

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF REFLECTIVE JOURNALING IN A COLLEGE  
COMPOSITION I COURSE

A THESIS

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## DEDICATION

For my husband, Bruce McMillin who has been an encouragement and support throughout the process of obtaining multiple degrees.

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## ABSTRACT

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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF REFLECTIVE JOURNALING IN A COLLEGE

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This exploratory study investigates the impact of directed reflective journaling in a first-year college English Composition course. Student reflections were analyzed for self-regulatory behaviors, evidence of skills associated with course objectives, and writing skill development. Changes in self-efficacy perceptions were analyzed using pre- and post- self-efficacy surveys.

It was found that self-regulatory behaviors can be encouraged through reflective journaling and that self-efficacy attitudes were impacted positively as a direct result of the self-regulatory activities. The journaling task met two of the English Composition core objectives (interpretation and evaluation) and students demonstrated gains in writing fluency, conventions, and word choice.

Student and teacher perspectives of the reflective exercises are given along with recommendations for future implementations and research.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Only 39% of students who enter college earn a degree or certificate within six years (Shapiro et al. 5). This number is not surprising since 68% of community college students are underprepared for college work and only 28% of community college students who take developmental courses earn a degree within eight years (Jaggars and Stacey 1). These statistics demonstrate that many students, both underprepared and mainstream, are not persisting through the rigors of college.

The successful completion of the first semester of college is a key determinant of continued persistence in college coursework (Center for Community College Student Engagement 1). In the past, underprepared students in Texas have been placed into a sequence of developmental coursework as a pre-requisite to college level coursework. The Texas state policy for meeting underprepared students' academic needs is currently in transition (Texas Legislature). The state legislature of Texas has mandated that by the 2020-2021 academic year, 75% of developmental students in Texas be placed into corequisite model courses. This model allows for the developmental English student to be placed directly into a college level English course alongside a support course (Texas Legislature).

This mandate will change the learning dynamics in English Composition I courses. Developing pedagogical strategies that are manageable to administer, meet the

course objectives and promote successful completion of the course is a current and relevant challenge for English professors.

This exploratory study investigates the impact of directed reflective journaling in a first-year college English Composition course. Student reflections were analyzed for self-regulatory behaviors, evidence of skills associated with the core objectives of the course and writing skill development. Changes in self-efficacy perceptions were analyzed using pre- and post- self-efficacy surveys. A qualitative analysis was also completed of student and teacher attitudes towards the reflective practices. Lastly, conclusions were drawn as to the feasibility and appropriateness of integrating reflective journaling into the Composition I course.

### **Definitions**

The concepts of self-efficacy, self-regulation, and reflection are foundational to this research. For clarity and consistency, the following definitions will be used when referencing those concepts.

Bandura defines *self-efficacy* as “People’s judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances” (*Social* 391). Self-efficacy in an educational setting is a student’s belief in his or her ability to perform a task that is directly linked to his or her academic performance (Bandura, *Self-Efficacy* 216).

Zimmerman defines *self-regulation* as “A self-directive process through which learners transform their mental abilities into academic skills” (“Developing” 2). It is

“concerned with the degree to which students are metacognitively, motivationally and behaviorally proactive regulators of their own learning process” (Zimmerman, “Self-Motivation” 664).

For this paper, David Boud’s definition of *reflection* will be used: “a generic term for those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciation” (“Promoting Reflection” 19).

### **Hypotheses**

There are two hypotheses addressed in this study:

1. It is hypothesized that directed reflective journaling can lead students through a process of self-regulatory behaviors which have been theorized to promote positive self-efficacy for writing tasks (Bandura, *Social*).
2. It is hypothesized that reflective journaling activities address three of the four core objectives of the Composition I course in the state of Texas (critical thinking, communication skills, and personal responsibility)<sup>1</sup> and improve student writing.

<sup>1</sup> The fourth objective is teamwork. There is no obvious argument that reflective journaling would meet this objective.

CHAPTER II  
LITERATURE REVIEW  
**Self-Efficacy**

Successful students are motivated to take active control of their learning based on the belief that they have the resources needed to persist through their academic pathways (Boutet et al. 16). This attitude is directly reflected in a student's sense of self-efficacy for the various tasks required to complete his or her course of study.

Arthur Bandura introduced the idea of self-efficacy in the 1970s. He defines self-efficacy as, "people's judgements of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (Bandura, *Social* 391). Self-efficacy in an educational setting is a student's belief in his or her ability to perform a task which is directly linked to his or her academic performance (Bandura, *Self-Efficacy* vii).

The self-efficacy beliefs students hold are pivotal to their choices, effort, persistence, resilience, strategic thinking, and academic outcomes (Bandura, "Guide" 308; Bruning and Kauffman 161; Ritchie 24; Usher and Pajares 791; Zimmerman, "Self-Efficacy" 82). When students are given an academic task to complete, they subconsciously evaluate their ability to complete the task successfully. If their confidence is low, students will not be motivated to pursue completion of the task when learning struggles are encountered. If students are confident in their eventual success, they will

persist through academic challenges (Ritchie 24; Zimmerman, “A Social” 331). Self-efficacious learners are not deterred by failure and use their resources creatively, seeking possible solutions before giving up (Ritchie 30).

There are four primary events that impact the development of a strong sense of self-efficacy amongst students: mastery experiences, social persuasion, vicarious experiences, and their emotional and physiological states (Bandura, *Self-Efficacy* 79). Of those four, the most potent source of support for positive self-efficacy is experience in mastering a challenge (Usher and Pajares 780). The successful mastery and completion of a task will boost confidence and inform beliefs of success in future tasks of a similar nature (Ritchie 26). Instructors can build these experiences into the writing classroom by breaking down a writing project into pieces and giving feedback throughout the process of completing the project.

Social persuasion also supports self-efficacy beliefs. Bandura describes social persuasion as “a useful adjunct to more powerful efficacy-promoting influences” (Bandura, *Self-Efficacy* 104). Social persuasion works alongside student accomplishment to impact self-efficacy beliefs (Ritchie 28). The source of social persuasion can be from both the instructor and peers and has the potential to impact a student’s sense of self-efficacy positively or negatively. The most impactful feedback is given on proximal goals and accomplishments rather than distant ones. In the composition classroom, it is recommended that instructors provide students with specific suggestions for writing



improvement and strategy adjustments throughout the writing process (Bruning and Kauffman 161).

Vicarious experiences have also been shown to impact students' self-efficacy beliefs. These experiences develop from exposure to quality modeling of skills by instructors or peers (Usher and Pajares 780). Students benefit from observing effective strategies used by others to overcome angst and difficulties in the writing process (Bruning and Kauffman 161). When students visualize what a successful process and product look like, they develop confidence in their ability to accomplish a similar task successfully. As students find success in completing one task, they can then visualize themselves mastering progressively more difficult tasks (Usher and Pajares 782).

The last major source of support for self-efficacy beliefs is acknowledgement of the emotional and physiological states of the students throughout the process of completing task demands. Many students may come into the introductory composition classroom with very little confidence of completing the tasks required in the content area successfully. This low confidence can be a consequence of previous negative literacy experiences and/or it could be due to the lack of the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to perform successfully (Usher and Pajares 782). These students may not be successful initially, but with guidance, feedback, and reflection, they can be encouraged to explore literacy-building strategies (Ritchie 43). With proper and frequent instructor modeling and feedback, students can experience small successes, which in turn will set a foundation for developing future successes (Ritchie 43).

Self-efficacy is especially important in the composition classroom. Self-efficacy for writing refers to “perceptions of one’s own capabilities to plan and implement actions necessary to attain designated levels of writing on specific tasks” (Zimmerman, “Becoming” 77). These beliefs are significant predictors of college students’ ability to set appropriate goals and create reasonable standards for task performance (Zimmerman, “Self-Efficacy ” 86). Low perceptions of efficacy for a writing task can undermine engagement in the writing activity and subsequent development of literacy skills (Zimmerman, “Becoming" 78).

The measurement of self-efficacy is domain and task specific (Bandura, “Guide” 308; Zimmerman, “Self-Efficacy” 86). In a composition course, perceived self-efficacy of students is measured by their confidence in completing various writing process tasks such as researching, creating outlines, editing, and revising.

Promoting and supporting positive self-efficacy beliefs in the composition classroom involves communication. Two-way communication between learners and teachers fosters a sense of trust and subsequently builds an environment in which students can safely take risks and develop successful strategies and skills to promote future learning (Ritchie vii). Within this environment, students’ sense of self-efficacy for required tasks is strengthened, which in turn supports students in setting more ambitious goals (Artino 84; Fong and Krause 261). Although having a positive sense of self-efficacy promotes positive attitudes towards learning and increases persistence,

resilience, and strategic thinking, self-regulation in the learning process also impacts academic achievement.

### **Self-Regulation**

Self-regulation in an academic setting is a “self-directive process through which learners transform their mental abilities into academic skills” (Zimmerman, “Developing” 2). Self-regulated students take active roles in “initiating, choosing, and carrying out learning as opposed to following a predetermined path and reacting to set, external instruction” (Ritchie 86). They are equipped to navigate successfully through academic paths and are lifetime learners (Bandura, *Self-Efficacy* 174). Although self-regulation may not be intuitive to all students, it can be developed through directed practice (Ritchie 26).

Research suggests that students who struggle in post-secondary settings often need assistance in learning how to self-regulate their learning more effectively (Butler et al. 210). Self-regulatory processes are teachable and can increase students’ motivation and achievements, yet few teachers effectively prepare students to learn on their own (Zimmerman, “Becoming” 97). Integrating self-regulation instruction into the composition coursework provides learners with opportunities to apply self-regulatory behaviors in actual academic tasks, making it more likely that the skills will transfer to other coursework in the future (Butler et al. 210).

Productive self-regulatory behaviors promote engagement, learning, persistence, and achievement in academic settings (Wolters and Hussain 296). Self-regulated learners

are “controllers rather than victims of their learning experiences” (Zimmerman, “Developing” 1). They set goals for themselves, self-monitor their learning behaviors, and think strategically (Zimmerman, “Developing” 1).

Barry Zimmerman first introduced the concept of self-regulation in learning and his ideas have since been supported and adjusted to fit into various educational settings by multiple educational theorists. Zimmerman defines three stages of self-regulation, which are consistent among all the theorists’ models, although the labels for the phases are sometimes different. Appendix A provides a detailed explanation of the three phases of self-regulation based on three separate perspectives.

