taught (Reese, 2014). This means that during the subsequent lesson, academic material may need to be re-taught. Closure is not exclusively teacher-directed. Students can also actively participate in closure by explaining what they have learned to each other.

Assessment. Assessment is any process which measures student learning based upon a specified standard (Ainsworth, Brigg, Wiggs, Besser & Almeida, 2012). The purpose of assessment is to acquire data about students' academic progress towards a specific set of learning goals, and subsequently use this data to make instructional decisions which will help students advance towards mastery (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010). Formal assessments are tests which not only measure the degree to which students have mastered a specific set of pre-determined learning objectives, they also compare students' test results with those of other students on a district, state, or national level (Williams, 2017). Examples of formal assessments include standardized state exams, norm-referenced tests, end-of-chapter exams, content-based midterm or final exams, final papers, and other test instruments that indicate the level of mastery at the end of an instructional period. Criteria for mastery on formal assessments are pre-determined by the rubric utilized by the exam-issuing entity (Williams, 2017).

Informal assessments are conducted by a teacher throughout the learning cycle, and are not used to compare students to other, larger groups (Borich, 2007). Rather, informal

assessments provide a set of blueprints of student progress from which the teacher can modify or plan instruction to meet students' academic needs. Examples of informal assessments include students' responses to teacher queries, work samples, and observed pupil progress during instruction (Borich, 2007). For assessments to be useful, teachers should administer the type of assessment that will most accurately provide information about student progress or mastery (Reeves, 2004). There are many types of assessment tools teachers can use to evaluate their students' progress towards mastery of a learning objective. In the explicit instruction model, some kind of informal or formal assessment generally follows independent practice. These can be in the forms of whole-class question and answer sessions, ticket-out-the-door written responses, quizzes, student writing and various other types of student products designed to provide evidence of what students have learned (Borich, 2007).

In conclusion, Marzano (2003) correlates teachers' implementation of several components of the Hunter model with statistically significant improvement in student learning and achievement. Specifically, he identifies the establishment and communication of learning objectives, advance organizers, purposeful cues, non-linguistic depictions, teacher feedback, and student collaboration as strategies that significantly improve student academic achievement (Marzano, 2003). In this research study, the explicit prewriting approach employed by teacher participants represented a compilation of instructional methodologies that were synthesized from Marzano's research on effective instructional practices (Marzano, 2003), conclusions drawn from Hattie's research on corrective feedback (Waack, 2018), and most significantly, Hunter's model of instructional design (Hunter, 1982). Figure 2.3 is pictorial encapsulation of the collective theoretical frameworks for the explicit instruction approach utilized in this study.





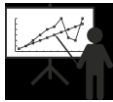





	ANTICIPATORY SET <i>Build upon students' existing knowledge, backgrounds, and experiences.</i>	1
	OBJECTIVE <i>Convey to students what they will be expected to do by the end of the lesson.</i>	2
	PURPOSE <i>Explain lesson's purpose in order to narrow the focus during instruction and learning.</i>	3
	INPUT OF CONTENT <i>Teach specific content, concept, etc. to students.</i>	4
	MODELING <i>Provide clear examples of the targeted learning objective. Show how to demonstrate mastery.</i>	5
	CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING AND PROVIDE CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK <i>Check frequently for understanding; respond to pupils' inaccurate representations/interpretations of content.</i>	6
	GUIDED PRACTICE <i>Teacher guides students as they practice the targeted learning.</i>	7
	INDEPENDENT PRACTICE <i>Students practice the targeted learning with minimal teacher assistance.</i>	8
	CLOSURE <i>Revisit objective to: summarize; clarify; ask questions; identify gaps in comprehension.</i>	9
	ASSESSMENT <i>Measure student learning: Ex: exit tickets, questioning; peer-to-peer discussions; quiz, etc.</i>	10

Figure 2.3. Explicit Instruction Model Employed in Study. Adapted from *What Works in Schools: Translating Research into Action*, by R. Marzano, 2003, pp. 78-84. Copyright 2003 by ASCD, Alexandria, VA.

Stages of Concern with Sample Teacher Responses and Scoring.

Concerns-Oriented Educational Change Theories

In that the qualitative phase of this research study focused on teachers' views, perceptions, and concerns about learning a new instructional strategy, educational change theory was deemed to be an appropriate frame of reference. Educational change theory is concerned with the process of undergoing individual, group, or organizational change with the goal of improving academic outcomes (Fullan, 2010). Educational reform theorist such as Fuller, Parsons and Watkins (1973), and Holloway (2003) maintain that when teachers are introduced to innovative or unfamiliar pedagogy, they often become fearful of what the new strategy will entail, how it will affect them personally and professionally, whether or not they will be able to successfully master the strategy, and how their students will fare academically as a result of the new instructional practice (Holloway, 2003). Therefore, change agents should make efforts to understand and address individuals' attitudes, fears, perspectives, and concerns when planning to launch instructional initiatives that teachers will be responsible for implementing (Senge, 2012).

Educational change theory as it relates to education was born out of a position that teacher training and professional development endeavors are more effective when they are grounded by an appreciation for the attitudes, belief systems, perceptions, and reticence many teachers bring to the training environment, as well as into their own classrooms (Fuller, Parsons, & Watkins, 1973). Burns (2007) goes so far as to state that initiators of change will not be successful in their efforts if they fail to consider the needs, beliefs, concerns, anxieties and fears of those who will be navigating, facilitating, and experiencing systemic change. Fuller, Parsons and Watkins (Fuller, Parsons, & Watkins, 1973) suggest that after teachers' concerns are addressed, change will be observed gradually over a period of time. These theories are

consistent with several others that focus on teachers' concerns about educational change. Some of the more prominent within this genre of educational change theory include the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (Hall & Hord, 1987), affective domain (Doherty, 2014), self-actualization (Olson, 2013), and Senge's mental models (Senge et al., 2012). The research undergirding each of these theoretical models is discussed in the following sections.

Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM)

The Concerns-Based Adoption Model or CBAM represents a set of analytical practices for measuring and evaluating teachers' concerns about adopting a new instructional technique, process or innovation (Christensen & Turner, 2014). CBAM, as well as adaptations of this model have been used by many educational change facilitators. For example, the Department of Education has used a CBAM survey process to make recommendations for improving teacher professional development in the United States (George, Hall, & Stiegelbauer, 2006).

Proponents of CBAM make seven key assumptions (Hall & Hord, 2015). First, for a reform to be effective as well as sustainable, the change agent must take time to understand and empathize with the points of view of teachers who will carry out the reform. Second, change agents must recognize that change is a process that may proceed slowly over time. Thus, it is not a one-time event. The third assumption is that as a change process proceeds, change agents can anticipate with some degree of accuracy, issues and problems that may arise along the way and address them as necessary. Fourth, innovations can represent tangible assets such as curricula, textbooks or even a change in environments. Innovation can also include virtual learning, contemporaneous pedagogy, diverse procedures, or new processes. Fifth, innovation and implementation are two entirely different mechanisms. Whereas innovation is an idea that has yet to be birthed, implementation is the actual birthing of the innovation. Each of these concepts

is constrained by antecedents that must be first put into place. One important antecedent of innovation is the establishment of pre-planning and brainstorming sessions so that potential challenges and issues can first be identified. Other important antecedents of implementation include taking teachers' concerns and perspectives into consideration and ensuring that support for implementation is available to teachers at every juncture in the implementation process.

Sixth, innovators must recognize that for authentic, meaningful change to occur, individuals will need to modify their thinking, attitudes, and behaviors. Thus, consideration and attention must be given to those individuals who are inclined to be non-participative, apathetic, or oppositional. Without full participation of its implementers, innovations will not lead to the desired outcomes – the most relevant being that of student achievement.

Finally, administrators should not operate as autonomous change agents. Several contemporaneous research studies have concluded that educational reform is more sustainable when teachers, parents, and other stakeholders become collaboratively involved as agents and facilitators of change (Fullan, 2010; Senge et al., 2012; Donovan & Green, 2014; DuFour et al., 2006; Morgan, Rutledge & Kohler-Evans, 2017). This suggests that administrators should strive to create opportunities for shared leadership and decision making when proposing a change. In this way, the perspectives and concerns of all stakeholders can be acknowledged, validated and appropriately addressed.

Stages of Concern

Prior to launching an educational reform, the Concerns Based Adoption Model can be used to identify, analyze and evaluate teachers' concerns (Hall & Hord, 1987). Once this process has been initiated, change agents are able to plan professional development and training that more closely aligns with the needs of participants. One of tools of analysis utilized in CBAM

methodology is the Stages of Concern process (AIR, 2018). The Stages of Concern framework is comprised of categories that correspond to specific areas of concerns teachers may experience when learning new programs, processes, or pedagogy. Several analytical tools can be used to collect this data, including open-ended responses, interviews, focus groups, journals, or the CBAM Stages of Concern Questionnaire or SOCQ (Hall & Hord, 2015). Results from pre- and post- innovation data can be used to address teachers' concerns and to plan more meaningful and effective teacher professional development and training.

Although there have been adaptations made to the SOCQ format by researchers since its inception in the 1980's, the original SOCQ consisted of a set of thirty-five questions that focused on teachers' feelings and perceptions about an educational innovation that they will learn about and implement (Bullard, Rutledge & Kohler-Evans, 2017). Once data from the survey is collected, teachers' response types are compared to and ultimately placed into one of seven Stages of Concern categories that represent a continuum of affective-oriented views, attitudes, perceptions, and emotions. These categories are awareness, informational, personal, management, consequence, and collaboration. A response that falls into one of these categories receives a score from zero to six (Bullard, Rutledge & Kohler-Evans, 2017). Although the SOCQ instrument was not utilized in this research study, the leveled SOCQ category descriptions were used to analyze participants' journal entries and their responses to 20 interview questions. These SOCQ categories are discussed in greater detail in the following sections of this dissertation.

The zero level of the stages of concern process is the awareness stage. In the awareness stage an individual does not have any concept of the initiative, and is not particularly interested in hearing or learning about it. Teachers who respond to a question within this range on the

questionnaire are assigned a score of zero. Level one is the information stage. It is at this level that individuals become somewhat interested in the initiative and desire to learn more about how it works. Level two represents the personal stage, where teachers begin to consider how the change will affect their lives and professions. The third level is called the management stage, wherein teachers become concerned about the time they will need to learn, implement, and master the innovation. They also begin to wonder about the resources that will be necessary for successful implementation. The consequence stage is the fourth level, in which teachers become concerned about how their students will be impacted by the change. The fifth level represents the collaboration stage. At this stage, teachers are interested in collaboratively applying the innovation, as well as in observing others during its implementation. The sixth level is the refocusing stage. It is at this point that individuals begin to ponder ways the initiative could be improved upon, as well as whether there are better options. Individuals whose questionnaire responses correspond to the refocusing level are assigned a six. It is at this stage that although teachers have learned, adopted, implemented and adapted to an initiative, they continue to explore ideas and strategies that could lead to improvements in professional development, implementation, or student achievement (Bullard, Rutledge, & Kohler-Evans, 2017). In this research study, a modified version of SOCQ such as that displayed in Figure 2.4 was used to identify and assess teachers' concerns about explicit prewriting instruction.

STAGES OF CONCERNS	SCORE	SAMPLE TEACHER RESPONSES
0 – AWARENESS ✓ Disinterested ✓ Apathetic ✓ Unknowledgeable about initiative.	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I don't know anything about it. ▪ I'm not interested in learning about it. ▪ I can't add anything else to my schedule. ▪ What we have already is working just fine.
1 – INFORMATIONAL ✓ Curious about initiative ✓ Shows interest. ✓ Wants more details about how it works.	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I'm curious to know how it works. ▪ I need more details. ▪ I need to know exactly how it's going to work before committing.
2 – PERSONAL ✓ Wants to know how it will affect one's job performance and/or evaluation. ✓ Wants to know the personal impact. ✓ Wants to know the professional impact.	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How will this affect my job? ▪ Will this affect my performance review? ▪ What happens if I don't do it well?
3 – MANAGEMENT ✓ Assessing amount of time required. ✓ Assessing required amount of preparation. ✓ Thinks about needed resources.	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Will I have the time to implement this correctly? ▪ Can I manage this initiative and still adequately perform my other duties? ▪ Will I have the resources and materials I need to implement this effectively?
4 – CONSEQUENCE ✓ Wants to know impact upon pupils. ✓ Wants to know how students will be affected.	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Will this lead to higher student achievement? ▪ What about my struggling students and Els? ▪ How will it affect my special education pupils? ▪ What about my high achieving pupils?
5 – COLLABORATION ✓ Interested in sharing information with colleagues and others. ✓ Interested in watching others implement strategy.	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can we talk about it more at our next staff meeting? ▪ I'd like to know how it's going with other teachers. ▪ Would I be able to observe other teachers who are implementing this initiative?
6 – REFOCUSING ✓ Begins to think of ways to improve concept. ✓ Begins think about different ways to use the strategy.	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What if we expanded upon the idea by..... ▪ I have an idea for making it work even better. ▪ I would like to share some ideas about how I think we could improve upon the strategy.

Figure 2.4. CBAM Stages of Concern with Sample Teacher Responses and Scoring. Adapted from *Change in Schools: Facilitating the Process* by G. Hall and S. Hord, 1987, pp. 58-70. Copyright 1987 by the State University of New York.

As previously articulated, the CBAM Stages of Concern framework represents a body of educational change theory that focuses on teachers' concerns with respect to their participation in new initiatives or instructional practices (Hall & Hord, 2015). Several empirical studies have emphasized the importance of considering teachers' concerns when in the process of planning or instituting school reforms (Holloway, 2003; Knight, 2007; Charalambos & Philippou, 2010; Christesen & Turner, 2014; Bullard, Rutledge & Kohl-Evans, 2017). For example, in a study where teachers' attitudes and concerns about learning a new mathematics approach were assessed prior to its application in the classroom, these preliminary actions resulted in enhanced acceptance and use of the mathematics approach (Nielsen & Turner, 1987). Results from several empirical studies have suggested that evaluating teachers' concerns about new instructional practices prior to implementation can lead to more rewarding professional development experiences, more frequent classroom application of the practice, and improved student learning outcomes (Kohler-Evans, Calhoun & Cooper, 2014). One aspect of educational reform that is frequently cited is sustainability of the innovation. Telzrow and Beebe (2002) have observed that often there is not a direct correlation between teachers' willingness to accept a reformative practice and their willingness or ability to sustain that practice. Sanders and Horn (1998) therefore maintain that utilization of the CBAM or other affective domain-oriented approaches before, during, and after targeted professional development not only positively impact teachers' training experiences inside and outside of the classroom environment, but also improve chances for sustainability of the reform. In fact, diminished application of an educational initiative has been shown to occur more frequently and profoundly when deliberate, targeted professional development and training are not implemented on an ongoing, continuous basis (Noell et al., 2000).

In this study, adaptation of three CBAM tools of analysis were employed in order to gain an understanding of teachers' concerns with respect to learning about and implementing explicit prewriting instruction. Specifically, teachers who participated in the study responded to interview questions that focused on their previous knowledge and experience with writing instruction, as well as questions which related to teachers' concerns before, during, and after the six-week writing intervention. Teachers also recorded their experiences in journals. This data was collected and later subjected to qualitative data analysis. During analysis of the data, references were made to CBAM Stages Concern theory in order to interpret and better understand teachers' impressions of the writing intervention strategy.

