

THE LANGUAGE AND PRACTICE OF WRITING TEACHERS:
EXPLORING TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

WITHIN A PLC FRAMEWORK

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my children and their future teachers.

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ABSTRACT

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THE LANGUAGE AND PRACTICE OF WRITING TEACHERS: EXPLORING TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING WITHIN A PLC FRAMEWORK

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There is a need for higher quality professional development for writing teachers (Cutler & Graham, 2008; Gilbert & Graham, 2010; Kiuahara, Graham, & Hawken, 2009). Even though writing is an essential skill, quality writing instruction for students and the professional development for writing teachers is lacking (National Commission on Writing, 2003; Cutler & Graham, 2008). Thus, the purpose of this qualitative collective case study was to document the language and classroom practice of three teachers when professional learning was related to writing process and situated in a Professional Learning Community (PLC) framework. Guiding my inquiry were the following research questions: 1) How is professional learning around writing process evidenced in teachers' language? 2) How is professional learning around writing process evidenced in teachers' classroom instruction? Data were collected through observations, interviews, and artifacts. Data analysis involved both deductive and inductive coding, pattern coding, and thematic analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

Three themes emerged when exploring teacher professional learning as evidenced by their language and classroom instruction: improvement in pedagogical content knowledge, development in knowledge-*of*-practice, and growth in reflective practice. Findings reveal that professional learning that is connected throughout a unit of study, driven by a team's own agenda, situated in classroom practice, and surrounded by the analysis of student work positively influences teachers' language and practice around writing instruction. These findings confirm much of the research on professional learning communities but adds a new perspective on the possibilities with not only writing teachers, but also teachers of poetry writing. These findings are step forward to emphasizing the need for even more professional learning opportunities and training for writing teachers.

Keywords: poetry, poetry writing, professional learning, professional development, professional learning communities, teacher knowledge, writing, writing instruction, writing workshop

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Problem

Writing is an essential skill, yet often shortchanged in today's schools (National Commission on Writing, 2003). Because of the pressures from the high-stakes standardized assessments in the subjects of both math and reading, many teachers neglect additional subjects (McCarthy, 2008). The pressure to have high student achievement on standardized assessment was influenced by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) policy in 2001 and continues to affect our schools today. The student and school performance on standardized assessments starting in grade 3 directly influences accountability ratings of schools. In Texas, a school is now labeled with an A-F rating determined from those scores. The heightened pressure to perform well on these assessments trickles down to affect the primary teachers, often causing a decrease in instruction of other subjects, including writing, in kindergarten through second grade.

The pressure of these high-stakes assessments also compels teachers to focus more on what is going to be assessed and remove elements from the curriculum that are not (Lambirth, Smith, & Steele, 2013). While writing instruction is often shortchanged, poetry writing is almost completely eliminated from many classrooms because of this way of prioritizing curriculum based on tested standards (Myhill, 2013). Unfortunately, by decreasing time on writing instruction and removing poetry writing as a genre, many teachers are sacrificing the benefits to students. Certo, Apol, Wibbens, and Yoon (2010) argued that writing poetry places a high cognitive demand on students and provides many benefits to the writer's process because it

requires them to slow down, be concise, and think deeply about manipulating words and language.

The high-stakes assessment is not solely to blame for the lack of adequate writing instruction in classrooms today. A survey conducted by Cutler and Graham (2008) found that 28% of teachers indicated that they felt like their certification or education program did a poor and inadequate job preparing them to teach writing, 44% of teachers reported that their program did an adequate job preparing them to teach writing, and only 28% felt like their program did a very good to exceptional job preparing them to teach writing. Since teachers enter our schools feeling inadequately prepared to teaching writing, it would make sense that there is also the need to better provide professional learning experiences in writing instruction for existing classroom teachers.

In order for teachers to develop their own understanding of the content they teach and high yield instructional strategies, professional development is essential (McQuitty, 2012). In fact, there is a direct connection between high quality professional development and improved classroom practice and student achievement (Borko, 2004; Desimone, 2009; Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). High quality professional development shifts away from ineffective one-shot workshops and towards a model of continuous, sustained, and connected learning (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Cohen & Hill, 1998; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Fullan, 1995; Guskey, 1995; Little, 1993; Showers & Joyce, 1996; Sykes, 1996; Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). Additionally, high quality professional development values teachers actively constructing their learning (Blank de las Atlas, 2009; Borko & Putnam, 1995; Little, 1993; Miller, Lord, & Dorney, 1994; Tillema & Imants, 1995). Finally, when professional development is directly rooted in daily practice, the

learning becomes more meaningful for teachers, creates change in practice, and builds capacity for teaching (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Guskey, 1986; Wei et al., 2009).

While several models of professional development are being used in schools across the country, professional learning communities are one way to provide high quality professional development that embodies the characteristics of high quality professional learning by continuously involving teachers in active learning around problems of practice (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Many, & Mattos, 2016; Fullan, 1991; Guskey, 1995; Hargreaves, 1994; Huberman, 1995; Little, 1993). Lieberman & Miller (2008) defined professional learning communities as “ongoing groups ... who meet regularly for the purposes of increasing their own learning and that of their students” (p. 2). Additionally, Lieberman and Miller (2008) explained that while professional communities can vary in context, they all operate under the assumptions that teachers can learn from each other by examining their own practice, trying new strategies, and reflecting on what works and why. Findings from research consistently indicate that professional learning communities have the potential to build capacity in teachers and positively impact student achievement (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Lieberman & Miller, 2008; Lieberman & Wood, 2003; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006).

In a study that examined writing teachers as they engaged in a professional learning community, Pella (2011) discovered several benefits of this model as teachers transformed their perspectives and pedagogy for teaching writing. Pella (2011) explained, “as participants’ engaged in their quest for theoretical equilibrium, they experienced shifts in their perception of students’ abilities and changes in their practices” (p. 117). Thus, the professional learning community provided an avenue for deeper professional learning as participants experienced

diverse views on writing instruction and engaged in shared learning opportunities with other writing teachers.

Not only is there a great need for more research on the practice of writing teachers, but there is an even bigger need in diving deeper into the professional learning experiences of writing teachers as they engage in a professional learning community. The problem of this study not only emerged from the gap in the literature, but also out of my own practice. Over the past five years, various initiatives have been implemented in the school district where I work. These initiatives are introduced in an isolated manner, even if they do naturally work to complement each other. In my experience as an instructional coach working with teachers in this district, they are often left feeling as if their plate is too full of different initiatives and unsure of how to put each one in action.

The first initiative that came to our district was the collaboration structure called Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). The school district adopted Dufour et. al's *Learning by Doing* (2016) as the go-to model for PLCs and sent several teachers to the PLC conference held by Solution Tree, the publisher of *Learning by Doing*. Many of the campus principals altered their master schedule to allow more time for teachers to meet in a PLC and designated teacher leaders who attended the PLC conference to facilitate their grade level's PLC. Now, this structure is a naturally occurring collaboration structure that exists within many of the schools. Three years ago, our school district embarked on a journey that emphasized writing instruction, just as many school districts did after the change in the writing assessment in Texas. The goal of this writing initiative was to place emphasis on writing, showing its natural connection to reading, and creating a common language around writing for students going through our school district. The district also wanted an assessment system that would allow

teachers to monitor growth and meet individual students' needs. After much deliberation, the school district opted to purchase the *Units of Study for Teaching Writing* by Calkins (2013).

Unfortunately, teachers did not see the natural connection between the writing curriculum, assessment system, and PLC framework adopted by the district, which caused a lot of frustration, confusion, and distress. Most of the teachers collected the writing assessments and filed them away, never using them to inform instruction and simply complied with the district initiative to implement a writing portfolio system. The burden of analyzing and scoring writing samples was a frequent complaint of teachers. They also regularly verbalized their frustration with the lack of flexibility within the curriculum. The PLC framework encourages teachers to reflect on instructional strategies and adapt lessons according to student progress, but teachers felt locked into the sequence of the writing curriculum. A gap developed between the district-wide mandate of the PLC model and district-wide mandate for the writing curriculum.

The literature calls for higher quality professional development for writing teachers (Cutler & Graham, 2008; Gilbert & Graham, 2010; Kiuahara, Graham, & Hawken, 2009) and demonstrates the effectiveness of professional learning communities as a form of high quality professional development (DuFour, et al., 2016; Fullan, 1991; Guskey, 1995; Hargreaves, 1994; Hubberman, 1995; Lieberman & Miller, 2008; Little, 1993), however there is little research on the entire framework of a professional learning community, especially as a form of professional development for writing teachers. In an attempt to begin to fill that void, this study followed a team of teachers across a unit of study in poetry writing as they look at their students' writing, set goals for instruction, and analyze progress made toward those goals using the PLC framework. By adding the layer of looking directly into and documenting teachers' language and

practice around writing instruction, this study adds contributions to the existing literature on both professional learning and writing instruction.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to document the language and classroom practice of teachers when professional learning is related to writing process and situated in a PLC framework.

Building on the ideas that knowledge is actively constructed through social interactions (Vygotsky, 1978), that there is a fluid process between the language and thinking of individuals (Vygotsky, 1986), and the learning that occurs is situated within the context of that individual (Greeno, 1998; Putnam & Borko, 2000), this study explored how teachers' collaboration, dialogue, and inquiry influenced their knowledge about teaching writing and the writing instruction inside their classroom.

A collective case study approach (Stake, 1995) allowed me to comprise the case of multiple individuals and explore the phenomena within the bounded unit of a grade level team. As the researcher, I served as the interpreter in the field, striving to find meaning within my observations. Determined to maintain the natural context and gain insight in a more discreet manner, this study took place within the collaboration opportunities already built into the teachers' schedules. By observing teachers as they engaged in a PLC around student writing, this study created an opportunity to see how that collaboration influenced a teacher's professional learning across a unit of study for writing instruction.

Research Questions

This study adds a unique perspective to the literature on writing instruction and professional learning. Guiding my inquiry were the following research questions:

- 1) How is professional learning around writing process evidenced in teachers' language?

- 2) How is professional learning around writing process evidenced in teachers' classroom instruction?

To answer these questions, I built on the existing research on effective professional learning (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Fullan, 1991, 1995; Guskey, 2003; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Little, 1993, 2005; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Sykes, 1996; Wei et al., 2009). I designed and implemented targeted and embedded professional learning throughout a poetry writing unit of study with three classroom teachers. As a researcher, I conducted individual and focus group interviews with teacher participants and observed classroom writing instruction and each PLC. I analyzed each data source as the study progressed, moving back and forth between data sources, and analyzing small bits of data at a time, while constantly comparing each unit to the next. Upon the conclusion of the study, I created categories of my initial codes, which I use to determine overarching themes.

Significance of the Study

A situated perspective on learning assumes that social activity is a vital part of learning for teachers and collaboration opportunities should create rich interactions between teachers' classroom experiences and instructional knowledge (Greeno, 1998; Putnam & Borko, 2000). The PLC structure is one form of professional development that allows teachers to meet regularly to analyze data, discuss student progress, and create goals for instruction. The PLC structure is situated within teacher practice as they collaborate around their own student work, creating those rich interactions between classroom practice, experience, and knowledge. Additionally, this structure is designed to support teachers in directly connecting their learning within the context of their classroom. Borko (2004) explained that the primary goal for any professional development should be for teachers to transfer their learning into their classroom. This study

followed a team of teachers across a unit of study as they looked at their students' writing, set goals for instruction, and analyze progress made toward those goals. Throughout this process, I documented teacher language and practice around writing instruction, revealing a strong connection between teacher learning and their language and practice. The findings from this study will add contributions to the existing literature on professional learning and writing instruction.

This study has the potential to support other instructional coaches as they facilitate and participate in PLCs. Oftentimes, instructional coaches are deliverers of professional development that includes isolated trainings (Knight, 2007). Those one-shot, fragmented trainings are largely ineffective to influencing teaching practice or knowledge (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Cohen & Hill, 1998; Fullan, 1991; Little, 1993; Showers & Joyce, 1996; Sykes, 1996; Wei et al., 2009). DuFour et al. (2016) explained that PLCs “operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous job-embedded learning for educators” (p. 10). With that understanding, this study intentionally embedded professional learning opportunities within the existing PLC structure. Thus, this structure provided an avenue for positively influencing teacher learning and classroom practice. The results of this study could inform other instructional coaches as they aim to support the professional learning of teachers.

Additionally, there is a great need for a larger emphasis on poetry writing in the field of literacy research (Certo et al., 2010). The results from this study will add to the existing empirical studies on poetry writing. Most of the current literature on poetry writing is centered around the benefits for students, revealing that writing poetry places a higher cognitive demand on students, encouraging them to take risks and explore language in unique ways (Certo et al.,

2010; Elster & Hanauer, 2002; Myhill, 2013). This study exclusively looked at the language and practice of classroom teachers, adding a new perspective into this body of literature.

Finally, this study will also inform the work of both district and campus leaders. By exploring teacher collaboration within a PLC structure as well as their practice and understanding of teaching writing, this study provides insight to administrators regarding their existing collaborative structures within their schools. The study might also inform the work of those who do not have existing collaborative structures in place, illuminating any possible connections between that structure and the professional development of the teachers.

Local Context

This study took place at a single elementary campus with a single grade level team. The campus is one of ten Title One schools within the district, with 58% of its student population classified as economically disadvantaged. Over the past several years, this campus consistently performs in the bottom 5% of schools in the district according to the state test results. In response to the low test scores, the principal established several structures to support teacher professional learning, including a creative schedule that implemented extended time for teachers to collaborate outside of their normal planning period. The principal trained her staff on the PLC model (DuFour et al., 2016), sending some to a PLC conference hosted by *Solution Tree* called, *Professional Learning Communities at Work*, and building capacity in those teachers as leaders of learning. Each grade level team actively use the PLC framework to analyze student data to inform instructional decisions.

I selected this campus largely in part because of the existing collaborative structure. Because I wanted to study how the PLC structure influences teachers' language and practice, it was important to examine teachers in a structure that already exists, rather than implement a new

structure. While I have worked on this campus for several years, supporting teachers in planning, in-class coaching, and sitting in on PLCs, I had not participated in a full cycle of inquiry within a unit of study prior to this study. Also, I had not directly coached any teachers on this particular grade level team or worked with them as a team, so my role as a coach was authentically connected to the purpose of the research. Finally, while this grade level had previously done similar work in a PLC framework with the subjects of math and reading, they had never used this structure with writing. So while the process of analyzing student work and collaboratively planning a unit felt familiar because of the PLC framework established at this campus, the element of using this framework for writing instruction and with the support of an instructional coach was new.

Background and Role of Researcher

I serve as the district-wide English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR) Instructional Coach in the school district where this study took place. I conducted this study at a school that I have supported for the past three years. I have established relationships with the teacher participants as I have frequently been in their classrooms, answered questions, provided training, supported planning, and attended PLCs. During this study, I took on the role as a participant observer, becoming fully engaged in the inquiry process with the participants but remaining a neutral third party. Denzin (1989) defined participant observation as “a field strategy that simultaneously combines document analysis, interviewing of respondents and informants, direct participation and observation and introspection” (p. 157-158). While I still participated in the study as an instructional coach, the participants understood my role as a researcher.

Summary

By examining the influence of professional learning communities on teacher language and practice around writing instruction, this research has the potential to support teachers, instructional coaches, campus principals, and district leaders. Additionally, this research could purposefully extend existing frameworks for professional learning by adding elements that better influence classroom practice.

CHAPTER II:

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in two components of Vygotskian theory, including learning as a social activity (Vygotsky, 1978) and the relationship between thought and language (Vygotsky, 1986). For this study, Vygotsky's theory was applied to the context of professional learning with teachers, rather than the development of children that his original work described.

Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social constructivism highlighted the role of social interactions with the construction of knowledge. That is, as individuals interact with others, their understanding of a concept expands. Additionally, Vygotsky acknowledged that learning takes place within the individual and is informed by past experiences and beliefs. Thus, an individual's learning is shaped by both their past experiences and their interactions with others. Social constructivism is foundational to this study because it assumes individuals learn when interacting with each other.

In *Thought and Language* (1986), Vygotsky described the fluid process between language and thinking. He explained "it would be wrong...to regard thought and language as two unrelated processes" (p. 211). In fact, Vygotsky criticized many other theorists who saw thought and language as isolated entities because he found that there is a much more fluid relationship that exists between the two processes. He argued, "the relation of thought to word is not a thing but a process, a continual movement back and forth from thought to word and from word to thought" (p. 218). Thus, thinking shapes our language and language shapes our thought. This

understanding shaped the study because it clarifies the fluid process between language and thinking while individuals are learning.

Vygotsky's theory of social learning and the relationship between thought and language are vital to this research. In this study, I closely explored the ways in which teacher participants construct knowledge by talking and thinking together around common issues. This study is based on the assumptions that learning occurs in social situations that promote talk and reflection.

Situative Perspective of Learning

Building on the Vygotskian theory of learning, the situative perspective of learning explains the role of knowledge, thinking, and learning on individuals (Greeno, 1997, 1998). Greeno (1997, 1998) explained that the situative perspective does not separate action from meaning and instead focuses on the activities that construct meaning, taking into consideration the context, activity, and culture on learning. Greeno (1998) argued that all activity provides situations for learning to occur, but it is how the activity is situated that really affects the type of learning that transpires. He explained, "the situative perspective emphasizes aspects of problem spaces that emerge in activity, the interactive construction of understanding, and people's engagement in activities, including their contributions to group functions and their development of individual identities" (Greeno, 1998, p. 14). That is, learning and knowledge is developed as people have sustained engagement in learning communities, where they strive to meet the larger goals of the group but also as an individual. Similar to Vygotsky, Greeno (1997) stated, "thinking is a social practice, involving reflection and discourse on activity" (p. 97). The situative perspective encourages more activities and situations where students are actively engaged in thinking, productive inquiry, and discourse.

Putnam and Borko (2000) revolutionized the way we think about teacher learning by applying the theory of situative learning in the context of teacher learning. The situative perspective understands that “cognition is (a) situated in particular physical and social contexts; (b) social in nature; and (c) distributed across the individual, other persons, and tools” (Putnam & Borko, 2000, p. 4). Thus, it is less about if the knowledge and learning is situated, and more about the context in which the knowledge and learning is situated.

For teachers, the classroom environment can be a powerful context for learning and knowing to occur (Putnam & Borko, 2000). When engaging in learning experiences that are situated in classroom settings, teachers’ learning is intertwined with their classroom practice. However, it is naïve to assume that all teacher learning must occur in the context of their classroom, because some learning outside of the classroom is essential for teacher learning (Putnam & Borko, 2000). In fact, teacher learning that is removed from the context of the classroom can help teachers pull away from their existing classroom structures and current understandings, and experience structures and concepts in a new way (Putnam & Borko, 2000). Putnam and Borko (2000) argued for a combination of learning experiences that take place both inside and outside the classroom to help foster powerful shifts in thinking about practice for teachers. Putnam and Borko (2000) also explained the influence of the situative perspective on researchers of teachers, insisting that we must consider our own role as researcher in how we influence the phenomena we study.

The situative perspective in relation to teacher learning illuminates how various contexts influence the knowledge development of teachers. This perspective is critical to this study because I explored the discourse between teachers, specifically studying their language on student writing, both inside and outside their classroom. Putnam and Borko (2000) contested that

the situative perspective on learning can help us think about teacher learning more productively by providing “powerful lenses for examining teaching, teacher learning, and the practice of teacher education... in new ways” (p. 12). This perspective shaped the way I explored teacher learning in the context of a professional learning community.

Teacher Knowledge

In addition to the understanding that learning is situated with a social context, an understanding of the complexity of teacher knowledge is vital to this study. Shulman (1987) argued that it is not sufficient to solely rely on what research insists is effective teaching. Additionally, Shulman (1987) insisted that much of the research on teaching and the systems in place for training and certifying teachers undervalues the complexity and demands of teaching. He explained, “teachers themselves have difficulty in articulating what they know and how they know it” (Shulman, 1987, p. 6). Shulman’s work transformed current understanding of the complexity of the knowledge-base of classroom teachers by shedding light on the categories of what teachers know and how they know it.

Shulman (1987) listed seven categories of teacher knowledge: 1) content knowledge; 2) general pedagogical knowledge; 3) curriculum knowledge; 4) pedagogical content knowledge; 5) knowledge of learners; 6) knowledge of educational contexts; 7) knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values (p. 8). The amount and type of knowledge required of a classroom teacher itself reveals the complexity of teaching as a profession, but Shulman (1987) argued that pedagogical content knowledge is what distinguishes an expert from a novice teacher. Pedagogical content knowledge is a blending of what teachers know about both content and pedagogy, specifically understanding how to present and adapt the particular content to a group

of learners (Shulman, 1987). In other words, pedagogical content knowledge is a teacher's understanding of how to teach a specific subject to various groups of students.

In 1990, Grossman elaborated on Shulman (1987) definition of pedagogical content knowledge by naming and describing four additional components. Within pedagogical content knowledge, there is also a person's overarching conception of teaching a subject area, which serves as a person's basis for making instructional decisions within their classroom. Next, there is knowledge of instructional strategies and representations, which is a person's extensive repertoire of strategies for teaching a particular subject area in multiple ways for a variety of learners. Similarly, knowledge of students' understanding and misunderstandings is a person's understanding of how students typically learn and a person's ability to anticipate problems that might arise when teaching a particular subject. Finally, a person's knowledge of the curriculum and curricular resources accounts for the in-depth knowledge of the resources available for teaching a particular subject and how the resource is structured across the grades within a school.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) added to the body of research on teacher knowledge by drawing a connection between teacher knowledge and practice as teachers learn in communities together. They argued for distinction between the three assumptions of teacher learning including, *knowledge-for-practice*, *knowledge-in-practice*, and *knowledge-of-practice* (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). The first assumption, *knowledge-for-practice*, assumes that researchers and theorists produce formal knowledge for teachers to improve instruction. The second assumption, *knowledge-in-practice*, assumes that teacher learning occurs when it is embedded in the actual work of expert teachers and the reflection on instruction. The final assumption, *knowledge-of-practice*, assumes that teacher learning occurs when they work in inquiry communities to theorize and connect their practice to larger issues and contexts. The first two

assumptions, *knowledge-for-practice* and *knowledge-in-practice* assume that teachers need formal knowledge and practical knowledge for more effective instruction, which is similar to Shulman's (1987) explanation of pedagogical content knowledge of teachers.

However, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) revolutionized the understandings of teacher knowledge by arguing that teachers learn and cultivate their knowledge for instruction by coming together in communities that center around a *problem-of-practice*. They explained that *knowledge-of-practice* does not assume you need both formal and practical knowledge, nor does it make the distinction between expert and novice teachers (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). *Knowledge-of-practice* places teachers as co-constructors and agents of their own learning, emphasizing that teachers learn best when working collaboratively in a tight-knit community toward a common problem with larger efforts to reform their teaching. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) explained that *knowledge-of-practice* assumes that “practice is more than practical, that inquiry is more than an artful rendering of teachers’ practical knowledge, and that understanding the knowledge needs of teaching means transcending the idea that the formal-practical distinction captures the universe of knowledge types” (p. 274). *Knowledge-of-practice* emphasizes teachers using their knowledge to make instructional decisions, influence curriculum, become school leaders and ultimately transform their classroom practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999).

In learning communities grounded in *knowledge-of-practice*, teachers challenge their own assumptions and practices by engaging in a systematic inquiry around a common problem by collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data sources (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) explained that these communities of teachers might study their practice through oral inquiry by analyzing student work, observing their own or a colleague's instruction,

and reflecting on curriculum and school documents. This understanding of teacher knowledge, especially what Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) described of *knowledge-of-practice*, is critical to this study because the design and structure of the process of learning alongside the teacher participants is rooted in the understanding that teachers learn by collectively coming together around a common problem of practice and making instructional decisions by studying student work, observing colleagues, and reflecting on the curriculum.

This study is first grounded in the two components of Vygotskian theory, learning as a social activity (Vygotsky, 1978) and the relationship between thought and language (Vygotsky, 1986). The Vygotskian theory provides the lens of collaboration and discourse as a means for learning. Extending those components of the Vygotskian theory as applied to teacher learning, is the theory of situative perspective on learning (Greeno, 1998; Putnum & Borko, 2000), where activity is an essential part of learning situated within a specific context. Finally, an understanding of teacher knowledge as explained by both Shulman (1987) and Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) provide the final layer to the theoretical framework of this study.

Professional Learning

Because this study explored teacher professional learning, it is imperative to first understand the influence of policy, specifically looking at how the particular political focus at different points in time placed a specific demand on the type of professional learning that occurred for teachers. Additionally, it is important to understand how the definition of professional learning has evolved over time and how policy and various organizations have contributed to our most recent definition. Finally, it is critical to examine the literature to determine characteristics of effective professional learning, as those characteristics shaped the design of this study.

Influence of Policy

Now, more than ever, there is an increased need for quality professional learning. School reform has placed a greater emphasis on increased student achievement, which requires an improvement in teacher professional learning focus is shifted deeper into classroom instruction. The implementation of NCLB in 2001 left many districts responsible for individually determining what constitutes the highly-qualified professional development as deemed necessary by the law. Then, in 2004, The Teaching Commission released *Teaching at Risk: A Call to Action*, which proposed helping teachers by implementing high standards for classroom and student performance with ongoing and targeted professional development. While the message of the report was to help teachers succeed and enable students to learn, there was no further explanation of what or how the professional learning would look like in a district. Sykes (1996) explained that “reform visions are inevitably vague on just how to implement such new ideas” (p. 2). As a result, many districts are spending millions on professional development that is fragmented, superficial, and neglect how adults learn (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Putnam & Borko, 1997; Sykes, 1996).

In 2009, on behalf of the National Staff Development Council (NSDC), Hirsh defined professional development as a “comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers’ and principals’ effectiveness in raising student achievement” (p. 12). Additionally, this definition by Hirsh listed a set of criteria for professional development, including fostering a “collective responsibility for improved student performance” (p. 12). Hirsh extended this statement by explaining that professional development should also be aligned with state, district, and school goals and learning standards, conducted in learning teams, facilitated by a principal,

coach, or teacher leader, occur over sustained amount of time, and consist in a continuous cycle of improvement.

In 2011, Learning Forward, previously known as the NSDC, released new standards for professional learning. This release boldly shifted away from the term professional development to professional learning. This shift in terminology placed more emphasis on the teacher's role in and active construction of their learning. These standards have seven dimensions, including (1) learning communities, (2) leadership, (3) resources, (4) data, (5) learning designs, (6) implementation, and (7) outcomes. In this statement, Learning Forward explained that "professional learning is not the answer to all the challenges educators face, but it can significantly increase [teachers] capacity to succeed" (p. 42). The standards also describe the four prerequisites for effective professional development that illuminate the role of the learner in the process. Also, the standards describe the cyclical relationship between professional learning and student results, claiming

if educators are not achieving the results they want, they determine what changes in practice are needed and then what knowledge, skills, and dispositions are needed to make desired changes. Then they consider how to apply the standards so that they can engage in the learning needed to strengthen their practice (p. 43).

From these standards, it is clear that Learning Forward is shifting focus back onto the teachers as they actively construct their learning throughout a continuous cycle of improvement.

In 2015, President Obama enacted Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and Learning Forward once again improved the definition of professional development to align with the Standards for Professional Learning and show cohesion with federal policy. According to ESSA and Learning Forward, the term professional development means activities that—

(A) are an integral part of school and local educational agency strategies for providing educators...with knowledge and skills necessary to enable students to succeed in a well-rounded education and to meet the challenging State academic standards; and
(B) are sustained...intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom-focused (Learning Forward, 2015, p.1)

The definition includes more description about different types of professional learning that could fit with the characteristics described in the second part of the definition. The Executive Director of Learning Forward, Stephanie Hirsh, released a statement shortly after the ESSA passed, expressing the importance of having alignment with federal policy, but she believes that “professional learning requires more than what the bill describes” (2015, p. 1). Specifically, she encouraged a shift away from using the term “activities” to describe professional learning because the term inherently neglects the continuous nature of learning. However, the rest of the definition supports the effective characteristics of professional learning as described in Learning Forward’s standards, and while it does not guarantee implementation, Stephanie Hirsh explained that “defining professional learning meaningfully in policy is one key step” (2015, para. 10).

While the definition of professional development has evolved and become more specific over the years, many schools in the United States continue to rely on ineffective methods for professional learning. A three-phase report was conducted by Learning Forward and the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education in 2009 and 2010 to describe the trends and challenges in professional development in the United States (Wei et al., 2009; Wei, Darling-Hammond, Adamson, 2010; Jaquith, Mindich, Wei, & Darling-Hammond, 2010). These studies were conducted in hopes to “provide the most comprehensive picture and far-reaching analysis that has ever been conducted in the United States” (Hirsh, 2015, p. iii). Stephanie Hirsh, the

Executive Director for the National Staff Development Council argued that due to the adoption of the Common Core State Standards, “states and districts need to move more aggressively to provide continuous professional development” (p. iii). Furthermore, she explained that effective professional learning involves teachers working regularly together with the goal to improve practice and meet the needs of their individual students (Hirsh, 2015). Wei, Darling-Hammond, and Adamson (2010) argued that “professional development that is short, episodic, and disconnected from practice has little impact, and that well-designed professional development can improve teaching practice and student achievement” (p. 1). Since the quality of teaching is directly linked to student academic performance, it is critical to provide teachers with learning opportunities to improve their practice.

In their first report, Wei et al. (2009) found that there was a decrease in professional learning opportunities for teachers in the United States from 2000 to 2004. Most of the professional learning during those years consisted mostly of workshops and conferences, rather than collaborative work including coaching or observation of peers. As a result, Wei et al. (2009) found that because the professional learning was so disconnected and fragmented, there was little impact on practice. Phase Two of this study found similar results in that teachers were still mostly participating in workshops and conferences, rather than continuous and sustained professional learning (Wei et al., 2010). Finally, in phase three of this study, researchers identified specific features of state policies that encourage active teacher participation in professional learning, including standards for professional development, accountability, and allocation of resources (Jaquith, Mindich, Wei, & Darling-Hammond, 2010).

In summarizing their findings from 2009, Wei et al. (2010) explained that effective professional development included the following features:

- Focused on specific curriculum content and pedagogies needed to teach that content effectively
- Offered as a coherent part of a whole school reform effort, with assessments, standards, and professional learning seamlessly linked
- Designed to engage teachers in active learning that allows them to make sense of what they learn in meaningful ways
- Presented in an intensive, sustained, and continuous manner over time
- Linked to analysis of teaching and student learning, including the formative use of assessment data
- Supported by coaching, modeling, observation, and feedback
- Connected to teachers' collaborative work in school-based professional learning communities and teams (p. 2)

More recently, *The State of Teacher Professional Learning: Results from a Nationwide Survey* (2017) was released from National Education Association, Learning Forward, and Corwin. This study used a 60-item survey to measure professional learning experiences of over 6,300 teachers across the United States. The questions on the survey directly aligned the Standards of Professional Learning from Learning Forward. The findings from this study indicated that teachers are not deeply involved in decisions about their own professional learning, despite the deep commitment to professional learning shown by leaders. Additionally, teachers also reported that they are not given adequate time to apply and practice newly learned skills in their classroom. Finally, teachers reported the use of student data to drive their professional learning, but they do not use data to assess the effectiveness of the professional learning. From these findings, the recommendations included more opportunities for continuous,

job-embedded learning, the use of a variety of data sources to plan and assess professional learning, and the inclusion of teachers in the decision-making process about their own professional learning. Monitoring the evolution of professional learning over time, it is clear that there is still a great need to support implementation in schools. While clarity has been brought through standards and definitions, teachers continue to report their lack of involvement and the fragmentation of professional learning activities.

Characteristics of Professional Learning

This study explored the learning that occurred within a group of practitioners who engaged in the collaborative process of a professional learning community. Professional learning was embedded throughout the process of the professional learning community; therefore, it is imperative to understand the qualities of effective professional learning. Additionally, it is vital to make a distinction between the terms of professional development and professional learning. As stated previously, Learning Forward has been instrumental in framing the definition of quality professional learning. Hirsh (2015) contended that professional learning should involve teachers working together collaboratively with the goal to both improve their practice and influence student learning. In contrast, the term professional development implies that there is a knowledgeable other providing information to someone else so that they become more developed in their profession (Easton, 2008). The research on isolated one-shot workshops consistently demonstrate that fragmented professional development does not result in larger gains in practice or student learning (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Cohen & Hill, 1998; Fullan, 1995; Little, 1993; Showers & Joyce, 1996; Sykes, 1996; Wei et al., 2009). Instead, the term professional learning describes a continuous cycle of improvement where teachers actively construct their learning.

While the definition of professional learning has evolved, several characteristics have remained constant over the years. It is important to note that characteristics of professional learning are not as effective outside of an organized system for learning (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworht, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Leana & Pil, 2006). In fact, Leana and Pil (2006) found that a school's strong social capital is more of an accurate prediction of student achievement than other factors, such as teacher experience. Thus, professional learning is only successful in a supportive school environment (Fullan, 1991; Hawley & Valli, 1999). Below I describe the characteristics that are most prominent throughout the literature on professional learning and included in the most recent definition in ESSA.

Cohesive. Effective professional learning is coherently linked to all school reforms and initiatives. Professional learning should be aligned to district, school, and teacher goals (Byrk, Rollow, & Pinnell, 1996; Friend & Cook, 2016; Fullan, 1993; Guskey, 2003; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Wei et al., 2009). When professional learning is fragmented and isolated from the larger school reform effort, it is less effective (Wei et al., 2009). In fact, Wei et al. (2009) explained that if teachers feel a disconnect between what they are learning and what they are required to follow in local curriculum, the professional development will have little impact. In the same way, if teachers are seeking out professional learning as individuals through one day workshops or conferences and it is not linked to the overall vision of the school, it can cause disconnect between growth in teacher learning and school reform. Instead, the professional learning that occurs should be aligned with school and district goals, while largely supporting the application of new learning.

Effective professional learning is intensive, sustained over time, and continuous. One-shot workshops are fragmented, shallow, and ineffective to creating change and growing

knowledge (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Cohen & Hill, 1998; Fullan, 1995; Little, 1993; Showers & Joyce, 1996; Sykes, 1996; Wei et al., 2009). Ball and Cohen (1999) explained that these one-shot workshops are more like a refresher course, where teachers are updated on current information from an outside source. Ball and Cohen (1999) also compared this type of professional development to yo-yo dieting, where initially there is excitement and possibly even change, but eventually the knowledge gained from the workshop end up sitting in a collection of dusty binders and worksheets on a bookshelf. These workshops assume that there is no need for sustained learning, but the research insists that ongoing and continuous professional learning is most effective for teachers (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Fullan, 1993; Guskey, 1995; Hodges, 1996; Wei et al., 2009).

Systemic professional learning is focused and coherent because it has student learning at the heart of all stakeholders (Raphael, Vasquez, Fortune, Gavelek, & Au, 2014). This characteristic is vital to professional learning because it views the responsibility for student learning as a collective whole. That is, each student's learning is the responsibility of every teacher and staff member in the school. Lyons and Pinnell (2001) explained, "Every administrator, classroom teacher, and specialist assumes responsibility for the literacy achievement of every student in the building and is committed to that goal" (p. 6). This approach eliminates teacher isolation and brings about change because it involves collaboration (Bryk et al., 2010; Raphael et al., 2014), which usually results in an increase in student achievement (Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2005). When professional learning is systemic, it "creates a common purpose and shared responsibility for reaching concrete goals" (Raphael et al., 2014, p. 163).

Authentic. Effective professional learning also engages teachers in actively constructing their learning in meaningful and authentic ways. In a meta-analysis of 16 studies that met their criteria, Blank and de las Alas (2009) found that a common feature of effective professional learning was active learning methods. Additionally, Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) explained that this structure views “knowledge as constructed by and with practitioners for use in their own contexts” (p. 82). Furthermore, it eliminates mandates that are far removed from teacher’s own professional goals. Professional learning should involve learners in the identification of what they need to learn and the development of that learning opportunity and process to be used (Borko & Putnam, 1995; Little, 1993; Miller et al., 1994; Tillema & Imants, 1995).

Rejecting the traditional sense of professional development, Lieberman and Miller (2014) describe a shift towards a more learner-centered approach to support teacher growth in practice. Lieberman and Miller distinguished the terms of professional development and professional learning by leaning on their previous works (Lieberman & Miller, 1999; Lieberman & Miller, 2000) as well as the works of their colleagues (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Little, 2005; McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993). Lieberman and Miller explained that professional learning involves “steady, intellectual work that promotes meaningful engagement with ideas and with colleagues over time” (Lieberman & Miller, 2014, p. 9). Raphael et al. (2014) explained that “teachers must believe that, through their actions, they can influence their students’ learning and that they have the power to make decisions necessary to effect improvements” (p. 154). When teachers are actively constructing their own learning and seeing their learning result in change in their students, they become agents for that systemic change in a school.

Sustained. Wei et al. (2009) found that the duration of professional development was associated with the impact on both practice and student achievement. In fact, they explained that when professional development is sustained over time, like in a study group or coaching, teachers typically have opportunities to apply their learning to their practice, which yields greater results in student learning. Not only is sustained professional learning more effective on practice and student learning, Wei et al. (2009) also found that teachers prefer in-service activities when they are continuous and ongoing. Sykes (1996) encouraged a shift from the knowledge-transmitting that is typically done through one-shot workshops to an approach that is focused on teachers, putting the control of learning in the teacher's hands and adding to their continually existing teaching repertoire. Sykes (1996) said, "Teachers are frequently the targets of reform, but they exert relatively little control over professional development" (p. 1). When professional learning is continuous and ongoing, teachers have more control over what they are learning and are better able to apply new knowledge to their practice.

Sustained professional learning, rather than episodic professional development, "depends on participants' ownership over the change effort and long-term commitment to it" (Raphael et al., 2014, p. 165). Additionally, Darling-Hammond (1993) revealed that sustained and continuous professional learning involves building capacity within all staff members, growing a staff of teacher leaders who take charge of their own learning and collectively support the vision of the school. In order to affect change, teachers require continuous opportunities and ample time to construct knowledge together and apply their learning into their practice.

Rooted in practice. Effective professional learning is linked to both practice and student learning through the analysis of formative assessments. Researchers often refer to this form of professional development as being job-embedded, meaning teacher learning occurs within the

context of daily practice (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). When professional learning is job-embedded, teachers can directly witness the results of their learning on their student achievement, which is incredibly more meaningful for teachers. Additionally, it is through this analysis of their practice and student learning that teachers establish a shared responsibility for student learning and build their capacity for teaching and repertoire of instructional strategies (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995).

Wei et al. (2009) explained that professional development should address the everyday challenges teachers face in the classroom, rather than arbitrary concepts that are out of context and irrelevant to teachers. They explained that teachers find hands-on professional development more valuable because it allows them to directly connect what they are learning and apply it in the context of their own classroom (Wei et al., 2009). Also, Guskey (1986) theorized that change in teacher's beliefs and attitudes only occur after the teacher observes changes in student learning outcomes. When professional development is grounded in practice and provides opportunities for teachers to see how their learning affects change in their students, teachers beliefs about teaching can transform.

One powerful strategy for professional learning is the analysis of authentic student work. Ball and Cohen (1999) emphasized the importance of situating professional learning in authentic artifacts because "it grounds the conversation in ways that are virtually impossible when the referents are remote or merely rhetorical" (p. 17). In fact, the conversations and learning by teachers around authentic artifacts can change the discourse of practice and even improve classroom instruction (Ball & Cohen, 1999). Smylie (1988) discovered that "teachers are more likely to change their behavior in directions that may improve their classroom effectiveness if

they believe that they themselves are instrumental to the learning of their students” (p. 23), which is possible through the collaboration around student work.

While just looking at student work will not immediately translate into improved practice, Kazemi and Franke (2004) found that it “supported the development of a shared language, that in turn, contributed to the construction of the workgroup meeting practices” (p. 230). In the study done by Kazemi and Franke, the professional learning activities were centered around student work, which initiated conversations about practice. Thus, teachers did not just look at work but used it to reflect and adapt their teaching. Kazemi and Franke discovered that this learning that was profoundly rooted in teachers’ practice “allowed for conversations that deepened as well as challenged teachers’ notions about their work as teachers (p. 230). Similarly, Wei et al. (2009) explained that the analysis of student performance data and samples of student work helps teachers determine instructional strategies that are or are not working. The analysis of student work allows teachers to be reflective on their practice and use the data to inform future instructional decisions.

Collaborative. Teacher professional learning happens when educators are engaged in focused collaborative cultures (Fullan, 2016; Hargreaves, 1994). When collaborative, an entire school begins to develop a shared language and depth of understanding of practice (Fullan, 2016; Little, 1982). Collaboration is not something that can result from top-down directives, but exists organically with all members of a learning community who work together to create a shared vision (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Hargreaves, 1994). Additionally, collaboration is not something that always occurs on schedule, like a pre-planned meeting, but instead exists with the day-to-day interactions of teachers, often going unnoticed (Hargreaves, 1994). Joyce and Showers (1995) explained that “without companionship, help in reflecting on practice, and instruction on

fresh teaching strategies, most people can make very few changes in their behavior, however well-intentioned they are” (p. 6). Collaboration is essential to professional learning when the goal is to improve classroom instruction and student achievement.

In their book, *Systems for Change in Literacy Education: A Guide to Professional Development*, Lyons and Pinnell (2001) explained that professional development should be designed through the lens of constructivist theory because “our personal perspectives are shaped and changed as we engage in cooperative social activity, conversation, and debate with others around common purposes, concerns and interests” (p. 4). This process of collaboration then builds new knowledge and extends current thinking (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). The framework and principles described by Lyons and Pinnell (2001) synthesize the research on teacher learning and describe it through the lens of constructivist theory. They explained that professional development should encourage active participation with teachers, occur within small-group contexts, apply new learning to practice, support conversation around shared experiences, and build on teacher’s strengths. Lyons and Pinnell argued that these principles could best be applied through a collaborative community of learners.

In summary, effective professional learning is aligned to district, school, and classroom goals, authentic, rooted in practice, sustained over a long period of time, and collaborative in nature. These characteristics are not isolated but integrated within an organizational structure and school culture. When these characteristics exist together, a shared language of practice emerges, which can positively influence student achievement.

Professional Development Models

Given that this study is rooted in teacher professional growth, it is imperative to examine existing professional development models in recent literature. Using the characteristics of

effective professional learning, several models and frameworks have been embraced by schools and districts to provide systemic structures for collaboration. This section does not include an exhaustive list of all models, but those models that embrace the characteristics of professional learning as previously described.

National Writing Project (NWP)

Arguably the most respected professional development model for writing teachers, The National Writing Project (NWP) is a federally funded program that involves a network of writing teachers teaching other writing teachers, with the sole mission to improve the writing and learning of all students. The NWP has close to 200 sites that provide professional development for writing teachers, through both multi-week summer institutes and year-round events. These sites are usually connected through local colleges and universities, serving writing teachers at all levels, from early childhood to university.

The primary form of professional development through NWP occurs during multi-week summer institutes that leads teachers through authentic writing experiences grounded in research-based instructional practices. During the institute, teachers focus on their own writing and reflection on their writing process, stressing that writing teachers are writers first. Teachers also spend time reading relevant writing research, collaborating with other writing teachers, and demonstrating their classroom practice. The summer institute produces a cadre of teacher leaders who become involved in year-round professional development through the organization.

Throughout the year, NWP provides professional development opportunities for teachers through various workshops, study groups, retreats, and coaching sessions. While some of these professional development opportunities are hosted by the national organization, most are put on locally at the university sites by the teacher leaders. For those unable to physically attend events,

The NWP website abounds with research articles ranging on various topics of writing instruction. NWP also has a radio channel that regularly discusses writing pedagogy and recent research. While no longer in print, *The Quarterly of the National Writing Project* was a journal published by NWP for 27 years that included reports and articles on writing research. The journal archive is available for free-access on the NWP website. NWP not only provides face-to-face opportunities for teachers' professional learning, but offers an extensive amount of digital resources, too.

There have been several studies and reports that reveal the positive impact of NWP professional development on both teachers and students (Borko, 2004; Lieberman & Wood 2003; Kim et al., 2011; Whitney, 2008; Whitney & Friedrich, 2013). In an article about effective professional development, Borko (2004) listed NWP as an example of professional development that grows capacity in teachers. Borko (2004) described the focus of NWP on "situating teachers' learning in their own writing and classroom practices rather than developing extensive curricular materials" (p. 10). Most of the research on the effectiveness of the NWP on teachers is positive, however, the primary method of collecting data is through surveys and interviews with teacher-reported information. Borko (2004) explained that most teachers report that NWP "helped them to develop a valuable professional network, change their philosophies about teaching writing, and increase both the time spent on writing instruction and use of exemplary teaching practices" (p. 11).

Lieberman and Wood (2003) revealed that because the teachers that participate in NWP are immersed in learning themselves, they are able to make connections to their own classroom practice, resulting in shifts in their philosophy for teaching writing. In a case study of seven writing teachers, Whitney (2008) found significant transformations in teaching practices of the

teachers who actively participated in the NWP summer institute. In fact, Whitney found that the experience of authentically writing and collaborating with colleagues was a significant factor in the teacher professional learning. Additionally, Whitney (2008) highlighted a strong connection between professional development and the community of learners that created through and sustained from the professional development experiences of NWP. In a more recent study of 110 teachers, Whitney and Friedrich (2013) contended that the legacy of NWP outlasts any instructional strategies for teaching writing because the network of continuous learning created by NWP is long-lasting.

Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP)

Located in New York, NY, through Columbia University, The Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) is an organization designed to support reading and writing teachers. The organization began organically as the founder, Lucy Calkins, established a team of people to work as staff developers in local schools. The initial team included Georgia Heard, Ralph Fletcher, JoAnn Portalupi, and Shelley Harwayne, who are all well-known authors of books for writing teachers. The TCRWP has published curriculum for K-8 teachers of both reading and writing, titled *The Units of Study for Teaching Reading* and *The Units of Study for Teaching Writing*.

The heart of the project is supporting teachers in local New York City schools. The TCRWP has partnerships with local schools that serve as model schools for the city and visiting teachers. The staff developers at TCRWP provide ongoing professional development for the teachers of those schools and frequently bring in teachers from other states to experience flourishing classrooms that use reading and writing workshop for literacy instruction. Because of these partnerships with local schools, the staff developers are able to create lab-site experiences

for other teachers, where they provide professional learning opportunities in authentic classroom settings using hands-on practice of instructional strategies.

In addition to school-based professional development, several institutes are offered year-round through TCRWP. Teachers in Grades K-8 can participate in over 15 multi-day institutes that breakdown the components of reading and writing workshop. There are also specific institutes that target diverse populations such as English Language Learners or students in Special Education. Some institutes are even targeted to specific genres of writing, like argument or essay, and others to specific components of literacy learning, such as phonics. Additionally, TCRWP hosts leadership institutes for school leaders and coaching institutes for literacy coaches. Each institute is a blend of workshop-style sessions and application of the learned strategies. Not only are the institutes offered at Teacher's College each summer, but staff developers also travel to schools around the world to provide professional development at what they call Home Grown Institutes.

The TCRWP website includes information about their organization and lists specific studies that support the research-base for their curriculum. While TCRWP grounds their work in relevant research, they do not have any existing empirical studies examining the effectiveness of their professional development system. There are published articles and practitioner resources from multiple TCRWP staff developers and some empirical studies looking specifically at student products, but there are no studies that look at their model for professional development.

Reading Recovery

Reading Recovery® is well known for its success in early intervention with struggling readers. The program began in New Zealand thirty years ago and brought to the United States in 1984. The goal of Reading Recovery is to reduce the number of first grade students who are

struggling to read and write. Because Reading Recovery relies on the decision making of teachers, the professional development component of this program is a large part of its success.

Reading Recovery established a three-tiered approach to professional development that involves teachers, teacher leaders, and university trainers. Additionally, all Reading Recovery teachers participate in graduate studies that focus on early literacy, assessment, and intervention. The professional development is systemic, ongoing, job-embedded, and continuous for the teachers, teacher leaders, and university trainers. Additionally, Reading Recovery teachers consistently engage in reflective practice as they work with four students, one-to-one, while taking a year-long course at the university. In reference to his first encounter with Reading Recovery over 20 years ago, Bryk (2009) claimed that he saw “a program whose organizational design was way ahead of its time” (p. 17). The professional development component of Reading Recovery achieves what most programs have not been able to because it is not only grounded in best practice and theory of learning, but involves educators continuously seeking improvement and using student data to drive their work.

Several key components of the professional development system of Reading Recovery can be attributed to its success. First, Reading Recovery established a shared language between all educators. The training of Reading Recovery teachers is systemic and connected, using the same resources, assessment tools, and instructional protocols. The teachers develop a thorough understanding of early literacy development and use a common language to observe, assess, and discuss literacy behaviors (Bryk, 2009). Next, the training of Reading Recovery teachers is just as systematic as the program itself. New trainees participate in a year-long academic study at the university with a practice-based approach to learning. Throughout training, Reading Recovery teachers participate in observing other Reading Recovery teachers and discussing practice using

the behind-the-glass approach. Bryk (2009) explained that this approach to professional learning reveals that “individual practice is public to one’s colleagues [and]... critical dialogue with colleagues about the specifics of practice is how we learn to improve” (p. 18). Also, the learning never stops with Reading Recovery teachers. New trainees, practicing teachers, teacher leaders, and university trainers all engage in professional learning together, continuously seeking to improve their practice and the system as a whole.

The professional development system in Reading Recovery is “more detailed, thought out, and strategically delivered” than many existing preservice or in-service programs (Bryk, 2009, p. 18). In fact, I have not found another program that incorporates so many elements of effective professional learning, while also having results to prove its effectiveness on student achievement. Reading Recovery routinely collects data on student learning, critically looking at the systems in place to educate students and continuously seeking to improve. Reading Recovery teachers see their own teaching as opportunities to learn and work within a system to grow their understanding and meet the needs of individual learners.

Other models of professional development that contain the characteristics of effective professional learning given previously encourage communities of learners within a school or district. While nothing can compare the vast community of learners through the networks within Reading Recovery, several models strive to achieve similar goals with teachers. One of the benefits of these other models is that they can be applied in various contexts, not just with a program or even content area.

Instructional Coaching

Another form of professional learning takes place through instructional coaching. While some frameworks incorporate coaching within their model for professional development, others

see it as a separate form of professional development altogether. The movement in instructional coaching is largely in response to the lack of change in teacher practice after attending a workshop. In fact, Knight (2007) found that many teachers were over-compliant and burdened by the large amount of initiatives and fragmented trainings, and that one-on-one coaching served as a better way to influence change. Knight (2007) defined Instructional Coaching (IC) as

individuals who are full-time professional developers, on-site in schools. ICs work with teachers to help them incorporate research-based instructional practices. When ICs work with students, they do so with the primary goal of demonstrating new effective practices to teachers...ICs must be skilled at unpacking their clients' (collaborating teachers) goals so they can help them create a plan for realizing their professional goals...ICs have to have a repertoire of excellent communication skills and be able to empathize, listen, and build prelatships and trust. Also...ICs must be highly skilled at facilitating teachers' reflections about their classroom practices. Finally...ICs have to know a large number of scientifically proven instructional practices (p. 12-13).

The initial research and learning from Knight's studies are synthesized in his book called *Instructional Coaching* (2007). This book described the role of a coach as a collaborator and facilitator of learning, creating a partnership with the teacher rather than a supervisory role. Additionally, he described a coaching model called The Big Four, which encouraged coaches to support teachers with research-based practices in the areas of behavior, content knowledge, direct instruction, and formative assessment. In Knight's model of coaching, the instructional coach is not content-specific, but works with teachers across content areas, supporting teachers with generalizable and transferable instructional strategies.

More recently, Knight (2018) published *The Impact Cycle: What Instructional Coaches Should Do to Foster Powerful Improvements in Teaching*. In this book, Knight (2018) again synthesized not only his own work with teachers and coaches, but the work of many other researchers in the educational field, proposing a cycle of coaching that can lead to both student and teacher growth. He argued that coaches are most effective when they “position teachers as partners...and employ the high-impact actions within a coaching cycle” (Knight, 2018, p. 4). Knight’s proposed high-impact coaching cycle is illustrated in the figure below (see Figure 2.1).

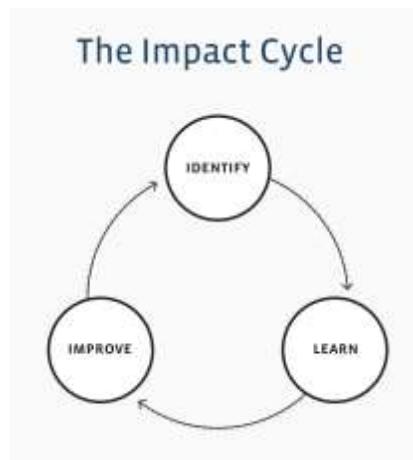


Figure 2.1. The Impact Cycle (Knight, 2018)

The Impact Cycle (Knight, 2018) begins with identify, which involves a coach and a teacher in partnership working towards a common goal. This part of the process begins by getting a clear picture of reality. Knight (2018) explained that “coaching likely won’t succeed unless teacher and coach both clearly see what is happening in the classroom” (p. 27). To establish this baseline, Knight (2018) recommended using video recording of teaching, learning from students, or observational data. After establishing a clear picture of reality, Knight (2018) suggested that the coach and teacher set goals for the outcome they want to experience. Drawing on the work of other researchers and his own experiences working with both teachers and coaches, Knight (2018) developed a framework for creating goals called PEERS: Powerful,

Easy, Emotionally Compelling, Reachable and Student-Focused. Knight (2018) argued, “once a teacher has a PEERs goal, coaching has a momentum of its own” (p. 66).