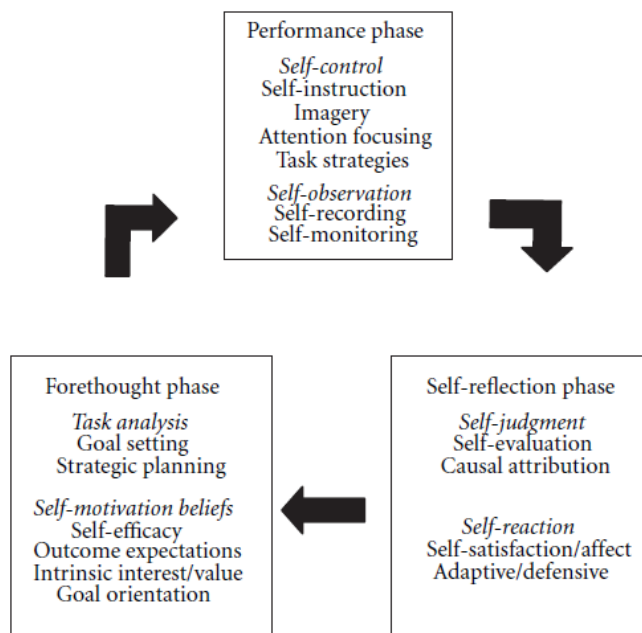


Figure 1. The cyclical and recursive cycle of self-regulatory behaviors.

Source: Anastasia Kitsantas and Timothy Cleary. “The Development of Self-Regulated Learning During Secondary School Years: A Social Cognitive Instructional Perspective.” *Handbook of Motivation at School*; edited by Kathryn Wentzel and David Miele; New York; Routledge; 2016, p. 173.

For this paper, Kitsantas and Cleary's labels for the three phases will be used: forethought phase, performance phase, and self-reflection phase (see Figure 1). These phases are not finite and static, but are interactive, cyclical, and recursive (Kitsantas and Cleary 170).

Self-regulated learners engage in the various activities and thought processes involved in self-regulated learning as the need arises in the process of completing a task.

Four of the most important self-regulatory behaviors that move students towards academic success are setting quality goals, having a learning goal orientation, self-monitoring performance, and making healthy attributions for failures and successes.

A system of graduated, hierarchical goals ranging from proximal and specific tasks to distant goals provide learners with opportunities for frequent monitoring and evaluation of progress and strategies usage. Self-regulated learners set proximal goals that are achievable and provide a high probability of achievement. Successful completion of challenging yet achievable goals boosts learners' task-specific sense of self efficacy and motivates learners to work towards success in subsequent tasks (Zimmerman, *Self-Regulated* 10).

Self-regulated learners have a learning goal orientation as opposed to a product goal orientation. Instead of only focusing on completing a project, self-regulated learners focus on the separate tasks and products required to complete the project. Productive self-regulated learners view completing assignments or tests as opportunities to enhance their abilities rather than as tests of their intelligence. Because self-regulated learners see

learning as a process, they may not initiate a project with a high sense of self-efficacy in the individual tasks required, but they do envision successful completion of the project after learning has taken place (Zimmerman, *Self-Regulated* 10).

Self-monitoring is deliberate and proactive attention to learning strategies and behaviors (Lan 102). Skillful self-regulated learners self-monitor their progress and performance frequently and evaluate the appropriateness and success of the learning strategies they are using. Students can avoid negative outcomes as they evaluate and adjust their learning strategies throughout the learning process (Zimmerman, *Self-Regulated* 15).

Lastly, self-regulated learners attribute negative evaluations to poor utilization of strategies, learning method, or insufficient practice instead of attributing them to their lack of abilities (Zimmerman, *Self-Regulated* 17).

Self-regulation is practiced throughout the learning process, both in formal academic settings and throughout the lifetimes of learners. As learners grow and mature in their reasoning and learning abilities, they must change and re-assess their self-regulatory behaviors (Zimmerman, *Self-Regulated* 20).

There are many opportunities for self-regulation in the writing process. Effective writers analyze task requirements, articulate writing goals, and use strategic approaches to achieve their objectives (Butler et al. 210). Self-regulated learners monitor their progress and make adjustments throughout the recursive writing process of planning, text production, and revision (Butler et al. 210). The ability to monitor goals and learning

behaviors throughout the writing process allows learners to become independent sources of affirmation, and that in turn also feeds into the development of a positive sense of self-efficacy (Zimmerman, *Self-Regulated* 20). If obstacles in the writing process are encountered, effective writers will adjust writing goals or strategies to address areas of difficulty (Butler et al. 210).

Because high levels of self-regulation are needed for learners to become proficient, effective writers, the composition classroom provides an appropriate environment for students to develop strong self-regulatory behaviors (Zimmerman, “Becoming” 96).

### **Interactions Between Self-Efficacy and Self-Regulation**

The concepts of self-efficacy and self-regulation are interconnected and work together to either fuel or discourage students’ commitment to academic goals. According to the Social Cognitive perspective, learning involves the use of strategies to achieve academic goals that are based on self-efficacy perceptions. Three elements are involved in this process: self-regulated learning strategies, self-efficacy perceptions, and commitment to academic goals (Zimmerman, “A Social Cognitive” 337).

The development of self-regulatory behaviors is impacted by and impacts a students’ sense of self-efficacy for learning (Ritchie 93). Strong self-efficacy beliefs drive students to set more ambitious goals and monitor their progression through those goals (Artino 84; Fong and Krause 261). This in turn returns students to the process of practicing self-regulatory behaviors. This process is cyclical and recursive (Kitsantas and

Cleary 173) (see Figure 2).

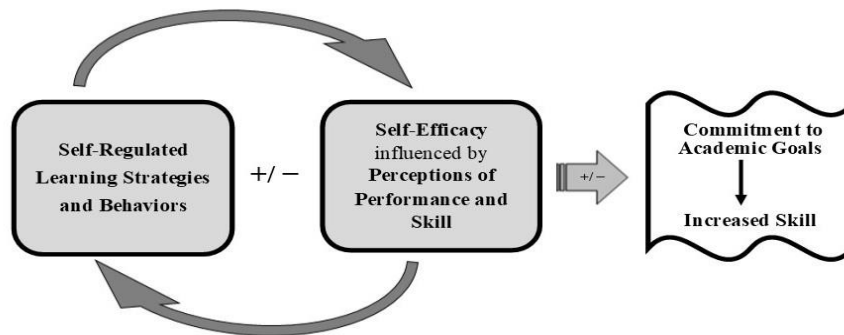


Figure 2. The relationship between self-regulation, self-efficacy, and persistence in learning

Self-regulation in the writing process is “not a single capability but a complex system of interdependent processes that are closely linked to an underlying sense of self-efficacy as a writer” (Zimmerman, “Becoming” 97). Strong self-efficacy beliefs motivate students to participate in self-regulation (Usher and Pajares 791; Zimmerman, *Self-Regulated* 20). Conversely, negative self-efficacy feelings can form barriers towards learning. Negative feelings and experiences can “distort perceptions, lead to false interpretations of events, and can undermine the will to persist” (Bout et al. “Introduction” 11). These false interpretations of events lower the motivation of students to apply self-regulatory behaviors to their academic work.

In a recursive manner, strong self-regulatory skills contribute to mastery of academic subject matter which provides support for increased self-efficacy (Bandura, *Self-Efficacy* 174; Ritchie 24; Zimmerman, *Self-Regulated* 20). Task mastery is the greatest source of positive self-efficacy beliefs (Ritchie 85). If students take time to



reflect on their performance and make necessary adjustments to learning strategies, they are more likely to move towards mastery.

Strong self-regulatory behaviors support self-efficacy beliefs. Table 1 provides a summary of the literature that describes the relationships between strong self-regulatory behaviors and self-efficacy beliefs.

Table 1

Relationships Between Self-Efficacy and Self-Regulation

Self-Regulation Processes (Kitsantas and Cleary)	Impact Self-Efficacy Has on the Self-Regulation Processes	Impact Self-Regulation Has on the Self-Efficacy of the Learner
Goal-Setting	Strong self-efficacy beliefs drive students to set more ambitious and appropriate goals (Artino; Fong and Krause; Ritchie; Zimmerman, "Becoming").	The process of setting, monitoring, and reflecting on proximal goals highlight the growth capability of the learner which encourages task mastery (Bandura, <i>Self-Efficacy</i> ; Zimmerman, "Self-Efficacy").  Successful completion of challenging, yet achievable goals boosts learners' task-specific sense of self efficacy and motivates learners to work towards success in subsequent tasks (Zimmerman, <i>Self-Regulated</i> ).
Learning Goal Orientation  (Self-Motivation & Outcome Expectations)	Strong self-efficacy beliefs motivate students to participate in self-regulation (Usher and Pajares; Zimmerman, <i>Self-Regulated</i> ).  The self-efficacious learner shows persistence in the face of difficulties in the learning process (Ritchie; Zimmerman, "Becoming").  The self-efficacious learner views set-backs as opportunities for learning (Zimmerman, <i>Self-Regulated</i> ).  The self-efficacious learner seeks helps when needed (Kitsantas and Cleary).	Reflection throughout the process of learning reinforces self-efficacy beliefs (Ritchie).  Productive self-regulatory behaviors promote engagement, learning, persistence, and achievement in academic settings (Wolters and Hussain)

Table 1 cont.

Relationships Between Self-Efficacy and Self-Regulation

Self-Regulation Processes (Kitsantas and Cleary)	Impact Self-Efficacy Has on the Self-Regulation Processes	Impact Self-Regulation Has on the Self-Efficacy of the Learner
Self-Monitoring	The confidence stemming from a positive sense of self-efficacy drives the process of adopting, evaluating, and adjusting learning strategies (Zimmerman, "A Social"; Zimmerman, "Self-Efficacy").	The ability to adopt and adjust learning strategies to fit task demands allows learners to continue progressing through a difficult task which in turn promotes task mastery (Zimmerman, "A Social").  Regulatory skills promote task mastery (Bandura, <i>Self-Efficacy</i> ).
Attributions (Self-Evaluations)	Learners use the confidence that develops from positive self-efficacy to evaluate strategic efforts and make adjustments where necessary (Zimmerman, "A Social").	Self-reflection encourages students to recognize their accomplishments (Dunlap, "Using"). This builds a positive sense of self-advocacy in the learner.  Effective goal setting allows learners to become independent sources of affirmation (Zimmerman, <i>Self-Regulated</i> )

### Reflective Journals

Reflection is an integral aspect of self-regulation. Reflection in the educational setting has been implemented in various ways with students of all ages. Since Dewey's first exploration of the concept of reflection in learning (1933), the term *reflection* has been interpreted and implemented in various ways (Beveridge et al. 59; Kreber 29; Ryan 99).

Most definitions of reflection in learning are based on Dewey's basic definition of reflection: "the process of rationally examining the assumptions by which we have been justifying our convictions" (qtd. in Mesirow, "How Critical" 2). The discussion of the

reflective process in this study will move beyond Dewey's basic definition and interpret the findings based on Boud's definition of reflection: "a generic term for those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciation" ("Promoting Reflection" 19). The outcome of a reflective activity should not simply draw on what is already known. It should involve the reassessment of past behaviors and lead to adjustments in behaviors and attitudes to allow for successful completion of the student's academic plan (Mezirow, "How Critical" 3).

