

SUPPORTING PRE-SERVICE TEACHER WRITING DURING TEACHER
TRAINING: PERCEPTIONS OF SEVEN INTERVIEWEES
COMPARED WITH THEMES IN
CURRENT RESEARCH

by

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my first grandchild, Adrienne Rachel Marks, whose early, but very blessed arrival, nearly made the completion of this thesis impossible.

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ABSTRACT

While studies have explored the writing identity formation and compositional self-efficacy of pre-service teachers, little research has been published on writing skill and task competencies important for emphasis during teacher training. In order to help fill this gap in current research, seven pre-service teachers contributed interview data by answering eleven open-ended questions about which compositional skill and task proficiencies they considered most crucial during their preparation for an in-service career. This data was then compared to other current studies exploring writing skill and task competencies for pre-service and in-service teachers. Because this information was so scarce, data was also included from college-prep, college-remedial, and general college-level writing research as well as from study results from four university career preparation programs: psychology, business, history, and fundamental and applied sciences. Convergent and divergent themes were generated and analyzed. During the course of the interviews, pre-service teachers identified writing skill proficiencies that comprised mechanical, organizational, social, and cognitive aspects. Task competencies included professional, communicative, instructional, and personal compositional types. Compared to research literature, pre-service teachers exhibited a heightened concern with mechanical skills while underemphasizing cognitive writing proficiencies. This was also reflected in their task emphases; concern for correct mechanics when writing for colleagues, sending letters to parents, and modeling for students were frequently mentioned themes. Personal task proficiencies were also more highly regarded in some research literature than by the seven interviewees. Additionally, pre-service teachers agreed strongly with current studies suggesting that a single freshman writing course was insufficient writing preparation for career-oriented training in composition. Conclusions reached by this study emphasized meeting currently expressed pre-service teacher needs for mechanical instruction while also nurturing awareness of cognitive writing competencies. Support for social and organizational proficiencies should also continue throughout teacher training. It was suggested that desired skill proficiencies could best be developed by practicing authentic, career-specific writing tasks accompanied by instruction and positive, yet clear, feedback. Both skill and task competency development should be supported consistently over the entire course of the teacher training program, according to the interviewees and current research data.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to research pre-service teachers as writers as they prepare for careers as educators. This involved looking closely at their experiences, histories, values, and goals while at the same time considering these in the light of current research studying which writing skill and task competencies were most critical for teacher preparation.

Autobiography of Researcher

Working with college-level writers began before I reached the age of twenty—inside a writing lab peopled by university students labeled “at risk” for failure to succeed in college due to problems with writing abilities. After having worked in this writing center during my undergraduate training, spending time as an editorial assistant for a technical magazine, and teaching foreign language for nine years in grades three through eight, I took a position as university supervisor for one student teacher. That single student-teaching experience rapidly blossomed into an acceptance of more and more supervisory roles. Eventually, I moved away altogether from the middle-school classroom and became more deeply enmeshed in the world of pre-service teachers. This led to over fifteen years of working with teacher candidates and practicum students during their experiences in the real worlds of public and private classrooms.

Some years later, having entered graduate school, I became immersed in assessing and grading senior capstone projects for student teachers. In addition, as a graduate teaching assistant, I became further involved with courses in which students

struggled with writing. One class, designed to cover methods of teaching grammar quickly evolved, out of student necessity, to more of a “methods-of-learning” grammar approach. Likewise, a 300-level language arts course required for elementary majors adapted to include instruction in college-level writing in order for students to begin meeting basic expectations in the area of composition.

Throughout all of my interactions with pre-service teachers, I had found myself in an editorial role due to a pervasive, critical student need for compositional assistance. One year I was asked to serve as a writing aide for students trying to create essays required for entrance into the education program. “They cannot meet minimal compositional standards,” I was told, and we need to provide help for them. After agreeing, I arrived at the appointed hour and was ushered into a large room overflowing with students and writing assistants. I do not remember how many students I helped that day—but not enough. Indeed, that experience was the closest I have ever come to offering aid during a national disaster—an earthquake or severe storm. The deficits were so appalling and the resources, so few. After that year, it should be noted, the essay requirement for admittance into the education program was eliminated.

During over a decade and a half of involving myself with pre-service teachers, I increasingly offered editing services. Freely, I went through paper after paper, correcting spelling, grammar, and syntax errors as well as offering suggestions regarding clarity, organization, and textual support (See Artifact #1, Appendix B). While I was glad to do so, I became increasingly troubled by the futility of my aid. Yes, I could fix up a paper here and there and help a student to continue through this or that education class, but,

realistically, I knew that the problems I had covered with Band aids were moving in a steady stream toward K-12 classrooms—perpetuating the same difficulties in tributaries of learners who, also unprepared in the area of writing, would eventually flood careers or post-secondary programs of study. I received further confirmation of my unease during the summer in which I evaluated in-service teacher essays generated during a professional development seminar. The same difficulties characterizing pre-service teacher work had apparently followed many of these instructors into their classrooms (See Artifact #2, Appendix B).

When attending a faculty meeting one week, I encountered a statement in a document under review:

By 2019, MSU will achieve targets for mastery of disciplinary knowledge as developed in department learning assessment plans; University measures of UG mastery of critical thinking, oral communication, **written communication**, [bold face added] quantitative reasoning, understanding of diversity and understanding of contemporary issues in science will be developed by 2014 (Montana State University, 2014)

When asked, the faculty members in my group did not yet know how this mastery in written communication would be assessed. Thus, as I prepared to define a Master's Thesis, I approached the task with two simple questions burning in my mind fueled by years of puzzlement regarding the writing of pre-service teachers as they prepared for careers in education: "What do pre-service teachers as writers need to know and be able to do?" and "How can we help them?" Because of the magnitude of such questions, I needed to narrow my pursuit of answers. I chose two sources, leaving other very critical avenues of data for hopeful future research. First of all, in order to amass basic knowledge, especially regarding what pre-service teachers as writers needed to know, I

went to the research literature. In the area of writing standards relevant to teacher training, however, the literature was sparse and difficult to locate—a fact which drove me to look into writing at the college level as a general standard and toward other content areas for possible comparative information. In addition, even though pre-service teachers, admittedly, might not have had experiences extensive enough to provide complete answers to the above questions, I chose to research their ideas, values, experiences, and opinions.

I selected pre-service teachers for a number of reasons. First of all, I reasoned that future research could beneficially target pre-service teachers more quickly if study results were available for comparison with other relevant sources—in-service teachers, for example. Also, even though perhaps somewhat uninformed about the true realities of teaching, these fresh, enthusiastic individuals had the potential to enliven the outlook of those long engaged in career fields: “Experienced hires are evaluated more highly than new graduates on most characteristics ... although new graduates are evaluated more highly on open-mindedness and willingness and ability to learn new things” (Rynes, Orlitzky, & Bretz, 1997). Also, as noted by Downey (2008), pre-service teachers, in spite of their often immature ideas about the task of teaching, “...come to their teacher education coursework having already spent 12 or more years observing teachers in action” (p. 1). Thus, though I knew pre-service teacher viewpoints would probably be narrow in focus with some simplistic ideas, my desire for them to have a voice and, thus, hopefully, to feel a personal stake in the significance of this research, prompted me first in their direction.

In addition, I was biased in favor of teacher candidates because of their urgent needs. Even if some of their writing expectations for the field might turn out to be unrealistic in the long run, their struggles to attain the proficiencies they valued were immediate and compelling. Also, I remembered the in-service essays I had reviewed during the summer seminar. Certainly, as I read those documents written by practicing teachers, as a parent and community member, I made value judgments about the overall competency of the teachers whose work I assessed. This heightened my motivation to begin research at the teacher training level where writing support could help avert such difficulties before they reached K-12 classrooms. Thus, because I saw pre-service need as crucial and their opinions as significant and because I hoped this group would be benefitted by an exploration of their writing skill and task competency needs, I chose to listen to their voices before collecting data from other stakeholders. Admittedly, however, this study demands rapid follow-up involving the conceptions of in-service personnel, administrators, parents, and others with high stakes in the writing instruction and modeling being carried out daily in K-12 classrooms.

The Neglected “R”

Throughout its history, American education has traditionally relied upon what has been popularly termed the “three Rs” of reading, writing, and arithmetic. This trio of so-called “basic skills” (Green, 2000, p. 7) has comprised the educational fundamentals necessary for any individual pursuing post-secondary education, entering a career, or even successfully navigating modern American society (Green, 2000, p. 23).

That each support of this three-legged stool has demanded continuing and close scrutiny can be easily inferred from the development of educational standards on both international and national scales beginning with international math and science standards in the 1960s (Ravitch, 1995) and continuing with the development of national content standards across all major disciplines of study. Ravitch (1995) separated the concept of educational standards into three categories: content standards—what teachers must teach and students should learn; performance standards--what degree of mastery students are required to attain in any given content standard; and “opportunity to learn” or “school delivery” standards—the resources provided by institutions of education that allow learners to achieve given content and performance standards (pp. 12-13). The insistence of the American public on its educational system maintaining learning standards could be seen from legislation such as “No Child Left Behind” or the more recent adoption by most states of the English Language Arts and Mathematics Common Core Standards Initiative—both of which have embraced standards for K-12 classrooms. Further concern could also be inferred from popular literature, which over the decades had demanded the answers to *Why Johnny Can't Read* (Flesch, 1956), *Why Johnny Still Can't Read*, (Flesch, 1981), *Why Johnny Can't Add*, (Kline, 1973), and bemoaned additional proficiencies that the Johnnies of America had apparently still failed to master.

In 2003, the National Writing Project issued a report entitled “The Neglected R” making the case that, of the above “Three R” triad, “writing was clearly the most neglected” (National Commission on Writing in America’s Schools and Colleges, 2003, p. 3). With only one quarter of graduating high school seniors considered to be writing at

a level of proficiency as established by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) (National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges, 2003, p. 16), the potential impact of this assertion and its relation to the expression of thought among those educating others would seem to bear further study.

Implications for College-bound Individuals

Many of the remaining three-quarters of the high-school seniors, who were part of the NAEP study and who graduated without adequate writing skills, nonetheless, continued to move from high school into post-secondary institutions as demonstrated by the proliferation of remedial writing programs for two- and four-year college freshman. In 1995, 71% of America's colleges and universities offered one or more remedial writing courses with 17% of incoming freshmen choosing to enroll (U.S. Department of Education, 1996) in order to align their basic skills with university demands. A 2010 report put out by The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education and the Southern Regional Education Board described readiness gaps between high school preparation and entry-level college standards. Students recruited by highly selective institutions with stringent entrance requirements evidenced a 10% readiness gap. Less selective colleges and universities, those who required high school diplomas, certain grade-point averages and/or standardized test scores, and college-prep curriculum showed a 30% readiness gap. However, open-enrollment, or non-selective institutions that required only a high school diploma showed a 60% readiness gap among students entering programs of study (The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education,

2010, p. 2). Reports by one western university system study showed that writing scores were increasing among new students. Freshman in this study enrolling in remedial writing courses dropped from 13.6% in 2006 to 9.1% in 2013 (Montana University System, 2013). However, nearly ten percent of students who scored 23 or higher on their ACT placement tests received a “C” or lower in their freshman-level writing courses (Montana University System, n.d.) This data points to the reality that many students graduating from high schools have not been fully prepared for college-level composition.

Adding to the situation, just what has constituted college-level writing has continued to be a subject for debate among university experts (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006). Correctness and conventions have vied with originality and depth of analysis; and the variety of issues, according to Sullivan and Tinberg (2006, p. xv), have created ambiguous, vague performance standards related to university-quality writing—a confusion plaguing those seeking either to attain or to uphold college-level standards of written communication (Green, 2000, p. 9; Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006, p. xv).

While respecting, even valuing, the variety of expert opinions on a standardized definition of college-level writing, Sullivan & Tinberg (2006) also urged that post-secondary student success, at least in part, depended on an essential consensus by experts as to the differences between pre-college and university-level writing. Specifically, he advocated for a degree of standardization in order to better support under-prepared writers entering colleges and universities (p. 6). In addition, Sullivan has suggested that the question of what defines college-level writing might vary across departments other than English (2006, p. 2), opening the possibility of differing standards for varying

courses of study. Taking this one step further, Sullivan and Tinberg also emphasized that the question of what defines university-quality writing may have critical implications for those not yet involved at the college level—in fact, for elementary and secondary students in all grades of American education contemplating possible post-secondary careers. Given all of the above, achieving competent writing skill levels and task proficiencies would appear more urgent for university students entering teacher training courses than for college- and career-trainees in other content areas, for it is in their hands that the future education of these primary and secondary students lie.

Implications for Pre-service Teachers

Although a variety of literature has existed considering the question of general standards for college-level written communication, specific work regarding writing skill and task proficiencies necessary for education majors has remained a gap in existing research. Despite the move in modern, American educational history toward content, performance, and resource-related standards and despite studies (Bridgeman & Carlson, 1984; Mohr, 2013; Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990) pursuing Sullivan's urging that the college-level writing demands of a variety of major courses of study be researched (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006, p. 2), the field of education has remained relatively quiet in generating professional literature on the topic. Rather, current research available on pre-service teacher and in-service teacher writing has focused primarily on writing self-identity and self-confidence (Frank, 2003; Pajares & Johnson, 1994; Street, 2003; Susi, 1984) rather than on specific writing standards for needed skill and task competencies.

As a result, the literature review for this study was broadened to include research on college-prep skill and task competencies, as well as similar proficiencies at the college-level and in four other career training fields: business, fundamental and applied sciences, history, and psychology. By surveying writing instruction emphases in these groups and considering their approaches in light of specific pre-service teacher needs, directions for strategically supporting writing development during teacher training, it was hoped, would become clearer. Both general and discipline-specific explorations seemed necessary. A parallel from athletics served as an inspiration; effective coaching of a football, basketball, or hockey team would require understanding broad fundamentals of coaching as well as how to specifically apply these to the home team.

Problem Statement

This study began by exploring the basic questions asked by any learner entering a discipline of study: “What do I need to know and do?” In this case: “What do pre-service teachers need to know and do as writers during teacher training?” However, most studies on pre-service teachers as writers focused on identity and self-efficacy rather than on compositional competencies. This pointed to a gap in current study literature, even though researcher experience suggested many pre-service teachers might lack needed skill proficiencies to accomplish professional tasks. This study, then, sought to help fill this gap by exploring the phenomenon of supporting pre-service teachers as writers during teacher training. In order to do this, information generated by current research was compared to opinions and experiences of pre-service teachers at one western, land-

grant university. Because of the lack of current literature on pre-service teacher writing competencies, foundational information was gathered from college-prep writing, remedial composition, college-level writing and university writing instruction in four other disciplines: social science (psychology), history, business, and fundamental and applied sciences. Finally, this study considered any resulting implications for teacher training institutions regarding resources needed for meeting these writing proficiencies expected of the education profession by communities and the society it served.

Research Questions

The research questions which guided this study were:

1. How do writing skill and task competences identified by pre-service teacher perceptions compare to what is known by researchers?
2. What can teacher training institutions glean from current research and pre-service teacher perceptions regarding the support of writing skills and task competencies during teacher training?

Overview of Research Procedures

First, a survey of current research was conducted regarding writing skill and task competencies necessary for pre-service teachers as part of teacher training. When the search did not generate sufficient data, the review literature was widened to include research on college-preparation writing standards, standards for college-level writing, and compositional requirements stressed in four career-training programs: business, fundamental and applied sciences, history, and psychology. In order to compare these

findings with pre-service teacher perceptions, teacher trainees at one western, land-grant university were asked to provide opinions, experiences, histories, and values regarding their current writing and teacher-training preparation in the area of composition. These data were collected via in-depth, open-ended interviews conducted with seven pre-service teachers, who discussed personal histories as writers, experiences with writing during teacher training, writing goals for their approaching profession, and how teacher training programs could best support their writing needs. These interviews were later transcribed and analyzed for recurrent themes and provided qualitative data for this study to be compared with themes generated by the literature review.

Context and Assumptions

By limiting the data collected to perceptions of pre-service teachers, a gap has remained in current literature regarding needed writing skills and task competencies necessary for a career in education. A topic this critical to K-12 classrooms should include data from in-service teachers, administrators, parents, K-12 students, and various community members as well as pre-service teachers in other training programs and locations. Thus, this research represented only a small segment of what might be a larger study designed to open the door to further exploration. For this research, only seven teacher trainees' perceptions were analyzed according to current research literature. The intent was to probe deeply with a small number and note emergent patterns. Thus, while the area of writing preparation for pre-service teachers would remain relatively undeveloped, this study could also serve to establish a need for a more deliberate

approach to studying the question of writing skills and task competences—specifically, those which would mirror the real tasks in which teachers engage on a daily basis. Also, the sample was drawn according to convenience from a group of pre-service teachers in whose writing preparation the researcher had been deeply immersed. This study, however, made the assumption that those pre-service teachers’ opinions and self-perceived needs would be fundamental in any research considering how to best support the writing of soon-to-be-educators and that each opinion represented a reasonable starting point and a valuable contribution to the whole. Thus, this work focused attention on one segment of a future teaching workforce and sought to open the doors to additional research concerning the writing development of future teachers during their university preparation.

Definitions of Terms

The following definitions have been specifically linked to writing at the university level and may be helpful in understanding the research done in this study.

Audience Awareness Skill Competency: This social writing skill competency looked toward the writing needs of an audience rather than taking an egocentric or conventional approach to writing (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006, p. 124). Narratives, explanations, arguments, etc. were tailored to the demands of a reading audience (Yore, Hand, & Pain, 2002, p. 679). The concept included clarity (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006), sensitivity (Sternglass, 1997), and interest (Susi, 1984), to name a few focus points.

Authentic Voice Skill Competency: This social writing skill competency emphasized an author's "style, tone, personality, and rhythm" (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006, p. 43) as well as cultural factors, personal experience and first-person point of view (Bizzell, 1982). Authentic voice could also demonstrate critical thinking by taking on a "professional-in-training" point of view appropriate to growing expertise in a content area (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990).

College-level Writing: This level of writing, the qualities of which were continually debated by experts, was often said to include: understandings of writing processes, contexts, structures, evaluation, clarity, and mechanics (Enders, 2001, p. 62) as well as "focus, organization, support, fluency, and mechanics" (Condon & Kelly-Riley, 2004, p. 59), "sophisticated grammar and synthesizing information from disparate sources" (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006, p. 295), an anticipation of "the reader's response," and "a level of comprehension and application...of the college-level label" (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006, p. 307).

Communicative Writing Task Competency: Although part of the professional writing task competencies of teachers, this task competency was set apart by one interviewee and an expert in the field. This "writing to communicate" (Interviewee #7) would include notes home to parents as well as many hard copy or electronic communications that might notate items of interests to parents, students, or others (Frager, 1994).

Critical Thinking and Cognition Skill Competencies: These represented a set of writing skill competencies which included critical thinking characteristics: identifying

salient issues or problems, considering context, integrating research data and theory, formulating connections and hypotheses within authentic contexts, and developing new thinking and solutions (Arend, 2009, Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 1999; Hatton & Smith 1995; Kember, McKay, Sinclair, & Wong 2008; Lee, 2008; Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990). These skill competencies also included many cognitive aspects of discipline-specific writing (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990).

Instructional Writing Task Competency: This involved a broad area of competency that would include direct instruction in and assessment of general classroom writing done primarily by elementary and language arts personnel (Adger, Snow, & Christian, 2003; Frager, 1994) as well as discipline-specific writing instructional techniques (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990). It also encompassed more ubiquitous teacher duties such as providing written instructions (Frager, 1994) and feedback (Sternglass, 1997) as well as serving as an overall writing model for students (Frager, 1994).

Mechanical Skill Competency: Mechanical skills included a set of writing competencies that aligned with the conventions of standardized English (Acker & Halasek, 2008; Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006). Widely mentioned in literature were grammar, spelling, and syntax, as well as varied sentence structure (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006) and formatting (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990). Flower and Hayes (1981) stressed work with mechanical elements in the editing phase of writing.

Organizational Skill Competency: This skill competency described writing skills that allowed the writer to “organize information...to fit into...appropriate format sections...and also...organize the appropriate information logically within a section”

(Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990, p. 219). These skills could vary within discipline structures and included content-specific concepts such as a thesis, sub-theses, warrants, factor analyses, literature reviews, abstracts, lab report formats, etc. (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990). Sullivan and Tinberg (2006) stressed how college-level organization was task and discipline specific rather than standardized as in the typical high-school level five-paragraph essay format. This area of skills also included facility with transitioning and thorough development and support of concepts (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990).

Personal Writing Task Competency: This writing task competency surfaced in research literature and embraced creative writing, journaling, and other forms of recreational or introspective writing (Susi, 1984).

Pre-service Teachers: These were students who had entered teacher education programs (Downey, 2008). In the university utilized in this study, admission requirements included achieving minimal grade point averages, gaining approval of advisors, and providing evidence of no criminal record.

Professional Writing Task Competency: This competency represented an ability to effectively apply needed writing skills to professional tasks, which Sullivan & Tinberg described as those emphasized in career training and in professional work subsequent to graduation (2006, p. 238). In the teaching profession, these would include professional correspondence, papers for college classes, writing for professional journals, and others (Frager, 1994). One interviewee described grant-writing as fitting into this category, and Frager (1994) listed professional competence modeling as important for educators.

Social Writing Skill Competencies: These writing competencies are closely tied to the social, communicative aspects of writing, and in this study comprise authentic voice and audience awareness (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006).

Significance of Study

In pondering the significance of pre-service teacher preparation in writing, it seemed important to consider the necessity of proficient compositional abilities for educators as well as the benefits for all members of society. Two new-millennium movements have illustrated both: “No Child Left Behind” legislation (2001) and The Common Core Standards Initiative (2010). While both movements have retained unique differences, their ultimate purposes have remained similar:

- NCLB

“... that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and state academic assessments” (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

- The New Common Core Standards

“...ensure that students make progress each year and graduate from school prepared to succeed in college and in a modern workforce” (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

No Child Left Behind

Under the first reform, “No Child Left Behind,” America re-instituted, in 2001, the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act with the laudable purpose of assuring equal access to quality education for all students while, at the same time, strengthening

accountability for America's schools—including delineating national standards for highly qualified teachers (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). As part of NCLB, the sixth annual report issued by the U.S. Secretary of Education described multiple criteria for meeting a highly-qualified educator designation. Two of these, successfully completing a teaching degree and attaining a full, state-controlled teaching license, demanded fulfilling several writing-dependent requirements: passing basic skills tests (reading, writing, and mathematics), succeeding in additional content and pedagogy assessments, creating portfolios or work samples that focused on reflective practice during field experiences, and meeting other requirements (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). By inference then, under NCLB, America's assessment of new teacher readiness depended heavily on these candidates' abilities to document and demonstrate their cognitive and pedagogical skills through the medium of writing.

However, as Darling-Hammond (2007) pinpointed, NCLB's reliance on standardized testing had been viewed by many to compromise intellectual rigor, critical thinking, and problem solving skills in American education (p. 3). This had crippled the U.S. in its academic comparisons with certain other nations in several areas including that of students "defending their ideas orally and in writing" (Darling-Hammond, 2007, p. 3). These limitations and other concerns regarding the college- and career-readiness of American K-12 students opened the door for the release, in 2010, of a new initiative designed to strengthen the cognitive aspects of American education.

The New Common Core Standards Initiative

Developed cooperatively by the National Governor's Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers, Common Core standards in math and English/language arts were released in 2010 and had been adopted by 45 states at the time of this writing. A closer look at the English/language arts standards reveals the expressed purpose, "to help ensure that all students are college and career ready in literacy no later than the end of high school" (Common Core Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects, 2010, p. 3). These standards have further defined this readiness as:

...the ability to gather, comprehend, evaluate, synthesize, and report on information and ideas, to conduct original research in order to answer questions or solve problems, and to analyze and create a high volume and extensive range of print and nonprint texts in media forms old and new (Common Core Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects, 2010, p. 4).

The above Common Core charge focused attention on the need for all educators to have readied themselves to guide K-12 students toward two compelling goals: to become informed readers and writers and to master persuasive and evidence-based writing across English, history/social studies, science, and technical subject content areas. Additional implications for teacher preparation related to an increased freedom for the classroom practitioner as to methodology. No "scripted curriculum" would support those who taught under the new standards, and the standards purposely avoided any prescription for how these goals needed to be presented (Porter, McMaken, Huang, & Yang, 2011). This placed an additional burden on in-service teacher competency in the

field of writing, further supporting the contention of the National Writing Project that knowledge of the teaching of writing had to come from “theory and research, the analysis of practice, and the experience of writing,” (National Writing Project, 2014). Similarly expressed, Colby and Stapleton stated, “Teachers need to be writers themselves in order to be effective writing teachers” (2006, p. 354). The college-and-career-ready standards developed by the Common Core Initiative and directed toward teachers of English language arts as well as literacy in history, social studies, science and technical subjects (Montana Office of Public Instruction, 2011) have taken Colby and Stapleton’s assertion and extended it—effectively making teachers in all these content areas responsible for competence in the areas of college-and-career writing readiness.