The second part of the Impact Cycle is called learn. This involves a knowledgeable coach working with a teacher to select teaching strategies to meet the pre-determined goal. Knight (2018) encouraged coaches to carry an instructional playbook to keep track of the strategies that have the greatest impact on student learning. After a teacher selects a strategy to try, Knight (2018) found that modeling the strategies in the teacher’s classroom with or without students present could help teachers internalize the strategy as their own. Additionally, Knight (2018) found that co-teaching, watching a video, or visiting another teacher’s classroom could also be helpful ways to experience new instructional strategies.

Finally, the Impact Cycle ends with improve. Knight (2018) explained, “the improve stage is where ideas turn into action, where real improvement either does or doesn’t occur” (p. 133). In this stage, the teacher and coach engage in a reflective conversation about the goal, strategies, and how they have impacted student learning. Knight (2018) argued for a four-step process of this stage of the cycle, that often occurs within a single conversation: 1) confirm direction, 2) review progress, 3) invent improvements, and 4) plan next actions. From there, the cycle might repeat based on the teacher’s next action steps.

Knight (2018) has had an extremely important influence on the literature around instructional coaching for over a decade. His proposed method for coaching insists on an equal partnership between a coach and a teacher and is focused on student achievement. He explained that the Impact Cycle is a dialogical approach to coaching (Knight, 2018). In a dialogic approach, coaches “ask powerful questions, listen and think with teachers, and collaborate with them to set powerful goals that will have powerful impact on students’ lives” (Knight, 2018, p.

13). An important distinction to the dialogic approach to coaching is that the coach does not hold back their expertise as in some other approaches. In fact, Knight (2018) argued that a coach must have a very deep understanding of highly effective instructional strategies to better help teachers improve. It is crucial, though, that a dialogic coach “does not do the thinking for teachers; rather, they position teachers as decision makers” (Knight, 2018, p. 13).

Another model for instructional coaching is what Costa and Garmston (2002) defined as Cognitive Coaching. This model supports teachers in reflecting on their practice in a nonjudgmental way through conversations about teaching. Cognitive Coaching is highly effective in increasing teacher collaboration (Alseike, 1997) and reflection (Smith, 1997) and has a positive impact on student achievement (Auerbach, 2006). The appeal of Cognitive Coaching is that it does not assume there is a formula for coaching or even instruction, but builds capacity within a staff by focusing on teachers’ strengths and reflecting on possibilities. Cognitive Coaching takes place in a three-phase cycle including a preconference, observation, and postconference. The goal of the cycle is for the teacher to reflect on the lesson and find opportunities for learning. This reflective nature of Cognitive Coaching is what makes it transformational for classroom practices.

A school-wide reform model called Literacy Collaborative (LC) utilizes a coaching structure with individual teachers with the goal to improve student literacy learning. This professional development model was designed by Fountas and Pinnell (1996, 2006), who were largely influenced by the reading theories of Clay (1966, 1991, 1998, 2001) and the structures she created within the professional development model of Reading Recovery. Literacy Collaborative acknowledges the need of continuous learning with teachers, and designs a program to train school-based literacy coaches that work side-by-side with classroom teachers.

Similar to the Reading Recovery model, literacy coaches-in-training receive one year of graduate studies. The training for the LC, though, focused both on growing the coach's own understanding of literacy learning in children and discovering ways to lead professional development and coach teachers.

In a 4-year longitudinal study of this program, Biancarosa, Bryk, and Dexter (2010) found that literacy coaching has a strong effect on student literacy learning. In fact, they found that students had significant gains in literacy learning from the first year of implementation of LC. Biancarosa, Bryk, and Dexter (2010) attribute the success of LC to the intense training of literacy coaches, organizational system, and coherent implementation across campuses. This is another professional development model that empirically reveals its effect on student learning over time. Literacy Collaborative is one of the only systems in place to train literacy coaches and reform schools as a professional development model.

Another effective system that trains literacy coaches and includes intensive professional development is the Partners in Comprehensive Literacy (PCL) developed by Dr. Linda Dorn through the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. The PCL is a model on school improvement that partners schools with universities, aligns instruction, intervention, and assessments, and trains teachers as leaders of school improvement. Coaching is an essential feature of PLC as it relies on school-based coaches, district coaches, peer coaches, and intervention coaches. Even though the coaches work with teachers most of their day, they also still see students as interventionists so they are constantly connected to practice. Similar to the Reading Recovery behind-the-glass professional development model, PCL involves teachers in cluster conferences, where teachers observe and discuss a brief, focused lesson together. Additionally, teams of teachers also work together through Collaborative Learning Teams, where they expand their

knowledge of literacy through book studies, action research, or coaching. The comprehensive approach by PCL involves teachers as active agents of their learning, includes systems for tracking growth in both students and the school, and embeds professional learning through a structured coaching model.

Joyce and Showers (2002) revolutionized the way many thought of staff development when they introduced the idea of peer coaching in their earlier work. In their research on effective staff development, Joyce and Showers found that there is a large effect in transfer of learning to practice when coaching is added to the initial training of theory, demonstration, and practice. That is, coaching effectively helps teachers transfer new knowledge into the context of their own classroom.

Joyce and Showers (2002) explained that through all their research on coaching, several consistencies exist that speak to the effectiveness of instructional coaching. First, they found that teachers who are coached usually practice the new strategies more frequently and persevere through trials or awkward stages of implementation. So, even if teachers receive the same amount of professional development training, those who receive coaching support are more likely to implement new strategies and see effects on student learning. Next, coached teachers implement new strategies more appropriately than uncoached teachers do because they receive consistent support in implementation, reducing the chance of constructing misconceptions about their new learning. Third, coached teachers “exhibited greater long-term retention of knowledge about and skill with strategies in which they had been coached” (Joyce & Showers, 2002, p. 87). Specifically, Joyce and Showers (2002) found that months after being trained, coached teachers not only retained the new learning, but also often enhanced their technical mastery of those strategies because of the coaching. Also, their research in peer coaching revealed that the

students of coached teachers had an increase in understanding and independence with new strategies than the students of uncoached teachers (Joyce & Showers, 2002). Finally, they found that coached teachers had “clearer cognitions with regards to the purposes and uses of the new strategies” (Joyce & Showers, 2002, p. 87). Through interviews, lesson plans, and classroom observation, Joyce and Showers discovered that the new strategies became a natural part of a coached teacher’s repertoire. The work of Joyce and Showers reveal the positive impact coaching can have on teacher practice and student achievement.

Professional Learning Communities

One structure for professional learning that is systemic, connected to practice, collaborative, and centered around student learning and achievement is the participation in school-based professional learning communities. In this section, I describe the two sides of the literature on professional learning communities. On one hand, the term is used as a proper noun and accompanying acronym: Professional Learning Community (PLC). This term refers to the prescriptive nature of the collaborative structure as defined by DuFour et al. (2016). On the other hand, I describe the term that has been present in the literature for much longer, professional learning communities, which both credits and embodies reflective practice (Dewey, 1933, 1964; Schön, 1983), communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), and inquiry-as-stance (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, 2009).

Professional learning communities (PLCs). Professional learning communities are one structure that have recently become popular in many schools because of the systematic way it can be implemented across content areas. Many districts, including the one where this study took place, adopt the model designed by DuFour et al. (2016) with the intent to improve their schools. DuFour et al. are responsible for making the term a proper noun and thus, a widely used acronym

in many schools. DuFour et al.'s (2016) work has created tension amongst academics whose lifework has been studying professional learning communities because the design is more prescriptive in response to school reform. While most of the seminal literature of professional learning communities aim to describe the organic collaborative nature of the groups, acknowledging the learning theories that make their work so effective, DuFour et al. (2016) wrote a handbook with procedures to implement PLCs. While this difference may be subtle on the outside, it has sparked much debate in researchers in this field and created misconceptions by those implementing PLCs in their schools.

Learning by Doing by DuFour et al. (2016) is written as a practical handbook that many district administrators use to implement the PLC model in their schools, creating a common language for collaboration. DuFour et al. (2016) defined a PLC as:

an ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve. PLCs operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous job-embedded learning for educators (p. 10).

DuFour et al.'s (2016) work is widely adopted as a prescription for improving collaboration in schools, and oftentimes mandated in top-down directives, which is far from the intent of DuFour et al. (2016). One of the problems that frequently occurs in schools using DuFour et al.'s (2016) handbook is that many school districts have begun using the term PLC to describe work that does not align with the intended definition of a PLC. Frustrated by the misconceptions surrounding the definition of a PLC, DuFour and Marzano (2011) argued:

Some educators approach the PLC process as if it were a program, simply one more addition to the existing practices of the school. It is not a program. Others regard it as a

meeting, as in, “We do PLCs on Wednesdays from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m., and then we return to business as usual.” It is not a meeting. Still others equate a PLC to a book club, as in, “We all read the same book and talk about it.” It is not a book club. (p. 22)

DuFour et al. (2016) explained that the big ideas that drive the work of a PLC include a focus on learning at high levels, working collaboratively and taking collective responsibility for all students, and a results orientation with evidence of student learning. Thus, it is much less about scheduled times to collaborate and more about the work that occurs during the collaboration. DuFour et al. (2016) contended, “the intent of this cyclical process is not to simply learn a new strategy, but instead to create conditions for perpetual learning” (p. 13).

The first big idea behind DuFour et al.’s (2016) work is based on the idea that all students deserve the right not just to be taught but also to learn at high levels. DuFour et al. (2016) call for all stakeholders to be invested in the mission for high levels of student learning by creating collective commitments that help to create a shared vision for all students, rather than just those inside an individual teacher’s classroom. Additionally, these commitments help clarify the role each member will play and the expected results that demonstrate the learning. DuFour et al. (2016) described four crucial questions that guide the ongoing work of the members in a PLC: 1) What is it we want our students to learn? 2) How will we know if each student has learned it? 3) How will we respond if a student does not learn it? 4) How will we respond if a student already knows it? These guiding questions are intended to focus the work of the PLC by creating clear expectations for student learning while also driving teachers to examine their own practice to ensure all students are learning at high levels.

A second big idea behind DuFour et al.’s (2016) work emphasized that collaboration and collective responsibility of a group helps to ensure that all students learn at high levels. Moving

away from a model where teachers each work in isolation inside their own individual classroom, DuFour et al. argue that schools embracing the PLC model understand that “working collaboratively is not option, but instead an expectation and requirement of employment” (p. 12). When collaboration is truly embraced at a school, the teachers become interdependent on each other to achieve their shared goals and hold each other accountable along the way (DuFour et al., 2016). DuFour et al. contend that it is not just simply collaboration that influences student learning, but collaboration that is “focused on the right work” (p. 12). That is, collaboration should involve teachers working together to impact their own instruction and student learning (DuFour et al., 2016).

The last big idea behind DuFour et al.’s (2016) work is a need for results orientation. In a PLC, educators should be expected to focus on the results of their student learning and then use the results to “inform and improve their professional practice and respond to students who need intervention or enrichment” (DuFour et al., 2016, p. 12). A focus on results leads to a cyclical process of the PLC where the team of teachers work to gather evidence, develop strategies to address strengths and weaknesses of their students, implement the strategies, analyze the impact of the changes to discover what is effective, and then apply the knowledge in the next cycle (DuFour, et al., 2016). This process involves all members of the team and leads to “an environment in which innovation and experimentation are viewed...as ways of conducting day-to-day business, forever” (DuFour, et al., 2016, p. 13)

To effectively implement the big ideas behind a PLC, DuFour et al. (2016) called for “a culture that is simultaneously loose and tight” (p. 13). That is, teachers should be empowered to make important decisions, but leaders need to provide some structures that are nondiscretionary

and required. Below lists the elements that should be considered tight in a PLC, according to DuFour et al. (2016) (See Figure 2.2).

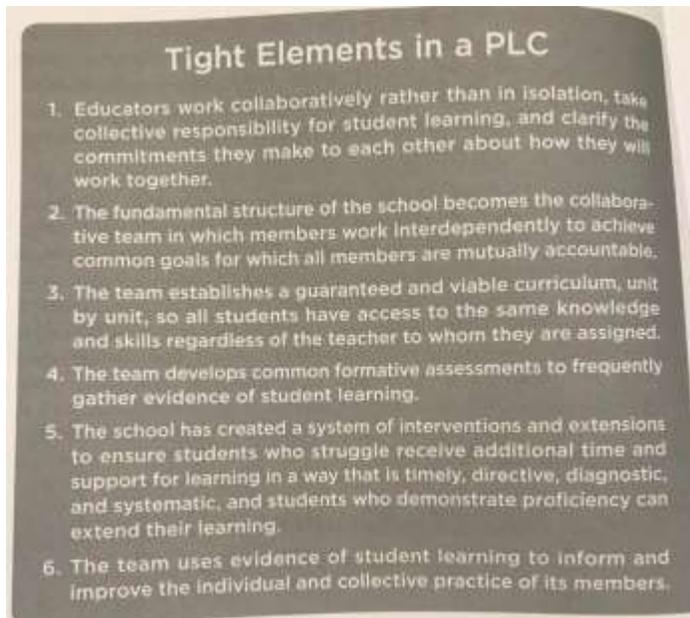


Figure 2.2. Tight Elements in a PLC (DuFour, et al., 2016)

DuFour et al. (2016) wrote *Learning by Doing* as a handbook for schools to use to implement PLCs effectively. Aside from establishing the rationale of big ideas guiding the work in the first chapter, the remainder of the book includes procedures for implementing PLCs. Each chapter is organized by a case study to illustrate the focus, procedural steps describing how to implement the focus, a rationale behind the focus, reproducible pages to assess your own place in the PLC journey, tips, guiding questions, and advice for avoiding dangerous shortcuts. As an additional support to schools implementing DuFour et al.'s PLC model, the book's publishing company, Solution Tree, hosts a variety of online resources, provides on-site professional development with consultants, and manages an institute held in a variety of locations titled *Professional Learning Communities at Work*.

While the big ideas behind DuFour et al.'s (2016) model for PLCs involve building collective capacity with student learning as the focus, the implementation has been misconstrued

in many districts, partially from the presentation of the resources. The PLC model as described by DuFour et al. is seen as a prescription for school improvement that is accompanied by various resources, consultants, professional development opportunities, and even reproducible pages to increase teacher understanding of how to effectively implement PLCs. Ironically, the PLC structure embodies much of the definition of effective professional learning opportunities, especially since it involves continuous improvement, collective inquiry and job-embedded experiences. However, the way it is presented takes on the definition of “professional development” where teachers attend workshops that feel disconnected to the work at hand. This argument is a big reason for the divide between DuFour et al.’s model of PLCs and the existing literature on professional learning communities.

Professional learning communities. While the work of DuFour et al. (2016) has influenced many schools and districts in implementing PLCs, the work of small group collaboration through collective inquiry and problem-solving has appeared in the literature on professional learning for quite some time (Fullan, 1991; Guskey, 1995; Hargreaves, 1994; Hubberman, 1995; Little, 1993). Research has revealed positive outcomes for both teachers and students when professional learning communities are implemented in schools (Fullan, 1991; Kazemi & Franke, 2004; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Rogoff, Baker-Sennett, Lacasa, & Goldsmith, 1995). Lieberman and Miller (2008) defined professional learning communities as “ongoing groups of teachers who meet regularly for the purpose of increasing their own learning and that of their students” (p. 2). These groups of teachers are strongly bound together in trusting professional relationships that value honest and open communication. The teachers talk, inquire critically and deeply into their practice, and assume mutual responsibility for student learning. Professional learning communities combine the ideas of reflective practice (Dewey, 1933, 1964;

Schön, 1983), communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), and inquiry-as-stance (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, 2009).

Reflection occurs within the context of a professional learning community. John Dewey (1933, 1964) advocated for practitioners to be reflective problem-solvers, where they identified problems, came up with possible solutions, enacted the solutions, and analyzed results. For Dewey, deep reflection was essential when practitioners came together to problem-solve. Schön (1983) helped practitioners distinguish between reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. He contended that oftentimes the reflective work done inside the classroom is overlooked and undervalued, but when teachers reflect-in-action, their knowledge is developed and articulated within that action. Schön (1983) explained, “when someone reflects-in-action, he becomes a researcher in the practice context” (p. 68). While an individual brings technical knowledge to the practice, the ability to reflect-in-practice demonstrates knowledge-in-action, quick decision-making and problem-solving. Through reflective practice as a problem-solving activity, Dewey and Schön’s theories both shift focus back on practitioners, the context of their classroom, and their experience.

Communities of practice involve individuals who come together to engage in a process of collective learning (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner explained that this collective group shares a common concern become more knowledgeable as they interact regularly. Additionally, it is not merely enough to come together due to shared passion, but a community of practice is united by a shared domain, actively engaged as a community of learners, and situated within their own practice (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). These groups are sometimes developed naturally within the workplace, but other times are artificially created to promote collaboration. Communities of practice develop

their knowledge through active problem-solving, sharing experiences, documenting gaps, visiting others, and more (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). While communities of practice are not the solution alone, they open up opportunities for building capacity in others and developing learning capability. Thus, communities of practice are a foundational piece of professional learning communities.

In 2009, Cochran-Smith and Lytle wrote *Inquiry as Stance*, a follow-up to their foundational text, *Inside/Outside* (1993). *Inquiry as Stance* dives deeper into practitioner research, especially in light of new educational policies. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) explain that “inquiry as stance is grounded in the problems of practice” (p.12) and the ways that practitioners respond to those problems. Additionally, inquiry as stance blurs the boundaries between leaders and followers, as all stakeholders are valued in the problem-solving process and decisions are made organically within an inquiry group. Within a professional learning community structure, boundaries are dissolved between administrators and teachers as they engage in collective problem-solving, thus, inquiry as stance is a foundational component of professional learning communities.

Lyons and Pinnell (2001) created a systematic framework for professional development that exists within a community of learners. They warned that this creating a collaborative group of educators who see themselves as learners together is no easy task. The creation of a community of learners takes intentional commitment from administrators and teachers. Lyons and Pinnell explained that collaboration within a learning community requires an atmosphere of trust, shared responsibility and credit for success, time, communication, focus on students, and a vision of what is possible (p. 7-8). When a community of learners is established, the teaching practice, student learning, and overall achievement improves.

Writing Development

The participants in this study were second-grade writing teachers, thus it is important to establish an understanding of writing development, both in the historical evolution of studies focused on writing development and the developmental trajectory for young writers.

Initially, young children are fearless writers (Graves, 1983). While learning to write, young children are still in an egocentric frame of mind, abiding by their own guidelines, and focusing more on getting marks on the page than having a conventionally spelled message. Graves (1983) contended that early writing experiences of children are primarily for their own purpose, similar to their play behaviors. Eventually, children will begin applying rules of the written language to the messages they compose, but first, they must explore, discover, and approximate (Clay, 1975; DeFord, 1980; Graves, 1983). The writing process works in conjunction with the reading process and oral language process, resulting in literacy development in a child (Clay, 1991).

Marie Clay's (1966) work first shed light on the literacy development of young children. Her theory revealed that early literacy development occurs with a period between birth and when the child begins to read and write at a conventional level (Clay, 1966). Additionally, Clay believed that literacy development is ongoing and continuous, that development does not stop at the conventional level but continues throughout a child's life. When researching about young writers, it is necessary to view the child's entire literacy development as each system interacts with the other. Clay's theory specifically illuminated the interconnectedness and reciprocity between speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

When a child comes to school, it is important to "foster the child's desire to explore writing at the same time he is learning to read" (Clay, 1991, p. 96). When a child is learning to

read, concepts learned in reading can be used in writing. Similarly, the concepts learned in writing acts as a resource in reading. Clay (1991) suggested that “writing provides extra opportunities for the child to gain control of literacy concepts” (p. 109). Thus, learning to read and write simultaneously creates a network of information that the child can rely on (Clay, 1991).

Learning to write occurs long before children receive formal instruction (Clay, 1991; Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982; Sulzby, 1982, 1985, 1986; Sulzby & Teale, 1991; Puranik & Lonigan, 2011). In fact, the unconventional writing behaviors that children exhibit before entering school strongly influences the foundation and later success with conventional knowledge they receive during formal instruction. Children come to school as individuals and express themselves as such. Within their first year of school, children’s literacy development begins to change and evolve. Clay (1991) explained, “entry to school requires rapid transition from old adjustments” (p. 56) which results in children regulating their literacy learning to the expectations of their classroom. A child’s first year in school may be their first experience with reading and writing as a daily activity. Children must first learn that print conveys meaning, whether or not their messages can be read conventionally. Additionally, children must learn how to transition from oral language into written language, which can be an intricate process for a young child.

Developmental Trajectory

Learning to write is complex and the literature reflects this complexity in the varied views on writing development. Read (2009) explained that “learning to write...is not a single cognitive step but rather involves components of knowledge and skill” (p. 261). Rather than thinking about writing development as stages along a trajectory, Read (2009) argues for “logical

components of the learning process” (p. 261). Because learning to write is so complex and far from generic, development in writing is variable, meaning there is no single linear path or endpoint for each writer (Bazerman et al., 2017). While learning to write is a complex process, there are some agreed upon understandings of the nature of writing development in young children, with the understanding that each individual develops at their own pace, varying from one another. Writing development is best thought of as a sociocognitive constructivist process, rather than stages of development (Chapman, 2006). Since researchers account for individual differences, backgrounds, and experiences, children do not linearly progress through lockstep stages of writing development. Children move through different predictable patterns of development, adding new skills to their repertoire as they go (Sulzby, 1996).

One of the earliest studies of young children’s writing was Hildreth’s (1936) study on the developmental sequence of name writing. While her findings were somewhat accidental as she intended to study the mental processes of preschool children, she discovered that children’s writing typically progressed from unorganized scribbles to writing that looked somewhat more conventional. Clay (1975) explained that since names are extremely personal signs, children typically first learn to write their own name before learning to write other words. When the child initially identifies his written name, he sees it not as a word, but as a representation of himself. Clay (1975) explained that we as adults understand that the letters represent a name, but “to the child it is his name” (p. 46). Later, the child developmentally progresses by identifying the individual letters that make up his name, distinguishing his name from others, and understanding that specific letters in his name are also in the whole alphabet. Eventually, the child can use that knowledge of letters and corresponding sounds to construct other words.

Name writing represents one of the first opportunities for a child to convey meaning through print and influences a child's early literacy knowledge (Bloodgood, 1999; Clay, 1975; Haney, Bissonnette, & Behnken, 2003; Welsch, Sullivan, & Justice, 2003). Bloodgood's (1999) study of 67 children revealed connections not just between name writing and literacy knowledge, but specifically identified the connections and literacy growth within specific age groups of children. In their study on the relationship between name writing and emergent literacy knowledge in 3,546 preschool children, Welsch et al. (2003) expanded on Bloodgood's (1999) findings at a much larger scale, proving that the complexity of name writing is directly linked to a child's literacy knowledge. They explained this connection suggests "that the accuracy of children's name writing reflects their general knowledge about print and sounds" (Welsch et al., 2003, p.771). Bloodgood (1999) agreed that name writing provides the opportunity to match known letters to sounds, which can be used to communicate meaning through print.

Similarly, Haney et al. (2003) found similar evidence in their study of 162 preschooler's name writing, explaining that "early name writing may represent a child's first use in using printed symbols for meaning" (p. 99). Children move towards more conventional print in name writing than in other forms of writing words, which reveals that name writing is one of the earliest literacy behaviors in young children and provides the opportunity to observe what children are noticing about print.

Clay's (1975) original work with *What Did I Write?* documents a child's writing behaviors over time by using real examples of student writing and describing guiding concepts and principles for writing development. This work showed that while there are predictable writing behaviors as children develop as writers, they do not progress linearly through stages. The first principle described by Clay is the *sign concept*, where a child understands that print

carries meaning. Next, the *message concept*, is when a child understands that their speech can be written down. The *copying principle* applies to beginning printing behaviors as a child benefits from imitation and copying of some letters, words, or phrases. The *flexibility principle* is when a child explores the limits of variation in letter forms. The *inventory principle* is comprised of an exhaustive list of letters, words, or phrases, revealing what a child can do fluently and any potential gaps. The *recurring principle* is when a child repeats and duplicates a drawing, word, or phrase within a piece. Clay explained that the *recurring principle* might give a child a sense of accomplishment as they fill the page with an image or string of words. The *generating principle* illuminates a leap in development as a child uses what they know and applies it to new inventive forms. Next, Clay describes the *directional principles*, which reveals how a child develops their understanding of the way print typically moves across a two-dimensional page. The *space concept* develops when a child moves from writing single words to groups of words, seeing a word as a unit and understanding the function of space between those words.

While Clay's work focused specifically on the visual features of print, Read's (1971, 1975) early work illuminated a developmental sequence for spelling. Read's findings significantly contributed to the field of existing literature because it was one of the first studies that looked specifically at phonological competence in children. Read's findings led to deeper understandings of invented spelling and the typical groupings of speech sounds by children. His work has influenced spelling instruction in classrooms to this day. While many would argue that writing development does not occur in sequential stages, the opposite is true for spelling development (Fresch, 2001; Henderson & Beers, 1980; Korkeamaki & Dreher, 2000; Read, 1971). Research reveals that spelling typically progresses from where there is no link between

letters and sounds, to spellings where letters begin to represent some sounds, to the use of orthographic rules when spelling, to eventual conventional spelling (Rowe, 2013).

Clay (1998) explained that “writing forces learners to search their speech for the acoustic units that count in printed language so that they can represent them in writing” (p. 146). This process of searching can be facilitated through invented spelling, which was one of Read’s (1971) major contribution to field of writing development. Read (1971, 1975) revealed that the work of invented spelling occurs when a child is breaking words into phonemes and representing the phonemes with corresponding letters. One issue that occurs when children are using their existing knowledge of phonemes with corresponding letters, is that sometimes the sounds are changed around (Temple, Nathan, & Temple, 2013). Thus, children use what they hear to spell, but it is not always conventional. Therefore, it is important to accept the approximations by young writers with invented spelling. Temple, Nathan, and Temple (2013) argued that the practice of invented spelling “motivates children to explore language...helps children become more expressive, not limited by the words they have been taught” (p. 103). Graves (1981) insisted that invented spelling creates opportunities for children to write and believe they can write, taking the pressure off conventions and allowing message to come through first. Invented spelling allows children to use what they know about letter-sound correspondence to compose messages without worrying about the conventional spelling patterns of unknown words. Graves (1983) explained that eventually invented spelling develops into conventional spellings but the child must first feel some control over and confidence of their writing. This exploration in writing is a vital component to literacy development.

Read (2009) also contended that learning to write does not occur sequentially through stages of development and presented several components of the process of learning to write.

Read, like Clay, argued that the first component of learning to write is the understanding that print carries meaning (Read, 2009; Clay, 1975). Read (2009) provided the example of a child scribbling down on a paper and announcing that the image in fact says something. While we may not be able to conventionally read what the scribble says, that mark linguistically represents a message. Next, Read argued that another component to learning to write is being able to recognize and create conventional symbols, moving from scribbles to letters. Third, Read explained that child must connect the symbol to what they represent, as in the connection between the letter M and the restaurant McDonalds, eventually moving to understanding that the letter can represent multiple words. Finally, the two most vital components of learning to write is acquiring phonemic awareness and learning the alphabetic principle (Read, 2009). Read defined phonemic awareness as “the concept that syllables are made up of individual speech sounds, or phonemes” and the alphabetic principle as “that letters...represent phonemes” (Read, 2009, p.262).

Bissex (1980) largely influenced the research on writing because she studied and documented her own children’s writing development from ages 5 to 10, which was published in her book *Gnys at Wrk: A Child Learns to Write and Read*. The findings from this longitudinal study revealed the interconnectedness between a child’s reading development with their writing development. Additionally, she illuminated the individual nature of writing development, shifting away from a predictable instructional sequence.

Focused more on the message of children’s compositions, Harste, Woodward, and Burke (1983, 1984) revealed that children’s writing is not haphazard and in fact delivered meaningfully and intentionally. As they studied young children as they wrote, Harste, Woodward, and Burke (1984) found that young children “actively attend to written language” long before they receive

formal instruction as they begin to play with a written system by producing scribbles and illustrations that represent and communicate a message (p. 82). Harste, Woodward, and Burke (1984) challenged the idea of conventional writing because they placed emphasis on the meaning and intention within a child's scribbles. This understanding revealed an important characteristic of a child's writing development in that children first intentionally use unconventional markings to represent meaning which later transitions into more conventional writing. The work of Harste, Woodward, and Burke (1984) helped shift the perspective on preschool children as active literacy learners.

While writing development can be observable through predictable behaviors, it does not develop sequentially along a trajectory (Bissex, 1980; Clay, 1975; Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984; Read, 1971, 1975, 2009). Writing begins with a child experimenting with symbols through drawing and print, understanding that each carry meaning. The child begins to attend to the feature of letters as they write, eventually using what they know about the sounds of letters. The child attends to the directionality of print, understanding that print goes from top to bottom, left to right, and return sweeps to start the same pattern. The child then begins to see words as units, using what they know about sounds to write words, oftentimes through invented spelling. The child develops a repertoire of high-frequency words that they know and use as they write. The child uses their syntactic knowledge to organize word sequence to form sentences. Composition begins with ideas, moves to speech, before being written down. Children bring their semantic interpretations to the texts they write, writing for various purposes and audiences at any given time. Learning to write is a complex process that requires a rich literacy environment, adult assistance, and opportunities to explore (Clay, 1975).

Writing Instruction

Because the participants in this study were second-grade writing teachers, it is important to review the literature on effective writing instruction. This section describes the influence of policy on writing instruction, the characteristics of the process approach to teaching writing, and the framework of writing workshop.

Influence of Policy

For the past two decades, our nation has been striving to improve literacy instruction in classrooms across the country. This sense of urgency can be traced back to the mandates of NCLB in 2001. Because NCLB determined federal funding, states had to comply with specific demands that included rigorous academic standards that were tested in Grades 3-8 on statewide standards-based assessments and the results were used to evaluate school and teacher performance in a statewide accountability system. McCarthy (2008) reported that because of the mandates from NCLB, teachers felt a heightened focus on testing where much of their instruction revolved around helping students become successful on a standardized assessment. Additionally, McCarthy (2008) found that the mandates from NCLB also negatively impacted the curriculum because teachers spent more time preparing for the test than teaching content, and often had to eliminate other subjects like Social Studies from their day. In many schools, an intense focus solely on Math and Reading existed because those were the subjects mostly assessed. While the intention of NCLB was to close gaps and improve classroom instruction, McCarthy (2008) found that in many cases, the opposite occurred.

In 2003, The College Board called schools and colleges to action regarding writing instruction because many schools had almost completely removed writing instruction. To remedy this issue, they established the National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and

Colleges with the intention of adding a writing component to the SAT in 2005, directly addressing the concern that writing is neglected in many classrooms. They argued, “although there is much work taking place in our classrooms, the quality of writing must be improved if students are to succeed in college and in life” (National Commission on Writing, 2003, p. 7). The National Commission on Writing knew how vital the skill of writing was on a students’ future and advocated for quality instruction in schools across the nation. In the 2003 report, the National Commission on Writing demanded more time to teaching writing, cohesive standards, and authentic assessment measures. The report aimed to shift the perception of writing as merely a creative act, to viewing writing as an essential skill.

From 2003 to 2006, the National Commission on Writing released numerous reports advocating for increased attention on writing instruction. In the report titled, *Writing: A Ticket to Work...or a Ticket Out* (2004), The National Commission on Writing illuminated survey results from major American corporations and the impact that writing skills have on employment. They found that “writing is a ticket to professional opportunity, while poorly written job applications are a figurative kiss of death” (p. 3). That is, employment and promotion opportunities disappear without the ability to write and communicate clearly. The following year, the National Commission on Writing released a report titled *Writing: A Powerful Message from State Government* where they looked specifically at survey responses from state employees, again revealing the importance of writing in any job at the state level, but more shockingly revealing that 30% of state employees surveyed did not possess adequate writing skills and received additional training in order to develop the basic writing skills necessary for their job. The additional training in writing costs taxpayers a quarter of a billion dollars annually (National Commission on Writing, 2004).

Finally, The National Commission on Writing released the last report in 2006 titled, *Writing and School Reform*, which summarized the five hearings where a group of people met together to discuss reform efforts in writing, specifically engaging in discourse about how to make high quality writing instruction available for all students, the creating of writing assessments that are fair and authentic, and professional development opportunities for teachers of writing. This report concluded with recommendations for schools to use to create “skillful, self-confident writers” (National Commission on Writing, 2006, p. 64). Despite the amount of work that went into this long-term project on improving writing instruction across the nation, researchers are still finding teachers do not have adequate training to feel confident teaching the content of writing (Cutler & Graham, 2008; Gilbert & Graham, 2010; Kiuahara et al., 2009).

In 2010, many states adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which influenced change in classroom practices as the demands of the standards differed from previous standards of many states. One effect from the CCSS was the equal emphasis on both reading and writing instruction. Before the CCSS, many schools and classrooms spent most of instruction focusing on reading because of the mandates from NCLB in 2001. Since 2010, the emphasis on writing instruction that came from the CCSS requires classroom to spend half of their time on writing instruction while also integrating it across the curriculum. This heightened focus on writing felt new for many teachers, even though the National Commission on Writing established by the College Board has been advocating for an increased attention on writing instruction since 2003.

While the rest of the nation adopted the CCSS, the state of Texas elected to use their own standards called the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). While the state did not adopt the CCSS, they did feel the effects of CCSS along with the rest of the nation. In 2011, Texas

revised the state standardized test, shifting from the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) to the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR). The STAAR test came with many changes that affected instruction. Specifically in writing, the STAAR test brought about changes that required teachers to carry out writing instruction in all grade levels.

Additionally, over the past several years, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) has been revising the English Language Arts and Reading TEKS for Kindergarten through Grade 8. In May of 2017, the State Board of Education (SBOE) gave final approval for the revised standards, which will be implemented in classrooms across the state in the 2019-2020 school year. There is a heavy shift towards writing instruction in these new standards. The revised TEKS specifically outline the three genres for writing required of students, just as the CCSS did with narrative, opinion, and information writing. Also, the revised TEKS go into greater detail describing the writing process required of students. Now, writing conventions are embedded within the editing strand. This adjustment in the placement of the standards may seem minor, but it supports the balance that researchers are urging teachers to find between teaching writing genre, craft, process, and conventions (Cutler & Graham, 2008). In fact, Cutler and Graham (2008) found that teachers were spending over 50% of their time teaching writing skills and conventions in isolation and students were spending less time writing connected texts. They recommended, instead, that “writing instruction needs to strike an appropriate balance between writing, teaching skills, and learning writing strategies and processes (Cutler & Graham, 2008, p. 917). The movement of the conventions standards within the writing process can potentially shift instruction towards the balance as described by Cutler and Graham (2008).

The Process Approach

The underlying beliefs of the process approach to teaching writing views writing as a complex, dynamic, and nonlinear process that takes place in multiple contexts for multiple purposes (McQuitty, 2014). That is, when writers write, they do not progress linearly through stages such as prewriting, drafting, editing, revising, and publishing, but fluidly move back and forth between processes. In fact, because writing is a recursive process, time should be allowed for the processes to cycle back on each other (Bereiter & Scardmalia, 1987; Calkins, 1994; Emig, 1971; Murray, 1972; Perl, 1980; Sommers, 1980). Writers naturally shift back and forth within the writing process and need flexibility to do so.

Flower and Hayes (1981) revolutionized the way many thought about the writing process by theorizing a cognitive process model that rejected the traditional linear view of writing. Their model described how the writing task, long-term memory, and writing process work together in compositions. Below is the original Cognitive Process Model as described by Flower and Hayes (see Figure 2.3).

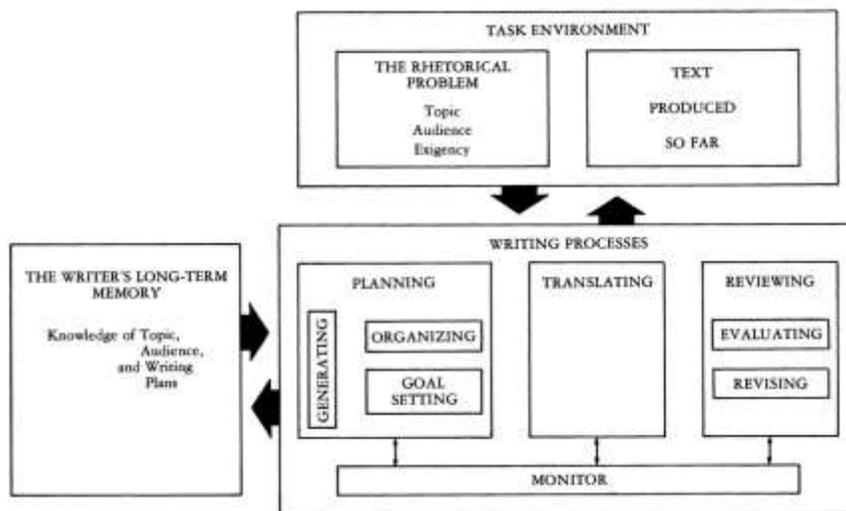


Figure 2.3. A Cognitive Process for Writing (Flower & Hayes, 1981)

The task environment as described by Flower and Hayes (1981) begins with the rhetorical problem, where the writer considers topic, audience, and exigency. The way a writer chooses to define their rhetorical problem differs depending on the writer, but is a “major, immutable part of the writing process” (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 369). Another element of the task environment is the written text. As a text is composed, the writer faces even more decisions and constraints. Flower and Hayes (1981) explained, “each word in the growing text determines and limits the choices of what can come next” (p. 371). A writer must balance the rhetorical situation and what they know about writing as they compose each sentence of the written text.

A writer’s long-term memory is activated while writing, pulling information that currently “exists in the mind as well as in outside resources” (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 371). The knowledge a writer activates includes knowledge of topic, audience, and writing plans. In the midst of composing, a writer must access the network of information stored from previous writing experiences while also “adapting that knowledge to fit the demands of the rhetorical problem” (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 371).

Finally, Flower and Hayes (1981) described how a writer engages in the writing process. The first part of the process is planning, where writers “form an internal representation of the knowledge that will be used in writing” (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 372). While planning, a writer generates ideas, organizes the ideas into a meaningful structure, and establishes goals for their writing. Next, the writer works to put their ideas that can be read by others. Flower and Hayes (1981) named this part of the process translating. They explained, “the process of translating requires the writer to juggle all the special demands of written English” (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 373). Because of this demand on the writer, Flower and Hayes argued that this part of the process can be increasingly frustrating for younger writers because of their “limited

capacity of short-term memory” (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 373). The next element of the writing process involves reviewing, where the writer both revises and evaluates their writing, which “frequently leads to new cycles of planning and transcribing” (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 374). Finally, Flower and Hayes (1981) described a writer’s act of monitoring their own progress as they write, which helps them determine when they need to move to another process and how quickly they are reaching their goals.

Flower and Hayes rejected the notion of the stage model of writing, contending that that the writing process is not fixed or linear but hierarchically organized. They explained, “a given process may be called upon at any time and embedded within another process” (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 375). This understanding of the writing process as a nonlinear and recursive process is foundational for the process approach to teaching writing. In fact, Flower and Hayes revolutionized the way many researchers looked at a writer’s process.

The contributions Fountas and Pinnell (1996, 2016) have had on literacy teachers are undeniable. While they are both well known in the literacy teacher community for decades for their contributions to guided reading, they have recently written more about the processing system for a writer, which embodies the essence of the writing model described above by Flower and Hayes (1981). Much of Fountas and Pinnell’s work extends the original work Marie Clay (1991). Specifically, they built on Clay’s theory for how children become literate by building a self-extending system, which involves the processes of strategic actions. In this self-extending system, Clay explains that children can interactively use their knowledge to detect their own errors and problem solve. Additionally, the more readers spending time reading and practicing reading, the more skilled they become.

In 1998, a group of researchers from Auckland conducted a study to explore children’s self-extending system in writing, building off Clay’s work with reading (Boocock, McNaughton, & Parr, 1998). This study suggested that children “become more skilled at writing to the point where they are able to assume responsibility for their own learning” (Boocock et al., 1998, p. 56). Not only did the study name specific behaviors that contributed towards the self-extended system for writing, but it was one of the first that applied Clay’s work to children’s writing.

In their most recent edition of *The Literacy Continuum* (2016), Fountas and Pinnell added the component of writing, specifically highlighting a processing system for writing. Below is the visual representation of the processing system for writing as developed by Fountas and Pinnell (see Figure 2.4).



Figure 2.4. A Processing System for Writing (Fountas & Pinnell, 2016)

This visual representation of the processing system for writing (Fountas & Pinnell, 2016) illuminates the recursive nature of writing. The innermost circle of this graphic draws focus to the definition of writing: communicating meaning for a specific purpose towards a specific audience. Within that definition, there is a balance of writing in a specific genre, considering different craft moves, and incorporating conventions for readability. The outer gold circle shows the cycle a writer goes through as they write. First, the writer views themselves as writers. Then, they plan and rehearse their writing, oftentimes extending into drawing. Next, the writer drafts and revises. After that, editing and proofreading occurs, finally resulting in publication.

There is not just one way to write and there is not just one process for writing. Dyson and Freedman (1991) explained,

writing is conceived of as a skill and yet, at the same time, that skill is itself a process dependent upon a range of other skills and, moreover, a process that is kaleidoscopic, shaped by the author's changing purposes of writing (p. 754).

Writers have choices to make as they compose each word, sentence, and piece. Their process for writing is ever-changing depending on the decisions they make as they write. While the process is not rigid or lockstep, it can be seen as predictable. That is, a writer moves fluidly through a predictable process, but the process will never look the same for any writer.

Prior to the 1980s, writing was not viewed as a complex, dynamic, and nonlinear process. Instead, writing instruction occurred in a formulaic way, where students wrote for one audience, usually the teacher, in one format, like the five paragraph essay. In the primary grades, traditional writing instruction mostly focused on isolated skills, like handwriting, spelling, and sentence construction. When speaking to traditional writing instruction, Boscolo and Gelati (2013) explained, "traditional instructional strategies...rest on the belief that writing is an

academic ability” (p. 293). That is, teachers who use these traditional approaches view writing as a skill to be mastered, teaching it isolated from all other academic subjects and in a linear format. Researchers caution against a traditionally linear writing instruction because “any classroom structures that demand that all students plan, write, and revise on cue in that order are likely to run into difficulty” (Dyson & Freedman, 1991, p. 760). This linear and formulaic method for teaching writing is unnatural and ineffective.

Still today, you may find evidence of this type of traditional writing instruction in classrooms. In fact, Cutler and Graham (2008) found that primary grade teachers “favor a more balanced eclectic approach to instruction” (p. 915). Additionally, in their survey of 178 teachers, Cutler and Graham (2008) reported that over 75% taught using a combination of both the process approach and traditional skills approach. However, the hybrid of traditional skills instruction with the process approach was not evenly balanced. Most teachers spent more than 50% of their instructional writing time teaching isolated skills, and, as a result, students spent less time per day planning, drafting, and revising connected texts. Cutler and Graham (2008) recommended to increase the amount of time students spend writing connected text per day, stating, “while students must learn how to write letters fluently, correctly spell words, and so forth...writing text and learning the strategic processes involved in writing should not be shortchanged” (p. 917).

In contrast to the traditional skills instruction, research on the process approach to writing focuses on the writing process of real writers, using those processes to shape theories and instruction of writing. This dramatically shifts from a linear model focusing solely on the final product or isolated skill, to a dynamic model that focused on the individual writer and their process. This approach to teaching writing was intended to capture the recursive nature of the writing process within the writing classroom. Graves (1983) and Murray (1985) were among the

leading authors who aimed to shift writing instruction to a more student-centered approach that honored the recursive nature of the writing process, viewing each individual child as a real writer, who writes for real reasons, in authentic contexts. Additionally, their work emphasized the need for more small-group instruction where specific feedback is used to move writers, not just a single piece of writing, forward (Graves, 1983; Murray, 1985). The seminal work from Graves and Murray inspired many other authors, like Calkins (1994) and Atwell (1987), and the initial implementation of writing workshop.

One problem from the process approach is that it varies greatly in implementation across classrooms (Graham & Sandmel, 2011; Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006; McQuitty, 2014). In their meta-analysis, Graham and Sandmel (2011) found that while the process writing approach is effective for teaching students in a general education setting, it really did not produce significant or powerful results in student growth or motivation. Additionally, they did not find evidence to back that the process writing approach supported weaker writers, students who are English Language Learners or in Special Education. Although they did not find evidence to support the process writing approach, Graham and Sandmel do not suggest abandoning this instructional practice, but embedding other highly effective instructional practice within the approach.

Cutler and Graham (2008) cautioned that “efforts to reform writing instruction are likely to fall short, if little attention is devoted on how frequently practices are implemented” (p. 916). To take the advice based on the meta-analysis conducted by Cutler and Graham (2008) and Graham and Sandmel (2011), it is important to gain a better understanding of the highly effective instructional practices that could be used in conjunction with the process writing approach.

Unified and aligned curriculum. Since writing is a complex skill for children to learn, it requires an exceptionally knowledgeable teacher within a unified organization whose writing

program utilizes evidenced-based practices for teaching writing (Graham, 2008; Graham & Harris, 2013; Graham & Parin, 2007b; Graham et al., 2012). When emphasizing the power of a vertically aligned writing curriculum, Graham (2008) said, “if a single teacher can make a difference, imagine what happens when students are taught well beginning in first grade all the way through high school” (p. 2). It is not merely a single program that can move writers from novice to skilled, but the combination of exceptional teachers using evidence-based practices within a system for teaching writing.

When observing writing instruction in first grade classrooms, Coker et al. (2015) found alarming findings in the variability in writing instruction both at the classroom and school level. They found that teachers and schools did not seem to agree on the amount of writing instruction or the appropriate approach to teaching writing. They explained, “while variability may not necessarily be detrimental to students’ writing growth, variability may also suggest a lack of a well-articulated approach to writing instruction” (Coker et al., 2015, p. 821). These reinforce the findings from a meta-analysis conducted by Graham et al. (2012), revealing that a comprehensive writing program improved the quality of student writing across the grade levels.

In a report written for Renaissance Learning about effective writing instruction, Graham synthesized his findings from previous research reviews (Graham & Parin, 2007b) by providing seven recommendations for teaching writing and 27 evidence-based practices within those recommendations (Graham, 2008). He explained that those evidence-based practices are even more effective if they are “embedded within a framework of what we know about how youngsters move from initial acclimation (i.e., novice writer) to competence (i.e. skilled writer)” (Graham, 2008, p. 2). Evidence-based practices are most effective when they are embedded

within a unified curriculum and a framework that understands how to move a child from novice to skilled.

While unified curriculum is an essential part of quality writing instruction, when it does not include evidence-based practices, the unified curriculum can have negative effects on writers. Bazerman et al. (2017) argued for a curriculum that has a flexible design, can be differentiated to a variety of learners, and is mindful of individual learning differences. In a study of fourth-grade writing classrooms, Anderson and Dryden (2014) found that district wide curriculum that focused on the demands of the state writing test created classrooms that produced formulaic writers and writing teachers. For example, the students across classrooms used the same graphic organizer, wrote in the same structure, and had similar topics for writing. Furthermore, Anderson and Dryden observed students “listening to instruction about writing, rather than engaged in the act of writing” (p. 9). For the classrooms in their study, the district curriculum set the agenda for teaching. So, while a unified curriculum is necessary in teaching writing, it is also important that it is grounded in evidence-based practices.

Time to write. In order to become better writers, students need time to write (Graham et al., 2012). Providing students with long periods of time to write allows them to practice strategies and skills, which improves the overall quality of their writing (Graham et al., 2012). Graham (2008) contended, “A good rule of thumb is that students should spend at least one hour or more each day in the process of writing—planning, revising, authoring, or publishing text” (p. 3). However, in studies conducted by Graham and several of his colleagues, they are finding teachers devoting less than half of that recommended time for students to write. In a survey of elementary teachers conducted by Gilbert and Graham (2010), they found that students wrote for about 25 minutes per day, averaging about a paragraph in length. These findings were confirmed

in a later survey of third and fourth-grade writing teachers (Brindle, Graham, Harris, & Hebert, 2015). Similarly, Coker et al. (2015) found that first-grade teachers only spent 25 minutes a day on writing, with skills instruction occurring most followed by process instruction and composition time. While the recommended time for writing at school is an hour, teachers are dedicating more than half that time.

As a way to increase the amount of time spent writing, Gilbert and Graham (2010) suggested that students write more at home and across the school day. Likewise, Gerde, Bingham, and Wasik (2012) provided suggestions for integrating research-based writing activities into daily instructional practices as a way to also increase the amount of time students spent writing. In addition to embedding writing activities into routines, such as having students write their name for their lunch choice, Gerde et al. (2012) recommended teachers build at least fifteen minutes of writing time devoted to composition. This daily practice of writing may be connected to a book read or a shared experience, regardless, the important part is that students “write to represent their thoughts and ideas” regularly (Gerde et al., 2012, p. 353).

In their study of 14 teachers, Howard et al. (2014) found that high implementer teachers, those who valued the writing process and saw themselves as good writers, craved more time to teach writing and were often frustrated by the curricular pressures that took time away from writing. Even though the high implementer teachers were offering time for daily practice in writing, almost 45 minutes per day, they wanted even more time. Consistent with the researchers mentioned above, Howard et al. suggested that teachers learn how to integrate writing across the school day to provide even more time for students to write connected texts.

When inquiring into the evidence-based practices of exemplary writing teachers, Gadd and Parr (2017) discovered that the instructional moves that most resulted in learning gains

included time and opportunity write. Specifically, they found that exemplary teachers provided time for students to write on self-selected topics and outside of writing instructional time. Similarly, Graham (2008) explained that students need time to write for multiple purposes, such as communication, informing others, persuading others, learning, entertaining, responding to literature, and demonstrating knowledge. When given ample time to write a variety of texts on meaningful topics, students will significantly grow as writers.

Not only do students need time to just write, but they also need time to move recursively throughout the writing process. Lamme, Fu, Johnson, & Savage (2002) found that initially, kindergarten writers would think they were done after a quick draft. After instruction on revision, learning how to reread their writing and the process for cutting and adding details, students begin to apply that work independently in their own writing. This instruction required time for students to write and revise often. Likewise, Graham (2008) argued that students should carry a processed piece over several days, weeks, or even months. He explained, “teachers that achieve exceptional success in teaching writing recognize the importance of frequent and sustained writing” (Graham, 2008, p. 3).

Explicit instruction. Teachers must find a balance between explicitly teaching writing and allotting time for students to write independently (Gilbert & Graham, 2010; Graham et al., 2012; Graham & Harris, 2013). Puranik, Al Otaiba, Sidler, & Grulich (2014) studied 21 primary classrooms and found that while students were given time to independently write, they were not given much time being explicitly taught. In fact, kindergarten teachers, on average, only taught writing for 6.1 minutes in the fall and 10.5 minutes in the winter. Graham et al. (2012) recommends that students receive at least thirty minutes per day in writing instruction, so the findings from Puranik et al. (2014) were surprising. Based on their findings, Puranik et al.

contended that just like reading, “writing too requires explicit, systematic, and sustained instruction for its mastery” (p. 231)

Teachers should make the writing process visible to students by using self-talk and thinking aloud to model and explicitly teach writing (Gerde et al., 2012; Jones, 2014). A study conducted by Jones (2014) suggests that “consistency of teacher explanations and modeling related to the writing process and product increased student acquisition of writing compositional skills” (p. 42). Gerde et al. (2012) found similar results in teachers thinking aloud to explicitly teach writing, encouraging teachers to use the time students are engaged in a morning message activity as an opportunity to write and think aloud as a writer for students. Interactive writing and shared writing are other instructional moments when teachers might think aloud their writing process for students (Gerde et al., 2012). In shared writing, the teacher composes the message orally with students, but only the teacher uses the pen to write. Alternatively, in interactive writing, the teacher selects certain students to write specific words or phrases in a shared message. Gerde et al. (2012) explained, “using a combination of these methods with children individualizes the instruction based on the child’s need and skill level” (p. 353-354).

In a meta-analysis of writing instruction, Graham et al. (2012) found that strategy instruction was an effective method for explicitly teaching writing. Not only was strategy instruction effective, but Graham et al. (2012) found that it “enhanced the quality of students’ writing” (p. 886). Strategy instruction involves explicitly teaching strategies that are specific to the writing process, the genre of writing, or transferable strategies that can be applied to any genre. Also, Graham et al. (2012) found that explicitly teaching other strategies such as self-regulation, text structure, imagery, and transcription improved the quality of student writing.

Graham (2008) explained that strategy instruction involves describing the purpose of a strategy, making it clear for when to use the strategy, showing students how to use the strategy, providing students practice applying the strategy, supporting students in applying the strategy independently, and asking students to evaluate how the strategy improve their writing. Additionally, the teacher should provide opportunities for students to see how the strategy can enhance writing and praise all attempts made my students in applying the strategy (Graham, 2008). Eventually, the teacher should strive for impudence in using the strategy, where the student no longer requires assistance and takes ownership over the strategy (Graham, 2008).

In their study of exemplary writing teachers, Gadd and Parr (2017) found a strong correlation between learner gains and direct instruction in writing. They explained that the direct instruction that was most effective involved teachers demonstrating, explaining what students are expected to do, and questioning students effectively. Additionally, Gadd and Parr found that active demonstration was even more effective, meaning that those teachers “composed texts *with* their students consistently, whereas other teachers tended to demonstrate more by analyzing previously composed texts” (p. 1566). Another element of the effectiveness of direct instruction with exemplary writing teachers is asking higher level questions. In fact, Gadd and Parr discovered that the students who made the larger gains in writing had teachers who asked three times as many higher level questions throughout the lesson.