Reflective journal writing has been found to have many positive impacts on student attitudes and achievements. The process can

- promote self-reflection, problem solving and critical thinking (Dunlap, "Using" 20; Gleaves et al. 230; Lew and Schmidt, "Self-Reflection" 540),
- positively impact learning and academic achievement (Boutet et al. 1; Lew and Schmidt, "Self-Reflection" 540; Lew and Schmidt, "Writing to Learn" 528),
- promote positive changes in students' study habits and behaviors (Beveridge et al. 70; Boutet et al. 11; Dunlap, "Changes" 20; Lew and Schmidt, "Writing to Learn" 528),
- improve students' self-concepts as learners (Boutet et al. 11; Dunlap, "Changes" 21; Gleaves et al. 230; Kirby 127; Lew 122; McCrindle and Christensen 182),  
and

- build positive and beneficial relationships with the professors (Boud, “Introduction” 14; Boutet et al. 11; Kirby 127).

### CHAPTER III

#### THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF REFLECTIVE JOURNALING

It is apparent from the review of literature that providing a classroom environment in which self-regulatory behaviors are encouraged benefits students and supports positive self-efficacy beliefs. A brief overview of the literature supporting reflective practices suggests that including reflective journaling into coursework also has many potential benefits for students and instructors.

This study is based on two hypotheses. The first is that directed reflective journaling can lead students through a process of self-regulatory behaviors which have been theorized to promote positive self-efficacy for writing tasks (Bandura, *Social* 391) (see Figure 3).

The second is that reflective journaling activities address three of the four core objectives of the Composition I course in the state of Texas (critical thinking, communication skills, and personal responsibility) and improve student writing.

Chapter III explores some of the literature that gives contextual support for the study's hypotheses.

#### **Encourages Self-Regulation and Supports Positive Self-Efficacy**

Part of the self-regulatory process required in the composition classroom is setting challenging and attainable goals, which in turn promotes a positive sense of self-efficacy. This skill is not inherent in many students and they may need support in participating in

task analysis, goal setting, strategy adaption, and monitoring (Butler et al. 210.; Ritchie 85; Zimmerman, “Becoming” 96). Reflective journaling provides an instrument in which students can explore goal setting and receive support in initiating and maintaining self-regulatory processes (Ritchie 43; Zimmerman, “Becoming” 96).

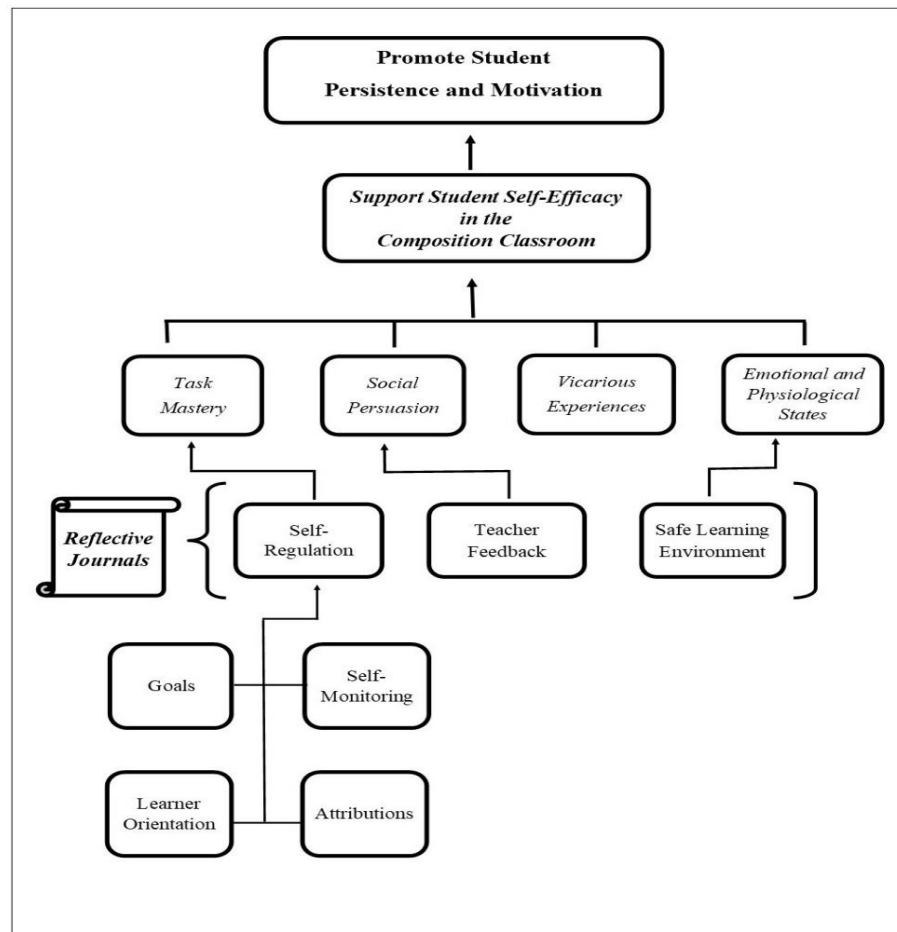


Figure 3

## Promoting Student Persistence and Motivation through Supporting Positive Self-Efficacy in the Composition Classroom

Reflecting on the learning process can have positive impacts on the learning, motivation, and self-efficacy of students (Paris and Paris, “Classroom” 91; van den Boom et al. 564; Zimmerman, “A Social” 336). The awareness gained from students’ self-observations of their learning behaviors can be instrumental in building positive self-efficacy beliefs. As self-regulatory behaviors develop and are encouraged through the reflective process, “the clarity of the reflections, observations, and acknowledgement of successful experiences confirm positive self-efficacy beliefs” (Ritchie 97).

### **Meets Course Objectives**

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has developed a framework for consistent statewide core undergraduate coursework (Texas Core Curriculum). Within this framework, each core course under the Communication component must include the objectives of critical thinking skills, communication skills, teamwork, and personal responsibility (“Elements”). Directed reflective journaling can potentially guide students through processes that meet the objectives of critical thinking, communication skills, and personal responsibility.

### **Develops Writing Skills**

The American Management Association and the National Education Association agree that communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking are the key skills students need to achieve success (Friedman 106). Solid writing skills are not only needed for college related tasks, but 82% of employers expressed in an online survey that the ability to effectively communicate in writing is a very important skill for their employees to have (Friedman 114).

Sustained writing practice eases writing anxiety, improves writing, and helps students become more fluent in the writing process (Kellogg and Whiteford 254). Reflective journaling encourages writing in a low-stakes environment and can be a resource that supports the goal of improving student written communication.

### **Promotes a Positive Learning Environment**

Although not directly addressed in the data analysis of this study, reflective journaling can be used to promote a positive learning environment.

A positive attitude and sense of safety in the learning environment can greatly enhance the learning process by keeping a learner on task and providing motivation for learning (Bandura, *Self-Efficacy* 174; Boud et al., “Introduction” 11). Positive and constructive feedback from an instructor can not only promote a safe learning environment but can also provide positive social persuasion which positively impacts the self-efficacy beliefs of students (Bandura, *Self-Efficacy* 175; Boud et al., “Introduction” 11). Reflective journaling can promote this type of student-instructor interaction when it is constructed to encourage discussion between the two parties.

Self-efficacy beliefs are strengthened in an environment in which students are aware of the study processes required and their correlation with academic achievement (Zimmerman, “Self-Efficacy” 87). Instructors can be instrumental in helping students make appropriate attributions to achievements (or lack of achievements). Interactive journaling in which the instructor provides feedback can provide an avenue for this type of mentoring. It is important to note, however, that student recognition of achievements



should be a direct result of their use of learning strategies and perceived effort throughout the learning process (Ritchie 43). The instructor's role in giving feedback is to guide students through the reflective process, encouraging them to interpret their progress in a manner that promotes positive self-efficacy beliefs (Ritchie 44).

## CHAPTER IV

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Rationale and Background**

Many undergraduate students lack the study habits and confidence needed to persist through the hard-academic challenges of completing a college education (Center for Community 1; Jaggars and Stacey 1; Lan 87). As discussed previously, self-efficacy beliefs can be directly tied to students' level of persistence, motivation, and determination in completing an academic plan. Self-regulatory behaviors are integral to the development of positive self-efficacy beliefs. While some schools address these deficits in study-skills coursework (Bail et al. 58), it has been suggested that these skills transfer best when practiced in the required university coursework (Beveridge et al. 70; Bruning and Kauffman 161; Butler 160; Lan 101).

Although there has been a tremendous amount of research exploring the individual concepts of self-efficacy and self-regulation, there has been little research exploring how these concepts interact together in the college classroom (Beveridge et al.; Bruning and Kauffman; Rutschow and Schneider).

A few studies have connected the teaching of self-regulation strategies to student recognition of their learning strengths and accomplishments, an insight that is inherent in a strong sense of self-efficacy (Bail et al.; Dunlap, "Changes"; Kirby). One study

focused directly on the development of self-regulatory behaviors through completing reflection journals (van den Boom et al.). Other studies have shown a positive correlation between reflective writing in undergraduate classrooms and an increase in self-efficacy beliefs in students (Bail et al.; Beveridge et al.; Boutet et al.; Dunlap, “Changes”; Gleaves et al.; Kirby; Lew; McCrindle and Christensen). Two studies were found that explore the concept of self-efficacy in undergraduate composition courses (Kirby; Zimmerman and Bandura).

None of the studies tie all three concepts--self-efficacy for writing, self-regulation behaviors, and reflective journals--together. The previously mentioned studies taken together, however, give a basis for the hypothesis that encouraging students to practice self-regulation behaviors through reflective journaling can promote positive self-efficacy for writing tasks.

### **Research Context**

Reflective journaling was assigned as part of the requirements in an English Composition I course at a community college in a large metropolitan area. The course evaluated in this study was an evening course in which the students were independent from their parents and had been out of high school for more than two years. Thirteen of the original fourteen students in the course were previously designated as developmental students in terms of college ready English skills as measured by the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) Assessment. All but one of the students had completed an eight-week

developmental English course the eight weeks prior. Fourteen students began the course and two of those students withdrew within the first week.

The purpose of the study was explained to the students and they were given the opportunity to sign an informed consent form for the study, which was approved by the Texas Woman's University Institutional Review Board (protocol #19996). In the interest of maintaining impartiality of the researcher (the instructor and author of the thesis), a third party collected the forms and kept them in a secure location until after the final grades were posted for the semester. Student grades were not impacted in any way by their involvement or non-involvement in the study.