Affective Domain

Bloom described the affective domain as the internalized set of emotions learners experience when required to learn new skills, techniques, processes or academic content (Clark, 2015). Attitudes, fears, concerns, acceptance, views, biases, anger, personal views, values, apathy, and other internalized feelings and perspectives are all illustrative of the affective domain (Clark, 2015). In the context of education, the affective domain refers to the range of emotions individuals who are tasked with learning a new skill or concept may experience (The Peak Performance Center, 2019). Bloom and posited that the affective domain is an additional portal through which individuals access information, knowledge and skills (Halawi, 2009). Moreover, the cognitive domain, consisting of several hierarchical levels of learning that ranging from simplistic to more cognitively demanding categories of learning was formulated by Bloom (Walsh, 2010). This hierarchy is referred to as Bloom's taxonomy, and it is a model that continues to be utilized by teachers in the creation of content-based learning objectives. For the qualitative component of this research study, the affective domain theory as proposed by

Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia (Bilon, 2019) was referenced in order gain a better perspective and understanding about teachers' views and concerns about learning explicit prewriting instructional strategies.

The affective domain model features five levels that explain the progression of internalized emotional and psychological experiences individuals may encounter when learning new material (Borich, 2007). These levels in order of progression are receiving, responding, valuing, organization, and characterization (Borich, 2007). At the receiving level, individuals are aware of the targeted concepts, processes or skills and are willing to tolerate them; however, they may be somewhat apathetic about learning the new concepts or skills. At the responding level, individuals comply with directives to adopt the skill, and may even volunteer to enact parts of the process. At the valuing level, individuals desire to be perceived as wanting to learn the material, although they may not be personally committed to the assigning of personal value to the learning. In the organization stage, learners assign value to the learning and rationalize it as a worthy venture in their acquisition of knowledge and information. The characterization stage exemplifies a values-driven, harmonious, internal co-existence with the new skill, as well as a willingness and readiness to adopt it. Figure 2.5 summarizes the five levels of the affective domain, and includes descriptors for each level.

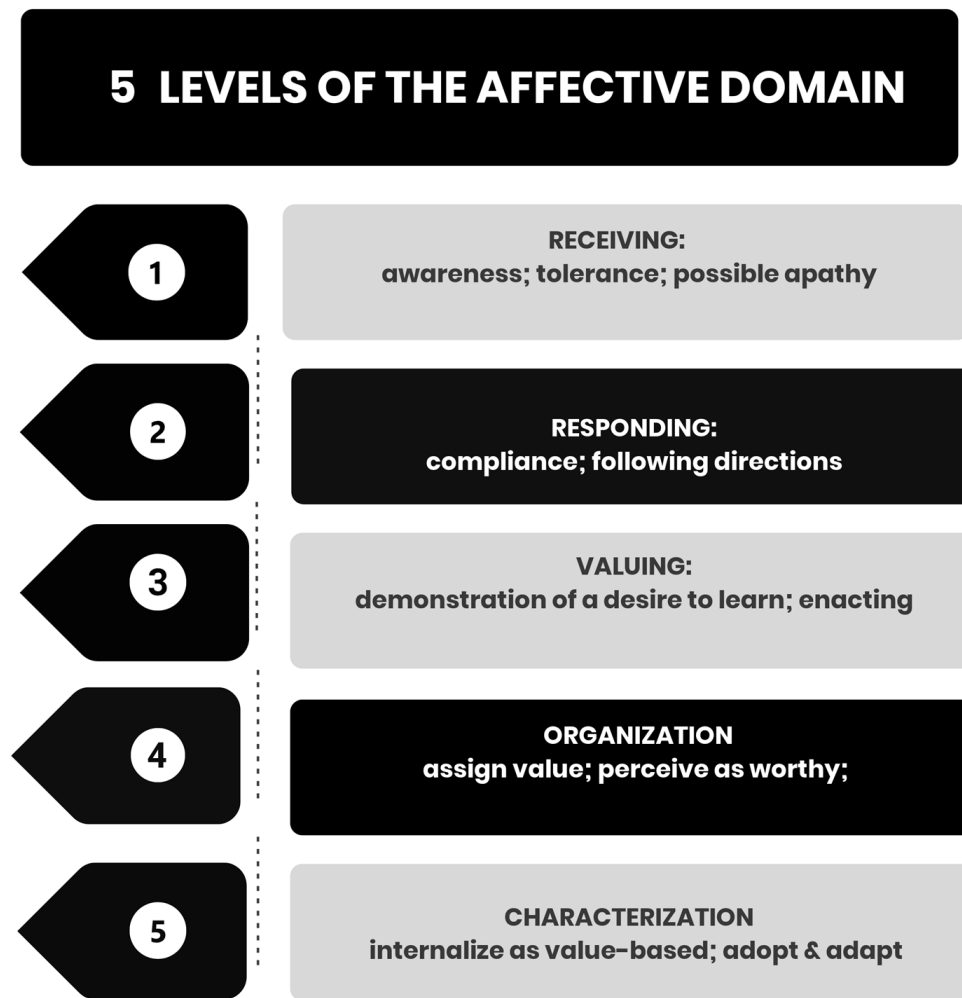


Figure 2.5. Levels of the affective domain in ascending order. Level 5 is the highest level of attainment, and Level 1 is the lowest level in terms of accepting, adapting to, and internalizing new information. Adapted from “Goals and Objective,” by G. Borich, 2007. *Effective Teaching Methods: Research-Based Practice*, p. 96-99. Copyright by Pearson.

Tytler (2007) maintains that over the past decade there has been a shift from an emphasis on unilateral, knowledge-oriented teacher professional development to a more holistic approach that focuses on knowledge, process and teacher participation. Contemporaneous professional development now more widely considers the role of the affective domain in the planning and implementation of teacher training. Accordingly, trainers have increasingly become more

considerate of participants' sensibilities in terms of their views, perceptions, attitudes and feelings about the training, as well as about how learning and implementing new skills will affect their personal and professional lives (Tytler 2007). Opfer and Pedder (2011) affirm that teacher professional development and training should not be treated as simply a platform from which information is disseminated to individuals. Rather, trainers should view professional development as a network of systems that consider the many factors contributing to how teachers receive, learn and are influenced by new information before, during and after training. In fact, research suggests that such a comprehensive approach to teacher professional development leads to more positive outcomes with respect to reshaping teachers' beliefs and attitudes about learning reformative practices or programs (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar & Fung, 2007; Bybee & Loucks-Horsley, 2000; Ostermeier, Prenzel & Duitt, 2010).

A study that examined the effectiveness of a Hong Kong certification program for faculty support officers concluded that the impact of the program was compromised due to the fact that the affective domain had not been taken into consideration during the planning, implementation, and follow-up phases of the program (Doherty, 2014). Specifically, trainees reported that they lacked confidence in the ability to carry out their roles and were unable to see the relevance or value in what they were being taught. Trainees also stated that they experienced self-devaluation, a lack of motivation, stress, and anxiety. As a result of these observations, the university's certification program was redesigned to assess trainees' values, address concerns they might have about their new roles, facilitate their understanding of the program's relevance, inspire self-confidence, and celebrate successes throughout the training (Doherty, 2014).

Research in the area of teacher professional development suggests a correlation between effectiveness of the training and an appreciation for the affective dimension of learning. Senge

et al. (2012) notes that failure to consider this important aspect before initiation of an educational reform is not only ineffective, but also not sustainable. Thus, if change agents do not take the time to examine teachers' internalized views, attitudes and feelings about educational practices in general, and a targeted reform specifically, the reform may not be positively received or implemented with fidelity. Numerous studies suggest that consideration of the affective domain when planning professional development contributes significantly to the effectiveness, success, and sustainability of the initiative (Fullan, 2010; Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001).

Self-Actualization: Maslow

Maslow's self-actualization theory is part of his hierarchy of needs model. The needs of the individual proceed in ascending order, with the basic needs of food, water, and homeostasis being the most foundational, and the need for self-actualization occupying the pinnacle of the pyramid. Figure 2.6 is a representation of Maslow's hierarchy of needs model, with self-actualization shown as the highest level of human needs attainment.

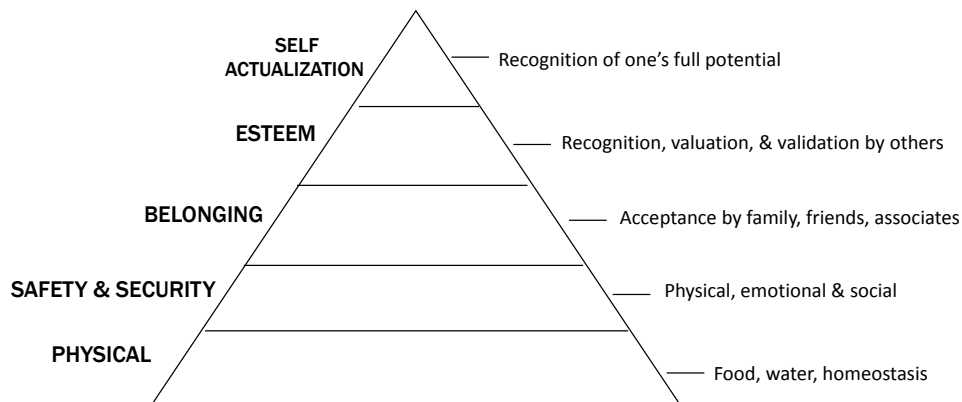


Figure 2.6. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs pyramid. Adapted from "Motivation and Academic staff in higher education," by J. Rowley, 1996, *Quality Assurance in Education*, 4, p. 11-16.

“Self-actualization has been described by Maslow as the ability to transcend levels of physiological, psychological and social needs, to obtain fulfillment of personal needs in terms of life’s meaning. He stated this type of growth to be a linear escalation of fulfillment that is represented by a pyramidal hierarchy. The levels that he describes express these needs and their order of hierarchical transcendence” (Reitan, 2013). Moreover, self-actualization is the element of Maslow’s pyramidal scheme that describes individuals’ recognition and attainment of their greatest potential, as manifested by utilization of their talents, creativity, focus, and independence, as well as by a heightened sense of commitment to positively impact the environment of which they are a part (Olson, 2013). However, according to Maslow, the self-actualization level cannot be achieved until the antecedent levels of the hierarchy are met. With respect to educational research, self-actualization theory has traditionally focused on understanding the relationship between motivation and learning (Maehr, 2012). The theory promotes the idea that when individuals achieve self-actualization, they become more personally invested in their learning (Maehr, 2012). It is for this reason that instructional coaches, school administrators, teachers, employers, and others in leadership positions continue to explore effective means by which their protégés are motivated to attain personal self-actualization, for it is at this level that individuals recognize and experience their highest potential for success (Maehr, 2012).

According to Chapman (2017), Maslow’s self-actualization concept is an important one for organizations that pursue more effective means of encouraging personal growth and development among their employees. Accordingly, employers have become increasingly aware of the human motivation element of professional development, and have taken deliberate steps to infuse principles of self-actualization theory into their institutions’ education and training

models. Some of these steps have included encouraging individuals to experiment with new concepts or strategies, use intuitive processes to identify their sense of purpose within the organization, evaluate the value of new phenomena, take personal responsibility for successes and failures, and work decisively to help formulate solutions to challenging problems (McLeod, 2018b). Some of the ways organizations can apply these principles during professional development include encouraging participants to freely express their views, perspectives and concerns about the innovation, validating participants' views and concerns, connecting the training to real-life experiences, creating a format for the collaborative sharing of experiences related to the targeting innovation, and conveying the expectation that participants will be successful as they apply the innovation as they engaged in their profession (Maehr, 2012).

With respect to professional development for teachers and others, there are several principles of self-actualization that merit examination (Pontefract, 2016). First, individuals should be encouraged to freely express their opinions and concerns about a reformative practice (Senge et al., 2012). This can provide useful data for change agents. By instituting this necessary first step, professional development planners can anticipate challenges and problems and seek ways to address them so that they do not become obstacles to successful implementation of the reform. Next, referencing real-life situations, creating a platform for shared experiences, and modeling the reformative practices serve to authenticate the learning, in that teachers are able to more clearly envision themselves as active participants in the reform (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017). Finally, conveying to teachers a belief in their ability to become successful facilitators of change has been demonstrated to be a powerful motivational technique (Tanner, 2018). This type of communication implies to participants that trainers or administrators view them as capable and competent professionals.

Mental Models

Advanced as an educational theory by Peter Senge, mental models philosophy centers around the schemata and belief systems of individuals (Senge et al., 2012). Senge proposes that before reform efforts are introduced, the mental models of individuals who will be impacted by the reform need to be identified and addressed. Otherwise, the reform is not likely to be successful. Senge (2012) recommends that change agents not regard teacher professional development as single, episodic sessions, as this type of approach is neither meaningful or sustainable. Rather, he proposes that professional development in education be regarded as a whole-system effort. That is, leaders should make an effort to examine the inner workings of their institutions circumspectly, giving special consideration to the belief systems, attitudes and concerns of every member. Senge (2012) calls this approach the fifth discipline. The fifth discipline model recommends that school reform efforts be guided by a collaborative convergence of ideas that have been garnered from all stakeholders, including teachers, policy-makers, those in leadership roles, community members, parents, and students. The fifth discipline represents five strategies for strategically addressing change within an educational institution. They are personal mastery, shared vision, team learning, systems thinking, and mental models.

Personal mastery describes actions taken by individuals to create a personal vision concurrently with truthful analysis of where they are on their continuum of growth. The idea is that the tension created by these sometimes opposing forces motivates individuals to take actions that can potentially improve their productivity. Shared vision provides the adhesive element needed to collaboratively and collectively draw stakeholders towards a common set of values, purposes and objectives. Team learning involves creating a safe place where collaboration,

interaction and ideas are freely shared and discussed among members of an institution. Systems thinking is based on the principles of continuous action and feedback, which in turn help individuals unravel the complexities of an organization's culture, values and structure. Finally, mental models can be viewed as mental constructs that frame individuals' thinking about the world of which they are a part (Aguilar, 2015). Thus, mental models represent personally held ideas, beliefs, attitudes, views, biases, and other dimensions that typify the ways people think. In that the five disciplines can be used to explain how people accept, adopt, and adapt to change, this aspect of mental models theory was deemed pertinent to this research study. Thus, it was from this theoretical perspective that teachers' views, perspectives and concerns about implementation of explicit prewriting instruction were examined.

Mental models theory can be utilized by organizations to help constituents introspectively assess their values and beliefs as they concurrently consider the views held by others (Culatta, 2018). To engage in this type of exercise, it is necessary that individuals work from the inside out to discern and distinguish thinking that is framed by reality and that which is based solely on the perceptions and ingrained beliefs of its members. This marks the beginning of mental models development (Senge et al., 2012). The thoughts that individuals bring into their work milieus gradually develop into a culture that may or may not need to be adjusted to more closely reflect reality. Senge maintains that these types of thoughts can interfere with the mission to advance an educational reform and can make the effort to implement and sustain the reform overwhelmingly challenging. However, according to Schumacher and Czerwinski (1992), when people come to the realization that their mental models may not be congruent with concepts that can potentially improve their work efficiency and job satisfaction, they may be more inclined to make the necessary adjustments in their thinking.

Mental models are important to consider when planning professional development because peoples' ideas, values and belief systems are so diverse. When teachers do not recognize the value of learning a different instructional system because it conflicts with their mental models schema, they may approach professional learning experiences as bystanders or compliant entities. Thus, the goal of educational change agents is to encourage teachers to openly discuss their attitudes, values, and thinking so that these mental models can be compared to reality. Senge proposes that once teachers come face to face with the realities of an educational reform, they become less reticent to embrace it. In this research study, one mental models challenge was attempting to reconstruct teachers' belief that because students' writing skills so were far below grade level, any applied interventions would be insufficient in addressing these deficits. In other words, their mental imagery was more aligned with thoughts that their instructional efforts would prove to be futile in bringing about improvements in student writing.