Reciprocity of reading and writing. A child’s literacy repertoire is expanded when teachers help establish reciprocity between reading and writing (Clay, 1998). Clay (2001) explained that the instruction of reading and writing should be parallel. It is not sufficient to teach one before the other, because the child can use both systems to support growth in their literacy learning. When a child writes, she also reads and when a child reads, she is composing

meaning (Anderson & Briggs, 2011). Thus, reading and writing are mutually beneficial processes where writing supports reading acquisition and vice versa.

One way that early writing supports early reading is that it helps the child pay attention to the print (Clay, 2001). When a child writes, she finds the visual information and symbols that represents what she wants her message to say. Also, she rereads her writing in order to verify the intended message. Furthermore, writing requires the child to slowly analyze print (Clay, 1998). While reading can be done at a more rapid pace, writing requires the child to slow down and pay attention to each part of constructing letters, words, and sentences. Clay (1998) explained that “writing words forces attention to detail, which can be easily overlooked in the quick visual perception of a word that is read” (pp. 137-138). Because both reading and writing draw on the same sources of knowledge, the reciprocity between the two systems supports early literacy growth.

While the participants in their study were undergraduates, Charney & Carlson (1995) discovered that one powerful tool for improving student writing is using models. The models in their study served as sample mentor texts that illuminated ways to write in a particular genre. The students that used the models scored significantly higher than those without models, especially in regards to their content and organizational structure of their writing (Charney & Carlson, 1995). Graham (2008) explained that one way that reading can support writing is through well-crafted literature, like mentor texts (Graham, 2008). From studying mentor texts, students can engage in discourse about the craft, characteristics of good writing, and author’s intentions.

Scaffolding. Building on Vytogsky’s (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), teachers often refer to the metaphor of scaffolding as a way to provide adult assistance to coach

and gradually release a child to independence. Chapman (2006) explained that instructional scaffolding might include “modeling, demonstrating, prompting, questioning, and joint construction of text” (p. 33). In an earlier study, Chapman (1995) found that student growth within and across genres of writing was partially due to the instructional practices of the students’ teacher. Specifically, the teacher in the study frequently provided models of sample texts and wrote with her students, demonstrating strategies that related to that genre.

Gerde et al. (2012) also warned that just placing writing materials out for students will not teach them how to write. Scaffolding writers requires the teacher to demonstrate, model, and remind students how to use materials for a variety of different purposes. Because the level of writing can vary within a classroom, it is vital for a teacher to accept all forms of writing and scaffold accordingly (Gerde et al., 2012).

Graham et al. (2012) found that several instructional scaffolds used by teachers improve the quality of student writing. They encouraged teachers to “develop instructional arrangements where children work together to plan, draft, revise, and edit their papers” (Graham et al., 2012, p. 890). Prewriting activities, such as drawing or taking notes prior to drafting, can be seen as a form of scaffolding. In the eight studies they tested, Graham et al. found that the prewriting activities improved writing quality. Another instructional scaffold examined by Graham et al. (2012) includes peer assistance in the writing classroom, which they found also improves writing quality. Goal setting, the process of identifying specific areas to work on as a writer, was another instructional scaffold that Graham et al. (2012) found to improve the quality of student writing. Similarly, Gadd and Parr (2017) found that self-regulation was a critical part of effective classroom practice. When students self-regulate their learning, they set goals and take

responsibility for their part in the learning process. Self-regulation and goal setting is a classroom structure established by the teacher but owned by the students.

Feedback. To become better writers, students need feedback on their writing (Murray, 1985). Feedback can come from teachers, peers, or even computers. Graham (2008) cautioned that feedback on writing should first be positive, something that the teacher or peer liked about the piece, to encourage and praise the writing efforts. Responding to student writing and providing feedback helps “students improve the quality of their writing” (Beach & Friedrich, 2006, p. 222). Researchers have found that simply correcting students’ final drafts is largely ineffective to improving their future writing (Beach & Friedrich, 2006). Instead, teachers should use feedback to help students self-assess and set goals to improve (Beach & Friedrich, 2006).

In 2016, Fisher, Frey, and Hattie published the book *Visible Learning for Literacy: Implementing the Practices that Work Best to Accelerate Student Learning*. This book drew on Hattie’s (2009) original work highlighting effect sizes of various instructional strategies, but narrowed the lens to the effective practices of literacy teachers. Fisher et al. (2016) argued that feedback to the learner was a way to achieve deep literacy learning. In fact, the effect size for feedback is 0.75, which is considered high and within the zone of desired effects (Hattie, 2009). Fisher et al. (2016) claimed that for feedback to be especially effective, it must be “timely, specific, understandable, and actionable” (p. 100). Effective teachers must consider when their feedback is given, what they say, and how their message is received. Warning against language that contributes to a fixed mindset in students, Fisher et al. (2016) suggested that teachers name specifically what a student is doing well rather than simply saying, “Good job.” They explained, “What we say to children, as well as how we say it, contributes to their identity and sense of agency, as well as success” (Fisher et al., 2016, p. 101). By naming exactly what the student is

doing well helps a student see the relationship between the feedback they receive and the action they are taking to make progress.

Fisher et al. (2016) revealed four levels of feedback that teachers give to students. First, teachers give feedback about the task. That is, the teacher names how well a task has been performed or completed. Next, teachers give feedback about process, naming specific strategies that might be needed to perform the task. Fisher et al. (2016) explained that the first two levels are most commonly seen in classrooms. Third, teachers give self-regulatory feedback, naming the conditional knowledge and understandings needed. It is in this level that teachers can have the greatest influence on student learning because it promotes dialogue and self-directed learning (Fisher et al., 2016). Finally, teachers give feedback about self or personal evaluation. However, when teachers linger in the final level giving feedback about self, it can have very little effect on student learning (Fisher et al., 2016). Well-intentioned teachers often praise students to increase self-esteem, but Fisher et al. (2016) cautioned that feedback about self “appears to have zero to negative impact on learning” (p. 102). Ultimately, Fisher et al. (2016) encouraged teachers to spend the time giving feedback and having dialogue with students to deepen learning and move into transfer.

In a meta-analysis of several studies that looked at formative assessment in writing, Graham, Hebert, and Harris (2015) explained “classroom-based formative assessment that provided students with feedback on their written products or their progress in learning writing skills or strategies resulted in positive gains in children’s writing” (p. 540). Feedback on writing can be verbal or written. Beach and Friedrich (2006) claimed that written feedback has been found to contain comments that are “too vague, pro forma, global, or inconsistent” (p. 225).

Additionally, the verbal comments are most helpful when phrased from the perspective as a reader (Beach & Friedrich, 2006).

Writing conferences are one way teachers can provide verbal feedback to their students. In a writing conference, the teacher sits next to the student to engage in a personalized conversation about the student's writing process. This personalized conversation that takes place in a writing conference looks deeply into a writer and his process, poses critical questions, and aims to move a writer forward (McIver & Wolf, 1999). Graves (1983) stated, "writing conferences lead to dramatic changes in children's writing" (p. 75). In agreement, Murray (1985) argued that writing conferences are the most effective and practical method of teaching writing. Not only is verbal feedback in the form of a writing conference a powerful instructional technique for writing teachers, but it is arguably the most effective place for teaching writing.

Carl Anderson is a practitioner researcher best known for his work on writing conferences. For over two decades, Anderson has been studying writing conferences in classrooms across the world. Once a lead Staff Developer for the Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP), Anderson now works as a consultant with schools and districts. In 2000, Anderson published, *How's it Going? A Practical Guide to Conferencing with Writers*. This was one first books written for writing teachers that placed a narrow focus on that art of conferring with writers. In a conversational tone woven throughout the book, Anderson sheds light on the role of both the teacher and student in a writing conference and suggests a predictable structure for a writing conference. In his first book, Anderson (2000) built on the foundation of Graves (1983), Murray (1985), and Calkins (1994) to illuminate how asking the simple question, "How's it going?" and then really listening into a writer as they respond can shed light on teaching possibilities that will move them forward.

Recently, Anderson (2018) published, *A Teacher's Guide to Writing Conferences: Grades K-8* as a part of a series called *Classroom Essentials* edited by Katie Wood Ray. With a similar conversational tone, but incorporating a highly-visual layout, Anderson (2018) expanded on his original ideas of writing conferences. Specifically, Anderson (2018) not only provided a rationale for writing conferences but dove deeper into how teachers can make decisions about writers in order to teach powerfully. Throughout the book, Anderson (2018) named specific predictable scenarios of writing conferences along with suggested teaching strategies to try with writers. Most importantly, Anderson (2018) named the teaching moves in a writing conference: 1) Give feedback responding to the content of the writing, highlighting the student's strengths, and naming a next step for instruction, 2) Teach by cuing the student, explaining what you're teaching, and explaining how to do what you're teaching, 3) Coach the student as they try the strategy, and 4) Link to the student's independent work so they know what they should try right away. While Anderson (2000, 2018) does not conduct or publish empirical studies to reflect his work in classrooms with writing conferences, it would be remiss to ignore his contributions to the field.

Anderson (2018) contended that a writing conference is just "a conversation that teaches students to be better writers (p. 4-6). However, some research has revealed that not all writing conferences promote successful outcomes. In fact, some students leave a conference without the desire to try new writing strategies, while others do exactly as the teacher *told* them, without taking their own risk or adjusting it for their own writing benefit (Fitzgerald & Stamm, 1992; Walker, 1992). Ownership of writing and student interest influences student decisions about whether to follow through on recommendations from a conference. Students make choices as they participate in writing conferences and teachers help guide them to make the choices that are

most useful for their writing. Thus, it is not simply the act of conferring with writers matters, but the way in which the feedback is given by the teacher as well as received and used by the student.

Genre of writing. Learning to write in a variety of genres is a necessary part of writing instruction and requires higher level thinking skills of students. Bazerman et al. (2017) argued for not only a writing curriculum that exposes students to a variety of genres, but also a curriculum where students actively participate effectively in a range of genres. In order to write effectively in a genre, “a writer must be familiar with its conventions, structure, and style, as well as understand the assumptions underlying these conventions” (Charney & Carlson, 1995, p. 89). Understanding the conventions of a genre and applying them to an original writing task can be challenging for writers.

The findings from Chapman’s (1994) study in a first-grade writing workshop classroom exposed fifteen different genres of writing produced throughout the year. In the beginning of the year, the genres of writing were simple and as the year progressed, the genres became more complex. Many of these genres were implicitly modeled through literacy activities by the teacher. Illuminating the teaching of different genres of writing situated in the context of a primary classroom, Chapman (1995) revealed that “young children’s writing emerges in multidimensional ways simultaneously including the ways that meaning is shaped for different purposes in a particular context” (p. 188). That is, young children can learn to write in several different genres long before their spelling is considered conventional. Chapman argued that genre development is a dimension of emergent writing and the findings from this study showed examples of how writers develop through genres over time.

To be successful writers, students need to write in a variety of genres (Gilbert & Graham, 2010). While Cutler & Graham (2008) found that most primary teachers typically limit student writing to narrative forms, such as stories and poems, Gilbert and Graham (2010) found that most upper elementary teachers were less likely to assign narrative tasks. In fact, upper elementary teachers mostly had students write to learn, such as short answer response, summarizing, note taking. While these methods of writing are important for students, Gilbert and Graham (2010) urged teachers to include persuasive, information, and report writing more regularly in their classroom because those are the forms that will be needed for later success in college.

The writing task. Students are more motivated to write when the task is authentic, relevant, and meaningful (Boscolo & Gelati, 2013). An authentic writing task is one that involves students in writing for real literacy purposes of enjoyment or communication (Boscolo & Gelati, 2013). For example, an authentic writing task might involve students writing persuasive letters to the campus principal advocating for a specific change. Boscol and Gelati (2013) stressed the importance of “making students aware...that writing is a fundamental tool of communication” (p. 288).

Gadd and Parr (2017) found significant gains between learning tasks and student performance. In their study that focused on the practices of exemplary writing teachers, Gadd and Parr presented the idea that learning tasks which are purposeful and that involve the students in the construction of the task result in larger learner gains. Specifically, the exemplary writing teachers from the study allowed ample time for students to write extended texts on topics of their choice. In contrast, Coker et al. (2015) discovered that only a quarter of the writing tasks in first-grade classrooms were open-ended where students were asked to generate the content. Most of

the time students spent writing, they were actually just copying or responding to a question. Writing tasks should be for authentic purposes and audiences (Graham & Harris, 1997).

The writing environment. A literacy-rich environment supports student acquisition in writing (Chapman, 1995). When students are surrounded by environmental print and written artifacts, they begin to emulate patterns in their writing. Jones (2014) argued, “just as a print-rich environment is essential for readers, a writing-rich environment is essential for creating writers” (p. 41). Additionally, a writing-rich classroom includes access to a variety of writing tools, such as pens, markers, computers, paper, reference tools, and publishing supplies. A classroom that is writing-rich should also display student published work, celebrating the individuality of each writer. A writing-rich classroom environment fosters students’ enjoyment and motivation to write. Most students come to school wanting to write, but often find that the writing done in school is less desirable. Graham (2008) explained that “students are more likely to enjoy writing if the classroom environment is supportive and pleasurable” (p. 4). He explains that a good starting point for new writing teachers is to cultivate a collaborative and supportive environment where students are given time to write every day for authentic purposes through the processes of writing.

Writing Workshop

One framework for teaching writing that includes several of the qualities of effective writing instruction is writing workshop. Writing workshop emerged out of the writing process approach and has been written mostly from the perspective of practitioners and teacher researchers. The empirical evidence for the effectiveness of writing workshop is limited, but there are several studies that highlight the effectiveness of several components that make up

writing workshop. This section on writing workshop will synthesize the findings from above as they apply to the instructional framework of writing workshop.

Writing workshop has a clear and predictable structure. The predictable flow of writing workshop not only helps students productively write, but emulates the real workshop of any artisan (Calkins, 1994; Graves, 1983; Murray, 1985). It's important that the structure of writing workshop remains predictable daily because that structure promotes high productivity in students, while allowing the teacher to differentiate support based on where writers are in the process (Calkins, 1994; Graves, 1983; Murray, 1985). The predictability of writing workshop requires consistent and seamless routines and procedures that promote independence in young writers.

Calkins (1994) beautifully explained the teaching of writing in writing workshop when she said, "Teaching writing is a matter of faith. We demonstrate that faith when we listen well, when we refer to our students as writers, when we expect them to love writing and to pour heart and soul into it" (p. 17). The writing workshop classroom is engaging and supportive, just as Graham (2008) explained that effective writing classrooms should be. Writing workshop values each classroom member as a writer, including the teacher. In a writing workshop classroom, children love to write because it is a part of who they are. The goal of strong writing instruction in writing workshop is to produce writers who are able to apply their skills to different disciplines and across their lives (Calkins, 2013).

Writing workshop begins with a mini lesson, lasting between ten to fifteen minutes. Starting with a brief, but explicit lesson allows the teacher to demonstrate a strategy or skill within the context of real writing, whether that is through a mentor text, teacher writing sample, or student writing sample. Explicit strategy instruction reinforces the idea that students are

building a repertoire of strategies to apply to any writing they approach, rather than that single piece that one day (Bereiter & Scardmalia, 1987; Gadd & Parr, 2017; Murray, 1972; Puranik et al., 2014). Furthermore, the mini lesson allows the teacher to use think alouds to model her own writing process. During this time, it is also common to find the teacher use literature as mentor texts, encouraging students to borrow craft moves from published authors. The use of mentor texts allows students to consider the intensions of authors and teachers to reinforce the reciprocity between reading and writing.

After the mini lesson, students go off to write for an extended period of time, working to apply the strategies they have learned and crafting pieces of their own choice, typically within a specific genre of writing. Calkins (2013) encourages teachers to allow primary grade students at least 30 minutes of writing time and upper grades at least 50 minutes of writing time, which is similar to the recommendations made by Graham (2008). This sustained time for writing is not spent silently writing, but in a collaborative, productive workshop, where students are conferring with each other, meeting in partnerships or writing groups.

During independent writing, students are writing for authentic purposes on topics of their choice (Calkins, 2013; Coker et al., 2015; Gadd & Parr, 2017; Graham & Harris, 1997). The instructional framework of writing workshop is built on the idea that writing is a “recursive process used by professional writers, who are also writing for authentic audiences and not for classroom teachers” (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006). In writing workshop, children are viewed as real writers who write for real reasons in authentic contexts. In a writing workshop classroom, everyone is a teacher. Each student provides suggestions and feedback to each other. The classroom walls are covered in anchor charts providing visual reminders of previously learned strategies. Students have access to a variety of writing materials that they select based on their

needs as writers. Student writing notebooks and folders burst with pages of writing as volume and stamina is encouraged each day. Drafts burst with evidence of revision and editing. Instead of focusing on perfect, writing workshop focuses on process and celebrates the writing efforts made along the way.

While students independently write, the teacher remains an active member of the writing community, moving between students providing feedback through conferences and small groups. Writing conferences are at the heart of writing workshop because they provide a way for teachers to talk about writing with their students, to teach strategies, and inspire more writing. McIver and Wolf (1999) explained that writing conferences become a more personalized conversation from an informed audience that looks deeply into a writer and his process, poses critical questions, and moves a writer forward (McIver & Wolf, 1999). Writing conferences are the most effective and practical method of teaching writing (Murray, 1985). Part of what makes conferencing so effective is because the structure allows a teacher to differentiate instruction and scaffold to meet the variety of needs of the writers in the classroom and collect formative assessment data (Calkins, 2013; Gerde et al., 2012; Graves, 1983; Graham et al., 2012).

Finally, the workshop time concludes with a share or reflection of learning that day, allowing students to set goals for concurrent workshop sessions. Sometimes the share portion of writing workshop allows a teacher to use another student as a model to reinforce the specific teaching point. The share time creates a supportive writing environment that encourages students to take risks and emphasizes the idea that everyone is a part of a writing community (Graves, 1994).

While the research on writing workshop is limited, there have been a few studies recently that have illuminated the positive effectiveness of writing workshop on primary children. These

studies compile many of the characteristics of effective writing instruction and show how they exist within a writing workshop framework.

In an observational study of kindergarten writers during writing workshop, Snyders (2013) explained that “the nature of writing workshop not only lends itself to differentiation among students but also provides opportunities to explore authentic texts and tasks” (p. 405). Snyder’s findings revealed that writing workshop supports the development of a writer’s identity. In the study, students began seeing themselves as real authors writing for real purpose, and she found that the structure of writing workshop was responsible for flourishing that identity. Because the teacher’s mini lessons pulled in mentor texts, the conferences provided feedback, and the share celebrated each writer, there was an increase in writing stamina and engagement. Additionally, the findings from the study revealed that the writing workshop provided time for students to move through the writing process at their own developmental stage (Snyders, 2013).

Similarly, Jasmine and Weiner (2007) found positive effects of writing workshop on young students’ independence and enjoyment in writing. The findings from their study concluded that the positive writing atmosphere established in a writing workshop classroom was also responsible for flourishing writing identity in young children. Specifically, Jasmine and Weiner concluded that explicit instruction in mini lessons, feedback during writing conference, collaboration, student choice, and sharing through the Author’s Chair were structures that contributed to the positive effects of writing workshop in a first grade classroom.

In a study on three different instructional approaches to writing in kindergarten, Jones (2014) investigated the effects of writing workshop, interactive writing, and a control group on students’ development in foundational and compositional writing skills. The findings revealed that while there was no difference in all three approaches on the development of foundational

skills, both interactive writing and writing workshop showed significant growth between the pretest and posttest for composition writing. Jones (2014) argued that the literacy-rich environment of writing workshop was partially responsible for the significant gains in student writing. Students had access to a variety of writing materials and knew how to use the materials to meet their needs as authors. Additionally, the teachers in a writing workshop classroom continuously used think alouds and modeling to teach both the process and product of writing. In a writing workshop classroom, Jones (2014) noted that students consistently used the writing process to improve their writing. Finally, significant gains in composition skills could be attributed to the active writing environment in the writing workshop classrooms. Students engaged in dialogue about good writing, wrote daily for extended periods of time, and saw themselves as members of a writing community (Jones, 2014). While this study significantly added to the field of research on writing methods, Jones (2014) contended that there is a great need for more empirical studies on writing instruction.

Poetry

One unique aspect to this study was that it took place within a poetry writing unit. While very few empirical studies exist on writing instruction, even fewer exist for poetry writing. In fact, in the most recent edition of the *Handbook of Writing Research* (MacArthur, Graham, & Fitzgerald, 2016), poetry is hardly mentioned, and no real emphasis is put on this genre of writing or the empirical studies that exist, despite having other chapters dedicated to other genres of writing. This section will strive to reveal existing literature on poetry writing, the benefits for teaching poetry writing, and the pedagogy around teaching poetry writing.

In 2010, Certo et al. called for a larger emphasis on poetry writing in their chapter titled, *Teaching Poetry Writing, PreK-12: A Review of Research and Suggested Directions for Teacher*

Practice and Development in the edited book, *Putting Writing Research into Practice: Applications for Teacher Professional Development* by Troia, Shankland, and Heintz. Even though their argument did not affect change in the second edition of the *Handbook of Writing Research*, Certo, Apol, Wibbens, and Yoon have continued to publish empirical studies, articles, and books dedicated to the field of poetry writing.

A significant contribution to the field of research on poetry writing occurred with the *Poetry Matters Seminar* funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. This seminar drew attention to poetry, arguing that people need to see how much poetry really does matter in our lives. Additionally, one of the main goals of the seminar was to pave the path of future research in poetry. The edited book titled, *Making Poetry Matter* by Dymoke, Lambirth, and Wilson (2013) emerged from the seminar and features international research on poetry pedagogy. Dymoke, Lambirth, and Wilson (2013) boldly stated that they “believe there has been a woeful neglect of the enormous contribution poetry can make to young people’s knowledge and intellectual development” (p. 1). They argue that poetry enhances the reciprocal nature of reading and writing because it allows students to see the relationship between words, their features, and meaning (Dymoke, Lambirth, & Wilson, 2013).

Benefits of Teaching Poetry Writing

One argument for the lack poetry in schools is that because of the heavy emphasis on tested standards. Lambirth et al. (2013) explained, “The pressure of meeting national targets compels teachers to focus on those aspects of the curriculum that are likely to be tested” (p. 86). Because poetry writing is not formally tested, it becomes “sidelined to the gutters of the curriculum” (Myhill, 2013, p. 52). In fact, at an initial glance of the CCSS, it appears that writing poetry does not even exist as a national standard. Poetry is explicitly mentioned in the reading

standards, but not in the writing. When digging deeper into the CCSS, there is one line in Appendix A provided that explains that the genre of narrative writing might also include poetry. In Texas, poetry is an emphasized genre in the TEKS for both reading and writing from Kindergarten to Grade 12. Also, in Texas, poetry is a tested reading standard. The STAAR test for reading often includes a passage in the genre of poetry with specific comprehension questions that ask about poetic features. However, poetry is not a tested genre for writing.

Even though the genre of poetry writing is often ignored because it is not assessed, there are several benefits to teaching this genre of writing. Myhill (2013) explained, “Poetry is perhaps the most amendable to creative and playful exploitation of the potential of language.” (p. 49). When writing and performing poetry, students slow down to pay attention to poetic language (Elster & Hanauer, 2002). Students learn to play with the poetic language to develop images that create sensory experiences for their readers. Students begin manipulating the physical space and using words to create rhythm and meter in their poems. As a result, students develop complex ideas and bring meaning to what otherwise might go unnoticed. Within poetry, students use punctuation and the whitespace on the page to create effect and honor silence. By writing poetry, students use language to evoke emotion (Myhill, 2013).

Writing poetry places a high cognitive demand on writers (Certo et al., 2010). Writers have to make decisions about what to include in their poems, considering how their choices affect their audience and the overall meaning and tone of their poem. Many would argue that to achieve this high-level of thinking, teachers must move away from only focusing on the strict forms of poetry, such as haiku, and place a greater emphasis on the creative possibilities of writing poetry (Myhill, 2013; Wilson, 2005a). Myhill (2013) explained, “It is more important that we help young writers think about the choices they make and empower them to be

authoritative designers of their poem, rather than to teach mere obedience to the demands of form” (p. 50). This type of creative writing requires the student to self-monitor and consider audience and purpose. Wilson (2007) explained that because there are so many different forms of poetry, students have to learn and relearn various rules of different poetic forms, which “makes the cognitive load of poetry writing especially demanding for children” (p. 454).

Writing poetry can provide benefits to the writer’s process. Due to the brevity of poems, students take the risk to experiment with language and manipulate words, contributing to their ability to revise with more intentionality (Certo, 2017; Dix, 2006). As a part of a larger study looking specifically at the revision process of primary students, Dix (2006) found that primary students were not only able to revise, but were metacognitively aware of the decisions they were making as they revised. Dix (2006) specifically discovered that students revised more frequently in poetic writing because “they appear to have greater ownership and flexibility to make choices concerning language and sentence structure so that they could experiment with words to create a desired image or effect” (p. 572). When writing in other genres, the writers did not take as many risks with their revisions because they were bound by the demands of that genre. Therefore, poetry writing opened the door for endless opportunities to revise and experiment with language.

Poetry Pedagogy

Lambirth et al. (2013) claimed, “Successful poetry pedagogy...requires the formation of a special relationship between teachers and children but also between knowledge of the poems and the teaching itself” (p. 94). This extends on Shulman’s (1986) idea of pedagogical content knowledge: a teacher’s knowledge of how to engage students in learning specific subject-area content. One conclusion drawn from the edited work, *Making Poetry Matter* is that there is a “lack of clear pedagogy that has made teachers less confident in making...poetic judgments”

(Spiro, 2013, p. 99). Spiro (2013) gives a call to action to establish a clear pedagogy for teaching poetry just as there is for teaching prose. To do this, Spiro suggests looking at the writing process of actual poets, considering the audience students are writing for, and establishing a shared language around the genre of poetry.

In 2010, Certo et al. not only defined poetry, but also named the genre features of poetry. For the purpose of this study and because the literature has yet to produce any other clear parameters for poetry, I will rely on their work. Standing on the shoulders of Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod, & Rossen, 1975, Certo et al. defined poetry as, “literary language used to represent a writer’s (real or imaginary) experiences and to create a visual experience for readers” (p. 109). Drawing on the literature published by both Friedrich (1979) and Tannen (1989), Certo et al. explained that poetry writers attend to the following features: texture, register, and structure. It is important to note that these features are not always mutually exclusive. Poetic textural features refers to the poet’s use of words at a line or multiline level to create imagery for their readers, often including figurative language to describe words in new ways (Certo et al., 2010). To achieve poetic register, writers use repetition, rhyme, assonance, imagery, or metaphor to enhance the sound, tone, or mood of the poem (Certo et al., 2010). The poetic structure is the writer’s manipulation of line breaks, stanzas, rhythm, and meter to enhance the overall meaning or cadence of the poem (Certo et al., 2010). Finally, Certo et al. explains that poets think about the overall meaning of the poem and remove unnecessary words that do not enhance that meaning, which is often referred to as poetic conservation.

Apol (2002) contended, “there are some things that writers of poetry can learn—and that teachers of poetry can teach—to make writers more skilled and to alleviate some of the fear that often accompanies the writing of poems” (p. 89). One important aspect of teaching poetry is to

immerse students in reading a wide variety of poems and poets. In a study conducted by Certo (2017), she began by pulling the class of students together in an inquiry about poetry, studying the craft moves and effects on them as readers. Certo (2017) wanted students to explore reading poems and try out moves of their own by writing poems. Apol (2002) eloquently explained, “it is important to spend time in the company of poems that spark our imaginations and fill our souls” (p. 90). The reciprocal nature of reading and writing extends into the specific genre. When readers are actively reading poems, especially through the lens of both a reader and a writer, they become better writers of poetry (Apol, 2002).

Summary

This review of literature described existing research on teacher professional learning, writing development in children, writing instruction, and poetry. Much of the work detailed in this literature review revealed a gap between two distinct bodies of literature—teacher professional learning and writing instruction, especially regarding poetry writing. Bridging the gap between these two bodies of literature has the potential to establish a process for empowering writing teachers as they engage in professional learning communities and build their knowledge for teaching writing. This study has implications for how we think about professional learning with writing teachers, no longer allowing writing to take the back seat to other assessed content areas, and situating professional knowledge and growth within a community of learners around a common problem-of-practice.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative study was to document the language and classroom practice of teachers when professional learning was related to writing process and situated in a PLC framework. The research questions guiding my inquiry were as follows:

- 1) How is professional learning around writing process evidenced in teachers' language?
- 2) How is professional learning around writing process evidenced in teachers' classroom instruction?

To explore these research questions, I used collective case study research methods. This chapter contains four main sections. First, I discuss my methodological framework. Second, I explain the selection of the site and participants. Third, I discuss data collection including researcher positionality, data sources, and phases of data collection. Finally, I explain the phases of data analysis and the methods followed to ensure trustworthiness.

Methodological Framework

Qualitative Inquiry

This study aimed to explore teachers' experiences while participating in a PLC, thus qualitative research is most appropriate. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) explained that qualitative research is a "situated activity that locates the observer in the world" (p. 3). In trying to make the world visible, the researcher strives to "turn the world into a series of representations" that involves a "naturalistic approach to the world" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). Those representations often include anecdotal notes, conversations, interviews, and recordings. The researcher is focused on the meaning and understanding behind a situated context, always

striving to “achieve an understanding of how people make sense out of their lives” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 15). Because this study focuses on the experiences of a group of people, how they interpret those experiences, and the meaning they attribute to those experiences, qualitative research is most appropriate.

Furthermore, Flick (2014) concluded, “the main reason for using qualitative research should be that the research questions *require* the use of this sort of approach and not a different one” (p. 12). The research questions listed above are best be answered through qualitative research because the phenomena of professional learning and teacher language around writing instruction cannot be described in isolation due to their complexity. Additionally, the findings from the research questions are best represented through rich description. When comparing qualitative and quantitative researchers, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) explained that the methods used by qualitative researchers value thick, rich descriptions to explain their social world. In writing up my findings, it is necessary to present the information through narrative description to best capture the social world of a grade level teams’ participation in a PLC.

Qualitative research should describe a phenomenon through the participant’s perspectives, rather than the researcher’s (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The product of this study will richly describe the phenomena through the perspectives of the teacher participants. Additionally, through this study, I aimed to “take into account that viewpoints and practices in the field are different because of the different subjective perspectives and social backgrounds related to them” (Flick, 2014, p. 16). This study strived to demonstrate multiple perspectives from participants, describing their professional knowledge and learning and analyzing their interactions with each other, taking into consideration their differences, but also finding similarities.

Finally, qualitative research is most appropriate for this study because of the reflexivity of the researcher (Flick, 2014). Throughout this inquiry, I interacted with and participated alongside teachers. This interaction became a part of the research process and I served as a primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Collective Case Study

Within the qualitative paradigm and drawing on the work of Stake (1995), a collective case study design was employed to examine writing teacher language and practice. Stake (1995) explained, “a case study is expected to catch the complexity of a single case” (p. xi). A single case could be one individual or a group of individuals (Stake, 1995). When a case is comprised of multiple individuals that are instrumental to learning more about a phenomenon, a collective case study is most appropriate (Stake, 1995). In this research, I studied a grade level team as a bounded unit, rather than individual teachers. By bounding the individuals as a case, I was able to gain insight into the process and experiences of teachers as they participated in a PLC, while monitoring ways evidence of their individual learning in both practice and language.

Stake (1995) argued that a case should not be selected to better understand other cases because “our first obligation is to understand this one case” (p. 4). To maximize my understanding of one case, a collective case study was most appropriate because it allowed me to study the experience of multiple teachers as they collaboratively learn together. In this study, I selected one case and maximized what I could learn from that single case. Furthermore, instead of generalizing results, Stake (1995) suggested “particularization” (p. 8) in a case study, where the researcher comes to know a case particularly well without comparing it to other cases. The goal of the researcher, then, is to describe and understand that single case.

Another characteristic of case study research, according to Stake (1995), is the emphasis on interpretation done by the researcher while in the field. He explained,

we emphasize placing an interpreter in the field to observe the workings of the case, one who records objectively what is happening but simultaneously examines its meaning and rejects observation to refine or substantiate those meanings (p. 9).

For this study, I served as the interpreter in the field, striving to record objectively and find meaning within those observations. Stake (1995) also explained that the goal of case study is to avoid disrupting the natural context as much as possible and gain information in a discreet manner. This study took place in a context that is already established. The grade level team selected is one that already participated in a PLC and my goal as a researcher was to observe changes in their learning over time as they participate in professional learning.

Site and Participants

Selection of the Site

This study was conducted in a mid-size school district in the southwestern part of the United States just a few miles north of a large metropolitan area. The school district is home to 19,134 students (as of March 2016) who fill the walls of 15 elementary schools, 5 middle schools, and 3 high schools. This district was purposefully selected for the unique opportunity to explore more about teacher learning around writing instruction. I have been an employee of the district for five years, serving as a district instructional coach for the past four years. I was hired to support the goals of the district's strategic plan, *Aspire 2022*. According to their long-range plan, each teacher in the district will be provided with the resources and opportunities to collaboratively plan the innovative implementation and delivery of an instructional program. The district's English Language Arts department just finished their third year of a district-wide and

vertically-aligned implementation of writing workshop. My role in the district is to support the district's goal to provide teachers with the resources and opportunities to collaboratively plan around writing workshop. Thus, this district provides a rich opportunity to closely study the professional learning that occurs within that collaborative planning.

This study took place at a single elementary campus within the school district. Mountain Elementary School (pseudonym) was selected because I had an established relationship with the staff. The campus principal frequently requested my support with professional development and I participated in grade level planning meetings and PLCs for three years. The campus culture was naturally collaborative and self-motivated. The principal employed creative scheduling, designating extended blocks of time for grade level teams to collaborate through the PLC model. Furthermore, it was common to see grade level teams planning and collaborating outside of that block of time, frequently participating in book studies or other professional learning on their own.

While most of the teachers at this campus engaged in various forms of professional learning and valued high student achievement, this particular campus was not seeing the growth that they hoped. Mountain Elementary School was one that the both the state and district watched closely because of lack of growth in student test scores. This lack of growth, despite the natural collaborative structures and high-quality teaching, became a puzzle to many administrators in the district. Even though the teachers collaborated, learned together, and used best instructional strategies, they remained one of the lowest performing campuses in the district. I selected this campus for my study mostly because of the natural collaboration that already existed, but also to see if there was growth in other areas besides what is reported by student test

scores. I was particularly interested to see if the PLC model was influencing teacher professional language as seen in their classroom practice and language about content.

Table 3.1 demonstrates the student demographics of Mountain Elementary as it compares to both the district and state. This campus is one of nine Title 1 campuses in the school district.

Table 3.1

Mountain Elementary Demographic Information (2015-2016)

Race	State	District	School
African American	12.6%	10.2%	3.6%
American Indian	0.4%	0.6%	0.5%
Asian	4%	4%	1.4%
Hispanic	52.2%	36.5%	39.3%
Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.3%	0%
White	28.5%	45%	50.8%
Two or More Races	2.1%	3.5%	4.3%
Economically Disadvantaged	59%	42.3%	57.8%
English Language Learners	18.5%	8.6%	5.3%
Special Education	8.6%	8.3%	10.4%
Mobility Rate	16.5%	15%	12.1%

Selection of the Participants

Instead of selecting a case that is typical, Stake (1995) suggested selecting cases where the “opportunity to learn is of primary importance” (p. 6). In this inquiry, the bounded unit for analysis was a second-grade team of three teachers who ranged in teaching experience. The first reason I selected this team is because I have not done a full cycle of coaching with any of the members, which allowed me to go in as a researcher without preconceived notions on how they collaborated. Additionally, this team varied in levels of training regarding both the PLC model and Writing Workshop. Since they already frequently participated in a PLC cycle around student work and each taught using writing workshop, they fit the necessary criteria for this study and

provided me with an ample opportunity to learn. Table 3.2 describes the teaching background information for the participants selected for this study.

Table 3.2

Participant Background Information

Name	Years Teaching	Years Teaching Second Grade	Years in the District	Years on the Campus	Previous Grade Levels Taught
Jackie Campbell	8	2	4	4	Kindergarten, First Grade
Lillian Walker	2	2	2	2	None
Tracy Meadows	9	5	9	9	Fourth Grade

Positionality of the Researcher

As the researcher, I conducted this study at a school in the district in which I am employed. I serve as an English Language Arts and Reading Instructional Coach for the district and have been working with teachers at this campus for three years. The teacher participants in this study have requested my feedback and collaboration to inform instructional moves, but have not participated in a full coaching cycle with me prior to this study. For the purpose of this study, I took on a participant as an observer role, becoming fully engaged in the inquiry process with the participants but remaining a neutral third party. While I still participated in the study as an instructional coach, the participants knew my role as a researcher.

Data Collection

Data Sources

Several sources of data were collected throughout this study to provide rich, thick descriptions to answer each research question.

Observations. Observations, both in the classroom and of teacher collaboration, were my primary source of data. Stake (1995) explained that “observations work the researcher towards a great understanding of the case” (p. 60). The purpose of the observations was to gather, thick, rich description of the teachers in the natural context of their day.

I conducted three classroom observations of each teacher during their writing workshop block. During the classroom observations, I positioned myself in a place of least distraction as to not disrupt the natural flow of the classroom. The purpose of the first classroom observation was to establish a baseline of writing instruction prior to beginning the study. The midpoint and final classroom observations were included to document evidence, if any, of teacher learning that occurred within their classroom. The observation form in Appendix A was used to record only my observations of what occurred, describing what the teacher and students were doing within that timeframe, and leaving interpretations for the analysis phase of this study. Additionally, I recorded the pacing of the lesson by keeping time as teachers transitioned to various sections of the lesson. During the independent writing time, I recorded the amount of conferences teachers had with students with a brief narration of the nature and content of the writing conference.

I also observed each time the team of teachers met together to collaborate, during planning meetings, regularly scheduled PLC times, and professional learning opportunities. I took detailed field notes, audio recorded, and later transcribed each session. During these sessions, I positioned myself as a participant-observer, engaging in the collaboration alongside the teachers. The purpose of these observations was to document evidence, if any, of teacher language about writing instruction and poetry writing.

Interviews. Another primary source of data for this study were individual and focus group interviews (see Appendix B). The individual interviews took place at three different points

in this study: before, during, and after. Participants selected a time for the interview that worked best for their schedule and no interview exceeded thirty minutes. The initial individual interview was used to gather baseline information of the participant's experience in teaching, professional learning, and writing instruction. The initial individual interviews took place in each teacher participant's individual classroom, sitting side by side at their table. Even though the interviews were structured, I wanted to ensure that they flowed like a conversation, so the participants would be open and honest with their responses. The initial interviews occurred during the participant's conference period on February 13, February 28, and March 1. All time frames and dates were selected by the participants. Each interview lasted between twenty and thirty minutes.

At the end of the initial individual interview, participants analyzed two writing samples, describing the areas of strength, need, and next point of instruction. The purpose of that portion of the interview was to establish a baseline of their current understanding of the genre of poetry writing. The writing samples used for this portion of the study can be seen in the figures below.

PG 16.1 Mason's poem

Looks like an Eagle

It looks like an eagle.
It eats dead animals
It is a bird of prey.

sharp claws
big eyes
pointed beak
Awesome flier

If you're a small critter
watch out!
watch out!

by Mason

Figure 3.1. Writing Sample 1 (Calkins, Parsons, & Vanderwater, 2013)

PG 1.7 Tess's poem

Icicles

by: TESS

Icicles sparkle
in the sun
Drip, drip, drip
water dripping down
Icicles fade
When the sun comes up
Icicles come to life
when it is cold
Icicles dance in the sky

Figure 3.2. Writing Sample 2 (Calkins, Parsons, & Vanderwater, 2013)

I selected two writing samples from the poetry unit included in the *Units of Study for Teaching Writing* curriculum (Calkins et al., 2013). These samples were selected because they were written by second-grade students and represented the potential products from this unit. When selecting the samples, I wanted to ensure strong poetic structure, clear line breaks and/or stanzas, so the samples visually looked like poems. I also selected samples that included other elements of poetry, either in poetic register (repetition, imagery, etc.) or poetic textual features (word choice, figurative language, etc.). Since these samples came from the curriculum resource, they exhibited a lot of the teaching points from the unit, while revealing possibilities for future teaching. Participants looked at one sample at a time as I asked them to name a possible area of strength, then need, and finally next point of instruction. This process of analyzing writing was repeated for a second writing sample. This process occurred within the initial individual interview and lasted no longer than five to ten minutes for each participant.

The midpoint and final individual interviews (see Appendix B) were used to promote reflection on the process from the teacher's perspective, allowing them the opportunity to describe their own learning so far and any changes in their understanding of writing instruction or classroom practice with writing instruction. Additionally, these interviews served to document evidence, if any, of teacher learning through their language around writing instruction. The final individual interview (see Appendix B) presented the writing samples again (see Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2) to the teacher participants, asking them to identify the strengths, needs, and next point of instruction, which was used as a final point of data for teacher understanding of the genre of poetry writing.

Artifacts. Relevant artifacts were collected throughout the study, including meeting notes, agendas, products from PLC sessions, curriculum materials, and lesson plans.

Additionally, the student writing samples analyzed during PLC sessions were collected as evidence of the teacher learning that occurred. Teachers removed student names prior to any collection so that student work remained anonymous. Teacher participant names were also anonymous.

Reflexive journal. Throughout the entire study, I kept an ongoing reflexive journal to separate my observations from interpretations. This reflexive journal, along with my field notes, was typed and organized in a password-protected Microsoft One Note Notebook. After any observation or interview, I narratively recorded my experience, thoughts, ponderings, and plans for future sessions. The reflexive journal also included analytic memos, jottings, an audit trail for data collection (see Appendix D), and initial findings from each phase of data analysis.

The sources of data were collected over a three-month time period. The initial contact with participants began in February 2018 and the study concluded in May 2018. Table 3.3 provides a timeline for data collection throughout this study.

Table 3.3

Timeline for Data Collection

Type	Title/Name	Date
Initial Individual Interview Initial Classroom Observation	Jackie Campbell	2/13/18
	Lillian Walker	2/28/18
	Tracy Meadows	3/1/18
PLC 1 (Planning) Focus Group Interview 1	Team	3/6/18
PLC 2 (Data Analysis) Focus Group Interview 2	Team	3/23/18
Labsite Focus Group Interview 3	Team	4/2/18
PLC 3 (Data Analysis) Focus Group Interview 4	Team	4/3/18
Midpoint Individual Interview Midpoint Classroom Observation	Jackie Campbell	4/9/18
	Lillian Walker	4/16/18
	Tracy Meadows	4/18/18
Individual Coaching	Lillian Walker	4/17/18
	Tracy Meadows	4/19/18
	Jackie Campbell	4/19/18
PLC 4 (Data Analysis) Focus Group Interview 5	Team	4/30/18
Final Individual Interview Final Classroom Observation	Jackie Campbell	5/2/18
	Lillian Walker	5/4/18
	Tracy Meadows	5/7/18
PLC 5 (Data Analysis) Focus Group Interview 6	Team	5/8/18

Data Collection Procedures

Before the six-week writing unit began, I collected preliminary data to establish a baseline for each teacher participant. The baseline data included both an individual interview (see Appendix B) and classroom observation (see Appendix A). For the initial interview, I gathered information about each participant's experience in teaching, with Professional Learning Communities, and writing instruction. I also asked each teacher participant to look at two different writing samples (see Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2) and discuss areas of strength, need, and teaching opportunities for that student. These data were collected as a baseline for teacher talk about the content of writing. Finally, I conducted a classroom observation during each teacher participant's writing workshop block. I took notes using an observation form (see Appendix A) and narratively recorded my observation in a reflexive journal immediately following the observation.

After establishing baseline data for each individual teacher, I met with the teachers as a collective whole during their scheduled PLC time. Figure 3.3 is the agenda from the PLC meeting on March 6, 2018.

2nd Grade PLC Agenda
March 6, 2018

PLC QUESTION #1:
WHAT IS IT WE WANT OUR STUDENTS TO LEARN?

1. Set professional goals.
 - a. How do we want to grow as teachers throughout this unit?
 - b. What changes in our teaching might our students notice by the end of this unit?
2. Characteristics of poetry
 - a. What can we learn about the characteristics of poetry writing by studying student samples and mentor texts?
 - b. How will these characteristics inform our teaching of this unit?
 - c. How might we create a checklist for students to use to evaluate their own poems?
3. Collaborative Planning of the Unit
 - a. Unpack the TEKS
 - b. "Welcome to the Unit" section of the Poetry spiral
 - c. Student Products & Major Anchor Charts
4. Reflection
 - a. How are the ideas from today connected to what you already know?
 - b. What ideas did you get that extended your thinking in new directions?
 - c. What challenges have come up in your mind after today's session together?

Figure 3.3. PLC Agenda March 6

Throughout this initial meeting, I audio recorded and took field notes to document the collaboration. At the start of the collaboration, I asked teachers to establish professional goals as a team. These goals were related specifically to the content of writing instruction. While each teacher might have individual professional goals, the team decided on one or two goals that they wanted to work on together throughout this PLC process. Collaboratively, the teacher participants decided they really wanted to grow their understanding of the genre characteristics of poetry because each vocalized their insecurity with teaching this unit. Additionally, the team set the instructional goal of differentiating their instruction by teaching strategies to small groups of children. Based on the goals selected by the team, I designed a plan for embedded and targeted professional development throughout the rest of the study.

After professional goal setting, teachers determined teaching objectives for their writing unit by analyzing both student samples and published texts to generate a list of qualities of poetry

writing, focusing on the first PLC Question, “What is it we want our students to learn?” The writing curriculum that the teachers use, *Units of Study for Teaching Writing* (Calkins, 2013), comes with sample student writing and a mentor text that reflects the teaching points from the unit. Teachers spent time analyzing and annotating on the student samples, considering the qualities of poetry writing that they want to see in their own students writing. Then, they looked at the included mentor text, *Old Elm Speaks: Three Poems* (George, 1998). While the curriculum includes assessment tools for narrative, opinion, and information writing, it does not have one that specifies the characteristics of poetry writing. Thus, teachers used what they learned from the student samples and mentor texts to create a student-friendly checklist of desired qualities of writing based on what they noticed about poetry writing. The intent of this professional learning experience was to establish a common language around the genre of poetry, while becoming familiar with teaching tools that will be used throughout the unit.

Next, the teachers designed a plan for teaching this unit, focusing on the overarching goals of the unit. To do this work, teacher participants each took on a role in understanding a piece of the larger unit. One teacher dove deeper into the standards using documents provided by Lead4Ward.com that explained what students are expected to do according to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for reading and writing poetry. Another teacher read the curriculum documents provided by the district that describes the pacing and unit objectives along with the introductory pages of the curriculum resource, *Poetry: Big Thoughts in Small Packages* that is included in the *Units of Study for Teaching Writing* curriculum for second grade (Calkins et al., 2013), to understand the bigger goals of the unit and the pacing according to the resource. Finally, one teacher participant spent time looking at the teaching points within the unit, student products throughout the unit, and the major anchor charts and resources for students included in

the curriculum resource to better understand the type of work to expect from students during this unit. The goal of this collaborative planning was to align and prioritize the teaching throughout the unit. By understanding the demands of the TEKS, teachers were better able to use the resource intentionally, rather than blindly following it lesson by lesson as if it were a script. This is mostly important because this resource was written to be in alignment with the CCSS and Texas is a state that does not use CCSS. While the TEKS show some similarity to the CCSS, they ask for different skills to be mastered, so it is important that the teachers are intentional on what poetry skills to focus on. With their understanding of the characteristics of the published writing samples along with their understanding of the demands of the TEKS, teachers were prepared to make informed decisions when planning.

The next portion of the PLC was conducted on a separate day due to time constraints.

Figure 3.4 is an agenda from the PLC on March 23, 2018.

2nd Grade PLC Agenda
March 23, 2018

PLC QUESTION #2:

HOW WILL I KNOW IF EACH STUDENT HAS LEARNED IT?

1. Genre Characteristics of Poetry
2. Thin Slicing
 - a. Quick Sort by High, Medium, Low
 - b. Resort Medium
 - c. Select a Representative Sample for Each Stack
 - d. Compare the Representative Sample with Published Student Work
 - e. Plan Next Steps for Instruction
3. Reflection
 - a. How are the ideas from today connected to what you already know?
 - b. What ideas did you get that extended your thinking in new directions?
 - c. What challenges have come up in your mind after today's session together?

Figure 3.4. PLC Agenda March 23

This PLC was used to build upon the teacher participants' discovery of what student should know and answer the next PLC question, "How will we know if each student has learned it?" Prior to beginning the unit, teachers administered a writing prompt that asked students to generate a poem (Appendix C). This PLC was designated to the analysis of the student writing samples to drive instruction throughout the unit. The participants reviewed the genre characteristics of poetry and used the checklist to quickly sort their student writing into stacks by those who were on, above, or below the criteria of the checklist. Each teacher participant calculated percentages of each stack using the total number of writing samples in the stack out of the total number of students in the classroom. We recorded the information for each teacher as well as the grade level as a whole to establish a baseline of data for where writers began and returned to the data at each PLC to track student growth. We reflected on where the students currently are as poets and adjusted the pacing of the unit accordingly.

The next phase of the study took place during the first two weeks of the writing unit and included targeted and embedded professional development based on teachers' professional goals. This targeted and embedded professional development was referred to as a labsite, originally coined by staff developers from the Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP). This experiential learning is much like a scientist's lab, where teachers grew in their understanding of a particular concept, in this case, conferring with writers, and then applied their understanding inside of their classroom with their students that same day. The goal of this professional learning model was to encourage collaboration, so teachers were each other's learning partners as they discovered and discussed methods for conferring, planned a lesson cycle together complete with small group work, and collaboratively taught the lesson together in a classroom, with side-by-side coaching support. The day concluded with time to debrief and

reflect on the experience and their own understanding. Throughout the labsite, I audio recorded and took field notes. Additionally, I conducted a focus group interview, where the teachers orally reflected and shared about their experience. The focus group interview was also audio-recorded and later transcribed. The agenda from the labsite on April 2, 2018 can be seen in Figure 3.5.



Figure 3.5. Labsite Agenda April 2

After participating in the labsite experience, the teacher participants decided they wanted to analyze student writing again, now that the students had a little more instruction in the genre of poetry. The team met the following day to analyze student writing, calculate new percentages of students on, below, and above level, and form small groups based on their findings. I audio recorded and took field notes during this PLC. Figure 3.6 captures the agenda from the PLC on April 3, 2018.

2nd Grade Extended PLC Agenda
April 3, 2018

**PLC QUESTION #3 & #4:
HOW WILL WE RESPOND IF STUDENTS DO NOT LEARN?
HOW WILL WE RESPOND IF THEY ALREADY KNOW IT?**

1. Analyze student writing
 - a. What are students already understanding about poetry writing?
 - b. What might students need to grow as poets?
 - c. What strategies can we teach? (*The Writing Strategies Book*)
 - d. How might we organize students into small groups to differentiate our instruction?
2. Reflection
 - a. How are the ideas from today connected to what you already know?
 - b. What ideas did you get that extended your thinking in new directions?
 - c. What challenges have come up in your mind after today's session together?

Figure 3.6. PLC Agenda April 3

The following week, I collected midpoint data through individual interviews and classroom observations, using the same observation form from the first observation (see Appendix A) and the midpoint interview protocol (see Appendix B). After each observation and interview, I wrote a short narrative describing the instruction in my reflexive journal.

Based on the information collected from the midpoint interviews and observations, I offered my coaching support for individual teacher needs as another method of targeted and

embedded professional learning. This coaching support was intended to reach the individual teacher's professional goals and occur within their own classroom setting. Each teacher participant had a different need, and I accommodated accordingly, customizing my coaching strategies based on each teacher's goals. One teacher participant wanted more in-class side-by-side coaching support, so I went in an additional day to model and provide feedback for small group instruction. Another teacher participant wanted help thinking through lesson planning, so I sat with her during her conference to guide her thinking about the unit. Finally, another teacher participant wanted feedback on her teaching because she was noticing students not transferring the lessons into their writing; so, I sat in her class to observe and provided feedback and some strategies to help for transference. After each individual coaching session, I debriefed with the teacher during her conference time.

At the end of the month, I met with the teachers to follow-up in another PLC as seen in Figure 3.7.

- 2nd Grade Extended PLC Agenda**
April 30, 2018
- PLC QUESTION #3 & #4:
HOW WILL WE RESPOND IF STUDENTS DO NOT LEARN?
HOW WILL WE RESPOND IF THEY ALREADY KNOW IT?**
1. Update on unit progress
 - a. How's it going so far?
 - b. How are your writers doing?
 - c. Any changes/updates since we last talked?
 2. Analyze current writing
 - a. What are students already understanding about poetry writing?
 - b. What might students need to grow as poets?
 3. Reflection
 - a. How are the ideas from today connected to what you already know?
 - b. What ideas did you get that extended your thinking in new directions?
 - c. What challenges have come up in your mind after today's session together?

Figure 3.7. PLC Agenda April 30

This meeting took place during their normally scheduled PLC time, with the intention of using student writing to analyze progress towards the initial goals set prior to starting the unit. We reviewed the checklist for poetry writing and then quickly sorted midpoint student writing samples in to the same three stacks of on, above, or below expectation. Teachers calculated new percentages for each group and compare to their original numbers to determine if growth was made. We concluded the PLC by reflecting on the unit so far and adjust the planning according to the student data. During this meeting, I audio recorded and took field notes.

The last phase of the study encouraged teacher reflection of the entire cycle of inquiry. The agenda from May 8, 2018 can be seen in Figure 3.8.