Ten of the twelve students who completed the course signed the informed consent forms. Throughout the course of the semester, all twelve students answered six reflective prompts via an online LMS journaling tool. Feedback was given by the instructor within the same week as the responses were written. In most cases, the feedback from the instructor included one or two questions to promote further exploration of the self-regulatory behaviors expected from the responses. Students were expected to respond to the instructor before participation points were given for the journal entry. Participation points were given for each reflection based on timely and appropriate answers both to the prompts and feedback given by the instructor. The six reflection journal prompts were written outside of class time and were submitted electronically.

The final assignment of the course included a prompt that asked the students to reflect on their experiences in the course. This activity was planned and written in class

during the assigned date and time for the final. See Appendix B for the questions used for the journal reflections and the final reflection assignment.

Additionally, all students completed two surveys of their self-efficacy beliefs based on the individual tasks required to complete the Composition I course successfully (see Appendix C). This survey was completed the first week of class as well as the last week of class. Only those surveys of the ten students who had signed the informed consent form were analyzed for this study.

### **An Overview of the Research Design**

Both the self-efficacy surveys as well as the reflections were used to answer the first research question: *How does reflective journaling impact the self-regulatory behaviors and self-efficacy of first-year composition students?*

Individual reflections were analyzed for the presence of self-regulatory behaviors demonstrated or reported by the students. Change in self-efficacy beliefs was measured by comparing the self-efficacy surveys from the beginning of the course with those from the end of the course. The differences in the pre and post ratings were recorded, and the percentage change was calculated for each specific learning behavior and writing skills. Student commentary within the reflections was reported in a qualitative analysis of the student responses to the learning environment.

To answer the second research question, *Is reflective journaling an appropriate learning tool for the Composition I college classroom?* two analysis processes were completed. The reflections were analyzed for evidence of behaviors that reflect selected

criteria of the core objectives of the Composition I college course. Writing skill growth was reported from the results of an analysis of the writing of the first reflection, last reflection, and final reflection.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

#### *Student Journal Analysis*

Two raters (I and one other rater) completed the rating processes of identifying self-regulatory behaviors, identifying evidence of core objectives achieved, and scoring writing skills. Once we were familiar with the criteria defined for the behavior or skills being rated, we scored two reflections independently. Upon completion of the initial ratings, our results were compared and discussed. If there was a significant discrepancy (more than one rating), we discussed reasons for the discrepancy and agreed on an appropriate modification of ratings to bring the discrepancy to an acceptable level. Then, we continued rating, comparing results, and rectifying any significant discrepancies periodically. Once the rating process was completed for a particular type of analysis, I analyzed the ratings. More specific information for each type of analysis is given below.

**Self-regulatory behaviors demonstrated.** Both individual reflections as well as the final reflection were analyzed for four self-regulatory behaviors described in Kitsantas and Cleary's stages of self-regulation (see Appendix A). The following behaviors were identified and recorded: making quality goals, acknowledging learning orientation, self-monitoring, and making healthy attributions (see Table 2). These behaviors each contribute to the building of self-efficacy beliefs related to the writing process.

Table 2

Rubric for the Self-Regulatory Behaviors Evaluation

Quality Goals		Learning Goal Orientation		Self-Monitoring		Attribution	
10	Documents hierarchical, challenging, and achievable goals.	10	Acknowledges learning that has taken place vs. only the final product.	10	Evaluates appropriateness and success of learning strategies.	10	Successes and disappointments are attributed to strategies, learning method and/or practice.
8	Somewhat Achieved	8	Somewhat Achieved	8	Somewhat Achieved	8	Somewhat Achieved
6	Attempt Made	6	Attempt Made	6	Attempt Made	6	Attempt Made
0	No Attempt	0	No Attempt	0	No Attempt	0	No Attempt

Each journal entry was scored for the presence of each self-regulatory behaviors (see Table 2). Discrepancies of more than one rating were discussed and reconciled to be within that limit. Overall, 13% of the ratings were discussed and modified to fit into the above parameter.

**Core objectives achieved.** The Composition I course is part of the Texas Core Curriculum, Language, Philosophy & Culture foundation component. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board specifies that courses within this component area meet the core objectives of critical thinking, communication, teamwork, and personal responsibility (“Elements of the Texas Core Curriculum”).

There are several criteria under each core objective. The core objective rubrics from a local community college were reviewed and specific criteria were chosen based on the intended outcomes of the reflection journals. Each reflection entry was read for evidence of the fulfillment of criteria from the three objectives of communication, personal responsibility, and critical thinking (“Elements of the Texas Core Curriculum”). Since the journaling assignment did not incorporate interactions among the students, evidence of the fulfillment of criteria in the teamwork objective was not measured.

Within the communication core objective, the criterion of interpretation was evaluated. Evidence of this criterion being met is a demonstration that the student understands the assigned task (“Core Objectives”). Within the personal responsibility core objective, the criterion of ethical self-awareness was evaluated. Performance descriptors from the Ethical Reasoning Value Rubric from the Association of American Colleges and Universities were used (*Ethical*). Evidence of this criterion being met is a demonstration that the student connects his/her core beliefs with his/her academic tasks and goals (see Table 3) This criterion was selected due to the nature of the first reflection prompt which asked students to discuss their core values in relation to their academic goals. It was the hope that students would be motivated to persevere and develop self-regulatory behaviors as they reflected on their core values.

Within the critical thinking core objective, two criteria were evaluated, inquiry and evaluation. Evidence of the criterion of inquiry being met is the student exploring feelings, ideas, or alternative perspectives (“Core Objectives”). Evidence of the criterion



of evaluation being met is a discussion of a change in perspective and/or plan for growth in a personal or academic area (“Core Objectives”) (see Table 3).

Table 3

Selected Texas Core Curriculum Objective Criteria

TEXAS CORE OBJECTIVE 1	CORE OBJECTIVE CRITERIA DESCRIPTION <sup>2</sup>	10 Meets Expectations	7 Partially Meets Expectations	0 Does not meet expectations
Communication	<b>Interpretation</b> The student uses relevant content that conveys understanding of the assignment	Shows in-depth understanding and uses relevant quality content.	Content is partially relevant and does not give details, may go off topic.	Does not address the assignment prompt.
Personal Responsibility	<b>Ethical Self-Awareness*</b> The student discusses core beliefs that consciously or unconsciously influence ethical conduct or thinking.	Student discusses in detail/analyzes both core values/beliefs and how they are related to their academic goals.	Student states core values/beliefs but does not connect them with academic goals.	Student does not state core values or beliefs.
Critical Thinking	<b>Inquiry</b> Seeks information using ideas or perspectives pertaining to an issue or problem	Shows an in-depth exploration of feelings, ideas, or alternative perspectives.	Partially explores feelings, ideas, or perspectives but does not go in-depth.	Feelings, ideas, or perspectives are not mentioned.
Critical Thinking	<b>Evaluation</b> Uses relevant arguments to support a new perspective and/or, create a plan for change in behavior.	Explicitly shows an in-depth discussion of change in perspective and/or plan for growth in personal or academic areas based on the reflective process.	Partially relevant discussion of change in perspective and/or plan for growth in personal or academic areas based on the reflective process.	Does not include a change in perspective and/or plan for growth in personal or academic areas.
<sup>1</sup> “Elements of Texas Core Curriculum.” <i>Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board</i> . <sup>2</sup> “Core Objective Assessment Team.” <i>Academic Services</i> . Collin College, 21 Aug. 2017, <a href="http://inside.collin.edu/tl/COAT.html">http://inside.collin.edu/tl/COAT.html</a> . <sup>2*</sup> Adapted from the Ethical Reasoning Value Rubric in which the Collin College Personal Responsibility Rubric is based. “Ethical Reasoning Value Rubric.” Association of American Colleges & Universities, <a href="https://www.aacu.org/ethical-reasoning-value-rubric">https://www.aacu.org/ethical-reasoning-value-rubric</a> .				

Each reflection was rated for evidence of the four criteria being met. If there was demonstration of the objective being met, a score of ten was recorded. If there was partial demonstration of the objective being met, a score of seven was given. If there was no demonstration of the objective being addressed, a zero was recorded (see Table 3). Discrepancies of more than one rating were discussed and reconciled to be within that limit. Overall, 4.6% of the ratings were discussed and modified to fit into the above parameter.

In the final analysis, a mean student rating of eight was considered as evidence that the evidence met the criterion. This rating was decided on as a conservative measure that reflects a response above surface level but not considered an in-depth response.

**Writing skill development.** There are multiple methods to measure writing abilities and levels. The Composition I course is intended for students in their first year of college and who have demonstrated basic writing skills. A rubric used widely in secondary school systems (6 + 1 Trait Writing Model) was used to measure the writing skills students are expected to have when they enter into the college environment.

The 6 + 1 Trait Writing Model of Instruction & Assessment was created by Education Northwest as an aid for instructors to provide consistent and research-based feedback on student writing. The traits correlate with the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts (Education Northwest). Education Northwest recommends that writing be evaluated using the traits that are appropriate for the writing assignment. This study's measurement of the quality of writing was based on *voice*, *word choice*, *fluency*,

and *conventions*. Since the objective of the journaling was for students to demonstrate and reflect on self-regulatory behaviors, the traits of *main idea* and *insights, organization, and presentation* were not measured. The assessment rubric given by Education Northwest was modified to fit more precisely into the parameters of the reflection assignment and to simplify the assessment process (see Appendix D).

The first, fifth, and final reflections were scored independently by the two raters using the same process as followed in rating the self-regulatory behaviors and the core objectives. Discrepancies of more than one rating were discussed and reconciled to be within that limit. Overall, 19.7% of the ratings were discussed and modified to fit into the above parameter.

Writing growth was measured in two ways. The first one measured the percentage change between the mean scores of reflection 5 (R5) and reflection 1 (R1). The second measured the percentage change between the mean scores of the final reflection (F) and R1. The change was calculated for each item using the formula:  $((B-A)/A) * 100 = C$  (where A is the prior value, B is the ending value, and C is the percentage change).

The results were reported graphically with a written description added.

*Change in Self-Efficacy Beliefs.* Self-efficacy surveys were given to students the first week of the course, followed up with a post-survey during the seventh week of the course (see Appendix C). The survey asked students to rate themselves on the degree of confidence they felt in demonstrating nine academic behaviors and completing nine writing tasks. Students were given time in class to complete the surveys and they were

collected before the class was dismissed. Only the surveys of the students who completed the course successfully and had signed the consent to participate form were analyzed. The grades in the course ranged from 73% to 95% (4 C, 4 B, and 4 A). All but one of the students had successfully completed a developmental English course with the same instructor the previous eight weeks. The students who had completed the developmental English course were familiar with MLA formatting, general outlining, and creating thesis statements. They had also been told that English 1301 would cover the same skills in more detail and would introduce research skills.