Summary

Chapter 2 represents a review of the literature. Chapter 2 began with an historical overview of reformative practices to improve literacy and writing in the United State over the past two decades. A rationale for improvement efforts in these academic domains was also included in this section of the dissertation. Recommendations from the research were made with respect to teaching students to write through implementation of explicit prewriting pedagogy. The steps in this process were thoroughly explained in this chapter. These recommendations are grounded in the cognitive constructivist theories of Piaget (2010), Vygotsky (McLeod, 2018b), Hunter (1982), and others. In terms of teachers' concerns about implementing explicit prewriting instruction as a strategy to improve student writing, this aspect of the study was

grounded in concerns-oriented educational change theories, including the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (Hall & Hord, 2015), affective domain (Kirk, 2019), Maslow's self-actualization theory (Olson, 2013), and Senge's (2012) mental models paradigm.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The objectives of this explanatory mixed methods research study were to examine the effect of explicit prewriting instruction on students' writing skills in the age of Common Core and to gain an understanding of teachers' views, perceptions and concerns about implementation of this instructional strategy. For the quantitative phase of the study, the pre- and post- writing assessment scores of 53 students in Grades 4-7 who received 6 weeks of explicit prewriting instruction were compared. For the qualitative phase of the study, teachers' views, perceptions, and concerns about implementation of explicit prewriting instruction were identified, examined, and subjected to data analysis. This qualitative data was acquired from teacher interview responses as well as from their handwritten journal entries. Accordingly, in order to address the research questions that constituted the basis for the study, an explanatory mixed methods research design was employed. The research questions are stated as follows:

Research Question 1: *Was there a statistically significant difference in the pre- and post- writing assessment mean scores of students who received six weeks of explicit prewriting instruction?*

Research Question 2: *What were teachers' views, perceptions and concerns teachers about implementation of explicit prewriting instruction as a strategy to improve students' written communication skills?*

According to Mahmood (2018), an explanatory mixed methods research design incorporates aspects of both quantitative and qualitative research methodology in terms of how and which data will be collected, as well as how it will be measured and analyzed. In quantitative research, data are typically collected from instruments such as norm-referenced,

criterion-based, or performance-based tests, or from rating scales, checklists, surveys, and other instrumentation that is amenable to statistically quantifiable measurement (Daniel, 2016).

Data are then subjected to statistical analysis. Conversely, in qualitative research, open-ended responses such as those derived from field observations, journals, focus groups, memos, diaries, or interviews comprise the basis for assumptions, conclusions, or generalizations about a phenomenon, theory, or other entity (Mahmood, 2018).

There are several benefits to utilizing an explanatory mixed method research design (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). In a mixed methods study, phenomena can be studied from two different perspectives. For example, whereas the quantitative phase of a study provides a platform from which to examine, interpret, and draw conclusions about numerically derived values, the qualitative phase of a study elucidates aspects of human nature that can prove helpful in understanding how or why certain results were obtained (Best & Kahn, 2006). Moreover, in a mixed-methods research design, theoretical and conceptual frameworks can be examined from several different perspectives. A mixed method approach also enables researchers to more thoroughly address the research questions that are driving the study (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006). Each of these methodologies – quantitative and qualitative represents the research design incorporated in this study. The data analysis instruments utilized to achieve these goals are delineated in this chapter. The chapter is organized into the following sections. They are: setting and participants, sampling and procedures, instrumentation and measures, data collection, data analysis, and summary of the chapter (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008).

Setting and Participants

Initially, 74 students from Grades 4-8 enrolled in the program. However, due to attrition factors during the summer months, enrollment numbers gradually decreased to 53 students. The

elementary school where the study took place has an enrollment of 860 students in kindergarten through 8th grade. The school is located within a community of low-to-middle-income, single-family homes with limited commercial establishments in the immediate vicinity. Seventy-nine per cent of the students who attend the school qualify for free and reduced lunch. During the regular school year, the school's demographics are 63% Hispanic, 13% Filipino, 11% African American, 5% multi-racial, 3% white, and 5% other. Students with disabilities represent 9% of the school's population, and 34% are English learners. A majority of the school's Els identify Spanish as the primary language spoken at home. Of the 53 students enrolled in the 2018 summer program, 66% were Hispanic, 19% were African American, 8% were Filipino, 5% were Asian, and 2% were Caucasian. In addition, 10 were English learners, representing 19% of the summer enrollment, and one was enrolled in the special education resource program during the regular school year, representing 2% of the summer enrollment.

In the state of California, students in 4th through 12th grade are administered the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (2018) or SBAC each spring. Results from these assessments were published by the California Department of Education in the fall of the same year (CAASPP, 2018). ELA/Literacy proficiency levels are designated by four categories. The categories are,

- Level 1 – Standard Not Met
- Level 2 – Standard Nearly Met
- Level 3 – Standard Met, and
- Level 4 – Standard Exceeded.

Only students scoring at Levels 3 or 4 are considered proficient in a specific academic discipline such as mathematics, science or ELA/Literacy. In addition to presenting the levels within which students scored, the California Department of Education (2017) also includes the percentages by

grade level and other student designations. The percentage of students who were proficient in ELA/Literacy on the 2018 SBAC are presented in Table 3.1, and are listed according to the state, county, district and school jurisdictions where the study was conducted.

Table 3.1

Percentages Students in Grades 4-8 Who Met or Exceeded ELA/Literacy Standards on the 2018 SBAC by Jurisdiction. (CAASPP, 2018)

<i>Jurisdiction</i>	<i>Grade 3</i>	<i>Grade 4</i>	<i>Grade 5</i>	<i>Grade 6</i>	<i>Grade 7</i>	<i>Grade 8</i>
State	48%	49%	49%	48%	50%	49%
County	39%	38%	39%	39%	43%	42%
District	24%	23%	29%	25%	29%	27%
School	29%	25%	31%	44%	20%	20%

As can be determined from Table 1, average, overall student mastery of ELA/Literacy standards in California falls below 50%. At the school where the study took place, overall mastery of ELA/Literacy in Grades 3-8 reflected an average of 28%.

The ELA/Literacy SBAC categories are broken down into subcategories. These are Reading, Writing, Listening, and Research/Inquiry. For the purpose of this research study, focus was placed upon the writing category. Results from the SBAC ELA/Literacy writing category are presented in Table 3.2 according to jurisdiction.

Table 3.2

Percentages of Students in Grades 4-8 Who Met Writing Standards on the 2018 SBAC by Jurisdiction (CAASPP, 2018)

<i>Jurisdiction</i>	<i>Grade 3</i>	<i>Grade 4</i>	<i>Grade 5</i>	<i>Grade 6</i>	<i>Grade 7</i>	<i>Grade 8</i>
State	24%	24%	29%	24%	28%	25%
County	17%	16%	22%	18%	22%	19%
District	10%	8%	11%	9%	11%	8%
School	16%	11%	16%	13%	8%	10%

As can be observed by the SBAC writing proficiency scores displayed in Table 3.2, during the 2017-2018 academic year, fewer than 25% of public-school students in the state of California met writing proficiency standards. At the school where the study was conducted, on average fewer than 13% of students met writing proficiency standards. Following administration of the pre- writing assessment at the beginning of the summer program, it was determined that 0% of the summer school students performed at grade level in writing.

At the time of the study, the school had 32 multiple-subject general education teachers, 4 special education teachers, 3 music teachers and 1 physical education teacher, 100% of whom were credentialed by the California State Board of Education. Six teachers participated in the study. The program specialist and three of the other participants were faculty members of the school where the study took place, and two were from other schools within the district. Each participant was credentialed by the state of California and had taught for at least one full school year. All teachers had to have received a Satisfactory or greater overall level of performance on his or her most recent teacher evaluation, with no “Needs Improvement” or “Unsatisfactory” in

any category. Participants taught various subjects during the regular school year and their teaching experience ranged from 1 to 24 years.

Sampling Procedures

The researcher met with the school's site administrator and was granted permission to conduct a research study that would involve comparing the pre- and post- writing assessment mean scores of students who received 6 weeks of explicit prewriting instruction during the summer of 2018. Permission was also granted to interview the 6 summer school writing teachers in order to gain a perspective of teachers' views, perceptions and concerns about implementation of explicit prewriting instruction as a means of improving students' written communication skills.

Instrumentation: Quantitative

Research Question 1: *Was there a statistically significant difference in the pre- and post- writing assessment mean scores of students who received six weeks of explicit prewriting instruction?*

To address Research Question 1, students were administered a writing pre-assessment, instructed in explicit prewriting for six weeks, and then administered a writing post-assessment. Initially, students in Grades 4-7 were administered a writing pre- writing assessment that instructed them to write a 5-paragraph narrative essay about the best present they could receive. Appendix N displays the writing pre-assessment used in the study. The program specialist began administration of the untimed writing pre-assessment on the second day of summer school classes, as the first day was reserved for student orientation and the distribution of materials. For the writing pre-assessment, students were provided two sheets of white copy paper, two sheets of binder paper, #2 pencils, a set of color pencils, and the writing pre-assessment form.

Instructions were read to students from the pre-assessment form, and students were told that they could use the copy and binder paper to plan their essays and write down ideas in any way they desired. They were also told that they could use the color pencils to help plan their essay if they wished. In order to replicate the test format used in SBAC administration, students were not given examples of outlines or graphic organizers for writing. After being provided the test materials and instructions by the program specialist, teachers monitored the rest of the test administration process. Teachers were instructed to not assist students in any way in terms of essay development, and to only answer questions having to do with the test instructions. During testing, the summer school administrators and program specialist monitored the test environments to ensure compliance with instructions and consistency in test administration procedures. Following 6 weeks of instruction in explicit prewriting, the same testing format and procedures used for the writing pre-assessment were applied in administration of the writing post-assessment. However, for the post-assessment, students were provided the graphic organizer template used during the intervention and instructed to write about what they valued most in a friend. The post-assessment is presented in Appendix O of this dissertation.

After having first been granted permission from California's Elk Grove Unified School District (EGUSD), writing rubrics were downloaded from its website. Some aspects of the EGUSD rubrics were pared down to more appropriately reflect the parameters of the summer program. The program specialist used these rubrics to assess students' performance on the writing pre-test (Common Core State Standards, 2019). This scoring instrument was selected for use in this research study for several reasons. First, the rubrics are aligned with the CA Common Core ELA State Standards. Second, EFUSD's writing rubrics are used by educators nationally, as well as internationally. Third, these rubrics are copyright protected, owing to their extensive

use and endorsement by multiple school districts. Finally, these rubrics provided an uncomplicated, non-cumbersome guide for teachers to use in assessing students writing. With permission from EGUSD, an adapted version of this writing rubric is presented in Appendix C of this dissertation.

Data Collection: Quantitative

Following each test session, students' pre- and post- writing assessment forms and scratch paper were collected by the program specialist. Next, the program specialist and teachers met to collaboratively score the assessments. The researcher was present to monitor these scoring sessions, but did not participate in the scoring. Prior to scoring these assessments, teachers received professional development in scoring compositions with the use of writing rubrics. Once a score was obtained for each student, the program specialist hand-wrote the score in a table she had created. She placed an identifying marker beside the name of each EI student, as well as beside each student who was enrolled in the school's special education resource program during the regular school year.

The pre- and post- writing assessments and students' rubric-derived writing scores were collected by the program specialist and provided to the researcher. The researcher then entered students' pre- and post- writing scores into an Excel spreadsheet. There was a spreadsheet for each grade level, as well as a spreadsheet of the scores of English learners only. Included in each spreadsheet were each student's number, grade, pre- writing assessment score, and post- writing assessment score. In statistical analysis, a paired-samples t-Test is used when evaluating the difference between the means of two groups. In this research study, paired samples t-Tests were conducted in order to compare students' pre- and post- assessment mean scores. Results of these statistical analyses are discussed in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

Data Analysis: Quantitative

Students were administered a writing pre-assessment, instructed in explicit prewriting strategies for six weeks, and administered a writing post-assessment at the end of the summer term. The teacher participants collaboratively scored these assessments using an adaptation of the Elk Grove Unified narrative writing rubric. This rubric is displayed in Appendix B. Students received a score ranging from 1 - 4 in the domains of introduction, organization, structure, and language. The highest score a student could attain in one skill domain was 4, and 1 was the lowest score a student could attain. A cumulative score was calculated from the combined skill domain scores. The highest score a student could attain on the writing pre- or post- assessment was 16, and the lowest was 4.

In quantitative research, a paired samples t-Test or dependent sample t-Test is an analytical tool that can be used to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between individuals' pre- and post- assessment mean scores following an intervention. If the mean difference is zero, this indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in the scores. In this study, in order to compare students' pre- and post- writing assessment mean scores by grade level, the 2018 Microsoft Excel for Mac version 16.16.6 was used to run paired samples T-tests. An example of the type of calculations obtained by running a paired samples t-Test is presented in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3

Example of Paired Samples t-Test Results

Measure	Observation 1	Observation 2
	<i>Pre-Test</i>	<i>Post-Test</i>
Mean	5.88235294	8.11764706
Variance	5.86029412	7.48529412
Observations	17	17
Pearson Correlation		0.73827574
Hypothesized Mean Difference		0
Df		16
t Stat		4.88042587
P(T<=t) one-tail		8.3347E-05
t Critical one-tail		1.74588368
P(T<=t) two-tail		0.00016669
t Critical two-tail		2.1199053

For the purpose of this research study, the measures that were extrapolated from the data generated from each of the grade-level-specific paired samples were mean, observations, hypothesized mean difference, and P(T<=t) two tail. The mean scores provide a comparison of the pre- and post- assessment means. The observations are the number of scores at Interval 1 and Interval 2 assessment periods. The hypothesized mean difference of zero represents the null hypothesis that is being tested. P(T<=t) two tail is also referred to as the p value. A p value less than or equal to .05, is indicative of there being a statistical significance between the scores. In the example from Table 3.3, the p value is 0.00016669. Since the p value is less than .05, the assumption is that this difference is attributable to a specific intervention or other type of phenomenon.

In addition to conducting a paired samples t-Test to collectively compare students' pre – and post- mean scores by grade level, a paired samples t-Test was also performed in order to compare the pre- and post- writing assessment mean scores of English learners who were enrolled in the summer program.

Reliability: Quantitative

Reliability refers to the degree to which a test instrument will consistently measure the same test results under the same conditions every time it is utilized (Center for Innovation in Research and Teaching, 2018). The writing prompts used in the study reflected the style, format, and type of prompts provided in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium or SBAC sample test questions repository (Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, 2018). This is the norm-referenced testing system used in the state of California. In addition, to score the pre- and post-writing assessments, a modified version of the Elk Grove Unified School District (EGUSD) writing rubric was considered to be a reliable tool for evaluating students' writing skills. EGUSD's writing rubrics have been in existence since the inception of the Common Core Standards, and are used by school districts both nationally and internationally (Common Core State Standards, 2019).