- 2nd Grade PLC Agenda**
May 8, 2018
1. Analyze published writing
 - a. Quick Sort
 - b. Calculate percentages
 2. Analyze one student's growth across the unit
 3. Reflect on the professional learning together across the unit.

Figure 3.8. PLC Agenda May 8

This meeting took place during the team's existing PLC block, spending the first half analyzing student post-assessments, sorting them by writing level as done in previous phases and collecting percentage data to track growth across the cycle. The last half of the meeting was spent in a focus group engaging in reflection of student growth and professional growth throughout this cycle of inquiry. Throughout this meeting, I audio recorded and took field notes. On this same day, I was able to participate in each teacher's final writing celebration with their classes as they created a space for students to read their poetry aloud to the class.

Finally, I met with each teacher participant individually for a final interview and classroom observation. During the final interview, I asked teachers to look at the same writing samples from the start of the unit and comment on the student's strengths, areas of need, and opportunities for teaching. I used the same observation form for the last classroom observation. These data sources served as the final data point for the study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis during this study was ongoing through each phase of the inquiry since data collection and analysis in qualitative research should be a simultaneous process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Throughout this study, I continuously collected and analyzed data, growing interpretations as I went. It was especially important that data collection be concurrent with analysis because part of the study was reliant on my interpretations of the data. For example, the professional development provided to the teachers was designed based on their responses in the initial interview and PLC. By analyzing the data throughout, I was able to “cycle back and forth between thinking about the existing data and generating strategies for collecting new...data” (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014, p. 70). Table 3.4 illustrates the cycles of data analysis employed during this study.

Table 3.4

Cycles of Data Analysis

Cycle of Analysis	Analytic Task
1 st	Deductive Coding
2 nd	Inductive Coding
3 rd	Pattern Coding
4 th	Thematic Analysis

Before analyses began, I typed up all field notes and transcribed audio recordings. After typing up field notes and transcribing audio recordings, I documented my initial reflection in a reflexive journal format. These reflections were memos that intended to describe and synthesize the data at a higher level, capturing thoughts and potential findings from the study (Miles et al., 2014). All memos were kept in a password-protected OneNote Notebook, which is an application created by Microsoft that simulates a paper notebook. With the recommendation from Miles et al. (2014) to be as specific as possible with dates and narratives, the One Note Notebook was organized chronologically by each type of data. Throughout the study, I exported the memos and other data sources and uploaded them into Dedoose (<http://www.dedoose.com/>), a secure data analysis software that is housed online. I chose this cost-effective online platform because it allowed for the analysis of both audio and text files, is easy to use, and comes with built in support for data analysis.

In addition to memos, I also took jottings to reflect and extend on raw data. Miles et al. (2014) explained, “A jotting holds the researchers fleeting and emergent reflections and commentary on issues that emerge during field work and especially data analysis” (p. 94). I used

jottings to infer the meaning behind what a participant said, describe my initial thinking of the data, and list my personal feelings or opinions. These jottings were kept with the raw data but distinguished as jottings so that my own opinion did not interfere with what was observed. Miles et al. (2014) recommend that researchers use jottings to be more mindful in their coding process. I used jottings in the moment while I was collecting data and in the midst of analyzing and coding the data. Each of the jottings was stored within the Dedoose software.

Since I used collective case study research to answer my questions, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) advised to first bring all the information and data about the case together. So, I gathered all the interview transcripts, PLC meeting transcripts, observation notes, and reflexive journal notes together. Because this is a collective case study, where a grade level of teacher is bounded together as a case, the data were organized by type rather than individual. Thus, I analyzed all interviews, observations, and artifacts simultaneously, looking for patterns to emerge across the group of teachers, while also considering the individuals that comprised the group.

First cycle of analysis. The first cycle of analysis included deductive coding. Miles et al. (2014) explained, “one method of creating codes is developing a provisional ‘start list’ of codes prior to the field work—Deductive coding” (p. 81). Using the literature review to guide me, I generated a list of preset descriptive codes. These codes were attached to chunks of data as I read and analyzed each data source. Miles et al. (2014) also recommended defining each code with “clear operational definitions...so they can be applied consistently by a single researcher over time” (p. 84). Table 3.5 lists the possible codes, definition, and reference from the literature. These codes and definitions were uploaded into Dedoose to use as I analyzed the data through the first cycle of deductive coding.

Table 3.5

Codes for Deductive Analysis

Code	Definition
Authentic Writing Task	The product of writing that is being produced by students for authentic and real purposes (Gadd & Parr, 2017)
Craft-Based	Referring to a writer's intentional use specific details to have an effect on their reader, such as figurative language, sensory details, text structure, etc.
Explicit Instruction	Explicit, systematic, and sustained writing instruction that is grounded in the writing process, strategies, and skills and typically appears in the format of thinking aloud and/or demonstrating by the teacher (Gadd & Parr, 2017; Gerde et al., 2012; Graham et al., 2012; Puranik, et al., 2014)
Feedback	A specific written or verbal response to student writing given by a peer or teacher that is intended to both positively reinforce good writing and improve the quality of the child's writing. (Beach & Friedrich, 2006)
Genre-Based	Referring to the specific characteristics of the genre of poetry writing (texture, register, structure) when speaking about student work
Mentor Text	Children's literature used to teach specific craft moves to students, encouraging them to borrow and apply similar moves in their own pieces (Calkins, 2013)
Modeling	The teacher demonstrating a writing strategy or skill using his/her own original composition.
Process-Based	Referring to the specific component of the writing process (Planning, drafting, revising, editing, publishing)
Reciprocity of Reading and Writing	The understanding that reading and writing are mutually beneficial, so when a child writes, she also reads and when a child reads, she is composing meaning (Anderson & Briggs, 2011; Clay, 1998)
Scaffolding	Providing adult assistance to coach and gradually release a child to independence, usually in the form of modeling, demonstrating, prompting, questioning, and/or joint construction of text (Chapman, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978)
Share	The final portion of the workshop period where the students reflect on their learning, set goals, and/or share a portion of their writing (Calkins, 2013)
Skills-Based	Referring to basic writing skills such as handwriting, spelling, grammar, capitalization, and punctuation
Student Talk	A collaborative environment where students are encouraged to engage in conversation with other students in order to improve their own and each other's writing

Time to Write	The extended time (recommended time=1 hour) where students are writing connected text, engaging in the writing process, and practicing writing strategies and skills (Graham, McKeown, Kiuahara, & Harris, 2012; Graham, 2008)
Writing Environment	A literacy-rich classroom that includes access to a variety of writing tools, displays student published work, encourages collaboration, and fosters students' enjoyment and motivation to write (Chapman, 1995; Graham, 2008; Jones, 2014)
Writing Skills	Handwriting, spelling, grammar, capitalization, and punctuation (Cutler & Graham, 2008)
Writing Strategy	A series of steps a writer may take to achieve a desire goal, typically modeled by teacher and practiced several times by students (Graham et al., 2012)

The deductive codes were attached to chunks of data from observations, interviews, and field notes, assigning meaning to specific information gathered from the data. The deductive codes were descriptive in nature, which allowed me to assign labels to summarize chunks of data in a short word or phrase (Miles et al., 2014). The portion of data assigned to a code ranged from a phrase to a few sentences. The coding process linked the raw data to larger meaning, representing the essence of the data (Miles et al., 2014). Figure 3.9 is an example of how I used deductive coding in Dedoose. Because Tracy was referring to the conventions of writing, including handwriting, spelling, grammar, capitalization, and punctuation, I attached the code “writing skills” to the chunk of text from the initial interview with Tracy Meadows.

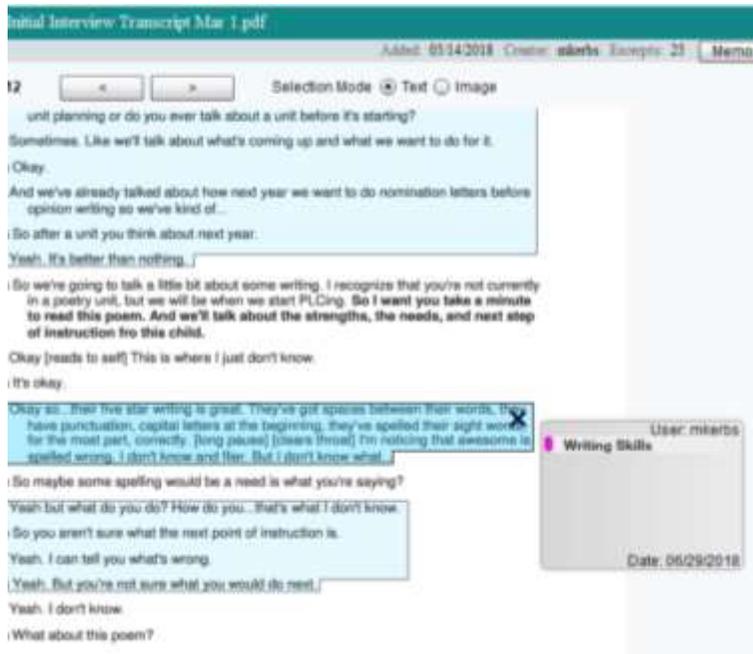


Figure 3.9. Deductive Coding Example from Dedoose

Deductive coding allowed me to begin categorizing similar data and noticing patterns across data sources. Additionally, the analysis work done from deductive coding created the opportunity to illuminate the relationship between the data from this study and the literature. This first phase of analysis was essential in beginning to reflect on the data to begin drawing larger conclusions to answer the research questions.

Second cycle of analysis. Miles et al., (2014) warned that “still other codes emerge progressively during data collection” (p. 81), thus, I relied on inductive coding to describe any data that could not be described by the preset codes pulled from existing literature. Table 3.6 lists additional codes that emerged from the data.

Table 3.6

Codes for Inductive Analysis

Code	Definition
Adjusting	Adapting and adjusting the pacing of curriculum.
Collaboration	Referring to teachers working together towards a common goal
Conferring- Individual	Referring to conferencing with one student.
Conferring- Praise	Referring to a writing conference that is centered on positively acknowledging what a student is doing well, but does not provide any instruction.
Conferring- Questioning	Referring to a writing conference that is driven by teacher questions to understand how a student is going to do something or why they have chosen to do something, but does not use any direct statements to instruct next steps.
Conferring- Redirect	Referring to a writing conference that is intended to redirect undesired behavior.
Conferring- Reinforce	Referring to a writing conference is reinforced desired writing behaviors, but does not provide any instruction.
Conferring- Small Group	Referring to conferencing with more than one student.
Conferring- Strategy	Referring to a writing conference that teaches a specific strategy through the use of mentor texts, anchor charts, or modeling.
Conferring- Troubleshoot	Referring to a writing conference that intends to trace and correct faults of an issue that came from misunderstandings from the mini lesson.
Confidence	Comfortable and confident in teaching writing
Curriculum	Relating to the framework and sequence of teaching as directed from the district or district-provided resource
Analyzing Student Work	Referring to process where students collaborated around and analyzed student work.
Decision-Making	Making choices in response to students work.

Negative Experience	Referring to a prior experience teaching writing or learning about writing instruction that is negative
Planning	Referring to the planning process for teaching.
Positive Experience	Referring to a prior experience teaching writing or learning about writing instruction that is positive
Purposeful	Referring to the intentionality of the teacher.
Reflection on Student Learning	When a teacher’s reflective comments are directly related to the student learning they’re observing.
Reflection on Teaching	When a teacher’s reflective comments are directly related to their teaching.
Responsive	A teaching move directly in response to a student behavior or looking at student work
Teacher Attitude	A teacher’s way of thinking or feeling about teaching, reflected in their speech and body language.

Miles et al. (2014) contend that inductive coding provides the opportunity for a researcher to better satisfy their readers because it shows they are “open to what the site has to say rather than determined to force-fit the data into preexisting codes” (p. 81). Figure 3.10 is an example of inductive coding completed in Dedoose. This example is taken from the initial observation in Lillian Walker’s classroom, where I began noticing the different ways she conferred with students, thus assigning the code, “conferring- troubleshooting” to this chunk of data.

Indepel	8:57 The teacher reminds students that they just have a few minutes to finish their booklet so their voices should be at a level zero.	
	Works with 3 different students at different times to support writing categories from research questions	teacher seems to conference via troubleshooting. She goes to students to get them on task, redirect, or explain the directions.
	Teacher walks around the room supporting students raise their hand asking for help	User: mkerbs minutes to write independently, didn't do much writing.
Share	9:05am The teacher recaps what they did in the lesson "Do you think your research booklets will help about your animal?" Then asks students to turn	Conferring- Troubles... She asks, to write and tell their

Figure 3.10. Inductive Coding Example from Dedoose

Third cycle of analysis. The third cycle of analysis involved assigning pattern codes to groups of individual codes. Because Dedoose did not allow me to look across data sources and participants at the same time, I created tables to reorganize the data I gathered. In the process of coding data in Dedoose, I was buried in the trees, getting lost in the finite details of individual data. The process of organizing information into tables allowed me to take a step back to view the data from a global perspective, seeing patterns emerge across data sources and the participants. The tables were organized by data source first, then participant, and finally conclusions across the team. After looking at the data collectively, I was better able to identify larger patterns. Figure 3.11 is a portion of the table I created to analyze the data from the individual interviews.

DATA ANALYSIS- INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Professional Background					
	Total Years Teaching	Years Teaching Second Grade	Years in the District	Years on the Campus	Previous Grade Levels Taught
Jackie Campbell	8	2	4	4	K, 1
Lillian Walker	3	2	2	2	None
Tracy Meadows	9	5	9	9	4
Experience with Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)					
	INITIAL INTERVIEW	MIDPOINT INTERVIEW	FINAL INTERVIEW		
Jackie Campbell	Participated in a PLC structure whole teaching career (Jackie, Initial Interview, 16) "I think it's a great time to get together and talk about data...what you're seeing students do. It's a	"I think that the way that we've been doing it in the past is, one of us plans a unit, but I think that getting together and all of us discussing this unit ...that really drove our lessons and our teaching... So I think	"We use PLC a lot to come back and look at our data and see how we move forward in reading and math. We haven't used it as much as writing, but I think I've seen the power in the collaborative planning		

Figure 3.11. Individual Interview Data Table

After looking across data sources and across the individual codes assigned to the data, I felt confident in collapsing the codes into categories that described commonalities between codes. By collapsing codes into larger categories, I was able to “pull together a lot of material...into more meaningful and parsimonious units of analysis” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 86). Pattern coding was important to the data analysis work because it condensed the large amount of codes into more detailed categories and allowed the research to become more focused (Miles et al., 2014). Table 3.7 illustrates how each code was grouped into categories.

Table 3.7

Pattern Coding

Category	Codes
Feedback/Conferring	Conferring- Individual Conferring- Partnership Conferring- Praise Conferring- Questioning Conferring- Redirect Conferring- Reinforce Conferring- Small Group Conferring- Strategy Conferring- Troubleshoot Genre-Based
Writing Instruction	Authentic Writing Task Confidence Craft-Based Explicit Instruction Feedback Differentiation Mentor Text Process-Based Reciprocity of Reading & Writing Responsive Scaffolding Skills-Based Student Talk Time to Write Writing Skills Writing Strategies
Intentionality	Adjusting Confidence Decision-Making Purposeful
Collaboration	Collaboration Planning Analyzing Student Work
Reflective	Reflection on Teaching Reflection on Student Learning Teacher Attitude

By using Dedoose, I was able to collapse the codes under parent codes so I could visualize the relationship between the individual codes and larger themes. Additionally, Dedoose allowed me to color code so I could easily distinguish between the codes and categories. Figure 3.12 is a screenshot example of some of the codes (pink) and categories (blue) that I used in Dedoose.



Figure 3.12. Parent Code Example from Dedoose

Fourth cycle of analysis. For the final phase of analysis, I strove to construct themes from the data in order to answer my initial research questions. To do this, I re-examined my data. Thus, I re-read each individual interview, classroom observation, focus group interview, PLC meeting transcripts, reflexive journal notes, charts, and analytic memos. This culminating process of analysis allowed me to better theorize how teachers' professional learning was evidenced in both their language and practice. From this final phase of analysis, I determined that as a result of targeted and embedded professional learning experiences, teachers showed improvement in pedagogical Content knowledge, development in knowledge-of-practice, and change in their reflective practice. These themes were evident in both the language and classroom practice of the teacher participants.

Table 3.8 below illustrates how these themes were constructed from the previous cycles of analysis.

Table 3.8

Theme, Category, Code Chart

Theme	Category	Codes
Improvement in Pedagogical Content Knowledge	Feedback/Conferring	Conferring- Individual Conferring- Partnership Conferring- Praise Conferring- Questioning Conferring- Redirect Conferring- Reinforce Conferring- Small Group Conferring- Strategy Conferring- Troubleshoot Genre-Based
	Writing Instruction	Authentic Writing Task Confidence Craft-Based Explicit Instruction Feedback Differentiation Mentor Text Process-Based Reciprocity of Reading & Writing Responsive Scaffolding Skills-Based Student Talk Time to Write Writing Skills Writing Strategies
Development of Knowledge-of-Practice	Intentionality	Adjusting Confidence Decision-Making Purposeful
	Collaboration	Collaboration Planning
Change in Reflective Practice	Reflective	Reflection on Teaching Reflection on Student Learning Teacher Attitude

In Dedoose, I created an overarching parent code of the theme and then collapsed the larger categories and the codes under. This allowed me to keep the data organized and grouped so that I could export excerpts from Dedoose that corresponded to the overarching theme. Figures 3.13 and 3.14 are examples of how one theme was developed from larger categories and individual codes and how the data reflected those codes.

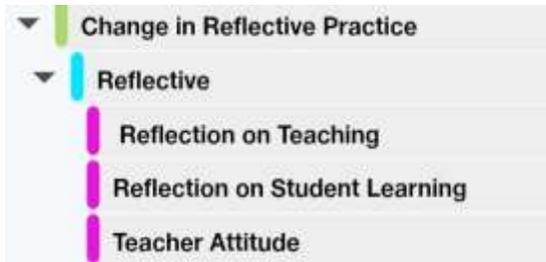


Figure 3.13. Thematic Analysis Codes from Dedoose



Figure 3.14. Thematic Analysis Example from Dedoose

After coding in Dedoose and reorganizing codes into categories and then themes, I exported excerpts from Dedoose that captured that data for each theme. Figure 3.15 is a portion of the excerpts exported from Dedoose for the theme “Change in Reflective Practice.”

	A	B	D	BE
1	Media Title	Excerpt Range	Excerpt Copy	Name
2	Teacher B Initial Classroom Obse	Page 1: 899-1003	orks with 3 different students at different times to support wr	Lillian Walker
3	Teacher B Initial Classroom Obse	Page 1: 1132-1222	eacher walks around the room supporting students as they rai	Lillian Walker
4	Teacher B Initial Classroom Obse	Page 1: 1234-1267	13 minutes to write independently	Lillian Walker
5	Teacher C Midpoint Classroom O	Page 1: 27-1057	8:21-8:25am Teacher moves to student to ask what she is wri	Tracy Meadows
6	Teacher C Midpoint Classroom O	Page 1: 87-886	acher moves to another student complementing her poem abx	Tracy Meadows
7	Teacher C Midpoint Classroom O	Page 1: 330-340	ini Lesson	Tracy Meadows
8	Teacher C Midpoint Classroom O	Page 1: 341-346	8:07am	Tracy Meadows
9	Teacher C Midpoint Classroom O	Page 1: 794-871	"Writers sometimes use patterns and repetition to create rhyt	Tracy Meadows
10	Teacher C Midpoint Classroom O	Page 1: 1220-1290	Teacher asks students why Lilian Moore would use repetition	Tracy Meadows

Figure 3.15. Thematic Analysis Excerpts from Dedoose

The visual nature of the excel spreadsheet did not lend itself for me to easily draw connections across participants and data sources, so I reorganized the information from the excel spreadsheets into a table in Microsoft Word. These tables listed each theme and examples from the data. To connect the larger themes to the specific research questions, I organized the data into columns for each research question. This process allowed me to visually see how teacher professional learning was evidenced in both their language and classroom instruction and how it appeared across various data sources and the three participants. Figure 3.16 illustrates a portion of the chart used to link examples from the data to the theme of improvement in pedagogical content knowledge.

Theme: Improvement in Pedagogical Content Knowledge	
How is professional learning around writing process evidenced in teacher language?	How is professional learning around writing process evidenced in teachers' classroom instruction?
<p>"Being more comfortable...has shortened my mini-lessons because I feel like I understand what I am teaching better" (Jackie, Midpoint Interview, 38-40)</p> <p>"I'm more aware of their needs to the specific unit or genre, not just their needs as a writer" (Jackie, Midpoint Interview, 233-234)</p> <p>"I feel like I have an understanding of the unit as a whole, whereas before, sometimes in the past, I was going week by week." (Jackie, Midpoint Interview, 204-205)</p> <p>"I kind of already knew what we did last year...but I have more of a big picture now" (Lillian, Focus Group 1, p 1)</p> <p>"It goes back to knowing what I'm looking for" (Lillian, Final Interview, 87)</p> <p>"We were not looking forward to [poetry] at all because it was so hard to understand before, but</p>	<p>More time for students to write (Table 4.1)</p> <p>Type of feedback given to students (Table 4.2)</p> <p>Use of mentor texts to teach strategies in writing</p> <p>In the beginning, the explicit teaching mostly included talking about or telling how to do something. By the midpoint and final observation, the teachers included more modeling and demonstration in their mini lessons.</p> <p>"I know we've done this before, but now I want to show you again" (Lillian, Midpoint Observation, p. 1)</p> <p>Tracy used her own poem to demonstrate how to reread and revise to make it more powerful (Tracy, Final Observation, p. 1)</p> <p>Conferring feedback focused on teaching into the writing process, with genre in mind: "How might you revise your poem to add in repetition?" (Tracy, Midpoint Observation, p. 1)</p>

Figure 3.16. Examples from the Data Chart

The data analysis process began with deductive and inductive coding, then pattern coding, and finally thematic analysis, which revealed several themes that theorize how teacher professional learning is evidenced in their language and classroom instruction. The first theme, improvement in pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), indicated that teachers improved in their understanding of how to present and adapt writing instruction to a group of learners (Shulman, 1987). The second theme, development of teacher knowledge-of-practice, revealed that teachers used their knowledge to make instructional decisions and improve the writing curriculum (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Finally, the last theme, change in reflective practice, illuminated the shift in reflection teachers made as they began to reflect on their teaching through the lens of their students' learning.

Trustworthiness

For the purpose of establishing trustworthiness in this study, I used the concepts described by Lincoln & Guba (1985), Creswell (2009), and Creswell & Miller (2010).

Prolonged Engagement

To develop an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being observed, it is important that the researcher spend a prolonged time in the field (Creswell, 2009). This study took place over three months and included an extended amount of time observing classroom instruction, teacher collaboration, and meeting individually with the teachers. Spending an extended amount of time with participants in their natural setting provided more accurate and valid findings (Creswell, 2009).

Member-Checking

To provide “accuracy of descriptions, explanations, and interpretations” (Miles et al., 2014), I provided an opportunity for participants to engage in member checking. Throughout the study, I frequently shared the data and interpretations with the participants, giving them the opportunity to add additional comments or reflect on the findings.

Triangulation

Triangulation involves gathering multiple sources of data to answer the research questions. All findings from this study were established by “converging several sources of data or perspectives from participants” (Creswell, 2009). The sources of data included individual interviews, focus group interviews, classroom observations, teacher collaboration observations, field notes, audio recordings with transcripts, a reflexive journal, and various artifacts.

Peer Debriefing

Throughout the entire process of this study, I relied on critical friends to help ensure that all analysis was grounded in the data (Creswell, 2009). I frequently met with trusted colleagues, faculty members, and other doctoral candidates to share data, discuss findings, and review interpretations and analysis of the data.

Rich, Thick Descriptions

To convey the findings from the study, I used rich, thick descriptions to assist the reader in visualizing the setting and having a shared experience of the study. I used thick, rich descriptions in the form of vignettes and quotes from each teacher participant and the interactions throughout the study. By using rich, thick description, I was able to provide a realistic perspective on the phenomenon, which added to the validity of the findings (Creswell, 2009).

Audit Trail

From the start of the design of the study, I began to construct an audit trail to keep thorough documentation of all aspects of the study. The audit trail was digitally housed in a password protected One Note Notebook, a software application available through Microsoft. The audit trail listed, in detail, the timeframe, research session task, and the data collection code. The table was organized chronologically by date. Additionally, this audit trail was digitally interactive which allowed me to hyperlink completed tasks and data sources and check off tasks as they occurred. In addition to using the Microsoft One Note Application, I cited the data sources in a way to stay organized and accurately reference the location. For all data sources, I listed the participant's name first, followed by the data source name and corresponding line or page numbers (ex: Tracy, Initial Interview, 34-35). The audit trail can be found in Appendix D.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the methodological process I used to examine teacher language and practice around writing instruction. A collective case study approach allowed me to examine a second-grade team of teachers as a bounded unit. Several sources of data were used including, individual and focus group interviews, audio recordings and field notes from teacher collaboration sessions and classroom observations. I used both deductive and inductive analysis in the first two phases of data analysis, which allowed me to create larger categories and eventually themes from the data. In the following chapter, I present the results of my analysis.

CHAPTER IV:

FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to document the language and classroom practice of teachers when professional learning was related to writing process and situated in a PLC framework. The research questions guiding my inquiry were as follows:

- 1) How is professional learning around writing process evidenced in teachers' language?
- 2) How is professional learning around writing process evidenced in teachers' classroom instruction?

In this chapter, I present the findings from the study. The organizational structure for this chapter is aligned to the method for data analysis used to analyze the data sources. First, I describe the findings from the individual interviews, providing specific information from each teacher participant for each interview and drawing conclusions across the case for the second-grade team. Then, I provide rich, thick description of each of the classroom observations for all three teacher participants, naming patterns that emerged both with a single teacher participant and across the case of the second-grade team. Finally, I conclude by describing the process of professional learning that took place during the study, including findings from professional learning opportunities, PLC meetings, and focus group interviews.

Individual Interviews

Professional Background

The second-grade team. The second-grade team at Mountain Elementary School is comprised of three teachers: Jackie Campbell, Lillian Walker, and Tracy Meadows (all names are pseudonyms). This team was spoken highly of by the campus administration because of their

positivity, collaboration, and innovative teaching methods. The principal explained that this team views all children as a collective group, taking ownership for the growth of the entire second-grade, not just the individual students in the classroom. You can often find these teachers team-teaching, where they combine classrooms and co-teach a lesson together. Alignment is valued among the teachers of this team, and they strongly contribute to the campus vision. This particular team of teachers has been together for two years. See Table 3.2 for specific participant background information.

Jackie Campbell. The first participant in this study was Jackie Campbell. Jackie was the teacher I initially had contact with after receiving permission for the study by the campus principal. Jackie is the ELAR representative for her grade level. Being the ELAR Representative, she is designated a contact point for communication and attends all district-wide professional development or content-specific meetings relating to ELAR. Jackie has been teaching for eight years. She has taught kindergarten, first grade, and second grade, with the past two years being in second grade. She came to this school district four years ago from a neighboring school district. Approaching 50 years old, it might appear that Jackie is a veteran teacher; however, she came into the profession later in life, after spending many years raising her three children. Jackie received her bachelor's degree in developmental psychology with a minor in education and social work from an out-of-state-university. When she moved to Texas and began her teaching career, she went through an alternative certification program to receive her teaching certificate.

Throughout her entire teaching career, Jackie has used the workshop model to teach both reading and writing. She explained that she did not learn much about teaching writing in her teacher education courses at the university she attended, but the gaps were filled in her first couple of years of teaching by the professional development offered in her first district. Jackie

described the professional development around writing instruction in her first district as focused on the framework, while the professional development she has received in the current district is more focused on the curriculum resources. Being the ELAR representative for her team, Jackie has attended several required professional development sessions relating to writing instruction but has also voluntarily attended additional summer sessions to deepen her understanding for teaching writing.

Lillian Walker. The next teacher participant in this study is Lillian Walker. Lillian also came into the profession after spending time raising a family. Lillian received her bachelor's degree in business administration with a minor in marketing from an online university, and later went through an alternative certification program to receive her teaching certificate. Her whole teaching career has been at Mountain Elementary, including a long-term substitute position in third grade the year before she was hired full-time.

In her initial interview, Lillian said she felt confident with teaching writing because it was her favorite subject in school. However, Lillian had very limited training on writing instruction. While receiving her alternative certification, Lillian did not have any guidance on how to teach writing. Since being hired in the district, Lillian received some professional development during the summer by district leaders. Due to her lack of training Lillian explained that she was not as confident as she could be. In fact, she often walked to her doorway to listen in on her teammates teaching to see if she was doing it right. Since Jackie is the ELAR representative for the grade level, Lillian did not attend many professional development sessions during the school year for writing instruction and she also did not write the lesson plans for writing instruction.

Tracy Meadows. Tracy Meadows was the final teacher participant in this study. Tracy received her bachelor's in education from a local university and has only ever taught at Mountain Elementary. Tracy has been teaching for nine years, with the past five years in second grade. Prior to teaching second grade, Tracy taught ELAR in fourth grade.

Tracy differed slightly from her teammates in that she did not have positive experiences around writing instruction. Tracy was a graduate of a teacher education program at a local university and explained that her experiences learning about literacy in young children during her program traumatized her. She described her experience in a class focused on early literacy:

I hated that professor. I was told to write an ELAR lesson and I picked first grade...And so I wrote this lesson and in part of my writing time, I wanted them to write a short paragraph, like three sentences. And she pulled me in her office after hours and said, "Do you know that first graders can't do this? That first graders can't even form a sentence?" And in my head I was like, "That is so rude! If you believe in them and you show them, they can!" And so that just stuck with me. (Tracy, Initial Interview, 216-222)

She went on to explain that she really did not have high regards for the university she attended and feels like she did not enter the field prepared. When I asked Tracy how she thought that experienced affected her as a teacher, she exclaimed, "Well I didn't know what to do!" (Tracy, Initial Interview, 239).

Experience with Professional Learning Communities (PLC)

Jackie Campbell. Throughout her entire teaching career, Jackie has utilized the PLC framework to analyze student data, collaborate with colleagues, and adapt instructional plans (Jackie, Initial Interview, 16). In her previous district, the PLC framework was already established, but when Jackie transitioned to Mountain Elementary, it took a year for the campus

to transition to the PLC framework. Jackie has been instrumental in helping establish the PLC framework on this campus. She has attended the PLC Conference held by Solution Tree, served as a PLC leader on her campus, and led the staff in campus-wide training on the PLC framework. When speaking about the PLC framework, Jackie said, “Honestly, I just feel like without [PLC] we couldn’t move kids the way we do...just trying to do it alone. I just think collaboration is imperative to move students forward” (Jackie, Initial Interview, 25-26). Almost all of Jackie’s experiences with the PLC framework has been around either math or reading instruction.

Since the midpoint interviews occurred after the team participated in a PLC around student writing, I asked the participants to reflect on their experience and consider how it affected their theory and practice for teaching writing. Jackie immediately thought back to how the team used to plan units of study and how different this experience has been for her. She said,

I think that the way that we’ve been doing it in the past is just one of us plans a unit, but I think that getting together and all of us discussing this unit and all of us discussing...what our kids need to know...these are things we think that they will struggle with according to that pre-on-demand...that really drove our lessons and our teaching...so I think it’s made our teaching much more purposeful...We all have a great understanding of the unit now. (Jackie, Midpoint Interview, 57-65)

Jackie acknowledged that the time spent sorting the student writing before the unit and getting a better picture of the unit goals helped her gain a better understanding of the unit itself so that her teaching could be more intentional. Jackie even mentioned that the team wants to carry that same process of planning a unit and analyzing pre-assessment data to other units in different content areas to ensure that “everyone has a grasp of what needs to be taught and how to teach it” (Jackie, Midpoint Interview, 66-67).

Later in the midpoint interview, Jackie thought back to the PLC process and how it's affected her as a teacher. She explained:

I think the PLC process started with us as teachers. This is a unit that we always, I'm not going to lie, dreaded. And I know for me... I didn't know a lot about poetry. And so I think coming together in the beginning and really talking about that as a group... built our confidence as teachers. (Jackie, Midpoint Interview, 105-108)

Jackie admitted that this unit of poetry writing had been one that she has dreaded. She attributed the PLC where we spent time diving into the unit, really getting a grasp of the genre of poetry and the demands for our students, to building her confidence as a writing teacher.

In the final interview, after the study concluded, Jackie again reflected on her experience in a PLC around writing. In the midpoint interview, Jackie mostly referred to the initial two PLC meetings where we launched the unit by getting an overall plan and analyzing student writing. In the final interview, Jackie began speaking about how coming back to look at data throughout the unit of study has been helpful. She said:

We use PLC a lot to come back and look at our data and see how we move forward in reading and math. We haven't used it for writing...but I think I've seen the power in this for writing...everyone knows what they're doing. (Jackie, Final Interview, 128-130)

In the final interview, Jackie made connections between what she did as a math and reading teacher in a PLC, to the possibilities for doing this same process in writing. She went on in the interview to explain how meeting in a PLC has affected her planning of writing. Before, she was the only one responsible for writing the lesson plans for writing instruction. Now, she said, "It's not just me entering plans" (Jackie, Final Interview, 131). Because the team met so frequently to

analyze the student writing and create plans based on their students, the lesson plans became more meaningful. Jackie was still responsible for entering them into the online platform, but feels like the teachers were contributing to the content and had a good understanding of how to implement the plans.

In the final interview, Jackie also spoke to how the PLC process influenced her writing instruction. She said, “And I think that coming back and looking and sorting that writing has really driven our small group instruction” (Jackie, Final Interview, 132-133). Jackie acknowledged that the time spent in PLC where they analyzed student writing and designed lessons for small groups of students made her teaching more purposeful and grow her understanding of the teaching the genre. She said, “we have seen poetry like we’ve never seen before” (Jackie, Final Interview, 133-134).

At the start of this study, Jackie already knew how the PLC structure supported student achievement. She acknowledged the time she spent in a PLC around math and reading data but had not used the framework for writing. By the midpoint interview, Jackie recognized the unit planning and initial analysis of student work portions of the PLC instrumental in her understanding of teaching the unit. By the final interview, Jackie reflected on the times they met throughout the unit of study to analyze student work and determine instructional goals and how it made her a better writing teacher, focusing her instruction, and helping her see the genre with more clarity. In the final interview, Jackie spoke to how she intended to carry this process into the following school year at the head of every writing unit (Jackie, Final Interview, 134-135).

Lillian Walker. When describing her comfort level with the PLC framework, Lillian said, “Last year, I kind of just sat...I did not really know what I was doing. This year I feel like I can contribute more to it and know a little more of what's going on” (Lillian, Initial Interview,

52-53). While still new to the PLC framework and following the lead of her teammates, Lillian felt strongly about the possibilities that this structure creates for her instruction, especially regarding creating common assessments and analyzing student data. She was the only member on the team that has not gone to the PLC Conference held by Solution Tree, but her principal signed her up for an upcoming conference in the summer.

In the midpoint interview, Lillian said that from participating in the study, she can now “analyze their writing, knowing how to separate it...and picking those major...standards...and what is most important to go from here” (Lillian, Midpoint Interviews, 90-94). Not only was Lillian more comfortable with analyzing writing, but she was more comfortable using the information to drive her instruction. Another interesting comment made from Lillian is how she analyzed student writing more frequently, even when she was not in a PLC with her team. She said, “just yesterday, I collected their writing and I just quickly saw two things I really...thought they should be using, like line breaks...So I knew I had to meet with those kids again” (Lillian, Midpoint Interview, 111-114). Lillian used the process of analyzing writing to inform her day-to-day teaching decisions with small groups of students. She referred to the time spent analyzing writing, saying, “I was worried about that...is this going to take a long...a lot of time reading the writing often and making sure? But it’s really not, and it’s what’s best for them” (Lillian, Midpoint Interview, 114-117). Not only did Lillian see the benefit on her teaching by taking the time to analyze the writing quickly, but it did not take too much time out of her already busy day.

Another interesting reflection that Lillian made during the midpoint interview was how the experience teaching together really took their PLC to the next level. She mentioned that before they always just talked about what they did in the classroom or reflected on a certain strategy or student. When speaking of the labsite experience in particular, Lillian said, “I loved

that because I feel, with not having someone judging you and being able to give me that feedback, it was really helpful” (Lillian, Midpoint Interview, 137-138). In the middle of her reflection, Lillian’s eyes filled with tears. After taking a moment to collect herself, Lillian explained that it made her emotional because her team works so well together and supports each other so much, so she was able to be vulnerable and take risks (Lillian, Midpoint Interview, 153-157). Not only did the PLC provide opportunities to analyze student work and make instructional decisions, it also allowed the teachers to collaborate and unify as a team, which positively influenced Lillian’s practice and confidence teaching writing.

In the final interview, Lillian directly mentioned how the PLC affected her confidence teaching writing. She said, “the time together, you know, looking things over, and just talking about our students. I think that that helps build your confidence” (Lillian, Final Interview, 129-131). Earlier in the interview, Lillian commented on the day we spent planning the unit, saying:

I think being able to pull apart the standards that we needed and using it to drive the instruction...knowing what exactly was needed in the poetry has helped so much with what I'm teaching...how to teach it. (Lillian, Final Interview, 6-10)

The time ahead of a unit spent in the PLC better understanding the demands of the standards and the bigger goals for the units helped focus Lillian’s writing instruction and provide clarity of the outcomes. When considering the whole PLC process, Lillian made a connection to how they do a similar process for reading. By spending time determining where students are, she reflected, “you're not at the end and like, well, crap!” (Lillian, Final Interview, 174-175). She said the process for tracking data and truly knowing where students were felt so similar to how they keep track of students reading levels to make instructions for guided reading. Finally, Lillian stated,

“I like watching their growth, because I think that's another thing that builds our confidence, too, is seeing that they're getting it” (Lillian, Final Interview, 183-184).

Tracy Meadows. One area of strength that Tracy identified in herself was her understanding of the PLC framework. She attended the PLC Conference held by Solution Tree and said it was “life changing” (Tracy, Initial Interview, 28). Tracy brought back several trainings for the entire campus after attending the training and said it really affirmed what her team was already doing in PLCs. Tracy said that her team mostly does a PLC for math or reading, and very rarely for writing. Most of the PLC meetings that she helps lead involve math since that is where she is most comfortable.

In the midpoint interview when Tracy reflected on the PLC process so far with writing, she said the process had positively affected her as teacher (Tracy, Midpoint Interview, 51). Specifically, she named, “Breaking apart the different elements and looking at who needs what and getting ideas how we can implement small group and individual conferences to help those kids reach their goal (Tracy, Midpoint Interview, 53-55). The process of planning the unit to understand the bigger goals and analyze student writing to make instructional decisions accordingly has greatly influenced Tracy as a writing teacher. In fact, Tracy said, “I wish we would do this for every unit” (Tracy, Midpoint Interviews, 221). Not only did Tracy see the benefit of using the PLC with writing, she saw the benefit of using the entire PLC process to shape a unit of study. She also acknowledged that this process could be carried over to other content areas. When reflecting on how the PLC influenced her classroom practice, Tracy said, “I am more aware” (Tracy, Final Interview, 62). She went on to give an example of how she knows what her kids need so well that she is able to angle her mini lessons accordingly and pull specific mentor texts to provide another layer of exposure (Tracy, Final Interview, 62-67). Later, she

mentioned how her conferring work has become more focused because she knows exactly which students could benefit from specific strategies. Tracy said, “so I am more intentional on my conferences...and in my lessons” (Tracy, Final Interview, 161-162). For Tracy, the time upfront really understanding the genre-demands of the unit and collaborating around specific strategies for groups of students seems to have made the greatest impact on her classroom instruction.

When we reflected on the PLC framework in the final interview, Tracy said, “It's easier to do with writing now” (Tracy, Final Interview, 58). Before, she explained, she mostly used the PLC framework with math or reading because it was a lot easier (Tracy, Final Interview, 60). When I asked what made the PLC process with writing easier now, Tracy reflected on the whole process of planning the unit before teaching, analyzing the student writing throughout the unit, making decisions when using the curricular resource, and keeping track of student growth (Tracy, Final Interview, 63-68).

The second-grade team. The second-grade teachers at Mountain Elementary are self-contained, meaning they are responsible for teaching all subject areas, including English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR), math, science, and social studies. In fact, all primary grades (K-3) at Mountain Elementary are self-contained, while upper grades (3-5) are departmentalized with teams of teachers dividing the content into a Math/Science and ELAR/Social Studies split. When talking to the teachers about their previous experiences with the PLC structure at their campus, it was evident that all three teachers only experienced working in a PLC around the subjects of math and reading. The school district initiative for PLCs did not specify certain content areas, but the interpretations from this campus and the teachers utilized PLC for just reading and math. Even though the teachers were responsible for all content areas, they only previously collaborated around two subject areas.

By the end of the study, all three participants felt more confident about using the PLC process for writing and saw direct connections to how they could make their PLC for math and reading even stronger. One piece of the PLC that seemed to make the biggest difference of the participants was the time we spent ahead of the unit better understanding the standards, genre, and curriculum pacing. All three participants commented on how this process helped their teaching become more purposeful and built their confidence as writing teachers. The participants also mentioned how analyzing writing, not just before a unit but throughout the unit, helped them know exactly where their students were and target their individualized instruction more appropriately.

Abilities Teaching Writing

Jackie Campbell. When asked about her abilities teaching writing, Jackie said, “I’m comfortable with teaching writing...that’s one of my more comfortable subjects because I love writing” (Jackie, Initial Interview, 57-58). She also immediately identified areas where she needed to grow as a writing teacher, describing differentiation and documentation as some of her professional goals. Even though she did not have a lot of training in her undergraduate program, she explained that it really did not hinder her ability to teach writing. She said, “Writing is more of a natural thing for me. I love to write. And I feel like as a student I was strong in writing” (Jackie, Initial Interview, 69-71) Additionally, she said that not having undergraduate work might have actually been beneficial to her because she did not enter the field with any preconceived notions about how to teach writing.

In the midpoint interview, Jackie reflected on how the professional learning experiences in the study influenced her classroom practice. She immediately said that she was even more

comfortable teaching writing now (Jackie, Midpoint Interview, 38). She also reflected on the length of her writing mini-lessons, explaining that this work together has shortened her lessons (Jackie, Midpoint Interview, 38-39). Jackie said, “I feel like I understand what I’m teaching better, so I can get that across more easily...so it’s kept those mini-lessons short” (Jackie, Midpoint Interview, 39-40). What is interesting is that during the midpoint observation, I actually did not observe a difference in the length of the mini-lesson from the initial to midpoint observation, but Jackie felt a difference in her teaching.

Later in the interview, Jackie clarified what she meant by shortened mini-lessons in reflecting on the pacing of her writing workshop. She explained that the way she uses the time during writing workshop is “more efficient” (Jackie, Midpoint Interview, 160) and she is able to accomplish a lot more in a short amount of time because of how much more she understands about the unit (Jackie, Midpoint Interview, 204-206). Jackie continuously referred to this same shift in her practice of efficiency throughout the interview, claiming it has made her teaching “more purposeful” (Jackie, Midpoint Interview, 63, 75, 233). She also explained that she has shifted her understanding of the purpose of her lessons. Instead of the goal of mastery, she started thinking about the goal of exposure to a variety of strategies. She said

I think one other thing is I think that I have learned to give them more time to write, to really keep that short and sweet, and let them go try it and then go from there. Rather than making sure that everyone does it or understands before they go write...no, just let them go, because they have blown me away with what they've done on their own. (Jackie, Midpoint Interviews, 255-259)

Jackie recognized that her students were more likely to try new strategies and enhance their writing when they were given time to write. The way she structured her workshop block became more efficient because she created a balance of time to teach and time for students to practice.

Another big instructional shift that Jackie felt by the midpoint interview was the implementation of small group instruction. Prior to this study, Jackie only use one-on-one conferences to differentiate her writing instruction during independent writing time. After spending time as team organizing students into similar needs based on their writing, Jackie began implementing small groups to differentiate her writing instruction. When reflecting on this shift in her practice, Jackie said, “The huge thing has been in the small group conferencing...it’s given a lot more independence to the other kids...I think they are more confident to go out and work” (Jackie, Midpoint Interview, 41-49). Jackie explained that designing the small group lessons ahead of time based on the student writing made pulling the small groups easy and manageable. Because the small groups were designed around specific writing strategies, the small group lessons were very quick, gave time for some feedback, but empowered the kids to go off and try the strategy on their own. Since the students have become more independent, Jackie noticed that they were not craving her attention anymore, and instead brave enough to take some risks and implement new techniques in their writing.

Along with small group instruction, Jackie recognized a shift in the type of writing conferences she had with students. When selecting the students to confer with, she explained, “it was more convention type stuff, not the development or structure of the piece” (Jackie, Midpoint Interview, 218-220). Jackie said it was easier to see who was struggling with spelling, spacing, punctuation, or capitalization, but now she can easily look for genre and craft (Jackie, Midpoint Interviews, 222-224). She also explained that strategy instruction is what made it easier to focus

on genre and craft and it has made her conferences more meaningful (Jackie, Midpoint Interview (224-226). Jackie's own reflection was consistent with my findings in the midpoint classroom observation during her writing workshop block.

At the end of the midpoint interview, Jackie laughed and said she thought she was confident teaching writing before (Jackie, Midpoint Interview, 231). I asked Jackie to name what she contributed to the increased confidence so far in the study and she said:

I think it's more that... I keep saying purposeful. I think I know now what I'm teaching, and I know what my kids need more. I'm more aware of their needs to the specific unit or genre... And when I say in general, I think more conventions. I think, before, that was always my fallback for conferencing, whereas now, it's like a much bigger picture.

(Jackie, Midpoint Interview, 233-238)

By the midpoint interview, Jackie felt more confident in her writing instruction because her teaching struck a balance between conventions and craft. Since she understood the demands of the genre so well, she was able to efficiently use her time and develop a repertoire of strategies for teaching students.

In the final interview, Jackie also mentioned that her teaching has become more purposeful (Jackie, Final Interview, 3). She explained, "I mean we are really stopping often to reflect on what do students have, what do they not have, and then adjusting our lesson plans to meet that" (Jackie, Final Interview, 3-5). Jackie's instruction became responsive to the students progress throughout the unit. She added on, "so we were able to focus more on what they needed instead of rushing through everything to get every little thing in" (Jackie, Final Interview, 6-9). Not only has Jackie's instruction become more purposeful, but she has also felt confident in the

decisions she's made to adjust the pacing and scope of the curriculum based on what her students need and her knowledge of the grade-level standards.

Jackie also reflected on the way she used writing conferences in the final interview. She said that prior to this study, she did not meet with students frequently enough, claiming, "it would be so long before you got back, that either they'd master that or they were off... it just took too much time (Jackie, Final Interview, 31-34). Now, Jackie said she sees each of her students at least twice a week because of how she's structured independent writing time with small group and one-on-one conferences. As a result, she explained that students are "reaching goals quicker...and misconceptions are being fixed more quickly" (Jackie, Final Interview, 35-38). She immediately noticed that because of the way she has become more purposeful in her writing conferences and met with the kids more frequently, students are transferring the elements of poetry into their writing even more (Jackie, Final Interview, 41). In fact, Jackie just paused and said, with a smile spreading across her face, "Their writing has just blown me away" (Jackie, Final Interview, 40). By the final reflection, Jackie moved from reflecting on shifts in her own practice to naming how her practice has influenced the students in her own classroom.

Lillian Walker. Lillian felt confident in her classroom instruction around writing, especially regarding the overall pacing and flow of the workshop framework (Lillian, Initial Interview, 126-156). She described her struggle teaching writing skills, referring to specific mechanics and conventions with writing, such as ending punctuation. Lillian explained that she could sit next to a student and help them see that they need the punctuation, but she was not sure how to scaffold the student into doing the work independently. Additionally, Lillian felt confident in her abilities to teach students to revise and add detail. She said her focus was typically on the craft of writing, which is why she thought she needed more support with

conventions. Finally, Lillian mentioned that she really felt confident knowing where her students are as writers and forming instruction based on their needs.

In the midpoint interview, Lillian chuckled and said, “When I first started, I thought I was really good...I felt so confident with my conferencing...Okay, no, that’s changed!” (Lillian, Midpoint Interview, 77-82). She went on to explain that before this study she felt confident with conferencing because she was able to meet frequently with her students, but now she realized that the content of her conferences have become more meaningful (Lillian, Midpoint Interview, 88-89). Lillian specifically referenced the time spent really understanding the genre-demands of the unit and the specific grade-level standards along with the in-class application of small group instruction as to the greatest impact on her ability to confer with writers. In the final interview, Lillian reiterated this point. She said:

I feel like I've been more purposeful with it. I understand poetry better now, so it helps me teach it better. I think being able to pull apart the standards that we needed...using it to drive the instruction... knowing what exactly was needed in the poetry has helped so much with what I'm teaching, you know, and how to teach it. (Lillian, Final Interview, 5-10)

Lillian recognized that her understanding of the genre and the time spent collaborating with her team directly influenced her ability to teach poetry writing.

In the final interview, Lillian also reflected on her ability to confer with writers. She explained that in past units, there were too many elements to look for and teach into in student writing (Lillian, Final Interview, 66-67). Since the team met to establish non-negotiable criteria as a grade level, it narrowed her lens for teaching. She said that before, she was just trying to get to as many individual students as possible, but now, she is able to look at the writing quickly to

determine small groups (Lillian, Final Interview, 67-68). As a result, she said, “I feel like I’m reaching more now than I was before” (Lillian, Final Interview, 70). Lillian was not just referring to the quantity of students she worked with, but the quality of the content of the conferences. Because her teaching has become so focused and she has been able to intentionally pull small groups, she said, “I feel more confident...and I feel like my students are wanting to work harder” (Lillian, Final Interview, 81-85). In reflecting on her ability to teach writing, Lillian acknowledged that becoming more purposeful in her teaching directly influenced her students’ productivity during writing workshop.

In the final interview, Lillian also reflected on the pacing of her writing workshop block. She explained that prior to this study, she was fearful to send students off to write independently if they did not master the content taught in the mini-lesson (Lillian, Final Interview, 41-42). As a result, her mini-lessons were often maxi-lessons, often doubling the intended length and leaving little time for students to apply the strategies taught. Lillian said, “I feel like I’ve done better with sending them off and trusting them” (Lillian, Final Interview, 43-44). Lillian explained that she still feels a sense of panic when she realizes that they might not know what to do when they leave the mini-lesson, but she feels better about sending them off because she knows she will have the opportunity to work with them in a conference. She said:

And I’m going to send them off, and they’re not going to know what the heck to do. But I’ve kind of realized that it’s okay now. And as I go around I see, oh, they are getting it...Or they’re the ones that I’m going to help... I’m going to pull aside to work with.
(Lillian, Final Interview, 49-54)

Lillian became more comfortable in releasing her students to take risks as writers and attempt to try a strategy because she knew that the mini-lesson was not her only opportunity to teach.

Later in the final interview, Lillian reflected on how her confidence in teaching writing has affected her students as writers. She said, “I feel like my confidence is being pushed over to them” (Lillian, Final Interview, 87). She explained that because she knows what she is looking for, she has developed a sense of confidence in the genre of poetry writing. In return, her students have gained clarity of the genre of poetry writing and are eager to showcase what they are working on (Lillian, Final Interview, 88-92). When reflecting on herself as a writing teacher in the final interview, Lillian’s comments all went back to her students. She said, “They’re excited...they love it and they feel confident. And that’s how I want them to feel!” (Lillian, Final Interview, 90-92).

Tracy Meadows. In her first year of teaching, Tracy was initially hired as a long-term substitute for a teacher on maternity leave, which a few months later developed into a full-time position. She was hired to teach fourth grade ELAR and said, “So I didn't really know what to do besides pull out a workbook” (Tracy, Initial Interview, 242). She described her first years of teaching as negative and teacher-led. This experience stuck with Tracy. She did not have anyone to support her teaching or planning. When talking about her teaching career, Tracy said, ‘So it kind of started off kind of crummy’ (Tracy, Initial Interview, 249). I asked Tracy how she recovered from that experience and she told me that she never really did. She explained that the principal at the time moved her to second grade shortly after she was not producing results and Tracy felt like it was a punishment or a ploy to get her to quit. In fact, Tracy did consider leaving the professional altogether after her fifth year of teaching.

When I asked Tracy what made her stay, her eyes filled with tears as she named another teacher on the campus. She explained that this teacher was hired on when Tracy was at her lowest. Through the teacher’s encouragement, support, optimistic attitude, Tracy began to see the

possibilities in teaching. Tracy said, “No one I worked with really loved kids and loved learning like she did. She showed me how to be a good teacher. I'm just so thankful for her” (Tracy, Initial Interview, 263-265). Over the next three years, Tracy said her instruction became more student-centered as she transitioned to using the workshop model for all subjects and embraced collaboration through the PLC framework. Tracy had incredibly negative experiences in both her undergraduate degree and her first years of teaching and underwent a huge pedagogical transformation in the past couple of years.

As a result of the traumatic experiences, Tracy explained that she does not have any confidence when teaching writing. When I asked her how she felt about her abilities for teaching writing, Tracy simply said, “I struggle” (Tracy, Initial Interview, 155). She also referred to her own abilities as a writer, arguing that she is just not creative and tends to struggle in front of the class. For the past five years of teaching second grade, Tracy has not received any professional development in writing instruction because she is the grade-level representative for math. So, while the district has embarked on a new writing initiative, Tracy has not received any of the training. What is interesting about Tracy as a teacher is that she has experienced a huge pedagogical shift in her instruction, despite not receiving district-level professional development. Additionally, Tracy is regarded as one of the strongest math teachers in the district as she currently writes math curriculum for the district and takes on an active role in the vertical math team on the campus. Tracy explained that writing was the only subject that she did not feel confident teaching.