Teacher Quality and Student Achievement

Because research has clearly correlated student achievement with teacher quality (Borman & Kimball, 2005; Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, & McPortland, 1966; Hanushek, 1992), a national emphasis on the training and hiring of highly qualified teachers has remained fundamental. In addition to research samples confined within the U.S., studies that have compared qualifications of teachers on an international scale have found correlations between high student achievement rankings on the one hand and lofty standards for teacher quality on the other (Motoko, LeTendre, & Scribner, 2007; Wang, Coleman, Coley, & Phelps, 2003). Defining “teacher quality,” however, has remained an elusive and debated issue, as shown by the differing variables and evaluation strategies utilized in various studies and including: teaching degree in major, years of experience,

and full certification, (Motoko, LeTendre, & Scribner, 2007); student achievement while accounting for other variables (Rivken, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005); and standards-based teacher evaluation systems (Borman & Kimball, 2005).

Although the prescription for “highly qualified teacher” might never become entirely clear, those elements that could contribute should continually be subjected to analysis and research; and networks, such as The National Writing Project (2014) as well as the mandates of The New Common Core Standards Initiative (2010) have supported writing proficiency as being one of these elements. In Gonzci’s (1994) argument for competency assessments to be applied to various professional candidates in Australia, he stressed the need for holistic standards as well as professional judgments when strength in one area might possibly compensate for a weakness in another. Nevertheless, the findings from this study vigorously supported the establishment of competency standards for education as well as other professions (Gonzci, 1994).

Writing and the Highly Qualified Teacher

In careful consideration of the abovementioned foci on standards and accountability with the evidence having suggested that to think analytically and to represent those thoughts in accurate prose represented characteristics of a “highly qualified teacher,” this study undertook to examine writing preparation during teacher training. In addition to the overall relationship between teacher quality and student success, the various duties of the profession might further influence writing content standards for pre-service teachers. Daily educator compositional tasks have comprised a

variety of tasks: creating written instructions for assignments or quizzes, sending home emails for parents, writing evaluations and letters of recommendation, instructing in general or content-specific writing, writing professional papers, authoring grants, and a host of other tasks—all requiring a certain combinations of skill proficiencies to achieve competence in each. Both Sternglass (1997) and Walvoord and McCarthy (1990) discussed how writing skills must be adapted to specific writing situations within various disciplines and across a variety of situations. Thus, writing skill and the task competencies in varying situations were reviewed in this study as they related to pre-service teachers during undergraduate training.

Furthermore, since many experts have continued to debate the degree to which discrete elements should be emphasized in general college-level writing (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006), and since writing skills and task competencies for in-service teachers have varied across grade levels and content areas, expected degrees of mastery for future educators in a variety of roles would appear to be another area deserving of careful study, both regarding general professional requirements as well as discipline-specific demands. Expected performance standards, such as these, have often been difficult to quantify. However, in this study, when they were mentioned strongly or frequently by an interviewee, they were presented narratively in the data. Thus, any inferences helpful to teacher training in the area of performance standards were duly noted.

Finally, along with the consideration of writing skill and task competencies for pre-service educators, a final category of standards as suggested by Ravitch, “opportunity to learn” standards (1995, pp. 12-13), or institutional support for student need, seemed

also to merit consideration. If highly qualified teachers needed to understand, master, and be able to teach correct, evidence-supported, persuasive writing skills across a variety of disciplines, the resources enabling them to attain necessary writing proficiencies would represent a final area of need for continuing research. Therefore, the questions of defining which writing skills and task competencies appeared most important for pre-service teachers during their teacher training and how to best support the development of needed proficiencies in these skills and tasks created the foundation of this research and formed the basis for interview questions offered to the select sample of future educators making up this study.

Conclusion

While both NCLB legislation and the New Common Core Standards Initiative have focused attention on the need for quality teaching, the proliferation of remedial writing classes along with other data have indicated that many undergraduates entering colleges and universities have been underprepared as college-level writers, all while the definition of college-level writing has remained a topic of debate. Because success at the college level would seem to require, minimally, competence in university-quality writing, K-12 teachers should be prepared to model, support, and teach at this level. This study, then, launched a preliminary exploration of what defined college-level writing proficiency via a literature review. This data was then to be augmented by compositional writing skill and task standards for pre-service and in-service teachers. However, since this data was limited and represented a gap in research, data from four other university

content areas was reviewed to see if applications might be relevant to teaching. This information was then aligned with the experiences and opinions of pre-service teachers during their teacher training at one western, land-grant university. Common and divergent themes between research literature and pre-service teacher conceptions were compared in order to provide direction for future research about how to best support future educators in writing preparation during teacher training.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Studies in the area of pre-service teachers as writers have recently begun to emerge in research literature. However, this topic of inquiry has remained relatively new (Morgan, 2010), and many avenues for further exploration were still being opened at the time of this writing. For the most part, explorations of teacher-candidate writing have focused on dispositional hindrances to composition proficiency, such as lack of confidence, poor writer self-image, and general attitudes toward writing, as well as strategies to overcome those hindrances (Chambless & Bass, 1995; Morgan, 2010; Pajares & Johnson, 1994). However, a scarcity of studies on the most necessary composition skills and their relationships to writing task competencies important to pre-service teachers during teacher training have continued to invite further research. A study of these two—writing skills and professional task competencies—should help in defining and supporting professional writing instruction for pre-service teachers during their teacher training.

In order to determine the elements of composition most important for pre-service teachers, this study began with writing standards and task competencies emphasized at the high school, college-preparation level. Even though experts often disagreed about exactly which elements to emphasize during early training for university-quality composition, examining this stage offered clues as to where pre-service teachers might be located on the college- and career-level writing continuum. Remedial writing

characteristics were also examined because university mentors and instructors have needed to assess whether or not their teacher trainees have required remediation, such as that provided in developmental classes. In these cases, Sternglass's (1997) injunction to offer underprepared students cognitively rigorous, content-authentic tasks while at the same time supporting remediation of sentence-level difficulties would seem critical for pre-service teachers who find themselves struggling with writing while in the midst of teacher training (p. 297). Remedial writing education was followed by a survey of general, college-level writing characteristics. Establishing the writing skill and task competencies necessary for pre-service teacher training began with these since a liberal-arts education has included employer-desired skills such as facility with written communication (iseekeducation, 2014). Beyond general college-level writing requirements, research on in-service as well as pre-service teacher writing added specific focus to the exploration of the writing skill and task proficiencies most necessary for teacher trainee instruction and practice. However, because this area represented a gap in research literature, this study also included a survey of discipline-specific composition tasks and emphases generated in four other academic societies: business, psychology, science, and history.

General College-Preparation Writing at the High School Level

On the topic of how writing proficiency should develop for all highly educated individuals, studies existed that examined preparing high school students for university-level composition. However, what specifically constituted college-level writing

frequently defied definition and became an intricately faceted question considering “a whole range of interrelated and interdependent skills associated with reading, writing and thinking” (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006, p. xiv). As a result of the divergent opinions expressed by the twenty-five-plus contributors to their anthology, Sullivan and Tinberg (2006) admitted that the number of issues relevant to preparing high school students for university-quality composition “frustrate[s] our desire for easy answers” (p. xv), and this frustration surfaced throughout literature on the topic.

When it came to basic standards for college-level writing during the 1990s, less than one third of incoming freshman were adequately prepared for college (Gray, Wang, & Malizia, 1995). A more current California study showed similar results:

As part of its application process for admission, the California State University system requires all eligible students (those graduating in the top 33 percent of their high school class) to take placement exams that measure their "proficiency" in math and English. The 2008 freshman class tests results found 47 percent of the students needed remedial English and 37.2 percent needed remedial math (Stuart, 2009, p. 15).

Such statistics have suggested significant consequences for students and post-secondary institutions regarding ultimate student success, and remedial writing classes, therefore, have continued to flourish. Conley’s (2007) definition of high school readiness for college stressed the ability of future and current students to “...enroll and succeed—without remediation—in a credit-bearing general education course at a postsecondary institution” (p. 5). Continuing the topic of writing readiness at the college-prep, high-school level, experts have frequently emphasized writing skills that included facility with grammar, sentence structure, and other conventions (Conley, 2003; Enders, 2001; Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006). In addition, students entering universities

should have been able to exhibit clarity of purpose, understanding of audience, facility with rhetoric, care with organization, provision of adequate support, and ability to edit their work (Conley, 2003; Enders, 2001; Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006). Authentic voice (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006), ability to write persuasively (Conley, 2003), clarity, succinctness (Enders, 2001), transitioning (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006) and variety (Enders, 2001) have also appeared as threads throughout research literature on writing skill proficiencies important for learning university-quality writing.

The “Standards for Success” project represented a concise and comprehensive attempt to guide high school instructors in college-prep writing content standards and, thus, is quoted at length here:

All students can benefit from more attention to writing mechanics. A review of work samples from students in entry-level courses reveals a high level and array of grammatical errors. In order to succeed in and benefit from writing and literature courses, students must have a good grasp of writing conventions...Student writing must be coherent, and students need to think rhetorically when they write, consider the audience, carefully select the evidence used to support ideas, cogently present the overall argument and understand the purposes of their writing. To achieve this, successful students write an outline...as a guide while writing. Successful students also understand how to support an argument...while at the same time understand the consequences of taking a particular position...Editing is the most important part of the writing process...Students need to be able to proofread, check for mistakes on their own and appreciate the value of the revision and re-writing processes (Conley, 2003, p. 18).

Conley (2003) went on to emphasize that writing “is the means by which students are evaluated at least to some extent in nearly every postsecondary course” (p. 14).

Writing task competencies necessary for succeeding in college, then, comprised descriptive, persuasive, and expository proficiencies with the expectation that students understood the pre-writing/composition/editing cycle as well as formatting requirements

and the conventions of standardized English (Conley, 2003, p. 14). All these represented necessary preparation for high school seniors desiring to enter programs of study in teacher training.

Performance guidelines demanded of incoming freshman in the area of writing had often been derived from standardized tests such as the Stanford Achievement Test, (though the essay requirement would soon be made optional, according to early 2014 predictions) overall student GPA, and college essay requirements. Nevertheless, Acker and Halasek (2008) noted the exasperation and discouragement experienced by college freshman who had successfully navigated the waters of high school writing requirements and standardized tests, yet still found themselves unprepared for the rigors of university composition (p.1). Underscoring the ambiguity of standards for college-level writing, this situation heightened the uncertainty in many high-school, college-prep writing classes as to which writing standards to emphasize and to what degree (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006).

Effective strategies for helping high school students attain college-level writing skills had been widely addressed in literature. Enders (2001), discussing his survey of freshman composition students at Indiana State University, noted that students credited frequent writing opportunities in high school as the activities that best prepared them for university-level composition (p. 63). Besides sheer volume of practice, students documented that they benefited most from high-school writing assignments that mirrored rigorous college-level work coupled with clear and thorough feedback (Enders, 2001; Sternglass, 1997). Hattie and Timperley (2007) cautioned, however, that task-oriented,

carefully timed corrective and instructional feedback was far more effective than feedback in the form of scores or even personal praise, echoing Bandura's (1997) link between self-efficacy and competence—a connection shown to be significant in the performance of high-school composition students (Pajares & Johnson, 1996). However, many studies lamented that providing frequent and academically rigorous high school writing assignments accompanied by extensive and thoughtful feedback proved too time-consuming for many high school teachers' schedules (Enders, 2001, p. 64; Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006, p. 58), a condition all too frequently repeated in university classes (Sternglass, 1997; Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006, p. 105).

Thus, research indicated that in order to become prepared for university-quality writing, high-school students entering a career in education must have received direct instruction in how to compose assignments that mirrored college-level work, as well as having been given clear and appropriate feedback (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Areas needing emphasis encompassed a host of mechanical writing skills as well as the ability to organize, to collect quality and adequate support for main points, to develop mature voice, to persuade and defend ideas, and to gain an awareness of audience. Achieving university-quality writing also necessitated mastering various task competencies—including narrative, persuasive, and expository proficiencies—along with facility in pre-writing, drafting, editing, and revising. Because of the complexity of the writing process (Kellogg, 1994) readiness for college required sufficient time for students' writing to mature—in many cases, years (Sternglass, 1997). However, often, high school instructors lacked the time to fully implement the above elements with sufficient student

practice. Thus, because pre-service teachers with varying backgrounds have continued to enter teacher training, education programs must be prepared to receive individuals with a wide range of preparatory experiences in university-quality writing.

Remedial Writing Instruction

Increasingly, four-year universities have experienced pressure to eliminate unprofitable remedial courses and to pass the responsibility for readying unprepared college hopefuls onto community-level institutions (Southard & Clay, 2004, p. 39). Thus, America's community colleges have often filled the gap between writing-deficient, graduating high school seniors and college-level readiness. According to the National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges (2003), seventy-five percent of incoming freshmen were considered to be writing below proficiency levels, hence, the topic of writing remediation, whether accomplished in actual remedial courses or attempted by instructors during regular education or methods classes—as in the aforementioned course designed to cover methods of teaching grammar—has remained relevant to teacher-training programs.

Remedial courses, by definition, have attempted to bridge the gap between inadequate high-school preparation and the attainment of university-quality skills with a frequent focus on foundational constructions. Writing standards emphasized in remedial, or developmental, programs at a Florida university in 2004, for example, included an emphasis on mechanical elements: grammar, sentence structure, paragraph construction, coherence, revision, and editing—all designed to prepare participants for a more

traditional freshman writing course emphasizing organizational outlining, effective communication, sources identification, formatting, and timed writing (Southard & Clay, 2004, p. 41). With regard to compositional performance, remedial participants in Sternglass's (1997) longitudinal study underwent multiple attempts to pass writing placement tests that would enable them to advance in their university studies. Of note, these individuals required extended periods of time in order to reach college-level proficiency. In the conclusion to her study, Sternglass (1997) emphasized the importance of allowing developmental students sufficient time to mature along with providing them cognitively rigorous assignments in their chosen disciplines, which would include education majors, though no pre-service teachers were actually featured in Sternglass's (1997) work:

Students in basic writing classes...should not be treated differently from students in so-called regular composition classes....all students should be exposed to the challenges central to their development as thinkers and writers....sentence level problems...can be dealt with in the editing process of developing drafts" (p. 297).

Time extensions notwithstanding, remedial programs have appeared to produce positive effects; the aforementioned research undertaken by Southard and Clay (2004) showed no long-range significant differences in overall university success between developmental students and those directly entering freshman composition courses (p. 43), supporting the general effectiveness of paragraph and sentence-level instruction in developmental preparation for college writing. Nonetheless, remedial students in this study did experience an average drop of one grade level between developmental writing courses and their first university-level composition classes, suggesting a gap between the

two in such areas as developing a writing style, gaining facility with research, and mastering documentation (Southard & Clay, 2004, p. 49)

Although remedial writing required concentrated support in the foundational elements of conventions and organization, a remedial emphasis on mechanics may have sometimes fallen short of Sternglass's (1997) recommendation that developmental writers also needed to be immersed in "critical reading and critical writing from the first assignments given to freshman students" (p. 296). By inference, Southard and Clay's (2004) study results and Sternglass's (1997) findings both suggested that all pre-service teachers, no matter their writing backgrounds, might benefit from content-rigorous writing experiences during teacher training as well as sentence-level remediation when necessary—just as, during the week, a sports coach might adjust practice drills to precisely meet the needs of his team members but then, on Friday night, send them out to play the game.

General College-Level Writing at the University Level

Several universities have attempted to define writing standards at the university level by developing integrated writing curricula and/or a regular assessment process in order to meet the needs of developing college writers. Such standards would also be relevant as basic writing skill and task competencies for all pre-service teachers. For his study on college-level skill proficiencies, Enders (2001) adapted an ISU (Indiana State University) list of a seven-point college-freshman writing standard that stressed students' understandings of writing processes, contexts, structures, evaluation, clarity, and

mechanics (p. 62). Similarly, Washington State University developed a writing assessment program in which university students were assessed at entry and at the midpoint of their college careers according to a five-point structure including “focus, organization, support, fluency, and mechanics” (Condon & Kelly-Riley, 2004, p. 59). Other studies have characterized university-quality writing skills by effective use of authentic voice (Bizzell, 1982; Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006), ability to logically organize complex structures (Acker & Halasek, 2008; Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990), a correct and sophisticated facility with mechanical elements (Acker & Halasek, 2008; Enders, 2001), proficiency with taking, supporting, and arguing a position (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006; Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990) and an advanced ability to reflect and problem solve meta-cognitively via critical thinking and writing techniques (Sternglass, 1997; Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990). At one western university, the 2012 current strategic plan set “overarching goals for the university” (MSU, 2012) which included developing and attaining standards for written communication within all disciplinary departments:

By 2019, MSU will achieve targets for mastery of disciplinary knowledge as developed in department learning assessment plans; University measures of UG mastery of critical thinking, oral communication, **written communication**, [bold face added] quantitative reasoning, understanding of diversity and understanding of contemporary issues in science will be developed by 2014.

Establishing which writing standards to emphasize at the university level has represented one challenge; however, delineating levels of expected performance for these standards at the university level has remained even more ambiguous (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006). The question of “how good is good enough?” has continued to be difficult to answer in a university-wide setting, though certain academic courses of study have

clarified the confusion to some degree within their program structures (Bridgeman & Carlson, 1984; Di Salvo, 1980).

At least three of the studies surveyed reached one common conclusion: a single freshman composition course was inadequate preparation for the writing demands of many post-bachelor careers (Epstein, 1999; Sternglass, 1997; Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990). Such a determination could have significant ramifications for teacher training as well as other disciplines. Again, the coaching model would support this conclusion; while coaching football and coaching swimming would mirror each other at times, preparation for one would not adequately approximate readiness for the other.

Given the extreme complexity of moving from high-school level writing with its focus on the rigid, five-paragraph essay to varied academic discourse at the university level, students' needs for university support would include effective instruction, quality feedback, and extensive practice of authentic writing tasks over sufficient time to prepare them for college-level writing skill and task competencies. In the case of pre-service teachers, this kind of support would be relevant throughout the curriculum, as per Sternglass's (1997) injunction to allow students sufficient time for skills to develop, while task competencies would require practice of these skills through rigorous, authentic experiences mirroring in-service writing requirements.

Writing and Pre-service Teachers

While the literature on the writing experiences and advancements of pre-service teachers was not extensive, recent studies had begun exploring pre-service teachers as writers. With regard to which standards were important, Gallavan, Bowles, and Young (2007) referenced concerns expressed by in-service educators about pre-service teacher abilities in three areas: "...writing knowledge, skills, and dispositions," "...competence to write correctly and to communicate effectively through a variety of writing formats," and "...proficiencies to teach writing appropriately to pre K-12 students and to integrate writing authentically across the pre K-12 curriculum" (p. 61).

Studies by several other researchers, however, focused less on standards and more on dispositions--on the writing self-images and self-concepts of teacher candidates (Frank, 2003; Morgan, 2010; Pajares & Johnson, 1994; Susi, 1984) although these, by inference, suggested possible needed skills and task competencies by referencing areas of self-perceived weakness by teacher candidates. For example, Morgan (2010) along with describing the poor writing self-images reported by almost 60% of the study participants also related how these low self-images hampered pre-service teachers in their attempts to master necessary skills. Concerns particularly included: "...grammar, spelling, and punctuation....organization, creativity, awkward sentences, run on fragments, wordiness, handwriting, neatness, and lack of an extensive vocabulary" (p. 356). These elements, all more reminiscent of developmental writing instruction than of advanced university-level written discourse (Southard & Clay, 2004), underscored the need for teacher training institutions to be aware of needed remedial supports for pre-service teachers. Pajares

and Johnson (1994), in their study on the writing self-efficacy of teacher candidates, while not concerned directly with writing task competencies, did emphasize the importance of teachers-in-training receiving direct feedback to support proficient “lesson plans, journals, brief articles, and critiques”—(p. 323) as well as to help teacher trainees gain proficiency in “grammar, usage, composition, and mechanical skills” (Pajares & Johnson, 1994, p. 319). This direct feedback and instruction was necessary in order to increase the self-efficacy of pre-service teachers in both of these writing areas.

One additional item of interest from a study done by Draper, Barksdale-Ladd, & Radencich (2000) was that, when asked about current writing involvement, most pre-service teachers recounted writing related to university assignments, but failed to reference lists, letters, emails, and other daily writing activities (p. 196). This omission would seem to parallel the lack of research material documenting the daily writing tasks of in-service teachers.

Studies on teacher candidates as writers stressed attitudes toward writing and a frequently felt poor writer self-image—often developed over years of writing encounters made negative by lack of home support (Draper, Barksdale-Ladd, & Radencich, 2000), negative school experiences (Draper, Barksdale-Ladd, & Radencich, 2000; Street, 2003), and critical instructors who stressed mechanical correctness over ideas and creativity (Street, 2003, p. 35). Draper, Barksdale-Ladd, and Radencich’s (2000) study specifically noted that pre-service teachers who embraced writing frequently described positive early school-writing activities followed by negative memories of later school experiences, including those at the university level, while non-writing teacher candidates described

mainly negative encounters with writing throughout their early and later education. This second category of teacher candidates in particular, while they were able to articulate strategies for teaching writing, were unable to inspire a love of writing in their students (Draper, Barksdale-Ladd, & Radencich, 2000p. 200). Research conducted by Street (2003) obtained similar results noting a relationship between pre-service teacher attitude toward writing and the ability to inspire enthusiasm for writing inside the student teaching classroom. Likewise, Morgan's (2010) qualitative study of early childhood (P-3) teacher candidates concluded that pre-service teachers needed to be effective writers themselves in order to teach writing, in this case at the P-3 level.

On the topic of training pre-service teachers in necessary writing skills and task competencies, Morgan's (2010) findings supported that pre-service teachers required concentrated and repeated opportunities to practice complicated writing processes and that these were especially effective when soon-to-be educators conducted this practice via authentic experiences relative to their coming professions over sufficient time (p. 352). More specifically, to learn necessary teacher writing skills, Morgan's (2010) survey of forty-two pre-service teachers in a writing methods class revealed four instructional strategies to have been particularly helpful during teacher training for developing career-relevant writing self-confidence: "reading like a writer, having similar writing experiences in class as their future students, writing regularly and having choice in topic, and designing writing mini-lessons" (p. 352). Teacher candidate participants in a Galavan, Bowles, and Young (2007) study seemed to agree, citing a need for, "more honest and authentic writing experiences...particularly during the last 2 years in all

programs,” and “more guidance, modeling, practice, and feedback” (p. 64). Supporting the authentic experience concept, pre-service teachers in one study simultaneously: a) wrote and published in a language arts class, b) studied how to teach and assess writing at an elementary level, and c) actually taught writing in second-grade classes (Colby & Stapleton, 2006). Participants in this study expressed that they valued both learning better methods of writing instruction as well as empathy for student “needs and concerns” (Colby & Stapleton, 2006, p. 371) throughout the writing process.

While specific writing support needs for pre-service teachers in teacher training have not been extensively researched, they seemed to encompass instruction and support in mechanical skills, the provision of a variety of writing experiences and tasks-- including mundane ones, such as emails and letters to parents, encouraging a positive disposition toward writing, and nurturing a strong sense of self-efficacy as a writer. Also, these understandings, skills, and dispositions appeared to be best learned through positive, authentic experiences closely mirroring those of in-service teachers.

Writing and In-service Teachers

In their work on language and teaching, Adger, Snow, and Christian (2003) noted that in order for teachers to be effective, they must be able “to structure their own language output with maximum clarity” (p. 10). Yet, in contrast with other training programs, research on the writing needs of educators almost exclusively focused on teachers as writing instructors rather than as holistic writers in their professions. Thus, while studies of how to teach writing abounded, research on daily writing skill and task

competency demands of teachers—either within the classroom or as part of professional development—were few. Focus on the need for educator writing standards, therefore, remained a gap in research literature. Experts in the area of teaching and composition did, nevertheless, emphasize the connection between quality writing instruction and a teacher’s personal involvement in the writing process (Graves, 2004; Frager, 1994; Frank, 2003) with some data indicating that teachers who did not write themselves could not effectively teach writing (Graves, 2004). Additional studies pointed out the difference between author-instructors who intimidated student writers with impossible standards and teachers who wrote along with students, offering empathy while also serving as models in the problem-solving process of composition (Frager, 1994, p. 275; Susi, 1980).

Much like the research literature on pre-service teachers as writers, studies often focused on the topic of teacher confidence in composition. According to such research, contributing factors to the writing reluctance of some educators included negative past experiences, during which their writing was criticized, as well as lack of choice in compositional topics (Frager, 1994, p. 276). Daley (1978) also noted the connection between writing apprehension and writing competency with implications for teachers who lacked confidence in their writing identity. Because high apprehension correlated with avoidance (Daley, 1978), teachers who considered themselves as poor writers were less likely to provide frequent, quality writing instruction for their students and may have even propagated their own aversion to writing in the classroom (Frager, 1994, p. 277).