Validity: Quantitative

Validity refers to the ability of, and degree to which a test instrument measures what it is designed to measure (Best & Kahn, 2006). Pre- and post- writing prompts were adapted from the California's Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) practice test examples. As this is a state assessment instrument, it was deemed to be a valid means of accessing grade-level appropriate writing prompts. A summative writing assessment, which is also referred to as a post-test, was administered after 6 weeks of explicit prewriting instruction. Results of the

summative writing assessment were an accurate assessment of the progress students made in terms of writing skills development after 6 weeks of explicit prewriting instruction during the summer of 2018. However, one of the threats to validity in this study was attributed to students' not fully understanding the writing prompt. For example, when writing about *The Best Present I Could Receive*, one student wrote about the importance of being *present* every day for school. Another threat to validity was student behavior, in that two students refused to complete the post-writing assessment following the 6-week writing intervention period.

Instrumentation: Qualitative

Research Question 2: *What were teachers' views, perceptions and concerns about implementation of explicit prewriting instruction as a strategy to improve students' written communication skills?*

As noted from the concerns-oriented educational change theories expounded upon in Chapters 1 and 2 of this dissertation, individuals often observe, experience and respond to phenomena differently. With respect to the qualitative aspect of this research study, the objective was to examine teachers' views, perceptions, and concerns about implementation of explicit prewriting instruction. To study these phenomena, a set of 20 interview questions and teachers' writing journals served as the instrumentation employed in this phase of the study. The interview questions focused on teachers' professional backgrounds, as well as on their impressions of explicit prewriting and the professional development they received in this instructional strategy. Moreover, teachers' journal notes provided an additional dimension of information in this area of inquiry.

Teachers received 25 hours of professional development in explicit prewriting instruction over the course of the summer program. This consisted of 6 hours of training on the Saturday

preceding Day 1 of the summer writing intervention, 2.5 hours per week of additional training throughout the 6-week writing intervention period, and 4 hours of professional development in writing rubric interpretation and scoring. An agenda was developed for each professional development session. The professional development agendas are presented in Appendix H of this dissertation. In addition to the professional development sessions, teachers observed and took notes from demonstration lessons provided by the program specialist and researcher.

Next, during the professional development sessions and classroom demonstrations, teachers recorded their experiences in journal notebooks that had been provided by the summer school's program specialist. The researcher asked the participating teachers and program specialist to record their experiences, impressions, views, and concerns about explicit prewriting instruction, as well as about the professional development they received. Teachers were asked to make at least 3 entries per week. At the end of the 6-week intervention period, teachers participated in one-on-one interviews. There were 20 semi-structured interview questions. These questions are presented in Appendix K of this dissertation. Teachers' responses to the interview questions were hand-recorded by the researcher. As previously articulated in this dissertation, the questions related to teachers' impressions and concerns about explicit prewriting instruction and about the professional development they received in this instructional strategy.

Data Collection: Qualitative

Data was collected from teachers' responses to semi-structured interview questions about explicit prewriting instruction and the professional development they received in this approach before, during, and after the summer program. In addition, teachers' writing instruction journal entries was collected for the purpose of qualitative data analysis.

Data Analysis: Qualitative

Saldaña (2015) describes coding as an analytical process by which quantitative or qualitative data are compiled, labeled (or coded), and organized in such a way that provides a more detailed description of phenomena that occurred during the study. The data can then be summarized to tell a story about the phenomena. Coding was used as a data analysis tool in this research study. The first step of the coding process used in the study entailed closely reviewing teachers' interview responses and journal entries. Second, penciled-in notations were made of recurring and dissimilar themes. Third, these notations received varying colored labels based on similarities and differences. Fourth, similar themes were grouped together. Finally, this data was again reviewed in order to establish connections to research-derived theories and conceptual schemes. Thus, the coding techniques utilized in this phase of the study provided an organized, systematic means of collecting, organizing and analyzing qualitative data. Results from the qualitative data analysis component of this study are summarized in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

Reliability: Qualitative

Interviews and journal entries are often used to evaluate how participants experienced a particular event or phenomenon. In terms of this research study, teachers' journal entries and responses to interview questions had a moderate degree of reliability. For the journal entries, teachers were encouraged on a daily basis to express their frustrations as well as triumphs and to be as open and truthful about their experiences as possible. Since individuals may sometimes intentionally omit writing or talking about experiences that make them uncomfortable, this may have contributed to a lower reliability factor for the qualitative phase of the study. Although the journal and interview processes enabled the researcher to gain a more detailed sense of what

participants experienced during explicit prewriting training and implementation, these research tools were reliable only to the extent that teachers elicited responses that accurately reflected their perspectives, views, and concerns about their experiences.

Ethical Considerations

When children or adults participate in research, the importance of maintaining confidentiality, protecting individuals' rights, and adhering to appropriate protocol for collecting, storing, and maintaining data cannot be understated. Moreover, subjects must be treated humanely, respectfully, equitably, and in a manner that is not condescending. Evaluative judgments about students' or teachers' work is inevitable, but should be stated in a positive and supportive manner, and should not engender feelings of embarrassment or degradation of character. Students as well as teachers should be given every opportunity to succeed, and should be recognized for their accomplishments. In this research study, care was taken to address each of these ethical considerations in the manner articulated in the preceding statements. An additional safeguard to ensure adherence to ethical practices included the researcher having gained permission from Elk Grove Unified School District to use its Common Core State Standards writing rubrics. Finally, all referenced authors and original research were acknowledged throughout each stage of the research and dissertation development processes.

Summary

In conclusion, Chapter 3 of this dissertation provided a detailed overview of the methodology employed for conducting analyses of the quantitative and qualitative data collected for the research study. The goal was to incorporate both quantitative and qualitative data analysis procedures to measure and analyze data about the effect of explicit prewriting instruction on students' writing skills and teachers' concerns about implementation of this

strategy. This process included first refocusing on the problem statement and research questions driving the study. Next, a determination was made of the most appropriate quantitative and qualitative data analysis instrumentation to employ after having reviewed studies with similar focus from the literature. Accordingly, for the quantitative component of the study a paired samples t-Test was conducted to compare and analyze students' pre- and post- writing assessment mean scores. Participants' input from interviews and journals provided data for the qualitative component. The qualitative data was coded to expunge and label explicit and implied connotations, nuances, and meanings. As patterns, similarities, and differences emerged from this coded data, conceptual frameworks tied to these thematic elements became more apparent. It is from this context that suppositions could be made, and conclusions drawn. A mind map representing the mixed methods quantitative and qualitative research process employed in the study is displayed in Figure 3.1.



QUANTITATIVE METHODOLOGY	PHASE	QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY
Research Q1: <i>Was there a statistically significant difference in the pre- and post- writing assessment mean scores of students who received 6 weeks of explicit prewriting instruction?</i>	① RESEARCH QUESTIONS	Research Q2: <i>What were teachers' views, perceptions and concerns about implementation of explicit prewriting instruction as a strategy to improve students' written communication skills?</i>
Cognitive Constructivism Piaget, Vygotsky, Explicit Instruction, Hunter	② THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS	Concerns-Oriented Models: CBAM, Affective Domain, Self-Actualization, Mental Models
School Site	③ ← SETTING →	School Site
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No human participants Only test score data collected 	④ PARTICIPANTS	ELA teachers who taught writing @summer session.
Pre- and post- writing assessments of 4 th -7 th grade students	⑤ SAMPLING	Summer school ELA teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre/Post writing assessments Writing Rubric 	⑥ INSTRUMENTATION & MEASURES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher interview questions Teacher's journal entries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-writing assessments collected by program spec. Post-writing assessments collected by program spec. 	⑦ DATA COLLECTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Researcher collected & organized interview responses. Researcher collected & organized journal entries.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct 1 paired-samples t-Test per grade. Organize/analyze results by grade, EL status, gender, and special education designation. 	⑧ DATA ANALYSIS ↙ ↘	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Code responses from interviews & journals. Note trends, similarities, differences, outliers, & recurring descriptors used by participants.

Figure 3.1. Mind map of the research process employed in this research study.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

In this mixed methods research study, quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed through the use of specific statistical instruments and methodologies. For the quantitative phase of the research study, the pre- and post- writing assessment mean scores of students in Grades 4-7 were compared. For this purpose, the Microsoft Excel data analysis tool was used to conduct a paired samples t-Test. For the qualitative phase of the study, teachers' responses to interview questions, as well as their hand-written journal entries about explicit prewriting instruction were analyzed. The latter process consisted of hand coding by the researcher in order to identify, categorize, subcategorize and organize emerging themes. As specific themes emerged, they were synthesized into a network of connections between foundational theoretical frameworks and teachers' responses to the phenomena under study – teachers' impressions of learning about and implementing explicit prewriting instruction. These impressions became categories that were later used to construct a conceptual framework for the qualitative aspect of the study.

Quantitative Phase of Study

Testing the Research Question

Research Question 1: *Was there a statistically significant difference in the pre- and post- writing assessment mean scores of students who received six weeks of explicit prewriting instruction?*

Descriptive statistics were used to address this research question. A paired samples t-Test was conducted to compare the pre- and post- writing assessment mean scores of students in Grades 4-7 who received 6 weeks of explicit prewriting instruction. The results are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Students' Pre- and Post- Writing Assessment Results by Grade Level

Grade	<i>n</i>	Writing Pre-Test		Writing Post-Test		<i>t</i>	df	<i>p</i>
		M	SD	M	SD			
4	19	6.68	2.70	9.16	2.99	5.99	18	.001
5	16	6.5	2.25	9.0	2.6	5.27	15	.001
6	9	5.78	2.22	8.11	1.76	4.04	8	.004
7	9	6.44	1.67	9.56	3.09	4.35	8	.002

Results of the paired samples t-Tests indicate that students' post-test scores were higher than their pre-test scores at each grade level. Fourth grade students scored higher on the post-test ($M = 9.16$, $SD = 2.99$), than on the pre-test ($M = 6.68$, $SD = 2.70$, $t(18) = 5.99$, $p < .001$). Fifth grade students scored higher on the post-test ($M = 9.0$, $SD = 2.6$), than on the pre-test ($M = 6.5$, $SD = 2.25$, $t(15) = 5.27$, $p < .001$). Sixth grade students scored higher on the post-test ($M = 8.11$, $SD = 1.76$) than on the pre-test ($M = 5.78$, $SD = 2.22$, $t(8) = 4.04$, $p < .004$). Seventh grade students scored higher on the post-test ($M = 9.56$, $SD = 3.09$) than on the pre-test ($M = 6.44$, $SD = 1.67$, $t(8) = 4.35$, $p < .002$). As the data indicate, there was a statistically significant difference in the pre- and post- writing mean assessment scores of the students in Grades 4-7 who received 6 weeks of explicit prewriting instruction during the summer of 2018. From the pre- to post-writing assessment period, Grade 7 students showed the most growth, followed by students in Grades 4, 6, and 5 respectively. Figure 4.1 is a graphic comparison of students' pre- and post-writing assessment mean scores by grade.

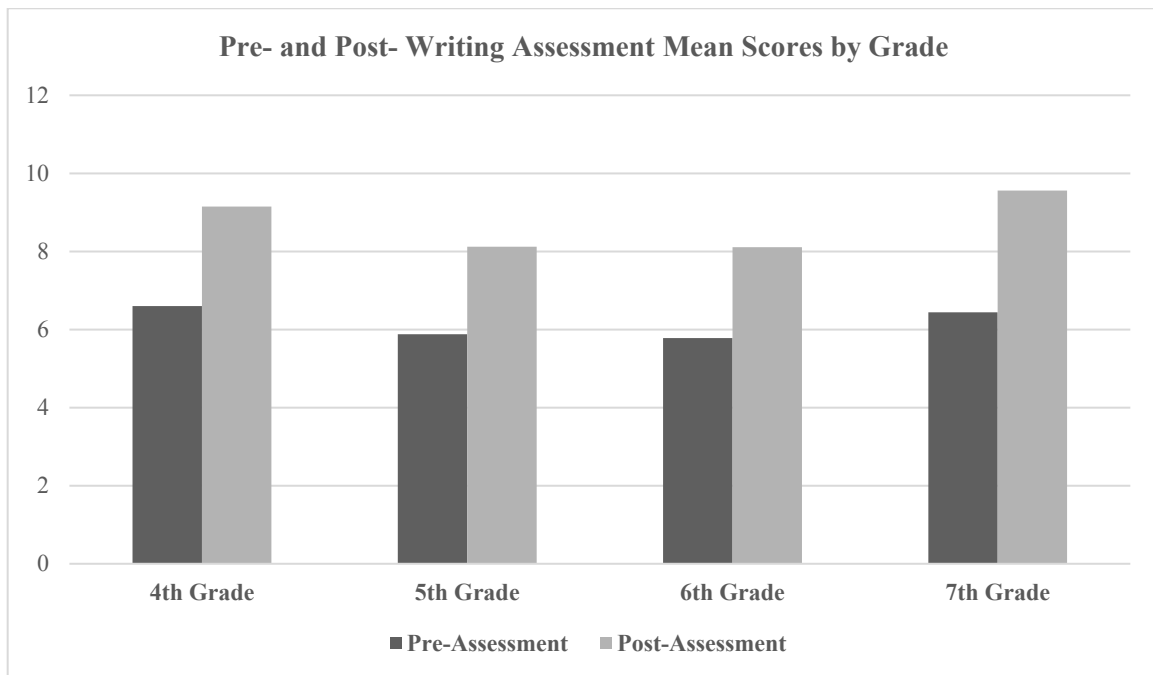


Figure 4.1. Comparison of Pre- and Post- Writing Assessment Mean Scores by Grade

The statistically significant differences in students' pre- and post- assessment mean scores suggest that 6 weeks of explicit prewriting instruction during the summer of 2018 had a positive impact on students' written communication skills.

In that English learners represent a significant population of California's public school population, and represented 19% of the 2018 summer enrollment, a paired samples t-Test was also performed in order to compare the pre- and post- test writing assessment mean scores of English learners who received 6 weeks of explicit prewriting instruction. Table 4.2 displays the pre- and post- writing assessment mean scores for English learners who were enrolled in the summer program.

Table 4.2

Comparison of 4th – 7th Grade Els' Pre- and Post- Writing Assessment Mean Scores

<i>n</i>	Writing Pre-Test		Writing Post-Test		<i>t</i>	df	<i>p</i>
	M	SD	M	SD			
10	4.7	1.33	6.8	1.48	-11.7	9	.005

Results of the paired samples t-Test for English learners indicated that this population of students scored better on the post-test (M = 6.8, SD = 1.48 than on the pre-test (M = 4.7, SD = 1.33, $t(9) = -11.7$, $p < .005$. Since $p < .005$, the difference in the mean scores was statistically significant. The assumption is that 6 weeks of explicit prewriting instruction had the effect of improving the writing skills of this group of students. Figure 4.2 is a graphic representation of the comparison between individual English learners' Summer 2018 pre- and post- writing assessment mean scores.