By the midpoint interview, Tracy said that her confidence in teaching writing slightly increased (Tracy, Midpoint Interview, 18). She explained that because we spent time analyzing the student writing and planning small group lessons together, it was easier for her to know what

to do when conferring with students (Tracy, Midpoint Interview, 19-20). Tracy said that her slight increase in confidence teaching writing and knowledge about the genre of poetry writing positively enhanced her conferencing with students. Tracy said that now she actually likes teaching writing because she “understands it more” (Tracy, Midpoint Interview, 37). She simply said, “I am more aware” when commenting on her understanding of the genre of poetry writing and how it’s helped her become intentional in her teaching (Tracy, Midpoint Interview, 62).

Later in the interview, she said:

I think confidence is huge because before I wasn’t confident so I would just kind of skip through things or I wouldn’t explain it...because I didn’t know...Now I can explain it better than I could before because I understand what is needed. (Tracy, Midpoint Interview, 137-140)

Tracy’s confidence grew as a writing teacher because she knew the expectations of the genre. Additionally, Tracy added on that her students were “more open to change and...growing as writers” now that she is more confident (Tracy, Midpoint Interview, 42-43). Not only did Tracy’s confidence grow because she gained more clarity in the unit, but she acknowledged the change in her students as a result of her learning.

When reflecting on how this experience has influenced the way she teaches writing, Tracy said, “I still feel confident...and I just enjoy it so much more” (Tracy, Final Interview, 6-8). I asked Tracy to elaborate some more, and she added:

I know what I’m doing. I know what I’m supposed to be saying...I’m more confident...I enjoy teaching, because when I go and talk to kids at their table while they’re working, I know what I need to say, for the most part. (Tracy, Final Interview, 11-13)

Tracy went on to give a specific example of student she conferred with earlier during writing workshop. She explained that the student really understood the previous goal they worked on with adding line breaks, so she helped him add more sensory details into his poem by thinking about how he feels and how he wants his readers to feel when reading the poem (Tracy, Final Interview, 15-21). By the final interview, Tracy not only felt more confident in her ability to teach writing, but she was able to really name specific examples of how her confidence and understanding of poetry influenced her students as writers. Tracy credited the time spent collaboratively planning the unit with her team to her increased confidence in this unit.

The second-grade team. One interesting finding across the teacher participants is the relationship between the individual teacher's professional learning experiences related to writing and how they describe their abilities teaching writing. For example, Jackie spoke positively about the writing training opportunities she has received in both school districts she has taught in the past nine years. Even though Jackie was alternatively certified and did not attend a teacher education undergraduate program, she received ample training in how to teaching writing. Jackie also claimed that she felt confident teaching writing because she enjoyed it so much. Jackie is also the district grade-level representative for ELAR, so she attends trainings throughout the year on writing instruction. Thus, Jackie has extensive previous and ongoing learning experiences around writing instruction, so she feels confident about her abilities in this content area. Jackie is also responsible for entering in the writing lesson plans for her whole grade-level team, allowing her to be immersed in the curriculum, which also attributes to her confidence in the classroom.

On the contrary, having prior negative experience relating to writing, Tracy did not feel confident in her ability to teach writing. In the only course that addressed writing instruction in her undergraduate program, Tracy left feeling defeated. Then, Tracy began her teaching career in

a difficult situation without proper mentorship or support. As a result, Tracy hated teaching writing at the start of this study. Tracy's attitude toward writing was a result of the negative experiences that influenced her over time. While Tracy was the one who needed more ongoing professional learning related to writing instruction, Jackie was the member on the team receiving all of the training. One interesting finding from this suggests that the district's organizational structure for training teachers that are self-contained does not prioritize those who desperately need the support.

After sustained support over a few weeks, all three participants experienced an increase in confidence for teaching writing as indicated in their midpoint individual interviews. All three said that the experience of collaboratively planning the unit, analyzing student writing, and gaining a better understanding of how to incorporate small group instruction into writing workshop helped them feel more confident as writing teachers. By the final interview, the participants shifted their responses to focus on the student learning as a result of their increased ability in teaching writing. All three mentioned how students were better able to transfer strategies into their own writing with more independence because their teaching became so much more purposeful.

Experience with an Instructional Coach

Jackie Campbell. When asked about her experiences working with an instructional coach, Jackie immediately asked for clarification of that role, confused by which individual served in that capacity at her campus. When prompted, she thought about an experience with a coach at her previous district during her first year of teaching, explaining that the coach would “come in and model lessons...or watch and give feedback” (Jackie, Initial Interview, 40-41). In

this district, she explained that both the literacy and math interventionists support in their PLC meetings, helping them set goals for students and identifying instructional strategies.

By the midpoint interview, Jackie was able to speak to the specific role of the instructional coach throughout this study. She explained that having an instructional coach as a part of the team helped clarify a lot along the way. She said:

And I think just your knowledge on what poetry is and some ways you can teach it...just being able to pick your brain...was a huge help in clarifying...You were able to condense it because it's so much information and bring it to us in a way that we understood.

(Jackie, Midpoint Interview, 131-140)

Jackie reflected on how the role of the instructional coach was used to facilitate conversation around the unit of study and deepen the teacher's understanding of the genre. Jackie also mentioned the feedback given to the teachers throughout the process was helpful. She specifically referred to the experience of the labsite when we practiced small group instruction. She explained that by watching it and discussing teaching decisions throughout, she was able to pick up a few tips on how to manage it within her own classroom (Jackie, Midpoint Interview, 149-156).

In the final interview, Jackie spoke of the role of a coach in a different manner. Instead of speaking of the pieces that the coach brings to the team, like knowledge of the genre or modeling of instructional strategies, she spoke to the relationship between the teachers and coach.

Specifically, Jackie said:

When you come in as a coach, you come in on our level, you're one of us...yet you have this immense amount of knowledge...but you never come across as 'I'm the coach and you need to listen to me because I'm the all-knowing'...you are able to relate it to us in the

classroom...And because of that you've built those relationships with us...like you're a member of our team... You share in our joys with these kids like they're your own kids.

(Jackie, Final Interview, 215-224)

The role of a coach shifted from someone who brings knowledge and clarity to someone who participates in the process as a member of the team, sharing in the celebrations along the way. Reflecting on previous relationships with coaches, Jackie explained that she has never had a relationship with a coach like this, where true collaboration resulted in such dramatic changes in both her own teaching and the student learning (Jackie, Final Interview, 262-267). Additionally, Jackie explained that this relationship has made her a much better teacher because she is constantly reflecting, learning, and striving to make me proud (Jackie, Final Interview, 286-288).

Lillian Walker. When asked about her experience working with an instructional coach, Lillian shared about her experience working with the campus math coach. She describes an experience with the coach the previous year where she was teaching and the coach corrected her lesson:

So last year she would come in and she would just watch me teach and would chime in every now and then. It was actually kind of funny because I was teaching something last year that I completely taught wrong. It was a number line for math and I was teaching them the opposite way to do something on the number line. And she was like "Okay stop. You just made the same mistake that I did when I first started teaching. We need to do this backwards." Anyways, it was funny. But she would just come in and help me then.

(Lillian, Initial Interview, 64-70)

Lillian's experience working with an instructional coach was limited to her first year teaching and the daily support she received from the campus math coach. Her initial understanding of the

role of an instructional coach was to provide feedback when something was wrong. When I asked if she still received help from the math coach, Lillian explained that since she was no longer a first year teacher, she did not require the coaching support anymore.

In the midpoint interview, Lillian reflected on the role of the instructional coach up until that point in the study. She immediately explained how comfortable she is having a coach in the classroom while she teaches and how it does not make her nervous (Lillian, Midpoint Interview, 164-165). Then, she reflected on the out-of-classroom experiences with an instructional coach and said, “Just the little pieces of information you give here and there without saying that you did this...you just sneak in pieces of advice” (Lillian, Midpoint Interview, 174-175). Lillian acknowledged the pieces of knowledge that an instructional coach can bring to a team and extended this by saying,

...or you make it so reflective...just the way you ask questions makes me reflect more on what I am doing...And so it helps me be more reflective and think about what’s best for my kids. (Lillian, Midpoint Interview, 176-179)

Lillian also explained that she appreciated the aspect of coaching that extends into the days when I was not on campus. Specifically, she explained that she has a better understanding of how to use the resources in her classroom so she can better problem-solve using the process we talked about as a team (Lillian, Midpoint Interview, 184-187). She explained that even when I’m not on campus, the process is the same for looking at student strengths and needs and coming up with small group plans to differentiate the writing (Lillian, Midpoint Interview, 184-187). She concluded by saying, “It’s completely changed what we’re doing in the classroom” (Lillian Midpoint Interview, 191).

In the final interview, Lillian explained that having a coach stay throughout the entire unit of study and guide the learning was really beneficial to her understanding. She said:

Just you being here to help guide us through all of that. I mean, we wouldn't be able to know to do all of that stuff if you weren't here. It helped build all our confidence.

(Lillian, Final Interview, 139-141)

Lillian also commented on the positive feedback she received after having coaching support in her classroom, describing how helpful it was to hear not only what she was doing well as a teacher but also getting a few tips to try the next time (Lillian, Final Interview, 143-147). She said, "It just stuck with me...just the little different tips like that has just helped me so much with meeting my kid's needs" (Lillian, Final Interview, 151-154). Lillian found that coaching support throughout the entire unit of study was really helpful to guiding her understanding during the unit.

Tracy Meadows. When I asked Tracy about her experience working with an instructional coach, she immediately named the campus math coach. Tracy said that she worked with the math coach her first three years of teaching second grade, then said, "she pushed me out because she's comfortable with me being a math teacher" (Tracy, Initial Interview, 73-74). She also remembered working with a literacy coach her first years of teaching second grade, learning how to implement guided reading. She described a gradual release of responsibility as the coach modeled guided reading and then gradually released parts of the lesson over to Tracy, eventually becoming independent in the instructional strategy. Again, Tracy said that once the coaches were comfortable with her teaching, they pushed her out. Therefore, the past few years of teaching second grade, Tracy has not received any coaching support or professional learning related to literacy instruction.

Another interesting understanding about coaching from Tracy was that she identified peer coaching as a form of instructional coaching (Tracy, Initial Interview, 93-99). When I asked her how she felt about not receiving coaching support the past couple of years, she emphasized that she desired feedback and help, especially with writing, but that she was fortunate to have colleagues who are so willing to teach her. In fact, the second grade team often combined their groups to co-teach lessons. If a teacher was unsure of a strategy or content area, the team got together to support each other. Tracy explained that this design for peer coaching and co-teaching occurs every week or two. While Tracy has not received much professional learning around literacy, especially in comparison to her colleague Jackie, she created opportunities for herself to learn through peer-coaching.

In the midpoint interview, Tracy immediately named modeling as the most helpful element of coaching so far (Tracy, Midpoint Interview, 84). With a touch of sarcasm, she said, “I like to see it done...I would like you to be with me the rest of the year. Can we make that work?” (Tracy, Midpoint Interview, 84-87). Tracy explained that it was really helpful to see both the planning for the small groups and the teaching of small groups within her classroom during the labsite. She mentioned that she felt confident enough to try the same instructional strategy on her own following that experience because she had the opportunity to see it modeled inside her classroom and the chance to try the strategy out with coaching support before going off to try it alone (Tracy, Midpoint Interview, 107-108). Tracy also referenced the relationship with the coach inside of the classroom, commenting on how powerful the positive feedback is on her confidence in teaching (Tracy, Midpoint Interview, 95). She said, “I like that when I work with you...I don’t feel stupid!” (Tracy, Midpoint Interview, 90-91). Both modeling and feedback seem to be the most beneficial elements of coaching for Tracy’s confidence teaching writing.

After this interview, Tracy requested more coaching support during her writing workshop to help her become even stronger at conferring with writers.

In the final interview when I asked Tracy to reflect on her experience working with an instructional coach, she exclaimed, “I just love it so much! I am so much more confident because of you” (Tracy, Final Interview, 79-80). Tracy went on to describe the experiences where I modeled lessons and she observed and then immediately implemented the strategy and received feedback. She explained, “I like to see things done and how it’s done” (Tracy, Final interview, 80-81). For Tracy, modeling allowed her to visualize an abstract concept and grow more confident trying the strategy on her own. She also explained having a balance between in-class support and in PLC support was really beneficial to helping her grow more confident in her teaching (Tracy, Final interview, 90-92).

The second-grade team. The responses from the teacher participants in the initial interview were really interesting about how they viewed the role of an instructional coach. Both Tracy and Lillian had to clarify who actually served in those roles on their campus. They all also seemed to consider coaching mostly for new or inexperienced teachers. The ways they mostly described coaching was pushing into the classroom to provide feedback or modeling lessons. Sometimes, they talked about the coaches sitting in on their PLCs, but said that did not occur very frequently. It did not appear that the coaching support they received previously was connected to any larger purpose or goal. They spoke of coaching as isolated incidents, not as a professional learning opportunity. By the midpoint interview, all three specifically named the elements of coaching that were most beneficial. They all explained that the knowledge behind the genre helped provide clarity and clarify their misunderstandings. They also said that modeling helped them see a new strategy, but the act of implementing right after modeling was

really beneficial to their own understanding. Finally, all three found positive feedback with reflective questions or quick tips pieces of coaching that really stuck with them when I was not around. In the final interview, the coaching experience was discussed in a much larger way. For example, Jackie talked about how I became a member of the team because of the types of collaboration around student work. Tracy and Lillian just beamed when they talked about the experience and explained that it made them much more confident in their teaching of writing. The teacher participants' responses in the final interview illuminated the relationship between a teacher and a coach, especially when the coach strategically positions herself as an equal. Throughout the study, the role of a coach shifted from an outsider coming into the classroom to an insider making decisions alongside the teachers.

Process for Planning Writing

Jackie Campbell. Being the ELAR representative for her grade level, Jackie was also the person who wrote all of the lesson plans for writing instruction for her whole team. When asked about her process for planning writing, Jackie said that she started by looking at the unit of study as a whole, explaining, “so I kind of know the end product of where we need to end...what do they need to publish” (Jackie, Initial Interview, 120-121). Then, she described reading through the *Units of Study for Teaching Writing* curriculum resource (Calkins, 2013) to understand a week at a time, leaving sticky notes on the pages in an attempt to condense the wordy lessons. After gaining an overall picture of the unit, Jackie dove deeper into daily lesson planning, using her sticky notes to guide what she enters in the plans. Even though the resource remained the same each year, Jackie explained that what she enters in for lesson plans differs because, “honestly, each year it's different depending on what the kids need” (Jackie, Initial Interview,

127-128). Jackie used her observations of her students in her classroom and discussion with her teammates to adapt the lesson plans each week in response to student needs.

One interesting piece about Jackie describing her process for planning is that when I asked to see examples of the types of notes she writes on the sticky notes, she replied, “Here’s the thing. Like, I don’t always...like today I didn’t write anything on a sticky note. It’s from last year” (Jackie, Initial Interview, 147-148). The process Jackie described for planning was her intended planning process, but it was not a reflection of her current reality. In fact, she went on to explain that since this year she was much more comfortable with the curriculum, she mostly used her notes from last year and did not read the lessons as in depth as she had done in previous years (Jackie, Initial Interview, 177-182). She recognized that while she does not go through the intended process of reading the lesson and leaving sticky notes, she still makes adjustments from last year’s plans based on her the current students in her classroom. That is, last year’s plans are not just copied and pasted over from the previous year, but used as a quick reference for how she might need to adjust the session this year.

In the midpoint interview, Jackie reflected on the previous process the team used for unit planning. She explained that in previous years, one of the teachers on the team did all of the preparations for the unit (Jackie, Midpoint Interview, 57). Now, she explained, “I think that getting together and all of us discussing this unit...really drove our lessons...and made our teaching much more purposeful” (Jackie, Midpoint Interview, 58-63). Since Jackie was the person on the team responsible for entering in the lesson plans, this collaborative unit planning helped build cohesive understanding of the genre across the team. Additionally, the planning became much more about teaching writers than entering in plans. Jackie reflected:

Honestly, I think because we've been so much more purposeful in the planning of the lessons, I have such a deeper grasp of the unit as a whole...whereas in the past, I just went by week to week. (Jackie, Midpoint Interview, 204-207)

The planning process shifted for Jackie, releasing the pressure to do all the planning herself and including her team in the curricular decision-making based on the student progress.

By the final interview, Jackie noticed that her planning process started including specific plans for small group instruction (Jackie, Final Interview, 59). Because the teachers were collaborating more around how their students are progressing through the unit, Jackie was able to input specific plans based on what students might need (Jackie, Final Interview, 60-62). Jackie explained that her plans now include specific scenarios to describe a predictable problem and a few references to support differentiated instruction (Jackie, Final Interview, 72-76). She mostly pulled lessons from *The Writing Strategies Book* by Jennifer Serravallo (2017) that addressed particular needs for their writers.

In the final interview, Jackie spoke about how she has become more flexible in planning writing workshop from *The Units of Study for Teaching Writing* (Calkins, 2013) curriculum. Before this study, Jackie felt like her planning had to begin and end with the curricular resource. Now, she is able to much more flexible adapting the pacing of the unit based on what she knows about the standards and what she discovers about her students (Jackie, Final Interview, 96-102). She also explained that she began looking across her entire literacy block for opportunities to teach. She said, "The things they didn't necessarily need to know for writing, we exposed them to that in reading" (Jackie, Final interview, 108-109). Knowing the reciprocal nature of teaching reading and writing, Jackie was able to consider multiple avenues for instruction to blend both reading and writing workshop. As a result of the collaborative nature of this study, Jackie

became more comfortable writing plans that met the specific needs of the students, addressed the grade-level standards, and provided opportunities for students to experience literacy through the lens of both a reader and a writer.

As a final reflection, Jackie explained that she intends to carry this process for planning a unit into the next school year (Jackie, Final Interview, 140-142). Without knowing specific details, she explained that she wants to “take a day to delve through the writing and talk about the unit coming up...looking at the standards...reading through Lucy...considering where our kids might struggle and what they might need to be successful” (Jackie, Final Interview, 142-146). Jackie emphasized that as she plans next year, she wants to “have everyone’s kids in mind, not just [her] own” (Jackie, Final Interview, 147). When thinking ahead to the next year, she reflected, “I know it’s going to change the way we plan!” (Jackie, Final Interview, 153). This process of planning not only changed the way Jackie currently plans, but also helped her rethink her process for planning for the following school year.

Lillian Walker. When describing her process for planning, Lillian referred to the previous year when she dedicated a lot more time to the writing resource. She said, “So last year I was very specific about doing everything Lucy said in each unit...So I would make sure I could fit everything from her session that I could into my day. So all that reading...I would go and I would plan it all out...and my plans would be long because I would make them so detailed. Also, I would read it and then I would have to go back and reread it on my plans because after planning it all, I had no idea what I wrote for the next day because it was so much” (Lillian, Initial Interview, 200-208). The previous year, Lillian dedicated a lot of time to planning writing instruction, but found that it did not support her teaching of writing. She spent more time reading and rereading the pages in the resource, treating it as a script, and less time being responsive to

what her students needed. Upon reflection of the change in her planning process this year, Lillian explained, “I did everything that she did...but your kids don't need everything...they're all in a different place...So I couldn't do everything she wrote” (Lillian, Initial Interview, 210-212). This year, Jackie wrote the lesson plans for writing and presented them to the team the Thursday before the plans begin. Lillian skimmed through the teaching points and lessons referred to in the *Units of Study for Teaching Writing* (Calkins, 2013) resource, but did not dedicate as much time to reading the lessons thoroughly. Additionally, Lillian mentioned using *The Writing Strategies Book* by Jennifer Serravallo (2017) to help differentiate her writing instruction.

In the midpoint interview, Lillian explained that her process was still pretty similar to the beginning of the year. Because Jackie entered the lesson plans for writing, Lillian mostly just read the plans the week before and then referred to the curriculum if she had additional questions or needed clarification (Lillian, Midpoint Interview, 318-321). In the final interview, Lillian explained that the process of getting together and talking about what their students’ progress really helped shape her plan for differentiation inside of her classroom (Lillian, Final Interview, 97-100). Because she left the PLC meetings with sticky notes full of small group lesson ideas for specific groups of students, Lillian felt like using student writing really helped her plans become more purposeful (Lillian Final interviews, 116). Lillian reflected on her previous process for planning and said, “I feel like I was trying to be too perfect” (Lillian, Final Interview, 118). Instead of shooting for perfection, Lillian shifted her mindset in planning on efficient ways to organize student into groups by need and ways to quickly implement a new strategy to lift the level of her students’ writing. While Jackie continued to insert the plans, Lillian took initiative to plan for differentiation based on her student progress.

Tracy Meadows. Because Tracy is the math representative, she did not enter lesson plans for writing instruction. In fact, she only read the lesson plans right before she began her writing lesson for that day. Tracy explained that when she first started using the *Units of Study* (Calkins 2013) resource a few years before, she read the lessons thoroughly, but now she just relied on the detailed plans that Jackie enters for writing. When speaking of the curricular resource, Tracy exclaimed, “I don’t read Lucy Calkins because it’s too long. It’s too long!” (Tracy, Initial Interview, 327-328). In fact, Tracy hardly even opened the curricular resource anymore because everything she needed to teach the lesson was in the lesson plan written by Jackie. Tracy brought over her lesson plans and asked me, “Have you seen them? Jackie does a great job of getting the gist of everything. I don’t have time to read six pages every night. It’s just too wordy” (Tracy, Initial Interview, 335-337). Tracy’s planning process for writing involved reading the lesson plans written by Jackie when she arrived to school each morning.

When I asked Tracy about her planning process for writing in the midpoint interview, she paused and then said, “Jackie plans” (Tracy, Midpoint Interview, 169). She quickly followed up by explaining that they do meet as a team weekly to look at the plans and discuss how their students are progressing so far in the unit. One shift that Tracy acknowledged that is different is that she was finding herself using the curricular resource more often because Jackie was referencing specific pages in the unit to use with students (Tracy, Midpoint Interview, 193-194). So, while Tracy was not self-initiating using the curriculum, she was finding a balance between teaching completely from the lesson plan given to her and using the curricular resource to make choices for the instruction in her classroom.

In the final interview, Tracy proudly announced, “Instead of just winging it like, right before, I look at it, like, 30 minutes before, and I highlight what I need to say, to be more

purposeful” (Tracy, Final Interview, 43-44). At the start of the study, Tracy mostly left the planning process up to her teammate, Jackie, but by the end of the study she began taking more initiative to have a role in the planning. One interesting piece that Tracy did not mention in her interview is how collaborative she was in the planning process throughout the study. I often caught her at recess talking about where her students were struggling in writing, which oftentimes got addressed in subsequent lesson plans by Jackie. For example, one time, Tracy noticed that her students were really struggling to infer when she read poems aloud. They were taking poems at the most literal level and Tracy realized this was probably why her students were writing such literal poems. Tracy brought up this concern during recess to Jackie and Lillian, the three talked about possible options, and revised the lesson plans for the rest of the week to provide opportunities during reading to hear and talk about poems that are more abstract. Tracy did not recognize this collaborative work as contributing to the planning process for writing, but Jackie did mention how helpful it was to hear about the progress of the students from other classes.

The second-grade team. The planning process of the second-grade team was interesting because each member had a different responsibility for planning each subject. With Jackie being responsible for planning writing, the rest of the team mostly just relied on her lesson plans for teaching each day. In fact, they rarely looked at the curricular resource, complaining about the length and wordiness of the lessons. By the midpoint interview, the teachers began collaborating around the plans, discussing key points of the follow week’s lessons and contributing to the plans by discussing observations of their own students’ work. By the final interview, Jackie’s plans began to include small group lesson ideas, referring to specific page numbers within the curricular resources. Tracy and Lillian began to use the curricular resource in a more meaningful

way. Instead of worrying about implementing a curriculum perfectly, the second-grade team adjusted the pacing based on what they knew about the grade-level standards and the needs of their students.

Analysis of Student Writing

To document the evidence of professional learning in the teacher's language about student writing, I asked the teacher participants to analyze two different writing samples (see Figures 3.1 and 3.2) at the beginning and end of the study, describing the student's strengths, needs, and next points of instruction. I did not have specific correct responses that I expected to hear from this interview and was more interested in seeing what they noticed about and talked about the writing before and after the unit. The writing samples used came from the *Units of Study for Teaching Writing* curriculum designed by Calkins et al. (2013) and were approved for reproduction for educational purposes. These samples were selected because they contained some elements of poetry writing from real second-grade writers. The information collected from the interviews was triangulated with both field notes and transcripts from PLC, professional learning, and planning meetings, capturing teacher language regarding their own students' poetry writing. I first present these findings by teacher participant, and then reveal patterns of the collective whole.

Jackie Campbell. When Jackie looked at the first writing sample, she noticed the student's use of description, replying without hesitation saying, "Okay one of the strengths I see is the words they're using like, 'small critter'" (Jackie, Initial Interview, 196). Jackie paused, searching for the word to describe what this student was doing, then said, "...we call them the juicy words" (Jackie, Initial Interview, 197). Jackie turned her attention towards the student's use of conventions, noticing first the use of expression and exclamation marks in the line that

said, “Watch out! Watch out!” (Jackie, Initial Interview, 198). Then, she commented on the correctness of the student’s handwriting, capitalization, punctuating and spelling. Thinking about the genre of poetry, she said, “They have the breaks...I don’t know what you call that...where you put the different parts together” (Jackie, Initial Interview, 201-202). Jackie pointed to the different stanzas in the poem but was unsuccessful at naming that element of poetry.

When I asked Jackie to think about what this writer might need, she paused for a long time, reread the poem, chuckled, then replied, “I don’t know. It looks really good to me!” (Jackie, Initial Interview, 204). Searching for an answer to my question, Jackie reread the poem again, paused, and finally said, “I notice just here some of their capitalization is off...maybe some of the punctuation in this area...just in the middle piece” (Jackie, Initial Interview, 206-207). Jackie was pointing at the second stanza that read, “sharp claws/big eyes/pointed beak/Awesome flier,” showing that the capital letters were used inconsistently and no line had a period.

When considering possible next steps for instruction, Jackie took another long pause, reread the poem, and then suggested that she would help the student add more to the poem. She explained that the writer “told something” but did not “add why” so she thought they could add something part of the poem to explain more (Jackie, Initial Interview, 210-211). She ended with a final statement of, “I really just don’t know” (Jackie, Initial Interview, 212).

In the final interview, I asked Jackie to look at the same pieces again to comment on the student’s strengths, needs, and next steps of instruction. After reading the first sample again, she said, “So strengths- they’ve got some repetition. They’ve got the line breaks. They do have some descriptive words” (Jackie, Final Interview, 407-408). Without prompting with another interview question, Jackie immediately transitioned into what the writer needed. She described

the writer's need to use more description, pointing to specific parts of the poem that could use revision, and describing the effect of the craft move on the overall tone of the poem. She said:

I would say some of the things that they could work on is maybe show not tell... They do have some descriptive words. But instead of, 'it looks like an eagle, it eats dead animals, it is a bird of prey,' I feel like that would be a great area to show not tell, maybe use comparisons instead of saying, 'it looks like an eagle.' Maybe use those comparison words. I feel like they want the feeling in this poem to be scary, it's vicious, but that doesn't really come across. So, maybe, like, this end part, 'if you're a small critter, watch out, watch out,' maybe some more intense descriptive words to really give you that feeling. (Jackie, Final Interview, 409-420)

When I asked Jackie about the next point of instruction, she extended on the idea of embedding comparisons to add more description. Using genre-specific language, Jackie replied:

I think the first thing I would probably do is the comparisons, or the show not tell. I think this first stanza is what I would work on, because it almost reads more like a story...it's kind of flat...so helping them do that in that first stanza, to really bring the feeling out. (Jackie, Final Interview, 422-226)

Jackie's professional learning about poetry was evident in the way she spoke about the writing in the final interview compared to the initial. When Jackie looked at the first writing sample in the initial interview, she was not able to use genre-specific vocabulary to name the student's strengths or needs. By the final interview, Jackie was comfortably using genre-specific vocabulary to talk about the student writing. In particular, Jackie originally knew that the student was organizing his poem to include stanzas but struggled to use that word name. In fact, she

referred to the stanzas as “parts.” When she talked about the student’s writing in the final interview, she embedded the word naturally into her vocabulary about the student’s writing.

Another way Jackie’s professional learning was evidenced in her language was her ease of answering what the student needed and what the next points of instruction would be. Initially, Jackie hesitated on naming the child’s needs. In fact, she responded with “I don’t know” before trying to come up with a response, and in an attempt to have something to say, she immediately went to the conventions of the piece. In the final interview, Jackie never even hesitated to answer, and named specifically what the child needed and how she would teach into that need. Not only was Jackie’s language including more genre-specific terms from poetry, but she was almost more confident and intentional in her responses.

When I directed Jackie’s attention to the second writing sample during the initial interview, she started laughing and said, “Oh my God. My kids are so low so these look really good!” (Jackie, Initial Interview, 214). I asked Jackie to read the sample and consider the child’s strengths. Jackie read the poem, then replied, “I think their words help...like the visualization you get from the piece is really good” (Jackie, Initial Interview, 216). She proceeded to read specific parts of the poem that helped her visualize, pointing to the line that read, “Icicles dance in the sky.” Searching for a word to describe with the student was doing well, Jackie said, “I think that it’s much more...I just can’t think of the word. It’s poetic...I’ve drawn a blank on the word” (Jackie, Initial Interview, 219-220).

I asked Jackie to think about what the child might need. She paused for a long time, reread the poem and then determined that the student could work on punctuation. She said, “I see their commas in the drip, drip, drop, but that’s all I see” (Jackie, Initial Interview, 223-224). After I asked Jackie about possible next steps of instruction, she laughed and exclaimed, “Oh my

God! I don't know. I mean, I really don't know!" (Jackie, Initial Interview, 226). I assured Jackie that it was okay not to know and she replied, "I just think it looks really good. And they really make it come to life in your mind with their play on words" (Jackie, Initial Interview, 230-231).

Jackie's responses shifted quite a bit when I asked her to look at the second writing sample during the final interview. She reread the poem and immediately said, "Wow their line breaks are great" (Jackie, Final Interview, 428). Then she extended on that observation, going back to the writer's use of description in the line that read "icicles come to life and dance in the sky," and stated, "I like how they use the sound words here...and the personification of the icicles coming to life" (Jackie, Final Interview, 430-431). During the first interview, Jackie was searching for a word to describe what the student was doing in that specific part of the poem. By the final interview, it was evident that Jackie grew in her understanding of the genre of poetry by the way she used the term personification.

Jackie combined both what the writer needed and next steps of instruction as she continued talking about the piece. She said:

One of the things I would work on is maybe not using the word icicles. Like, seeing that though a poet's eyes...Instead of 'icicles sparkle, icicles fade,' maybe a little more through a poet's eyes... don't know, just doing something different to make their reader infer more. (Jackie, Final Interview, 432-437)

She followed this observation by stating that is the first thing she would work on with this writer, helping her use poetic language to help her readers infer. Then, Jackie added, she would help her use more precise words or comparisons to make her writing feel more dramatic and descriptive.

After commenting on the writing samples in her final interview, Jackie voluntarily reflected on how her thinking about the writing evolved from the first interview. Jackie thought about her initial responses thinking that the pieces were so good and didn't need anything else. She said, "I remember shaking my head and saying, 'I don't know' over and over to you" (Jackie, Final Interview, 449-450). I asked Jackie what she thought changed and she replied, "Knowing the vocabulary, knowing what to look for" (Jackie, Final Interview, 454). Jackie took some more time to pause and reflect on her own learning, then she said:

Honestly, just conferencing with kids and seeing what they can do, knowing they could do that, they could change that...because I remember looking at this writing and thinking it could not be second grade. But now, I think that our kids are writing like this or better. Our kids have really amazed me with their feeling and imagination. It's really come through in poetry. (Jackie, Final Interview, 456-465)

Jackie's eyes swelled with tears as she thought about the progress her students made in poetry. She began mentioning students by name and how they have evolved across this unit. She described one student who wrote poems about how mechanical objects and loud noises make him grumpy, which she did not know prior to him writing. Then, she thought to another girl who came to school very upset and crying one day about something that happened at home. Jackie helped the student to channel her emotions into her poems. She said, "I feel like I've really gotten to know them better through their poetry, because they're expressing things they don't normally just tell you" (Jackie, Final Interview, 474-475). Jackie found that writing poetry allowed her students to express themselves in new ways, while giving her a new perspective of her students.

Lillian Walker. As Lillian began reading the first writing sample, a smile stretched across her face. She laughed, read a few parts aloud, and said, "That's so cute!" (Lillian, Initial

Interview, 293). I asked Lillian what she would consider a strength of this student. Lillian paused and thought about a response. Finally, she said, “I think the organization of it” (Lillian, Initial Interview, 296). Lillian goes on to describe that the student organized the writing into “categories” where first they describe the animal, and then they name specific attributes of the animal. As she talks, she points to the different stanzas to explain the organizational structure, and then she says, “I don’t know...I don’t remember poetry all that much” (Lillian, Initial Interview, 303).

When I asked what Lillian thought the writer might need, she replied, “I don’t know. I really don’t know.” (Lillian, Initial Interview, 305). I followed by asking Lillian to consider next points of instruction. Lillian explained that she really did not remember much about poetry except for looking at the world through poet’s eyes. She elaborated and said, “and so you have the different ways of describing, like comparison. So maybe we could put more details in it like comparisons” (Lillian, Initial Interview, 307-310).

In the final interview, Lillian was much more confident in talking about the student writing as she rarely hesitated and was quick to respond. When thinking about the strengths of the first sample, Lillian noticed that the student had a good grasp of line breaks and stayed focused throughout whole piece. She thought the piece could use more precise words, describing through poet’s eyes or comparisons, to make it more interesting. When I asked about the next point of instruction, Lillian replied, “I would have them go through and revise for more precise words” (Lillian, Final Interview, 208-209). In the first sample, Lillian’s language showed evidence of learning about poetry as a genre and the writing process.

Just as Lillian had done with the first poem, a smile stretched across her face, she chuckled, read a few parts aloud, and then said, “That’s so cute!” (Lillian, Initial Interview, 314).

When I asked Lillian to consider the strengths of this writer, she said, “I feel like this one has more...details to help you visualize” (Lillian, Initial Interview, 316). She pointed to the line in the poem that said “drip, drip, drop,” and considered a word to describe what the writer was doing, and eventually said, “I don’t know!” (Lillian, Initial Interview, 317). When asked what the writer needed, Lillian responded again with “I really don’t know!” (Lillian, Initial Interview, 320). She took a long pause to consider the next steps for instruction. Lillian explained that she was not sure, but she thought it was great and just wanted the student “to put it on the center of their page” (Lillian, Initial Interview, 324). After explaining more of what she meant, Lillian said, “I’m picturing it with the pictures around it” (Lillian, Initial Interview, 332). It became clear that Lillian was talking about how she was not sure where the student was in the writing process, but she thought this poem was ready for publication.

In the final interview when Lillian returned to this writing sample, she exclaimed, “Oh I love that one! I really feel like they are ready to publish” (Lillian, Final Interview, 212). I asked Lillian to consider the specific strengths of this student. She said, “I think the rhythm of it...the way it flows...I mean they have repetition...they’re using their poet’s eyes...they have line breaks...everything” (Lillian, Final Interview, 215-220). I asked what she thought it might need to make it even better and Lillian concluded, “I mean...just add some pictures” (Lillian, Final Interview, 222). She explained that since they really do not need to edit for anything, it was ready to publication.

While Lillian’s language became more specific and used genre-specific vocabulary when talking about the student writing samples, she did not show as drastic a change as Jackie did. Instead of seeing the potential need of all writing and continuous growth along a continuum, Lillian views writing as hitting a point of completion, having a final point on the writing process.

When the writing included pieces that she knew were included in poems and looked conventionally clean, Lillian believed it was time to publish. While Lillian was not inaccurate in her conclusion, it is important to note that her responses for the second writing sample were very similar from the initial to final interviews, except for the increased use of genre-specific vocabulary.

Tracy Meadows. When Tracy read the first writing sample, she stopped, looked me in the eyes, and said, “This is where I just don’t know” (Tracy, Initial Interview, 370). I asked what she noticed the student was doing well, and she replied, “Their five star writing is great” (Tracy, Initial Interview, 372). I asked for clarification about the term “five star writing,” never having heard that term before. Tracy explained, “they’ve got spaces between their words, they’ve have punctuation, capital letters at the beginning, they’ve spelled their sight words, for the most part, correctly” (Tracy, Initial Interview, 374-376). Tracy used the term “five star writing” to describe characteristics of conventional writing. On one of the walls in Tracy’s classroom, this term is defined for kids. Figure 4.1 is a photograph of the five star writing display in Tracy’s classroom.



Figure 4.1. Five Star Writing

After commenting on the child’s strengths, Tracy shifted to noticing what the child needs, again drawing back on the five star writing. She said, “I’m noticing that awesome is spelled wrong... But I don’t know what...what do you do...How do you...that’s what I just don’t know”

(Tracy, Initial Interview, 377-378). Tracy explained that she can say what is wrong, but she is not sure what to do next.

In the final interview, Tracy's demeanor shifted as she began to talk about the student writing. With confidence, Tracy noted the student's strengths, listing multiple characteristics of poetry writing. She said with certainty, "So there's lots of great white space and line breaks...descriptive language...There's repetition in there. There are sensory details...I feel like this also creates a rhythm...It's a good poem" (Tracy, Final Interview, 115-118). When I asked the needs of this student, Tracy said, "Well, just a simple fix of sight words... Maybe in the first stanza, making it more precise, but I like the repetition of it" (Tracy, Final Interview, 120-121). I followed by asking what Tracy would do next with this student and she replied,

Maybe get a mentor text or mentor poem to see how other poets start their poems and see how they could use it for inspiration into theirs, because his second and third stanzas are really good, I feel. (Tracy, Final Interview, 125-127)

The most drastic evidence of professional learning in Tracy's language about student writing was the shift from speaking solely about the conventions of writing to using genre-specific language when speaking about writing. In the initial interview, Tracy commented on the student's "five start writing," which referred only to the conventions: handwriting, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. She used this to anchor both the strengths and needs she identified. In the final interview, she relied first on what she knew about the genre of poetry, using genre-specific words to describe the student's strengths. Then, when talking about the student needs, she spoke about his conventions as simple fix, and added a specific revision that could enhance the overall meaning of the poem. Where Tracy's professional learning really shines through is her discussion of the next point of instruction. In the initial interview, Tracy continuously

verbalized that she did not know what to do or how to teach something in writing. She kept saying, “This is where I just don’t know.” But in the final interview, she spoke of a specific strategy of using a mentor text to see how other poets begin their writing to inspire an idea of revision. Tracy was the only participant that spoke specifically of an instructional strategy when responding to the question about the next point of instruction.

When Tracy read the second writing sample, she immediately said, “She did a great job of writing ‘drip, drip, drop.’ I can picture the water dripping in my mind” (Tracy, Initial Interview, 383). Then Tracy, unsure of her response, speculated about the writer’s needs:

Add a picture next time? She could add a picture?... I don't know...I don't know. Would punctuation be something? Adding punctuation? Do poems have to have punctuation? ...Well there's none. But I don't know if poems need to have it or not (Tracy, Initial Interview, 384-388).

I asked Tracy what her next point of instruction would be, to which she replied that she would have her add a picture. Tracy finally said, “It just looks really good. Does it even need anything else?” (Tracy, Initial Interview, 396-397).

Tracy was much more detailed in her responses in the final interview when speaking about the student writing sample. After rereading the sample, Tracy said, “Their use of purposeful line breaks is good. It's not just random. It's got repetition in the drip, drip, drop. They're using poet's eyes” (Tracy, Final Interview, 134-135). Then, she considered what the student might need by taking time to read the poem again. Finally, she concluded that the student could add more sensory details to really help the reader visualize. She explained that they accomplished this in some areas of the poem, but not all. When thinking about what to do next with the student, Tracy suggested manipulating the white space on the page, explaining, “It

would be cool if they wrote it going down the page vertically like water dripping” (Tracy, Final Interview, 150-151).

It is evident that Tracy’s language about writing became more specific and included genre-specific vocabulary terms by the final interview. Also, while Tracy walked into this unit unsure of what writers needed and how to teach into what they needed, Tracy was able to speak confidently about the student writing and points of instruction. Tracy’s responses shifted from “I don’t know” in the initial interview to possibilities in the final interview.

The second-grade team. In looking at evidence of professional learning in the teacher participants’ language, several patterns emerged. When talking about the writing samples in the final interview, all three participants used genre-specific language relating to poetry. They used the characteristics of poetry to name strengths and needs for the students, and considered instructional strategies for next steps. In the initial interview, all three participants primarily shrugged their shoulders and responded with, “I don’t know.” However, in the final interview, they answered with ease and named several elements of poetry, including repetition, rhythm, sensory details, line breaks, precise words, and imagery.

The teacher’s use of genre-specific vocabulary was also evident in their conversations in collaboration time, including PLC and planning meetings. For example, after the initial PLC where I exposed the team to the elements of poetry, the teacher participants began using these words to describe their student writing in sorts. When speaking of one of her student’s writing, Tracy said, “Yeah she’s got repetition...and some rhyming...it creates this rhythm” (Tracy, PLC 2, 279-282). When talking about a common need across the poems in one of her stacks, Jackie said, “They just don’t have the poetic register yet...but that could easily be done by adding some sensory details” (Jackie, PLC 2, 415-416). In a later PLC, when discussing the student writing in

the low stack, Tracy said that her students' writing still resembled stories. Lillian added, "...more like prose. We just learned that word yesterday" (Lillian, PLC 3, 144). Tracy agreed that the writing was written in prose, not verse. Jackie added on, "I've been using that today with my kids...I told them it was a college word!" (Jackie, PLC 3, 146-148). The teacher participants' use of genre-specific vocabulary was evidence of their professional learning in both as they talked about the student writing in the interviews, and also how they spoke about their own student writing.

Another pattern that emerged was the shift from looking at only the conventions of writing to now looking at writing in terms of craft, process, and conventions. In the initial interview, two of the three participants named a convention as a need. When speaking about the first writing sample, Jackie said, "I notice that some of their capitalization is off...maybe some of their punctuation in this area..." (Jackie, Initial Interview, 206-207). Tracy noticed that the conventions were mostly accurate, but some of the spelling was incorrect. In the second writing sample, Jackie and Tracy both said that punctuation was a need. By the final interview, the participants began to respond using their knowledge of genre and process before focusing on conventions. While they did not neglect the need for conventional writing, the teacher participants recognized the elements of poetry first before narrowing their focus on conventions.

Writing Classroom Observations

Jackie Campbell

Classroom environment. When you walk into Jackie Campbell's second-grade classroom, you immediately notice the flexible seating dispersed for students to choose from, the soft music playing, and the walls covered with both student work and anchor charts. A thorough classroom library lines the one of the walls with bins filled to brim of a variety of books

organized by topic, genre, and interest. On top of the shelves are the student book boxes, bursting with the various choices they selected for independent reading. Figure 4.2 is a picture of one wall in Jackie's classroom used to display writing anchor charts and visuals for the students.

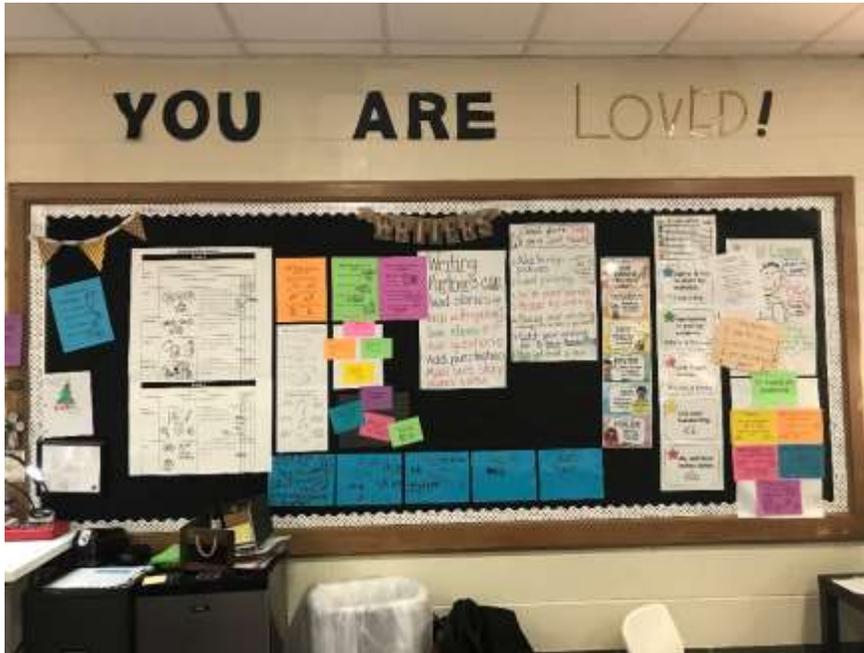


Figure 4.2. Jackie Campbell's Writing Bulletin Board

In the front of the room is a meeting area lined with places for students to sit, a projector, and an easel. In the back of the room sits a desk for Jackie's computer and a kidney-shaped table with remnants of the guided reading lesson that occurred previously that day. Student seating is around four tables with about five chairs per table. Each table includes a plastic storage draw system to organize materials.

For each classroom observation, I noticed students working on learning buckets containing Science Technology Engineering Mathematics (STEM) activities while Jackie was pulling a guided reading group. Jackie explained that she uses this time of the day to get in an extra time with her most struggling group of readers since they are pulled out for intervention at other parts of the day. While she is working with the reading group, students are productively

engaged in the activities in the bins, collaboratively building, creating, or thinking through various problems. No students interrupted her during her reading group and I did not observe any off-task behavior during this time. Jackie takes a few minutes to wrap up the lesson, conducts a quick running record, and then quickly transitions the class to writing workshop.

Initial observation. After inviting the students to the front of the room on the carpet for the writing mini lesson, Jackie said to her students, “show me you are ready, authors” to encourage body language that shows they are ready to listen and learn (Jackie, Initial Observation, p. 1). Throughout the remainder of the lesson, Jackie called her students authors or writers. The current unit of study for writing was an opinion-writing unit, focused on writing reviews of books. Jackie previously warned me that her students struggled with a concept yesterday, so she is deviating a tad from the curricular resource to help her students better understand how to weave text evidence into their reviews.

For twelve minutes, Jackie guided her group of students through a mini lesson focused on embedding direct quotations from a text to provide evidence to support their book review. After naming the focus for the day, she modeled how to do the work by showing her own review she has been writing with the class about the book *Mercy Watson* (DiCamillo, 2009). She pointed to a part of her review that she wanted to revise, showed them how to look through the text for a specific quotation, and how to pluck the quotation straight from the book and into the piece of writing. She emphasized that when writers borrow words from other authors, they have to use quotation marks around the borrowed text. She had the class repeat the phrase, “quotation marks hug the words the author says” three times to help them remember the rule for quotation marks (Jackie, Initial Observation, p. 2). Occasionally, while modeling embedding text evidence, she handed the dry-erase marker over to a student to reinforce a spelling or grammar skill through

interactive writing. After modeling, Jackie concluded the lesson by challenging the students to do this same type of work within their own writing today.

To send the students to write independently, Jackie first asked for a thumbs-up signal for the writers who are ready to get to work. Then, she dismissed the students by saying, “voices off so writers can work. Off you go” (Jackie, Initial Observation, p. 3). As students headed back to their tables to write, Jackie counted down from 10, allowing students time to gather materials needed and find a place to write. As students dispersed across the room, Jackie played soft music. There was a steady hum as students begin working productively on their writing, some occasionally turning to a partner to talk, but most focused intently on their reviews. Independent writing occurred for the next 25 minutes.

For the first 5 minutes of independent writing, Jackie walked around the room positively reinforcing appropriate writing behaviors. For example, when one student immediately started working on his writing she said, “I love how Jason got started right away” (Jackie, Initial Observation, p. 3). When she overheard a conversation between two students she exclaimed, “I hear partners having discussions about punctuation over here!” (Jackie, Initial Observation, p. 3). When she noticed a student had his book he was writing a review for next to him during writing time she celebrated and praised his actions in front of the students. After all students showed signs of being on task, Jackie began to confer with students. Throughout the writing workshop, students remained engaged on their writing as Jackie moved about the room to confer.

For the first writing conference, Jackie sat next to a brand new student who arrived that morning. This writing conference lasted just over five minutes and was mostly focused on helping the student generate ideas for a book he could review. She led him to his book box to select a book he had been reading and enjoying. She asked many guiding questions like, “What

did you like about this book? If you were to give it an award, what award would it deserve?” (Jackie, Initial Observation, p. 3). The student was quiet, reserved, and hesitant to engage in conversation. After modeling how he might write about *Super Fly Guy* (Arnold, 2009), the student’s book of choice, Jackie told him to keep thinking, get started, and she would come back to check on how he was doing in a little bit.

For the second conference, Jackie sat next to a student who was writing an award for a graphic novel. She asked the student to read his writing so far and point to the examples from the text that he was using to provide evidence. The student was writing about how the book he was reading has the best illustrations and struggled to find words from his book that supported his ideas since he was writing about the pictures. Jackie agreed that it would not make sense for him to try the strategy from the mini lesson and encouraged him to include examples instead of quotation. In this conference, Jackie did not model how or teach into this type of support for the review.

A similar pattern emerged in the next writing conference. Jackie sat next to a student and asked him to read his writing to her. She immediately complemented the student’s writing skills, specifically his handwriting and use of punctuation. The student was stuck spelling the word photographs so Jackie helped him break the word and spell it in chunks. Afterwards, Jackie looked at the student and asked, “Are you ready to start writing more in your review? Go for it right there in your writing” (Jackie, Initial Observation, p. 4). During this conference, Jackie did not teach a specific writing behavior or skill.

About halfway through the workshop, Jackie returned to the first student she conferred with to check in on his progress. She had him read his writing to her and she praised him saying, “What a great author you are!” (Jackie, Initial Observation, p. 5). Even though the student was

shy and reserved during the writing conference, he got a quite bit of writing done during the short time and seemed to transfer most of the writing conference to his writing.

For the final conference, Jackie pulled up next to another student, asks her to read her writing to her. Jackie gave a quick reminder to the student saying, “Don’t forget to make your quotation marks hug the words the authors says!” (Jackie, Initial Observation, p. 5). After the reminder, she walked around the room to monitor the progress of the rest of the students.

Upon the conclusion of independent writing time, Jackie called the students for a quick moment to share. To celebrate the different strategy used to provide evidence from the text, Jackie shared the writing from a student she conferred with previously about adding examples instead of quotes from the text to provide evidence. She had the student share his strategy, project his writing on the screen, and read his writing in front of the class. She said, “Sometimes you have to realize when something will and will not work for your work as an author” (Jackie, Initial Observation, p. 5). The student shared his plan for adding more examples in different parts of his review and Jackie transitioned the class to math. The share time lasted four minutes, for a total of forty-one minutes of writing workshop.

Midpoint observation. The midpoint observation of Jackie’s classroom occurred a few weeks into the poetry-writing unit and a few weeks after engaging in embedded professional learning related to poetry writing instruction. For eleven minutes, Jackie taught her students how to add feeling and emotion into the poems they write. She reminded students of the poems they wrote a few days before where they thought of an object that gave them a big feeling and added a layer of thinking about a special memory that elicits strong emotion. Through shared writing, Jackie composed a class poem about recess, helping them see how to take an ordinary memory and turn it into a poem. After writing the poem on the board, Jackie asked the students to turn

and talk about the feeling they get from the poem. To send students off to write independently, Jackie said, “Today you can revise for these things or start a new poem. If you think there is a poem that you want to revise, head on back. If you want to start a fresh, new poem, grab some paper and get started!” (Jackie, Midpoint Observation, p. 3).

As students headed off to independent writing time, Jackie began calling a small group of students to the carpet. As the students join her on the carpet, Jackie counts down from ten as a verbal reminder of the time remaining for students to settle into independent writing time. For the next ten minutes, Jackie implemented the same structure she learned from the embedded professional learning experience that took place a few weeks earlier. While the content of the small group was different, the structure of the group was aligned with the learning that occurred during the labsite. Jackie met with four students who needed support with creating rhythm in their poems because she noticed they had not yet grasped an understanding of using line breaks purposefully. When she pulled the group together, she immediately complemented their use of other poetic elements, including using precise words and poet’s eyes. Then she named her focus for the day: “Today I want us to work on the music or rhythm in our poems” (Jackie, Midpoint Observation, p. 4). To teach the small group, she pulled a page from a mentor text and showed the students how you can check for the rhythm in your poem by clapping while you read aloud. The group tried the strategy together, clapping along as they read the poem together. They recognized the beat that emerged from the poem and Jackie reinforced by explaining that poets can help get that rhythm or beat by revising and adjusting their line breaks. She asked the students to work with a partner to clap out the rhythm together, and revise to get an intended beat. While students work in partnerships, Jackie provided prompts and questions to guide the students thinking. When a student exclaimed that this work was so hard, Jackie responded, “Yes

it is hard work! But look at all that imagery you've captured on the page. You have the rhythm in your page, we just need to get it captured on your page, too!" (Jackie, Midpoint Observation, p. 4). After students clapped the rhythm of their poem and started making revisions, Jackie reminded them of the strategy they learned and sent them off to work independently.

Jackie pulled another group of four students together with a focus on spelling accurately. She noticed this particular group of students were rushing through drafts and not being as careful with spelling words they should already know how to spell. She wanted to teach them a strategy for what to do when a word does not look right when you spell: writing it three different ways and choosing the way that looks best. She revealed an anchor chart with visual reminders of the strategy, modeled how to do this work in her own writing, and then asked the students to try in their own writing.