The self-efficacy ratings were entered into an Excel file, one worksheet per student. The score at the beginning of the course was compared with the score at the end of the course for each of the 18 tasks and behaviors. The change was calculated for each item using the formula:  $((B-A)/A) * 100 = C$  (where A is the prior value, B is the ending value, and C is the percentage change). An analysis was performed for all the students overall, for those students with average confidence ratings of 90 or above (confident learners), and for those students with average confidence rates below 90 (less confident learners).

The behaviors and tasks were split up between two criteria: academic behaviors and writing skills. The data was further subcategorized by academic behaviors of confident and less-confident learners and writing skills of confident and less-confident learners. The learners were categorized by their confidence level in each subcategory, so a learner could be placed in the confident group for writing skills but also in the less-

confident group for academic behaviors. This subcategorization was completed to isolate those learners who had the least confidence and hypothetically had the most to gain by completing reflective journals in which self-regulatory behaviors were encouraged.

*Relationship Between Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Self-Regulatory Behaviors.* A table was developed to display the self-regulatory behaviors demonstrated by the students alongside the percent change in their self-efficacy beliefs. A discussion of possible correlations between student self-regulatory behaviors and self-efficacy beliefs is given for both individual students and the entire study population (see Table 8).

*Response to the Learning Environment.* After the rating process was completed, I documented quotations from the reflections that are representative of student attitudes towards the learning environment. Quotations were recorded alongside summary information regarding student self-efficacy beliefs and self-regulatory behaviors.

I also recorded my own thoughts and observations during the course. My personal reflections are used to evaluate the instructor's perspective of the feasibility and effectiveness of integrating reflective journaling into the Composition I course.

### **Limitations**

This study is exploratory and is meant to give an introductory glimpse of the impact of including reflective journaling which highlights self-regulatory behaviors into the Composition I classroom. The student population is a very specific demographic and ability level; therefore, the conclusions cannot be generalized to include students who are deemed college-ready in terms of reading and writing skills. The class size was also small

and consequently the amount of time I was able to spend with the students and respond to their reflections was greater than it would be in a larger class.

## CHAPTER V

### DATA ANALYSIS

#### **Self-Regulative Behaviors Demonstrated**

Both individual reflections as well as the final course reflection were analyzed for four self-regulatory behaviors described in Kitsanta and Cleary's phases of self-regulation (see Appendix A). The behaviors of making quality goals, learning goal orientation, self-monitoring and making healthy attributions were identified and recorded (see Tables 4 and 5). These behaviors were chosen as ones that support positive self-efficacy beliefs related to the writing process (Butler et al 210.; Zimmerman, "Becoming" 96).

Each journal prompt was written to encourage specific self-regulatory behaviors. The behaviors that were not targeted within a specific prompt were not evaluated (see Appendix D).

A score of ten was allocated if the entry included demonstration of the self-regulatory behavior in a clear and effective manner. A score of eight was allocated if the student put some effort and thought into the activity but the behavior was only partially effective. If the student attempted to demonstrate the self-regulatory behavior but was unsuccessful, a score of six was given. If there was no demonstration of the self-regulatory behavior where one would be expected, a score of zero was allocated.

Table 4

Behaviors of Highly Effective Self-Regulated Learners

Self-Regulatory Behavior	Evidence of High Effective Behavior
Sets Quality Goals	Sets hierarchical, challenging, and achievable goals. Evidence of this includes the creation of goals that are broken down into steps.
Has a Learning Goal Orientation	Acknowledges learning throughout the processes of completing a task rather than focusing simply on the final product. Evidence of this includes recording and discussing the accomplishment of the steps in the writing process.
Self-Monitors Progress	Evaluates the appropriateness and success of learning strategies. Evidence of this includes mentioning productive and unproductive learning practices.
Makes Positive Attributions	Attributes success and/or disappointments to the use of strategies, learning methods and study habits. Evidence of this includes recording and discussing of the amount of work, effort, and planning the learner put into the writing task.

Sources:

Butler, Deborah et al. "Promoting Strategic Writing by Postsecondary Students with Learning Disabilities." *Learning Disability Quarterly*, vol. 23, no. 3, Summer 2000, pp. 196-213.

Zimmerman, Barry. "Becoming a Self-Regulated Learner: An Overview." *Theory into Practice*, vol. 41, no. 2, Spring 2002, pp. 64-70.

The rating process described in Chapter IV – Methodology was followed in the rating of the self-regulatory behaviors. An acceptable discrepancy in this rating process was one level. For example, a ten from Rater 1 and an eight from Rater 2 were considered an acceptable discrepancy whereas a ten from Rater1 and a six from Rater 2 were considered unacceptable.


The data was recorded and analyzed. For the purposes of this exploratory study, a mean score of eight or better was considered evidence that the self-regulatory behavior was demonstrated effectively.



Each of the ten students had the opportunity to demonstrate the four self-regulatory behaviors through the completion of six reflective journal entries and a final reflective essay. Seven of the ten students reported some level of effective self-regulatory behaviors in their journal entries (see Table 5).

Table 5

Student Self-Regulatory Behaviors Demonstrated

	Quality Goals	Learning Goal	Self-Monitoring	Positive Attribution
Mean Rating of All Students	7.60	8.18	7.94	8.15
Student A	10.00	9.83	9.33	9.29
Student B	9.00	9.17	8.33	8.00
Student C	10.00	9.67	8.17	9.57
Student D	7.00	7.67	6.33	6.57
Student E	6.00	8.20	7.40	8.14
Student F	10.00	9.50	9.00	9.43
Student G	3.00	4.17	5.17	6.29
Student H	8.00	8.80	8.80	7.50
Student I	6.00	6.33	7.33	7.71
Student J	7.00	8.50	9.50	9.00
 A score of below 8 represents less than effective use of self-regulatory behaviors				

There is evidence that the participants demonstrated the self-regulatory behaviors of having a learning goal orientation and attributing success to work and effort. The self-regulatory behaviors of setting quality goals and self-monitoring were evident but not strong.

### Change in Self-Efficacy Beliefs

Self-efficacy beliefs concerning the academic behaviors and writing skills necessary for success in the Composition I course were reported by the students at the

beginning of the course and subsequently at the end of the course (see Appendix C). The difference in the pre and post ratings was recorded, and the percentage change was calculated.

Overall, the self-efficacy beliefs of the students had a positive change of six percent. A clear difference between the percentage change of the less confident learners and writers (overall initial mean self-efficacy <90%) and the more confident learners and writers (overall initial mean self-efficacy  $\geq 90\%$ ) was noticed. Students who started the course as less confident learners and writers reported a mean positive change in self-efficacy beliefs (+6.06% in self-efficacy towards academic behaviors and + 11.22% in self-efficacy beliefs towards writing skills). The students who started the course as confident learners and writers reported a mean negative change in self-efficacy towards academic behaviors (-.87%) and positive mean change in self-efficacy beliefs towards writing skills (4.45%) (See Table 6).

The analysis of the surveys provides evidence that students generally finished the course more confident in their academic behaviors and writing skills than they started the course. More insightful, however, is the anecdotal evidence found in the student reflections. The student comments give a more in-depth perspective of the impact the completion of the course activities had on both the academic behaviors and the writing skills of the students (see Table 7).

Table 6

Change in Self-Efficacy Beliefs by Confidence Level

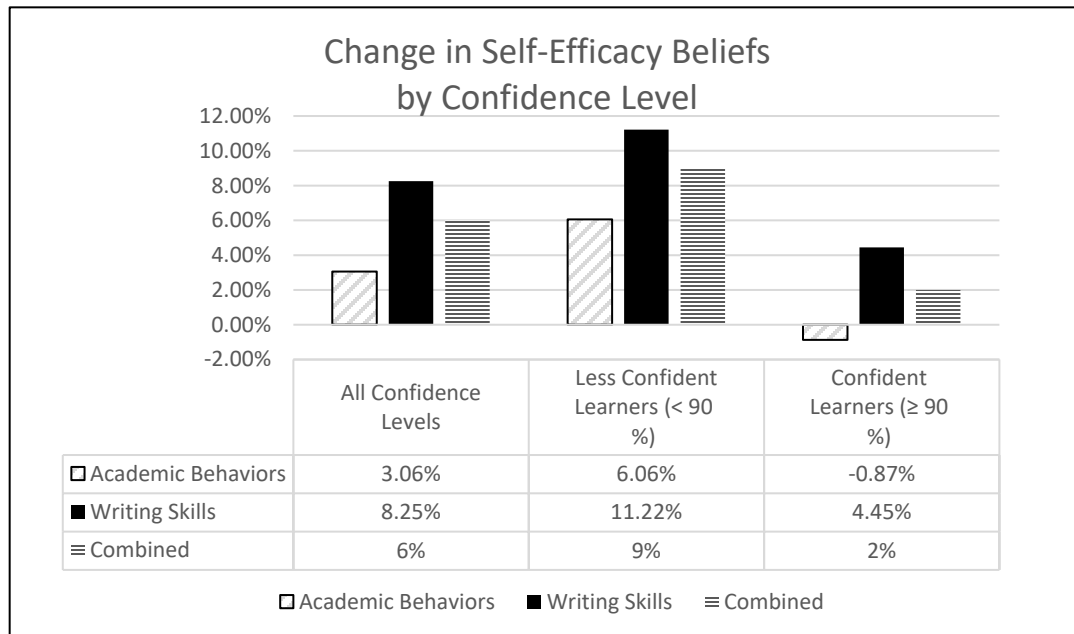


Table 7

Anecdotal Evidence of Change in Self-Efficacy Beliefs

Anecdotal Evidence	
Students Whose Self-Efficacy Beliefs Increased	
Student B – “I can definitely use my writing skills at work. I feel with my knowledge I can succeed with future school work. I have more confidence in myself and my work.” (72% initial self-efficacy for writing skills, 24.62% increase in self-efficacy for writing skills)	
Student F – “Everyone in my work started to tell me that I have improvement in my confidence. Talking about the situation I have learned after falling down is never say 'I am loser.' I learned to show up for myself. Wow I can do it [college].” (82.2% initial self-efficacy for writing skills, 13.51% increase in self-efficacy for writing skills).	
Student I – “In the end, English 1301 has taught me very much. The point is having study habits, by learning how to manage my time correctly, to learning how to write an academic essay.” (82.22% initial self-efficacy for academic behaviors, 16.21% increase in self-efficacy for academic behaviors)	
Student J – “I feel that the Discourse assignment is going to be a lot of work but I know I can do it if I have the right plan. After getting good notes and a clear understanding of what is was (discourse), it made me feel really confident to write those paragraphs. This course also	