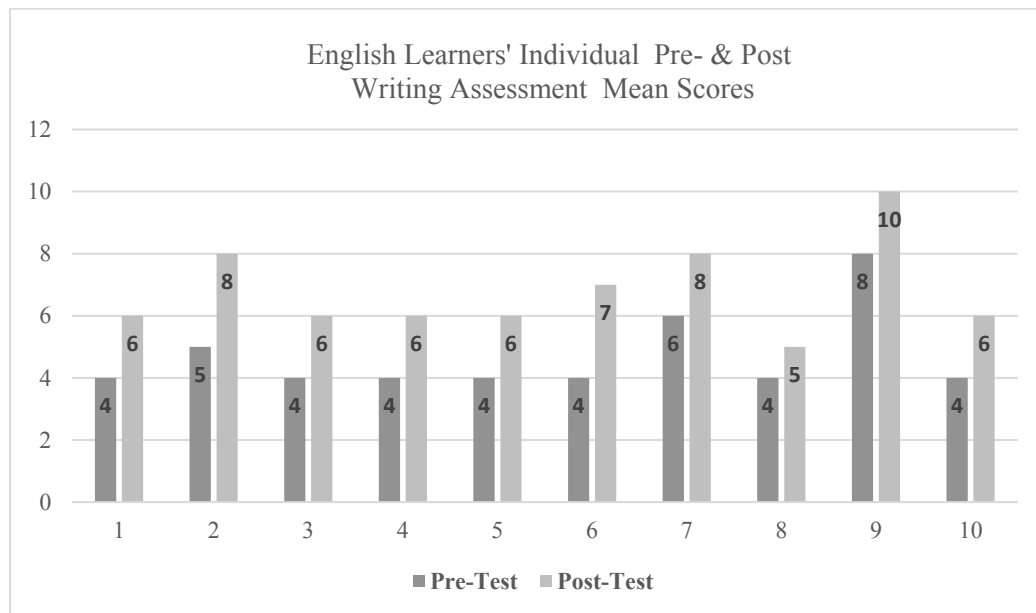


Figure 4.2. English Learners' Pre- and Post- Writing Assessment Mean Scores by Student

As depicted in Figure 4.2, following 6 weeks of explicit prewriting instruction, all of the English learners who were instructed in explicit prewriting showed significant improvement in their writing assessment scores.

Qualitative Phase of Study

Testing the Research Question

Research Question 2: *What were teachers' views, perceptions, and concerns about implementation of explicit prewriting instruction as a means of improving students' written communication skills?*

Data derived from verbal constructs such as field notes, observation documents, interviews, open-ended questionnaires, focus groups, observations, and other types of less formal representations of information are often characterized as qualitative data (Nassaji, 2015). Qualitative research tends to be less structured in terms of the approaches used in collecting and analyzing data. In qualitative studies, researchers often use coding techniques to extract thematic elements from data they have collected. The goal of qualitative research is to collect and analyze data from various sources in an effort to identify and make sense of participants' opinions, perceptions, thoughts, proclivities, concerns, motivations, or behaviors. In this study, the qualitative methods employed were a one-on-one, semi-structured teacher interview process and the examination of teachers' journal entries. In this study, teachers' responses to 20 interview questions, as well as their journal notes were analyzed through the process of coding in order to identify recurring themes.

The first seven interview questions provided information about participating teachers' backgrounds and experiences, their summer enrollment numbers, the grade they taught, and whether or not they had ever taught writing. All of the teachers had taught for at least one full

school year and held a valid California teaching credential. Two teachers had a California single-subject credential – one in physical education, and the other in mathematics. One teacher had one year of full-time teaching experience, and the remaining five had taught for over 13 years, with two having taught for 24 and 25 years respectively. Twelve questions related to teachers' views, perceptions, and concerns about explicit prewriting instruction with respect to professional development, implementation and effectiveness. For the last question, teachers were asked to provide recommendations for enhancement and improvement of this instructional approach. A list of the 20 interview questions is displayed in Table 4.3

Table 4.3

Guiding Questions Used for Semi-Structured Teacher Interviews

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
1. How many years of full-time teaching experience do you have?
2. Please list your degrees and any current CA credentials and professional certificates.
3. Which subjects do you teach during the regular school year?
4. For how many weeks did you provide explicit prewriting instruction?
5. Which grade(s) did you teach during this time?
6. What was your class enrollment during the summer program?
7. Had you ever taught writing prior to the summer of 2018?
8. In what ways did the professional development you received in explicit prewriting prepare you to implement this writing strategy during the summer writing program? If you feel that the professional development did not adequately prepare you, please describe the ways in which you did not feel prepared.
9. In what specific ways could the professional development in explicit prewriting instruction you received have been more effective?
10. Describe the challenging aspects of explicit prewriting instruction.
11. What are the strengths and weaknesses of explicit prewriting instruction as a strategy to improve student writing?
12. Please share with me ways you observed student writing improvement. If there was little or no improvement, describe what could have been done differently to enhance the instruction.
13. If you observed an improvement in students' writing skills after they had been taught how to use the rocket graphic organizer, please describe the ways in which you observed improvement.
14. What were the challenges students encountered during their use of the graphic organizer, and how did you address these challenges?
15. In what specific ways could the explicit prewriting model be improved upon?
16. Prior to the professional development you received in writing rubrics during the summer program, had you ever used a writing rubric to score students' writing?
17. Did the professional development sessions in writing rubrics adequately prepare you to score students' writing assessments? Please explain why or why not.
18. Was the writing pre-test a valid indicator of students' ability to compose a 5-paragraph narrative essay? Please explain why or why not.
19. If you believe that the writing post-test was a valid indicator of students' ability to compose a 5-paragraph narrative essay, please explain your reasoning. Or, if you believe that the writing post-test was not a valid indicator of students' ability to write a 5-paragraph essay, please explain your reasoning.
20. In what ways will you use the explicit prewriting as a strategy during the regular school year?

Teachers' interview responses and journal entries provided qualitative data that was collected, analyzed and hand-coded to identify commonalities, trends, differences, and outliers. Outliers were circled in black and set aside as information to be referred to later in the Chapter 5 of this dissertation. This analytical process contributed to the identification of five prominent themes. These themes were then categorized according to preparedness, professional development, implementation, effectiveness, and challenges. Attributes corresponding to each of these themes were teachers' backgrounds and experiences, impressions of professional development, implementation experiences, strengths and weaknesses, and challenges and frustrations, respectively. Each attribute was assigned a color code. Participants' frequent references to these attributes during the interview responses, and from the journal entries were highlighted in the corresponding color-coded attribute. Figure 4.3 provides a visual representation of the coding process employed in the qualitative phase of the study.

THEME: <i>Teachers' views, perceptions and concerns about explicit prewriting instruction</i>				
CATEGORY 1: "Preparedness"	CATEGORY 2: "Prof. Dev."	CATEGORY 3: "Implementation"	CATEGORY 4: "Effectiveness"	CATEGORY 5: "Challenges"
(red) CODED ATTRIBUTE: <i>Backgrounds & Experience</i>	(blue) CODED ATTRIBUTE: <i>Impressions of Professional Development</i>	(green) CODED ATTRIBUTE: <i>Implementation Experiences</i>	(brown) CODED ATTRIBUTE: <i>Strengths (+) Weaknesses (-)</i>	(purple) CODED ATTRIBUTE: <i>Challenges and Frustrations</i>
CA multiple subj. teaching credential (all teachers)	PD adequate for for implementation (4 of 6 teachers)	Easy to implement	(+) Students' improved writing organization skills	Students' were far below grade level
Single Subject: Math Single Subject: PE	Need more time to process info.	Steps keep you on track	(+) Students organize thoughts before writing	Lack of experience teaching writing
1-25 years of experience	Need more anchor papers	Resources adequate for implementation	(+) Brainstorming activity	Need more time for implementation.
Unfamiliar subject (2/6 of teachers)	More modeling needed	Easy to follow steps	(+) Straightforward	More modeling needed on a consistent basis
Previously taught writing (4/6 of teachers)	Need more teacher support after PD	A lot of steps to follow	(+) Graphic organizer	Need more monitoring and support
AVID Experience (5 of 6 teachers)		Hard to focus sometimes - large amount of info.	(+) Easy to implement	A lot of steps to follow
			(+) Color Codes	Too much to learn in short time span
			(+) Step-by-step process	Strategy effective, but easy to miss some steps .
			(+) Easy for students to learn	
			(-) Graphic organizer too juvenile for middle school	

Figure 4.3. Coding process used in the qualitative phase of the study. The researcher identified recurring descriptors from teachers' interview responses and journals, and then color-coded these descriptors according to common attributes. Highlighted words are indicative of repetitive themes.

Category 1: preparedness. In the context of this study, preparedness refers to the degree to which teachers' backgrounds, knowledge, experiences, or credentials prepared them to teach writing during the summer of 2018. The rationale for including this category was to ascertain whether some of the concerns that teachers expressed could have been related to their lack of exposure to writing instruction or training in this subject area. In terms of preparedness, teachers' backgrounds, knowledge and experiences varied. However, four of the six veteran teachers indicated that they taught writing during the regular school year.

All of the teachers held California multiple subject teaching credentials. Two also had single subject credentials – one in mathematics, and one in physical education. One of the single subject teachers had never taught writing and indicated during the interview that she was totally unfamiliar with this subject area. In one of her journal entries, she wrote, "I am a math teacher. I don't know anything at all about writing." The teacher with one year of experience wrote in her journal, "This is unfamiliar to me. My kids had writing last year when I taught sixth grade, but I never used any kind of formal program. They mostly wrote journals and essays based on whatever topic I gave them. This is different from anything I've ever done with writing."

All five of the participants who had taught for longer than 1 year had been trained in AVID (Achievement Via Individual Determination), including the two single subject teachers. AVID emphasizes interdisciplinary student research, notetaking, outlining and writing. Some of these strategies, particularly AVID's organization skills development is similar to the organizational approach used in explicit prewriting instruction. For example, one of the single subject teachers stated during the interview, "In my class, I just use Cornell note taking [and] step-by-step instructions, YouTube, and demos for each skill I teach the students." Another AVID-trained teacher stated, "This method is very similar to my daily teaching when introducing

a new concept. I have used E.D.I (explicit direct instruction).” The 1-year teacher veteran was the only participant who had not been trained in AVID.

Category 2: Impressions of professional development. According to DuFour and Marzano (2011), “The best strategy for improving schools and districts is developing the collective capacity of educators to function as members of a professional learning community-a concept based on the premise that if students are to learn at higher levels, processes must be in place to ensure the ongoing, job-embedded learning of the adults who serve them” (p. 21). Thus, it appears that effective teacher professional development is a significant determinant in the quest to improve teacher success and student academic achievement. In the context of this research study, Category 2 served as a repository of information from which to evaluate teachers’ impressions about the professional development and training they received during the summer of 2018. The four teachers who had previously taught writing indicated in their interviews that the training adequately prepared them to teach explicit prewriting instruction, making statement such as, “I felt prepared....The training was definitely adequate.....I didn’t feel unprepared. I felt confident.....Having an outline of the steps to follow and the rocket paper helped, but the most helpful thing was watching you model lessons. I could see what I needed to improve and I tried my best.” Three of the six teachers mentioned the time element as being a negative factor during the summer trainings. One of the teachers for whom writing instruction was a new experience stated, “It was very rushed. There was one day of modeling but nothing to follow up with. I found that the training was somewhat confusing, which made it more difficult to teach.” However, another teacher who had previous writing instruction experience also mentioned the time factor as being problematic, stating, “It was just so short and limited. This is something we teachers should be learning about at the beginning of the school year, not over the

summer because kids need to work on these skills all year.” Two other responded, “It was a lot to take in,” and, “Everything went too fast.”

Respondents mentioned modeling and teacher support frequently throughout the interview process. Statements were made such as, “As far as the modeling, that was beneficial because I learn more by seeing how something is done first hand rather than by just listening,” and , “....the most helpful thing was watching you model lessons.” Another stated, “...and there could have been a modeling with students for the first week.” Several teachers also stated that more anchor papers and other types of examples during professional development would have been helpful. One responded, “In the future, professional development should include, “1) additional prompts, 2) examples of students’ work, 3) examples of students’ work from first to final draft, 4) example of how the program would look in lower grades.” One teacher seemed to express frustration in navigating the professional development as evidenced by the following statements: “I’ve never done this before. I’ve never taught writing, but it seems if everyone else had. So, I started with a deficit...There were visuals, but since I had never done this before, the PD was somewhat confusing. I think I needed more time to let everything sink in.”

Category 3: Implementation. Category 3 focused on teachers’ explicit prewriting implementation experiences, as well as on students’ experiences as described by their teachers. The most frequently mentioned positive attribute of implementation expressed by teachers was the step-by-step instructional sequence used in the explicit prewriting process. Some of the comments were “What prepared me were the step-by-step instruction; having an outline of the steps to follow; I learned how to guide students through the graphic organizer; guides teachers how to teach writing from beginning to end; very straightforward.” In terms of their students’

experiences, teachers indicated that students generally found the explicit prewriting process to be fun, mainly due to the use of the colored pens and graphic organizer rocket template.

In terms of challenges during implementation, responses varied, but several teachers expressed disappointment and frustration about the fact that students lacked basic writing skills, specifically grammar, spelling, punctuation and the ability to independently write a coherent sentence. Common complaints were, “I also had resource students who struggled badly; poor skills to begin with; they should have been learning how to write properly in the lower grades, starting with kindergarten; 7th and 8th grade is sort of too late, and we only had 6 weeks to teach them writing they should have learned before; some kids were so low, it took them longer to catch on.” Another teacher expressed that she had difficulty getting her younger group of students to “...share their ideas more, raise their hands, and participate more in discussions.” However, this was not a common sentiment among teachers of the upper grades.

In terms of student’s experiences, these were observed by teachers to be positive. For example, teachers indicated that their students enjoyed being provided their own pouches, binders, and color pens, coming to the board to brainstorm, being able to move around during guided practice, using the graphic organizer, color coding their rocket templates, and using colored pens to develop their essays. One respondent’s comments summated what many teachers similarly expressed, “The students really seemed to take off with the program. They thought it was fun.”

Category 4: Effectiveness. The Effectiveness category relates specifically to whether or not teachers believed that explicit prewriting instruction was an effective strategy for improving students’ writing skills. This category also explored the strengths and weaknesses of explicit prewriting as a writing program. One of the factors that appeared to influence teachers’ overall

perceptions about the writing program was the large number of below-proficient students. This fact was mentioned several times during the interviews. However, when asked to share ways in which they observed improvement in students' writing, all of the teachers stated that they witnessed growth in 3 distinct areas – brainstorming, graphic organizer development, and organization. Some of the statements having to do with these skill areas ranged from, "...they were able to accomplish more...especially...brainstorming and organizing their ideas," to, "I noticed improvement in organizing...", and "The most obvious improvement was in organization." Since teachers mentioned brainstorming so frequently as being one of the most positive attributes of the explicit prewriting process, it seems apparent that students were successful in meeting teachers' expectations during this prewriting activity.

Common thematic elements that manifested as a result of teachers being asked to describe the positive attributes of explicit prewriting instruction included, "straightforward... easy to implement...helped kids organize...activated their prior knowledge...graphic organizer tool helped students organize...graphic organizer helps struggling students...especially brainstorming." A similar comment was, "The kids thought it was cool to use color pens for their rockets, and that helped them stay focused and somewhat organized." Another stated, "The color coordination for the graphic organizer is one of the strongest points."

With regard to aspects of the program perceived by teachers to be negative, limited time was most often cited as being problematic. Most teachers expressed that there was too much material to cover in 6 weeks of summer school, and that such a program would better serve students if it were implemented throughout an entire school year. In addition to this negative perception, one teacher stated, "I wouldn't use the rocket organizer for middle school. It's too

babyish for them. I would use some other kind of graphic organizer, but I would keep the basic concepts of the program.”

Category 5: Challenges. The Challenges category was designed to identify the challenges and concerns expressed by teachers with respect to implementation of explicit prewriting instruction. The two most frequently recurring themes in terms of challenges were the below-proficient academic achievement levels of students and the limited time frame for implementing the strategy. Regarding the element of time, interviewee responses such as the following were common: “...too many pieces to remember in a short amount of time.....I think overall the program had some good points, but there was too much to cover in six weeks.....too many moving pieces and not enough time to get to it all....not enough time to get students where they needed to be in six weeks.” Results of the teacher interviews overwhelmingly demonstrate that the limited time factor was a point of frustration for teachers.