As the small group of students worked on editing their poems with the new spelling strategy, Jackie moved to an individual conference with a student from the first small group. The student was signaling to Jackie by raising his hand. He explained that he wanted his teacher to see what he accomplished so far. After reading the student's revisions, Jackie exclaimed, "I love that! You did it! As you continue to write fresh, new poems, think about those line breaks!" (Jackie, Midpoint Observation, p.5). After positively reinforcing the student, Jackie checked in on the progress of the rest of the group, observing their writing behaviors, and reading their work over their shoulders. Sometimes she provided a gentle pat on back or encouraging smile. A few minutes later, Jackie returned to the small group of students who were editing their poems for spelling. When the students were finished, Jackie sent them back to their own spot to write, encouraging them to try this strategy while they were writing today. Jackie moved to a partnership sitting in the corner. She sat beside the partnership and listened. The partnership

between the two students was lively and productive and did not seem to require much guidance from the teacher, so Jackie moved to an individual student sitting close by. She asked the student what he was working on as a writer. The student immediately began reading his poem aloud. Jackie named the feeling she gets when he reads his poem aloud and asked, “Is that the feeling you wanted to portray?” (Jackie, Midpoint Observation, p. 6). The student nodded his head excitedly and Jackie asks him if he would share his poem during share time.

During the share, Jackie projected a student’s poem on the screen and asked the class to come to the front of the carpet. The teacher asked the class to think about the feeling they get when this poet reads aloud. The student read his poem and then the students turned and talked about the feeling they got when he read his poem aloud. Jackie looked at the student to ask if the class accurately identified the feeling he wanted to portray. The student said yes, he wanted to portray happiness and excitement. In forty minutes, the writing workshop block had come to a close.

Final observation. The final observation took place towards the end of the poetry-writing unit. In a fourteen-minute mini lesson, Jackie led her students in annotating a poem using the components from the poetry checklist. After reading the poem aloud, Jackie looked at the first component of the checklist that said, “...a topic that gives big, strong feelings” (Jackie, Final Observation, p. 2). She reminded students of prior lessons focused on that component and then taped the component next to the part of the poem that showed that element. She repeated this process with each part of the checklist, allowing students to take over each part and participate in annotating the poem. After annotating the poem with each piece of the checklist, Jackie reminded her class that the goal was to self-assess using their own checklist, seeing where they accomplished these elements of poetry in their own poem. For students still unsure, she invited

them to stay on the carpet. For those who were ready to self-assess using their own checklist, she sent them off to work.

For the next 15 minutes, students reread their poems and used the checklist to self-assess. During this time, Jackie moved about the room from table to table to check in on progress. At the first table, Jackie sat next to a student and immediately gave a verbal reminder of the goal of self-assessing for the day. Then, she turned to the whole table and asked how they might revise their poems based on their self-assessment using the checklist. One student showed a place where she planned to add more precise words. Another student explained she was going to work harder to add big feeling into her poem. Jackie asked the student, “how do you plan to capture how you were feeling?” (Jackie, Final Observation, p.3). The student said that she was feeling very sad so she was going to add, “My eyes started to water” (Jackie, Final Observation, p. 3). Jackie reinforced that after self-assessing their writing, they need to go back and find places to revise to make it even better. Jackie moved to sit next to another student at the table and asks what he was working on. The student read his poem aloud and started going through the checklist, showing where he did each component in his poem. Jackie praised his work with line breaks, saying “Wow! Look at that! We’ve been working on line breaks and you did it so well right there!” (Jackie, Final Observation, p. 3). Jackie began teaching into writing using poet’s eyes, reminding the student of a class poem they wrote together, pointing to the part where they described using a comparison. The student replied, “Oh! Maybe I can describe the planes in my poem like an asteroid!” (Jackie, Final Observation, p.4). Jackie guided the student back to his poem asking where he would add the comparison. The student pointed to the part he was going to revise, then says, “I think I’m going to say, ‘coming towards us like asteroids’” (Jackie, Final Observation, p. 4).

Jackie moved to another table group and sat next to a student while they were self-assessing using their checklist. The student began naming the pieces of the checklist that she did well. Jackie asked, “Is there anything else you need to add to your poem to make it stronger?” (Jackie, Final Observation, p. 4). The student explained that she was going to reread her poem to edit, checking for spelling and punctuation. Jackie gave the student a high five, said, “Sounds like a great plan!” and moved to a partnership that was sitting at the table (Jackie, Final Observation, p.4). Jackie immediately noticed that the partnership worked together to revise their poems by adding comparisons. She praised their work and asked them to share today. Jackie’s noticed another partnership sitting in a nearby table off-task. In a loud voice, Jackie began praising the partnership she is sitting with, highlighting the behaviors that make their work productive. The partnership that was off-task corrected their behavior and began working to revise poems.

Jackie transitioned to share time, projecting the poems from the partnership on the screen. She explained that this partnership is a perfect example of writing partners because they gave good feedback to each other to help their poems become even stronger. The first student read her poem up until the point of her revision. Then, explained the feedback that her partner gave her. The student said that her partner could not visualize what she was describing in her poem, so she added a comparison, “Shark teeth, like knives” (Jackie, Final Observation, p.5). Jackie reinforced that writing partners should use their knowledge to help their partner make their writing even better. After thirty-three minutes of writing, the class put their writing away and transitioned to recess.

Lillian Walker

Classroom environment. Lillian Walker's classroom looked very similar to Jackie Campbell's classroom. The second-grade students were seated around four tables that framed a meeting space with a big carpet. Anchor charts covered the classroom walls, creating visual displays of strategies that students have learned from all content areas. In the front corner of the room and situated directly in front of the teacher's desk sat a kidney-shaped table for small group work. Another wall was lined with shelves filled with baskets of books for the classroom library, organized by topic and genre. Student book boxes sat on top of the shelves. Each table contained a plastic supply drawer filled with folders, notebooks, pencils, and personalized word walls. Just as in Jackie's classroom, before each classroom observation, students were working on STEMS activities while Lillian pulled a guided reading group. Student work was celebrated and displayed in the hallway, as illustrated in Figure 4.3.



Figure 4.3. Lillian Walker's Bulletin Board

Initial observation. As soon as she finished her guided reading group, Lillian called the class to the carpet. For the next 32 minutes, Lillian taught her writing lesson. She began her

lesson by connecting to what the students learned the previous day. The students were in the midst of a writing research report unit and learning how to use their background knowledge to form research questions. To transition to the focus for the day's lesson, Lillian said, "I want to show you a way to dive into doing research by writing questions" (Lillian, Initial Observation, p.1). As she began modeling writing research question, Lillian paused and sent the class off to grab materials they would need for the lesson. Two minutes later, students returned to the carpet with whiteboards and dry erase markers. Lillian named the focus of the lesson, saying, "I want to show you how to look in a book to find what is important facts and what is just interesting" (Lillian, Initial Observation, p. 1). This teaching point did not align with the original teaching point about writing research questions.

Lillian began to model how to distinguish between important and interesting facts by reading aloud a book on komodo dragons. She projected the book on the screen and asked students to think about what might be important about komodo dragons as she read aloud. If they thought something she read was important, she asked them to jot the fact down on their whiteboards. As the Lillian read aloud, the students jotted facts on their boards. Periodically, Lillian would remind students that other important facts are found in different text features, like a diagram. Some students blurted out facts while Lillian was reading aloud, to which she reminded them to write it on their board. Occasionally, students asked Lillian to reread a page. After reading a few pages aloud, Lillian invited students to turn and talk with their neighbor about one of the facts they found important. After a few minutes, Lillian modeled how to take the facts they wrote down and look back at their original notes to see if they background knowledge was correct. She shared that when she used her background knowledge, she knew that komodo dragons lived in warm places. Then, she asked, "How does that fit with what we know?" (Lillian,

Initial Observation, p. 2). A student replied that they read about komodo dragons living in patches of shade and predicted that maybe they stay in the shade to get out of the heat. Lillian praised the student for his deep thinking.

The class chorally read the next two pages of the book, writing down interesting facts as they came up. Lillian noticed that a student wrote down a question based on what they read. She praised him by saying, “Oh! Look someone added a question for his research!” (Lillian, Initial Observation, p.3). Lillian went back to her original notes on komodo dragon to show how sometimes we find that the background knowledge we bring is incorrect and we can clarify our misunderstanding as we read. She marked out one of her notes and added in a new fact from the book. Lillian began reading aloud the next two pages, encouraging students to keep writing down facts. Then, she had students turn and talk about one of their facts. Lillian prompted into students to help them organize their thinking into categories like, “appearance.” Lillian read another two pages aloud and asked students to keep writing down facts. After finishing the book, Lillian said, “I can see your boards are full of information which is means you are rocking the research, but I have a question for you guys...do you think there is a way we could organize it?” (Lillian, Initial Observation, p.4). Lillian introduced a research booklet constructed of pages of Manila paper stapled together, modeling how to take the facts they wrote down and organize it in categories inside the booklet. After modeling how to take facts to create categories, Lillian explained that then students would be organizing their research booklets today. During reading time, the students would have the opportunity to do more research and write down important facts like those that they did in the mini lesson, but for writing time today, students would set up their research notebook by drawing a picture, writing their title, and naming their categories.

For 13 minutes, the students worked quietly on their research booklet while Lillian moved between tables to make sure everyone had what they needed to get started. Lillian started by sitting next to a student who was absent earlier in the week and missed the initial lesson for the research books. She helped the student select an animal to research and told her to start writing what she knew about the animal. Lillian popped around the room to troubleshoot off-task behavior. She mostly sat next to students to explain the directions again or help them get back on task. When a hand raised, Lillian moved swiftly to the student, but never engaged in a conference that was teaching into the writing. In fact, I did not observe any writing that occurred in this lesson. Students drew pictures and wrote titles of their categories, but nothing that resembled the lesson or required original thought.

For the final 3 minutes of the lesson, Lillian reminded students that their books would help them write about their animal. To share what they accomplished during the work period, Lillian had students to turn to their neighbor to share their sections of their booklet. The students turned and talked about their chapters, some even described what they planned to write in the categories. Lillian called the students back, praised their hard work, and then transitioned to math.

Midpoint observation. The midpoint observation of Lillian's writing instruction looked very different from the first observation, mostly in regards to the pacing of her lesson. Lillian's mini lesson lasted only 6 minutes, compared to the 32 minutes in the previous observation. While the timing was shorter, her students remained confused when they went off to write. Instead of troubleshooting in writing conferences as she did in the first observation, Lillian called the group back together to demonstrate how to do the work. The writing lesson of the day was focused on students self-assessing using a poetry checklist. However, Lillian did not originally

show students how to do this work. Instead, she instructed the students to work with a partner using the checklist and sent them off around the room. Only a minute passed before Lillian realized the mass confusion. She pulled the students back to the carpet and said, “I know we’ve done this type of work together before, but let me show you again how to use your checklist” (Lillian, Midpoint Observation,p.2). Lillian modeled how to read a poem and use the checklist to look for different components inside the poem. The modeling only lasted about 4 minutes and seemed to clarify the confusion. Students dispersed around the room with their writing partner. I heard a partnership say to each other, “Where’s your big feeling? I don’t see it. Maybe you’re starting to work on it, but I don’t think it’s there” (Lillian, Midpoint Observation, p.2). Another partnership said, “I think repetition would really add to the rhythm of your poem” (Lillian, Midpoint Observation, p.2). Students were using the language from the checklist as they gave feedback on each other’s work.

While students worked with their partner, Lillian moved around the room to work with partnerships. In the first writing conference with a partnership, she mostly focused on the logistics of getting the checklist into the page protector and using the dry erase marker to check off the boxes. In the next conference, she named what the students were doing well as writers and then gave the writer the tip for showing our reader how we are feeling, rather than naming the emotion. She helped the student think of an example and revise that part of his poem. In the next writing conference with a partnership, Lillian prompted the students to give feedback to each other. She listened in to what they were saying about the checklist and then helped them name something to work on. After allowing students to work with a partner for about 8 minutes, Lillian had students thank their partner and go off to work independently on their revisions.

As students began working on revising their poems based on the feedback from their partner, Lillian called a group of three students to the carpet. She complemented the group's ability to use their poet's eyes to describe everyday objects in a unique way, specifically naming the part in each student's poem that demonstrated this. Then, she named the teaching point that sometimes poets condense their work by taking out unimportant words. To teach this point, Lillian used a mentor text to show how the author used intentional line breaks and precise words to convey rhythm and mood. She challenged the students to do the same type of work in their own poems. The students seemed confused when trying to apply this to their own writing. While Lillian followed a similar structure of small group work learned from the labsite, she never really showed the student a specific strategy and her teaching point was unclear. It was not clear if students were to work on their line breaks, eliminate words, or make their words more precise. No student made changes to their writing after this lesson.

Lillian pulled another small group of 4 students to the carpet, named what they were doing well, and then focused the group on the teaching point of using precise words. She modeled how to describe emotion by showing what a person is doing instead of how they are feeling. She explained that instead of saying, "I was happy", you might say, "I smiled" (Lillian, Midpoint Observation, p.2). To model this, she had students help her revise a poem, replacing words that told with more precise words that described an action. When she finished modeling, she dismissed the students back to their seats to revise, reminding them to find places in their poems where they could use words that are more precise. While the teaching point was clear and she spent time modeling how to do the work, Lillian did not allow the students to practice on the carpet with feedback guiding their revision work. Instead, she sent the students back to their

seats and none of the four students made changes to their writing. After 49 minutes, the writing time ended. No time was allotted for share.

Final observation. In the final observation, Lillian had an extra 10 students in the class. Because Jackie was out sick and they could not find a substitute to cover her class, they split her class between Lillian and Tracy. As I walked in to observe, Lillian was frantically trying to organize the materials and make sure everyone had a place to sit. She called the class to the carpet and began her mini lesson. For 14 minutes, Lillian helped students annotate a poem using the characteristics from the checklist. She first read the poem aloud to the class and then went piece by piece in the checklist reading the criteria and then marking on the poem whether the poet accomplished that work. At the conclusion of the lesson, Lillian emphasized how writing time is so precious and how she expected students to finish revising their poems so they could publish by the end of workshop that day. The class writing celebration was the following day and Lillian reminded the class that they need to have their poems turned in by the end of the day.

The students independently wrote for 38 minutes. Even with the extra students in the room, no one demonstrated off-task behavior or asked for clarification. In previous observations, students did not seem to have clarity going off into independent writing time, but during this observation, students seemed to know exactly what was expected of them. As students settled into writing spots, Lillian positively reinforced desired behaviors. Lillian sat next to a student for her first writing conference. She taught into how to revise based on self-assessment of the checklist. The student identified the need to use more precise words in his poem. Lillian showed him how we could use precise words by describing our actions, rather than feeling. The student replaced “I was happy” to “my heart fluttered” in his poem (Lillian, Final Observation, p.3). Lillian reminded him that poet’s show with their words, rather than just tell their readers how

they feel. She encouraged him to try the same work in another place. This was the first writing conference that I observed Lillian teach a specific strategy and the student actually apply the work into their writing.

In another writing conference, Lillian acknowledged the parts of the checklist that the student was doing well. She mostly guided the student through the checklist as she did in the mini lesson, praising his hard work. Even though this conference did not teach into a specific skill or strategy, it reinforced the lesson for the day. The remainder of the conferences appeared to be this way- reinforcing the day's lesson and checking in on student progress. Lillian was able to meet with every student in the classroom, including those from Jackie's room, establishing a good pulse on student progress before their celebration. For the share, Lillian projected a student's poem on the board and asked the student to read it aloud. The class clapped for the student as he finished reading. Then, Lillian had the students read their poems to each other and give high fives for working hard. When everyone finished, the class transitioned to math.

Tracy Meadows

Classroom environment. Tracy's second-grade classroom was directly next door to Jackie's classroom. Bookshelves lined the wall, each containing baskets of books organized by topic and genre. Anchor charts were displayed throughout the room as a visual representation of

strategies learned in all content areas. Figure 4.4 captures this space in Tracy’s classroom.



Figure 4.4. Tracy Meadow’s Writing Bulletin Board

Four tables lined the perimeter of the meeting space where a chair and easels sat welcoming students. A kidney-shaped table was strategically placed in front of the teacher desk, cluttered with a guided reading notebook and leveled readers. Student work was on display in the hallway.

Prior to teaching writing, Tracy pulled a guided reading group while students worked on STEM learning buckets. For each observation, Tracy invited me to sit at the guided reading table with her as she finished her group, asking for coaching support while worked with the students. She explained that this group was one of her most challenging groups and she could use all the help she could get. Tracy asked questions about next steps in teaching and asked for feedback after the lesson was over during all three observations.

Initial observation. The initial observation of Tracy's classroom took place prior to the start of the poetry unit. The students were in the midst of a research-writing unit, where they were gathering information on an animal of their choice, and compiling it into a research book. In this first observation, Tracy's mini lesson was only six minutes long and focused more on explaining a task to complete than demonstrating a strategy or skill. She gathered students to the carpet, forming a large circle around the perimeter of the meeting area. She started the lesson by connecting directly to the lesson from the day before. As she reminded students of what they did in their research booklets, she showed her own writing. After about two minutes, she sent students off to gather their own research booklets to remind themselves of what they wrote the day before. So she would know when they were finished rereading their work, she asked students to position their fingers above their heads to form moose ears. As soon as all students reread their writing and formed moose ears, Tracy complemented their work and named the focus for the day. She explained that their job today would be to look through each section of their book to determine if they had enough facts and details to make a chapter. Then, Tracy said that if they did not have enough facts, they could research to add more facts. Finally, she told the students that they should all have four chapters. If they had more than four, they needed to narrow their wonderings down by either combining or removing some facts.

For the next 25 minutes, students worked with their writing partner, spread around the room, some sitting on the floor, others at tables. Tracy moved around the room to facilitate conversations with partnerships. When Tracy was not working with a group, true collaboration was happening. For example, I listened in on one partnership as they gave feedback to each other. A student advised his partner to remove a fact because it did not belong to any other category. His partner advised him to create a separate category called, "Fun Facts," with some of

the extra details that were interesting but did not belong in another category. After giving feedback, the students ran off to grab an iPad to gather more information. For the rest of the writing time, the two went back and forth between discussing interesting facts they learned and writing independently.

Tracy had writing conferences with three individual students and three partnerships, for a total of nine students. For each writing conference, Tracy used the following prompts and questions: 1) Tell me about your writing; 2) How many wonderings do you have?; and 3) What is your plan going to be today? (Tracy, Initial Observation, p. 2-3). In most of the writing conferences, Tracy listened to the student's plan. If they included too many facts, she guided them in condensing down to four chapters. In two of the conferences, Tracy taught into a writing convention, supporting one student with letter formation and another with capitalization. While Tracy worked with students, the rest of the class remained independently engaged either writing or using an iPad to research. I did not observe any writing partnership exhibit off task behavior.

For the remaining four minutes of writing workshop, Tracy asked students to gather back in a circle for share time. She looked around the circle and asks if anyone would like to share a fact they added to or deleted from their book. Five different students share and Tracy responded each time with, "Wow I didn't know that!" or "Isn't that interesting!" (Tracy, Initial Observation, p. 4). After 36 minutes, writing time has ended and Tracy transitioned the class to math.

Midpoint observation. The midpoint observation took place during the poetry-writing unit. On the day of this observation, Tracy only had ten students in her room because so many students were out sick. Tracy called the class to the carpet for the mini lesson, which lasted twelve minutes. She began by reminding students about the different elements of poetry they

have been working on so far in the unit. Then, Tracy displayed a math pattern cube and asked students what they noticed. The students immediately said that the cubes created a pattern with colors. Tracy connected this with the teaching point for the day explaining that poet's create patterns in their writing using repetition to create a rhythm for their readers. Tracy revealed a poem by Lilian Moore titled, "Go Wind" (as used in the Calkins, 2013 resource). She invited the students to read the poem aloud with her. When they finished reading, Tracy asked her class what they noticed about the repetition in Lilian Moore's poem. She invited the students to turn and sit in their "sit spot families" to discuss. The students all turned into groups of three to discuss the poem and the author's intentions. I overheard students saying, "It created a rhythm" or "it makes it sound like music" (Tracy, Midpoint Observation, p. 1). Another student said, "It almost makes it feel like a roller-coaster" explaining the changes of mood across the poem (Tracy, Midpoint Observation, p. 1). While students discussed in their groups, Tracy moved between groups prompting for deeper thoughts. She asked one group, "tell me what you mean by that?" and another group, "can you give me an example of that?" After a few minutes, Tracy called the whole group back together, naming what she heard students notice. Then, she asked students to think about the effect of the poem if Lilian Moore had not repeated certain words. She projected modified version of the poem without the repetition. After reading it aloud, Tracy asked students what they noticed about the effect the repetition had on the reader. One student verbally replied, "The repetition makes it more powerful!" (Tracy, Midpoint Observation, p. 2).

During the mini lesson, Tracy gave students the opportunity to practice this work in their own writing. She had students turn and talk about their poem with a partner, searching for an opportunity to embed repetition to create a stronger rhythm for their reader. As students brainstormed places they might revise for repetition, Tracy moved between partnerships, guiding

conversations. After a few minutes, Tracy said, “Writers, I want to challenge you to use repetition in your poems today. You can go revise your poems to add repetition or start a new one including repetition. Go! Write like the wind!” (Tracy, Midpoint Observation, p. 2). Students scattered across the room to work on their writing. For 22 minutes, students wrote independently while Tracy conferred with three different students.

The writing conferences looked different from the initial observation because Tracy sat down to teach into a specific skill or strategy. In addition, Tracy carried around her computer with her and taking anecdotal notes of what she notices about student writing. Also, she had a page organized by strategy where she was typing specific student’s names in after noticing patterns across her class. In the initial observation, Tracy did not take any anecdotal records, but now she has developed a system for both note taking and differentiating her writing instruction. In the first writing conference, Tracy sat next to a student and asked what she planned to do in writing today. The student wanted to start a new poem but was not sure where to start. Tracy guided the student into using her five senses to describe. After four minutes and continuous prompting with the student, Tracy said, “I can see your wheels turning. I’m going to come back and check on you while you think about this” (Tracy, Midpoint Observation, p. 3).

In the second writing conference, Tracy worked with a student who was revising his poem to add more repetition. The student identified the phrase that he wanted to repeat, but was not sure where he might repeat it. Tracy pulled out the poem by Lilian Moore to look how that poet repeated a word at different points to see if it gave him ideas of where he might repeat his phrase. The student looked through the poem and decided he was going to add it to the end of a couple of lines. Tracy gave the student a smile, told him that she could not wait to see his revisions, and moved to the next student.

In the third writing conference, Tracy complimented a student's use of repetition already. She noticed the student was already repeating a phrase throughout the poem, but the line breaks were not emphasizing the repeated phrase so it was losing its effect. Therefore, Tracy explained, "Here's what I'm noticing. You're filling up the lines but I'm not sure the line breaks are matching the rhythm you are saying when you read it aloud" (Tracy, Midpoint Observation, p. 4). She asked the student to read the poem to her again and pay attention to where her voice pauses. Tracy guided the student in creating line breaks to achieve the intended rhythm of the poem.

For the remaining 2 minutes, Tracy had students partner up with someone from another table and share how they revised their poems. Students quickly found a partner and began showing their revision work from the day. Tracy walked around the room to listen to student conversations. After 36 minutes of total writing workshop time, Tracy praised the students' hard work and transitions to math.

Final observation. In the final observation, Tracy called students to the carpet one table at a time, reminding them to bring their writing folders with them to the lesson. After all students were seated on the carpet, Tracy reminded the class that they are only days away from their final poetry celebration and to make sure they are prepared, she wanted to show them how authors reread their work and revise to make their writing even more powerful. For twelve minutes, Tracy demonstrated this writing strategy using her own poem. First, Tracy revealed one stanza, inviting the class to help her reread her writing and consider what is going well and what would make it even stronger. The students noticed that one of the lines did not match her intended rhythm, so Tracy modeled how to remove words so that it flowed better. Then, Tracy revealed the second stanza and invited the class to reread it with her. She asked her students to talk with

their sit spot family on how they might revise this stanza, using all they know about the elements of poetry. Tracy spent two minutes listening into student conversations, and then shared one group's suggestions for moving a line to earlier in her poem. After making the revision, Tracy reread the whole poem again, pointing to the revisions they made together, emphasizing that writers reread their work and revise it to make it even more powerful. Tracy gave students time to think of revisions they might make in their own writing, and then sent them off to write and revise independently. The students scattered across the room, immediately pulling out poems they intended to revise. I overhear students say, "I'm going to add more repetition" and "I'm going to take out some words here" (Tracy, Final Observation, p. 2).

While students independently wrote for twenty minutes, Tracy conferred with four students and one small group of three students. In the first writing conference, Tracy sat next to a student that she has been working on using line breaks. She said, "Remember when you revise, try using blank paper to rewrite your poem so you can really be intentional with those line breaks!" (Tracy, Final Observation, p. 2). She guided the student in choosing his favorite poem to reread and revise and asked his next step. The student said he was going to create slashes in his poem first and then reread it to make sure the flow was right. Then, he was going to rewrite his poem on the blank paper. Tracy smiled, patted the student on the back, and said, "Get going then!" (Tracy, Final Observation, p. 2).

In the second writing conference, Tracy worked with a student on poetic conservation. To frame her teaching, she said, "Remember poets have a purpose when they use line breaks" (Tracy, Final Observation, p. 3). Then she asked, "What was your purpose here?" pointing to a few of the longer lines in his poem (Tracy, Final Observation, p. 3). For the remainder of the conference, Tracy modeled how to reread and ask, "What words are unnecessary?" (Tracy, Final

Observation, p. 3). Then, she showed how to keep the best part and cut out the rest. In one part, she even showed how he could combine words that describe an even bigger feeling. At the end of the conference, Tracy recapped what they worked on together, told him to keep working and assured him that she would return to check in on his progress.

Next, Tracy met with a small group of three students. She pulled this group together to specifically help them in selecting a poem to revise. She told the girls that she noticed that they had been writing up a storm and filling their folders with poems, but now it was time to select one or two to take to publication. She guided the girls through a process of skimming through their poems and placing them in piles of those they loved and those they just liked. Then, she had them work together to narrow down their pile of the ones they loved to just one or two. After the girls had just one or two, she reminded them of how she reread her poem and thought about what would make it even stronger. Then, Tracy dismissed the students back to their seats to work on revising their poems.

The next two conferences resembled this small group, where Tracy sat next to an individual student, helped them select their poems they wanted to revise, narrowed their focus on one thing that would make their poems even stronger. In between conferences, Tracy positively reinforced desired writing behaviors, such as, “I love how Ruthy is reading her poem aloud to look for places to make it even better!” (Tracy, Final Observation, p. 4). Tracy also positively reinforced specific revision work done by students, such as, “Look! Nathan is crossing out words he doesn’t need so his poem only has the most precise words!” (Tracy, Final Observation, p. 4).

For the remaining four minutes of writing workshop, Tracy asked students to select one poem that they were proud of the revisions they made to share with a partner. She had the students find a partner that was not at their table to share their revision work. The students

quickly found a partner and began explaining the changes they made to their poem. Some partnerships gave feedback to each other, like, “What if you added a line break here?” and “I love how you really captured the big feeling” (Tracy, Final Observation, p. 4). As students met with their partner, Tracy moved about the room, listening to the conversations, sometimes asking a question to get students to talk even more about their writing. After 38 minutes of writing instruction, Tracy transitioned to math.

Second-Grade Team

When looking across the classroom observations with the teacher participants for evidence of their professional learning related to writing instruction, a few patterns emerged. First, the pacing of the workshop period was one of the most noticeable changes from the initial to final observations. In Lillian’s classroom, her writing lesson in the initial observation was 32 minutes long, leaving only 6 minutes for students to work independently. By the final observation, her writing lesson was 14 minutes long, leaving 38 minutes for students to work independently. In Tracy’s classroom instruction, her lesson was very short initially, lasting only 6 minutes. However, by the midpoint and final observation, her writing lesson extended to 12 minutes and still provided ample amount of time for students to independently write. The pacing and timing of the lesson remained consistent in all three observations of Jackie’s classroom. A summary of the average time spent in each component of the workshop is illustrated in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Summary of Writing Workshop Pacing

Lesson Component	Initial Observation	Midpoint Observation	Final Observation
Mini Lesson	17 minutes	10 minutes	13 minutes
Writing Time	20 minutes	30 minutes	24 minutes
Share Time	5 minutes	2 minutes	4 minutes
Total Time	42 minutes	42 minutes	42 minutes

Not only was just the change of pacing in the classrooms evidence of the teacher participants’ professional learning, but also the type of instruction occurring shifted between each observation. Tracy’s initial lesson was very short because she only told the students what to do, giving them the specific task for the day, and never showing how to do what she was asking for them. In Lillian’s initial lesson, she spent most of the time showing the students how to do something with her own writing, but never gave them the chance to apply it to their own writing. By the final observation, both Tracy and Lillian taught a specific strategy through modeling and demonstration, and then sent the students off to use the same strategy in their own writing. They were both using their time more efficiently and providing more time for students to apply strategies independently.

Another noticeable change and evidence of professional learning that occurred in all three classrooms was in the way the teachers conferred with their writers. In the initial observations, I noticed that most writing conferences were either to redirect undesired behaviors, troubleshoot a misconception from the mini lesson, reinforce a desired writing behavior, or to ask questions to spark thinking. Rarely did a teacher participant teach students a writing strategy. By the midpoint

and final observation, the type of teaching in the writing conferences showed evidence of teacher professional learning from the labsite and PLCs. Since we spent so much time analyzing student writing, forming small groups that could benefit from the same strategy, and practicing small group instruction collaboratively, I noticed the way the teachers conferred with their writers shifted by the midpoint observation. Both Jackie and Lillian conducted small group conferences that taught a specific strategy during their midpoint observation. While Tracy did not teach a small group, all of her individual conferences were focused on teaching a specific strategy. Additionally, both Jackie and Lillian were working with triple the amount of students in one workshop period by implementing small group work, allowing them to reach even more students. While Tracy did not increase the volume of students she met with, her work with students became more focused and strategic. A summary of the amount and type of conferences that occurred in each teacher participant's classroom observation is outlined in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Types of Writing Conferences

	Initial Observation		Midpoint Observation		Final Observation	
	Total Students	Types of Conferences	Total Students	Types of Conferences	Total Students	Types of Conferences
Jackie Campbell	4	<i>Individual-Strategy (1) Reinforce (2) Troubleshoot (1)</i>	12	<i>Individual-Praising (2) Partnership-Reinforce (2) Small Group-Strategy (8)</i>	6	<i>Individual-Strategy (3) Reinforce (1) Partnership-Praising (2)</i>
Lillian Walker	4	<i>Individual-Redirect (1) Troubleshoot (3)</i>	13	<i>Partnership-Troubleshoot (2) Strategy (4) Small Group-Strategy (7)</i>	21	<i>Individual-Strategy (4) Partnership-Troubleshoot (2) Reinforce (10) Praising (2) Redirect (2)</i>
Tracy Meadows	10	<i>Individual-Questioning (3) Strategy (1) Partnership-Questioning (2) Strategy (2) Reinforce (2)</i>	3	<i>Individual-Strategy (3)</i>	6	<i>Individual-Strategy (3) Small Group-Strategy (3)</i>

Finally, evidenced in all the classroom instruction was a navigating the demands of teaching all elements of writing, including genre, process, and conventions. In the initial observations, I noticed the teachers teaching into the genre in the lesson, but when they went to confer with students, it became more focused on specific conventions, like punctuation. I rarely saw specific strategies taught that explain how to do something as a writer. By the final observation, the teachers were showing students very specific strategies for poetry, but balancing their instruction with a focus on conventions. So, the teachers did not neglect what students

needed to know to write conventionally, and instead found a way to teach into all aspects of writing, including genre-specific strategies and writing skills. Additionally, the teachers seemed to be more in-tune with where their students were in the writing process. When they taught a strategy, they often referred to how it supports a writer's process.

Process for Professional Learning

After meeting with teacher participants individually and as a team, we designed a plan for professional learning based on their goals. With the understanding from Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) that learning communities grounded in building *knowledge-of-practice*, teachers needed to engage in systematic inquiry around a common problem while analyzing and interpreting data along the way; thus, the teacher participants collaboratively constructed the process for professional learning that occurred throughout the study. Collectively, the teacher participants agreed that they wanted to better understand the genre of poetry writing and develop a better understanding of small-group writing instruction. In fact, in the first meeting with the teacher participants, Jackie said, "I don't feel like I have a really great grasp of poetry, to be honest" (Jackie, PLC 1, 57). Both Lillian and Tracy nodded in agreement, and added that in the past they have dreaded teaching this unit.

With these goals in mind, we determined that frequent analysis of writing samples would be critical to monitoring the progress of both student and teacher learning. By grounding professional learning in the analysis of student work, the learning process became linked to practice and student outcomes. This helped to develop a shared responsibility for student learning and made the professional learning more meaningful for the teacher participants (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). Additionally, as Guskey (1986) theorized, teacher beliefs and attitudes will begin to shift when the teachers observe changes in their students. Thus,

examining student writing across the poetry-writing unit could result in change in teacher attitudes and beliefs about teaching writing.

It was also important that the teacher participants had opportunities to situate their learning within the context of their own classrooms (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015) and engage in deep reflection in-action and on-action (Schön, 1983), in order to build capacity and grow their knowledge for writing instruction. Additionally, by grounding the professional learning in practice, the teacher participants were able to connect what they are learning and directly apply it in the context of their own classroom (Wei et al., 2009). Collaboratively designing a process for professional learning that is sustained over time aligns with the understandings that continuous professional learning builds capacity and affects change (Darling-Hammond, 1993). Figure 4.5 is an illustrated visual of the timeline for professional learning that occurred during this study. The following sections describe that professional learning process designed by the teacher participants for the purpose of this study.

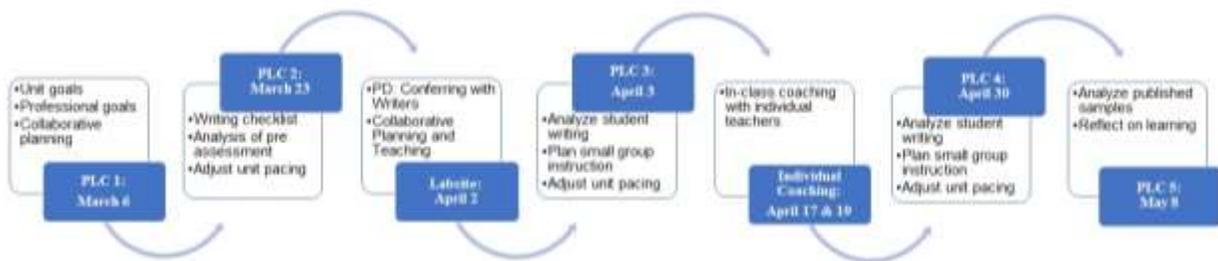


Figure 4.5. Professional Learning Timeline

Initial PLC

The initial PLC took place before teaching of the poetry writing unit. Due to time, this PLC split into two separate meetings (PLC 1 and PLC 2), with the first focused on building an understanding of what students were expected to learn in the unit and the second meeting focused on analyzing what students already knew about poetry writing.

PLC 1. The first PLC was situated in DuFour et al. (2016) first guiding question for PLCs: What is it we want our students to learn? An agenda of the first PLC can be seen in Figure 3.3 in the previous chapter. To build background in poetry writing, the teachers first studied mentor texts and student writing samples to generate a list of characteristics about poetry writing. As teachers listed what they noticed, I worked to name the elements using the common vocabulary terms for poetry. For example, when reading a poem from the mentor text, *Old Elm Speaks*, Jackie said, “I don’t know what you call this but sometimes, it’s like a sentence broken up. Line, line, line, period. Sometimes there’s no period” (Jackie, PLC 1, 142). To acknowledge her noticing, I named that poets manipulate punctuation and sentence boundaries through their use of both line breaks and white space. After studying the mentor text and sample student poems, the teacher participants generated a list of characteristics including, repetition, figurative language, sensory details, line breaks, white space, stanzas, expression, punctuation manipulation, and word play.

It is important to note that this process was not easy for the teacher participants. They each struggled as they searched for names of the characteristics of poetry. As a coach, it was important to create an environment where the teachers could be vulnerable and comfortable in a productive struggle around new content.

For the remainder of the first PLC, the teachers spent time understanding what the state standards asked of students and how the curricular resource, *Poetry: Big Thoughts in Small Packages* (Calkins et al., 2013), organized teaching points and learning outcomes for the poetry writing unit. The participants each took on a role for this section of the PLC. Tracy immediately volunteered to unpack the standards to figure out what Texas expected for second-grade poetry writers. Jackie volunteered to read the overview included in the curriculum resource. Lillian agreed to read the teaching points included in the resource, paying close attention to any student products along the way. The teacher participants spent time studying their parts, and then came back together to synthesize their understanding.

Again, this portion of the PLC required some productive struggle on the teacher participants as they were each working to develop understanding of their portion of the curriculum and synthesize their learning with what their colleagues learned. Tracy asked for help almost immediately because she was overwhelmed looking at the standards. Because Tracy plans the math lessons for her team, she has not looked at the TEKS for ELAR. I spent most of the time side-by-side with Tracy, guiding her through how to read, breakdown, and understand the standards. Jackie and Lillian looked through the curricular resources with ease, jotting down their ideas silently on sticky notes.

As soon as everyone finished reading, studying, and taking notes, I started the conversation by asking, “What are the big goals for this unit?” Jackie immediately chimed in with a reflection on how this unit is situated in meaning and reinforces the reciprocity between reading, writing, and oral language, stating:

So, it looks like the overall thing of why we teach poetry is it was saying that it gives the kids multiple opportunities to make decisions based on meaning. It really helps them to

reinforce the reading, writing, thinking concept. Because it was talking about how they really have to look at how the author wrote and why they chose those words and what mood it reflects and how the language is very precise. (Jackie, PLC 1, 331-335)

When Jackie finished, I looked over to Tracy and asked her to connect what Jackie described to what she read in the TEKS. Tracy commented about how the writing TEKS were vague, but the reading TEKS gave more description of what elements of poetry students should know, she said:

So, the writing, there's only one writing TEK: "write short poems that convey sensory details." But then, reading has got one and then, two underneath it. The main one is describing rhyme, rhythm, repetition to create images in poetry and under there, they also have identify lessons or the themes. (Tracy, PLC 1, 347-350)

Lillian looked back through the resource to find the specific places where each standard came through, helping the team identify the specific lesson that focused on sensory details, rhythm, and repetition. Jackie also reinforced that they are not having students write in specific structures of poetry, like Haiku, but having students "work with natural structures that we actually find in poetry" (Jackie, PLC 1, 395-396). Even though the team was talking specifically about a writing unit, they began making plans for teaching certain concepts through reading, especially thinking about using shared reading of poems to expose students to a variety of poems with different topics and themes. Within this first PLC, the teacher participants developed more content-specific vocabulary related to poetry. As a result of the learning during this first PLC, the teacher participants designed a student-friendly poetry writing checklist to use across the unit as seen in Figure 4.6.

My Second Grade Poetry Checklist

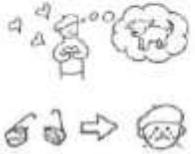
	I thought of a big topic with big feeling, and then found a small moment, detail, or object that holds that big feeling.	Not Yet <input type="checkbox"/>	Starting To <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes! <input type="checkbox"/>
	I looked with a poets' eyes to see ordinary things in a new way.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I experimented with line breaks when writing my poem.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I used honest, precise words to show, not tell, my reader.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I used rhyme, rhythm, and/ or repetition to help strengthen meaning / feeling in my poem.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Figure 4.6. Student-Friendly Poetry Writing Checklist

Focus group interview. At the conclusion of this PLC, I conducted the first focus group interview, asking the teacher participants to reflect on the learning so far. Lillian immediately reflected on the collaborative planning of the unit and said, “I already kind of knew what we did last year when we did each unit but I have more of a big picture now” (Lillian, Focus Group 1, 3-4). Jackie agreed that she had an understanding of backwards design and planning with the end in mind, but it really helped to do it with the entire team ahead of a writing unit. Tracy extended this thought and said that while she understood backward design, she never did it with writing so it was a new experience for her.

When thinking what extended their thinking during this PLC, Jackie mentioned the process of really unpacking the TEKS and looking at the student writing samples helped her better understanding what students would produce at the end of the unit. She said, “I just feel more confident in knowing what we need to be intentional with” (Jackie, Focus Group 1, 59-60). Tracy reflected on what extended her own learning since she had never looked at the ELAR TEKS before and said:

It’s overwhelming...it’s a lot of information...but I did it...I know the TEKS. I see them now. Before, I was just like, “Let’s just do poetry! Let’s just write poems!” Now I know I have to specifically teach these things...It’s not going to be a free-for-all like it was before! (Tracy, Focus Group 1, 78-89)

When considering what challenges lie ahead, Jackie mentioned that they were going to have to be intentional during their reading time to reinforce elements of poetry and exposing them to a wide variety of poems. Lillian thought about an additional potential challenge of generating ideas with students who come with limited experiences outside of school. At the conclusion of the focus group interview, the team acknowledged that they will have a lot of work to do in this unit, but they feel much more prepared teaching it now that they have done more planning.

PLC 2. The second portion of the initial PLC was structured around DuFour et al. (2016) second question, “How will I know if each student has learned it?” An agenda of the second PLC can be located in Figure 3.4 in the previous chapter. After the first part of the PLC, I created a resource for the teachers that included specific poetry terms organized by Certo et al. (2010), listed the teaching points from the *Units of Study* (Calkins, 2013) resource, and named the

second-grade TEKS for both reading and writing poetry. The resource served as a synthesis of the work done at the first PLC and can be in the figures below.

POETRY WRITING

"Literary language used to represent a writer's (real or imaginary) experiences and to create a virtual experience for readers" (Certo et al., 2010, p. 111)

Features of Poetry	Examples
POETIC TEXTURAL FEATURES The effective use of lexicon and syntax at a line or multiline level	Word Choice: purposefully selecting words for a specific purpose or using words in new contexts and ways
	Figurative Language: using figures of speech to be more effective in communicating meaning (ex: metaphor, similes, personification, onomatopoeia, oxymoron, hyperbole, symbolism, imagery)
POETIC REGISTER Suggests the tone and mood of the poem at the word, phrase, or line level	Rhythm: a literary device that creates a beat to create a musical feel and captivate an audience
	Imagery: using figurative language to represent objects, actions, and ideas in a way that creates a sensory experience for the reader.
	Repetition: a literary device that repeats the same word or phrases to emphasize an idea and create a rhythm
	Rhyme: a pattern that comes at the end of each line or stanza in a poem to create rhythm or highlight important ideas
	Assonance: two or more words that share a vowel sound but start with different consonant sounds used to enhance the musical effect, create internal rhyme, and develop a mood
	Alliteration: repetition of the initial consonant in a word to establish a rhythmic cadence
	Onomatopoeia: a word that imitates a natural sound to create emphasis
POETIC STRUCTURAL FEATURES Use of lines, stanzas, and shape of the whole text to enhance meaning and cadence	Line Breaks: a poetic device used at the end of the line to control the rhythm of the poem and bring additional meaning
	Rhythm/Meter: a stressed or unstressed syllabic pattern within the lines of a poem to create a rhythmic sound, provide a well-formed structure to the piece, and sometimes for artistic effect
	Shape: manipulating white space to create a desired shape of the poem
POETIC CONSERVATION Removing unnecessary words	

Figure 4.7. Poetry Writing Handout (Certo et al., 2010)

POETRY: BIG THOUGHTS IN SMALL PACKAGES

BEND 1 <i>See with poets' eyes</i>	BEND 2 <i>Delving deeper: experimenting with language and sound to create meaning</i>	BEND 3 <i>Trying structures on for size</i>
Seeing with poets' eyes	Searching for Honest, Precise Words	Studying Structure
Listening for line breaks	Patterning through Repetition	Close Reading of a Mentor Text
Putting Powerful Thoughts in Tiny Packages	Poems are Moody	Matching Structure to Feelings
Poets Find Poems in the Strong Feelings and Concrete Details of Life	Using Comparisons to Clarify Feelings and Ideas	Playing with Point of View
Editing Poetry	Stretching Out a Comparison	Revising Poems
		Editing Poems
		Presenting Poems to the World

Calkins, L. Parsons, S., & Vanderwater, A. L. (2013). Poetry: Big thoughts in small packages. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Figure 4.8. Poetry Unit Sequence Handout (Calkins et al., 2013)

2ND GRADE POETRY READING TEKS

2.7 POETRY. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of poetry and provide evidence from text to support their understanding.

2.7(A) describe how rhyme, rhythm, and repetition interact to create images in poetry

2.6 THEME AND GENRE. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about theme and genre in different cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.

2.11 SENSORY LANGUAGE. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about how an author's sensory language creates imagery in literary text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding.

2.11(A) recognize that some words and phrases have literal and non-literal meanings (e.g., take steps)

2ND GRADE POETRY WRITING TEKS

2.17 WRITING PROCESS. Students use elements of the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) to compose text.

2.18 WRITING/LITERARY TEXTS. Students write literary texts to express their ideas and feelings about real or imagined people, events, and ideas.

2.18(B) write short poems that convey sensory details

Figure 4.9. Second-Grade Poetry TEKS Handout

Earlier that week, the teachers administered a pre-assessment on poetry writing to determine what students already knew (see Appendix C). To analyze the student poems, I led the teacher participants in a process designed by staff developers from the Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) called thin slicing. This process was introduced to me during a coaching institute I attended with staff developers from TCRWP. Since that institute, I used this process frequently with other teachers in our district but never for poetry writing. I decided to use this process because it is quick and gives important information about student learning. I also wanted to introduce a process that could be replicated when I was not on campus. The process of thin slicing is illustrated in Figure 4.10.

THIN SLICING

A process for looking at student writing so teachers can analyze quickly and intervene early!

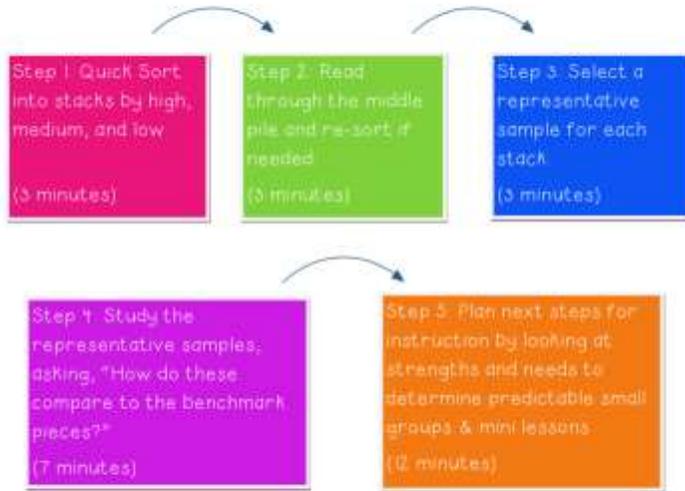


Figure 4.10. Thin Slicing (TCRWP)

Before analyzing the student's poems, we reviewed the published student work from the unit, the student-friendly poetry checklist (see Figure 4.6), and the poetry writing characteristics handout (see Figure 4.7). Then, the teacher participants quickly sorted their student writing into three different stacks by high, medium, and low. It is important to note that this experience of sorting writing was a productive struggle. The teacher participants went back and forth between how to classify different pieces of writing. Throughout the process of sorting, teacher participants were reading aloud student poems and asking each other their opinions on a piece. Having the clear criteria for poetry writing along with a checklist assisted in categorization of the writing. The conversation and dialogue around the student writing was a vital part of the learning

that took place during the PLC. After sorting into three stacks, the teacher participants looked quickly at their middle stack, reread the pieces, and made adjustments if necessary. Then, they each selected a piece as a representative sample of the stack. The process of selecting a representative sample allowed us to make generalizations about the student poems in that stack so that we could identify bigger trends and narrow our instructional focus.

Next, the teacher participants compared their representative samples to the published poems in the unit, student-friendly poetry checklist (see Figure 4.6), and poetry writing characteristics (see Figure 4.7). This process allowed them to name patterns and trends for their class. They used the language from the genre characteristics of poetry chart to name specifically what each stack had in common, as well as possible needs Table 4.3 describes the trends that the teacher participants noticed after sorting and analyzing student writing.

Table 4.3

Trends after Sorting and Analyzing Student Writing

High	Medium	Low
Using multiple elements of poetry for the intended purpose of writing poetry	Using only one element of poetry; Might be using, but confusing, other elements of poetry	No elements of poetry

Next, the teacher participants determined percentages for each stack by dividing the total number in the stack by the total number of students in their class. Teacher participants calculated their individual percentages for their class along with grade level totals. The purpose of calculating these percentages was to have data to track across the unit. The teacher participants wanted to do multiple sorts throughout the unit to determine if students were making progress

and to set goals for their instruction. Throughout the process of sorting, the teacher participants were continuously using specific language from the genre characteristics chart, increasing their understanding of content-specific vocabulary related to poetry.

Of the initial sort, 49% of the second-grade students fell in the low category because their writing did not resemble poems at all. In fact, most pieces appeared to be in the structure of narrative or informational texts. The medium stack of writing that somewhat resembled poems held 18% the second grade students. The participants noticed that most of the writing that fell in the medium stack did not visually look like poems, but contained descriptive language, making it stand out from the low stack. A surprising 31% of students were already writing poems that contained more than one element of poetry. The poems in the high stack were visually structured with line breaks and revealed an understanding of poetic conservation. Figures 4.11, 4.12, and 4.13 include examples of student pre-assessment writing from each stack, low, medium, and high.



Figure 4.11. Student Writing Sample- Low (“The cat and the dog one day this was a dog and a cat. The cat and the dog loves to do everything seen together The most seen. They love love to do together is to play together.”)

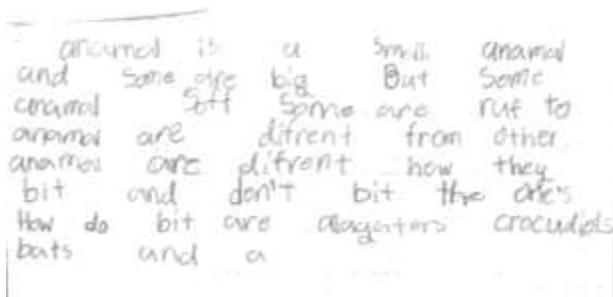


Figure 4.12. Student Writing Sample- Medium (“Animals is a small animal. And some are big. But some animals are soft, some are rough, too. Animals are different from each other. Animals are different how they bite and don’t bite the ones. How do bite are alligators, crocodiles, bats and a...”)

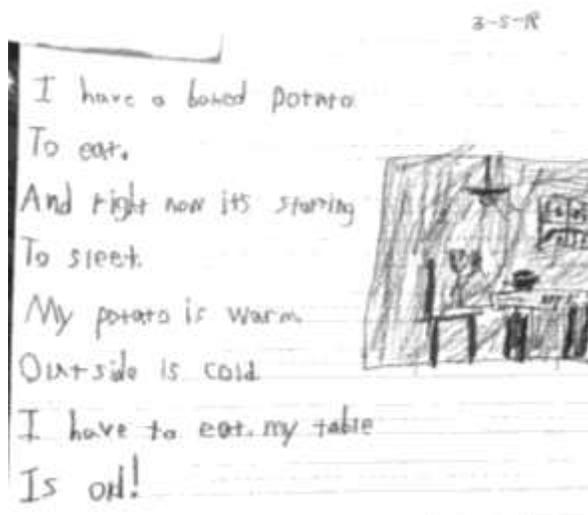


Figure 4.13. Student Writing Sample- High: (“I have a baked potato/to eat./And right now it’s starting/to sleet./My potato is warm/Outside is cold./I have to eat, my table/is old!”)

After sorting the writing, the teachers began identifying strengths, needs, and instructional implications for each group. This process allowed teachers to anticipate and predict small groups because they could easily manipulate the student work into groups of similar need. They turned to their curriculum resource to identify specific lessons that would target the needs

of most of their class, and then looked through to find small group lessons focused on the individual needs of their students. For the remainder of the session, we discussed instructional strategies for teaching poetry based on the findings from the sort. The teachers used sticky notes and paper clips to physically group students into specific stacks with similar needs. The figure below is an example of Tracy's sticky note of specific lessons from *The Writing Strategies Book* (Serravallo, 2017) that addressed the needs of students in her class.

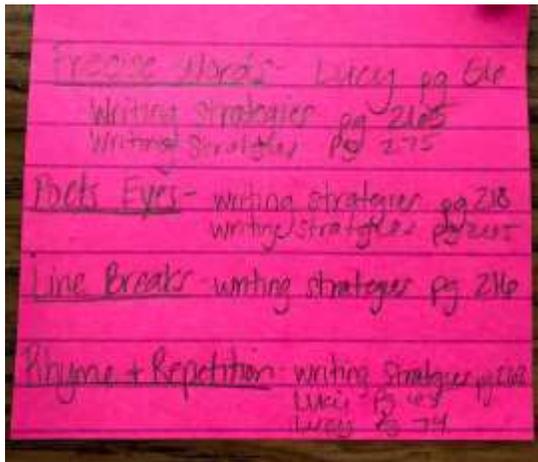


Figure 4.14. Sticky Note Small Group Plans

This final process of the second PLC allowed teachers the opportunity to use their newly acquired knowledge of poetry writing and their student current levels of understanding and apply that knowledge to make instructional decisions.

Additional reflections. While I only intended to collect information from the teachers at specific points throughout the study, I received numerous phone calls, text messages, and emails reflecting on the progress of students during the study. Also, the teachers posted to Twitter and their school Facebook page, highlight both the work we did in the PLC and the sharing photos of students writing during the poetry unit. These moments of reflection were important to capture because it occurred organically within the context of their classroom.