Table 7

## Anecdotal Evidence of Change in Self-Efficacy Beliefs

Anecdotal Evidence	
Students Whose Self-Efficacy Beliefs Increased	
	helped me to keep better studying habits, like taking good notes and putting more time aside to get ready for things. It also showed me that overall you can do whatever you put time into.” (78.89% initial self-efficacy for writing skills, 18.31% increase in self-efficacy for writing skills).
Anecdotal Evidence	
Students Whose Self-Efficacy Beliefs Decreased	
Student A -	“I would like to mention a thank you to the instructor for including the exercise of schedule making for assignment of Discourse Definition in previous week. .... I was a bit overconfident about assessing my weak point earlier. Now I gained much more clarity about my strengths and weaknesses.” (98.89% initial self-efficacy for academic behaviors, 2.45% decrease in self-efficacy for academic behaviors)
Student C -	“I enjoyed understanding my weaknesses and improving throughout the semester. I have implemented a very effective study plan that I was able to stick to that played a large role in improving my writing and research techniques. I was very proud of myself because I persevered, and my hard work paid off.” (99% initial self-efficacy for academic behaviors, 2.24% decrease in self-efficacy for academic behaviors)
Student D -	“In regards to my future assignments I will work on managing my time more and use the knowledge of what I had learned such as writing skills, also work a little harder to be able to accomplish my goals and be successful”. (93.35 initial self-efficacy for academic behaviors, 3.57% decrease in self-efficacy for academic behaviors)
Student F:	“I learned how to make a smart goal because when I started it was very difficult to manage class and assignments. Additionally, I also learned about how to be in a discipline and how to motivate myself when I feel that I am not able to do this.” (100% initial self-efficacy for academic behaviors, 1.11% decrease in self-efficacy for academic behaviors)
Student G:	“I could have researched a lot better and I should have asked for more help to understand the assignment better. In the future I plan to ask more questions and be more assertive in class and most of all more engaged with the professor. Plus I will plan to study a lot more and use my time more wisely in the future.” (84.44% initial self-efficacy for academic behaviors, 6.58% decrease in self-efficacy for academic behaviors)
Student H:	“This course was one of the most helpful classes so far. I feel like this course has really helped me understand what English is all about and how to properly format a paper. It has helped me with my professionalism in my everyday life as well as work life.” (97% initial self-efficacy for writing skills, 6.07% decrease in self-efficacy for writing skills)

As the anecdotal evidence shows, students with low self-efficacy in either of the two areas (academic behaviors and/or writing skills), reported an increase in confidence towards their future academic pursuits.

Most of the students reporting a decrease in self-efficacy towards academic behaviors reported finding additional strategies during the course to promote future success. A few of the students reporting a decrease in self-efficacy towards academic behaviors recognized their overconfidence at the beginning of the semester (students A & C) and remained positive in terms of their academic success in the future. In these cases, the decrease in self-efficacy towards academic behaviors seems to be beneficial.

Student G is an anomaly in the data. This student started the semester with low self-efficacy for both academic behaviors and writing skills. His/her confidence decreased in both areas by the end of the semester. He/she, however, was able to reflect back on the course and develop strategies to be more successful in future coursework.


See Appendix E for a more detailed analysis of the task-specific changes in self-efficacy beliefs.

### **Relationships Among Self-Regulatory Behaviors and Self-Efficacy Beliefs**

*Individual Student Analysis.* A comparison was completed of the self-regulatory behaviors and self-efficacy beliefs of each individual student. Table 8 displays a summary of the changes in self-efficacy beliefs of students as well as the mean level of self-regulatory behaviors the students demonstrated in their journals throughout the semester.

Table 8

## Self-Regulatory Behaviors and Self-Efficacy Attitudes of Individual Students

Student	Initial Confidence in Academic Behaviors	% Change Confidence in Academic Behaviors	Initial Confidence in Writing Skills	% Change Confidence in Writing Skills	Quality Goals	Learning Goal	Self-Monitoring	Positive Attribution
A	98.89%	<b>-2.247%</b>	97.78%	1.14%	10.00	9.83	9.33	9.29
B	82.22%	10.81%	72.22%	24.62%	9.00	9.17	8.33	8.00
C	98.89%	<b>-2.24%</b>	90.00%	11.11%	10.00	9.67	8.17	9.57
D	93.33%	<b>-3.57%</b>	66.67%	21.67%	7.00	7.67	6.33	6.57
E	74.44%	22.39%	88.89%	6.25%	6.00	8.20	7.40	8.14
F	100%	<b>-1.11%</b>	82.22%	13.51%	10.00	9.50	9.00	9.43
G	84.44%	<b>-6.58%</b>	67.22%	<b>-4/13%</b>	3.00	4.17	5.17	6.29
H	95.56%	2.33%	97.00%	<b>-6.07%</b>	8.00	8.80	8.80	7.50
I	82.22%	16.22%	89.44%	3.45%	6.00	6.33	7.33	7.71
J	96.67%	1.15%	78.89%	18.31%	7.00	8.50	9.50	9.00
 A score of below 8 represents ineffective use of self-regulatory behaviors								

Tables 9 through 18 report results on the self-efficacy beliefs and self-regulatory behaviors of individual students.

Table 9

## Student A – Change in Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Self-Regulatory Behaviors

Student	Initial Confidence in Academic Behaviors	% Change Confidence in Academic Behaviors	Initial Confidence in Writing Skills	% Change Confidence in Writing Skills	Quality Goals	Learning Goal	Self-Monitoring	Positive Attribution
A	98.89%	-2.247%	97.78%	1.14%	10.00	9.83	9.33	9.29
Student Comments: "I would like to mention a thank you to the instructor for including the exercise of schedule making for assignment of Discourse Definition in previous week." ... "I was a bit overconfident about assessing my weak point earlier. Now I gained much more clarity about my strengths and weaknesses"								

Student A's confidence in academic behaviors decreased, but he/she had very effective self-regulatory behaviors. The student acknowledges a level of overconfidence in the beginning of the course and states that he/she now has a more realistic perspective about the challenges of his/her academic path after completing the journal activities (see Table 9).

In this case, self-regulatory processes helped to adjust the student's self-efficacy beliefs to be more realistic.

Table 10

Student B – Change in Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Self-Regulatory Behaviors

Student	Initial Confidence in Academic Behaviors	% Change Confidence in Academic Behaviors	Initial Confidence in Writing Skills	% Change Confidence in Writing Skills	Quality Goals	Learning Goal	Self-Monitoring	Positive Attribution
B	82.22%	10.81%	72.22%	24.62%	9.00	9.17	8.33	8.00
Student Comments: "I'm extremely proud of myself and I was really excited when I found out I had received a 91 on my midterm. I was definitely not expecting that grade, but then again, I feel like I worked really hard for it. I feel with my knowledge I can succeed with future school work."								

Student B experienced a boost in confidence both in his/her academic behaviors and confidence in writing. He/she demonstrated effective self-regulatory behaviors in the journaling process. His/her comments reflect an attitude that success was due to hard work, which demonstrates highly effective positive attributions (see Table 10).

In this case, it seems that self-regulatory behaviors were a contributory factor to a boost in self-efficacy towards both academic behaviors and writing skills.

Table 11

Student C – Change in Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Self-Regulatory Behaviors

Student	Initial Confidence in Academic Behaviors	% Change Confidence in Academic Behaviors	Initial Confidence in Writing Skills	% Change Confidence in Writing Skills	Quality Goals	Learning Goal	Self-Monitoring	Positive Attribution
C	98.89%	<b>-2.24%</b>	90.00%	11.11%	10.00	9.67	8.17	9.57
Student Comments: "I enjoyed understanding my weaknesses and improving throughout the semester. I have implemented a very effective study plan that I was able to stick to that played a large role in improving my writing and research technique. I was very proud of myself because I persevered, and my hard work paid off. When I write I am able to understand my strengths and weaknesses because I vocalized that in previous reflections."								

Student C experienced a decrease in self-efficacy towards academic behaviors and an increase in self-efficacy towards writing skills. He/she demonstrated self-regulatory behaviors that were effective to highly effective (see Table 11). In this case, self-regulatory processes appear to have helped adjust the student's self-efficacy beliefs to be more realistic.

Table 12

Student D – Change in Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Self-Regulatory Behaviors

Student	Initial Confidence in Academic Behaviors	% Change Confidence in Academic Behaviors	Initial Confidence in Writing Skills	% Change Confidence in Writing Skills	Quality Goals	Learning Goal	Self-Monitoring	Positive Attribution
D	93.33%	<b>-3.57%</b>	66.67%	21.67%	7.00	7.67	6.33	6.57
Student Comments: "I have learned and gained experience in my writing skills from the essay assignments and of course setting a specific time on my daily schedule and be able to follow it. This course helped me a lot in my writing skills, I feel more confident and it will help me in my future academic path."								

Student D experienced a decrease in self-efficacy towards academic behaviors and an increase in self-efficacy towards writing skills. He/she did not demonstrate



effective self-regulatory behaviors in any areas. His/her comments reflect an acknowledgement that setting a specific timeline in his/her schedule was helpful (see Table 12). No definite relationships between self-regulatory behaviors and self-efficacy beliefs are evident in this student's journal entries.

Table 13

Student E – Change in Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Self-Regulatory Behaviors

Student	Initial Confidence in Academic Behaviors	% Change Confidence in Academic Behaviors	Initial Confidence in Writing Skills	% Change Confidence in Writing Skills	Quality Goals	Learning Goal	Self-Monitoring	Positive Attribution
E	74.44%	22.39%	88.89%	6.25%	6.00	8.20	7.40	8.14
Student Comments: "The assignments given throughout the course helped create a schedule for coursework and that will improve future coursework management as assignments pile up. The assignments have helped by teaching me how to take work step by step, making sure everything is done correctly."								

Student E experienced a substantial increase in self-efficacy towards academic behaviors and an increase in self-efficacy towards writing skills. He/she demonstrated effective learning goal and attribution behaviors but was less effective in setting quality goals and self-monitoring. His/her comments reflect the realization that breaking assignments into steps and creating a schedule were instrumental in the successful completion of the course (see Table 13). In this case, the self-regulatory behaviors of viewing a task as a combination of smaller tasks (learning goal) and attributing success to hard work throughout the writing process contributed to an increase in self-efficacy towards academic tasks.

Table 14

Student F – Change in Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Self-Regulatory Behaviors

Student	Initial Confidence in Academic Behaviors	% Change Confidence in Academic Behaviors	Initial Confidence in Writing Skills	% Change Confidence in Writing Skills	Quality Goals	Learning Goal	Self-Monitoring	Positive Attribution
F	100%	<b>-1.11%</b>	82.22%	13.51%	10.00	9.50	9.00	9.43
Student Comments: "I learned how to make a smart goal because when I started it was very difficult to manage class and assignments. Additionally, I also learned about how to be in a discipline and how to motivate myself when I feel that I am not able to do this. Wow I can do it (college)."								