Frager's (1994) research organized educator writing tasks into categories, though his primary focus was on teacher-writer identity. His study structured teacher writing into various discipline-specific types: those unavoidable to the profession (such as comments on report cards or notes to parents), tasks that organized classroom teaching (lists and plans), and additional writing opportunities, both personal and professional, that integrated education and writing on a deeper level (pp. 275-276). Having organized writing tasks into these three categories, Frager (1994) documented that the most involved educators appeared to be immersed in higher levels of personal and professional composition; these teacher-authors demonstrated less writing reluctance and more personal investment in their own identity as writers. Paramount in this research was the conclusion that a teacher's writing self-concept and overall attitude toward composition affected his or her students' mindsets about writing—an outcome also supported by additional research examining classrooms in which teachers wrote along with their students (Susi, 1984; Zarnowski, 1980).

In contrast to the emphases in other disciplines regarding authentic writing experiences as important to career preparation, Frager (1994) pointed out that very few programs for professional development focused on the kinds of writing that teachers used frequently—including daily workplace demands (report cards, communiqués to parents, etc.), as well as writing with a more public focus—grants, newspaper articles, etc. (p. 276). Frager (1994) continued by suggesting that failing to engage in meaningful, authentic writing experiences perhaps contributed to the continuing low writing self-efficacy expressed by many K-12 educators (p. 276) and echoed other studies suggesting

the importance of real-life writing experiences in professional training (Gallavan, Bowles, & Young, 2012; Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990). These results would seem to have applications in the training of teachers as writers.

Other studies related to supporting educators as writers stressed opportunities in professional development that emphasized writing. Such experiences appeared critical to educator growth in advancing understanding of pedagogical and content issues (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Kwang, 2001, p. 926). Similarly, Frank's (2003) study documented the value in-service teachers placed on writing support in the form of writing groups, writing workshops, seminars, and graduate level classes in order to help overcome poor-writer self-concepts and the resulting inability to effectively and consistently teach writing in the classroom. Clearly, the links between teacher writing engagement and writer self-identity, as well as between that identity and effective writing instruction, strongly suggested a need for teachers to be supported as effective writers in their fields with similar implications for pre-service teacher writing support during teacher training.

Academic Writing Among Disciplines: Social Sciences,
Fundamental and Applied Sciences, Business, and History

In 1980, Vincent Di Salvo published a meta-analysis of research surveying the communication demands of business, engineering, manufacturing, journalism, and others—data from which he offered several conclusions, two of them suggesting focused research for the communicative demands of specific professions as well as a standardization of these demands in order to educate future professionals (Di Salvo,

1980). Notably missing was any inquiry into communicative standards for educators. Similarly, Bridgeman's and Carlson's (1984) survey of university academic writing types, while it failed to include education majors, did examine specific writing task competency demands for first-year graduate and undergraduate students in business management, civil engineering, electrical engineering, psychology, chemistry, and computer science. Of primary importance, Bridgeman's and Carlson's (1984) data indicated that the writing priorities of instructors in these four disciplines often differed from their English counterparts as well as from each other (p. 278). Epstein (1999) in his work on field-specific writing instruction also concluded that field experts were better qualified to teach writing in their content areas than were general writing faculty (p. 30). Notwithstanding, instructors in Epstein's (1999) study stated that they lacked the time to teach content-dependent compositional skills and competencies (p. 35).

Lending further support to the importance of discipline-specific writing instruction at the college level, though this study also did not include teacher training, was Walvoord and McCarthy's (1990) qualitative study documenting differences in content-area writing instruction at three universities by business, psychology, science, and history faculty. Further analyses of discipline-dependent composition included: research into scientists as writers (Yore, Hand, & Pain, 2002), writing demands in engineering (Petroski, 1981), writing in psychology (Drotar, 2000), and composition task proficiencies specific to business (Zhu, 2004). The importance of specific types of writing mastery and of the ability to communicate well via the written word surfaced in

much academic-specific research, and with good reason. As noted by Bridgeman and Carlson (1984):

Except for psychology and undergraduate English, writing was consistently rated as more important to success after graduation than to success in school...the difference was particularly striking in engineering. In both civil and electrical engineering, only about 20% of the departments rated the importance of writing to success in school in one of the two highest categories (4 and 5), but over 60% of the departments in both areas rated writing as a 4 or 5 in importance after graduation (p. 278).

If so profoundly influential in such disciplines as engineering, the impact of writing on success after graduation would seem to invite careful consideration and study in the field of education. Another study of engineering alumni and their employers also described similar results in which both stakeholders consistently rated communication skills above technical skills as desirable to their work in the field (Mohr, personal communication, July, 2013). One of the reasons given included the collaborative nature of engineering project work. Given that teaching occurs in very social and collaborative settings, if similar correlations between communication skills and success in the teaching field were found true for educators, this impact would have important ramifications for instruction in communication, both oral and written, during teacher training. Therefore, because of a scarcity of research literature specifically analyzing the writing skill and task competencies most needed by teacher trainees, this literature review was expanded to include writing research related to career training in other disciplines.

Writing in the Social Sciences

According to experts, social sciences such as psychology demanded a keen understanding of each social entity in the writing process...the author and various real

and potential members of a reading audience (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990)—a point of view that revisited the college-level skills of authentic voice and audience awareness. In the same manner, constructing an author “self” as well as developing sensitivity to readers became crucial for training in a course on human sexuality featured in a study done by Walvoord & McCarthy (1990). In the Walvoord & McCarthy (1990) psychology course, taught by Susan Robison, students were required to effectively express concepts using informal language appropriate for certain audiences as well as outline those same ideas with sophisticated social science language, as also stressed by Drotar (2000, pp.147-148). Such a skill would, likewise, be applicable to pre-service teachers who must communicate equally well with young children, biased parents, and other professionals. A typical writing assignment in Robison’s class explicitly outlined standards for writing skills that included: organization, utilizing relevant supporting material, maintaining accuracy, correctly using mechanics, establishing an author role, writing appropriately to a specific audience, utilizing proper form, and a thoroughly developing a theme (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990. p. 151). In another study, Fallahi, Wood, Austad, and Fallahi (2006) chose four writing elements to emphasize when working with undergraduate psychology students as writers: grammar, style, mechanics, and APA referencing. They determined from the results of their research that, due to the communicative demands of clinicians and academicians in the field, time in writing instruction beyond that of the traditional freshman composition class was a valuable undertaking for psychology faculty (Fallahi, Wood, Austad, & Fallahi, 2006, p. 174).

Drotar (2000), when discussing writing task competencies for the psychologist emphasized that written communication represented the primary vehicle for communicating with colleagues and for advancing in the field, as well as for internally processing the complex thinking necessary for a career in social science (p. 453). Drotar (2000) went on to explore the rigorous compositional demands placed on psychologists who desired to publish research and advance their professional presence—citing the need for specific workshops helping psychologists master the revision processes and precision of detail necessary to prepare manuscripts for publishing (p. 453). In his undergraduate instruction, Klugh (1983) emphasized abstracting and critiquing professional articles from psychology journals in an effort to integrate psychological content and composition in his psychology courses. In addition to analysis and the ability to navigate complex psychological journals, students in social sciences, as in many college-level classes, were expected to state and defend positions using discipline-based methods and relevant supporting sources while adequately managing complexity (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990, p. 165).

As documented by the studies cited above, psychology students were provided helpful strategies involving targeted writing instruction that might well be relevant for pre-service teacher support during training, including, pre-draft writing with revision following feedback (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990) and peer editing (Fallahi, Wood, Austad, & Fallahi, 2006). Likewise, Sternglass' (1997) study underscored the value of writing practice with feedback—also with increasing academic rigor relative to critical thinking and analysis. These became crucial to Sternglass' (1997) participants'

university success as shown by one participant who left the nursing program in her fourth year and enrolled in psychology, a major that provided more support and increased her writing confidence by helping her develop “a workable strategy for handling long and complex research papers” (p. 222). Sternglass’ (1997) study also highlighted the challenges study participants experienced when trying to move from popular language into academic written discourse, making the transition from fact collecting to deeper analyses, and adjusting to instructors’ demands. Addressing the challenge of student transitioning from popular language into academic and career-appropriate writing would seem to have ramifications in the training of future teachers as well as psychologists-in-training, and the topic has invited further study and analysis. Overall, the psychology-writing emphases on audience awareness and professional communication appeared well aligned with professional needs of pre-service teachers who must also master a wide variety of audience sensitivities and who represent their profession to the communities they serve.

Writing in the Fundamental and Applied Sciences

Basic to composition within the fundamental and applied sciences was the self-concept of “scientist.” This author role, although somewhat different from the same ideal in social science, was equally crucial to the concept of writing within the discipline (Yore, Hand, & Pain, 2002). Designed to reinforce proficiency of this skill at the university level, Walvoord and McCarthy (1990) documented the designation of “scientist-in-training” in their study of scientific writing. In addition, as seen in other studies, audience awareness, especially in the area of technical expertise, remained a

crucial component to scientific writing, since primary responsibilities of scientific writing included informing or persuading a specific audience (Petroski, 1994; Yore, Hand, & Pain, 2002). A survey of needed compositional skill competencies in fundamental and applied sciences showed that, like writing in other disciplines, scientific or technical writing required facility with cognitive skills, process strategies (planning, drafting, and revising), and social aspects (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990; Yore, Hand, & Pain, 2002) while also providing a context for reflective scientific thinking about laboratory investigations, readings, and learning (Yore, Hand, & Pain, 2002, p. 673). However, criteria essential to scientific writing primarily involved accuracy and clarity of data along with design and originality of thought; lesser attention was paid to the quality of written language though some respondents claimed that frequent language errors led them to suspect the accuracy of other data (Yore, Hand, & Pain, 2002, p. 682). In general, the role of unbiased, valid, and reliable experimental data used in supporting claims remained paramount in all scientific writing according to Yore, Hand, & Pain (2002, p. 678).

Writing task proficiencies basic to both engineering and fundamental science included the ability to create a scientific report with its prescribed components (Petroski, 1994; Yore, Hand, & Pain, 2002) though engineering reports varied in length and complexity according to their intended audience. Additional types of writing common to the participants in Yore, Hand, and Pain's (2002) study included: reviews, academic and applied science journals, and daily writing—personal lab notes, lecture notes (in academia), journal articles, and general personal notes (p. 681). Johnson also required

that students utilize standard scientific journal format in the writing done for her biology class (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990, p. 184). Also important in technical writing was the ability to incorporate graphs, tables, and other visuals as part of data presentation, a component stressed in Johnson's university biology class (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990).

In Johnson's course, task competencies were closely related to the scientific method, which she affirmed by taking students through hypothesis formulation, construction of operational definitions, experiment design, variable control, and data interpretation (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990, pp. 181-182). In addition, Johnson utilized several writing exercises mirroring authentic writing demands in the field: lab summaries, abstracts, text to accompany graphics, short position papers, letters to the editor, research papers, and one original research report (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990, p. 179). Overall, adherence to scientific methodologies and prescribed writing structures along with clarity, accuracy, as well as an elimination of bias and unsupported conclusions remained crucial aspects of scientific writing in many of the studies cited—again, with implications for teacher training and the scientific aspects of pedagogy as well as in the K-12 teaching of various content areas, including the fundamental and applied sciences. Within the sciences, accuracy of data and structure tended to outweigh precision in writing, though correctness in composition was also valued by some as evidence of overall credibility.

Writing in Business

Within the business-oriented realm, the cognitive writing skill proficiencies of analysis, problem-solving, and decision-making ranked as highly valued in the field. Zhu (2004), in her study on graduate and undergraduate writing courses noted that business-

oriented writing departed from the topic-oriented approach common to general English for-academic-purposes classes. Instead, she emphasized problem-oriented writing and the development of analytical and problem-solving skill competencies as part of introducing university students to the academic business discourse community. Both Zhu (2004) and Sherman (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990) noted that certain writing models, such as the common essay, sometimes interfered with building the analytical, problem-solving skillset necessary for business-related compositions; and both cited the necessity for explicit explanations in instruction and assignments to avoid the cross-interference of this type of confusion. One conclusion from both studies again indicated that general English requirements were insufficient to develop necessary skills for business professionals and, even, that at times old models of writing learned in general composition classes interfered with the production of discipline-specific documents (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990, Zhu, 2004)—a repeated theme throughout content-specific writing preparation and one with possible applications to teacher training. Primary in both studies was the ability of students to take on the professional role of business decision maker—an observation echoing the scientist-in-training and the psychologist-self role models—all of which emphasized the place of writing in helping create professional self-concepts for students in training (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990; Yore, Hand, & Pain, 2002; Zhu, 2004). Additionally, Zhu (2004) revisited the concept of audience awareness when she described how students were instructed to keep “a specific audience in mind” (p. 124). While in both studies efficiency and conciseness in writing were highly valued, in Sherman’s case, a one-page, concise essay assignment was

sometimes translated in students' minds as "not important" because of its brevity (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990). The professors surveyed in Zhu's (2004) study also emphasized the need for quality language production and adherence to standardized English mechanics.

Types of writing most utilized in the business courses researched by Walvoord & McCarthy (1990) and by Zhu (2004) rated case study analysis as the most common university assignment followed by articles, business reports, reflection papers, and other projects. As befitting the business mindset, both studies focused on persuasive writing with one of the key difficulties for students being to manage the complexities of various factors, goals, and data (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990, Zhu, 2004). Thus, the sheer variety of elements in the problem-solving process required that students maintain objectivity by implementing formulaic analyses (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990) and by carefully utilizing critical thinking skills throughout the analytical process (Zhu, 2004). In all, cognitive writing skill competencies appeared highly valued in the world of business writing preparation. Moreover, the prevalent 21st Century emphasis on critical thinking in education (P21, 2014) would suggest that the problem-solving nature of business writing would be fundamentally applicable to teaching. Therefore, pre-service teachers, like the business students in Walvoord & McCarthy's study (1990), should learn decision making that integrated both information and experience rather than relying exclusively on one or the other.

Writing in History and Social Studies

“The difference between basic historical study, of the sort that ought to go on in high school, and history as what historians actually do—is argument” (Walvoord & McCarthy, 2002, p. 99). This quote excerpted from John R. Breihan’s comments regarding his “Modern Civilizations” 100-level course, encapsulated the philosophy that drove Breihan’s history instruction. His passion for teaching cognitive writing skills demanded that his students think critically and pose problems—both emphases common in a history/social studies approach to writing. Lehning (1993), in his analysis of writing about history, re-emphasized the need of students-historians to build upon the general writing instruction they had received in English/language arts instruction for use in the persuasive aspects of history-related composition: “...writing assignments in history classes must focus on teaching students to use general writing techniques to address and persuade the discursive community of historians” (p. 342). Referencing a writing-across-the-curriculum emphasis on learning about the past in order to fuel cognitive reflection, Lehning (1993) highlighted the process of re-envisioning information by processing it into one’s own personal language—a concept reminiscent of Sternglass’s (1997) study in which participants frequently referred to how writing helped them to genuinely understand content-dense readings. Lehning (1993) also described five skill competencies needed for writing about history: summarizing, analyzing, interpreting, and creating arguments and counterarguments (p. 343). The last two required more practice and development as the others had been introduced in general writing classes.

Task proficiencies needed by his students of history often began with practicing “workaday” writing and note taking (Lehning, 1993, p. 342). These informal, ungraded pieces, often in the form of journals or free writing, could, according to Lehning (1993), served as bridges to the more formal aspects of historical writing, a description echoing Breihan’s focused writing exercises designed to develop needed skills for more formal writings (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990, p. 98). Comprising the bulk of Breihan’s primary assignments were three argumentative essays (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990, p. 98) scaffolded by assignments involving issues planning, discussions about modes of argument, and in-class debates (p. 98). Lehning (1993), on the other hand, described a series of assignments including a summary newspaper article, an analytical letter, an interpretive conversation, an argumentative policy memorandum, and a speech designed as a counterargument. Both Lehning (1993) and Walvoord & McCarthy (1990) stressed the argument/counterargument aspects of writing in history—a structure for which earlier composition classes tended not to prepare students and which necessitated careful support and instruction through history classes.

In order to train students for these argument/counterargument task competencies, Marlow’s (1992) creative suggestions for teaching social studies included outlining, summarizing, building illustrations and models, writing creatively (poems, etc.), listing pros and cons of an issue, map making, and ultimately entering into a dispute through taking a side and creating logs reflecting that viewpoint. Although the historical writing route appeared to vary somewhat among instructors, the primary goal remained for students to create original historical/social viewpoints based on analyzing quality source

documentation as evidence to support a position while also carefully considering alternative positions. Lehning (1993) defined these processes as superseding writing about history and moving to actually “writing history” (p 347).

Dominant themes in history-related writing included creating arguments and counterarguments based on historical viewpoints generated from studying relevant documentation. While the skill of debate might be only partially applicable to the general teaching profession, careful investigation of source material in order to support a position would be important for pre-service teachers when considering, for example, how to select curricula or differentiate instruction for individual students. Thus, the fundamentals of historical writing appeared to have broad, as well as content-specific, applications to education.

Writing Skill Competencies

This survey of studies on writing done at the general college-level, during pre-service teacher training, on the job for in-service educators, and throughout university education in other disciplines, suggested several standards for supporting the written work of pre-service teachers. These tended to fall in certain often-repeated categories, and are summarized here. First of all, skill competencies repeatedly surfaced in mechanical, cognitive, organizational, and social areas. In addition, writing task proficiencies frequently arose within the context of certain types of activities: professional, communicative, instructive, and personal. Depending on level of experience and the discipline under study, each of the above skill and task competencies

necessitated competent-to-masterful performance achieved through opportunities for instruction, authentic practice, feedback, revision, and more instruction, practice, etc. Also, as emphasized by Sternglass (1997), adequate writing performance levels in all areas required sufficient time for development, in many cases, years.

Mechanical Skill Competencies

Although mechanics and style were generally considered subordinate to such qualities as content, organization, and critical thinking when faculty assessed university projects (Bridgeman & Carlson, 2004; Condon & Kelly-Riley, 2004), experts agreed that university-level writing should follow the conventions of standard English (Acker & Halasek, 2008; Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006). Literature in all areas of writing mentioned correctness of grammar, spelling, and syntax, although writing instruction in various disciplines may have weighted these elements somewhat differently compared to other aspects of content-specific writing, such as accuracy of data (Yore, Hand, & Pain, p. 682) or persuading a discursive community (Lehning, 1993, p. 3420). Surfacing throughout relevant literature on writing for pre-service educators was an emphasis on mastering standardized English: correct spelling and vocabulary use, effective and varied word choice, and, finally, adherence to proper grammar (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006). Even though literature made a distinction between revision (alterations to ideas and organization) and editing (changes in mechanics) (Flower & Hayes, 1981; Enders, 2001; Zamel, 1985) the benefits of reviewing and altering composition through a multiple-draft process were well-supported in research (Acker & Halasek, 2009; Bartholomae & Petrosky, 1986; Sternglass, 1997). In short, research has continued to underscore the

complex nature of the writing process (Kellogg, 1994). Also, because “...written expression, akin to mathematical calculations, requires precision and carefulness” (Ellsworth, personal communication, 2013), all advanced writing would seem to require correct writing mechanics and attention to the standards of the English language. For pre-service teachers whose facility with mechanics might vary widely, the importance of careful instruction and feedback over sufficient time (Sternglass, 1997) in order to engender college-level competency would appear fundamental.

Cognitive Skill Competencies

Early in the 20th century, the work of John Dewey brought to the forefront the elements of critical thinking, analysis, and reflection as essentials of academic learning (Bean, 2011). The writing of Dewey, one of the first learning theorists to delve into the concept of reflective thinking, described such critical engagement in terms of moving through a problem toward a solution (Dewey, 1910). Woven through the various concepts of critical thinking and reflection were common themes: identifying salient issues or problems; considering issues in light of context, theory, and research data; formulating connections and hypotheses within new and authentic contexts; identifying valid and reliable supporting evidence for positions; and, finally, emerging with new thinking, solutions, and points of view (Arend, 2009; Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 1999; Hatton & Smith 1995; Kember, McKay, Sinclair, & Wong, 2008; Lee, 2008; Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990).

Other studies have made inseparable the concept of cognition and the act of written expression. Ronald Kellogg (1994) in his extensive book on compositional

theory, *The Psychology of Writing*, described “thinking and writing as twins of mental life” (p. 13). “The study of the more expressive twin, writing, can offer insights into the psychology of thinking, the more reserved member of the pair,” claimed Kellogg (1994, p. 13). Sullivan (2006) agreed when he suggested that the term “college-level writer” be expanded to “college-level reader, writer, and thinker” (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006, p. 16). Flower and Hayes (1981) developed this concept further in their description of writing as “a set of distinctive thinking processes” (p. 366). Whether writing, cognition, and critical thinking were branches of the same tree (Kellogg, 1999) or whether writing served, rather, as a communicative vehicle for expressing cognitive elements (Condon & Kelly-Riley, 2004, p. 66) remained a debate topic for compositional theorists. Nevertheless, college-level writing that failed to identify problems, establish perspectives, examine alternative points of view, recognize context, find and evaluate evidence, delineate assumptions, and formulate conclusions (Condon & Kelly-Riley, 2004, p. 59) did not meet holistic values inherent in the academic process, and, thus, fell short of what constituted full and complete college-level writing, according to the research surveyed.

D.R. Garrison (1991) confronted the traditionally vague concept of critical thinking and proposed a cyclical model of critical thinking, which included: problem identification, problem definition, exploration, applicability, and integration (p. 293). Furthermore, he described a cycle of collaboration and reflection—an interweaving of introspection and socialization as important to the critical thinking process (Garrison, 1991, p. 295).

Sternglass (1997) underscored the need for writing instructors to honor students’ cultures, genders, races, classes, and beliefs (p. 9) suggesting that cognition might not be the only

ingredient in the critical thinking process and that even novice writers might learn best when composing about questions imbued with personal meaning—even if those questions were difficult.

Research on discipline-specific writing was also rich with emphases on cognitive elements. Frequently mentioned was the inability of a freshman composition course to meet the needs of career-oriented writing—specifically in the area of high-level cognition (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990). Debate in historical writing along with its arguments and counterarguments, analysis in psychological articles, structured, scientific methodology in lab reports, and managing complex factors in order to arrive at decisions for the businessperson—all represented complex approaches to cognition and critical thinking centered around collecting data, analyzing that information, and reforming it in new ways to solve problems. Advanced academic writing in these various disciplines embodied written meaning as a creation rather than as a discovery—a two-part invention involving choice of events on the one hand and choice of translation on the other (Lucaites, Condit, & Caudill, 1999). Based on the research surveyed, the ramifications for pre-service education appeared immense. Not only has the teaching profession needed to clarify its own structure for critical thought and problem solving as a discipline in its own right, but K-12 instructors have been mandated with planting the seeds for critical thinking for all kinds of discipline-specific writing within thousands of youthful scientists, businesspersons, psychologists, and historians in K-12 classrooms across the country.

Organizational Skill Competencies

Whether a writer was structuring event sequences for a narrative or developing an organization that resulted in a clear and understandable persuasive or expository piece, (Montana Common Core Writing Standards, 2013), an organized, logically sequenced, and well-supported structure had to underlie all successful college- and career-level writing. In fact, “the ability to organize ideas” (Sternglass & Tinberg, 2006, p. 34) along with “strong voice” (Sternglass & Tinberg, 2006, p. 34) have been mentioned as the central foci of college-quality writing instruction—and for good reason. As post-secondary students have moved from freshmen composition classes to content-specific writing, they have encountered demands for competency in general college-level organization along with the rigors of discipline-specific structures and formatting. Walvoord and McCarthy (1990) referenced the dual challenge of university students who had to “organize their information... to fit into...appropriate format sections...and also... organize the appropriate information logically within a section (p. 219). Theses, sub-theses, warrants, factor analyses, literature reviews, abstracts, scientific methods and results, as well as other elements (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990) demanded an understanding of writing structures surpassing the simpler, five-paragraph construction learned in high school (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006).

In addition to a logically organized sequence of main ideas in college-level writing, these central points must also be well supported with valid and reliable “facts, illustrations, experiences, analogies, quotes, or whatever is needed to make the thesis or premise clear” (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006, p. 33), all serving to analyze ideas from both

sides of a question, rather than merely present them. Walvoord and McCarthy (1990) documented two university student approaches to papers used to avoid the rigorous and time-consuming process of gathering sufficient, quality evidence to support a position: a) the text processor, who simply paraphrased text as supporting material and b) the layperson, who relied on personal opinion rather than on professional understandings and methodologies. Such strategies were reminiscent of Kellogg's (1994) concept of "satisficing" in which writers "economize effort" and "seek a satisfactory product with the least possible investment of processing time and effort" (p. 65). Kellogg (1994) described three motives for such economy of effort at the expense of optimal quality: lacking sufficient information resources, experiencing cognitive capacity deficits, and failing to find motivation in the writing task (p. 65). In the case of the Walvoord and McCarthy (1990) study, extreme instructor clarity—even care using precise vocabulary within instructions—was necessary to help students overcome this tendency.