The first text message came from Tracy. After analyzing student data two days before, Tracy asked for recommendations for poetry mentor texts. I shared a few titles with her that I knew students enjoyed and delivered a basket of my personal poetry books to the teachers the following day. One of the books that I recommended was *Love that Dog* by Sharon Creech (2001), a novel written in verse and very relatable by most reluctant writers. I brought one copy to share and Tracy immediately connected with the text. She ordered all of Sharon Creech's books and sent me a photo the day they were delivered with an emoji describing her excitement for the new books. This was the first moment where I witnessed Tracy's attitude towards writing begin to shift. While she had moments of feeling overwhelmed with unit planning and understanding the TEKS, she was showing excitement for the poetry unit, too. The text message is featured below (see Figure 4.15).



Figure 4.15. Text message received from Tracy.

The next day, Jackie posted to the campus Facebook page, celebrating the launch of the poetry unit. Mountain Elementary designed this page in an attempt to capture all of the successes that occur across the campus. The page was only viewable by district and campus employees,

with the intent to inspire and collaborate. After several years of negative attention for low test scores, the campus principal designed the page as a way to highlight the good that was occurring on the campus on a daily basis. The teachers frequently posted photos of their students working inside their classroom, lesson ideas, videos, and pictures of teacher collaboration or professional learning. On March 26, Jackie posted:

Today, in writing, our second graders began seeing ordinary things through a poet's lens. They had some amazing descriptions when looking at classroom objects with their poet's eyes! They were so excited!

With her post were four photos of students working in her classroom wearing plastic glasses as a symbol of having their poet's eyes. She also included a sample of a student's observations of everyday objects using his poet's eyes. Even though I was not in their classrooms every day, I was able to see what occurred within their classroom through posts like this. This post occurred on the first day of the poetry-writing unit and captured the excitement of both the teachers and the students. Figure 4.16 is an example of student writing from the first lesson of the unit as they began to see objects around the classroom in a fresh, new way.

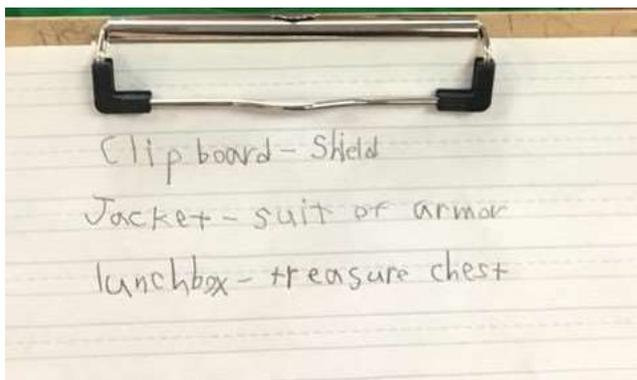


Figure 4.16. Student Writing with Poet's Eyes

Later that week, Jackie sent me more photos and videos from her classroom. Jackie's text message read, "We are loving poetry! Since it was too stormy to go outside and choose an object together, we are looking at the storm with our poet's eyes!" In the video, students are peering out the window, clipboards in hand, writing down what they notice about the storm. Because the weather was stormy, the second-grade team took the opportunity to turn it into a shared writing experience. Each class described the storm and constructed a poem together. Again, even though I was not on campus, the teacher participants were sharing about their student's learning with me. Figure 4.17 shows an example of the shared writing experience from Lillian's classroom.

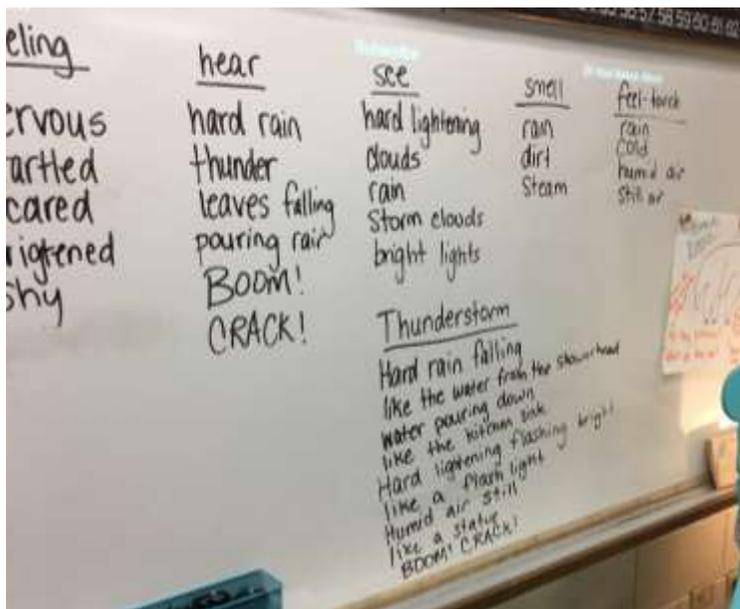


Figure 4.17. Shared writing about the storm from Mrs. Walker's class.

Another spontaneous reflection from a teacher participant occurred in phone call to reflect on the first week of the unit. Jackie called just to tell me that the first week had gone so well with teaching poetry. She explained that she was so apprehensive to teach this unit and never liked teaching it in previous years, but now it is becoming one of her favorite writing units. Additionally, she said that working together and having me come guide the planning of the unit

helped it feel easier to teach. This reflection was not instigated by me and occurred naturally, as Jackie reflected on the first week of the unit. It captured the shift in attitude toward teaching poetry as well as the comfort level of teaching that occurs when time is spent ahead of the unit understanding what students are expected to do.

These reflections were unexpected and not planned as data points in the study, occurring organically in the moment of teacher professional learning situated in the context of their own classroom. These text messages, phone calls, and posts to social media captured the teacher participants' excitement for the poetry-writing unit, which they originally said they were dreading. Additionally, it also revealed that I became a true partner in teaching with these teachers, as they wanted me to share in the journey with them, even in a virtual way.

Labsite

The next phase of the professional learning was situated within the teacher's classroom practice (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). We called this experience a labsite, borrowing the term originally coined by staff developers from TCRWP, because the approach is similar to the experiential learning that occurs within a scientist's lab. Teachers grew in their understanding of a particular concept and then applied their learning in the field. The goal of this phase of professional learning was to encourage collaboration, so teachers were each other's learning partners as they discovered and discussed methods for conferring, planned a lesson cycle together complete with small group work, and collaboratively taught the lesson together in a classroom, with side-by-side coaching support. The labsite also promoted opportunities for teacher participants' deep reflection both on-action and in-action (Schön, 1983).

The labsite took place over three hours in one school day afternoon. Teacher participants received substitutes in their classrooms for the afternoon so they could engage in learning and

applying their learning with students. The labsite began with a brief reflection on the progress of the poetry writing so far. The teacher participants were keeping me constantly in the loop of the progress their students were making in the unit so far, but I wanted to provide an opportunity for them to synthesize what they noticed in their students so far. Lillian immediately commented on her students were really using their poet's eyes and imagination to describe objects in a new ways, even using some comparisons through some metaphors in their writing. Tracy commented that students were carrying their poet's eyes beyond the writing classroom. She said:

And it didn't just stop in the writing lesson. They went on to recess and saw large puddles and quite a few of them came up to me at one of the recesses and said, oh, in my poet's eye, I see this blade of grass as just... Or I see this puddle as... So they're not just keeping it in writing, they're connecting it. (Tracy, Labsite, 17-20)

Jackie talked about how what they were doing in reading workshop was helping to transfer to what they were learning in writing workshop. For example, in reading workshop, the teacher participants set out buckets of poetry books for students to explore both independently and in partnerships. They helped students notice the rhyme, rhythm, and repetition of poetry and encouraged the students to find evidence of those pieces in the poems they were reading. They also used a book called *Dogku* by Andrew Clements (2007) to show students how some poet's tell stories through verse. Jackie emphasized that she immersed students in poetry and was seeing it transfer to what they were able to do as writers of poetry.

For the next thirty minutes, the teachers engaged in professional learning around conferring with writers, specifically looking at the structure of a writing conference for both individual and small group work. One of the goals of the second-grade team was to learn more about the genre of poetry writing and another goal was to develop strategies to teach small

groups of writers. I designed this chunk of time to support both of those goals at once, while also helping them develop a practice that could transfer to any genre of writing. To inform the design of the content of this professional learning, I drew on the work of Graves (1982), Murray (1985), McIver and Wolf (1999), Graham (2008), and Calkins (1994, 2013).

Upon reflecting on the goals before diving into the content of the professional learning, the teacher participants all agreed that they knew what to teach, but they do not know how to teach it, so they often found themselves working with students individually during writing time, but never really teach anything. I thought this was an interesting reflection because it was congruent to all of my initial classroom observations. Thus, the purpose of this phase of professional learning was driven by needs of the teacher, honoring their autonomy of their own learning, but it was also aligned with what I anticipated they needed. This supports the understanding that knowledge should be actively constructed by and with practitioners within their own context for learning (Blank & de las Alas, 2009; Borko & Putnam, 1995; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995).

Instead of giving teachers specific lessons and strategies for how to teach different elements of poetry, I wanted to honor the premise that we first teach the writer, not just the piece of writing (Calkins, 1994). Additionally, I also wanted to support the idea writing teachers should also be writers, paying attention to their own writing process, better understanding the purpose behind writing moves, so that their feedback is more meaningful to their students (Graves, 1983). Thus, I wanted the teacher participants to see to figure out how to teach something in writing, we need to go back to the purpose and intention of the author. For example, if we want to teach a student how to structure their poems with intentional line breaks, we need to first figure out why poet's use line breaks and then show the student how that might

look in writing, either our own or a mentor text. I used this approach because in Tracy's original interview, she mentioned that she had a bag of tricks on hand for teaching particular math concepts and desired the same thing for writing. Instead of leaving the teacher participants with a prescription of strategies to try, I left them with two questions to guide their work with writers, "What is the purpose of the writing move?" and "How can I show how to do this through my own writing, someone else's writing, or the student's writing?"

To guide teachers to understand the different methods for teaching during a writing conference, I used guidelines described by Calkins (2013) because the resource was included as a part of their curriculum and was familiar to the teachers. In *A Guide to the Common Core Writing Workshop*, Calkins explains four teaching methods: (a) demonstration, (b) explain an example, (c) guided practice, (d) inquiry. As a group, we looked through each of these methods, understanding the purpose of when to use it and what it might look and sound like in the classroom. I decided to use the teaching methods because I noticed majority of their writing conferences in my initial classroom observations involved praising, redirecting, or troubleshooting writing behaviors. Very few conferences actually taught a strategy to the student, so I knew this could be a starting point to help them reach their goal of conferring with writers.

After discussing the teaching methods, Jackie exclaimed, "a lot of times that is not what we do!" (Jackie, Labsite, 344). Tracy followed by reflecting on her own practice and said, "Well I'm realizing as we're all talking, I've only been doing inquiry and it's unsuccessful" (Tracy, Labsite, 350). I reminded Tracy that this is her part of her strength as a teacher, she is asking questions and prompting students for independence, but we can add new methods to her repertoire so she can meet a variety of learners in her classroom. Jackie replied with her own reflection on her practice, stating, "I didn't even realize until I saw this...I'll say 'Oh you need

finger spaces’ and just assume they know what that means” (Jackie, Labsite, 360-361). I transitioned the conversation to looking ahead at the layer we can add by trying new teaching methods today during the labsite to enhance our conferring skills. I reminded the teachers that today we would be asking ourselves the questions, “What do I need to teach? How am I going to teach it? How do I ensure they’re transferring it across pieces and genres of writing?” The handout given to teachers that describes the teaching methods as defined by Calkins (2013) is in Figure 4.18.

Teaching Methods

<i>Method</i>	<i>When Its Used</i>	<i>What It Looks Like</i>
 DEMONSTRATION	When a concept is brand new	Model a strategy by slowing it down and voicing over what you are doing
 EXPLAIN AN EXAMPLE	When you want to encourage a student to use a strategy they are familiar with	Provide the student with the exact example of what you want them to do and explain what it is/how it was done
 GUIDED PRACTICE	To give extra support in the moment	Coaching or giving prompts while the student is trying a strategy
 INQUIRY	To lift the level of student work by naming out strategies that another student has done	The teacher shows a strong example of student work (a level above where the student is performing) and provides an inquiry question. The student is the researcher. The teacher voices over/guides exploration

Figure 4.18. Teaching Methods Handout

In addition to the teaching methods described by Calkins (2013), she also illuminated a predictable structure for conferring with writers. This structure can be used to meet with an individual student or small group of students, embedding the teaching methods previously

discussed, and providing a predictable format for giving authentic feedback to students. The conferencing framework started with the teacher spending a short amount of time doing some research, possibly through observation of writing behaviors, conversation with the student, or reading their writing, to determine the strengths, needs, and points of instruction for the child. Then, Calkins (2013) suggested complimenting the child's strength, specifically naming the writing skill, strategy, or behavior that should be positively reinforced. Next, the teacher should name a teaching point to focus on the feedback for the conference. After that, the teacher can transition to model or demonstrate how to do the teaching point, providing time for the student to practice it while receiving prompts from the teacher. Finally, the conference concludes with a link, where the teacher names again the teaching point, applies it to all future writing, and sometimes leaves an anchor chart of visual reminder of the strategy. The handout given to teachers that outlines this structure of a writing conference as described by Calkins (2013) is below (see Figure 4.19).

Reading & Writing Conference Cheat Sheet

<i>Structure</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>What you Might Say</i>
RESEARCH 	0-3 minutes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look at reading/writing behaviors or reading/writing history to discover what the reader/writer is doing well and what the next steps might be Once in a while you draw on previous knowledge and go right to the compliment or the teach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are you working on as a reader/writer today? Can you show me where you tried that? How is that going? Last time we met we were working on...How's that going? Can you show me where you did that? What is your plan for what you'll do next? If I was to suggest you do...what would you do to get started? How do you assess this piece? One of your best? How would you make it better?
COMPLIMENT 	0-1 minute <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compliment a skill or strategy, a behavior, or volume and stamina Skip the compliment if the student is not working or is acting inappropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One thing you do as a reader/writer that is so fantastic is that... I'm thrilled to see you're not the kind of reader/writer who...No way! Instead, you're the kind of writer who...for example...also...
TEACHING POINT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name one tip to teach the child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Now, can I give you one tip today-something that will help you become an even better reader/writer? Today I want to teach you that readers/writers often...One way that readers/writers do that is...
TEACH/COACH 	1-2 Minutes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate or explain how to do the teaching point Coach in with short prompts Have the child practice the skill right then and there in front of you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Let me show you what I mean...The other day when I was reading/writing ____, I ...and so I...Do you see how I...? Right now, with your piece/text you will try that? Let me show you how an author did that in our mentor text... That's good...now...remember to... I'll be back to check on you.
LINK 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reminder of the teaching point Send the reader/writer off with a plan Leave an artifact or anchor chart if possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> So whenever you are ____, you can remember to... Say back to me what you learned from this conference. What's your plan as a reader/writer when you get back to work on your own?

Figure 4.19. Structure of a Writing Conference Handout

After reviewing the structure of the writing conference and reflecting on her practice, Tracy pointed to the section labeled teaching point and said, “And then we stop there” (Tracy, Labsite, 416). Lillian reads aloud the sentence stem from the section labeled teach, “One way writers do this is...” (Lillian, Labsite, 419) recognizing that the language we use can transition from stopping at the teaching point to actually teaching a strategy. Jackie brought up an example from a conference she had the previous day on line breaks. After describing how the conference went, she applied it today’s learning of the structure of the conference to discuss what she could have done differently. Instead of just telling students to use line breaks to create rhythm, she could have shown what that looks like and left a visual with the students as a reminder.

Before transitioning away from the portion of the labsite with focused learning on a specific content, I asked the team if they had any remaining questions. Jackie wanted specific support in how to not get stuck going the same struggling students each time. She explained the situation:

There's always those babies that you drop every day. And I get stuck in the cycle of going to them, instead of going to everyone because I'm so afraid that if I don't, they're going to do it wrong over multiple days. Because if I met with everyone, I might hit them every few days....So I end up going to the same kids all the time. And I know that's not okay, but what do you do with those...Do you know what I mean? (Jackie, Labsite, 472-481)

Jackie's question about making sure to meet with all students established a nice transition to the power of pulling multiple students together with similar needs into small groups. In response to Jackie's question, the team started wondering about logistics of conferring with writers. They asked about designing a specific schedule on when to meet with students and how long to spend when meeting with students. I guided the conversation back to thinking about ourselves as writers. The team agreed that a schedule might interfere with the natural process of writing and that we should be flexible in who we confer with so that we can be responsive to their needs when they need it. Additionally, I reinforced the concept of fostering independence in students. I said:

If you fall victim to certain students asking for help all the time, they won't become independent...If we don't trust that they're going to do it or have someone else to go to, besides us, a partner... then we'll fall into that trap...And then, we won't get to our kids that could do even more than they're doing now. (Macie, Labsite, 517-519)

The team extended the idea of reaching the needs of all learners by discussing classroom routines and procedures that fostered independence. They discussed consistent writing partners, expectations for independent writing time, and setting the goal as a teacher to meet with at least six students a day in order to get to all students in a week. The second-grade team was already beginning to apply the new knowledge about writing conferences by reflecting on their previous practice and considering possibilities for future instruction. Now, it was time to put the learning in action by practicing in one of their classrooms.

The teacher participants collaboratively planned a lesson cycle together to teach in Tracy's classroom, our lab for the afternoon. They decided that Jackie would teach the mini lesson, I would model a small group, and then Tracy and Lillian would teach another small group with side-by-side coaching support. The team decided to teach a mini lesson focused on line breaks because they noticed their student's poems still did not resemble poems. They also added another layer by setting a spontaneous PLC for the following day, allowing each teacher to reteach a lesson on line breaks and bring student writing from the lesson to determine additional needs on this topic. This PLC was unplanned, but resulted organically out of the collaborative planning that occurred during the lab site. After planning the mini lesson about listening for line breaks, the teacher participants planned a small group lesson that reinforced the concept of using line breaks to establish rhythm in a poem. The team collaboratively wrote a poem together and planned to have students physically manipulate the words into different structures to explore different rhythms and the effect line breaks had on the overall structure of the poem. While we originally intended to plan multiple small group lessons, the time ran out and the teachers asked if they could just duplicate the observed modeled small group lesson that I did with the students so that they could feel comfortable with the structure. I agreed, reminding them that it is less

about the lesson we are teaching and more about the structure for conferring. The teacher participants quickly discussed logistics for transitions and the other components of the workshop model, and then prepared to go into the classroom to implement what they planned.

As the teachers entered the classroom, the student were already gathered on the carpet for the mini lesson. Tracy reminded her class of students about how the teachers were in there to learn with them and thanked her class for being flexible. Jackie began teaching the mini lesson as planned by the team. As students dispersed to write independently, I led a small group of students in hands-on manipulation of a poem to explore the rhythm created by line breaks. I modeled how to transition from teaching to prompting, then finishing with a link to encourage students to do the work on their own. After about six minutes, Lillian and Tracy pulled their own small group of students to practice the same small group. While they were teaching the small group, Jackie and I coached in as needed. Jackie led the whole class in a quick share, and then we all met in the hallway to walk back to the conference room to debrief.

Focus group interview. The purpose of this focus group interview was to reflect on the learning that occurred within the classroom labsite. Immediately after exiting the classroom, the teachers were bursting with information about what they observed the students do as a result of the small group lesson. Tracy mentioned that she noticed students going into their own writing to cross out words and add slashes for line breaks. She also began reflecting on some of the decisions she made during the small group. When Tracy was teaching her small group, she realized how quickly the students were catching onto the strategy so she adapted the lesson from what I modeled. Instead of guiding students to manipulate the whole poem, Tracy stopped the group after they broke up the first line so that they could apply it into their own writing. The teacher participants reflected that the first small group pulled needed repeated practice, but the

group Tracy pulled caught on more quickly, so our scaffolds of support adapt to meet those needs. Additionally, Tracy said, “I will tell you, I was kind of stressed out about it because I didn't know how to teach line breaks, but that was fairly simple” (Tracy, Focus Group 2, 86-87). Lillian agreed, saying, “That was! I really liked the cutting apart...I’m doing it tomorrow with my class because I really feel like it will be really beneficial” (Lillian, Focus Group 2, 88-91).

The teacher participants continued reflecting on the lesson they collaboratively taught in Tracy’s classroom, and began discussing next steps. They all agreed that the cutting part of the poem gave students a concrete example of line breaks and began brainstorming ways to support those students who were not as successful at transferring that into their own writing. A few minutes into reflection, Tracy announced, “I’m really excited to teach writing tomorrow...I sound a little bit more knowledgeable” (Tracy, Focus Group 2, 222-227). Jackie agreed, pointed at the conferring handout and said:

I think for me...to see this is all we need...and then to go through the unit and spend more time on what they struggled with in the pre on-demand and stretch some of those lessons or shorten some of the others...And I think too, like today we all learned a lot, not just about line breaks but how to teach it and what they need. (Jackie, Focus Group 2, 233-240)

The teacher participants talked about how they felt like it was possible to teach more students with the structure of small group conferences because it allows them to be intentional in what they teach and saw it directly influence their student’s learning. Tracy said:

So it's really exciting to know that already the first day of line breaks they're already getting into the groove of it, they know what it looks like. I'm exciting to go deeper

into it the next two days knowing that we're still on line breaks. (Tracy, Focus Group 2, 264-267)

I asked the group to think about what so far in the process for their own professional learning as specifically contributed towards their newfound excitement and confidence for teaching poetry writing. The teacher participants agreed that the work done ahead of the unit digging deeper into the TEKS, understanding where students were, and adapting the unit plans accordingly has been the most helpful. Additionally, they appreciated the chart that specifically named the elements of poetry writing. Lillian mentioned how helpful it was to analyze student writing along the way. She explained that it was really helpful to see each other's student writing because sometimes she panics that she is doing something wrong or her students are way off base, but when she talks with her team about it, she sees that it might be actually normal or they have a way to help her. Finally, they all contended that this type of co-teaching felt different than the way they co-taught in the past.

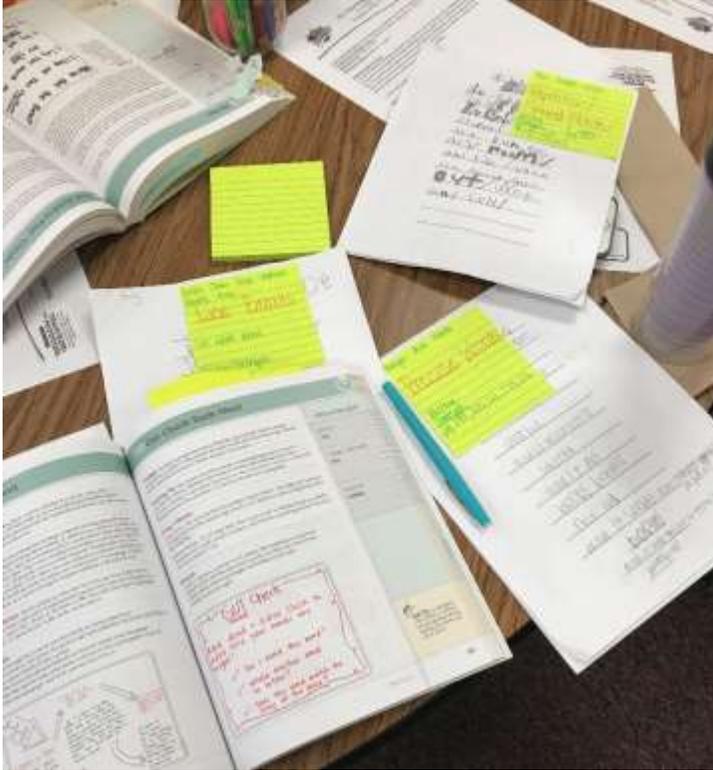
Guiding the group back to the focus group questions, I asked what learning from today specifically connected to what they already knew. Jackie immediately said that she knew the power in conferring with writers but "didn't know how to do it that effectively" (Jackie, Focus Group 2, 387). Tracy extended this thought on conferring by adding, "Going along with that, I was sticking too much in the inquiry part of my conferencing...I didn't know that there were different methods" (Tracy, Lasbite, 389-390). Jackie agreed and said that to extend her learning, she really needs to focus on the teach and link portion of the writing conference, rather than stopping at the teaching point and leaving her students hanging. Lillian mentioned that the pacing of the lab site extended her thinking and helped her reflect on the pacing in her own classroom. Both Tracy and Jackie nodded in agreement. Finally, Tracy brought up a challenge

that remained- finding time to design engaging strategies like this for her students on a regular basis. The team brainstormed ways to embed this part into their already scheduled PLC times, ending with the goal to try to design small group lessons for each of the stacks after sorting the writing. They intended to implement this the following day at their midpoint PLC.

PLC 3

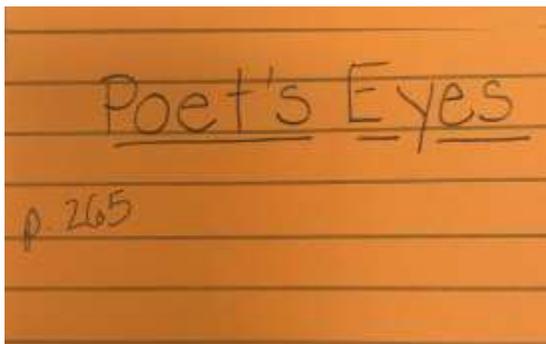
After participating in the labsite experience, the teacher participants decided they wanted to analyze student writing again, now that the students had a little more instruction in the genre of poetry. The team met the following day to analyze student writing, calculate new percentages of students on, below, and above level, and form small groups based on their findings. The team used the same criteria established from the initial PLC to sort their writing and engaged in deep conversation as they sorted the student writing, frequently talking about a piece collaboratively before deciding which stack to place it.

Of the second-graders at Mountain Elementary, 9% fell in the low stack with poems that still resembled stories, 62% fell in the medium stack with poems that were beginning to resemble the structure of poems and included descriptive language, and 29% fell into the high stack, with poems that included multiple elements of poetry. Instead of stopping with just percentages, the team looked through the stacks to notice common strengths and needs across the pieces. Then, the teacher participants placed sticky notes with the teaching focus on top of the stack and began designing lessons for small group instruction. In addition to using strategies for conferring discussed the previous day, the teacher participants used *The Writing Strategies Book* by Jennifer Serravallo (2017) for specific lesson ideas. See Figure 4.20 as an example of teacher lesson planning for small group instruction.



4.20. Team Planning Small Group Lessons

For example, Jackie divided her students into groups that needed rhyme, repetition, precise words, line breaks, and poet's eyes. She wrote those elements on sticky notes, found corresponding lesson ideas, then grouped students together for small group instruction for the next couple of weeks. An example of the sticky note with student writing is in Figure 4.21.



The TRAIN
 we were
 going home/ my
 MOM/ needed
 the postcard/
 there was a
 TRAIN/
 The OKems
 we didn't

Figure 4.21. Plans for Small Group Instruction

Focus group interview. Because this midpoint PLC was not originally on the calendar as a part of the process for professional learning, there was not time reserved at the end of the PLC for a focus group interview. Instead, the teacher participants wanted to reflect on the teaching moves they already tried in their classroom based on the learning that occurred in the labsite. All three teachers used small group conferences during their writing time. Tracy said they reflected on their writing instruction as they went out to recess. Jackie explained, “I thought it would feel overwhelming to get to so many kids...it was actually so much better...normally I’m running around, but today was so much better” (Tracy, Focus Group 3, 232-236). Lillian added on by reflecting on the pacing of her teaching saying, “I felt more confident setting them up and letting them work independently...and I had so much more writing time!” (Lillian, Focus Group 3, 246-248). Jackie extended on the reflection of the overall pacing of the lesson by stating that she used to think all students had to master a concept from the mini lesson, but now she realized that it is really in the pulling of small groups that supports understanding. She said, “So I didn’t feel that pressure that they’ve got to get this now before they leave the carpet because I knew I was going to pull them” (Jackie, Focus Group 3, 269-270).

Individual Coaching

After conducting midpoint interviews, a common need was more in-class support on an individual level. Each teacher requested support either planning small group lessons or implementing them in the classroom. I set up time to support each teacher meet their individual goals.

Jackie. Jackie did not want classroom coaching and instead wanted to sit down with me to refine her plans for writing. Jackie wanted to find a way to write her lesson plans to be more

responsive to what her teammates were seeing in their classrooms. In the past, she wrote the plans based on what the curriculum said or what she noticed with her own students, but now that they were analyzing student writing along the way, she realized that there are different needs in the other classrooms that she might not have in hers. We worked to design a section in the plans with predictable scenarios and poetry small group lesson ideas, with the goal of helping the entire team differentiate writing instruction. We also brainstormed specific instructional strategies that can serve as a scaffold for students who still struggle to use a strategy independently. She found opportunities within her whole day to embed various instructional strategies, such as interactive read aloud, turn and talk, shared writing, and interactive writing, to support student learning across the literacy block.

Lillian. The classroom coaching for Lillian also involved planning specifically for the various needs of the students in her classroom. She had a group of students who were identified as dyslexic and she was struggling to find resources and ways to support their spelling. Additionally, she was not sure how to find a navigate teaching the conventions of writing with the genre-specific skills we had been focusing on in poetry writing. We met together to look at her student writing and discuss possible options. We mostly discussed ways to focus on the conventions and skills of writing by embedding word work across the day. We started by looking at the structure and design of her guided reading group and looked for ways to incorporate elements of both word work and writing. I modeled what it might sound like in a small group and Lillian refined her plans to incorporate these elements. I also referred her to some shared video resources that the district has available.

Lillian also wanted feedback from her midpoint observation. While I did not set up a separate coaching day, I did help guide her reflection of the lesson I observed for the midpoint

observation. She was wondering why students were not transferring the strategy into their own writing. I asked guiding questions to support her reflecting on what went well and what changes she would make next time. She immediately named that the pacing of her lesson was much better and verbalized again that she wanted to do something to help students transfer the strategies in their writing. We looked back at the structure of the conference to reflect on the flow of the small group. Lillian immediately noticed that she showed students how to do a strategy with a different piece of writing, but never turned it back over into their own. She made the goal to allow more time for students to try the strategy in their own writing while receiving feedback from her.

Tracy. After her midpoint interview, Tracy requested additional support with small group instruction in her classroom. She explained that she had the plans, but was stuck in the research phase of the writing conference structure. Tracy redesigned the method of documentation she used when conferring with kids, creating a digital platform to group students and identify needs. However, she had not actually taught into any of the needs she identified. She was struggling to transfer her learning about small group work from the labsite. I came into Tracy's room to observe her lesson, model a small group, and provide side-by-side coaching as she tried additional small group lessons with different content focuses. I did not want Tracy to duplicate the same lesson that I did, because I think that structure is what prevented her from being able to transfer the learning from the labsite into everyday practice.

After the in-class coaching experience, Tracy and I reflected on her learning. Tracy continuously came back to the specific needs of her students, realizing that most of her students are struggling with abstract thinking. Their poems read in a literal manner and they are struggling to comprehend text by reading between the lines. Both of the small groups that we did required higher level thinking and the students really struggled. She felt stronger about the practice of

small group instruction and how teach strategies using a mentor text, but was not sure how to guide her students in deeper thinking. We talked about possibilities of providing more time for interactive read aloud and shared reading as a way to promote inferring about text and then writing in ways that help readers infer. Tracy set the goal of showing the connection of reading and writing more explicitly across the day.

PLC 4

To begin the fourth PLC, the teacher participants reflected on the progress of the poetry-writing unit. The teacher participants immediately started reading student poems that they collected, celebrating the growth of specific students. Lillian shared about an experience with a student that she was working with on writing about a big feeling. She said,

So she just started crying. So I told her let's just write about feeling. What do you feel really strongly about? ...she said, "my dad."... So I said, "okay, let's write about your dad...tell me some things about your dad." And so she starts telling me, and she goes... well, but he protects me...he's like a knight protecting his princess...all morning and night in his castle (Lillian, PLC 4, 53-62).

Lillian was really proud of the progress of this particular student because she was usually one of her lower performing students, but she has really found her voice in this unit. Also, the student was independent in writing about these ideas and in the past has required a lot more scaffolding. Lillian was beaming with pride over the progress of her students so far.

After celebrating Lillian's student success, the team reminded each other of the sorting criteria and began to create stacks of writing into low, medium, and high. While sorting, they engaged in active dialogue around pieces to determine where one might fit. At the conclusion of the sorting, Lillian immediately noticed that so many students had grown in their understanding

of specific poetic elements, especially in line breaks. She said, “I know that something that was really hard for them was line breaks, and I feel they’re finally starting to get it a little bit more than they did” (Lillian, PLC 4, 196-197). Jackie added on saying, “I think their language, too...their descriptive words and comparisons and... precise words, they’ve gotten a lot better at, which I think will carry over into all their writing” (Jackie, PLC 4, 199-200).

Of the second graders at Mountain Elementary, 11% fell in the low stack with poems that still resembled stories, 51% fell in the medium stack with poems that were beginning to resemble the structure of poems and included descriptive language, and 38% fell into the high stack, with poems that included multiple elements of poetry. The team looked ahead the intended lessons before the final poetry celebration and decided to spend more time on students self-assessing using the poetry checklist. They agreed to model annotating a poem using the pieces of the checklist and then giving students time to self-assess their own poems and set goals for revision. They made notes of students who still needed specific elements of poetry from last time, made plans for small groups, and then rushed off to pick up their students from specials.

Focus group interview. The time today was more rushed due to other obligations on the campus. Because of the time constraints, we were unable to do a focus group interview of the day’s learning, but the teachers did engage in overall reflection of the unit as described above.

PLC 5

For the final phase of professional learning, the teacher participants sorted their students’ published poems based on the previously determined criteria into stacks of high, medium, and low. Of the second graders at Mountain Elementary, 6% fell in the low stack with poems that still resembled stories, 34% fell in the medium stack with poems that were beginning to resemble the structure of poems and included descriptive language, and 62% fell into the high stack, with

poems that included multiple elements of poetry. Table 4.4 includes the final data collected by teachers from their PLC across the unit.

Table 4.4

Final Writing Sort Percentages

Collection date	High	Med	Low
3/5/18	31%	18%	49%
4/3/18	29%	62%	9%
4/30/18	38%	51%	11%
5/8/18	62%	34%	6%
Difference	31%	16%	-43%

The teacher participants celebrated the incredible shift from students who were initially in the low stack to students now in medium or high. Overall, the percentage of students performing in the low category decreased by 43%, while the students performing in the medium stack increased by 16% and the students performing in the high stack increased by 31%. To the teacher participants, these percentages were more than just numbers they tracked. Each participant had student names in mind when speaking of the shifts they made. When reflecting on the student learning overall, Jackie said, “Don’t you guys just feel like they really grasp poetry?” (Jackie, PLC 5, 259) and both Lillian and Tracy nodded in agreement. Tracy added on reflecting on why students made such progress and really seemed to grasp the genre of poetry:

I think that's because of all of the discussions we've had, the purposeful discussions... through the PLC process where we've collected data and sorted it...I think that really

helped us become knowledgeable. And we pulled small groups and Macie modeled for us (Tracy, PLC 5, 263, 266).

Jackie agreed that small groups really helped her become more intentional with her teaching and move students the way she was able to move them in this unit. Lillian brought a student's writing portfolio that tracked her progress across the whole year to show not only how much she has grown across the year, but how drastically the progress she made in this unit in particular compares the rest of the growth all year.

Focus group interview. The final focus group interview asked the teachers to reflect on the unit overall, considering what worked, what they might want to adjust for next year, and how they grew as a writing teacher. Tracy immediately said, "Well I didn't know any of the elements of poetry and I didn't know how to teach it" (Tracy, Focus Group 4, 9). Jackie agreed and said that the experience of really planning the unit before it started, getting an understanding of the TEKS and sorting writing would be beneficial to add at the head of every single writing unit and even carry over into other subject areas. Tracy and Lillian both agreed and said it helped them stay more purposeful in their teaching. To add on, Jackie said, "and it made us just feel so much more knowledgeable about the whole unit" (Jackie, Focus Group 4, 23-24) to which Lillian and Tracy both agreed.

Tears began to fall. The day before Tracy was told that she would be teaching third-grade math next year and would no longer be a member of this team. Tracy, excited for a new opportunity, was also overwhelmed with the emotions of leaving such a supportive team. She said, "We were just really lucky to be together...I just love us" (Tracy, Focus Group 4, 46-47). Jackie and Lillian gave Tracy a hug, reminding her that their rooms are only down the hall. Then, they helped Tracy see that she had a really unique opportunity ahead of her where she could take

all that she has learned this year about collaboration and unit planning and share it with a new team of teachers.

Before the planning period came to a close, I redirected the conversation in efforts to quickly recap the reflection from before. The teacher participants acknowledged that the work we did ahead of the unit was really what made the biggest difference for them because it helped them prioritize and internationalize their instruction. Additionally, meeting frequently by sorting writing helped them monitor their pacing and adjust as needed. Tracy explained that the process of sorting helped her see different ways for teaching similar content. Jackie said when planning the writing unit next year, she is going to start with blank paper. They noticed that their students were more reluctant to revise their poems on the paper that already contained lines. Finally, Jackie added that she would start using small group instruction immediately next year, explaining that, “teaching writing in general...it will all change” (Jackie, Focus Group 4, 188). Then she added, “Actually, I think it will transfer to other subjects, as well, not just writing. This whole process” (Jackie, Focus Group 4, 201-202).

Lillian added on that even just looking at the numbers from the writing sorts shows how effective this process was in moving students. Jackie said, “I think because we were so supported as teachers, it showed in the students’ work” (Jackie, Focus Group 4, 207-208). Lillian agreed and said, “I think that talking about it and meeting together built our confidence in poetry...and I think that transferred over to our students and their confidence” (Lillian, Focus Group 4, 209-212).

Synthesis Across Data Sources

When synthesizing findings across data sources in relation to the research questions guiding the inquiry of this study, the following themes appeared: improvement in PKC,

development of teacher knowledge-*of*-practice, and change in reflective practice. Table 4.5 provides specific examples that highlight each of these themes in relation to the research questions about teacher language and classroom instruction.

Table 4.5

Themes of Teacher Professional Learning

Theme	Teacher Language	Classroom Instruction
Improvement in Pedagogical Content Knowledge	<p>Teacher participants used genre-specific language that showed evidence of their understanding of how to present and adapt writing instruction and poetry to a group of learners.</p> <p>EX: "...Maybe get a mentor text or mentor poem to see how other poets start their poems and see how they could use it for inspiration into theirs" (Tracy, Final Interview, 125-127).</p>	<p>Teacher participants improved in their understanding of how to present and adapt writing instruction and poetry to a group of learners, as evidenced in their mini lessons and writing conferences.</p> <p>EX: Table 4.1 and Table 4.2</p>
Development of Teacher Knowledge-of-Practice	<p>Teacher participants talked about student work in ways that influenced instructional decision making and curricular pacing.</p> <p>EX: "We are really stopping to reflect on what they have, what they do not have, and then adjusting our lesson plans to meet that" (Jackie, Final Interview, 4-5)</p>	<p>Teacher participants used their knowledge about the genre of poetry and best practices in writing instruction to make decisions and improve curricular pacing.</p> <p>EX: Figure 4.20</p>
Growth in Reflective Practice	<p>Teacher participants reflected on student progress as a result of their teaching.</p> <p>EX: "I think that talking about it and meeting together built our confidence in poetry...and I think that transferred over to our students and their confidence" (Lillian, Focus Group 4, 209-212)</p>	<p>Teacher participants' confidence increased as student work showed evidence of their teaching.</p> <p>EX: Table 4.4</p>

Improvement in Teacher Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK)

The first theme, improvement in PCK, indicated that teachers improved in their understanding of how to present and adapt writing instruction to a group of learners (Shulman, 1987). This improvement in PCK was evidenced in both teacher language and classroom instruction.

Teacher language. The way the teacher participants spoke about student writing samples (see Figures 3.1 and 3.2) in the final interview showed major improvement in PCK. Not only did the participants elaborate more about their observations of the student work, but also their language was very specific to the genre of poetry and their recommendations for instruction were strategies that are specific to teaching writing. In the initial interviews when commenting on the writer's strengths, needs, and next steps of instruction, all three participants tried to describe what students were doing poetically, but did not use genre-specific terms. For example, when analyzing the first writing sample (see Figure 3.1), Jackie was able to describe what the student was doing, saying, "They have the breaks..." (Jackie, Initial Interview, 201), but was unable to accurately name the specific poetic terms, line breaks or stanza. By the final interview, Jackie confidently responded using genre-specific language, noticing not only the line breaks but also the use of repetition and comparisons (Jackie, Final Interview, 407). Additionally, Jackie named a specific strategy she would teach the student to help them "show not tell...to really bring that feeling out" (Jackie, Final Interview, 425-426).

Improvement in PCK is especially evident in the way Tracy spoke about student writing from the initial to final interview. When Tracy originally analyzed the first writing sample (see Figure 3.1) in the initial interview, she became stumped when considering next steps for instruction. Her body language and tone of voice signaled defeat. With shrunken shoulders she

replied, “I don’t know what...what do you do...How do you...that’s what I just don’t know!” (Tracy, Initial Interview, 377-378). By the final interview, her demeanor shifted, and she replied with confidence, naming a specific strategy she would use with this student. Tracy explained that to support the student in revising the first stanza of their poem, she would use a mentor text to look at how other poets started their poems, so the student might find inspiration for how to revise the beginning of their own poem (Tracy, Final Interview, 125-127). Again, Tracy’s language about writing and her demeanor when speaking about teaching poetry writing shows a growth of understanding and knowledge of how to teach writing.

Improvement in PCK was also evident in the teacher participants’ language around writing during scheduled collaboration time where they met as a PLC. In the first PLC, the teacher participants’ struggled to name specific poetic characteristics of writing. After naming the characteristics of poetry for the teacher participants and giving specific examples of the characteristics, the teacher participants’ language became more intentional to name what their students were doing as poets. As teachers analyzed their own student writing, they effortlessly named the characteristics of poetry as both strengths and needs for their students. For example, when speaking of one of her students, Tracy said, “She’s got repetition...some rhyming...it creates a rhythm” (Tracy, PLC 2, 279-282). This comment from Tracy illuminated her understanding of not only the genre of poetry, but also the purpose behind the characteristics of poetry. Similarly, in the same PLC, Jackie noticed the need for more poetic register from her students, and quickly added, “but that could easily be done by adding some sensory details” (Jackie, PLC 2, 416). The teacher participants’ language around their student writing revealed a growth in understanding of how to teach poetry to their group of learners.

Because the teachers saw improvement in their own PCK, they became more confident. At the start of the study, the teacher participants identified poetry writing as an unfamiliar and intimidating territory, but by the end of the unit of study, their language revealed more confidence in the genre of poetry writing. In the final interview, Lillian said, “We weren't looking forward to poetry. We weren't...I'm just going to be honest. We were not looking forward to it at all, because it was so hard to understand before... now we get it and we know” (Lillian, Final Interview, 163-165). Jackie made a similar reflection in her final interview, saying, “...really having been able to dive into poetry and understand it...what the kids need to know...we've taught it better.” (Jackie, Final Interview, 47-49). Jackie continues by reflecting on the way she taught poetry writing in the past compared to this year:

I think before it was a unit that we were kind of like...we just didn't know a lot about poetry...so maybe we skimmed through it. But...with the purposeful planning and diving deeper, we're giving them the opportunity to understand it better because we do. And I can see it really transferring into their writing. (Jackie, Final Interview, 50-52).

Because the teacher participants understood the genre of poetry and specific strategies for teaching poetry writing, their confidence as teachers grew.

The teacher participants' knowledge about writing instruction, specifically as evidenced in their language about writing, revealed a found confidence for teaching. In fact, by the midpoint interviews, both Lillian and Tracy said they felt more confident as writing teachers. Lillian reflected on her personal growth and said, “When I first started, I thought I was really good. I don't know if you remember me telling you that I felt like I was meeting all my kids needs this year...I felt so confident with my conferencing” (Lillian, Midpoint Interview, 77-79). After a few moments of silent reflection, Lillian chuckled, and said, “Okay, no, that's all

changed!” (Lillian, Midpoint Interview, 82). Before this study, Lillian felt confident because she was able to meet with so many of her students during writing time. She contributed success in conferencing with the quantity of students met. After participating in this study, she reflected on the quality of the conferences: “I feel what I’m saying to them is more meaningful...Now I can really guide the instruction for the small groups better, and I feel our conferences are more meaningful” (Lillian, Midpoint Interview, 88-93). Lillian specifically contributed the time spent analyzing writing as a factor in helping strengthen her writing conferences.

The shifts in language that occurred with all three teacher participants indicate improvement in the teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987, 2013). As the teachers’ PCK grew, their language became more intentional and specific. Because the teacher participants collaborated around student writing and developed a deeper understanding of the genre of poetry they were able to develop a repertoire of specific strategies for teaching poetry writing. When reflecting on the process for professional learning throughout the study, Tracy said that without the designated times to meet as a PLC to analyze writing, they would not have had the constructive conversation about student progress (Tracy, Final Interview, 36). She gave the example that before this study, she might have mentioned that her students were not doing well, but she would not know why. Tracy went on to say, “But now I could say, ‘they’re not adding repetition or they’re not adding the sensory words’... You know, I have more language behind me” (Tracy, Final Interview, 39-40). The findings from this study indicate that teachers improve their PCK when given the opportunity to collaborate, inquire, and reflect around student work.

Classroom instruction. The classroom instruction of the teacher participants in this study also showed improvement of PCK. This was mostly evident in the pacing of the workshop

block (see Table 4.1). Graham (2008) argued for an hour of classroom instruction time devoted to writing time per day. The teachers in this study spent an average of forty-two minutes per day on writing instruction. Over the course of this study, the time devoted to writing instruction per day remained fairly consistent, but the pacing within the block shifted, thus revealing a greater intentionality of the way the time was used. Of the 42 minutes of writing instruction, the initial observation revealed that the teacher participants spent, on average, 17 minutes teaching the writing lesson, devoting 20 minutes for independent writing and 5 minutes for share. By the final observation, teachers spent only 13 minutes, on average, teaching the writing lesson, devoting 24 minutes for independent writing and 4 minutes for share. The teachers increased the amount of time allotted for students to write independently, which supports Graham et al.'s (2012) argument for the need of extended periods of time where students write and practice strategies and skills as writers. By the end of the study, the teacher participants improved their PCK around best practices for teaching writing, by dedicating some time for explicit instruction an extended time for students to write independently.

One of the most observable changes in pacing and thus, improvement in PCK, for the teacher participants was within Lillian's writing block. In the initial observation, Lillian's writing lesson was 32 minutes long, leaving a mere 13 minutes for students to write independently (Lillian, Initial Observation, p. 1-4). By the final observation, Lillian's lesson was 14 minutes long, leaving 38 minutes for students to write independently (Lillian, Final Observation, p. 1-3). The change in pacing within Lillian's writing workshop block indicates that her PCK improved over the course of this study.

Another observable pattern that emerged from the classroom observations that revealed improvement in PCK was the type of teaching that occurred between each observation. For

example, Tracy's initial writing lesson was very brief, only 6 minutes long, because she never explicitly showed the students the strategy she was teaching (Tracy, Initial Observation, p. 1). Instead, she told the students what to do and gave them a task, but never modeled the expectation or process. By the final observation, Tracy's taught a very specific strategy through modeling and demonstration and then sent the students off to try the strategy on their own (Tracy, Final Observation, p. 1). Jackie also began use strategy-based instruction during her writing workshop, but incorporated it during the writing time with small groups of students. This shift in instruction occurred after participating in the labsite on April 2nd. During the midpoint observation, Jackie taught one of her small group of students to clap the beat of their poem to check if the rhythm matched their intention (Jackie, Midpoint Observation, p. 4). Not only did Jackie not pull small groups in the previous observation, but she also did not use strategy-based instruction when conferring with writers during independent writing time. Thus, the teacher participants developed a deeper understanding of best practices for teaching writing, revealing an improvement in PCK.

The method of providing feedback, specifically in the form of conferring with writers, was another pattern that emerged from the classroom observations. A summary of the types of writing conferences for each teacher participant can be found in Table 4.2. In the initial observations, most writing conferences were either to redirect undesired behaviors, reinforce desired behaviors, or troubleshoot misconceptions. By the final observation, the type of writing conferences occurring showed evidence from the professional learning that occurred. For example, instead of just meeting with students one-on-one, the teacher participants began meeting with small groups of students that shared similar goals. Additionally, the type of instruction that occurred within the writing conference shifted towards teaching specific

strategies, rather than redirecting, reinforcing, or troubleshooting. Teachers became more intentional in the feedback they provided to students through both one-on-one and small group conferences.

In the initial observations, conferring was used as a classroom management tool to ensure productivity of students. The teacher participants mostly redirected undesired behavior, positively reinforced desired writing behavior, or troubleshooted misconceptions from the mini lesson (see Table 4.2). By the end of the study, the teacher participants were all using writing conferences to teach specific strategies based on what the writer needed next to grow. Additionally, the content of the writing conferences focused on various elements of writing, including genre, craft, and conventions. For example, in one of the conferences during Tracy's final observation, she said, "How might you revise your poem to add in repetition?" (Tracy, Final Observation, p. 3). The way Tracy guided the student to make decisions about his writing throughout this conferences illuminated her understanding of author's craft, the genre of poetry, the writing process, and the structure of a conference.

This shift in teaching was observed during the midpoint and final observations, which occurred after the in-class practice of conferring during the labsite. By providing job-embedded professional learning experiences that occurred within the school day and with students, the teacher participants were able to learn and apply new strategies with the feedback and support of their colleagues and coach. This experience directly helped to improve the teacher participants' PCK as observed in their midpoint and final observations.

Development of teacher Knowledge-of-Practice

The second theme, development of teacher knowledge-of-practice, revealed that teachers collaboratively used their knowledge to make instructional decisions and improve the writing

curriculum (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). This theme was evidenced in both teacher language and classroom instruction.

Teacher language. The way the teacher participants spoke about their decision-making process while planning revealed development of teacher knowledge-*of-practice*. In the initial interviews, all teacher participants credited Jackie for doing the planning of writing for the team. Before this study, Jackie independently studied the district curricular documents, read the instructional resources, made decisions about pacing and scoping of lessons, and entered daily lesson plans into a shared document for the team. As a part of the study, teacher participants gathered together during the second PLC to collaboratively plan the poetry unit. While Jackie still entered the plans into the shared document, the team provided feedback on the pacing of the lessons. After gaining a better understanding of the grade-level standard expectations, the team decided to stretch a few lessons over several days so that students had adequate time to learn how to see the world with poet's eyes and use line breaks effectively (Team, PLC 2, 472-534). Even early into the study, the team began to develop their knowledge-*of-practice* by collaboratively making informed decisions regarding the pacing of the curriculum.

The teacher participants reflected on their planning process in the midpoint interviews. Jackie said, "Honestly, I think because we've been so much more purposeful in planning, I feel like I have a better understanding of the unit as a whole" (Jackie, Midpoint Interview, 203-204). Lillian made a similar reflection on her planning process, commenting on how long she spent reading the lessons in the *Units of Study* (Calkins, 2013) resource, explaining:

Last year it took me forever to read through all the Lucy lessons! So, getting the main teaching point and then just choosing little bits of pieces is really helping... And I feel like we're getting what we need from it like that (Lillian, Midpoint Interview, 326-328).

The teacher participants began making decisions in their planning process that, at times, deviated from the suggested pacing and scoping of the instructional resource. The teacher participants' decisions, being grounded in their understanding of the TEKS and progress of their students, enhanced the curriculum, illuminating their development of *knowledge-of-practice*.

Not only did the teacher participants adjust their plans in response to student work, but they collaborated around this planning process. In the final interview, Jackie said, "We are really stopping to reflect on what they have, what they do not have, and then adjusting our lesson plans to meet that" (Jackie, Final Interview, 4-5). Tracy explained, "If we hadn't have met, I would have just been going on, and my kids would have struggled" (Tracy, Final Interview, 27-28). Similarly, Lillian said, "The time together...looking things over and just talking about our students. I think that helps build confidence...and then we know we're all on the same page" (Lillian, Final Interview, 128-134). The collaborative planning process around student work contributed to the development of the teacher participants' *knowledge-of-practice*.

The teacher participants collaboratively made decisions regarding the pacing of the unit, while also considering opportunities for differentiation within their writing classroom. In the midpoint interview, Jackie emphasized that her planning process now included ways to narrow down and prioritize what a small group of students might need during conferences on top of what the whole group might need in a mini lesson (Jackie, Midpoint Interview, 284-285). Lillian mimicked Jackie's comment in her midpoint interview, stating, "I can now analyze their writing, knowing how to separate it...and being able to choose what is most important to go from here. Now I can really guide their instruction for the small groups" (Lillian, Midpoint Interview, 90-93). In the same way, Tracy, reported that now she was more intentional in who she confers with, explaining, "I am not just going around to random kids anymore!" (Tracy, Midpoint

Interview, 155). The teachers began making intentional instructional decisions about differentiation in their writing workshop as a result of collaborating around student work as a professional learning community, thus, developing their *knowledge-of-practice*.

Another way the teacher participants' language demonstrated development of their *knowledge-of-practice* was the way they spoke in their final focus group interview. Before the end of the study, the team learned that Tracy was being moved to teach a different grade level the following school year. Much of the final focus group involved Tracy verbalizing her angst and fears for what the next school year would hold, specifically nervous about the new team dynamics. Without hesitation, Jackie reassured Tracy that her strengths as a team member would transfer with her the following year. Referring to the process the team went throughout the study, Jackie said, "...just think of the opportunity to now spread this throughout the school" (Jackie, Focus Group 4, 78). The teacher participants began to see themselves as school leaders as they felt the obligation to share their learning and influence the rest of the school. This expanded view of practice demonstrates the teacher participants development in *knowledge-of-practice* as evidenced in their language.