Based on the fact that several references were made to students’ below-proficient skill levels, this also appeared to be a major concern for teachers. One upper grade teacher ‘statement about students’ skill levels was comparable to that expressed by other participants: “The students I had were super low. Forget writing an essay. They couldn’t even write a simple sentence. I had to start from scratch with them because they didn’t have any writing skills whatsoever.... How did I address these challenges? I just had to tell myself to be patient.” Another teachers’ statements with regard to this issue were, “.....students were far below grade level in spelling, grammar...most could not write a complete sentence....I had 3 resource students who struggled really badly.” Thus, based on teachers’ responses when asked about challenges of implementation, it is evident that time limitations and students’ low academic achievement levels were significant areas of concern.

Summary

In this chapter, results of quantitative and qualitative data analyses were presented. For the quantitative component of the study, a comparative analysis of students' pre- and post-writing assessment means scores was made by conducting a paired samples t-Test. Results from these t-Tests indicated that students showed statistically significant improvement from pre- to post- assessment at every grade level. In addition, when English learners' pre- and post- writing assessment mean scores were compared, this group was also observed to have made statistically significant improvement in their scores. Data analysis for the qualitative component of the study involved coding teachers' interview responses and journals entries in an effort to identify their views, perceptions and concerns about implementing explicit prewriting instruction. Results of the qualitative data analysis process revealed that teachers were most concerned about having enough time to properly implement the strategy and the fact that students presented with very low writing skill levels. Results of qualitative data also indicated that teachers perceived the most positive features of the writing program to be brainstorming, use of the graphic organizer, and organization skills development.

Chapter 5 of this dissertation will begin with an introduction of the chapter. This will be followed by a discussion of the findings, implications for practice, recommendations for further research, and a conclusion.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Introduction

In Chapter 4, results of the quantitative and qualitative data analysis were presented. Chapter 5 presents a summary, discussion of the findings, implications for practice, recommendations for further research, and a conclusion. The purpose of this chapter is to further expound upon the research questions that directed the study by affording a concise overview of the relevant studies, methodology and results presented in preceding chapters.

Summary of the Study

This chapter begins with an introduction, followed by a discussion that includes implications for practice, recommendations for further research in explicit prewriting instruction, and a conclusion.

Discussion of the Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of explicit prewriting instruction on students' written communication skills in the age of Common Core, and to identify the types of concerns teachers have about implementation of this strategy. The research questions that comprised the basis of this study are discussed in this section, along with the findings that addressed each question.

Research Question 1: *Was there a statistically significant difference in the pre- and post- writing assessment mean scores of students who received six weeks of explicit prewriting instruction?*

A paired samples t-Test was conducted in order to compare the pre- and post- assessment mean scores of students in Grades 4-7 during the summer of 2018. Results of the t-Tests indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in the pre- and post- writing assessment mean scores of students at every grade level. A paired samples t-Test was also

conducted for the scores of the 10 English learners who were enrolled in the summer program. Results of this t-Test indicated that there was also a statistically significant difference in the pre- and post- writing assessment scores of this population of students. Findings from the quantitative data analyses conducted in this study suggest that explicit prewriting instruction positively impacted students' writing, even though the intervention was applied for only 6 weeks. As writing represents a complex matrix of skills, every writing skill domain could not be addressed within the parameters of this study. However, in that students did make some gains in their writing skills over the course of 6 weeks, explicit prewriting instruction can prove beneficial as a precursor to more comprehensive writing programs.

Research Question 2: *What were teachers' views, perceptions and concerns about implementing explicit prewriting instruction as a means of improving students' written communication skills?*

Six teachers participated in a semi-structured interview process in which they were asked 20 questions relating to their concerns about implementing explicit prewriting instruction and the professional development they received in this strategy. Teachers were also asked to write about their training and implementation experiences in journals that were provided to them at the beginning of the study. Data from these sources were collected, coded and placed into five categories. These categories were (a) Background and Experience, (b) Impressions of Professional Development, (c) Implementation Experiences, (d) Strengths and Weaknesses, and (e) Challenges. In the following sections of this dissertation, the researcher's impressions of teachers' views, perceptions, and concerns about explicit prewriting instruction within the context of these five categories are discussed.

Researcher's Impressions

Participants' Backgrounds and Experiences

With regard to individuals' backgrounds and experiences, an effort was made by the researcher to determine if there appeared to be a connection between participants' backgrounds and their views about explicit prewriting instruction. The teachers who did not have previous background, experience or training in writing instruction appeared to struggle the most with implementation. This is to be expected when teachers are faced with expectations they are not confident they can meet. Given the short, 6-week implementation period, the pressures to meet expectations became a source of stress and concern for these teachers. Participants who had previous experience teaching writing did not have the same degree of concern as the less experienced teachers, but these teachers also mentioned that they needed more than 6 weeks to adequately develop students' writing skills. These findings are consistent with the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) proposed by Hall and Hord (1987) which suggests that before teachers can fully adopt and adapt to instructional innovations, curriculum planners should take teachers' concerns into consideration.

As a learning theorist, Maslow (1987) implied that it is futile to help individuals experience goal attainment without first having ensured that their most elemental needs are met. For example, in the Maslow hierarchy of needs pyramid, self-actualization and esteem, which are at the pyramid's pinnacle, are only realized after the individual's physiological, safety, and love/belonging needs have been met. In referencing Maslow's paradigm, it then becomes obvious that the physiological and safety/belonging needs of less experienced participants were not entirely met during the writing intervention. As an illustration of this phenomena, one less experienced participant used descriptors such as, "...very frustrating...hard...I wasn't

taught....confusing...daily struggle....never taught writing, but everyone else had.” The lesson to be garnered from this observation is that during periods of training in unfamiliar concepts, teachers will need verbal affirmations of their effort, abilities and potential, as well as hands-on modeling and support on an ongoing basis. Through deliberate engagement of esteem-building on the part of administrators, teachers can begin the process of attaining self-actualization in their roles as educators.

Implementation and Professional Development

It is interesting to note that although one participant stated that she had never taught writing, she had previously received cross-curricular AVID training, and in fact worked at a school where AVID was heavily emphasized. AVID, the acronym for *Achievement Via Individual Determination* is a program consisting of a set of strategies to help students become more successful academically (AVID, 2018). One prominent component of AVID is teaching students how to use AVID’s proprietary Cornell Notes template for note taking, summarizing information, and writing reports. Moreover, the K-12 California Common Core Standards require writing across the curriculum (California State Board of Education, 2013). Even if single subject teachers do not teach ELA or writing as a subject, the CA Common Core Standards and the AVID curriculum mandate that writing be infused into all academic domains, including mathematics, science, physical education, history, and other subject areas. Since both single subject teachers were AVID-trained, each would have been exposed to AVID’s writing component. However, since one of these participants expressed concern about not being familiar with teaching writing, the assumption is that AVID writing strategies were not integrated into that teacher’s single subject curriculum.

The issue of teachers receiving professional development but not fully embracing, gaining from, or implementing the reform is an ongoing dilemma for many school districts. However, Roy (1998), notes that several studies have concluded that improved outcomes for teacher training can be attained when change facilitators take a more comprehensive approach to professional development. Such an approach would include meaningful involvement of teachers in design, planning and implementation, differentiation of training for new, veteran or struggling teachers, continuous, ongoing hands-on demonstrating of the practice, coaching, modeling, and shadowing of the innovative practice, presenting opportunities for teacher collaboration, problem-solving, peer coaching, and discussion, and presenting factual data that demonstrates the efficacy of the reform in improving student achievement. Moreover, schools which utilize comprehensive professional development models have higher rates of teacher participation, as well as greater gains in student achievement (Roy, 1998). In the case of this research study, the AVID-trained teacher who stated that she had never taught writing may have never had the opportunity to experience AVID training that integrated these elements into a comprehensive professional development format.

An additional determinant of effective professional development has to do with the length and adequacy of training. The National Education Commission on Time and Learning (1994) or NECTL concluded that one of the most frequent complaints K-12 teachers have about professional development has to do with the inadequate amount of time they are afforded to cognitively process, practice, and apply information they are presented during school-wide or district training sessions. Because of these time constraints, many teachers feel ill-prepared to implement what they have learned through professional development. Moreover, they may lack confidence in their ability to positively impact student achievement through implementation of

newly learned pedagogy (1994). The conclusions drawn by NECTL are consistent with the findings of this research study, in that some of the participants expressed an uneasiness about the rapid pace at which the training proceeded. Two teachers indicated that 8 weeks was not enough time for them to fully assimilate every component of explicit prewriting instruction. However, four teachers stated that the professional development adequately prepared them to implement this strategy. Of these four, one individual also stated that the training made him more confident in the ability to master the process. All of the teachers desired to have more time to improve students' writing skills, and felt that weeks was inadequate.

It is obvious from the results of this study that 8 weeks of professional development in explicit prewriting instruction without several weeks or months of follow up coaching and support do not represent an ideal training model. It is also obvious that the amount of time needed for teachers to learn and successfully implement innovative programs, curricula, instructional strategies, or technology varies according to the type of proposed learning. Moreover, individual's unique schemata, as well as the rate at which they process information can be dissimilar. This was certainly the case in this study, wherein participants with experience teaching writing felt more confident and prepared in the classroom, and those with little or no experience teaching writing reported that they needed much more time to feel equally competent.

Purnell and Hill (1992) concluded that the time element is a critical factor in teacher professional development and made the statement, "To learn a "moderately difficult teaching strategy could require that teachers receive 20 to 30 hours of instruction in its theory, 15 to 20 classroom demonstrations, and 10 to 15 coaching sessions before mastering the technique and incorporating it into routine classroom practice" (p. 2). Even more time may be required for training when teachers' prior experiences, backgrounds, learning styles, and cognitive processing

rates are taken into consideration. Admittedly, 8 weeks of training in such a complex skill as writing could be somewhat overwhelming for teachers who are unfamiliar with this subject area. Therefore, for future studies in explicit prewriting and similar studies, I would recommend a teacher training period of at least twelve weeks that takes place concurrently with ongoing coaching, in-classroom modeling, and other forms of teacher support. It would also be important to recognize that teachers with less experience will most likely need more on-site, hands-on coaching and support than those whose backgrounds and experiences have included instruction in writing. In addition to the time factor, a desire for modeling, monitoring, and daily check-ins by administrators were mentioned several times by most of the teachers. In fact, the need for modeling appeared to be the greatest concern of teachers. Thus, one major implication of the qualitative research component of this study is that facilitators of professional development need to provide teachers with ample time to learn and practice this strategy, as well as with ongoing coaching, modeling and support.

In addition to a longer training time frame, participants recommended that more anchor papers be provided during professional development so that teachers could compare students' writing to a tangible standard. Considered a best practices writing assessment tool, anchor papers are examples of writing that correspond to ascending levels of performance as measured against a standard writing rubric (Osborn Popp, Ryan, & Thompson, 2009). At state and district levels, those tasked with scoring students' essays are provided illustrative examples of papers that represent writing performance along a continuum of proficiency levels (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2019). For example, on a scale of 1-5, an anchor paper that has been assigned a score of 5 would be exemplary, while a score of 1 would be far below grade level standards for writing. One especially interesting suggestion made by a participant was to

collect students' writing samples from the lower grades and compare them to upper grade writing samples. This would enable teachers at both ends of the grade level spectrum to analyze student writing from grade to grade, collaboratively identify areas of deficiency, and make adjustments as necessary. For future research, as well as for practical application in real world settings, I believe it would be expedient to consider the recommendations for improved teacher professional development made by this study's participants – more time for training, practice and support, as well as more examples of different proficiency levels of student writing.

Implementation

Teachers' implementation experiences were mostly positive, with the exception that most expressed concern, and even alarm about their students' low academic achievement levels. Even as the program continued, this continued to be an area of concern for teachers. Some of the words teachers used to describe their observations of this situation were, "super low.... far below grade level...not exposed in lower grades...too hard for them....they need more help...a lot of troubled kids...poor writing skills to begin with....longer to catch on....they struggled." These are sobering comments with respect to the levels at which students were performing when they started the intervention, and each comment is to be taken seriously and addressed appropriately during the regular school year. However, during the school term previous to the summer session, many parents of children who struggled in school eagerly awaited summer school in the hope that 6 weeks of academic enrichment would be beneficial. This factor might explain why many of the students were so low academically.

Teachers with writing instruction experience reported that the explicit prewriting process was "straightforward....easy to implement...students enjoyed this process....the graphic organizer was a great tool...color coding allowed student." One teacher said, "I feel great using

it....loved the freewriting process...loved the collaboration between the kids...I liked the color coded system.” In terms of implementation, teachers were unanimous in their praise for the brainstorming, color-coding process, and graphic organizers, indicating that students enjoyed this aspect of the program. However, the entire process was a bit more arduous for teachers in that students lacked many important writing skills at the beginning of the program.

In public schools, due to considerations of equity, summer school is generally open to all students. This means that summer school populations will mostly likely be comprised of students from varying levels of academic achievement. Many of the students whose writing scores were collected for the purpose of this research study struggled academically during the regular school term. It is for this reason that their parents enrolled them in summer school. For future studies of this kind, it will be important for facilitators of professional development to make this fact known to teachers on Day 1 of their training. By informing teachers of students’ present levels of achievement, teachers will be better able to plan learning activities that build background knowledge, as well as make plans for differentiation of instruction. In retrospect, participants of this study would have been better served by having been provided students’ Spring 2018 Measures of Academic Performance (MAP) scores on the first day of professional development. In this way, teachers could have been better prepared for the students they would receive, and make adjustments as necessary without compromising the integrity of the intervention itself.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Teachers had many opinions about the explicit prewriting program. All six teachers indicated that their students’ skills in organization improved as a result of the program. The four experienced teachers found the instructional sequence to be straightforward and easily

implemented. Although the two less experienced teachers indicated that they sometimes struggled with implementation, they each liked the step-by-step instructional sequence and found it simple to follow, even though they also indicated that there were too many steps to remember in a short span of time. All six of the teachers thought that the brainstorming activities in which students came to the board to write their thoughts was both enjoyable and beneficial for students. Additionally, all six teachers indicated that the colored pens and graphic organizer templates were useful in helping students develop their thoughts and ideas. On the other hand, one of the middle school teachers found the rocket graphic organizer template to be inappropriate for his students, and stated that even though he liked the explicit prewriting process, he intended to use a template that would be more appropriate for middle school.

There are several implications that can be surmised from these findings. First, one can assume that teachers will respond positively to professional development that is presented in a straightforward, comprehensible format. Second, teachers seem to appreciate learning and implementing a curriculum that includes activities that are stimulating and enjoyable for their students. Third, during the planning phase of professional development, it is important to align curricular resources and materials with the age, grade, and maturity level of the students who will use these materials. Fourth, based on teachers' observations, even though the intervention occurred within a span of only 6 weeks, it had a demonstrable impact on students' ability to generate ideas about an assigned topic and to then use these ideas to compose focused, organized compositions. Accordingly, since organizing one's ideas in preparation for writing is an expectation at every grade level and across all academic disciplines, explicit prewriting can become a useful pedagogical tool in the repository of effective instructional practices.

Fifth, teachers often lament the fact that when given a writing assignment, many students have difficulty getting even the first few words on paper. However, since the instructional sequence for explicit prewriting starts with the building of background knowledge, brainstorming, and the organization of ideas elicited from the brainstorming, this instructional method can prove useful for addressing this challenging aspect of writing. Lastly, and quite importantly, since this study demonstrated that English learners' writing skills improved as a result of explicit prewriting pedagogy, this approach may be similarly beneficial to students with disabilities, reluctant writers, and other students for whom writing may be particularly challenging.