Both elements—logical progression of ideas and sufficient quality support—related closely to the process of pre-writing, often the stage in which such structures were outlined and sequenced at least in preliminary form. Kellogg (1994) described the documented advantages of pre-writing in the overall quality of resulting documents, (pp. 126-127) and pre-writing as a strategy was mentioned in a host of sources on general college-level writing as well as content-specific composition (Enders, 2001; Graham & Perin, 2007; Pianko, 1979; Sternglass, 1997; Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990). Pre-writing and planning were often considered as almost synonymous terms regarding the organizational stage of higher-level writing. At all stages of the writing process,

however—pre-writing, drafting, and revising—college-level writers needed to approach composition in an organized, understandable fashion or risk alienating a confused reader and, thus, default on the understood, communal purpose of communicative writing.

Social Skill Competencies

As shown in the above review of literature, writing has been perceived as a social process, a means of communicating. The studies above detailed two types of participants in the social process of writing: the author and the reading audience, together interacting within a symbolized reality. Discussions about the author role in general college-level writing frequently stressed the concept of “voice” or “authentic voice” (Acker & Halasek, 2008; Bizzell, 1982; Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006). This concept, once again, however, appeared difficult to define (Acker & Halasek, 2008). Authentic voice proponents categorized voice as including cultural factors, personal experience, and the first-person point of view (Bizzell, 1982), though an over-emphasis on voice could preclude other important elements such as abstractions and developing concepts (Bizzell, 1982). Voice was described as “style, tone, personality, and rhythm,” “taking risks,” or “talking on paper” (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006, pp. 43, 44). Also dubbed as an “informed and critical” self (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006, p. 325), authentic voice demonstrated aspects both of critical thinking and of audience awareness. “Voice” within the realm of discipline-specific writing also encompassed the academic discourse of various content communities and the establishment of a writing self—a professional author-self proficient in the vocabulary and types of discourse relevant to each discipline. The idea of professional-in-training put forth by the instructors in Walvoord and McCarthy’s (1990)

study represented a deliberate attempt by professors in various fields to induct young college students into adopting an authentic voice appropriate to their areas of study: business, history, science, or psychology (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990). In the education profession, along with academic expertise, a strong writing self-concept and positive overall viewpoint of writing were deemed important for teachers as author models for their students and for pre-service teachers forming their teacher/writer self-images (Frank, 2003; Morgan, 2010; Pajares & Johnson, 1994). Teachers who had developed a positive self-identity as writers provided richer writing instruction for students and instilled in them a love for writing (Frager, 1994).

Closely linked to the concept of the author self was the idea of audience awareness. In addition to a personal writing identity, a sense of audience became vital for educated writers. Sternglass and Tinberg's (2006) commentary pointed out the importance of audience awareness in avoiding an overemphasis on personal meaning. Furthermore, these researchers cautioned against the tendency of the authentic voice movement to encourage egocentric and conventional statements in student composition. In actuality, audience awareness was sometimes considered the separating factor between adolescent and adult writing (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006, p. 124). However, content-specific writing also necessitated a careful consideration of audience. Yore, Hand, and Pain(2002), for example, pointed out the various audience-awareness demands in scientific writing; narratives, explanations, arguments, and lab reports all reflected different writing demands relative to reading audiences (p. 679). In fact, the various audiences possible in countless professional writing scenarios again pointed out the

difficulty of general university training to duplicate the complexities of career writing. A conventional audience of one professor, for example, might well fail to adequately prepare a professional-in-training for the audience demands of a specific academic field (Bizzell, 1982; Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006). Audience awareness, therefore, would hold special challenges for pre-service teachers who must learn to interact on so many planes: professionally—with colleagues, socially, with emotional parents and family members, and instructionally, with very inexperienced learners.

Looking at authentic voice and audience awareness together, the communal nature of writing involved very complex interactions in each specific writing situation. With regard to pre-service teachers, author/audience interactions over content could be critical to student success. Students who failed to understand the instructions to an assignment, for example, might not achieve according to their potential. The technology explosion has further complicated this interaction for educators. Many online resources have now featured written instructions, guidance, or directions—expanding the scenarios in which teachers must carefully consider audience needs in written communication. Emails with colleagues, parents, and students have placed a teacher's writing acumen on permanent display across the World-wide Web. Additionally, because teachers have been the seminal writing instructors for future business people, scientists, psychologists, etc., their understandings should include, in addition to general college-level writing proficiency, some degree of facility—depending on the grade level and subject matter taught—with the author mindset for various content areas, a kind of “writing-across-the-curriculum” awareness (Condon & Kelly-Riley, 2004, p. 69).

Writing Task Competencies

In order to apply research on general college-level writing to pre-service teachers in particular, insights were gained from looking ahead to the day-to-day demands of the teaching profession. As suggested by experts, if one looked forward, helpful information could be obtained by studying both the writing tasks emphasized throughout any given student's university training and also those within his or her chosen professional work subsequent to graduation (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006, p. 238). While much information existed regarding the teaching of writing at a variety of grade levels, less information was available about the many other writing requirements of K-12 educators: writing newsletters to parents, communicating memos to administrators, composing grant requests—all elements exploding within a modern “text-based electronic communications environment” (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006, p. 233).

Beginning with composing a résumé and creating a cover letter, these kinds of writing demands have continued throughout a career in education. In Frager's (1994) work on teachers and writing identity, participants described many of the professional writing tasks in which they engaged: professional correspondence, notes home to parents, papers for college classes, lists, lesson plans, introspective writing, and writing for professional journals. However, Frager's (1994) focus was on teacher writer-identity, rather than on a study of the tasks themselves. Thus, many of these communicative demands have remained little touched as subjects of current research and remained possibilities for further research—as has been done in other fields, such as business (Anson & Forsberg, 1990).

In addition to teaching writing and being involved in daily professional composition tasks, educators have also modeled writing on a daily basis for their students. Frager (1994) has discussed the issue of teacher modeling by noting both sides of a possible controversy: “Who would take skiing lessons from an instructor who painfully struggles to make it to the bottom of the slope without falling? . . . would a clumsy skiing instructor inspire fear or empathy? What feelings does a clumsy writer engender?” (p. 274).

Continuing his discussion of the question, Frager (1994) balanced both arguments: the need for competent modeling of writing on the one hand and the benefits gained by students from an empathetic teacher-writer who understood that learning to write meant making mistakes. However, it has not only been word or sentence-level features that teachers have modeled for students on a daily basis. Adger, Snow, and Christian (2003) who argued “that teachers need a depth and breadth of expertise about language because of the range of functions they must serve” (p.10), provided five compelling areas in which teacher literacy strongly affected their students—three of which related directly to teacher modeling of literacy, both oral and written:

- Teacher as communicator: in which teachers had to “...structure their own language output for maximum clarity” (Adger, Snow, & Christian, 2003, p. 18).
- Teacher as educated human being: in which teachers understood the basics of a post-secondary liberal education. “All of us should understand such matters [English grammar, history, its relationship with other languages, spelling, dialects,

etc.], and we will not learn them unless teachers understand them first (Adger, Snow, & Christian, 2003, p. 24).

- Teacher as agent of socialization: in which they guided children to “...become socialized into the ways of thinking and behaving that characterize educated individuals” (Adger, Snow, & Christian, 2003, p. 25).

The above educator roles emphasized the importance of teachers modeling educated, even academic, forms of communication, including writing; and this modeling proved especially important for students whose home and school cultures did not match very well (Adger, Snow, & Christian, 2003, p. 17). Thus, providing pre-service teachers opportunities to practice these authentic teaching tasks during teacher training would align with the professional-in-training approach recommended in Walwood & McCarthy’s (1990) research for developing the task competencies necessary for career compositional demands.

Conclusion

After reviewing available research about writing standards in general college-level writing, pre-service teaching, in-service teaching, and university training for four academic disciplines, several commonalities began to emerge. Primarily and fundamentally, the conventions of standardized English, including grammar, spelling, syntax, and word choice, needed to meet standards indicative of a liberally educated individual (Adler, Snow, & Christian, 2003; Frager, 1994). Yet, in spite of this emphasis on mechanics, statistics suggested that many pre-service teachers were entering their

training without adequate preparation in these fundamentals (Gray, Wang, & Malizia, 1995)—presenting teacher-training programs with challenges similar to those undertaken by remedial programs at the community college level (Southard & Clay, 2004).

However, not only would proficiency in mechanics seem to be a minimum standard for graduating teacher candidates, the higher-level aspects of university-quality writing appeared necessary for emphasis during pre-service teacher training. Among these were the ability to organize complex substructures into coherent documents; the ability to anticipate the needs of a reading audience; an emergence of authentic author voice; a facility with stating, supporting, and arguing a position; and proficiency with critical thinking, reflection, and problem solving (Acker & Halasek, 2008; Bizzell, 1982; Sternglass, 1997; Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006). Additionally, teacher writing appeared to serve as part of an overall model of what it meant to be an educated individual—providing for children a window into the requirements for achieving professional status via careful, correct, and sophisticated forms of communication (Adger, Snow & Christian, 2003; Frager, 1994).

Teacher responsibility did not stop with proficient knowledge and skills, however. Educator attitudes toward writing, even at the student teaching level, appeared to affect students. Teachers with strong self-identities as writers tended to engender in students a more positive attitude toward and even love for writing (Susi, 1984). Moreover, evidence existed to support the need for pre-service teachers, especially those in secondary fields, to gain an understanding of the forms and styles of writing inherent in various disciplines,

including historical debate, managerial problem solving, psychological analysis, the scientific method, and others (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990).

Preparing for daily professional writing tasks, for instructing children, and for communicating with parents and community members, pre-service teachers would need to learn effective communication through writing. The overwhelming complexity of these demands would certainly seem to have underscored the conclusions of Marilyn Sternglass (1997) who advocated strongly for immersion in critical reading and writing from the first freshman assignment; for direct, concentrated instruction in writing; and for frequent and effective feedback—all over sufficient time. A survey of research literature pointed to the importance of each of these elements within pre-service teacher training, right from admittance into the program. According to one expert, “incompetence or lack of skill with the English language by teachers can be compared to fraudulence in other professions such as the accountant who submits inaccurate tax returns or a medical practitioner who carelessly prescribes pharmaceuticals” (Ellsworth, 2014). Taken together, a survey of research literature seemed to offer encouragement for teacher training institutions to further study how they could best establish and support writing standards for pre-service individuals seeking to teach America’s K-12 children.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of pre-service teachers regarding which skill and task competencies they believed most crucial to writing preparation during teacher training. These perceptions were then compared to writing skill and task proficiencies emphasized in research literature. The research questions guiding this research are:

1. How do writing skill and task competences identified by pre-service teacher perceptions compare to what is known by researchers?
2. What can teacher training institutions glean from current research and pre-service teacher perceptions regarding the support of writing skills and task competencies during teacher training?

Chosen as the approach for collecting and analyzing data used in this study, a qualitative paradigm involves investigation into the meaning that individuals or groups generate regarding specific problems (Cresswell, 2012). In the case of this study, data was derived from seven pre-service teachers who were facing the challenges of developing needed writing skills during their university teacher training.

Study Context and Participants

The potential interviewee pool for this study included several hundred pre-service teachers enrolled as education majors at one western, land-grant university in which the

graduate-level researcher worked and studied. Participants were selected using convenience sampling, given the researcher's involvement as an instructor and field supervisor. Patton (2002) described the trust between researcher and those being studied as important to research situations, and that trust had been established in the above cases due to researcher immersion in the writing experiences of these pre-service teachers. Of the three groups, the student teaching sections and the entry-level seminar both included elementary, K-12, and secondary majors, while the language arts literacy class had enrolled only those in the elementary program.

The seven interviewees included six females and one male who were accepted on a first-come/first-served volunteer basis. From the entry-level seminar came one of the volunteers—a freshman pursuing secondary education in history and social studies. Two pre-service teachers just finishing student teaching offered to participate—one elementary major and one K-12 art major. A junior in secondary English also joined the interview pool, and the remaining four interviewees were elementary education majors drawn from the 300-level language arts literacy class. Because this literacy course was known to be writing-intensive, these four brought with them both a heightened awareness of quality writing standards as well as concern for inadequacies remaining in their own writing skill and task competencies. Of the other three, one interviewee admitted to learning disabilities that she felt had the potential to create roadblocks to her chosen content area. The final two interviewees spoke from positions of relative writing strength and reflected on their experiences and values from that point of view. After the invitation to interviewees went out to possible participants, volunteers were accepted primarily on a

first-come, first-served basis, though participants from the 300-level language arts methods class were limited to four. Capped at seven participants, this quota was established according to the resources of the researcher who conducted and transcribed all interviews. However, seven were included in order to amass a variety of majors with varying lengths of time in the program and different writing proficiency levels. Interviews took place at various locations and times, according to the needs of interviewees. Five occurred in a university office convenient to students attending classes; one took place in a local coffee shop; and another happened within a home setting. Each interview lasted approximately one hour with participants invited to continue the discussion as long as they liked.

Each of these pre-service teachers participated in an eleven-question interview, which followed what Patton (2002) termed a “standardized, open-ended interview format” (p. 344). Student volunteers were asked eleven questions (See Appendix A) and invited to elaborate on these eleven or on any other related topics of interest to them. Participants were encouraged to tell their writing stories, share their compositional strengths and weaknesses, and comment on personal experiences with writing within the teacher training program. Thus, in addition to representing a variety of majors, the interviewees’ opinions and values also reflected their different lengths of time in the education program, including one freshman and two seniors only a few days away from graduating. While the purpose of this narrative research did not focus on generalizability to a population of pre-service teachers, the interview sample did include enough participants to assure a colorful palette of data.

Research Design

Cresswell (2012) has delineated several steps in developing a research study, the first being to select a research design—either quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods. In this case, the purpose and passion of the researcher—to immerse herself in the perceptions of the pre-service teachers themselves—seemed best accomplished by collecting qualitative data generated via in-depth interviews. However, this narrative study would represent only one link in the story of pre-service teachers as writers. Because pre-service teacher writing skill and task proficiencies would eventually affect in-service careers, the data from this study would be of greater value when eventually accompanied by continued research into the values and opinions held by those experienced in the field of education, such as in-service teachers and administrators. Additionally, because of teacher accountability to local communities and families, parents and community members would also have relevant opinions about writing preparation during teacher training.

Cresswell (2012) has also suggested that when little research has been done on a topic, when questions are exploratory in nature, and/or when the researcher does not know which variables merit emphasis, then qualitative research would be the appropriate design (p. 18). While many studies had been directed toward university students as general writers and others had focused on discipline-specific composition at the college level, research on writing development during pre-service teacher training was scarce and tended to emphasize issues like confidence, writer identity, and author self-esteem. While these were important, a look at writing skill and task competencies also remained

foundational, even to questions about self-confidence and self-efficacy. Moreover, the effect of compositional competency on self-confidence could be inferred by examining statements from current studies on the topic of pre-service teachers as writers. Street, (2003) in his narrative research of five pre-service teachers, described how their self-confidence and identity as writers had been compromised by critical instructors who had emphasized “prescriptive correctness over meaning and expression” (p. 42), while Draper, Barksdale-Ladd, and Radencich (2000) documented that sixty-three percent of the pre-service teachers participating in their study had reported negative feelings about writing (p. 186). Likewise, Frager (1994) stated how the educators in his “reluctant writer” category (p. 276) had all described “memory of hurtful criticism of their writing by someone like a former teacher” (Frager, 1994, p. 276). All these suggested negative experiences in which criticism of competence, often in the area of writing mechanics, had undermined self-confidence.

Along these lines, Frager (1994) asked questions that went beyond teacher self-identity and grappled with accountability. He compared a teacher with poor writing abilities to a ski instructor who “painfully struggles to make it to the bottom of the slope without falling” (p. 274) while at the same time admitting the value of empathetic instructors who were “just good enough at writing to know how difficult writing is” (Frager, 1994, p. 274). Developing this theme further, Pajares and Johnson (1994), in their study of writing self-efficacy, took a straightforward approach to the necessity of building writer confidence on the one hand with a need for accountability on the other:

However, we warn that increasing students' self-confidence in an academic endeavor is no panacea for the development of competence.

Moreover, it may hardly be realistic to artificially build confidence when it has no basis in competence or aptitude. The development of confidence is clearly warranted, however, when perceptions of competence or potential are inaccurate or when skills and abilities are first being mastered (p. 328).

With this statement, Pajares and Johnson (1994) approximated the declaration of Bandura (1978) on self-efficacy, who, while underscoring the value of positive self-efficacy on effort and persistence (p. 141) also stated that, “Expectation alone will not produce desired performance if the component capabilities are lacking” (Bandura, 1978, p. 142). Writing has been shown to be difficult and complex (Kellogg, 1994). Thus, achieve writing mastery has demanded heeding instruction, practicing diligently, and allowing the process sufficient time for development (Sternglass, 1997). Thus, grit and perseverance would be important characteristics for pre-service teachers for advancing their skills during teacher training. As one participant stated:

And, to learn how to “take it,” is also an important thing too. Because you’re going to get reviewed and...looked at by all your peers in the workplace and by your boss—the principal, or whatever—and they might have suggestions for you or constructive criticism. And you’re going to need to learn to take that and wield it into a positive and change what you’re doing.

Given, on the one hand, the poor writer self-identities reported by many pre-service educators due to negative past writing experiences and, on the other, the need for self-confidence to be supported by genuine competence, an exploratory study regarding the skill and task competencies most necessary for development during teacher training seemed worthy of research. Certainly, there have been many stakeholders in the education of teacher candidates as future teacher-writers—students, parents, and administrators--to name the primary groups. However, no one has had a greater stake in

professional writing preparation for a career in education than those immersed in the process—pre-service teachers enrolled in teacher training institutions. Results from their contributions could be used to help inform teacher training priorities in the same way that research into writing tasks and standards have helped define preparation in other courses of study (Bridgeman & Carlson, 1984).

Theoretical Framework

In addition to structuring a research design, Cresswell (2012) suggested establishing a worldview in order to shape a researcher's approach to planning and implementation. The broader viewpoint espoused by this study would fall under social constructivism, which had as a foundational question:

How have the people in this setting constructed reality? What are their reported perceptions, "truths," explanations, beliefs, and world-view? What are the consequences of their constructions for their behaviors and for those with whom they interact? (Patton, 2002, p. 96)

This study represented social constructivism in that participants were invited to tell their writing stories, describe their personal issues with composition, and state their perceptions of writing preparation during teacher training. Gliner and Morgan (2000) also suggested how, in social constructivism, a researcher admits to influencing the research study because of background or bias. In this case, researcher positionality did affect the study direction. One of Patton's (2002) questions regarding people in social constructivist settings asked: "What are the consequences of their constructions for their behaviors and for those with whom they interact," (p. 96). As a parent and citizen, the researcher approached this study with concern, not only for pre-service teachers, but also

for consequences on those with whom pre-service teachers would be interacting, in this case K-12 students. Thus a bias toward accountability surfaced in some of the interview questions (Appendix A). Another influence in this study was the background of the researcher. Having worked with pre-service teachers for over fifteen years and having participated in their writing frustrations, the researcher's interest in problem-solving on behalf of pre-service teachers also formed part of the study background and resulted in the third research question: "What are the implications for teacher training institutions gleaned from current literature and pre-service teacher perceptions regarding the support of writing skills and task competencies during teacher training?"

Another dimension of qualitative studies related to the development of theory. In the case of this research, themes were allowed to emerge from the data rather than taken from a pre-established writing framework. A broad theoretical base was developed through an initial literature review on college-level writing. Concepts of mechanics, voice, audience, organization, and critical thinking emerged frequently within the review of literature. It should here be noted that, although the categories arising from the literature review as well as the interview data in many ways paralleled the 6+1 Trait® Writing model, (Culham, 2003) this rubric had largely been associated with K-12 education rather than used in post-secondary settings. Since this study focused only on college preparatory and college-level writing, the 6 + 1 traits (Culham, 2003) were not used in this research, even though a similarity to 6 + 1 (Culham, 2003) themes resulted from the literature review and from student interview data. This resemblance was hardly surprising, however, since writing at any stage was still writing and would have exhibited

commonalities at every level. However, this study contended that areas of emphasis and levels of sophistication in university-level work differed significantly from K-12 counterparts and, thus, should be researched separately. This became especially apparent for the emerging skill and task competency themes that mirrored high-level, career-specific writing, as exemplified by Walvoord and McCarthy's (1990) professional-in-training approach, which meaningfully connected university writing assignments to work inherent in professions.

Cresswell (2002) described how a sequence of methods was often influenced by a researcher's goal of either specifying research categories in advance or allowing these categories to emerge from participants' experiences (p. 17), while Gliner and Morgan (2000) discussed how phases of inquiry were inherent in an emergent design (p. 25). In the case of this study, interviews were structured to allow participants' views to emerge into several possible themes. These themes were revised over multiple readings by noting commonalities across interviewees and by comparing them with similar themes generated by the literature review material until eight pre-service teacher skill and task competency categories solidified from the data: skill competencies (mechanical, organizational, social, and cognitive) and task competencies (professional, communicative, instructional, and personal).

Trustworthiness and Role of the Researcher

Within this exploratory study, the primary focus was to note common themes that emerged from the seven study participants. Establishing the generalizability of those themes, therefore, was not a major goal of this study, although a variety of viewpoints,

majors, and experience levels were incorporated into the interview pool in order to provide a meaningful depth of data for analysis. Thus, recommendations for future research would include increased validity and reliability studies undertaken across multiple situations and among various stakeholders in the teacher training process.

Credibility of data in this study was first established through researcher trustworthiness. Each interview was digitally recorded followed by a careful transcription of each word in all seven sessions. Because of prior researcher commitment to pre-service teacher writing in a supportive, rather than critical relationship, interviewees expressed their opinions with relative freedom—including Interviewee #3 who immediately declared a hatred for grammar. In order to remain faithful to Interviewee accounts, the researcher allotted multiple readings (more than five) of the interview data along with two separate codings—one after an early literature review and the second after a more extensive literature review, approximately five months apart. This coding process followed suggestions by Cresswell (2012) whereby preliminary readings were coded into frequently used keywords and phrases that pointed to broad themes emerging in each interview. As the readings progressed, these themes coalesced by the established emergence of keywords and repeated phrases common across the seven interviews, though not all themes occurred in each interview. These themes, represented by keywords and phrases, were color coded and placed into tables for comparison. When the second full coding occurred (approximately five months subsequent to the first), this second set of emergent codes were aligned in the original seven tables with the first coded themes so that drifts in interpretation could be noted.

After comparing the two tables, although new codes were recognized after the extended literature review and although a small number of codes generated during the first reading were missed the second time around, agreement between the two coding sessions was deemed fairly consistent. Between the two codings, only twenty actual differences were detected in codings of well over 300 keywords and phrases, and most of these differences arose from a deeper understanding of the material generated by additional reading and time spent with the data generated by interviewees.

Efforts to validate the themes generated by the study included member checking, as overall themes were approved by four of the original interviewees who responded to an emailed interviewer query sent to all seven. Additional validation came through the opinions and contributions of two experts in the area of pre-service teacher writing—one from the target university and another working with pre-service teachers in a different western university. A careful attempt was made to report discrepant information—including one participant who emphatically stated that she disliked both grammar and writing—and to incorporate this material into the consideration of key themes. Thus, subsequent readings, consultation with experts, member checking, and comparisons with similar themes arising from studies in other disciplines helped establish reliability for the themes generated by the interviewees through a process of triangulation (Patton, 2002).

Data Analysis

In order to segment discussion interview responses into concepts for analysis, all interviews were carefully transcribed by the researcher allowing for close interaction with

interview material prior to the first reading. Next, interviews underwent an open-coding session using what Corbin and Strauss (2008) refer to as a “line-by-line analysis” (p. 72) in order to detect prominent or repetitive concepts. Second and third readings grouped these concepts into categories in terms of properties common across the concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 69). Some of these were laid aside because they did not relate specifically to the research questions for this study. Other categories were named using a combination of “words and phrases used by the informants themselves” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 69), researcher perceptions, and “borrowed concepts” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 68) generated by current research. These categories comprised two broad divisions: writing skill and writing task competencies. The writing skill competency categories included critical thinking, authentic voice, audience awareness, organization, and mechanics. Along with writing skill proficiencies, three task competency categories surfaced from interview data describing tasks students saw themselves performing as future teachers and, thus, requiring preparation during teacher training. Based on Bandura’s work regarding the situational demands of tasks and the necessity for a “microanalysis of perceived coping capabilities” (Bandura, 1978, p. 150), delineating both writing skill and task competencies seemed validated by the literature as well as steeped in the interview data. The task competency categories included communicative, instructional, professional, and university-related.

At this point in the research, a more intensive literature review took place, and the interview material remained relatively untouched for several months. At the end of the second literature study and after interview readings and category name adjustments, the

skill competencies of establishing an authentic voice and gaining audience awareness, because they were both related to the social aspects of pre-service teacher writing, were combined under the social skill competency heading. University-related task competencies were, in the research literature, aligned with authentic future professional tasks. As a result, university-related competencies were subsumed under the “Professional” heading. Although communicative task proficiencies were not recognized as such by the research literature, Interviewee #7 carefully made the distinction between professional and communicative writing. Because this difference was also validated by an expert in the field, communicative writing remained as a task competency category separate from professional. One new task proficiency category was derived from the research literature—personal. Two of the interviewees had specifically mentioned personal writing, but this was missed by the researcher as a theme until it surfaced in the literature review. Thus, personal composition was added to the list of four task competencies. Throughout the process, researcher care was given to a faithful representation of Interviewee opinions, values, and preferences.