Classroom instruction. From the classroom observations over the course of this study, the teacher participants began using their knowledge of writing instruction to make decisions about their work with students, revealing development in their *knowledge-of-practice*. This was mostly evident in the way teachers used information gathered from the analysis of student work to inform their teaching. For example, during Tracy's midpoint observation, she carried around documentation that broke students into specific groups with elements of poetry as the focus, such as repetition, precise words, or line breaks (Tracy, Midpoint Observation, p. 2-3). After meeting the students, Tracy made anecdotal notes with goals for the next conference. This example

reveals how Tracy adjusted her teaching in response to the collaborative work of analyzing student writing with her team. Similarly, both Jackie and Lillian pulled small groups during the midpoint observation with specific lessons targeted toward their needs based on the previous PLC.

The teacher participants adjusted the way they used knowledge of student work in the final observations. Instead of pulling small groups, the teacher participants mostly worked with students one-on-one to prepare for publication. In each classroom observation, it was evident that the teacher participants' knew their students as writers. During the first writing conference of Tracy's final observation, she sat next to a student and said, "I want you to remember what we talked about yesterday" (Tracy, Final Observation, p. 2). Tracy proceeded to work with the student on using blank paper to experiment with different line break choices, building off the conference from the previous day. In that final observation, Tracy was able to use not only the information collected and analyzed during a PLC, but also from observations and anecdotal notes during classroom instruction. She ended each conference by asking students to name their next step (Tracy, Final Observation, p. 2-3), jotting the information down in her anecdotal records to use for another day's instruction.

Jackie had a similar process of conferring with writers during her final observation. Instead of pulling small groups, Jackie moved between her table groups helping students self-assess using the poetry checklist (Jackie, Final Observation, p. 3-4). Most often, Jackie asked reflective questions of the students, pushing them to analyze their own progress (Jackie, Final Observation, p. 3-4). It was clear that Jackie internalized her students' progress in poetry writing and intended to support students in also internalizing their progress. The way the teacher

participants' conferred with their writers during the final observations illuminated development in their knowledge-*of*-practice.

Not only did the teacher participants sort student work to determine strengths and needs, but they used the information to make instructional decisions for differentiation, revealing development of their knowledge-*of*-practice. In this study, teachers collaborated around a common problem-*of*-practice, striving for a deeper understanding of how to teach poetry writing. They engaged in systematic inquiry by collecting, analyzing, and interpreting student writing so they could make knowledgeable instructional decisions and influence their curricular pacing. They also observed colleagues and reflected on their own teaching to transform their classroom practice. The findings from this study indicate that teachers' knowledge-*of*-practice increases when given the opportunity to collaborate, inquire, and reflect.

Change in Reflective Practice.

Finally, the last theme, change in reflective practice, illuminated the shift in reflection teachers made as they began to reflect on their teaching through the lens of their students' learning.

Teacher language. The way the teacher participants spoke when reflecting on their practice shifted across the course of this study. In the initial interviews, the teacher participants mostly spoke about their teaching practice when asked a reflective question, specifically emphasizing their attitude towards teaching the subject. For example, in the initial interview, Jackie said, "I'm comfortable with teaching writing" (Jackie, Initial Interview, 57). In the same way, Lillian explained, "I feel good about teaching writing because that was my favorite subject when I was in school (Lillian, Initial Interview, 126). In contrast to the positive comments but aligned in reflections on attitude toward teaching writing, Tracy simply said, "I struggle" (Tracy,

Initial Interview, 155). Before starting this study, the teacher's reflections on their practice reflected their comfort level and attitude toward teaching writing.

By the midpoint interview, the teacher reflections about teaching writing reflected specific instructional components of teaching writing. For example, Jackie said, "Well definitely being more comfortable has shortened my mini-lessons" (Jackie, Midpoint Interview, 38-39). Thus, Jackie credited her comfort teaching the subject with more focused writing lessons. Lillian reflected back to her original comment in the initial interview and said, "When I first started, I thought I was good....Ok, no that's changed!" (Lillian, Midpoint Interview, 77-78). Lillian proceeded to explain that she thought she was good at conferring before because she met with so many of her students. However, now she felt like what she was saying to them was more meaningful (Lillian, Midpoint Interview, 89). Lillian's reflection transitioned from confidence as a whole to a specific element of her teaching that she felt strongly about. One of the biggest transformations in reflective practice is the dramatic shift in attitude with Tracy as she announced, "I am more confident!" (Tracy, Midpoint Interview, 18). Tracy explained that now that she is confident in knowing what to teach, she has an easier time explaining a new strategy to her students during her mini lesson or conferring work (Tracy, Midpoint Interview, 137-140).

In the final interview, the teacher's reflections began to shift away from themselves and on to their students. In Jackie's final interview, she described the transference occurring into her students' writing as a result of her deepened understanding of poetry writing (Jackie, Final Interview, 50-52). Lillian mimicked this reflection in her own interview, stating, "I feel like I'm reaching more now than I was before...and my confidence is being pushed over to them" (Lillian, Final Interview, 70-87). Both Jackie and Lillian's reflection on their teaching shifted

from themselves to their students, noticing how their students were responding to their growth as teachers.

In Jackie's final interview, she reflected on the entire process of professional learning throughout the course of the study and how it has affected her as a writing teacher. She explained that she took a subject that she felt comfortable teaching and got even better (Jackie, Final Interview, 380-382). She said, "It gives me goosebumps because I always felt comfortable as a writing teacher, and now...there's just so much more I can do" (Jackie, Final Interview, 385-386). This final reflection from Jackie is evidence that she sees reflection as a necessary part of teaching and becoming an even better teacher.

Evidence of teacher reflections were also recorded from the conversations in the PLC meetings where teachers analyzed student work. At the start of the study, the teachers were hesitant that their students would be able to produce the same kind of work as shown as examples in their curriculum. In fact, Jackie worried that her students would not have rich experiences to draw on to generate ideas for writing poetry (Jackie, Focus Group 1, 144-147). However, over the course of the study, the teacher participants began to comment on the surprising changes in their students work. During the third PLC meeting with the teacher participants, Jackie said, "I love that our typically lower group are really excelling in this! This is going to give them so much confidence" (Jackie, PLC 3, 391-392). The other participants nodded in agreement, noticing that their students how typically struggle were outperforming the students who are typically higher achieving.

In the final PLC, Jackie reiterated this when she pulled a student's piece of writing from Lillian's stack of highs and said, "This sweet baby, though, is also a very low reader, so it's amazing what she is doing through that writing" (Jackie, PLC 5, 288-289). Tracy responded that

poetry has given that student confidence (Tracy, PLC 5, 291) and Lillian explained that poetry has allowed her to express herself in ways that no other genre has (Lillian, PLC 5, 293). The team's reflection demonstrated a focus on student growth as a result of their learning. Additionally, the team was able to talk about the students as a collective whole, shifting away from a narrowed lens of a single classroom to a shared responsibility for all students in the grade level.

Throughout the study, Tracy's language in reflecting on her practice mostly showed evidence of increased teacher attitude toward writing. At the start of the study, Tracy had very little confidence in her abilities for teaching writing due to prior negative experiences and misunderstandings (Tracy, Initial Interview, 200-242). Unlike the other participants, Tracy did not acknowledge student growth while reflecting on her teaching, but did show evidence of change in teacher attitude toward writing. In her final interview, she joyfully proclaimed, "I just enjoy it so much more now!" (Tracy, Final Interview, 8). In a previous PLC, Tracy also mentioned a newfound love for teaching writing as she reflected on one of her students' comments during her writing workshop block that day. She explained that during the share time, one of her more melancholy students stood up and announced, "This is the best day ever!" (Tracy, PLC 3, 186-187). In response, Tracy said, "I really love teaching writing, like I actually love writing today!" (Tracy, PLC 3, 187-188).

The teacher participants shifted in the way they reflected about their own practices over the course of this study. At the start of this study, two of the three participants felt comfortable teaching writing. By the end of this study, all three participants felt confident teaching writing, and two of those participants noticed changes in their students as a result of their professional

learning around writing. The teacher participants' reflections demonstrated changes in their reflective practice.

Classroom instruction. The change in teacher reflective practice as evidenced in their classroom instruction occurred in the way teachers collaborated with an instructional coach and the growth in student work over time.

One way the teacher participants demonstrated growth in their reflective practice was in the way they used the support of the instructional coach across the study. At the start of this study, all three teacher participants had misunderstandings about the role of an instructional coach. In fact, Jackie and Lillian asked who served in that role on their campus (Jackie, Initial Interview, 34; Lillian, Initial Interview, 58-59). Furthermore, they each had unusual descriptions of past encounters with instructional coaches, indicating that they saw a coach as someone who works with new or inexperienced teachers (Jackie, Initial Interview, 37; Lillian, Initial Interview, 64). Tracy mentioned that she used to work with the math coach on her campus, but said, "she pushed me out because she is comfortable with me being a math teacher" (Tracy, Initial Interview, 73-74). In regard to that same math coach, Lillian mentioned that the coach would just come in and tell her if she was doing teaching something incorrectly (Lillian, Initial Interview, 64-70). The teacher participants did not speak of these experiences negatively, but in a matter-of-fact manner as if that was the common practice for coaches.

In the middle of the study, the teachers shifted in their understanding of the role of an instructional coach. Jackie mentioned that the knowledge of a coach helped clarify misunderstandings during the planning process (Jackie, Midpoint Interview, 131-140) and the feedback given during teaching helped tweak her instruction (Jackie, Midpoint Interview, 149-156). Lillian mentioned that having a coach provide little pieces of advice and ask reflective

questions, helped her, “be more reflective and think about what’s best for my kids” (Lillian, Midpoint Interview, 178-179). In her typical, straightforward manner, Tracy declared, “When I work with you, I don’t feel stupid!” (Tracy, Midpoint Interview, 90-91). By the middle of the study, the teacher participants acknowledged the coach as a positive force that helped transform their practice and reflection on their practice. Additionally, all three participants requested individual coaching support to further their learning.

Not only did the teachers develop more of an understanding of the role of a coach across the course of the study, but, over time, they began seeing the coach as a contributing member of the team. Jackie said, “It’s like you’re one of us. You’re part of our team now!” (Jackie, Final Interview, 245-246). This was mostly evident in the increased comfort level over time. As I sat down with the teacher participants during scheduled PLC meetings, there was more equilibrium in speakers. In fact, the amount that I spoke decreased by the fourth PLC. The dynamics of our group began to feel more natural and comfortable (Reflexive Journal, April 30th, p. 2). In our final meeting together, the teachers even became saddened by the end of the study, acknowledging how easy it is to work together (Team, PLC 5, 237-245). Thus, the teachers growth in reflective practice was evidenced in the way they collaborated with an instructional coach.

The amount of student growth as a result of this study was the final way that teachers showed growth in their reflective practice. Prior to this study, the teachers had never analyzed student writing or tracked growth across a unit of study. When looking at student writing in the fourth PLC, Lillian exclaimed, “They’ve grown so much!” (Lillian, PLC 4, 190). Seeing the shifts in student work across each PLC lifted the spirits of the teacher participants and helped them identify which practices resulted in the largest gains. In fact, right after the teacher

participants began pulling small groups, they saw a large decrease in the students below grade level (see Table 4.4). In the final PLC after seeing the final percentages (see Table 4.4), Jackie said, “Wow we saw huge gains as a team in just a short amount of time!” (Jackie, PLC 5, 237). Tracy replied, “That’s just amazing!” (Tracy, PLC 5, 239). Later, Jackie said, “I do think the small groups helped a lot” (Jackie, PLC 5, 267), contributing that shift in practice to larger student gains. The process of collaboratively analyzing student writing helped the teacher participants draw conclusions about their own practice, showing overall growth in their reflective practice over time.

Summary

This chapter discussed the results of the data analysis that was completed to determine writing teacher professional learning as evidenced in both language and practice. First, I described the findings from the individual interviews for each teacher participant; first unfolding their experiences professionally, that has shaped each of them as writing teachers. Then, I presented the findings from the teacher participants’ individual responses for each interview question across the study as it related to their experience with PLCs, abilities teaching writing, experience with an instruction coach, planning process for writing, and analysis of student writing. Since this was a collective case study, I synthesized the findings from the individual interviews to describe patterns across the grade-level team. Next, I provided rich, thick descriptions of each classroom observation for the three teacher participants throughout the study, also synthesizing the findings to describe patterns across the grade-level team. Then, I explained the process for professional learning throughout this unit of study and the findings from the teacher participants as evidenced in their participation in the experiences and the responses during the focus group interviews. Finally, I presented findings as synthesized across

data sources and organized by research question. Thus, teacher professional learning as evidenced by their language and classroom instruction revealed the following themes: improvement in pedagogical content knowledge, development in knowledge-*of*-practice, and growth in reflective practice. I discuss these themes further in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V:

DISCUSSION

Professional development is essential for teachers to develop understanding of the content they teach (McQuitty, 2012). Many teachers feel inadequately prepared to teach writing (Cutler & Graham, 2008), which leaves an even greater demand on the need for professional development of writing teachers. Rather than providing isolated one-shot workshops, professional development opportunities should be sustained over time, rooted in teacher practice, and actively involve teachers in the construction of their own learning (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Borko & Putnam, 1995; Cohen & Hill, 1998; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Little, 1993; Wei et al., 2009). Professional learning communities are one structure that provides high quality professional development because the framework supports teacher collaboration around a common problem of practice and situates teacher learning in student work and reflection on their practice (DuFour et al., 2016; Fullan, 1991; Hargreaves, 1994; Little, 1993).

This research study was designed with the characteristics of effective professional learning in mind. The purpose of this study was to document the language and classroom practice of teachers when professional learning is related to writing process and situated in a PLC framework. Building on the ideas that knowledge is actively constructed through social interactions (Vygotsky, 1978), that there is a fluid process between thought and language (Vygotsky, 1986), and the learning that occurs is situated within the context of the individual (Greeno, 1998; Putnam & Borko, 2000), this study explored how teachers' collaboration, dialogue, and inquiry influenced their language and practice for teaching writing. Guiding my inquiry were the following research questions:

1. How is professional learning around writing process evidenced in teachers' language?
2. How is professional learning around writing process evidenced in teachers' classroom instruction?

Drawing on the work of Stake (1995), I used collective case study methods to explore these research questions about teacher language and practice. This collective case study looked at the phenomena of teacher professional learning within the boundaries of a second-grade team. The case was comprised of three individuals, ranging in teaching experience and comfort with writing instruction and the PLC framework. The study took place over three months, occurring within a poetry writing unit of study. After agreeing to participate in the study, the teacher participants determined that the poetry writing unit was one they were not comfortable teaching because of their unfamiliarity with poetry. So, this study was crafted and designed with the teachers around their professional goals and using what the literature has identified as high-quality professional development. Specifically, I ensured that the professional learning was cohesive across the study, rooted in student work, and actively involved the teachers in constructing their own learning. Additionally, the campus already had a collaborative system in place for regular times to meet in a PLC, so this study did not require any extra time on the participants.

As the researcher, I served as the interpreter in the field, collecting audio recordings of both PLC meetings and professional learning opportunities, observations of classroom instruction, and both individual and focus group interviews. I also collected artifacts relevant to the professional learning that occurred and maintained a reflexive journal to separate my observations from interpretations. The data analysis process was ongoing and recursive. When analyzing the data, I initially used deductive coding with a priori codes determined from the

literature review. Then, when I began noticing pieces that were not in the original codes, I used inductive coding, adding to the analytic word already completed. From there, I combined similar codes into larger categories. I immediately began noticing overarching themes and theorizing how teacher professional learning around writing was evidenced in both their language and practice.

In this chapter, I summarize the findings from this study and discuss their significance as related the relevant literature. Then, I discuss possible implications about professional learning resulting from this study. Finally, I conclude with final thoughts and reflections.

Summary and Significance of the Findings

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) said, “It has been more or less assumed that teachers who *know* more teach better” (p. 248). In this section I summarize the findings from this study, presenting information that not only supports that idea that teachers who know more teach better, but also conceptualizing what that knowledge and practice looks like in the context of a writing classroom.

Research Question One

The first research question of this study stated: How is professional learning around writing process evidenced in teachers’ language? To answer this research question, I collected data from individual and focus group interview, along with transcripts and field notes each time the teacher participants meet in a PLC. The findings indicate that professional learning around writing process as demonstrated in teacher’s language shows evidence of improvement in pedagogical content knowledge, development of knowledge-*of*-practice, and growth in reflective practice. Below, I summarize the findings as they relate to those overarching themes.

Improvement in pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). The teacher participants' language showed evidence of improvement in PCK in the way they spoke about student writing. Borko and Putnam (1995) explained, "strong pedagogical content knowledge is characterized by extensive repertoire of powerful representations and the ability to adapt these representations in multiple ways in order to meet specific goals for specific sets of learners" (p. 48-49). Over the course of the study, the teacher participants' language demonstrated a growing repertoire of instructional strategies as their language became more specific to the genre of poetry writing and they made recommendations for instruction that were specific to the teaching of writing.

When commenting on student writing at the start of the study, the teacher participants did not use genre-specific terminology and were unsure of what to do next in regard to instructional implications for the writer. In fact, all three participants said "I don't know" frequently when responding to my questions about what they noticed about student writing in the initial interviews. However, over the course of the study, the teachers' language demonstrated an understanding of the content of poetry writing as they began using genre-specific vocabulary to describe what the writers were doing. This was first evident in the second PLC meeting when the teacher participants named genre-specific characteristics of their own students' writing and discussed instructional strategies, such as the use of mentor texts that would best support those writers. In the final interviews, the way the teacher participants spoke about the student writing samples dramatically shifted as the participants answered confidently and demonstrated their understanding of how to teach poetry writing to young children.

Borko and Putnam (1995) said, "teachers with well-developed pedagogical content knowledge understand how students typically learn a particular subject" (p. 49). By analyzing student work throughout a unit of study, the participants engaged in job-embedded professional

learning, which allowed them to develop an understanding of how students typically learn how to write poetry. Ball and Cohen (1999) contended that grounding professional learning in artifacts allows the conversation between educators to become more concrete and lead to “serious intellectual work” (p. 18). Additionally, it is not merely the practice of analyzing student artifacts that leads to improved practice, but the dialogue and conversation between educators that leads to improved practice (Ball & Cohen, 1999). By analyzing student work with a group of colleagues, the teacher participants experienced diverse perspectives and examined their own practice in new ways. In fact, the teachers began to develop an understanding of how what students need to know about poetry writing and what problems to anticipate based on their knowledge of teaching that genre. This type of PCK is consistent with Grossman’s (1990) explanation of a component of PCK that involves knowledge of students’ understandings and potential misunderstandings. The process of analyzing student writing, especially the conversation around the student writing, positively influenced the teachers’ PCK.

Development of teacher knowledge-of-practice. The teacher participants’ language showed evidence of development in their knowledge-of-practice in the way they made decisions throughout the planning process. The learning that occurred is consistent with Cochran-Smith and Lytle’s (1999) description of knowledge-of-practice in that teachers developed knowledge that was unknown to an outside expert. In fact, the decisions the teachers made about throughout the planning process generated from within and did not show a distinction between novice and expert teacher, because all held equal value within the community.

At the start of this study, the teacher participants’ did not individually plan for writing instruction but used the plans written by Jackie. They collaborated weekly around the plans, but that mostly involved Jackie explaining what they should do the following week during writing.

In fact, the teacher participants rarely adjusted their plans as a result of collaboration and never discussed opportunities for small group instruction. While they gave a pre-assessment for writing, they never analyzed the writing as a group to inform their future instruction. Finally, the teacher participants, in many ways, felt bound to their curricular resource, asking permission to deviate to meet the needs of their students or better align to the state standards. In both the midpoint and final interviews, the teacher participants acknowledged the collaborative planning of the unit as an essential element of their understanding. They all explained how their instruction had become even more purposeful because their knowledge was grounded and they were paying such close attention to their students' progress. The teacher participants began collaboratively making decisions regarding the pacing of the unit, while also considering opportunities for differentiation, using their knowledge of poetry writing to enhance the curriculum.

Additionally, the participants agreed that this process would be carried into the following school year across the different subjects they teach. In the final focus group, the teacher participants discussed possible ways to carry this process into other subject areas and grade levels, possibly influencing teachers in the school vertically. Jackie said, "I know I feel like we're still going to come to you, but just think of the opportunity to now spread this throughout the school" (Jackie, Focus Group 4, 77-78). In this way, the teacher participants had a transformation in their understanding of practice, extending from within their classroom to influence their school building (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). The teacher participants felt the obligation to share their learning and influence the rest of the school, which demonstrates their development in *knowledge-of-practice* as evidenced in their language.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) argued that “teachers learn by challenging their assumptions, identifying salient issues of practice, posing problems, studying their own students, classrooms, and schools, constructing and reconstructing curriculum, and taking on roles of leadership” (p. 278). Additionally, this work is only possible in collaborative groups where teachers struggle alongside each other to construct deeper meaning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Because the community that the teacher participants created around a problem-of-practice, all members were learners and collectively inquired into the complexities of teaching poetry writing. This process positively influenced the teacher participants’ development in *knowledge-of-practice*.

Growth in reflective practice. The teacher participants’ language showed evidence of growth in reflective practice in the way their reflections on their teaching ability shifted across the course of the study. Lieberman and Miller (2008) explain that when teachers engage in reflective practice that is situated both in-action and on-action, the learning becomes “reciprocal, practical, active, and open to revision” (p. 21). As evidenced in their language, the teacher participants in this study reflected in a way that showed knowledge that transferred across domains and contexts.

At the start of the study, the teacher participants mostly reflected on their own practice, emphasizing their comfort level, attitude towards, or feeling about teaching the subject. By the midpoint observations, the teachers began naming specific elements of writing where they felt more confident. The reflections made by the teacher participants were consistent with Dewey’s (1933, 1964) argument that practitioners should be reflective problem-solvers. In fact, the teacher participants were engaging in deep reflection since they were identifying problems-of-practice, determining possible solutions, and analyzing the results. At the midpoint of the study,

the teachers were moving from reflecting-on-action to reflecting-in-action (Schön, 1983). For example, up until the midpoint interviews, the teachers mostly talked about their teaching practice outside of their classroom. However, because of the nature of the lab site experience, the teachers began reflecting-in-action as they engaged in professional learning experiences within the context of the classroom. By the final interview, the teachers reflected on their student learning as a result of their teaching, moving beyond their own personal feelings to the products of their students. Thus, the teacher participants' language showed evidence of growth in reflective practice.

Research Question Two

The first research question of this study stated: How is professional learning around writing process evidenced in teachers' classroom instruction? To answer this research question, I collected data from classroom observations, transcripts and field notes from each time the team met in a Professional Learning Community (PLC). The findings indicate that professional learning around writing process as demonstrated in teacher classroom practice shows evidence of improvement in pedagogical content knowledge, development of knowledge-*of*-practice, and growth in reflective practice. Below, I summarize the findings as they relate to those overarching themes.

Improvement in pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). Shulman (1987) argued that teachers need strong PCK to be effective teachers. Over the course of this study, it was evident in teacher practice that their PCK began to improve by the way they structured their writing workshop and the type of instruction that occurred during writing workshop. Over the course of the study, the teacher participants remained fairly consistent with the time devoted to teaching writing each day, however the pacing within their writing workshop block shifted with each

observation. The summary of the pacing of the writing workshop block can be seen in Table 4.1. On average, the teacher participants spent forty-two minutes teaching writing workshop each day, but the time devoted to independent writing increased from seventeen minutes to twenty-four minutes. The teacher participants allotted more time for students to write independently, which supports Graham et al.'s (2012) argument for the need of extended periods of time where students write and practice strategies and skills as writers

The type of instruction that occurred within each observation of writing workshop across the participants also revealed improvement in their PCK. In the initial observations, the teacher participants mostly told students what to do as writers, but rarely modeled or demonstrated the strategy. Thus, students were told what to do but not how to do it. By the end of the study, the teacher participants were using strategy-based instruction by explicitly modeling strategies during their mini lesson and writing conferences. This is consistent with Grossman's (1990) description of a component of PCK, where a teacher shows knowledge of instructional strategies and representations for teaching a subject. In addition, the teachers in this study not only knew the instructional strategies but were able to adapt them in multiple ways for different learners. Thus, the teacher participants' classroom instruction showed evidence of improvement in their PCK.

Development of teacher knowledge-of-practice. The teacher participants' classroom instruction showed evidence of development in their knowledge-of-practice in the way they opened their classrooms for inquiry to learn more about their practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). The teacher participants used their knowledge of writing instruction to make decisions about their work with students, differentiation, and curricular pacing.

At the start of the unit, the teacher participants did not have reasons for which students they conferred with, but by the midpoint observation, they carried documentation with their previous analysis of their students' work and used it to make choices about which students they conferred with and what strategies they needed to teach. The teacher participants investigated their own assumptions about conferring with writers and applied their understanding of poetry writing to make instructional decisions during writing workshop. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) argued that teacher learning begins "with identifying and critiquing one's own experiences, assumptions, and beliefs" (p. 279). Thus, because the teacher participants began investigating their own assumptions and challenging their beliefs about teaching writing, they demonstrated development in their *knowledge-of-practice*.

The goal of communities that work to develop their *knowledge-of-practice* do not engage in inquiry to produce findings, but to ultimately alter their practice and bring about fundamental change (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Throughout the study, the teacher participants engaged in inquiry to deepen their own understanding of teaching writing. As a result, they adjusted the pacing of the unit, spending more time on certain lessons that were better aligned to their students' needs. Instead of feeling tied to the suggested pacing of the curriculum, the teacher participants used their knowledge of the standards and their students to enhance the curriculum. Additionally, the team requested more times to meet and collaborate, engaging in oral inquiry around their *problem-of-practice* and, in turn, developing their *knowledge-of-practice*. The teacher participants' classroom instruction showed evidence of development in their *knowledge-of-practice* in the way they opened their classrooms for inquiry and worked as a collective unit to deepen their understanding of poetry writing.

Growth in reflective practice. The teacher participants' classroom instruction showed evidence of growth in reflective practice in the way they reflected both in and on action (Schön, 1983). Throughout the study, the teacher participants collaborated with an instructional coach around student work, both reflecting outside of the context of their classroom using student work and inside of the classroom when working with students. In the beginning of the study, none of the participants seemed to clearly understand the role of an instructional coach, but by the end of the study, the participants viewed contributed the partnership with the instructional coach as a reason for their own deeper reflection.

The teacher participants in this study frequently named the partnership with a coach as a vital component to their learning. The coaching that occurred throughout this study was what Knight (2018) referred to as “deep coaching” (p. 16). When engaging in deep coaching, teachers are guided through a reflective process where they challenge their own assumptions and experience significant improvement as a result (Knight, 2018). Because the coaching was situated as a partnership, teachers were the ultimate decision-makers while the coach created rich opportunities for job-embedded learning.

The amount of student growth throughout the poetry writing unit was also a way the teachers showed growth in their reflective practice. Prior to this study, the teacher participants had never tracked student progress in writing. By the end of the study, the students grew tremendously (see Table 4.4) and the teacher participants were able to see direct impact of their teaching on student learning. The teacher participants even analyzed the data more frequently in order to drive their instruction and deepen student learning. Dewey (1933, 1964) urged practitioners to be reflective problem-solvers, identifying problems-of-practice, determining

possible solutions, and analyzing the results. The teachers in this study were more self-driven in their reflective practices as they saw changes in their students.

Discussion

This study was grounded in the situative perspective of learning (Greeno, 1997, 1998), which takes into consideration context, activity, and culture on the construction meaning. How the learning activity is situated determines type of learning that occurs (Greeno, 1998). Lieberman & Miller (2014) define professional learning as “steady, intellectual work that promotes meaningful engagement with ideas and colleagues over time” (p. 9). The design of the process for professional learning for this study was situated within a single unit of study that solely related to teaching poetry writing. These findings are consistent with Wei et al.’s (2009) discovery that when professional development is sustained over time, teachers have more opportunities to apply their learning in their practice and positively influence student learning. As a result of this study, several conclusions can be drawn about teacher professional learning as situated within a PLC framework, leading to new understandings about a cohesive process for teacher learning.

A Process for Professional Learning

This study took place on a campus that used DuFour et al.’s (2016) model of Professional Learning Communities (PLC). In fact, two of the three participants attended the PLC conference hosted by Solution Tree. The three big ideas that drive DuFour et al.’s model of PLC include a focus on learning, a collaborative culture and collective responsibility, and a results orientation. DuFour et al. define PLC is an “ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve” (p. 10). Additionally, they contend that a PLC “operates under the assumption that

they key to improved learning for students is continuous job-embedded learning for educators” (DuFour et al., 2016, p. 10). DuFour et al. argue for a systematic process that puts students at the heart of all stakeholders and teachers at the center of collaboration.

This study found that several elements of DuFour et al.’s PLC process positively influenced teacher professional learning. DuFour et al. (2016) stress the importance of dedicating time for collaboration. Having time during the school day dedicated to collaboration made it possible for us to meet so frequently to talk about student progress and teacher practice. The teachers in this study not only have a common planning time each day, but they were also gifted extended blocks of time dedicated to collaboration every couple of weeks where we came together to analyze student writing. Another element from DuFour et al.’s PLC process was using the four guiding questions to drive the collaboration time. All of the PLC agendas were designed around one or more of the guiding questions that DuFour, et al. (2016) argue should drive the work of the PLC. Using the four guiding questions helped the team focus on the “right work” (DuFour, et al., 2016, 59). In the midpoint interview, the teacher participants’ specifically named the time spent ahead of the unit on question one as most beneficial to their learning.

DuFour et al. (2016) stress:

The process of collaboration is specifically designed to impact educator practice in ways that lead to better results...so they will possess and utilize an expanded repertoire of skills, strategies, materials, assessments, and ideas in order to impact student achievement in a more positive way. (p. 67)

This study also found that by focusing on the right work, a teacher’s capacity for best practice increased, which resulted in higher student achievement.

The first guiding question asks, “What is it we want our students to know?” (DuFour et al., 2016, p. 59). In an attempt to answer this question, we were able to identify the essential knowledge of poetry writing that students would acquire as a result of learning throughout the unit of study. DuFour et al. (2016) explain that spending time collaborating and studying state and district standards “promotes clarity” (p. 124). The teachers in this study mimicked that same finding as they stated their teaching became more purposeful as a result of studying the standards and unit before teaching. Also, DuFour et al. (2016) argue that collaborating and studying the state and district standards “creates ownership of the curriculum among those who are called to teach it” (p. 124). This is also consistent with the findings from this study as teachers became more interested and engaged in the content and frequently adjusted the curriculum to suit their students’ needs.

Additionally, the teacher participants named the act of meeting regularly to analyze student writing to gather evidence of student learning across the unit of study as beneficial to their learning. DuFour et al.’s second guiding question, “How will we know if each student has learned it?” (p. 59) drove this work. DuFour et al. (2016) explained that formative assessment occur in an ongoing process where teachers continually check for student understanding to determine where to go next. Additionally, DuFour et al. (2016) argue for protocols to guide teachers in discussing formative assessment data to support teachers in reflecting on what they see in the student work, the possible implications, and next steps for instruction. This protocol is very consistent with how the agendas were designed for each PLC during this study where teachers came together to analyze student work. Not only did we analyze writing together, but we also created a checklist with specific checkpoints of what we were looking for in the student writing. DuFour et al. (2016) argues that creating a common assessment, such as the poetry

checklist, “informs the practice of individual teachers...and builds a team’s capacity to achieve its goals” (p. 145). This is consistent with the findings from this study. Not only did individual teachers grow in their teaching of writing, but the team’s collective analysis of writing strengthened the pacing of the unit and the instructional strategies used to teach poetry writing.

Finally, the last two guiding questions, “How will we respond when some students do not learn it?” and “How will we extend the learning for students who have demonstrated proficiency?” (DuFour, et al., 2016, p. 59) provided teachers with the opportunities to consider differentiation within their writing instruction based on the evidence collected from the formative assessments. In the final interview, the teacher participants credited the act of analyzing student writing throughout to create small group lesson plans as transformational in their classroom practice. These findings somewhat contradict what DuFour et al. (2016) argue for as they discuss intervention for students who do not learn the material. DuFour et al. (2016) push for a schedule that blocks intervention time, making interventions “required, not inviting” (p. 159). Their argument was mostly for a cohesive multitiered system that supports intensive remediation for students. However, the teachers in this study found that becoming more focused in how they were using small group instruction and one-on-one conferences during their writing block resulted in larger student gains. Thus, they did not need a separate intervention time to provide intensive remediation. In fact, the teachers all claimed that even their students who typically struggle the most in reading and writing, thrived during this poetry unit. These findings provide evidence that responding to students when they are struggling to grasp a concept can occur within the scheduled classroom time and result in gains in student learning.

The findings from this study indicate that several elements of the PLC process as described by DuFour et al. (2016) positively influenced teacher professional learning. Specifically, the first

two guiding questions helped provide clarity and understanding for the teacher participants heading into the unit of study in poetry writing. However, there were other components of professional learning that occurred, in addition to the PLC process, that also contributed to teacher professional learning. While these components are not essential to DuFour et al.'s (2016) description to the PLC process, they are considered essential components by other researchers who study teachers in professional communities (Lieberman & Miller, 2008).

One vital component to the process of professional learning in this study was the act of applying what was learned inside the classroom with their own students. DuFour et al. (2016) mentioned job-embedded professional learning as a part of their PLC process, but only use that to describe the act of meeting during the school day to analyze student work. The findings in this study indicate that there is a need for redefining what job-embedded professional learning really means. In fact, the teacher participants in this study identified the labsite experience as transformational to their understanding of how to differentiate their instruction in writing workshop. Therefore, job-embedded learning is much more than learning that occurs within the school day and situated within student work. Job-embedded learning is also when opportunities are available to apply learning directly inside the teacher's own classroom with support and feedback from colleagues and coaches.

During this study, the teacher participants experienced job-embedded professional learning focused around instructional strategies within the context of their classrooms both with and without students present. Knight (2018) found that teachers want to see instructional strategies in action. He explained, "when teachers committed to goals for improvement that mattered to them and their students and identified teaching strategies that they really wanted to implement, they wanted to see how teachers would implement them" (Knight, 2018, p. 116). It is

not sufficient to simply model an instructional strategy, but vital to model instructional strategies that are connected to the teacher's larger goals and within the context of the teacher's classroom. In this study, the modeling occurred using role-play while we talked through specific writing strategies after analyzing student work. Thus, modeling without students present. Modeling also occurred in the context of the teachers' classroom with students present both in the labsite and in individual coaching opportunities. Modeling was a meaningful form of job-embedded professional learning, but only because it was grounded in the teacher participants' larger goals, surrounded by dialogue, and situated in the context of their own classrooms.

Putnam and Borko (2000) argue that the classroom environment is a powerful context for learning and knowledge to occur because the teacher's learning and experience is intertwined with their classroom practice. Thus, professional learning should strike a balance between the learning that occurs inside and outside the classroom, where teachers reflect both in-action and on-action (Schön, 1983). Ball & Cohen (1999) contend that teachers can learn about content and develop knowledge in a variety of out-of-classroom experiences, but in order to know how to use the knowledge, the learning must be situated in practice. In fact, they argue, "professional development could be substantially improved if we could develop ways to learn and teach about practice in practice (Ball & Cohen, 1999, p. 12). Building on their argument, this study found that the PLC process is one way to incorporate in-practice learning opportunities, but only when time is designated for teachers to both reflect in real time and on student work.

Another element of the process for professional learning that positively influenced the teachers that was not necessarily a component of DuFour et al.'s (2016) PLC process was teachers as agents of their own learning. While DuFour et al.'s (2016) work does value teacher contribution, it does not place a large enough value on teacher inquiry around a problem-of-

practice. In this study, the teacher participants unanimously agreed that they dreaded teaching the poetry writing unit because they did not understand poetry themselves. By identifying this problem-of-practice collaboratively, the teachers were agents of their own learning. This is consistent with the research on communities of practice (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015), where a collective group shares a common concern and becomes more knowledgeable as they interact regularly.

Because teachers in this study were agents of their own learning and active problem-solvers of an issue that they shared a passion for, the work they did together was much more than mere participation in a PLC. By situating the professional learning around a common goal and within the parameters of a unit of study, there were multiple opportunities collect, analyze, and interpret student work in order to reflect on instructional practices. This shifted the focus away from an individual teacher's practice, and onto the student learning occurring as a result of instructional practices. Ball & Cohen (1999) explain that grounding conversations in student work provides opportunities that are nearly impossible without artifacts. The teachers shared a common goal, tracked progress of students, and saw outcomes of their own learning as evidenced in their student growth. This design had student learning at the heart of all stakeholders and created a shared responsibility for the achievement of students (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Raphael et al., 2014). Because the professional learning was situated around student learning, the teachers were able to directly witness the results of their efforts.

The PLC consisted of members outside of the classroom teachers, specifically the dual role of researcher and instructional coach. DuFour et al. (2016) do not specifically mention the role of an instructional coach in a PLC, except that all members should actively contribute to the larger goals. However, the findings from this study indicate that the role of the instructional coach was

important in facilitating dialogue and organizing meaningful professional learning experiences for the teacher participants. Joyce and Showers (1980, 1982, 2002) found that coaching helps teachers transfer their newly acquired knowledge into the context of their own classrooms. Similarly, the findings from this study support Joyce and Showers' work in that through the support of a coach and multiple job-embedded professional learning experiences, the teachers were able to implement new instructional strategies successfully and independently. The findings from this study support the work conducted by Joyce and Showers (1980, 1982, 2002) as applied in the context of a PLC.

The findings from this study indicate that there is not a single characteristic or one process that makes professional learning more effective. Instead, the combination of several characteristics that are all connected to a common purpose positively influence teacher learning. Specifically, this study found that a process for professional learning should be driven by a team's own agenda, situated in student work, and provide opportunities to reflect both in and on action. Figure 5.1 captures the process used with teachers in this study, highlighting the cyclical nature of inquiry around a problem-of-practice, and the value of designing a unit of study, analyzing writing throughout a unit of study, and multiple opportunities to teach, reflect, and adjust accordingly.



Figure 5.1. A Process for Professional Learning

Direction for Future Research

This study provides important contributions to the fields of professional learning and writing instruction, beginning to bridge a gap between the two fields. However, there are important considerations for future research that this study did not address. First, it would be imperative to analyze student products as a result of teacher professional learning. This study strictly viewed the research from the lens of teacher as learners, but there were multiple opportunities to examine the data through the lens of the student writers. Additionally, this study was only conducted over one unit of study, approximately three months in working alongside the teachers. It would be important for even more prolonged engagement to see evidence of teacher professional learning across multiple genres over the course of a school year. Along the same

lines, it would be important to conduct similar studies with different groups of teachers. Because this sample was so small and not generalizable, more studies are needed to be able to see larger patterns. Finally, a direction for future research would be to explore this same type of professional learning connected across a unit of study and using the PLC framework in a school that does not have existing collaborative structures in place. This might shed more light on how to use the same high-quality professional learning characteristics in a different type of school environment.

Final Thoughts

Ultimately, the findings from this study reveal that when professional learning is connected to the goals of a teacher, embedded within the context of their job, and grounded in best practices for writing, positive outcomes result on teacher knowledge. Even though it has almost been two decades after the implementation of NCLB, this study reveals that the effects of that policy are still strong in schools today. While the teacher participants in this study were not directly responsible for students taking a standardized assessment, they still felt the pressure on the decisions they made in their classroom.

The experiences of the writing teachers in this study provide a glimpse into the possibilities of educators coming together in a collective community, focused on goals that are driven by the needs of their students. For educational policy to experience real change, it takes the voices of teachers and their students to remind us of what we cannot afford to sacrifice. Although much more research is needed to bridge the gap between the literature on professional learning, writing instruction, and poetry, the findings from this study that indicate that positive change occurs when teachers are engaged in meaningful professional learning experiences around writing instruction.

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APPENDIX A

Writing Workshop Observation Form

Teacher:

Date:

Time:

WORKSHOP COMPONENT	TEACHER	STUDENTS
Mini Lesson		
Independent Work/Conferencing		
Share		
NOTES/QUESTIONS		

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocols

Initial Interview Protocol

1. Have you every participated in a Professional Learning Community (PLC)? If so, describe your experiences.
2. Have you ever worked with an instructional coach? If so, describe your experience.
3. How would you describe your abilities with teaching writing?
4. Did you have any training in your undergraduate (or graduate) course work related to teaching writing? How has that affected the way you have taught writing?
5. Have you ever had any professional learning/training related to writing instruction? Talk about that experience. How has that affected the way you teach writing?
6. Describe your process for planning writing instruction.
7. Talk to me about this writing (Sample 1).
 - a. What do you see as the child's strengths?
 - b. Areas of need?
 - c. What might be the next point of instruction for this child?
8. Talk to me about this writing (Sample 2).
 - a. What do you see as the child's strengths?
 - b. Areas of need?
 - c. What might be the next point of instruction for this child?

Midpoint Interview Protocol

1. As a result of targeted and embedded professional learning experiences...
 - a. How has your theory evolved for teaching writing?
 - b. How has your practice shifted for teaching writing?
2. Talk to me about your experiences with the Professional Learning Community (PLC) around writing that you experienced during this unit of study.

- a. How has it affected your theory for teaching writing?
 - b. How has it affected your classroom practice?
3. Talk to me about your experiences with an instructional coach.
 - c. How has it affected your theory for teaching writing?
 - d. How has it affected your classroom practice?
4. How would you describe your abilities with teaching writing?
5. How has the professional learning related to writing throughout this unit of study affected the way you teach writing?
6. Describe your process for planning writing instruction.

Final Interview Protocol

1. How has this experience (targeted & embedded PD) affected the way you teaching writing?
2. How has this experience (targeted & embedded PD) affected the way you plan writing?
3. How has this experience influenced your understanding and thinking about PLCs?
4. How has this experience with an instructional coach supported your growth as a writing teacher?
5. Is there anything else you want to mention about this experience together?
6. Talk to me about this writing (Sample 1).
 - a. What do you see as the child's strengths?
 - b. Areas of need?
 - c. What might be the next point of instruction for this child?
7. Talk to me about this writing (Sample 2).
 - a. What do you see as the child's strengths?

- b. Areas of need?
- c. What might be the next point of instruction for this child?

Focus Group Interview Protocol

1. What challenges have come up in your mind after today's session together?
2. How are the ideas from today connected to what you already know?
3. What ideas did you get that extended your thinking in new directions?

APPENDIX C

On-Demand Performance Assessment Prompt (Poetry)

Poetry Writing On-Demand Prompt

Say to students:

“Writers, or should I say poets, I’m really eager to understand what you can do as writers of poetry! Today I’m going to give you some time to write a poem about something that matters to you. Remember to use everything you know about good poetry writing. Please keep in mind that you’ll have forty-five minutes to complete this, so you will need to plan, draft, revise, and edit in one sitting. Write in a way that allows you to show off all you know about poetry writing!”

(Adapted from *Writing Pathways: Performance Assessments and Learning Progressions, K-5*)

APPENDIX D

Audit Trail

AUDIT TRAIL

<u>When</u>	<u>Research Session Tasks</u>	<u>Data Collection Code</u>
Feb 5 <i>During regular weekly PLC/conference time</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment script • Consent/Signatures • Timeline 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jackie, Signed Consent <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lillian, Signed Consent <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tracy, Signed Consent
Feb 13, 28, Mar 1 <i>Interviews during conference Observations during writing workshop block</i>	Collect Baseline Data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial interview with discussion of writing samples • Initial classroom observation 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jackie, Initial Interview <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jackie, Initial Observation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lillian, Initial Interview <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lillian, Initial Observation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tracy, Initial Interview <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tracy, Initial Observation
Mar 6 <i>Extended PLC block</i>	PLC 1 (Planning) Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set professional goals • Determine characteristics of poetry • Collaboratively plan unit of study on poetry writing • Reflection 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Team, PLC 1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Team, Focus Group 1
Mar 23 <i>During regular weekly PLC/conference time</i>	PLC 2 (Data Analysis) Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reminder of poetry genre characteristics • Quick sort of on-demand writing • Instructional considerations • Reflection 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Team, PLC 2
April 2 <i>Half Day with Substitute coverage</i>	Labsite <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on unit progress • Professional learning around conferring with writers • Collaborative planning • Collaborative teaching • Reflection 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Team, Labsite <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Team, Focus Group 3
April 3 <i>During regular weekly PLC/conference time</i>	PLC 3 (Data Analysis) Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on unit progress • Quick sort of student in-progress writing • Instructional considerations • Reflection 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Team, PLC 3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Team, Focus Group 3
April 9, 16, 18 <i>Interviews during conference</i>	Collect Midpoint Data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe individual classrooms • Mid-point interview 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jackie, Midpoint Interview <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jackie, Midpoint Observation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lillian, Midpoint Interview <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lillian, Midpoint Observation

<i>Observations during writing workshop block</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tracy, Midpoint Interview <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tracy, Midpoint Observation
April 17 & 19 <i>Coaching conversations during conference</i> <i>In-class coaching during writing workshop block</i>	Individual Coaching <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted professional development w/ individual teachers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jackie- coaching conversation around planning for writing • Lillian- coaching conversation around planning for small group instruction; reflective feedback from classroom observation • Tracy- in-class coaching (reflective feedback, modeling, and side-by-side support) 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jackie, Coaching <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lillian, Coaching <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tracy, Coaching
April 30 <i>During regular weekly PLC/conference time</i>	PLC 4 (Data Analysis) Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on unit progress • Quick sort of student in-progress writing • Instructional considerations • Reflection 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Team, PLC 4
May 2, 4, 7 <i>Interviews during conference</i> <i>Observations during writing workshop block</i>	Collect Final Data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final classroom observation • Final interview 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jackie, Final Interview <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jackie, Final Observation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lillian, Final Interview <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lillian, Final Observation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tracy, Final Interview <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tracy, Final Observation
May 8 <i>During regular weekly PLC/conference time</i>	PLC 5 (Data Analysis) Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze student published writing assessment • Focus group for debrief on PLC process 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Team, PLC 5 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Team, Focus Group 4

APPENDIX E

Consent Forms

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title: The Language and Practice of Writing Teachers: Exploring Teacher Professional Learning Within a PLC Framework

Principal Researcher: Macie Kerbs mkerbs@twu.edu

Faculty Advisor: Connie Briggs, Ph.D. cbriggs1@twu.edu

Explanation and Purpose of the Research

You are being asked to participate in a dissertation research study at Texas Woman's University. The purpose of this study is to document the language and classroom practice of teachers participating in professional learning related to writing process, using a Professional Learning Community (PLC) framework. The PLC framework involves teachers meeting regularly to analyze student data, reflect on current instructional practices, and developing a shared knowledge of their content area. You have been asked to participate in this study because you are a second grade teacher who actively participates in PLC meetings on your campus.

Description of Procedures

As a participant in this study, you will agree to allow the researcher to observe your PLC meetings, writing instruction, and professional learning over the course of one unit of study in writing. Each PLC meeting and professional learning session will be audio recorded and transcribed so the researcher can accurately study what was discussed. In some PLC meetings, you will allow the researcher to provide targeted and embedded professional learning that directly aligns to your professional goals. At the end of each meeting, you will allow the researcher to conduct focus group interviews, lasting approximately fifteen minutes. You will also allow the researcher to observe you as you teach writing at three different times throughout the study. You will be able to select the date and time for the observation. Additionally, you will spend no more than two and a half hours of your time in three separate face-to face interviews. The researcher will ask you questions about your experience with both writing instruction and professional learning. You will be able to select a private location for the interview to occur. The interview will be audio recorded and then transcribed, so the researcher can be accurate when studying your language as you discuss writing instruction. You will be assigned a pseudonym and all data and transcripts will be stored using this pseudonym.

Potential Risks

A possible risk in this study is loss of confidentiality. Confidentiality will be protected to the extent allowable by law. All data will be recorded and stored in a locked and secured location at the researchers' office. Digital data will be stored on a password-protected device, which will be stored in a secured location in the researchers' office. Audio recordings will be destroyed after the completion of each transcription. Any publications that result from this study will use pseudonyms in place of participants' names. No mention of the campus or the district's name will be made.

Another possible risk in this study is loss of time. You will be able to self-select the time for each meeting and interview. You will also be allowed to adjust the length of any meeting, interview, or observation as needed. Each PLC will occur within regularly scheduled collaboration time as given by your campus administrator to prevent loss of instructional time. Finally, the researcher will prepare for each meeting so no additional time is taken from you.

Approved by the
Texas Woman's University
Institutional Review Board
Approved: January 26, 2018

Participant Initials


Page 1 of 2

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Texas Woman's University
Institutional Review Board
Approved: January 26, 2018

Participant Initials 
Page 1 of 2

The last potential risk involved in this study is coercion. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. Your relationship with the researcher will not be affected by your decision to participate or not participate in the study.

The researcher will try to prevent any problem that could happen because of this research. You should let the researcher know at once if there is a problem and need help. However, TWU does not provide medical services or financial assistance for injuries that might happen because you are taking part in this research.

Participation and Benefits

Your involvement in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. If you would like to know the results of this study we will mail them to you.*

Questions Regarding the Study

You will be given a copy of this signed and dated consent form to keep. If you have any questions about the research study you should ask the researcher; the email is at the top of this form. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research or the way this study has been conducted, you may contact the Texas Woman's University Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 940-898-3378 or via e-mail at IRB@twu.edu.


Signature of Participant

2/5/18
Date

*If you would like to know the results of this study tell us where you want them to be sent:

Email: _____ and/or address: _____

Approved by the
Texas Woman's University
Institutional Review Board
Approved: January 26, 2018

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CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

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Approved by the
Texas Woman's University
Institutional Review Board
Approved: January 26, 2018

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Signature of Participant

2/5/18

Date

*If you would like to know the results of this study tell us where you want them to be sent:

Email: _____ and/or address: _____

Approved by the
Texas Woman's University
Institutional Review Board
Approved: January 26, 2018

APPENDIX E

IRB Approval Letter



Institutional Review Board
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
P.O. Box 425619, Denton, TX 76204-5619
940-898-3378
email: IRB@twu.edu
<http://www.twu.edu/irb.html>

DATE: January 29, 2018

TO: Ms. Macie Kerbs
Reading

FROM: Institutional Review Board (IRB) - Denton

Re: Approval for The Language and Practice of Writing Teachers: Exploring Teacher Professional Learning within a PLC Framework (Protocol #: 19908)

The above referenced study has been reviewed and approved by the Denton IRB (operating under FWA00000178) on 1/26/2018 using an expedited review procedure. This approval is valid for one year and expires on 1/26/2019. The IRB will send an email notification 45 days prior to the expiration date with instructions to extend or close the study. It is your responsibility to request an extension for the study if it is not yet complete, to close the protocol file when the study is complete, and to make certain that the study is not conducted beyond the expiration date.

If applicable, agency approval letters must be submitted to the IRB upon receipt prior to any data collection at that agency. A copy of the approved consent form with the IRB approval stamp is enclosed. Please use the consent form with the most recent approval date stamp when obtaining consent from your participants. A copy of the signed consent forms must be submitted with the request to close the study file at the completion of the study.

Any modifications to this study must be submitted for review to the IRB using the Modification Request Form. Additionally, the IRB must be notified immediately of any adverse events or unanticipated problems. All forms are located on the IRB website. If you have any questions, please contact the TWU IRB.

cc. Dr. Connie Briggs, Reading
Graduate School

APPENDIX G
Signature Page

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY
DENTON, TEXAS

January 8, 2019

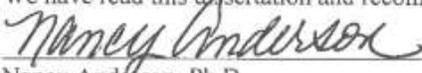
To the Dean of the Graduate School:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Macie Kerbs entitled "Change in Teachers' Knowledge of Writing Instruction: A Collective Case Study." I have examined this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Reading Education.



Connie Briggs, Ph.D., Major Professor

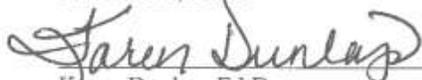
We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance.



Nancy Anderson, Ph.D.



Pat Watson, Ph.D.



Karen Dunlap, Ed.D.



Connie Briggs, Department Chair

Accepted:

Carolyn Kapinus, Ph.D.
Dean of the Graduate School

**TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY-GRADUATE SCHOOL
CERTIFICATION OF FINAL EXAMINATION**

January 8, 2019

Date of Examination

To the Dean of the Graduate School:

The undersigned have on this date examined (Name of Candidate and ID#):

Macie Kerbs 1068779
[Name] [ID#]

for the degree of: Doctorate in Reading Education

and hereby certify that the examination has been successfully completed. This

professional paper thesis dissertation scholarly clinical project

has been reviewed by each of us and is approved.

Major Professor [Signature] *Connie Briggs* [Date] 1/8/2019
[Type Name] Connie Briggs

Member [Signature] *Nancy Anderson* [Date] 1/8/2019
[Type Name] Nancy Anderson

Member [Signature] *Patricia Watson* [Date] 1/8/2019
[Type Name] Pat Watson

Member [Signature] *Karen Dunlap* [Date] 1/8/2019
(if appropriate) [Type Name] Karen Dunlap

Chair/Director/Associate Dean [Signature] [Date] 1/8/2019
[Type Name] Connie Briggs

According to departmental records, this student has met all requirements for graduation.

Connie Briggs
Major Professor

In accordance with Leg. HB 1922, an individual is entitled to: request to be informed about the information collected about them; receive and review their information; and correct any incorrect information.