Student F (Table 14) experienced a decrease in self-efficacy towards academic behaviors and an increase in self-efficacy towards writing skills. He/she demonstrated very effective self-regulatory behaviors in all areas. His/her comments seemingly contradict his/her initial confidence in academic behaviors. The self-efficacy rating was completed the first week of class and the reported comment was made in reflection 5 towards the end of the course. The shift in self-efficacy towards academic behaviors alongside his/her comments suggests that the student realized his/her overconfidence in academic behaviors as the course progressed. In this case, self-regulatory processes helped to adjust the student's self-efficacy beliefs to be more realistic.

Table 15

Student G – Change in Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Self-Regulatory Behaviors

Student	Initial Confidence in Academic Behaviors	% Change Confidence in Academic Behaviors	Initial Confidence in Writing Skills	% Change Confidence in Writing Skills	Quality Goals	Learning Goal	Self-Monitoring	Positive Attribution
G	84.44%	<b>-6.58%</b>	67.22%	<b>-4.13%</b>	3.00	4.17	5.17	6.29
Student Comments: "This class has shown me to strive for better results no matter how difficult it may seem."								

Student G experienced a decrease in self-efficacy towards both academic behaviors and writing skills. He/she demonstrated less than effective self-regulatory behaviors in all areas. His/her comments reflect his/her conclusion that increased effort in future coursework will produce more successful results (see Table 15). In this case, the student lacked self-regulatory behaviors and decreased in confidence towards academic behaviors and writing skills. It is very possible that the student's lack of self-regulatory behaviors impacted his/her success in the course.

Table 16

Student H – Change in Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Self-Regulatory Behaviors

Student	Initial Confidence in Academic Behaviors	% Change Confidence in Academic Behaviors	Initial Confidence in Writing Skills	% Change Confidence in Writing Skills	Quality Goals	Learning Goal	Self-Monitoring	Positive Attribution
H	95.56%	2.33%	97.00%	<b>-6.07%</b>	8.00	8.80	8.80	7.50
Student Comments: "It has been so long since I have been in school so that was motivation for me after seeing that I've gotten A on most of my papers. The downside to the assignment was I did not get the best grade that I was hoping to get, but I take this as a learning experience and I know what I would do differently for a similar paper."								

Student H experienced a slight increase in self-efficacy towards academic behaviors and a decrease in self-efficacy towards writing skills. He/she demonstrated effective self-regulatory behaviors in setting goals, having a learning goal orientation and self-monitoring. He/she was slightly ineffective in attributing his/her accomplishments to hard work. His/her comments reflect lower confidence than reflected in the self-efficacy surveys as well as a strong learning goal orientation (see Table 16). In this case, there is

no evidence that self-regulatory behaviors impacted the self-efficacy beliefs of the student.

Table 17

Student I – Change in Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Self-Regulatory Behaviors

Student	Initial Confidence in Academic Behaviors	% Change Confidence in Academic Behaviors	Initial Confidence in Writing Skills	% Change Confidence in Writing Skills	Quality Goals	Learning Goal	Self-Monitoring	Positive Attribution
I	82.22%	16.22%	89.44%	3.45%	6.00	6.33	7.33	7.71
Student Comments: "In the end, English 1301 has taught me very much. The point is having study habits, by learning how to manage my time correctly, to learning how to write an academic essay."								

Student I experienced a substantial increase in self-efficacy towards academic behaviors and a slight increase in self-efficacy towards writing skills. He/she demonstrated less than effective goal setting and less than effective learning goal orientation. He/she demonstrated more effective behaviors in terms of self-monitoring and making positive attributions, but his/her efforts were still only slightly effective. His/her comments reflect a realization that creating good study habits and managing time well impacts the writing process (see Table 17). In this case, self-monitoring and positive attributions seem to have boosted the student' self-efficacy towards academic behaviors.

Student J experienced a slight increase in self-efficacy towards academic behaviors and a substantial increase in self-efficacy towards writing skills. He/she demonstrated effective behaviors in learning goal orientation, self-monitoring and making positive attributions. His/her goal setting was less than effective. His/her comments reflect the attitude that good study habits and hard work will create a

Table 18

Student J – Change in Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Self-Regulatory Behaviors

Student	Initial Confidence in Academic Behaviors	% Change Confidence in Academic Behaviors	Initial Confidence in Writing Skills	% Change Confidence in Writing Skills	Quality Goals	Learning Goal	Self-Monitoring	Positive Attribution
J	96.67%	1.15%	78.89%	18.31%	7.00	8.50	9.50	9.00
Student Comments: "I feel that the Discourse assignment is going to be a lot of work but I know I can do it if I have the right plan. After getting good notes and a clear understanding of what is was (discourse), it made me feel really confident to write those paragraphs. This course also helped me to keep better studying habits, like taking good notes and putting more time aside to get ready for things. It also showed me that overall you can do whatever you put time into."								

pathway to success (see Table 18). In this case, there is a slight correlation between self-regulatory behaviors and self-efficacy beliefs.

*Patterns in Student Behaviors and Responses.* The data suggests that self-regulatory behaviors can be encouraged through reflective journaling. Seventy percent of students reported benefiting from self-regulatory behaviors during the learning process (see comments of students A, C, D, E, F, I, and J). Forty percent of the students displayed effective self-regulatory behaviors in all four areas measured.

The impact of the self-regulatory practices was greatest for those students who started out the course with low confidence (see Student B (Table 10), Student E (Table 13), and Student I (Table 17)). For three students who were initially highly confident (self-efficacy ratings 90% or greater), self-regulatory processes helped them to adjust their self-efficacy beliefs to be more realistic (see Student A (Table 9), Student C (Table 11), and Student F (Table 14)).

An analysis of Student G suggests that less-than-effective self-regulatory behaviors may be instrumental in decreasing self-efficacy beliefs. This student was initially low in confidence in both academic behaviors and writing skills. He/she lacked self-regulatory behaviors and decreased in confidence towards academic behaviors and writing skills. It may be that the reflective process he/she participated in served as a motivator to engage more deeply in future coursework (see Table 15).

Students D, E, and J all lacked effective self-regulatory behaviors in some areas. They did, however, benefit from the reflective journaling task. Student D showed improvement in his/her writing skills and reported that he/she had “gained experience...setting a specific time on my daily schedule and be able to follow it”. Student E also showed gains in writing skills and wrote in his/her journal entries that: “The assignments have helped by teaching me how to take work step by step...”. Student J gained confidence by seeing the results of his/her hard work: “This course also helped me to keep better studying habits, like taking good notes and putting more time aside to get ready for things. It also showed me that overall you can do whatever you put time into.”

### **Core Objectives Achieved**

All of the reflective journal entries were measured for demonstration of four criteria associated with course objectives. The criteria of interpretation (communication objective), ethical self-awareness (personal responsibility objective), inquiry (critical

thinking objective), and evaluation (critical thinking objective) were rated by two separate raters using the procedures described in Chapter IV Methodology.

Table 19

Measure of Texas Core Objective Criteria Being Met in the Reflective Journals

CORE OBJECTIVE CRITERIA DESCRIPTION <sup>3</sup>	Student A	Student B	Student C	Student D	Student E	Student F	Student G	Student H	Student I	Student J	Mean
<b>Interpretation</b> The student uses relevant content that conveys understanding of the assignment	10	9.78	9.57	7.2	8.75	8.5	6.6	8.5	7.42	8.29	<b>8.46</b>
<b>Ethical Self-Awareness*</b> The student discusses core beliefs the consciously or unconsciously influence ethical conduct or thinking.	9.14	3.42	4.2	3.71	3.41	3.21	3.1	2.3	3.5	2.93	<b>3.92</b>
<b>Inquiry</b> Seeks information using ideas or perspectives pertaining to an issue or problem	8.07	8.07	7.79	7.14	6.58	6.35	4.9	6	4.21	7.57	<b>6.67</b>
<b>Evaluation</b> Uses relevant arguments to support a new perspective and/or, create a plan for change in behavior.	6.2	4.93	5.93	2.71	4.25	5.71	4.2	5.25	4.71	6.64	<b>5.05</b>
Score of $\geq 8$ demonstrates the criteria was met at a satisfactory level											

In the final analysis, a mean student rating of eight was considered as evidence that the evidence met the criterion. This rating was decided on as a conservative measure of a response above surface level but not considered an in-depth response. The results are shown in Table 19.

The criterion of interpretation (communication) received a mean score of 8.46. The criterion of ethical self-awareness (personal responsibility) received a mean score of 3.92. The criterion of inquiry (critical thinking) received a mean score of 6.67. The criterion of evaluation (critical thinking) received a mean score of 5.05.

The conclusion can be drawn from this data that the criterion of interpretation (communication) was met through the reflective journaling activity. The objectives of inquiry (critical thinking) and evaluation (critical thinking) were addressed by students but should also be supported through other course activities. It is possible that rephrasing some of the journal prompts could promote more satisfactory outcomes in these two areas.

Students who did not address the criteria in a prompt received a score of zero for meeting the criterion although they may have met the criterion in a previous prompt. This skewed the mean scores negatively. Future research should include a stronger analytic approach to measuring the completion of course objectives.

The reflective journal activity did not seem to address the criterion of ethical self-awareness in the personal responsibility core objective.



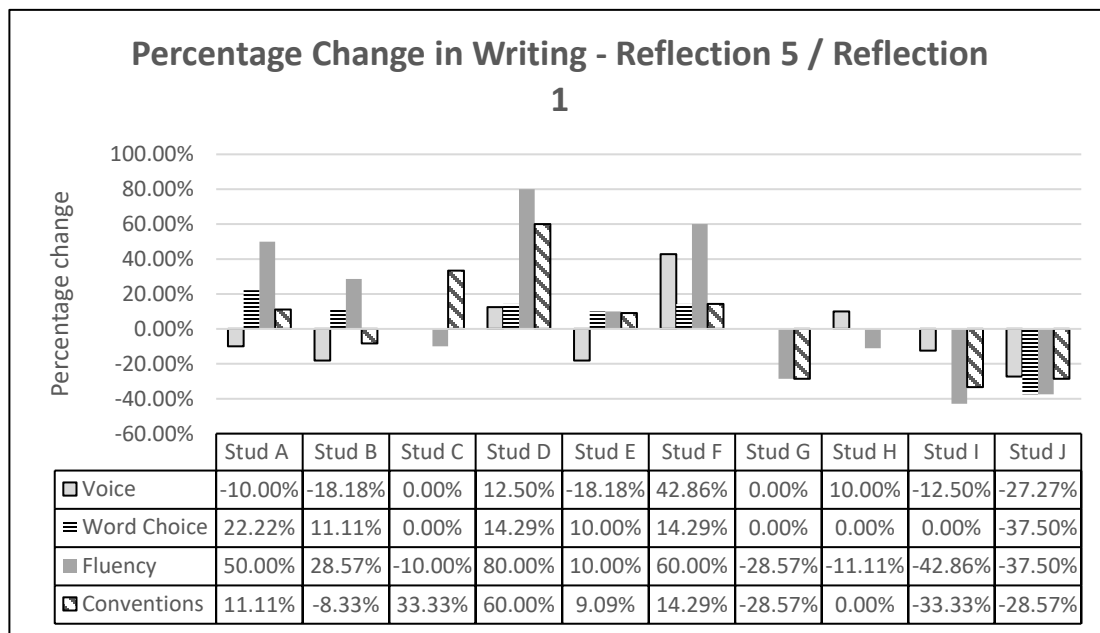
## Writing Skill Development

The reflections were rated by two independent raters for evidence of writing skills development in the areas of voice, word choice, fluency, and conventions (see Chapter IV Methodology). Two sets of analyses were performed, one comparing the fifth and the first reflections and the second comparing the final and the first reflection.