Study Limitations

An exploratory study like this one introduced certain limitations. First of all, the sample for this research was a convenience sample comprising seven interviewees from one, western, land-grant university. In addition to the small sample size and concentrated location restrictions, the researcher had extensive contact with elementary education majors in a 300-level language arts class and a more limited relationship with

secondary and K-12 pre-service teachers, who spent much of their training within discipline-specific departments. This resulted in a sample more heavily composed of elementary education majors (four K-8 interviewees) with lesser numbers of secondary and K-12 teacher candidates participating (one K-12 and two secondary interviewees). The predominance of elementary education majors may also explain the gender imbalance (six females and one male), since elementary has tended to attract greater numbers of females than males—another limitation of this study. Thus, a closer look at gender differences would represent one avenue for further research.

Because of the constructivist and exploratory nature of this research without a focus on generalizing to a population, these limitations were deemed acceptable for this study. However, subgroups ripe for additional exploration would include secondary pre-service teachers in various majors as well as K-12 teacher candidates. Because of their greater burden to teach more academic and discipline-specific composition to future students, secondary pre-service teachers and their needs for writing support during teacher training should be compared to those of their elementary counterparts. K-12 art, foreign language, and physical education majors might also find in their disciplines very unique writing skill and task proficiency needs. At the time of this writing, P.E. senior capstone projects have tended to be the most difficult to assess at MSU and have received significantly lower grades than their counterparts in other disciplines (Obery & Mohr, 2013).

In addition to the limitations of size, location, and major, this study considered only the opinions of pre-service teachers. By adding to this research ideas and

experiences expressed by other stakeholders—parents, administrators, in-service teachers, teacher training faculty, etc.—a more holistic consensus could be explored and a broader basis established. Finally, this research was focused on writing skill and professionally oriented task proficiencies. Writing processes were not considered here, simply due to limitations of time and resources. However, an examination of writing processes could also benefit teacher-training institutions in determining how they can enable pre-service teachers to attain desired writing proficiency goals during teacher training.

Conclusion

This study was designed as narrative, qualitative research with an exploratory purpose. Thus, the themes generated by the seven pre-service teachers interviewed, while not generalizable, will have added to the newly growing data on pre-service teachers as writers—in this case, pre-service teachers as writers during teacher training. The units of analysis surfacing from this data related to skill and task competencies needed by pre-service teachers during university training and arose from the interview data as well as from research literature. A social constructivist worldview was maintained in this study but influenced by researcher bias toward accountability and by a researcher background of problem-solving in the area of pre-service teacher writing. Seven volunteers from various emphases, experience levels, and writing proficiency levels were accepted in the order of their volunteering. Researcher resources limited the number of interviewees to seven, though the experiences of these seven participants

comprised multi-faceted viewpoints and provided rich, thick descriptions necessary to qualitative studies. Patton (2002) described the back-and-forth process a researcher must experience within the qualitative process in order to compare sources of evidence with researcher expertise (p. 477). Combining student- and literature-generated data with nearly two decades of experience supporting the writing of college-level writers and pre-service teachers allowed inferences to be made regarding the support of writing skill and task competencies crucial to pre-service teachers during teacher training.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine the pre-service teacher as a writer during teacher education and to focus on how to best support needed skill and task proficiency development during the training period. Thus, the results were intended to serve as a foundation for additional research exploring topics such as the following: professional writing competencies necessary to successful in-service teaching careers; specific writing needs of various groups of pre-service teachers; approaches and methodologies that would best provide needed support during teacher training; and how to assess pre-educator professional writing competency.

The interviews in this chapter were scripted carefully to reflect snapshots of the seven participants near the end of spring semester, 2013. While valuable information could be gleaned from these points of view, it was important to consider what Patton (2002) described as “alternative themes, divergent patterns, and rival explanations” (p. 553). Therefore, in the literature review, a variety of theories regarding college-level, career-oriented, and pre-service teacher writing were examined. Perhaps because of four interviewees’ experiences in a recent early literacy class that had targeted common mechanical skill difficulties and because of a researcher background focused on helping pre-service teachers revise and edit their work, a strong emphasis on mechanical skill proficiencies surfaced during the interviews. However, pre-service teachers in current studies also tended to concentrate on their mechanical difficulties (Morgan, 2010; Street,

2003), so this finding was supported by recent research. In order to balance this emphasis, possible negative effects related to overly harsh criticism of mechanics, such as in the example below, were also reported by this research.

For some, a pivotal moment came when they earned a certain grade on a paper. For Natalie, it was when she earned a C on an essay about the death of her second-grade friend that she questioned her ability as a writer. She cared deeply about her piece, put her “heart and soul” into it, but her grade “sent her a message.” For Liz, receiving an A– on her first college paper was an experience that “turned the tide” in her sense of self of writer. Other students remembered cringing from seeing “all of those red marks” or “blood” on their papers and felt their marked-up papers were indications of their writing abilities (Morgan, 2010, pp. 356-357).

By describing current research on how negative writing criticism had affected the writer-identities and self-efficacies of pre-service teachers, this study attempted to present both sides of a very complex issue involving accountability and professionalism on the one hand and the need for nurturing positive writer identity and self-efficacy during teacher training on the other. Interviewees, while describing strong values for precise and correct writing also expressed their preferences for positive feedback and how to phrase constructive criticism “in a way that it actually sounds more helpful than it is negative” (Interviewee #2). This study, then, has clearly supported further research into the relationship between upholding standards and developing positive pre-service writer identities.

This chapter presents the findings of this exploratory, narrative research. Case-study research utilized an in-depth interview approach to facilitate examining other individuals’ perspectives (Patton, 2002, p; 341) through purposeful sampling in order to learn about central issues vital to the research (Patton, 2002, p. 46). Individuals

referenced in this study comprised seven pre-service teachers from one land-grant university, representing varying majors, differing degrees of progress through the program, and of varying self-reported writing competencies. Invited from three education courses to join the study, they were then accepted in the order they volunteered until the quota reached resource limitations. Interviews were conducted in case-study fashion in that each participant was invited to tell his or her writing story and speak freely about personal writing history and goals for the future—though direction was also provided by the eleven interview questions (Appendix A). Because of researcher bias in favor of educator accountability and due to a past history of problem solving for pre-service teacher writing, researcher participation did affect some questions. From these open-ended interviews surfaced key words and phrases that formed the basis for eight themes analyzed in this research through inductive analysis, which “begins with specific observations and builds toward general patterns” (Patton, 2002, p. 56). However, this analysis was modified through comparisons with themes common across a literature review of pre-service teacher writing, in-service educator composition, college-level writing, and writing among four university-level disciplines of study. Thus, the research questions addressed in this study were as follows:

1. How do writing skill and task competences identified by pre-service teacher perceptions compare to what is known by researchers?
2. What can teacher training institutions glean from current research and pre-service teacher perceptions regarding the support of writing skills and task competencies during teacher training?

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 provide a succinct summary of the skill and task competency categories that surfaced from key words and phrases generated by the interviewees and/or, accompanied by references in research literature. Once established as major themes, these proficiencies formed the basis for answering both of the above research questions.

Table 4.1. Writing Skill Competency Categories and Sub-categories

Mechanical	Cognitive	Organizational	Social
Correct grammar and spelling (Acker & Halasek, 2008; Student interviews, 2013; Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006)	Content-specific Writing/prof expertise (Student interviews, 2013; Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990)	Logical organization (Student interviews, 2013; Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990)	Writing text understandable to readers (Student interviews,; Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006)
Formatting (Student interviews, 2013)	Critically analyzing information and applying it (Student Interviews; Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990)	Thoroughly developing and supporting concepts (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990)	Writing text sensitive to readers (Sternglass, 1997)
Varying writing structures (Student interviews, 2013)		Transitions (Student interviews, 2013; Walvoord & McCarthy)	Making writing interesting (Susi, 1984)
Vocabulary (Student interviews, 2013; Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990)			Ideas—own voice (Student interviews, 2013; Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006)

Table 4.2. Writing Task Competency Categories and Sub-categories

Professional	Communicative	Instructional	Personal
Writing for other professionals (Frager, 1994, p. 275; Student Interviews)	Email communication (Frager, 1994; Student Interviews)	Instructions for students (Frager, 1994; Student Interviews)	Writing novels and stories (Student Interviews; Susi, 1984)
Professional Competence— modeling (Frager, 1994; Student interviews, 2013)	Communication home to parents (Frager, 1994, p. 275; Student interviews, 2013)	General writing instruction (Frager, 1994; Adger, Snow & Christian, 2003; Student Interviews)	Introspective writing (Susi, 1984)
Planning—(Frager, 1994; Student Interviews)		Discipline-specific writing (Student Interviews; Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990)	
Presentations— (Frager, 1994)		Evaluating writing (Student Interviews; Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006)	
Writing Grants (Student interviews, 2013)		Written feedback (Sternglass, 1997; Student Interviews)	
Professional advancement (Frager, 1994 p. 276)		Writing role model for students (Frager, 1994; Student Interviews)	

The organization of this chapter was designed to follow what Yin has entitled a “question-and-answer format” (2004, ch. 6) and structured in eight sections. The first seven sections were based on the seven in-depth interviews and summarized the experiences, values, and opinions of each participant separately. An eighth section presented cross-case analysis data among the seven participants and also compared it with information from the research literature surveyed for this study. Although Patton (2002) described two kinds of qualitative reporting in which case analyses could be

blended and presented according to “variations in common answers” (p. 438), in this case, because the researcher became deeply immersed in each pre-service teacher’s experience as a separate unit, the choice was made to present all seven as separate case studies followed by cross-case and comparative analyses.

As revealed in research literature, pre-service teachers as writers have been shown to be at times, “unsure of themselves because they lacked...background knowledge in the area of writing” (Colby & Stapleton, 2006, p. 365) or as writers who desired to “share ideas with the world” (Morgan, 2010, p. 363) but who may have lacked the confidence to do so (Morgan, 2010, p. 363). In addition, pre-service teachers have mentioned “large gaps in their writing instruction” (Morgan, 2010, p. 362), as well as “issues with grammar, spelling, and punctuation as areas of difficulty or concern” (Morgan, 2010, p. 356). At the same time, pre-service teachers as writers have also expressed a value for the writing process and “...often identified key understandings about teaching writing as important to their learning. From their experiences, they discovered or rediscovered the process writing tenets of choice in topic and writing regularly” (Morgan, 2010, p. 362). Likewise, the pre-service teachers featured as writers for this study freely expressed their positive and negative experiences with writing as well as their hopes and goals for writing development during teacher training in their quest to become professional educators.

Section 1: Interviewee #1

Interviewee #1, a junior in elementary education, was one of four contributors who had recently completed the same junior-level, early literacy class required for elementary education majors—a course focused on early K-5 literacy but also known for its emphasis on quality writing and its “writing tips” component. Throughout this chapter, this early literacy class is designated, EDU XXX. The effect of the class can be sensed in the following quote:

I was always like, good enough to make it through until I hit college...but they never really pushed me very far until EDU XXX...my writing I felt like has shot through the roof with just like the skills and techniques I use in my writing now. But I feel like it's something I'm actually fairly good at now or progressing towards. But before it was never a focus.

Interviewee #1 further detailed her growing optimism regarding writing when she was asked to describe her strong points as a writer, which in her mind could be summarized as:

...organizing it and making it flow better. Before I could organize what I was saying but it was always really chunky, kind of, but now I feel like I can kind of have transitions that will flow better for ideas and I think it's more interesting for the reader now....what I'm writing.

This particular portrait of her writing strengths revealed a growing degree of confidence in her ability to organize and connect concepts. Her experience aligned with Street's (2003) study, which documented how writer confidence affected pre-service teacher performance during student teaching. Interestingly, during member-checking, this particular participant, when responding to the themes developed from interview data, stated: “Looks extremely accurate to me especially being in the heart of student

teaching!” (2014). Such a statement would tend to support Street’s (2003) opinion that positive writing experiences influenced the student teaching process. On the other hand, while structure and flow in her writing were sources of satisfaction for this participant, her greatest frustrations also related to organizational aspects of composition: “I feel like the body’s strong, but my introductions and conclusions could definitely be more...they could tie everything together better.” This focus on organization, representing both Interviewee #1’s strongest and weakest writing attributes, highlighted the emphasis that many of the respondents placed on organizational writing skills.

In addition to her focus on organization, Interviewee #1 expressed another, very audience-centered, purpose—that her writing could be “more interesting for the reader.” This became a theme she revisited later in the interview when she recounted her earlier college-level writing, “I always wrote noun/verb, noun/verb...didn’t really care. I’m sure my teachers were so bored reading my papers.” (Underlining added for emphasis.) This audience-centered mindset represented one of the hallmarks of university-level writing, as documented by Sullivan and Tinberg (2006), and would appear to be an important skill development juncture for preparing to communicate alike with children, parents, and professional colleagues. As previewed by this teacher candidate’s statement about making her writing interesting to professors, concern for future pupils permeated her comments about a desire for professional writing proficiency. For her, demonstrating correct mechanics surfaced specifically as a responsibility she felt toward her future classroom of students. Thus, when she considered modeling for students, she stated, “We have to have a high standard because they’ll reach for that, but if we’re spelling words

incorrectly or improper grammar, mixing up ‘affect’ and ‘effect,’ we’re not setting a standard for them.”

In fact, this individual had set for herself (and, in general, for pre-service teachers) a standard of quality writing “that an English major would have” –revealing that this teacher candidate took her writing responsibilities very seriously. Not only did she feel a weighty obligation for future students under her tutelage, but she stated as well that writing “should matter, just ‘cause you’re writing letters to a principal, to a parent....” Even a science teacher should be held to a standard, she suggested, as science instructors would be “writing reports, and, granted, it’s a little different type of writing but it needs to kind of have the same ideas.”

Despite this individual’s positive words about her new-found writing skills gained from the 300-level language arts education course, when asked how she would feel if asked to do an on-the-spot writing sample for a job interview, the bulk of her worries seemed focused on mechanics: “I would feel very nervous and unprepared....I don’t feel like I’m a good on-the-spot writer just because my spelling isn’t awesome and, grammatically, I like to go back and change things or fix things.”

Not surprisingly, given her interest in mechanically improving her papers, this student expressed a wish for increased writing instruction and feedback throughout her teacher training program. During the course of the interview, she described her desire to add a greater focus on mechanics to emphasis on content when writing papers for education courses:

Writing was never a focus. We were always focused on our subject, and they’d have us write papers, but nobody ever took the time to try to

progress that part of our skills...until this year, and still I have teachers where I write a paper and they won't say much about it. They'll say, "You need to fix grammatical things"...but they don't really specifically say what.

Her desire for an increased level of writing support during teacher training resurfaced throughout the interview and encompassed a variety of professional goals, including being responsible to students, parents, and other professionals. However, this interviewee also appeared to be gaining a sense of personal pride in her advancing professional writing skills, "If you'd have asked me like a year ago, I would not have said that...But now I'm kind of...appreciating the importance of writing...more after I'm realizing what good writing is." Yet, her realization of "what good writing is" also forged in her thinking an echo of regret:

We're reaching towards like being quality professional teachers, and I feel like we should have been pushed harder in our writing...it took me 'til my second semester junior year to finally realize what good writing was...I've spent two and a half years of writing bad papers in college.

Notwithstanding a sense of lost opportunity regarding past university-level writing, this participant appeared, overall, to have an optimistic outlook on her professional writing future. Having made progress in the area of organization, she seemed ready to continue as she had begun in the early literacy class. This attitude also echoed Street's research, in which teacher candidates with stronger writing identities often referred back to a former teacher or class who had provided them a supportive environment in which they could "take risks and still feel successful" (2003, p. 44).

Interviewee #1 generated a number of themes, which mirrored information gleaned from the literature review as well as common to other interviewees. Strongly

expressed were pride in her writing accomplishments; a sense of responsibility toward students, parents, and other professionals in the context of her future career; regret over not having received more writing instruction, feedback, and support during teacher training; and a commitment to very high professional writing standards. As to how her teaching university could best help her attain the high standards she desired, she had this to say:

I think they need a class actually focused on writing, and...ways to improve it, and I don't know where they'd put that, but they need to put it somewhere in the program...and have other teachers at higher levels hold us to that standard after that class was taken.

Interestingly, her statement was strongly reminiscent of work done in the area of career writing training (Bridgeman & Carlson, 1984; Epstein, 1999) that documented a need for compositional skill and task development to continue throughout a course of study, rather than concentrated in one, freshman writing class at the outset of a university career. A single freshman writing course was inadequate to train professionals to write in their fields, according to these researchers as well as many of the students interviewed.

Specific skill competencies mentioned by this teacher candidate included organizational, social (not boring students or teachers), and mechanical skill competencies. Cognitive competencies were not obviously featured during this interview. Task competencies described included communicative (letters to parents), instructional, and professional task proficiencies. Personal writing task competencies did not clearly surface.

Section Two: Interviewee #2

Through the course of her interview session, resourcefulness and creativity were qualities characterizing Interviewee #2. A freshman interested in secondary social studies, Interviewee #2 admitted to learning disabilities in the areas of reading and writing. “I couldn’t write diddly squat in the beginning,” she confessed. However, her self-described challenges were accompanied by a duo of very positive characteristics. First of all, despite writing difficulties, this individual was deeply involved in personal, creative writing: “...I love writing in general. I carry a notebook with me almost anywhere, and I write novels. So, I, wherever I go, I have one of my novels with me....I’m very creative, I have to say, that that would be my strong point.”

Personal writing had been shown by some studies (Frager, 1994; Susi, 1984) to have created empathy in teachers for the struggles students experience in the composition process and to develop teacher self-identity as a writer (Frank, 2003). Moreover, Frager (1994) discussed how teacher-writer identities, both positive and negative, might be passed on to students, and Street (2003) recorded how attitudes about and experiences with writing affected the student teaching experiences of five teacher candidates.

In addition to using writing as a means of self-expression, this early education major was already developing multiple strategies to support her self-reported disabilities in the area of writing. Mentioned as beneficial to her struggles with mechanics and organization were “The Barton Reading Program” (which she had utilized in middle school); extensive reliance on the spell-check and grammar features of Microsoft Word; the APA website put out by Purdue University; “Easy Bib”; the writing and advising

centers at her university; having others edit her work, and, perhaps most interestingly, her own ear: "... I always print it off in Courier and then read it out loud, and when I read things out loud, I tend to catch a lot more of the flow issues."

Notwithstanding the many resources she had collected, this participant admitted almost immediately when telling her writing story that spelling, grammar, and "where commas go" were issues that continually affected her writing. In addition, she described issues with APA formatting, which she termed as "totally foreign to me." Her history spoke of struggles with these difficulties:

Spelling is definitely an issue writing. I never liked writing on the board in class because of that....My skills of, like, on-the-spot writing actual...and making it sound halfway decent aren't really quite there yet. That was my problem with the SAT and the ACT.

On the other hand, Interviewee #2 expressed confidence regarding writing for specific audiences due to one high school opportunity: "I wrote thirty-five scholarships over my senior year. It was my job, uh, so I learned the, writing to the audience tactics to a tee." Her experience seemed especially significant in light of Sternglass's (1997) and Walvoord and McCarthys' (1990) emphases on providing university writers authentic, meaningful tasks in order to effectively develop college- and career-level skills. The power of these real-life writing experiences was later echoed in Interviewee #2's mature philosophy regarding professional audience awareness when engaged in communicative tasks:

...how to write a professional letter...to a parent, you know, without sounding like a complete nut or snob is something that you need to know. And, writing something also for a student that doesn't make it look like this was written by a CEO....

Because of her interest in becoming a social studies teacher, this interviewee related writing mechanics to the content of her discipline, “Well, obviously, you’re going to need to spell names and dates, and things like that correct [sic].... It’s huge, especially if you misspell like Nelson Mandela’s name, you know.” These issues appeared to loom large in her mind, no doubt as a result of the writing history presented earlier. Perhaps because of these experiences, this participant talked at length about writing feedback—how to provide, use, and accept it:

My motto for really anything is your confidence level will rise if you get positive feedback, and to get positive feedback you kind of have to...practice...something to get positive feedback on.... Like constructive criticism is technically negative feedback, but you phrase it in a way that it actually sounds more helpful than it is negative. So, I think that’s the biggest thing...so that the negative sounds more like a constructive criticism than it does, “You’re doing something bad.” You know, and I think that really...that’s the thing as a teacher you need to learn to do. And, to learn how to take it, is also an important thing too.

In brief, Interviewee #2 painted a picture of a teacher candidate with strengths in creative, personal writing and in resourcefulness. These were made even more significant by her very real, self-reported difficulties with mechanics and organization—difficulties which made her keenly aware of coming challenges in her chosen content area, such as a demand for precise spelling and detail. As a result, positive, significant feedback was very important to this freshman as she considered advancing through years of teacher training.

Themes that specifically arose in this interview included skill competencies in mechanics, organization, and social writing aspects, with no compelling references to cognitive skill competencies. Task proficiencies that loomed large in this interviewee’s

mind were professional, communicative, and instructional task competencies. Additionally, this was one of only three interviewees who specifically mentioned a value for personal writing, though she did issue one disclaimer: “I’m very creative, I have to say, that that would be my strong point. I approach anything from a different angle and that’s not always the best thing...” Her hesitance here suggests her fear that the creative side of her writing might be somewhat of less value than certain other strengths during her program of teacher training—a reminder that Susi’s (1984), Frager’s (1994), and Frank’s (2003) work on positive teacher identities and how these can be enhanced through personal writing might be appropriately integrated during her career preparation. Street’s (2003) participants recounted writing histories rife with negative experiences that had undermined their writing confidence; yet, most of them also remembered a teacher or a class that had combined effective instruction, powerful feedback, and confidence building in such a combination as to strengthen their identities as writers.

Section 3: Interviewee #3

“I’m really against grammar, honestly. I figure if you understand someone...then it’s fine.” This quote, provided by Interviewee #3, a junior in elementary education, set the stage for a very lively conference about this individual’s writing experiences and values. Despite her self-described dislike of grammar, she quickly acknowledged that “as an elementary teacher, I have to...forget that, and just try to make myself believe that you have to be grammatically correct.” The recognition that her personal values needed to

yield to the mandates of her chosen profession surfaced and resurfaced through the interview:

I'm horrible with grammar in my daily life talking...like, "me and him," or, like, saying "good" instead of "well." But, in writing, I wouldn't want to use those things 'cause my aunt is a teacher, and she's had other teachers complain to her because she needs to use her grammar correctly in the classroom....I mean, that's what you're there...I guess, is to teach the right way. And if a parent or principal sees you writing incorrectly, they're going to know that you don't understand the concepts that you need to be teaching yourself. So, writing professionally...writing correctly, shows that you understand what you're teaching and that you're qualified.

During the course of the interview, this participant continually painted a picture of herself as a rather unmotivated academic writer, who disliked writing, avoided editing, often wrote papers the night before they were due, and who even "reused a paper from my freshman year of high school...for WRIT 101." In addition, she was one of two interviewees to create a distinction between the pleasures of personal writing and what appeared to her to be the drudgeries of academic writing. By noting this transition, she was able to pinpoint the autobiographical period during which she began to experience a marked disinterest in writing:

I remember writing papers in like seventh, eighth, grade. I really liked writing short stories....We'd have journal time. I really liked that, I guess. Because they'd tell you [that] you could write whatever you wanted, so I would really write whatever I wanted—just random stuff....I was like, "if you're going to tell me that, then I'm going to go for it." And I never liked research papers. I liked...in maybe seventh grade...I remember doing one, like my first research paper. That was a lot of fun. But, then when I got into high school, I couldn't stand those.

Apparently, the increasing sense of boredom this participant found in the academic writing process began to result in writing avoidance strategies. Admitting to

“riding my bike home during lunch the days a paper was due” in order to whip out a research assignment, she also acknowledged quickly scanning for quotes that “my teacher would...be emotionally drawn to,” disregarding the source itself, and then writing “a good paper around the quotes.” At this point in the interview, after a second of thought, she completed the history by stating, “It worked, but I mean...probably wasn’t a good thing to do.”

Such a response, in this case to a sense of boredom, was once again reminiscent of Kellogg’s (1994), comments about satisficing, or reducing a writing task to the components most necessary to meet minimum requirements. One had the sense that this pre-service teacher/writer was still economizing effort and compromising results, “Like...our research paper for this class, I started it the night before. I was in the library from...7:00 to...1:30 in the morning.” That these strategies had “worked” for her perhaps lay in what she termed to be one of her greatest writing strengths, “I’m probably good at writing a first draft the first time and not having to go back and edit it too much.” On the other hand, this self-reported strength also became a factor in her, perhaps, settling for an outcome that did not necessarily reflect her potential to achieve, as she admitted, “usually I don’t edit it, so if I did, it’d probably be better.” However, this participant did mention one island in her sea of unmotivated, reluctant writing, though the experience was, apparently, short lived. This experience provided a powerful rationale for her tendency to satisfice the writing process, yet also disclosed elements effective in inspiring motivation:

...in high school, my first two years, I had a teacher who really cared, so I did good writing for that class. Then my senior year, like, I had a teacher

who just gave you good grades, so I just did what I needed to get by...on my senior project and stuff with my big paper because the topic didn't really interest me.