Challenges

The challenges participants spoke of most frequently had to do with the rapid pace of the program and students' academic deficits. Teachers who were new to writing instruction also wanted more modeling and support in the classroom, as well as frequent monitoring of their instruction so that they could be assured they were on the right track. Although these individuals asserted that explicit prewriting instruction improved their students' organization skills, the number of steps they were required to follow overwhelmed these same individuals. One of these participants expressed, "It was hard to use this method because sometimes I missed steps. Then I would find out the next day that my students hadn't done something they were supposed to do. This was very frustrating."

As Shuttleworth (2008) explains, "The principles of validity and reliability are fundamental cornerstones of the scientific method." However, there are very few mixed methods experimental designs that are totally void of any flaws, missteps, or other impediments to internal validity and reliability. This study was not an exception to this dimension of experimental research. Had the teacher training and writing intervention periods been

lengthened by several weeks, a semester, or even an entire school year, teachers may have had more confidence in themselves as well as in their proteges. Accordingly, it is recommended that for future studies, the training and implementation periods for explicit prewriting instruction be twelve weeks or greater. In this way, teachers are afforded more time to learn and implement a new instructional strategy, and students have an opportunity to advance beyond the rudimentary aspects of writing skills development.

Implications for Practice

In the age of the Common Core Standards, teachers in every academic domain and at every grade level are tasked with ensuring that students become proficient writers. The Common Core writing standards are specific, direct, and instructive in terms of the type of writing students should be able to produce at every grade level. Prior to Common Core, there were many other educational initiatives that sought to improve students' writing skills. The nation convulsed when *A Nation at Risk* was published during the Reagan administration because it brought about astute disappointment in the failure of our school systems to appropriately educate students. During the latter Bush presidency, *No Child Left Behind* law was an attempt by legislators to address school's shortcomings. Yet, almost forty years after *A Nation at Risk*, educators are still asking why Johnny can't write. The answer may lie in whole school reform that assigns greater importance and value to writing instruction, especially when the rigorous Common Core standards have been issued as an imperative for change in most of the fifty states. To achieve these goals, however, it is expedient to provide teachers with writing strategies and programs that work, as well as train teachers for effective implementation. This study sought to identify one avenue for achieving these objectives.

Explicit prewriting is an instructional strategy that guides students through an instructional sequence that focuses on the prewriting phase of composition development. Adapted from the Madeline Hunter 10-step model of instructional design (1982), the Hunter model constitutes the foundational principles, structures, and straightforward, step-by-step process used in explicit prewriting instruction. The steps used in the implementation of explicit prewriting are presented in Appendix C. Hunter did not necessarily propose that students come to the board in order to build background knowledge through brainstorming, but she strongly advocated use of an anticipatory set, a statement of purpose, an objective, and teacher modeling. In this study, each of these components, as well as the other elements of the Hunter model were employed in guiding students through the prewriting process, but were adapted to address students' diverse developmental levels and interests.

The explicit prewriting instructional strategies employed in this research study are most well suited for the elementary grades, especially Grades 3-6 because the Common Core writing standards for these grades emphasize multiple-paragraph narrative essay development. Scaffolding is probably the most important feature of explicit prewriting instruction, as students build upon prior learning at each step of essay development. For students who are struggling academically or for those who are learning to read, speak and write in a language that is different from their home language, scaffolding has been shown to be an effective strategy for improving student learning (Marzano, 2003).

Explicit prewriting is essentially a planning process for composition development. Individuals who possess exemplary writing skills almost always use an extensive, personalized planning process prior to writing (Troia & Graham, 2003). The advantages and implications of planning before writing are many. Through brainstorming, students are better able to generate

ideas about a topic. This removes the statement many students make when assigned a writing prompt. “I don’t know what to write.” The brainstorming ideas are used to develop the graphic organizer, and then the essay. There are many other steps in between, each of which is characterized as highly structured, explicitly taught, and teacher directed. Although each step is significant, teacher modeling and guidance are absolutely necessary for promoting student success.

The qualitative phase of this study examined teachers’ views, perceptions and concerns about explicit prewriting instruction. Data was gleaned from teachers’ interview responses and journals in an effort to identify the types of concerns expressed by teachers as a result of the six-week, explicit prewriting intervention instituted in this study. The data showed that teachers are generally quite concerned about their students’ achievement, and become frustrated when they feel they are not having a significant impact on students’ classroom and test performance. Teachers can also become frustrated, confused, and stressed when they do not have enough time to thoroughly process information during professional development or enough time to execute it successfully in the classroom. In this study, the issues of low student achievement and limited time to learn about and implement new strategies were prominent themes.

Data from this study can be used to increase awareness about the range of feelings, perceptions, concerns and emotions teachers sometimes experience when having to learn about and implement a new or unfamiliar pedagogy. New or inexperienced teachers can be particularly susceptible to uncomfortable or negative emotions when encountering new material that they will be responsible for presenting to their students. When students do not grasp the new material as quickly as teachers believe they should, teachers may blame themselves for their students’ failure. It is therefore important that instructional coaches, lead teachers, professional

trainers, and site administrators make every attempt possible to ensure that teachers with limited teaching experience are supported through coaching, collaboration, shadowing other teachers, team teaching, mentoring, and other mechanisms of support.

According to the prescriptive recommendations inherent in the Concerns Based Adoption Model, facilitators of change must recognize that when teachers are required to adopt an initiative, they often experience concerns about how they will manage to competently implement the initiative (Khoboli & O'Toole, 2011). Moreover, they can become concerned about how the initiative will affect them personally, as well as professionally. Addressing teachers' concerns with compassion, empathy, and respect can help alleviate some of their anxiety and self-doubt (2011). During the qualitative phase of the study in which I trained teachers in explicit prewriting methodology, I had an opportunity to experience first-hand, teachers' concerns about an innovative educational strategy.

One afternoon after I had modeled a lesson, a teacher remarked, "I felt like whatever I did was not good enough, especially after the modeling. And I felt that you didn't think I was doing a good job. And it hurt. On top of all that, I had some major family issues going on throughout the entire summer." The heartfelt statements made by this individual inspired me to embark upon a journey of self-examination and personal reflection. I began to introspectively revisit the body language, other types of non-verbal communication, and word selection I used in communicating to this teacher in a way that made her feel insecure in her own classroom. I had hoped that as a result of these self-defining exercises, I would not be found guilty of conduct and language which was condescending, judgmental, lacking in empathy, or void of compassion and understanding. However, I am embarrassed to admit that I was.

When in a position of school leadership, it is important to keep in mind that not only do individuals learn differently, but some learn less quickly than others. It is also important to note that teachers want their students to be successful, and more often than not, make a sincere effort to improve student learning and achievement. Further, when we observe educators in their respective school settings, it is easy to forget that they are not only teaching professionals, but also spouses, parents, grandparents, daughters, sons, students, and second-job wage earners. Teachers, as well as all other human beings experience grief, illness, financial difficulty, and other challenging issues of life. Accordingly, school leaders should make an attempt to determine why a teacher is struggling, and provide as much assistance and support as possible to help that person become successful. The data collected for this research study, as well as the study's theoretical frameworks in concerns-oriented educational research helped me reposition myself to become more aware of teachers' concerns with respect to professional development and implementation of new or unfamiliar instructional approaches. It is a transformative experience worthy of emulation by those engaged in district or site-level administration, coaching, professional development, school reform, or educational research.

Recommendations for Further Research

The objectives of this research study were two-fold. The first objective was to examine the impact of explicit prewriting instruction on students' written communication skills in the age of Common Core. To accomplish this objective, paired samples t-Tests were conducted in order to compare students' pre- and post- writing assessment mean scores by grade level, as well as by EL designation. Test results demonstrated a statistically significant difference in scores for each grade level, as well as for ELs specifically. Thus, students scored better on the post-test than on the pre-test. Although these findings are significant, there were limitations that were relevant to

these findings. First, the sample size was small, as compared to studies that examine the impact of an instructional approach on pre- and post- writing mean scores among a group of schools or across an entire school district. Second, the intervention took place over a period of 6 weeks. A more ideal length of time for implementation of this writing project would have been at least 12 weeks, the number of weeks in one semester. Finally, during the pre-test, students were provided a writing prompt test sheet, a blank sheet of paper for planning or outlining, and writing implements consisting of color pens and regular pencils. During the post-test, students were provided the writing prompt test sheet, a blank sheet of paper, a blank graphic organizer template, color pens and regular pencils. The reason that students were not given a writing template during the pre-test is that students had not previously been taught how to use this type of writing tool. Nevertheless, these actions constituted another limitation of the study.

There are several possibilities for future quantitative studies in explicit prewriting instruction. The first recommendation would be to use a larger population size to measure students' pre- and post- test writing scores following implementation of the writing intervention. Since the findings of this study provided evidence that ELs who received 6 weeks of instruction in this intervention also experienced academic gains, a second recommendation would be to conduct a study on a larger EL population sample.

The second objective of the study was to identify the views, perceptions, and concerns teachers had with respect to implementation of explicit prewriting instruction. Teachers' responses to interview questions posed by the researcher, as well as teachers' journal entries provided a repository of information about their experiences using this instructional approach. Results from the qualitative data collected in this study indicate that teachers can experience a range of emotions when faced with learning about and having to implement new strategies,

curricula, or other unfamiliar elements in their professional environments. It is therefore important that leaders identify teachers' concerns about new curricula or instructional strategies so that they can provide the appropriate support. Future research on teacher professional development should focus on building supportive environments for teachers. This would include sufficient mentoring, modeling of instructional practices, coaching and other supports. Continued research that targets the range of emotions teachers experience when confronted with new learning experiences in a school setting would also prove to be valuable. Results from these types of data could then be used to plan more effective teacher professional development, training and support.

Conclusions

The Common Core Writing Standards require that students in Grades 4-8 be able to create multiple paragraph compositions that are organized, coherent, and reflective of grade-level standards for language usage and sentence structure. However, over the past four decades, the majority of the nation's students have not met this requirement. As evidenced by the results of this and other studies that were referenced in this dissertation, providing teachers with the necessary knowledge, tools, and expertise to address this deficit is paramount to students' success in writing. Further, in order to enhance teachers' success in the classroom, teachers' concerns about the implementation of new or unfamiliar instructional approaches must be addressed. As the study demonstrated, teachers are concerned about students' below-proficient writing achievement levels. They are also concerned that they will have the time and support needed to help students make positive strides in this important academic domain. Teaching explicit prewriting strategies over the course of the school year, rather than over a period of 6 weeks was mentioned as a concern by all of the participants in the study. Ongoing, consistent

modeling of the instructional practice by experts in the field was also an area of concern expressed by the teachers.

In this study, analyses of students' pre- and post- writing assessment means scores suggest that explicit prewriting instruction offers a dimension of hope for students who struggle to meet the rigorous writing standards imposed by Common Core. Explicit prewriting instruction does not specifically target the conventions of language such as sentence structure, grammar, and spelling that are also important measures of writing proficiency. However, data from the study clearly indicate that explicit prewriting instruction improved students' writing organization skills. In this regard, teachers found the step-by step instructional sequence for explicit prewriting, brainstorming and students' use of color-coded graphic organizers to be especially helpful.

This study demonstrated that improving students' writing skills can be a daunting for teaching professionals, but rewarding for students in terms of academic improvement. Even though most students' were below grade level in writing at the beginning of the summer program, their writing scores improved following 6 weeks of explicit prewriting instruction. They were still not at grade level by the end of the intervention period, but had advanced beyond the point at which they started. Teachers expressed frustration with their students' below proficient achievement levels, but should be pleased to know that even 6 weeks of explicit prewriting instruction made a positive difference. They would be even more pleased to know that this fact had been proven through statistical analysis of their students' pre- and post- writing assessment data.

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APPENDIX A

California Common Core Writing Standards

Adapted from the *California Department of Education College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing* (California Department of Education, 2008).

Articulation of the CA Common Core Writing Standards for Grades 4-7

1. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.
 - a. Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
 - b. Use narrative techniques such as dialogue, description, and pacing to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to the situation.
 - c. Use a variety of transitional words, phrases, and clauses to manage the sequence of events.
 - d. Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.
 - e. Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.
2. With guidance and support from adults, produce clear and coherent multi-paragraph compositions in which the development and organization are appropriate for the task, purpose and audience.
3. With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, or rewriting.
4. With guidance and support from adults, use technology to produce and publish writing.

APPENDIX B

Grade 4-7 Narrative Writing Rubric

CCSS	4 Exceeds Grade Level	3 At Grade Level Std.	2 Below Grade Level	1 Far Below Gr. Lvl
<i>W3a; 4</i> I N T R O D U C T I O N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introductory paragraph. ▪ Appropriate title. ▪ Well-developed topic sentence. ▪ Well-developed thesis statement. ▪ 4-sentence paragraph. ▪ Responds appropriately to writing prompt. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introductory paragraph. ▪ Appropriate title. ▪ Topic sentence. ▪ Attempted thesis statement. ▪ 3-sentence paragraph. ▪ Responds to most parts prompt. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introductory paragraph. ▪ Title somewhat related to prompt. ▪ Topic sentence somewhat dev. ▪ Poorly dev. or no thesis statement. ▪ 3-sentence paragraph ▪ Minimal response to prompt. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Title ▪ Topic sentence absent or not related to prompt. ▪ No thesis. ▪ 2 or fewer sentences. ▪ Inappropriate or no response to prompt.
<i>W3a-e; 4</i> O R G A N I Z A T I O N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Uses graphic organizer before writing. ▪ Graphic organizer has a topic sentence. ▪ 3 subtopics evolve from topic sentence or prompt. ▪ Additional ideas evolve from subtopics. ▪ Graphic organizer content is transferred to narrative essay. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Creates and uses graphic organizer before writing. ▪ Graphic organizer contains at least a topic sentence. ▪ Additional ideas are contained in graphic organizer. ▪ Some information from graphic organizer is transferred to essay. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rudimentary development of a graphic organ. ▪ Graphic organizer not used. ▪ Minimal planning for essay development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Graphic organizer not used. ▪ No evidence of planning before writing.
<i>W3a-e; 4</i> S T R U C T U R E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introduction and three supportive paragraphs ▪ Coherently organizes event sequence. ▪ Transition words used at beginning of each supportive paragraph. ▪ Provides conclusion that clearly refers back to prompt. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introduction and three supportive paragraphs. ▪ Some evidence of event sequence. ▪ Some transition words used appropriately. ▪ Has conclusion, but it may not clearly refer back to prompt. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introduction. ▪ At least one supportive paragraph. ▪ Limited or no event sequence. ▪ Minimal or no transition words. ▪ Minimally dev. or no conclusion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introduction. ▪ At least one supportive paragraph. ▪ No event sequence. ▪ No use of transition words. ▪ No conclusion.
<i>L 1-2</i> L A N G U A G E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Uses creative, engaging language. ▪ Mostly uses appropriate English conventions: grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization. ▪ Sophisticated, insightful word choice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evidence of some creative use of language. ▪ Minor errors in use of appropriate English conventions. ▪ Grade-level-appropriate word choice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Repetitive sentence structure. ▪ English convention errors obscure meaning. ▪ Word choice lacks grade-level-appropriate sophistication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Non-mastery of sent. structure. ▪ Non-mastery of English lang. conventions. ▪ Word choice far below grade level.