After further thought on the topic, she did admit to enjoying writing opinion papers for a science class because "I care about arguing different ways politically and stuff."

Moreover, now in her junior year of study and approaching her practicum and student teaching experiences as well as a career in classroom teaching, she seemed even more to be reconsidering motivation for writing. Her lack of interest, due to "just an idea in my head that I don't like it," was now being confronted headlong by a sense of professional responsibility:

A lot of parents and other teachers aren't going to want kids to be taught the wrong way to say things...and a lot of people get offended with wrong, incorrect grammar....I mean, some people get really bothered by that, so I kind of have to change to fit into the career I'm going into.

In addition to concern with grammar and other mechanics, Interviewee #3 was beginning to express a sense of audience awareness awakened by her approaching career responsibilities; the adjective "purposeful" stood out in the following quote as a motivational adjective lacking in her description of earlier writing experiences:

I guess when I'm writing to parents or writing a lesson, or writing to another teacher or something, my expectations are higher because it's actually purposeful. It's going to make an impact. So, I mean, I don't want to sound stupid, and I want to get my point across clearly.

Adding to her concern over others understanding her writing, Interviewee #3 culminated her thoughts on professional motivation by noting that her career was about to place her written communications under exacting scrutiny:

If a parent or principal sees you writing incorrectly, they're [sic] going to know that you don't understand the concepts that you need to be teaching yourself. So, writing professionally...writing correctly shows that you understand what you're teaching and that you're qualified.

When asked what her teacher training program had contributed to her professional writing preparation, she expressed little value gained from her freshman composition course, "WRIT 101, nothing!" However, she acknowledged the benefits of the discipline-specific writing practice done in her political science class, "not because of what I was taught, just 'cause of writing on my own trying to make a good argument." Likewise, she mentioned the early literacy class referenced by three other interviewees: "This is the only class where I've probably really learned anything else about writing." After statements such as, "I don't like writing," and "I'm really against grammar, honestly," this admittance appeared startling. That this teacher candidate was moving beyond an earlier lack of motivation and looking to the future provided a unique perspective into the mind of pre-service teachers as they transition into the role of professional educators and begin to anticipate responsibilities involving their facility with written communication.

Writing skill competency themes that surfaced from this interview included mechanics—especially grammar—social proficiencies, and organizational abilities (mostly regarding structuring earlier essays around isolated quotations). In addition, cognitive competencies were mentioned, though only within the confines of scientific and political debate—activities that this participant found particularly motivating (as opposed to research paper writing). That these endeavors specifically inspired her raised the possibility that increased cognitive rigor in writing assignments, had it been implemented

consistently, may have proved a source of motivation for this pre-service teacher. This concept was reminiscent, once again, of Sternglass's (1997) assertion that university students should be immediately inducted into the critical thinking writing rigors of their chosen majors upon entrance into those programs. Task proficiencies mentioned by this pre-service teacher included personal, professional, and instructional activities with one, brief mention of writing to parents (a communicative task).

Section 4: Interview #4

Interviewee #4 had advanced entirely through her program of study—having just completed her student teaching experience and anticipating graduation with an elementary education degree within a few days following the interview. Like Interviewees #1 and #3, this participant, although a year further in the program, nevertheless still placed a high value on the 300-level, language arts course with its emphasis on writing:

It probably wasn't until seventh grade where I actually learned grammar...or the structure of sentences...things like that, and so that really put me behind and made it difficult for me all through high school and through college, but they didn't really look at the nit-picky things...the little things....It wasn't until last semester, when I had [the early literacy] class, that I actually got instruction that was worthwhile. And, without that, I don't think I'd be getting chosen for interviews and been prepared enough to go out professionally and apply for jobs.

When asked, this interviewee proclaimed her primary writing need to be increased confidence, "...just being more confident in myself, I think, is the biggest thing." Interestingly, her confidence had apparently decreased somewhat as a result of the 300-level language arts course: "Before taking the class I thought I was just fine. It was

not a big deal because all of my papers, anything I wrote...A, A, A. No problem, until I got in there [early literacy class] and really got to the...heart of the matter with my writing.”

This interviewee’s admission of earlier “false” confidence in her writing competency echoed Bandura’s (1978) statement that “expectation alone will not produce desired performance if the component capabilities are lacking” (p. 142). Her previous “no big deal” attitude, like Bandura’s “expectation alone” (p. 142) was the result, she expressed during the interview, of not being held to a high standard of writing quality. However, her newfound confidence, built on the advancing competency begun in the language arts course, allowed her to be “chosen for interviews” and “apply for jobs” and indicated the development of a self-efficacy adequately supported by Bandura’s (1978) “component capabilities” (p. 142).

As for writing strengths, Interviewee #4 was one of two participants (the other being Interviewee #7) who named as a particular strength the skill of creating variety in her sentence-level writing, “I’m very good at being able to vary sentences...and not repeating myself...using the same words over and over again. Just the basics.” The fact that only two of the most experienced writer-interviewees mentioned this skill might suggest that, while sentence variation might be a valued ability for teachers, it, perhaps, represented an advanced skill used in situations demanding more exacting writing—at least in the minds of these pre-service teachers.

Overall, this interviewee seemed pleased with her progress in writing skills and expressed qualified confidence in her writing abilities. When asked how she would feel

if she were required to complete an on-the-spot writing sample for a job interview, her answer illustrated this guarded self-assurance and growing self-efficacy: “My stomach would get into knots probably. Um, I would try my best to display all of my skills in that writing sample.”

Like other interviewees, this participant cited concern regarding parental criticism of mechanical imperfections in educator writing, “I want to be able to make sure that when I’m sending home like a newsletter or anything to parents that it is written properly. There aren’t simple spelling mistakes or grammar errors—things like that.” On a related note, this far-thinking participant had similar goals relative to written communication with other professionals: “I want to be able...when I’m speaking with my colleagues even...writing anything, writing grants, I want to be able to have enough confidence in myself to write something properly and know that this is great quality work.”

Her advanced experience (having just completed student teaching) gave her a unique window into professional writing tasks that some of her fellow participants had not yet seen, and those experiences appeared to have strengthened her personal writing standards:

I don’t think there should be different expectations. Because no matter what, I mean, you might be a P.E. teacher and you need to write a grant for new gym equipment. I think you should be held to that same expectation as an everyday kindergarten teacher sending home newsletters or whatever that might be. You’re going to use writing one way or another, and I guess I didn’t really realize that...until later on. Well, last semester, basically. Or, even now with student teaching, I see it more.

This perspective seemed reminiscent of Walvoord and McCarthy’s (1990) emphasis on a professional-in-training approach to career-oriented writing development

at the university level, an approach enhanced by the extended in-school experiences of student teaching. Likewise, Colby and Stapleton (2010) described a program in which pre-service teachers took an intensive language arts course while concurrently teaching writers' workshops in local schools. They observed advantages for students such as helping in their "...transitioning from courses that offer little differentiation of instruction to courses in which opportunities exist for preservice teachers to receive context specific feedback based on their teaching performance in authentic situations" (p. 372). Within the context of this practicum-coursework combination, students received training, opportunities for practice, and feedback from "a variety of sources" (Colby & Stapleton, 2010, p. 373)—all aspects which strengthened a successful experience for these pre-service teachers and which have implications for authentic, writing-based activities during teacher training.

Also like Interviewee #1, this participant was desirous of an increased writing instruction and feedback process throughout the teacher training program. This particular opinion tended to be most prominent among those interviewees who had recently completed the commonly experienced early literacy class.

I thought I was doing great, and then I take EDU XXX, and it amazed me how, not terrible my writing was, but how much it really could be improved. And I really wish that I would have started at a younger stage in the game. Starting with those skills. Building those skills. Being expected to know them and use them and apply them....Now, I'm just going out into real world and I want more time with them, more feedback to make sure that I have them in place. I didn't have that in my lower classes.

The portrait emerging from the comments of Interviewee #4 portrayed more confidence than expressed by Interviewees #1 and #2. Interestingly, this participant's

positive experiences with writing and the self-assurance she had gained appeared to have increased her desire for more and deeper instruction, practice, and feedback. Her appetite for learning was not yet satisfied, perhaps a sign that her teacher training in the area of writing skill and task competencies had been largely successful. Having just completed student teaching and looking forward to a career, this participant cast one final glance backward:

I would have started my freshman year and had, like, a teacher writing course....I mean, we just...had to submit a resume and cover letter...things like that, but I've never been taught. "What do you put in a cover letter?" I have no idea....We just kind of had to figure it out on our own, submit it, and then my feedback was just kind of, "Yah, looks good. You can change this or that." But, then...I got outside opinions from professionals in the field—principals and teachers and, they changed everything about it.

In this statement, Interviewee #4, once again, expressed value for a kind of professional-in-training approach (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990) to writing instruction and emphasized her personal value for learning composition via assignments that would mirror rigorous, authentic future writing tasks (Enders, 2001; Gallavan, Bowles & Young, 2012; Southard & Clay, 2004; Sternglass, 1997).

Skill competency themes in this interview were very focused on mechanics and included comments related to grammar, punctuation, formatting, spelling, sentence structure, and even sentence variation. Interestingly, even when this participant discussed communicative skill competencies expressed by sending letters home to parents, her concerns were on mechanical errors that might accompany the letters and reach the eyes of her future students' parents. Aligned with her concern over mechanical skill proficiencies was her emphasis on professional tasks—from writing a cover letter and

creating a résumé to grant composition and constructing classroom websites. Given her level of experience with day-to-day classroom activities, these emphases on mechanical skill competencies and their place in allowing her to adequately perform professional tasks brought up the possibility that, in the elementary classroom at any rate, these might be the most obvious compositional demands on a novice teacher. Apparently, mechanical concerns remained at the forefront during her student teaching experience, and, if true, this fact could have implications for further research into areas of support most critical for elementary pre-service candidates. Directions for further study, then, not only pointed toward supporting mechanical skill development and professional task training, but also addressing why other areas of writing, such as cognitive skill competencies, might have appeared less of a concern.

Section 5: Interviewee #5

Interviewee #5, a junior in elementary education and the lone male in the interview pool described himself as “street smart” rather than “book smart.” A friendly and personable individual, he also possessed a keen memory for his own writing history—from learning his first letters to the quality of writing instruction he received during high school. His first negative recollections began with a first-grade teacher: “It was her first year ever teaching, and she wasn’t very good at teaching phonics and all that.” When he arrived in third grade, however, his writing experiences took a more positive direction: “I had a teacher who was very good, and...she had to revamp her

whole teaching curriculum that year to catch all the kids up, but then my writing...she flipped all of us around and got us all caught up.”

The vivid descriptions of his writing journey continued through middle and high school:

I got into middle school; I just kind of kept going, but I...hit a peak where I didn't really change my writing at all. And, then, once I got into high school, I had my junior teacher who, man, he was a pain in the butt, but...he did really a good job of teaching me.

This participant's remembrances of writing instruction he had received throughout his K-12 years were so coherent that he even summarized his ruminations: “I struggled at the beginning...I liked it, I struggled, I “vamped” away from it, and then once I got help with it and stuff, I fell in love with writing stories and then, hit a peak, and then stayed there and then went up...and up, even more this year.

More than any other participant, Interviewee #5 related a very cohesive writing history, one that chronicled the many “ups and downs” of his writing career up until his junior year in teacher training. At one point, he looked back ruefully: “...and after taking this class, it's like my first-grade teacher gyped me so bad. But, so it is.”

Like the other elementary education majors interviewed for this study, Interviewee #5 had recently been involved in the 300-level language arts class. While he admitted that it, “it sucks at times,” this participant obviously valued what he was learning:

‘Cause this is the only writing class I've ever taken or anything, that ever touches on writing...but this class I've learned about...appositives, verbals...I think people do that unintentionally when they write sometimes, and they don't format it correctly with commas...but...as far as the XXX class, has been a great...I mean, no one likes writing papers,

obviously, but when I'm doing it, I feel like I've made a great improvement through it...a class like XXX needs to be at the beginning, I think.

In comparison, he stated about his freshman writing class (taken at another college) that it was a "wasteful class" even though the instructor was "a really nice lady." The whole purpose of that class, he surmised, was "to make sure we could write," and his conclusion at the end of the course was "at college, anyone can pretty much write down what they want to say." While this was undoubtedly not the stated purpose of this freshman writing class, his conclusions were simply, "I don't feel like that class was there to prepare me for anything....It was just like, "Oh, you can do it." Pass. And, had it been helpful, I, like, could have been way more prepared."

Not only did Interviewee #5 have a keen memory for writing history, he was able to conceive of composition across a broad spectrum of skill and task competencies. When asked about his writing weak areas, rather than focusing on one particular skill, this participant immediately mentioned challenges in three areas of competency: communicating clearly with his audience, mechanics, and organization.

My weak point is I struggle with getting it onto paper clearly. Like if I have my sentence there... people won't make sense of it....That's my weakest point, is getting it on paper. Punctuation...I still struggle with spelling....but, like, research papers, to a point I can do good, but then there's a point where....I don't know how to tie things together.

This insightful interviewee was also one participant who valued personal writing, describing several forms he had enjoyed over up until that point. Mentioned specifically were "writing comics," authoring "ten-page stories," "writing myself speeches," and "writing...personal stuff." In fact, he appeared puzzled as to why, when in these personal

modes of writing, he felt he could “go forever,” but when confronted with a college-level research paper, he appeared to have difficulty getting going and creating a cohesive work. Nonetheless, he expressed an obvious sense of growing pride and confidence in what he had learned about writing. Based on his advancing understanding of college-level composition, he found himself a bit shocked at writing authored by two friends not in education but attending the same university: “When I read papers that they’re working on, I just sit there, and I’m like, “Oh my gosh!” It drives me nuts knowing...how they do stuff, and...I can only say so much...because they’re not going to comprehend what I’m learning.”

This sense of pride re-echoed during the discussion when this participant was asked how he would feel if required to produce an on-the-spot writing sample for a job interview: “I’d feel pretty comfortable...pretty confident going into it after having what I’ve learned this semester...using the techniques I’ve learned, the writing tips.”

Interviewee #5 had obviously, perhaps because of his “street smarts,” developed a coherent philosophy of writing at the college level. His characterization of writing work in college compared to what he did in high school set forth a very unique perspective:

Getting to college is where they really...like, this class [XXX]...everything has to be precise. And, that’s important. But...it’s not grading to get to a point or improve me....It’s like, they don’t want you to be getting to the point, they want you to have the point, which is a big difference...they’re grading it for being 100% not just 95%.

When asked if anyone had ever helped him make the transition from high-school level writing (which he said was “graded on content”) to college-level writing, Interviewee #5 said, thoughtfully, “No, not really, honestly, not until this year.”

On the topic of college-level writing, he spoke at some length about what he believed would be most helpful, beginning with an in-depth writing class early on in the education program with emphases on vocabulary, word choice, and other writing tips. He also had well developed opinions on the topic of feedback: “I’m a huge person on not looking at negatives so much, but use them to build and look at them...like, you know; you did this; let’s change it, and you’re gonna be even...better than before.”

Of all the pre-service teachers interviewed, this young man held, perhaps, the highest professional writing standards for educators—even to equating correctness in writing to overall trustworthiness:

...that goes as far as permission slips to parents...even field trips. That’s going to be important.... If you want to go on a field trip somewhere, they’re going to feel way more confident in a teacher who sends home a nice letter that really explains everything vs. someone who sends home ...mistakes because little mistakes turn into big mistakes eventually.

The overall picture of himself as a writer painted by Interviewee #5 was one who cheerfully admitted the persistence of writing problems while at the same time demonstrating an increased pride and confidence in his work. Based on his candor and his value for positive vs. negative feedback, he seemed to portray the writing empathy described by Frager (1994) in which writing instructors are “just good enough at writing to know how difficult writing is” (p. 274). At the same time, he held for teachers in general an incredibly high writing standard expressed, not only in the above passage regarding sending letters home to parents, but in his mention of the communicative task proficiency of emailing, which had impressed him because of the volume of written emails produced by one of his former music teachers.

From learning the alphabet to insightful comments about college-level writing and from serving as a writing instructor to sending emails to students, this “street smart” interviewee featured an exceptionally well developed philosophy of writing and of writing instruction. As a result of his sharp memory and ability to analyze experiences, this participant covered a broad range of skill and task competencies during the course of the interview. Skill competencies mentioned included mechanical, organizational, and social. Only cognitive was not specifically emphasized. In addition, task competencies comprised professional proficiencies, instructional, communicative, and even personal writing competencies. Throughout his mention of all these areas of writing, Interviewee #5 held himself and all educators to the very highest standards while also allowing room for imperfections and error.

Section 6: Interviewee #6

A recently graduated senior in K-12 art, Interviewee #6 expressed the most outspoken confidence in her mechanical abilities due to strong family support, including a mom she termed “a really good writer,” a dad described as a “super good writer,” and a sister characterized as “a phenomenal writer.” Her family had apparently jump-started her into a high level of confidence about writing, such as documented in the Draper, Barksdale-Ladd, and Radencich (2000) study of pre-service teachers in which, “The interviewees who perceived themselves as writers identified specific events from home and family” (p. 193). Like these participants from the 2000 study, Interviewee #6 experienced writing success early on in her schooling:

I thought school was super easy, and when I got to high school, and I took some honors classes and...I did essay contests and stuff like that....Having...that little support system...was great, and I feel like...I was writing creatively when I...was supposed to be writing boring....I always tried to give that extra, and...I didn't have to take the intro writing class because of my ACT scores.

A closer look at the sources of this pre-service teacher's confidence revealed specific skill competencies, which she described as “good grammar, good spelling, and good flow,” that she brought from her supportive home life and successful school experiences into her teacher training program. Because the focus of this study was exploratory, rather than experimental, the validity of participant assertions was established through scripting precise quotes, creating true-to-life descriptions, and providing accurate paraphrases, rather than in actually measuring the objectivity of self-reported statements. Thus, there was no way of determining to what degree this interviewee's writing skill matched her self-perceptions, or whether she fell into a category such as Interviewee #4 when that participant stated, “Before taking the class I thought I was just fine.” It should be noted here that Interviewee #6 did not take the 300-level language arts class, as she was in the K-12 program for which it was not a requirement. However, the strong background and successes she described lent support to confident assertions such as, “I mean, I could have been an English teacher just fine.”

This participant also expressed confidence in other skill proficiencies. With assurance, she described authentic voice and her ability to modify it according to the needs of her reading audience by adding “variety in...writing” and making “it sound conversational or, or more formal, whatever voice you want”—a self-assessment of her overall competence in social proficiencies. Another strong area of skill competency

expressed by this participant was organization. When asked how she would feel if required to submit an on-the-spot writing sample for a job interview, she focused almost entirely on an ability to organize her work. Her additional reference to a supportive, even instructive, home environment was notable:

I would feel fine. I mean, I would be totally fine. I would probably do a little bit of... I don't know how that would be structured, but I'm assuming it would be a question and write blah, blah, blah 5 paragraphs or whatever...I would probably do a little...scratch sheet-paper like what do I want to talk about? And then I'd make sure it was structured...talk about it, support it, and then, and then tell them what you told them. That's what my dad always says. "Tell 'em what you're going to tell 'em. Tell 'em. Tell 'em what you told 'em.

On the other hand, while expressing strong self-efficacy in using the mechanical and organizational task skills of "good grammar, good spelling, good flow" in pre-service teacher writing, she was one of the few who made reference to a cognitive skill competency, though she described it as a deficit and appeared to have some difficulty recognizing this skill as a writing trait at all:

I kind of struggled with, like, the art history connections and stuff...in my art history classes, I got B's rather than my normal A. So, I struggled with that, but it wasn't my writing skills; it was my art history connections and all that stuff, so that added into it was tough.

This particular statement, when combined with the general lack of reference to cognitive skills expressed by other interviewees, seemed to lend credence to Morgan's (2010) findings regarding pre-service teachers' negative self-perceptions about writing focusing primarily on mechanics:

Eighteen preservice teachers specifically mentioned issues with grammar, spelling, and punctuation as areas of difficulty or concern. In addition, they identified difficulties such as organization, creativity, awkward

sentences, run on fragments, wordiness, and writing, neatness, and lack of an extensive vocabulary (p. 356).

In Morgan's (2010) study as well, participants focused on elements of mechanics and organization as problematic; thus, cognitive skill proficiencies appeared relatively unconnected with writing skills in these pre-service teachers' minds, perhaps due to negative editing experiences related to mechanics: "...students remembered cringing from seeing 'all of those red marks' or 'blood' on their papers and felt their marked-up papers were indications of their writing abilities" (p. 357). The most common reference to cognitive skill proficiencies in most of the 2013 interviews related to generating and utilizing ideas, such as this statement from Interviewee #6: "I feel like I can take what's in my head, put it on paper." Whether these statements related to cognitive skills or whether these "ideas" were more closely aligned with creating authentic voice was not clear in the context of this research, as these references were vague and not elaborated. However, having "ideas" was highly valued as a strong writing ability by several interviewees.

On the topic of communicative task competencies, Interviewee #6 expressed clear views about writing based on a certain specific experience from student teaching:

During my student teaching I got an email from a student's parent...she had been gone...missed a lot of stuff....She just really wanted to get her stuff together before she got back to school, so I emailed her back, and I was stressed. I was, like, "Oh, this is my first home/school conversation," So...it was a short email, but I made sure to be professional...So, I, I felt fine. I felt good. I was like, "O.K. I'm going to be professional."

While email did not surface frequently through the interviews, two participants did mention it as significant to professional standards for writing competencies. Draper,

Barksdale-ladd, and Radencich (2000) described a similar, though more pronounced, finding:

These preservice teachers had not considered lists, letters, email messages, personal notes, or thank you notes to be a part of their writing habits. Their implied definitions of writing included only academic writing and narrative or journal writing....It was obvious that these students had not yet looked at the complete genre of writing (p. 196).

Other writing task competencies mentioned by Interviewee #6 included instructional ones, such as writing on the board, which this participant related to mechanical skill proficiencies: “If you’re up on the board, you know, writing about something...and you have...misspelling, the kids are going to look....” However, this interviewee also issued a disclaimer, “You can still be a great teacher without, without having all those little things about writing, you know.” Along the same lines, Interviewee #2 had also expressed great concern about standing in front of students and writing on the board: “Spelling is definitely an issue writing. I never liked writing on the board in class because of that.” Interviewees #6 and #2 were also two participants who specifically mentioned the value of vocabulary (though in the case of Interviewee #2, this reference occurred in the context of concern with spelling). Because Interviewees #2 and #6 represented two of the three participants enrolled in content-specific majors, their focus on vocabulary could suggest a stronger emphasis on discipline-related terminology in K-12 and secondary settings than in elementary situations. In her discussion, Interviewee #6 used the phrase “terminology for art” and seemed to equate it with “explaining the concepts,” though this more likely related to cognitive competency—a possibility further supported by her reference to the Common Core Standards:

I think it's important, especially when you bring in the terminology for art...you know, explaining concepts...I think it's, I think it's important that kids know how to write, and there's this whole thing about writing...writing about art and reading about art that they're bringing in with the whole Common Core, so I think that's wonderful.

Interviewee #6 also represented the lone participant to reference lesson planning, which Frager (1994) also documented as an important task mentioned by his in-service teacher group of "Practical Writers" (p. 276). In the case of this pre-service teacher participant, her connection between writing and lesson planning resulted from the influence of a specific art methods instructor, who had also incorporated the personal task of journaling into the course. In these assignments, the focus had moved away from mechanics and was more closely connected with content and an eventual audience of classroom students:

I loved her style of checking through our...lesson plans—not thinking about essay writing anymore, just like lesson plans and daily things...like we did little journals....There was a...less formal style, and I feel like that supported what I was thinking...so she was all about, 'Does this make sense?' And I feel like that kind of was up to my standards too. I wanted her to look at the lesson—not did I correctly write the sentence.

Perhaps because of her self-reported writing competency and confidence, Interviewee #6 seemed to be slowly developing a focus on proficiency in the area of cognitive skills, though she separated "art connections and stuff" from the act of writing itself. No doubt, emphases inherent in her K-12 field also contributed to her concern with critical thinking processes. Her difficulties with "art connections and stuff," as well as an enjoyment of her art instructor's focus on looking at lesson content and clarity rather than at sentence structure, suggested that this writer felt ready for development in the cognitive skill competency area. Ideas provided by this participant for pre-service

teacher writing support included, interestingly, the concept of an assigned writing advisor who would provide personalized and positive writing feedback, “kind of on an individual, two-person relationship-type thing like, ‘Hey, you did a really nice job on that.’”

Overall, this interviewee expressed positive experiences during the course of her K-12 program: “I’ve had really...compassionate, caring professors, who are like, ‘Hey, if you need help, come see me.’” Very likely, these helpful and trusting relationships may have sparked her idea for a one-on-one, mentoring approach to supporting pre-service teacher writing during university training.

In interview #6, all skill study competency themes were at least mentioned by the participant, including: mechanical, organizational, cognitive, and social themes (expressed by her concern that her written work would “make sense” to a reader). She contributed, also, a variety of task proficiencies in the areas of professional writing proficiency—largely in terms of the high professional standards she frequently mentioned as important for pre-service and in-service teacher composition—as well as in her discussions of communicative and instructional proficiencies, including both emails and actual instruction of art terminology and concepts. Personal task competency was also touched upon as part of her art methods journaling requirements. Her broad experience throughout an entire K-12 art program as well as a compositionally supportive home environment and successful school experiences had apparently allowed this pre-service teacher to contemplate an entire spectrum of writing skill and task competencies that seemed important to her during teacher training.

Section 7: Interviewee #7

Participant #7, the last contributor to be reported for this study, was a junior in secondary education/English at the time of her interview. Another recipient of a rich home environment in which the father was a writer and editor for his town newspaper, this accomplished young lady has since gone on to receive recognition for her undergraduate research, to win an “outstanding senior” award, and to gain acceptance into graduate school. Thus, her writing abilities and overall scholarship have been well documented. Her writing history began with rich descriptions of her how deeply she enjoyed personal writing as a child:

I remember when I was in second grade, I started reading the *Babysitters' Club* books, and then, once I started reading them, I wanted to write my own version, and so, when [my brother and sister] would play outside, I would stay inside and write my own *Babysitters' Club* books. My parents thought I might need counseling or something! (*Laughter*)...But...then I got started writing lots of interesting stories, or I would just write stories in my head, but not write them down. I'd always do that for fun.

Of note in her experience was the close connection she felt between reading and writing—a relationship also emphasized by Draper, Barksdale-Ladd, and Radencich (2000) in their study on the combined “Reading and Writing Habits of Preservice Teachers,” as well as the designation by Sullivan and Tinberg (2006) of “college-level reader, writer, and thinker” (p. 16) to describe students whose writing had matured to university-quality status. However, the joy and pleasure experienced by this second grader began to diminish as she moved beyond her elementary school experience:

It mostly got extinguished around, like seventh or eighth grade when I had to write academic papers. So probably from like seventh or eighth grade to...last year, I only wrote...academic essays. I did reading for fun, but I

never did any writing for fun...but I still kind of enjoyed the essays although they were...never as fun as the *Babysitters' Club*. And then, just this year in classes I started getting assigned, like, memoirs, and...personal writing for assignments, so that was probably the closest I've gotten to creative writing since second or third grade.

This rich background of personal writing could well have contributed to a strong writer identity, such as documented by Frager's (1994) "Integral Writers" group (p. 276) in which in-service teachers held writing as "a vital part of their identities and lives" (Frager, 1994, p. 276). Similar to the successes experienced by Interviewee #7, Frager's (1994) most advanced teacher-writer group, "cited examples of writing that were well received by others and also new writing projects that were being planned" (p. 276). Regarding successes and writing identity, Interviewee #7 listed her strong points as "vocabulary" and "sentence variation." Only two pre-service teachers mentioned their word choices and sentence variation abilities as strong mechanical skill competencies, and both of these interviewees showed evidence of relatively advanced writing skills. Possibly, as mentioned before, varying sentences could be a relatively advanced mechanical skill competency—at least as shown by the pre-service teachers recorded in this study. Certainly, its priority for emphasis in teacher training has remained a topic for further research.

Her sense of humor surfaced when Interviewee #7 described her writing pitfalls:

Probably my weakest area is...developing one, single topic rather than...I tend to start with one and then...the essay sort of branches out like a tree so then I get like ten new ideas...while I'm actually doing it, which, then, it doesn't end very cohesively. Or...I have a hard time starting with a single point because sometimes I start with many different ideas, and I don't know what I'm trying to say until the end, and then I find the thesis at the end.

One of the valuable contributions to this research made by Interviewee #7 related to her careful separation of task proficiencies. The research surveyed for this study did not specifically explore teacher-oriented writing tasks, though in the context of writer identity for teachers, three task proficiencies were supported in the literature review: professional, instructional, and personal. However, this participant, later corroborated by an expert in the field, clearly made a distinction between these proficiencies and what she termed, “communicative” writing:

Maybe for actually teaching English classes...It would be important to have a knowledge of how to write literary analyses...but I think...[this] is probably a totally different skill set than any kind of writing to communicate...I would say all teachers—elementary to AP English—should...have equal skills at communica...ah...I don't know if there's a word for that....communicative writing...maybe rhetorics...or something. They should be able to write letters to parents as clearly as any other teacher—all the same.

As she continued to explore the differences between these genres of composition, Interviewee #7 was able to make clear statements about communicative writing that could have valuable implications for pre-service teachers during teacher training:

I think probably it's going to be a bigger deal in upper level English courses...that at least you've taken classes and have a knowledge of what is entailed in a literary analysis...if you're going to be teaching that subject, but otherwise I think all teachers need to have the same skills in communication—in speaking and writing.

Musing further on the subject, she observed, “I don't know if communicative writing, specifically, has ever been addressed...as far as like how to structure a letter home to parents...or a memo or anything like that. I haven't learned yet....”

Because of her secondary/English program focus, she was able to compare the emphases on writing and writing instruction between classes taken in the English

department and her education courses. When referencing writing feedback she had received, she made a distinction between the two departments, “In English classes...the structure of essays—that tends to be the feedback. In education classes more about the content...less about the specific structure of the essay.” However, when comparing differences between her university experiences to writing feedback she received in high school, she echoed studies that have lamented a paucity of writing feedback provided at the high school level due to insufficient time in teachers’ schedules (Enders, 2001; Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006):

The major one is that the teachers actually read it in college. I don’t know that my high school teachers/teacher read...any of our papers, so I would just kind of submit anything and it wasn’t ever...critically looked at. Even if teachers did read it, it usually was just a grade and like a “good job” or something.

This particular situation, documented here by Interviewee #7, could have major ramifications to writing support during teacher training, especially if institutions of education have assumed that students entering their programs have been adequately prepared, when actually, their papers were never “critically looked at.”

This final participant continued to speak at length about her university experiences in both the English and education departments. With regard to her personal training in the area of writing, a gap began to surface within her commentary. In her English classes, she suggested, she was taught the organizational skill proficiency of “thoroughly developing one theme in a literary essay” as well as “leaving room for ambiguity,” a cognitive competency of advanced critical thinking. On the other hand, she discovered the focus in her education classes (still within the secondary English track) to

have been how to “engage struggling readers and writers, and...writing with people who are struggling to write,” components to teaching composition also strongly emphasized in Susi’s (1984) research. However, while at the same time expressing value and appreciation for her schooling in both departments, she had this to add about the total experience:

We...read books about writing and talked about the best methods of teaching writing. We did a little bit of personal writing, but it wasn’t related to that and our mechanics as far as I know weren’t corrected...it was all about the ideas. There’s no writing really involved...I don’t know if I’ve ever really written about what we’re...going to be writing about.

Thus, regarding how institutions could better support pre-service teacher writing, Interviewee #7 expressed a desire for more practice: “I think it would be helpful to have...writing, in writing methods classes.” Taking this wish one step further, she referenced the types of authentic writing experiences mentioned by many studies as beneficial during university training (Frager, 1994; Sternglass, 1997; Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990): “...if I had really specific assignments in English education classes about ‘this is what you’re going to write...here’s a variety of writing types that you’ll have to do,’ ...I think that would be helpful.” Nevertheless, as one participant with a strong writing background and early practice with personal writing, she firmly expressed her writing self-identity when asked how she would feel about an on-the-spot writing sample for a job interview: “I’m just more comfortable writing than anything else... I’d feel better than if I had to talk.”

This interviewee also addressed strategies that she had found beneficial during her university experience, particularly for increasing levels of motivation, which presumably

moved her away from Kellogg's (1994) concept of satisficing in composition.

Specifically, for this savvy pre-service teacher, awareness of audience—both an on-site and an on-line audience—provided needed motivation for producing high quality work.

These comments seemed especially important when considering the possible benefits of technology in the writing support of pre-service teachers and pointed to another direction for additional research:

We always did either blogs, google docs or d2l forums where people commented, and...the motivation that people were going to read it...made me take a lot more time and write a lot better, so I think that's the most valuable aspect is giving people an audience online; I think blogs are really good. At least for me...if my friends are going to read it, then I try a lot harder.

She continued her comments regarding peer editing and sharing of work, "I think having your...the classmates read it and give feedback and suggestions so you're not just writing in a little vacuum..." Peer feedback and commentary, then, suggested further research regarding support for high school and university instructors who might lack time to provide needed writing feedback. However, while the value of peer collaboration as part of writing instruction has been well documented by such researchers as Bartholomae and Petrosky (1986), its implementation as part of pre-service teacher writing support during teacher training would seem deserving of particular scrutiny.

Painted on the canvas of the seventh interview was the portrait of a thoughtful pre-service teacher with a strong writer identity, who, in fact, represented herself as more confident when writing than speaking. Although her initial fun with personal writing had dampened over years of schooling, she nevertheless retained a strong value for continued writing as expressed by her wish for increased authentic writing during pre-service

teacher training. As the first researched source to clearly separate communicative writing competencies as separate proficiency skills critical for pre-service teachers, she continued to express insight into the social aspects of writing through strongly valuing feedback from a peer audience. One could wonder, given the overall university successes achieved by this participant, to what degree, if any, strong writing identity, compositional confidence, and proficient skill-levels of written communication had contributed to these triumphs. Certainly, these desirable writing traits alone did not account for her success or for the achievements of other participants in this study. Nevertheless, the benefits of effective writing support during teacher training were well chronicled by the seven interviewees researched.

Section 8: Cross-case and Comparative Analyses

In this section, the four writing skill competencies and four writing task proficiencies that surfaced in current literature have been compared with seven pre-service teacher interviews. The implications of the eight competencies, along with additional themes common across interviewee experiences have been chronicled in Chapter Five. Tables 4.3 through 4.10 have illustrated these skill and task competency themes through specific quotes from pre-service teachers taken from the interviews and by one or two samples from research literature. These tables, however, have not referenced all examples. Because these were documented by the literature review and the summaries of interview material, Tables 4.3 through 4.10 have served, rather, as graphic representations, showing examples of narrative materials generated earlier in this study.

Mechanical Writing Skill Competencies

In Table 4.3 (below) results have been presented for mechanical writing skill competency themes that surfaced throughout the seven interviews. Grammar and punctuation were mentioned by all participants, while six individuals referenced spelling sub-skills—excluding Interviewee #7, a secondary English major. Spelling appeared a prominent theme relative to at least one content area—history. Sentence variation seemed a more advanced mechanical skill and surfaced in only two interviews given by relatively experienced writers. Less experienced writers did not refer to this skill. Formatting, especially moving to APA from whatever requirements had been established during high school was found challenging by three participants. Overall, concerns with mechanics occurred frequently and were strongly emphasized throughout the interviews, mirroring similar results in current research (Frager, 1994; Frank, 2003; Morgan, 2010; Street, 2003). Concerns over mechanical errors generating parental or administrative criticism reflected negative self-writing perceptions generated through the studies on pre-service and in-service teacher-writers whose self-identities as writers had apparently been compromised by harsh criticism of earlier writing attempts—especially in the area of mechanics (Draper, Barksdale-Ladd, & Radencich, 2000; Frank, 2003; Pajares & Johnson, 1994).

Table 4.3. Mechanical Writing Skill Competencies

Mechanical Sub-skills	Pre-service Teacher Quotes	References in Research Literature
Spelling	<p>Spelling is definitely an issue” (Interviewee #2)</p> <p>“I lacked a...lot on vocabulary and spelling abilities” (Interviewee #5).</p>	<p>“Two teachers in this group cited...and fear of misspelling as reasons for their negative feelings about writing” (Frager, 1994, p. 275)</p> <p>Describing a writing component sub-skill: “Correctly spell all words” (Shell, Bruning, & Murphy, 1989).</p>
Grammar and Punctuation	<p>“I could...write something with confidence that it was going to be good grammar” (Interviewee #6).</p> <p>I’m really against grammar, ...but as an elementary teacher, I have to... make myself...grammatically correct (Interviewee #3).</p>	<p>“For some time now we have had teachers who had little exposure to the study of grammar when they were students” (Adger, Snow, & Christian, p. 16).</p> <p>“In school, ‘writing’ was handwriting, grammar, and spelling. I defined writing in narrow terms” (Frank, 2003, p. 185).</p>
Sentence Variation and Word Choice	<p>“I’m very good at being able to vary sentences, and not repeating myself...using the same words over...again” (Interviewee #4).</p> <p>“Probably my strongest point is vocabulary and sentence variation” (Interviewee #7).</p>	<p>“For the sentence-combiners, syntactic complexity has been an index of ‘growth,’ ‘development,’ ‘fluency,’ or ‘maturity,’ (Broadhead, Berlin, & Broadhead, 1982, p. 225</p> <p>“Word choice...The words that I use are striking but natural, varied, and vivid” (Andrade, 2000, p. 15)</p>

Table 4.3. Mechanical Writing Skill Competencies, cont.

Mechanical Sub-skills	Pre-service Teacher Quotes	References in Research Literature
Formatting	<p>“I’ve found, that the format is different because in high school I was taught to always do MLA format and some like APA, which is totally foreign to me” (Interviewee #2).</p> <p>“Definitely, the formatting, you know, and citations. That was a lot different” (Interviewee #6)</p>	<p>“Referencing: Avoidance of plagiarism, proper use of original versus secondary references, referencing within the body of the paper, development of an accurate reference list, and other important elements of APA style” (Fallahi, Wood, & Austad, 2006, p. 172).</p> <p>“Be sure to reference it properly at the end of your assignment...” (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990, p. 151).</p>

Organizational Writing Skill Competencies

Table 4.4 has summarized results in the organizational category. Sub-skills forming the organizational category included structural organization, support, and transitioning. As an overall theme, organizational competencies were clearly mentioned by all participants except Interviewee #4, usually in the context of sequencing and re-arranging concepts. The underlying concept of support was only alluded to by two interviewees, though it was also mentioned in research literature (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006; Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990). A third interviewee brought up developing a topic—perhaps an allusion to supporting that topic. The third sub-skill, transitioning, or “flow” as some participants termed it surfaced in five of the participants’ comments. Like mechanics, organization represented a major theme in this research, with interviewees citing it as both weaknesses and strengths in their writing.

Table 4.4. Organizational Writing Skill Competencies

Organizational Sub-skills	Pre-service Teacher Quotes	References in Research
Structural Organization	“...get all my ideas out and then you chop it down or expand it from there...but...structure” (Interviewee #2).	“the ability to organize ideas” (Sternglass & Tinberg, 2006, p. 34). “...organize the appropriate information logically within a section” (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990, p. 219).
Support	“I would try to find sources really quick, and just, like, find quotes that were good and not actually read the source and throw them in and write a good paper around the quotes’ (Interviewee #3). “talk about it, support it, and then, and then tell them what you told them” (Interviewee #6).	“facts, illustrations, experiences, analogies, quotes, or whatever is needed to make the thesis or premise clear” (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006, p. 33) “The student should draw material from all or most of the relevant lectures and readings” (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990, p. 101).
Transitioning	“Now I feel like I can kind of have transitions that will flow better” (Interviewee #1). “I don’t know how to tie things together” (Interviewee #5).	“Larson’s paper used transitions that promised more ‘fit’ than the paper actually delivered” (Walvoord & McCarthy 1990, p. 89). “Order, structure, or presentation...moves the reader through the text” (Acker & Halasek, 2008, p. 12).

Social Writing Skill Competencies

Table 4.5 has summarized results in the social category of writing competencies. The sub-skills gleaned from current literature as supporting this competency included authentic voice and audience awareness. However, throughout the course of the interviews conducted for this study, audience awareness emerged as a more prominent theme than did authentic voice. Audience awareness as expressed by concern for clarity, interest, and appropriateness for readers was mentioned in all interviews except one. By contrast, authentic voice as a theme surfaced in only two interviews, and the quality of emphasis was generally subdued as compared to that for audience awareness.

Table 4.5. Social Writing Skill Competencies

Social Sub-skills	Pre-service Teacher Quotes	References in Research
Authentic Voice	Add variety in your writing and make it sound conversational or, or more formal— whatever voice you want (Interviewee #6).	“Writer speaks directly to the reader in a way that is individual/ compelling/engaging” (Acker & Halasek, 2008, p. 12).
	“I approach anything from a different angle...that’s not always the best thing, but...it also helps me get... my ideas out” (Interviewee #2).	“Style, tone, personality, and rhythm,” “taking risks,” or “talking on paper.”(Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006, pp. 43, 44).
Audience Awareness	“I put them on paper, and people won’t make sense of it” (Interviewee #5).	“Writer crafts the writing with an awareness/respect for the audience” (Acker & Halasek, 2008, p. 12).
	“...instructions are going to have to be clear on stuff, and students are going to need...it needs to be where they can read it without questioning” (Interviewee #5).	“They also have realized that their graduates will need to communicate with numerous audiences,” (Yore, Hand, & Pain, 2002m, p. 673).

Cognitive Writing Skill Competencies

Cognitive results have been presented in Table 4.6. Critical thinking and discipline-specific proficiencies were mentioned by interviewees and current literature. However, clear support for rigorous critical thinking in writing was more heavily emphasized in research literature than by the interviewees in this study (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006; Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990). Six participants did reference “ideas,” which would appear to be a thinking skill, though the context of this word was difficult to establish. Most interviewees used this word vaguely, as in “getting all my ideas out” or “putting my ideas on paper.” Two pre-service teachers who did at least reference cognitive skills in writing came from the K-12/secondary education participants and referenced critical thinking skills as related to their content areas—“writing about art” and “literary analyses.” On the other hand, “art connections” were apparently not considered a writing skill by the contributor of the concept in the context of her own experience. Another participant brought up argument in writing—a cognitive concept closely related to Bloom’s (1956) evaluative level of cognition. Overall, given the difference in emphasis between literature on advanced writing and references provided by interviewees, cognitive writing skills for pre-service teachers seemed to require further research.

Table 4.6. Cognitive Writing Skill Competencies

Cognitive Sub-skills	Pre-service Teacher Quotes	References in Research
Ideas	“They should have the ideas and concepts down” (Interviewee #1).	“Writing is best understood as a set of distinctive thinking processes” (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 366).
Critical Thinking Proficiencies	“My writing’s improved in other classes...just ‘cause of writing on my own trying to make a good argument” (Interviewee #3).	“Thinking and writing...twins of mental life” (Kellogg, 1994, p. 13).
Discipline-specific Skill Proficiencies	“At least most of my English training has been in literary analysis” (Interviewee #7). “I kind of struggled with, like, the art history connections and stuff” (Interviewee, #6).	“Basically, then, all four teachers expected students to function competently in the role of “professional-in-training” (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990, p. 8)

Professional Writing Task Competencies

In Table 4.7 results generated from participants’ contributions about professional tasks have been presented. These proficiencies involved both in-school and professional development activities: report cards, communicating with administrators, professional papers, grant writing, and other activities. Three participants referenced these types of writing. The other closely related theme in this competency category was professional modeling of writing—usually for colleagues or the general community. Pre-service teachers in this survey felt that the quality of their writing reflected the level of their professionalism. Concerns about professional modeling surfaced in five interviews and seemed a significant area of concern.

Table 4.7. Professional Writing Task Competencies

Professional Task Sub-skills	Pre-service Teacher Quotes	References in Research
Professional papers, grant writing, professional correspondence, report cards, etc.	<p>“...writing grants, I want to be able to have enough confidence in myself to write something properly” (Interviewee #4).</p> <p>“So, if I was going to write about something that was bothering me to a principal, for instance, I wouldn’t want to make it sound like I was complaining. I’d want to write it in a professional manner” (Interviewee #3).</p>	<p>“Two other teachers discussed how their self-perceptions as writers were linked with a particular kind of writing: news articles for one teacher and teacher grants for another” (Frager, 1994, 276).</p> <p>“To this end, students [pre-service teachers] were asked to write...reviews of children's books, brief articles, and critiques” (Pajares & Johnson, 1994, p. 317).</p>
Professional Modeling	<p>“We have to have a high standard because they’ll reach for that” (Interviewee #1).</p> <p>“I have really high standards” (Interviewee #6).</p>	<p>“There is reason to believe that teachers who are themselves fearful and reluctant writers influence some students to share that apprehension about writing” (Frager, 1994, p. 277).</p> <p>“Teachers need a depth and breadth of expertise about language because of the range of functions they must serve” (Adger, Snow, and Christian, 2003, p. 10).</p>

Communicative Writing Task Competencies

Table 4.8 has documented results for communicative writing as it surfaced during the interviews and from recent research. Two written communicative task sub-skills emerged as thematic elements: emails and notes home to parents. Two participants specifically referenced emailing parents or students, while six interviewees discussed letters sent home. Overall, pre-service teachers appeared much occupied with the

communicative tasks they anticipated during future careers—most especially sending letters home to parents. Their concerns focused primarily on parental criticism of their mechanical writing skills with one interviewee relating a teacher making conventional errors to eroding parental trust in other areas. Frager (1994) mentioned how “Few, if any, programs for teacher development examine and provide instruction for the various types of practical writing teachers do on the job” (p. 276); thus, it could be possible that other categories might have surfaced among participants with more classroom experience. Emails, for example, did not emerge prominently within the interviews even though a few studies referenced them as becoming more significant within a blossoming electronic communications environment (Frager, 1994; Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006). Certainly, as electronic communication would continue to expand, this area would remain deserving of further research. Likewise an overall consideration of how the modern technological age generally impacts the writing of pre-service teachers—both positively and negatively—would suggest an additional avenue for further study.

Table 4.8. Communicative Writing Task Competencies

Communicative Task Sub-skills	Pre-service Teacher Quotes	References in Research
Emails	<p>“I used to get emails every week from him that he sent home to every kid...I think it’s important for every subject” (Interviewee #5).</p> <p>“I got an email from a student’s parent...she had been gone...missed a lot of stuff...so I emailed her back” (Interviewee #6).</p>	<p>These preservice teachers had not considered lists, letters, email messages, personal notes, or thank you notes to be a part of their writing habits. (Draper, Barksdale-Ladd, and Radencich, 2000, p. 196).</p> <p>“We argue that email, if used effectively, can create a new channel for student–instructor communication that would supplement other existing communication tools and can increase the overall return on the classroom learning experience” (Hassini, 2006, p. 30).</p>
Letters home to parents and caregivers	<p>“...parents...if you want to go on a field trip somewhere, they’re going to feel way more confident in a teacher who sends home a nice letter that really explains everything vs. someone who sends home...with mistakes” (Interviewee #5).</p> <p>“It should matter, just cause you’re writing letters...to a parent” (Interviewee #1).</p>	<p>“My analysis of the teacher-as-writer papers indicates four prior experiences:...3) writing done in response to demands of the workplace (for example, letters to parents” (Frager, 1994, p. 276).</p>

Instructional Writing Task Competencies

Table 4.9 has presented results for the very data-rich area of instructional task competencies in writing. Sub-skills for this category included planning, general writing instruction, discipline-specific writing instruction, written feedback, and serving as a

writing model for students. While planning was only referenced by one interviewee, six participants brought up teaching general writing skills, and five contributed general thoughts on discipline-specific compositional instruction. Four contributions about providing written feedback also surfaced during the interviews, and concern was expressed by three participants in the area of serving as a writing model for students. Regarding discipline-specific situations, one interviewee was specifically concerned with spelling historical names correctly, and the same could probably be inferred for scientific terminology within that discipline. Assessing writing as well as modeling very discipline-specific writing structures (such as articles, lab reports, etc.) did not surface powerfully in the course of the interviews, though one pre-service teacher did mention argumentative essays and another referenced “literary analyses” and said that “maybe for actually teaching English classes...It would be important to have a knowledge of how to write literary analyses” (Interviewee #7). Written feedback, on the other hand, was widely discussed across interviews, with an emphasis on corrective feedback with a positive, encouraging approach.