Adapted from the Common Core State Standards. Writing rubrics. *Elk Grove Unified School District*, 2019.

Add scores in vertical columns vertically to obtain a mean representing the student's overall writing score.

1 = 64% or below 2 = 74-65% 3 = 84-75% 4 = 85%-100

Each horizontal To obtain a score in a single writing category, scores horizontally To assess a student's specific strength/weakness in one specific writing category, add scores horizontally as follows:

APPENDIX C

10-Step Instructional Sequence for Explicit Prewriting Instruction

Adapted from the Hunter 10-Step Instructional Design Model

Each lesson presents the following instructional sequence:

1. Standard
2. Objective/s
3. Purpose
4. Input (lesson content provided by teacher)
5. Modeling
6. Guided Practice
7. Check for Understanding
8. Independent Practice
9. Assessment (informal or formal)
10. Closure

APPENDIX D

Explicit Instruction for a 5-Paragraph Narrative Essay

Step 1 – State the Standard

1. Write 5-paragraph narrative essay to develop real or imagined experiences or events using descriptive details and clear event sequences.
 - a. Organize an event sequence that logically unfolds.
 - b. Describe actions, feelings, or thoughts of the character being written about.
 - c. Use temporal words and phrases (i.e., first, in the beginning, second, next, in conclusion, an example of...) to signal event order.
 - d. Provide an introduction, 3 supportive paragraphs and conclusion.
2. With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.
3. With guidance and support from peers and adults, plan, revise and edit
4. Demonstrate standard English conventions.
5. Recall information from experience or cite information from print and digital sources.
 - a. Take notes on sources.
 - b. Sort evidence into categories as appropriate.
6. Cite evidence from text to support statements, claims, and viewpoints.
7. Extend time frames for writing to include activities such as researching, editing and revising.

Step 2: State the Objectives

- Students will plan, revise and edit a 5-paragraph narrative essay which includes a topic sentence, introductory paragraph, three supporting paragraphs and a conclusion.

- Students will plan, revise and edit a 5-paragraph opinion essay which includes a topic sentence, introductory paragraph, three supporting paragraphs and a conclusion.
- Students will plan, revise and edit a 5-paragraph informative/explanatory composition which includes a topic sentence, introductory paragraph, three supporting paragraphs and a conclusion.
- Students will use standard language conventions for writing as outlined in the CA CCSS Language Standards: Conventions of Standard English 1-3.
- Students will use linking words to create a logical organizational sequence and to link words and ideas in 5-paragraph compositions/essays.
- Students will use an instructor-provided graphic organizer to plan 5-paragraph compositions/essays.
- Students will actively participate in an academic prewriting process which will lead to the development of 5-paragraph compositions/essays.
- Students will use citations and/or experiential references in the development of 5-paragraph compositions/essays.

Step 3: State the Purpose

- Provide students with the necessary writing skills for district and state assessments.
- Provide students with the necessary skills for college and career readiness.

Step 4: Develop the Anticipatory Set

Build upon students' background knowledge by using examples from

- Personal experiences,
- students' backgrounds and experiences,
- text,

- illustrations/graphic images,
- media, and
- realia.

Step 5: Modeling by the Teacher

The teacher will introduce and demonstrate:

- Freewriting
- Brainstorming
- Converting writing prompt to title
- Converting title to topic sentence
- How to use a graphic organizer
- Development of thesis for introductory paragraph.
- Development of a graphic organizer in preparation for writing.
- Examples of and use for transition words.
- Elements of an introductory paragraph.
- How to create three supportive paragraphs, each beginning with a transition word and the subtopic sentence for each supporting paragraph. (Ex: Second, the wolf went to the house made of straw.)
- How to write a concluding paragraph which re-states information contained in the introduction.
- How to edit for grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and other standard English writing conventions.

Step 6: Check for Understanding Continuously

Throughout the teacher input and modeling steps, frequently check for understanding.

Step 7: Incorporate Guided Practice

- Throughout the teacher input and modeling steps, allow students to practice components of the lesson as presented.
- Ask students questions to gauge students' level of understanding. Provide peer and teacher support as needed.
- Use student engagement techniques such as student white-board responses, verbal responses, student-to-student verbal exchanges, students come to board or document camera to explain or demonstrate that they understand the concepts being taught.

Step 8: Provide Independent Practice

To gauge mastery, release students to independently work on the targeted learning objective.

Step 9: Provide Closure

- Teacher: Revisit the lesson's objective.
- Teacher: Re-state the objective.
- Teacher: Summarize key points.
- Students: Answer questions about key elements of the lesson.
- Teacher: Use students' responses to plan subsequent lesson/s.

Step 10: Perform Informal or Formal Assessments

Examples of assessment tools are

- Questioning students and requiring verbal response,
- Peer review,
- Self-review with feedback,

- Student work products,
- Oral presentations of completed work.,
- Informal assessments, and
- Formal assessments.
- Writing Rubric

APPENDIX E

Graphic Organizer Template used in Research Study

1

2	3	4
2	3	4
1		
2		
3		
4		
★		

APPENDIX F

Completed Graphic Organizer of *Student X*, Grade 4

Name: XXXXXXXXXX Date: 6/13/18

Title: Taking Care of a Puppy

This is how to take care of a puppy.

1
Puppies need food and water, love, and care.

2 Food and water	3 love	4 care
2 First, puppies need food and water. Make sure a puppy has clean water. Give puppy food to the puppy. They also enjoy having treats too.	3 Next, they need love. You should give puppies lots of hugs. They also like to play. Puppies enjoy being petted by their owners.	4 Finally, puppies need to be taken care of. Sometimes you need to give puppies medicine. If puppies are in danger you have to protect them. They also need shots to keep them healthy.

1 In conclusion, puppies need several things

2 for good health. Food and water help keep

3 a puppy strong. When puppies get lots of

4 love they are happy. When puppies are cared for they feel

* protected and loved. If you do all this for your puppy, your puppy will love you very much.

Rocket Writing

Appendix G

Completed 5-Paragraph Narrative Essay of *Student X*, Grade 4

June 27, 2018

Taking Care of a Puppy

This is how to take care of a puppy. Puppies need food and water, love, and care. All of these things help your puppy to be healthy and loveable.

First, puppies need food and water. Make sure a puppy has clean water. Give puppy food to the puppy. They also enjoy having treats.

Next, they need love. You should give puppies lots of hugs. They also like to play. Puppies enjoy being pet by their owners.

Finally, puppies need to be taken care of. Sometimes you need to give puppies medicine. If puppies are in danger you have to protect them. They also need shots to keep them healthy.

In conclusion, puppies need several things for good health. Food and water help keep a puppy strong. When puppies get lots of love they are happy. When puppies are cared for they feel protected and loved. If you do all this for your puppy, your puppy will love you very much.

Appendix H

Revision Checklist: Grades 4-5



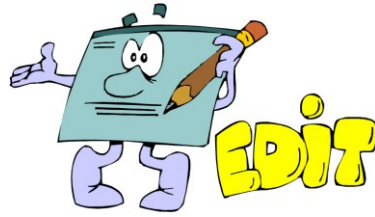
PROOFREAD, REVISE AND EDIT
(Grades 4-5)

Use this checklist to make a good essay even better!

- 1 ____ I have completed all parts of my graphic organizer rocket correctly.
- 2 ____ I changed the writing prompt (the topic) into my title.
- 3 ____ I changed the title into my topic sentence.
- 4 ____ I have a thesis statement in my introductory paragraph.
- 5 ____ I have stated what I intend to write about in my introduction.
- 6 ____ Each of my 3 supportive paragraphs has a topic sentence.
- 7 ____ Each of my 3 supportive paragraphs begins with a transition word.
- 8 ____ I used the correct color ink for each of my supportive paragraphs.
- 9 ____ Each supportive paragraph has 3-4 sentences.
- 10 ____ The conclusion has 3 sentences in different color inks to show my subtopics.
- 11 ____ The last sentence of my conclusion is interesting or exciting.
- 12) ____ I have checked for capitalization and punctuation mistakes.
- 13) ____ I have used interesting and exciting adjectives, verbs, and nouns.
- 14) ____ I indented each of my 5 paragraphs.
- 15) ____ I checked for spelling mistakes.

APPENDIX I

Revision Checklist: Grades 6-7

**PROOFREAD, REVISE AND EDIT**

- 1 _____ I have completed all parts of my graphic organizer rocket correctly.
- 2 _____ I changed the writing prompt (the topic) into my title.
- 2 _____ I changed the title into my topic sentence.
- 3 _____ I have a thesis statement in my introductory paragraph.
- 4) _____ I have stated what I intend to write about in my introduction.
- 5) _____ Each of my 3 supportive paragraphs has a topic sentence.
- 6) _____ Each of my 3 supportive paragraphs begins with a transition word.
- 7) _____ I used the correct color ink for each of my supportive paragraphs.
- 8) _____ Each supportive paragraph has 3-4 sentences.
- 9) _____ To show my subtopics, conclusion has 3 sentences in different color inks.
- 10) _____ The last sentence of my conclusion is interesting or exciting.
- 11) _____ I have checked for capitalization and punctuation mistakes.
- 12) _____ I have used interesting and exciting adjectives, verbs, and nouns.
- 13) _____ I have checked for grammar, run-on sentences, and sentence fragments.
- 14) _____ I have checked my spelling.
- 15) _____ I indented each of my 5 paragraphs.

APPENDIX J

Peer Editing Checklist

**PEER EDITING CHECK-LIST**

YES	NO	CRITERIA
		Graphic organizer has been completed correctly.
		The title has been turned into a topic sentence.
		There is a thesis statement.
		The same graphic organizer color coding is shown in the 3 supportive paragraphs.
		The 3 supportive paragraphs begin with a transition word.
		I checked for complete sentences and correct punctuation.
		The beginning of each sentence is capitalized. Proper nouns are also capitalized.
		I checked for correct grammar.
		I checked for correct spelling.
		The topic sentence has been restated in the first sentence of the conclusion.
		The conclusion has different colored inks for 3 of the sentences.
		The last sentence of the conclusion is interesting or exciting.
		I read the entire essay.

Thank you!

APPENDIX K

Six-Week Unit Lesson Plan for Writing Instruction

Standards for this 6-Week Unit Lesson Plan were adapted and or paraphrased from *The Common Core State Standards Initiative*, 2018.

CCSS Anchor Writing Standards

1. Write a 5-paragraph opinion piece on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons.
2. Write a 5-paragraph informative/explanatory composition about a topic which conveys information and ideas clearly.
 - a. Introduce the topic or text that is being written about.
 - b. Create a topic sentence for the introductory paragraph, 3 subtopic sentences for each supportive paragraph, and a concluding paragraph.
 - c. State an opinion.
 - d. Create an organizational structure that lists reasons for a point of view.
 - e. Provide reasons that support an opinion.
 - f. Incorporate linking words and phrases to connect paragraphs, ideas, and reasons such as “for example, therefore, since, for this reason, to begin with, first, second, third, finally, in conclusion”)
3. Write 5-paragraph informative/explanatory compositions to examine a topic and to clearly convey ideas and information.
4. With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.
5. With guidance and support from peers and adults, plan, revise and edit
-Refer to Language Standards to demonstrate standard English conventions.
6. With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing a needed through revision and editing.
7. Recall information from experience or cite information from print and digital sources.
 - a. Take notes on sources
 - b. Sort evidence into categories as appropriate

Objectives:

1. Students will plan, revise and edit a 5-paragraph narrative essay.
2. Students will plan, revise and edit a 5-paragraph opinion composition.
3. Students will use an instructor-provided graphic organizer to plan a 5-paragraph opinion composition.

4. Students will actively participate in a prewriting process that leads to the development of a 5-paragraph essay.
5. Students will use citations and/or experiential references in the development of a 5-paragraph essays.

10-Step Lesson

1. Anticipatory Set – Build background about caring for a pet. Use real life examples
2. Standards: Writing & Writing Applications
3. Purpose: Develop grade-level-appropriate writing skills.
4. Information
5. Modeling
6. Check for Understanding
7. Guided Practice
8. Independent Practice
9. Closure
10. Assessment

TEACH STUDENTS HOW TO:

- Free-write
- Convert Topic to Title of essay
- Use the graphic organizer
- Brainstorm
- Develop a topic sentence
- Develop a thesis statement
- Complete each step of the graphic organizer
- Use transition words
- Develop an introduction
- Develop supporting paragraphs-Develop a conclusion
- Students develop their first draft for homework and bring back for review the next day.

APPENDIX L

Teacher Interview Questions Used in Study

- 1) How many years of full-time teaching experience do you have?
- 2) Please list your degrees and any current CA credentials and professional certificates.
- 3) Which subjects and grades do you teach during the regular school year?
- 4) How many weeks did you provide explicit prewriting?
- 5) Which grades did you teach during this time?
- 6) What was your class enrollment during the summer program?
- 7) Had you taught writing prior to the summer of 2018?
- 8) In what ways did the professional development you received in explicit prewriting instruction prepare you to implement this writing strategy during the summer program?
If you feel that the professional development did not adequately prepare you, please describe the ways in which you did not feel prepared.
- 9) In what specific ways could the professional development in explicit prewriting instruction you received have been more effective?
- 10) Describe the most challenging aspects of explicit prewriting instruction.
- 11) What were the strengths and weaknesses of explicit prewriting instruction as a strategy to improve student writing?
- 12) Please share with me ways you observed student writing improvement. If there was little or no improvement, describe what could have been done differently to enhance the instruction.
- 13) If you observed an improvement in students' writing skills after they had been taught how to use the rocket graphic organizer, please describe the ways in which you observed improvement.
- 14) What were the challenges students encountered during their use of the graphic organizer, and how did you address these challenges?
- 15) In what specific ways could the explicit prewriting instruction model be improved upon?
- 16) Prior to the professional development you received in writing rubrics during the summer program, had you ever used a writing rubric to score students' writing?
- 17) Did the professional development sessions in writing rubrics adequately prepare you to score students' writing assessments? Please explain why or why not.
- 18) Was the writing pre-test a valid indicator of students' ability to compose a 5-paragraph narrative essay? Please explain why or why not.
- 19) If you believe that the writing post-test was a valid indicator of students' ability to compose a 5-paragraph narrative essay, please explain your reasoning. Or, if you believe that the writing post-test was not a valid indicator of students' ability to write a 5-paragraph essay, please explain your reasoning.
- 20) In what ways will you use the explicit prewriting as a strategy during the regular school year?

APPENDIX M
WRITING PRE-TEST

Student ID# _____

Grade: _____

Date: _____

Directions: Today you will write a 5-paragraph essay about the best movie you have ever seen. In your essay, make sure you use proper spelling, punctuation and grammar. Try to use interesting words and descriptive adjectives. You will have 90 minutes to complete your essay. You can use the blank unlined paper to create an outline or graphic organizer if you need to. If you finish early, start reading the book you selected before the test started. Take your time to do your best! You may begin when your teacher tells you to start.

APPENDIX N

Writing Post-Test

Student ID# _____

Grade: _____

Date: _____

Student Directions:

1. Use the Rocket Writing graphic organizer you have been provided to create a 5-paragraph narrative essay about what you value most in a friend.
2. Use the color pens to develop your graphic organizer.
3. Transfer the information from the graphic organizer into your test folder.
4. Be sure to use the same ink colors for your 3 supporting paragraphs as the ones used in your graphic organizer.
5. Use the same ink colors for the first four sentences in your conclusion paragraph.
6. End your essay with a sentence that expresses a strong thought.