Table 4.9. Instructional Writing Task Competencies

Instructional Task Sub-skills	Pre-service Teacher Quotes	References in Research
Planning	“...for lesson planning, she went through and said, ‘Does this make sense?’”	“The majority of the ‘Practical Writers’ described themselves as writers of lists and plans” (Frager, 1994, p. 276).
Teaching general writing	“I took teaching reading and teaching writing this year, and...we mostly learned how to engage struggling readers and writers, and...about,, writing with people who are struggling to write” (Interviewee #7).	“Preservice teachers often learn about writing instruction within a literacy methods course, so...time for learning about writing and teaching writers is limited to a few sessions” (Morgan, 2010, p. 352).
Teaching discipline-specific writing	“An art teacher? I think it’s important, especially when you bring in the terminology for art... I think it’s important that kids know how to write, and there’s this whole thing about writing...writing about art and reading about art that they’re bringing in with the whole common core” (Interviewee #6).	“In our view, when students enter a classroom, they are entering a discourse community in which they must master the ways of thinking and writing considered appropriate to that setting...” (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990, p. 21).
Providing written instructions and feedback to students; assessing and grading student work.	“Like constructive criticism is technically negative feedback, but you phrase it in a way that it actually sounds more helpful than it is negative” (Interviewee #2).	“The instructor provided feedback and encouragement by regularly writing comments on the students’ work...and by critiquing and grading the finished products” (Pajares & Johnson, 1994, p. 317).
Serving as writing model for students	“We have to have a high standard because they’ll reach for that, but if we’re spelling words incorrectly or...mixing up ‘affect’ and ‘effect,’ we’re not setting a standard for them” (Interviewee #1).	What are...students...learning about writing from the way their teachers live writing? To what extent are today’s teachers competent to teach writing through modeling and coaching? (Frager, 1994, p. 277).

Personal Writing Task Competencies

Table 4.10 has summarized for personal writing proficiencies. Sub-skills comprised creative, personal writing as well as journaling, which included job-related journaling. Three interviewees brought up their personal, creative writing experiences, and one participant discussed journaling in the context of lesson planning. Interviewees tended not to connect these rich personal experiences with their pre-service teacher writing, except in the case of journaling, and appeared to underestimate its importance.

Table 4.10. Personal Writing Task Proficiencies

Personal Task Sub-skills	Pre-service Teacher Quotes	References in Research
Journaling	"...we did little journals..." (Interviewee #6).	"...these examples included diaries, essays, letters-to-themselves...and a notebook" (Frager, 1994, p. 276).
Creative writing: novels, stories, etc.	"I carry a notebook with me almost anywhere and I write novels" (Interviewee #2).	"...a linguistically diverse group of teachers who were themselves fearful of writing and teaching writing became engaged in writing their own stories. By doing so they began to think of themselves as writers, and in the process they became more effective teachers of writing" (Frank, 2003, p. 185).

Conclusion

Throughout the seven interviews describing experiences, opinions, and values of pre-service teachers at one, land-grant university, the compelling and overarching lesson was that these individuals had a much to say about themselves as writers, their needs for writing support, and what they perceived to be the compositional demands that awaited

them during their careers as teachers. Overall, their questions, observations, and conclusions were also well supported in current research with many themes overlapping among interviewees as well as across current research. At the very least, these seven participants have proved themselves to be invaluable sources of information for anyone interested in how best to support pre-service teacher writing during teacher training.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Introduction

Because of the rich observations, opinions, and histories generated by the seven participants in this study, their data has been applied to the initial research questions generated at the outset of this exploration:

1. How do writing skill and task competences identified by pre-service teacher perceptions compare to what is known by researchers?
2. What can teacher training institutions glean from current research and pre-service teacher perceptions regarding the support of writing skills and task competencies during teacher training?

In reviewing possible answers generated by this study relative to the above questions, this chapter considered what Bandura (1997) termed “outcome expectancies” (p. 19), or the results students anticipated from the attainment or non-attainment of the writing skill and task proficiencies they mentioned during the interviews. Also pivotal to this study were pre-service teacher self-efficacy perceptions (Bandura, 1997) whereby these pre-service educators evaluated their perceived competencies of writing skills for specific tasks, and compared those to environmental demands (p. 15) anticipated during teacher training and beyond. This combination of what pre-service teachers perceived as their own competencies compared with what they considered to be necessary during teacher training and beyond was the core of this research and the basis for implications related to teacher training support for the writing skills of pre-service educators.

Pre-service Teacher Data Compared with
Current Research: Skill Competencies

With a few notable exceptions, data generated by the pre-service teachers in this study aligned remarkably well with current research themes on writing skill competencies common to college-level writing, to pre-service and in-service teacher composition, and to the writing demands of four university courses of study in psychology, business, fundamental and applied sciences, and history.

One of the most strongly expressed concerns surfacing from this study related to mechanical proficiency difficulties. Like pre-service teachers in other studies, these interviewees expressed worries about “grammar, spelling... awkward sentences [and] wordiness” (Morgan, 2010, p. 356). Across all research examined, the conventions of standardized English were considered fundamental to all university writing in the United States, though degrees of emphasis placed on precise writing varied according to training situations and disciplines. While mechanical skill competencies were strongly emphasized in remedial writing classes, for example, they were featured less prominently in college-prep high school classes and in college-level classes—including early freshman writing classes and content-specific courses (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006; Yore, Hand, & Pain, 2002). In the cases of pre-service teachers featured in current research, teacher trainees brought into their university courses a variety of attitudes toward and experiences with mechanical skill proficiencies based on their individual reading and writing histories (Draper, Barksdale-Ladd, & Radencich, 2003; Frager, 1994; Frank, 2003; Morgan, 2010; Street, 2003).

Repeatedly described in research literature were teachers and pre-service educators who had not yet developed a strong writer identity, due largely to negative past experiences related to criticism of their mechanics, as well as difficulties or lack of choice with writing topics (Frager, 1994; Frank, 2003; Morgan, 2010). This lack of pre-service and in-service teacher writing identity formation was problematic in that these individuals tended not to write themselves, avoided composition in their classrooms, and even passed their negative dispositions toward writing onto their students (Frager, 1994; Street, 2003).

Pre-service teachers in this study also closely connected writing history with their current compositional proficiencies in the area of mechanics. Mentioned specifically were home supports (Interviewees #1, #5, #6) as well as past influences—both positive and negative—of former instructors and writing situations (Interviewees #2, #3, #5, #7). A critical juncture for many of these participants came when they reached upper-division education courses, specifically the 300-level language arts requirement for elementary education majors. Because of inadequacies in their K-12 and high school experiences (Interviewees #3, #5, #7) and the common experience of general freshman writing courses to be insufficient for professional training in education (Interviewees #1, #3, #5), several participants expressed that they felt underprepared in desired mechanical skill competencies (Interviewees #1, #2, #3, #4, #5). This shared experience of insufficient freshman course training was also supported in surveyed research (Bridgeman & Carlson, 1984; Epstein, 1999; Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990), leading to the conclusion that it might be important for teacher training institutions to specifically support career-oriented

writing development for their pre-service teachers. Validation for this implication surfaced in the comments of interviewees who suggested that university training could provide additional support through offering specific writing classes for teacher trainees (Interviewees #1, #3, #4), supporting mechanical writing standards throughout the teacher training program (Interviewees #1, #4, #5), providing one-on-one mentoring support (Interviewee #6), offering encouraging feedback for writing—including peer feedback— (Interviewees #2, #5, #7) and creating opportunities for writing practice aligned with authentic teacher writing experiences (Interviewees #1, #2, #4, #7). True-to-life writing experiences were also well supported overall by recent research, which suggested that authentic writing tasks enhanced motivation for university students (Acker & Halsek, 2008; Frager, 1994; Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990). Of note, during her K-12 writing instruction, one pre-service teacher with a more impoverished writing background cited instruction that had valued idea development at the expense of mechanical skill precision (Interviewee #1). Two others reported receiving little-to-no feedback on their pre-college writing (Interviewees #4, #7)—a situation documented by research in which high school instructors often lacked time in their schedules for reading and commenting on student writing (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006).

Pre-service teachers with strong home backgrounds and successful past school writing experiences were less focused on their personal needs for mechanical skill instruction, though they still expressed firm values for accurate writing as part of teacher training (Interviewee #6; Interviewee #7). Across the spectrum of participants, varied past experiences and unequal support systems ensured that their writing development had

been very inconsistent prior to entering training programs. With nearly all interviewees expressing strong value for precise mechanics in teacher training composition (Interviewees #1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #6, #7), their requirements for specific support in the area of mechanical proficiency would suggest important implications for teacher training institutions and would appear to invite further research as to best supporting these needs.

Organizational skill competencies were frequently mentioned by pre-service teachers as either areas of strength (Interviewees #2, #3, #6) or weakness (Interviewees #5, #7) or both (Interviewee #1), illustrating the complexity of this skill proficiency. Most research on the topic stressed the necessity for organizational competencies to evolve from the five-paragraph essay structure commonly utilized at the high school level to more adaptive structures closely related to real-world, discipline-specific writing tasks (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006; Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990). The comments of participants indicated that most of them were in the process of evolving from high-school structures to college-level organizational demands, which according to some, mostly involved more pages of writing rather than specifically different types of organization (Interviewees #2, #4). Comments on discipline-specific structures did not explicitly surface, though some interviewees expressed a strong desire for writing instruction utilizing real-world applications (Interviewees #4, #7). Given the current research emphasis on incorporating authentic writing experiences for future teachers in training (Frager, 1994; Galavan, Bowles, & Young, 2007; Morgan, 2010) as well as in other disciplines (Bridgeman & Carlson, 1984; Epstein, 1999; Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990; Yore, Hand, & Pain, 2002),

additional research into the organizational structures most needed for authentic teacher experiences would represent another opportunity for teacher training institutions.

Social writing skill proficiencies were mentioned repeatedly by nearly all the participants interviewed for this study (Interviewees #1, #2, #3, #5, #6, and #7). Heavily weighted toward audience awareness rather than authentic voice, their comments emphasized being clear (Interviewees #2, #3, #5, #6, #7), interesting (Interviewees #1, #3, #6), and appropriate (Interviewees #2, #3, #7). Only Interviewees #2 and #6 made specific mention of targeting authentic voice in their writing, and Interviewee #2 qualified her tendency to look at writing tasks from a different angle as “not always the best thing.” Considering the many and varied audiences of teacher writing—from very young students and emotionally invested parents to professional colleagues and supervisors—this emphasis on the social competency of audience awareness was hardly surprising and appeared to deserve continuing support as a proficiency skill at the teacher training level. It should be noted that no participants specifically described deficits in their social skill competencies, though they repeatedly emphasized the skills as important. This might suggest a direction for further exploration as to their true self-efficacy in this area. Another possible focus for more research might include examining authentic voice as it relates to pre-service teacher writing identity—such as the development of a professional-in-training mindset as described by Walvoord & McCarthy (1990). Voice was only mentioned specifically by two participants (Interviewees #2, #6) but represented a proficiency said to be lacking according to some studies (Draper, Barksdale-Ladd, & Radencich, 2000; Morgan, 2010; Street, 2003).

Rigorous cognitive skill competencies remained the least mentioned skill proficiencies among the pre-service teachers interviewed, and this seemed significant—especially when compared to their concerns regarding mechanics. While writing “ideas” were valued at least to some degree by several (Interviewees #1, #2, #3, #5, #6, #7), these statements tended to lack context, such as “get all my ideas out” (Interviewee #2) and “want more time to get my ideas out” (Interviewee #3). Because “ideas” were mentioned by six contributors, “ideas” were included as a theme, but the strength of its contribution to cognitive writing proficiency was difficult to ascertain.

By contrast, only a few contributors discussed cognitive competencies that went any deeper than knowledge or understanding (Bloom, 1956). Three brought up critical thinking in discipline-specific contexts: arguing in a political science class (Interviewee #3), writing in art (Interviewee #6), and analyzing literature (Interviewee #7). However, participant #6, when she mentioned “art connections and stuff,” failed to consider these as true writing skills (Interviewee #6), and elementary majors remained quiet on the topic. Given the emphases on critical thinking both for college-level writing (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006) and in discipline-specific composition (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990), this deficit appeared to urgently demand a need for further research—especially as difficulties with advanced levels of critical thinking have been noted in on-line, written reflections developed by teacher candidates (Obery & Mohr, 2012).

Pre-service Teacher Data Compared with
Current Research: Task Competencies

Among the interviewees participating in this study, professionalism loomed large as a consistent theme during the interviews. Whether they discussed holding high professional standards (Interviewees #1, #2, #3, 5, #6), writing reports or grants (Interviewees #1, #4), composing letters to other professionals (Interviewees #1, #3), appearing knowledgeable in their fields (Interviewee #7) or applying for jobs (Interviewee #4), these pre-service teachers strongly felt that their proficiency in various writing tasks would reflect on their professionalism. Frager (1994) supported this need for writing confidence by describing three groups of teacher writers and pointing out how their self-perceptions of competence in various professional writing tasks in many ways shaped their professional careers. A prominent theme in research literature and mentioned by two participants (Interviewees #4, #7), once again, pointed toward utilizing authentic professional tasks, such as those mentioned above, to help support general pre-service teacher writing skills (grammar, spelling, organization, audience awareness, etc.). This approach aligned also with Sternglass's (1997) admonition that even remedial-level writers needed cognitively rigorous and authentic writing experiences while developing basic skills in composition.

Interviewee #7 delineated a separate branch of professional writing task competencies, which she termed "communicative writing," and this designation was supported by nearly all the interviewees, especially when it came to sending letters home to parents (Interviewees #1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #7) and emails (Interviewees #5, #6). Skill

proficiencies most closely desired for communicative task proficiencies, not surprisingly, comprised mechanics and audience awareness. Communicative tasks, according to Frager (1994) represented a segment of professional competencies for which teachers were generally unprepared by their training programs (p. 276). With this in mind and based on the values attached to communicative task proficiencies by the pre-service teachers surveyed for this study, authentic writing experiences offered during teacher training would ideally include communicative tasks as well as other professional ones.

The terms “teaching” and “instruction” being essentially synonymous, the emergence of valued instructional writing tasks from the interview data was anticipated. Instructional task competencies mentioned by pre-service teachers included: general writing instruction and assessment (Interviewees #1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #7) discipline-specific writing direction (Interviewees #1, #2, #5, #6, #7) providing written instructions and feedback for students (Interviewees #2, #3, #4, #7) and lesson planning (Interviewee #6). While the practice of instruction in writing was highly valued by participants, none mentioned any specific deficits regarding this area of their pre-service teacher writing support; and, in fact, one secondary English major cited instruction in how to help struggling writers as a strength of her program (Interviewee #7). This finding coincided with conclusions generated by the survey of research literature, which featured many explorations of how to teach writing but far fewer studies dedicated to pre-service teachers as authors in their own right.

Surfacing last from this research were compositional task proficiencies relating to personal writing. Although these were highly valued by Interviewees #2, #5, #6, and #7,

not until they appeared in current research did the researcher recognize them as suggesting a prominent theme in this study. Perhaps this was because self-directed writing pastimes, though noted as part of personal histories, did not seem connected by the interviewees to their pre-service teacher experiences. Although Interviewee #6 mentioned journaling for one class and Interviewee #7 described memoirs written for advanced English classes, no other references to personal writing were esteemed as particularly valuable during teacher training. On the other hand, new research into the writing of pre- and in-service teachers has begun to place a high worth on personal writing as a means to establish teacher-writer identity—thus, increasing instructor self-efficacy in the area of writing, and resulting in richer classroom experiences for students (Draper, Barksdale-Ladd, & Radencich, 2000; Frager, 1994; Frank, 2003; Morgan, 2010). Because of the lack of data generated by this study coupled with the value of personal writing documented by research, personal writing as important during teacher training would appear to be an area needing further exploration and development. By finding ways to enhance pre-student teacher enjoyment of writing, as mentioned by Interviewee #7's pleasure when writing her own *Babysitters' Club* series, teacher training institutions could possibly help ensure that an enjoyment of writing will be passed to future K-12 students (Frager, 1994; Street, 2003).

Additional Themes Emerging from this Study

In concert with the above-mentioned writing skill and task competency themes, other commonalities worth mentioning surfaced across the interviews. One frequently

expressed perception came only from the elementary education majors who had taken the 300-level language arts course. For several of these interviewees a transformation in their outlook had occurred when they entered the class with its emphasis on quality writing. In this course they had often discovered, much to their surprise, that their writing competencies were lacking. This point of view was stated very explicitly by Interviewees #1 and #4 and implied at least to some degree by Interviewees #3 and #5. This transformational view related closely to Bandura's (1978) statement: "expectation alone will not produce desired performance if the component capabilities are lacking" (p. 142), and these students seemed suddenly to have realized this. Pajares and Johnson (1994) pointed out that "most college students perceive themselves, to greater or lesser degree, as competent writers" (p. 326). Furthermore, they cautioned that "to criticize the writing of someone who prides himself as a competent writer can be akin to criticizing the person" (Pajares & Johnson, 1994, p. 326).

All four participants expressed high value for skills taught in the junior-level literacy class; however, they also appeared startled to have been confronted with their limitations abruptly and late in their programs of study. They responded by suggesting additional approaches to enhance university support. First, they proposed early, cross-program writing instruction and accountability, similar to what they had received during the 300-level language arts class (Interviewees #1, #3, #4, and #5). Additionally, they desired this instruction to include extensive, positive, and precise feedback that would guide them while also supporting their self-confidence as developing writers (Interviewees #2, #5). These, combined with opportunities for practicing authentic

writing tasks mirroring those done in the field (Interviewees #4, #7), were suggestions for teacher training support generated directly by participants in this study.

Conclusion

The data generated by seven pre-service teachers at one land-grant university produced a number of themes specifically relevant to their situations as writers involved in teacher training programs. Like participants in other research explorations, they had entered their university studies with varying histories and degrees of writing skill and task competencies. Thus, their different past experiences had created a varied palette of needs. Those with less home support or with more negative school experiences appeared to require a higher level of support for mechanical skills than did the pre-service teachers with richer home support and/or a history of success in K-12 composition. Mechanical needs for competency support included grammar and spelling with the more experienced writers mentioning proficiencies in sentence variation and word choice. With regard to organization, these individuals considered themselves at varying places on a proficiency continuum, without strong correlations to writing experience (with one of the most advanced writers declaring organization to be her major compositional weakness). All interviewees, no matter their mechanical and organizational proficiencies, expressed personal value for the social writing skill competency of audience awareness, not surprising within a communicative-intense environment such as education. Lacking as a specifically valued skillset were higher-level cognitive competencies, especially those related to critical thinking and advanced analysis. This shortage of generated data would

point to a need for further research as to why these skill proficiencies tended not to be mentioned by pre-service teachers, especially elementary majors, in this study.

Overall, pre-service teachers enthusiastically embraced a shared need for professional, communicative, and instructional task competencies—expressed in professional writing pastimes such as emails and letters home to parents, and in the general and specific branches of writing instruction for future students. A predilection for positive feedback combined with direct, effective instruction was communicated by these pre-service educators—valued both for themselves as writers and as preparation for how they would deal with their own students in the future. Also, while a few described enjoyment and involvement with personal writing proficiencies, as a group, the pre-service teachers did not appear to see these as directly applicable to their preparation in teacher training—an assumption contradicted by recent literature on personal writing and the formation of strong teacher-writer identities. Lastly, pre-service teachers expressed a desire, well-founded in current research, for writing support that would begin early in their program, be supported in every level of their instruction, be directed specifically toward their career functions as educators, utilize authentic writing experiences, and be enriched with encouraging, yet directional feedback throughout their teacher training.

Because of the emphasis in current research literature in the area of pre-service teacher writing identity and the discouragement of many when confronted with harsh criticism, this research would strongly recommend the continued study of how teacher training can best support both skill and task competency development as well as nurture positive pre-service teacher writer identities through specific, instructional, yet

encouraging feedback. Interviewee #5 summarized this objective: "...to see where they can improve, like what their ultimate goal is and where they want to go...not looking at negatives so much, but use them to build and look at them, "Oh...you did this; let's change it, and...you'll be better than before."

By demonstrating to pre-service teachers "where they can improve" and using these standards to make them "better than before," it is hoped that all pre-service teachers can be supported during teacher training to attain the kinds of professional writing goals clearly desired by the seven participants in this study and that their strengths and positive dispositions in the area of writing skill and task competencies could then be shared with hundreds of future K-12 classroom students.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

ELEVEN-QUESTION INTERVIEW

1. Please tell your writing story. You might want to describe events, people, or pastimes, that have positively contributed to where you are as a writer...or what roadblocks you have encountered...or discuss about your past, present, and future writing goals. Your choice
2. What do you consider some of your writing strong points? Weak areas?
3. Recount some of the differences between high-school-level and college-level writing that you have experienced.
4. Look ahead at the demands of teaching, (actual instruction, being a model for students, communicating with administrators, parents, and colleagues) and describe the level of writing skills you think you will need. (mastery, proficient, good enough, doesn't matter) Do you feel prepared in this area? How do the writing skills needed by future educators differ from skills required by students in other majors? (Mastery—almost no errors, very professional; proficient—few errors and fairly professional, good enough—a fair number of errors, somewhat casual, but understandable, doesn't matter)
5. Looking now within the teaching profession...do different teaching situations require varying writing skill levels? Compare secondary English, Secondary history/social studies, secondary math, secondary science, k-8 elementary k-12 foreign language, art, p.e. by using "mastery, proficient, good enough, doesn't matter"
6. What are some skills/ideas/etc. you have learned about writing at MSU?
7. Were the writing skills you consider necessary for your future career (question 4) consistently emphasized during your teacher training program?
8. Describe how you would feel were you asked to submit an on-the-spot writing sample during a job interview for a teaching position?
9. Do you have any ideas about how technology could be better utilized at MSU to support writing skills of pre-service teachers? If so, please describe....
10. In your opinion, what are some of the best ways MSU could help pre-service teachers attain the writing proficiencies you described as necessary for soon-to-be teachers?
11. In your opinion, how can MSU help pre-service teachers gain confidence as writers who will be on display to students, administrators, and the public?

APPENDIX B

PRE-SERVICE TEACHER AND IN-SERVICE TEACHER
WRITING SAMPLES FROM RESEARCHER EXPERIENCES

Artifact #1: Pre-service Teacher Samples from
Teacher Work Samples and Research papers

“With Whittier Elementary School under a new principle, I will need to ensure that my lessons cover the standards that the school and district expect.”

“An example would be for students that are jumping well to try and increase the distance you are jumping.”

“First, the teacher should have the student select a book they want to read and once they get it the teacher should have the student read it aloud to him/her and should record all their mistakes they make while reading and the teacher should help the student when they need it”

“Lastly, section four is where I self-asses my teaching through the semester and how effectively I taught and what I can improve on.”

“My main optical will be to keep my students busy.... Giving instructions has always been an optical for me.”

“XX sets foundations and expectation that are required of all students and are understood due to the reputation of the school, making the instructional teaching to the students rather enjoyable and somewhat easier than if they did not attend a school filled with people of such good character.”

“It is defiantly a blue collar town with hard middle class working families.”

“This is one of three...classes. This is a class of eager, well behaved youngsters who have an exciting love for music. This class has a small amount of experience playing recorders as well as guitars.”

Artifact #2: In-service Teacher Samples
from Professional Development Essays

“What I learned from the XXX institute is that teachers not only have to do their regular lesson plans, but provide an stress free environment in which the students feel comfortable and that someone is concerned about their academic progress. We do this by enforcing a schedule, a set of classroom rules and expectations, develop procedures for managing student work and classroom routines, and design our classrooms for easy monitoring.”

“I also work with students, whom I am not the case manager, that have behavioral problems, and some that are on the spectrum.”

“Some steps towards bully prevention would be: to invite parents in and teach them about bullying, students need not only to be taught about bullying every year, but retaught throughout the year, bullying policies and procedures need to be established, teachers need to be taught how to deal with bullying and showed how to supervise areas to help prevent bullying, administration needs to take a leadership role on how to model and teach the anti-bullying model which the whole school needs to embrace and be consistent with.”

“This rule which I teach from the first time I enter their classroom in the begging of the year is to listen. If a teacher cannot teach your students to listen, it is extremely difficult to teach them anything with consistency.”

“Which, it is always good to continue growing and learning in our line of business....XXX is definently the "whole package" and I am thrilled to be a part of it.”

“My oldest son will be a freshman this year which is for whom I purchased the book.”

“As far as a behavior resource, the check and connect resource is just what we need for our students at the tier two level to check and connect with another adult for additional help and support, another resource we can easily implement is the newcomers club with our meaningful work resource, which I will talk about later.”

“For example: A solution for students who seek power and control, would be that the teacher may give them certain jobs in the classroom that they are in control of like putting up the flag, and taking it down every day.”

“Using these skills will keep the students brain active and engaged.”

“While listening to the opening session “XXXX?” I was stuck that the teachers/councilors worked with XX and who she was.”

“The reality is there, and as an educator who works with students on a daily basis, it is critical that I am aware of some of the issues that some of my students may be dealing with. In these cases, it is again important for the teacher to have a positive, trusted relationship with the parents to ensure the student receives the best education and help they need.”

“On the personal side of the diagram, I am most changed by two realizations from MBI: first, the historical perspective that while students have always misbehaved and traditional punitive measures *may* stop misbehavior, the effectiveness of a punishment paradigm based on consequences for misbehavior is seriously and increasingly limited, largely because there is no teaching involved, and thus no growth toward any positive element for students, either solo or as a class. This critical to any American public school teacher today, but it feels especially important to me since I work with many students

who are very much at risk, and I struggled just last year with a viciously negative “anti-learning” downward spiral in one troubled class.”

“I think most of these students would be more than willing to help out around our school which would benefit all the teachers and students but also help the student without them even knowing it.”

“One of the reasons that I choose her class was that I needed to know if I had crossed the line from caring about the students to enabling them.”