In the analysis comparing the fifth and first reflections, seven students had an increase in various writing skills, while three of the students demonstrated negative or no change in writing skills (see Table 20).

Table 20

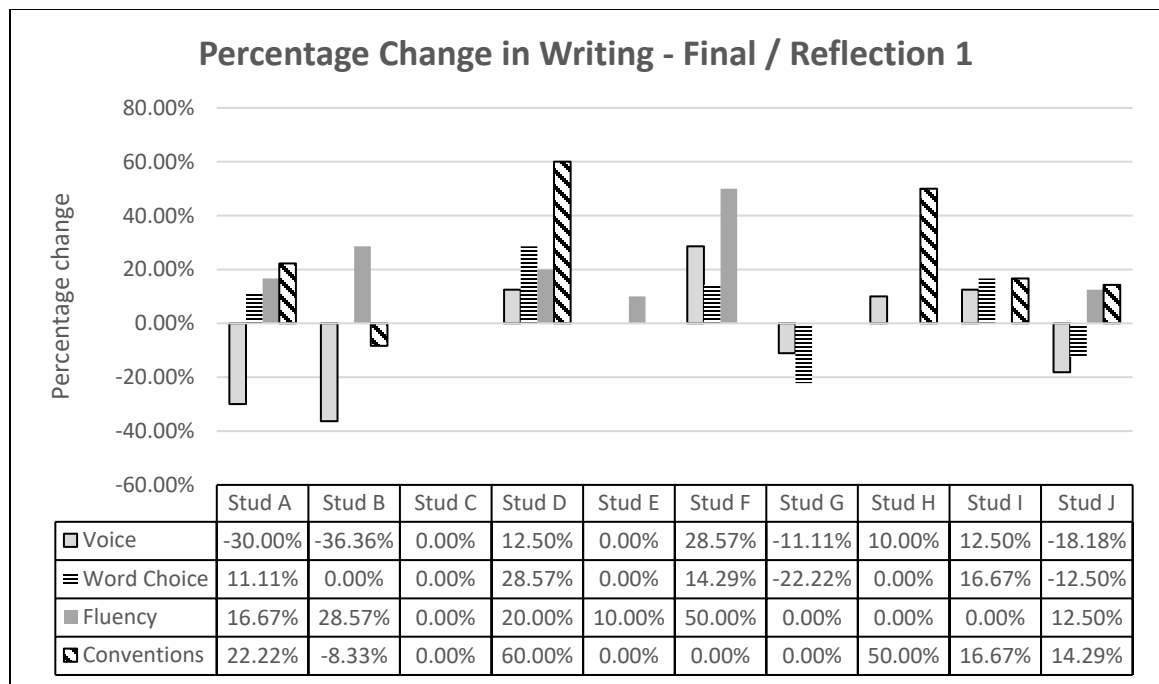
Percentage Change in Writing – Reflection 5/Reflection 1



An analysis was also completed for the percentage change in writing skills between the final and reflection 1. Eight out of the ten students demonstrated a growth in their writing skills based on this analysis (see Table 21).

Table 21

Percentage Change in Writing – Final/Reflection 1



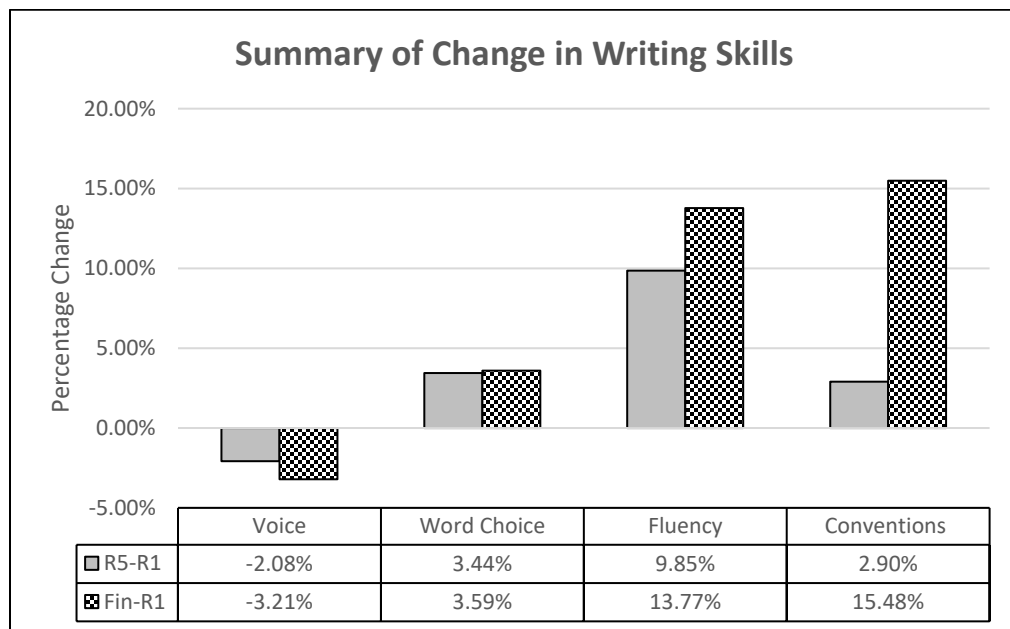
Overall students demonstrated growth in the areas of word choice, fluency, and conventions. Surprisingly, they showed negative growth in voice (see Table 22).

The percent change in writing skills in the final reflection was higher than the growth seen in the fifth reflection. This discrepancy could be the significance students placed on the writing assignment. The first and fifth reflections were completed for homework, away from the classroom. Most students enthusiastically wrote the first

reflection which focused on introducing themselves to the instructor. As the semester progressed, the quality of the writing may have suffered due to the stresses of the accelerated course. The final was an in-class writing assignment that also involved reflection and represented 20% of the students' final grade. Students most likely wrote with greater care and attention to detail in the final reflection, which would explain the greater percentage change in writing skills between the two analyses.

Table 22

Summary of Change in Writing Skills



The comparison of the two analyses shows consistent growth in word choice, fluency, and conventions (see Table 22). There was a discrepancy in the amount of growth of the writing conventions that could be due to the differences in the writing

environments discussed earlier. Overall, the reflective journaling activity had a positive impact on student writing skills.

## CHAPTER VI

### DISCUSSION

The college Composition I classroom is a place through which the majority of college freshmen pass. It is filled with anxious and ambitious learners who dream of a future of learning and success. Many of these students pass through the course successfully but more than a few leave the classroom discouraged.

It was with this in mind that I embarked on this exploratory study. I set out to find learning tasks that would encourage developmental English students to persist in their college endeavors. After researching many strategies and tools, reflective journaling showed promise to be a task that could promote a positive sense of self-efficacy in students, help students build self-regulatory behaviors, and strengthen their literacy skills.

As discussed previously, self-efficacy in learning is instrumental in supporting the determination and persistence students need to complete an academic pathway. Self-regulation plays an integral role in the building of self-efficacy for academic tasks. It impacts and is impacted by self-efficacy.

This exploratory study set out to explore the impact reflective journaling would have on students in terms of their self-regulation behaviors and self-efficacy beliefs. One of the study hypotheses predicted that reflective journaling would encourage students to practice self-regulation behaviors and subsequently their self-efficacy beliefs would

increase. It was also hypothesized that reflective journaling could be used as a learning tool in the Composition I classroom to build writing proficiency and meet some of the core objectives of the course.

### **Impact of Journaling on Self-Regulatory Behaviors and Self-Efficacy**

The data collected for this study came from a willing group of ten students in an evening Composition I classroom which I taught the Spring of 2018. The course was an accelerated course, condensed into an eight-week time span. Throughout the course, students were required to work through six reflective journal prompts, respond to my comments, and complete a reflective paper.

Data collected from the reflective journal entries support the hypothesis that self-regulatory behaviors can be encouraged through reflective journaling. Seventy percent of the students demonstrated some form of effective self-regulatory behaviors in their journal entries. Forty percent of the students displayed effective self-regulatory behaviors in all four behaviors measured: setting quality goals, having a learning goal orientation, self-monitoring progress, and making positive attributions (Butler 163; Zimmerman, “Becoming” 96).

Self-regulatory behaviors were scored on a ten-point scale. A ten was given for highly effective demonstration of the behavior, an eight for somewhat effective demonstration, and a six for an ineffective attempt. Overall, the students demonstrated somewhat effective behaviors of learning goal orientation (mean score of 8.18) and making positive attributions (mean score of 8.15). The students demonstrated a mean

score of 7.94 for self-monitoring behaviors and 7.60 for setting quality goals (see Table 5). Although these scores do not represent highly effective self-regulatory behaviors, they do represent that students made a good attempt to practice them.

Self-regulatory behaviors support positive self-efficacy beliefs (Zimmerman, “Becoming” 95; Zimmerman, *Self-Regulated* 10). The measurement of self-efficacy beliefs was split into two categories: academic behaviors and writing skills. Overall, the students increased their self-efficacy beliefs regarding academic behaviors by 3.06% and regarding writing skills by 8.25%.

Four of the learners in this study started the course with less than 90 percent confidence in their academic behaviors. After the completion of the reflective journaling assignments, these learners reported a six percent increase in self-efficacy towards academic behaviors. This increase in confidence will enable them to better evaluate their strategic efforts in the future and make adjustments where necessary (Zimmerman, “A Social” 337). The students who started the course less than 90 percent confident in their writing skills increased their confidence by 11.22% (see Table 6). Overall, the students who were less confident at the beginning of the course had a substantial increase in their self-efficacy for academic behaviors and writing tasks.

Students who started the course with a high level of confidence in their abilities ( $\geq 90\%$ ) generally did not raise their self-efficacy beliefs as much as the less confident learners. The students who started the course confident in their writing abilities ( $\geq 90\%$ ) increased in confidence by 4.45%.

Sixty percent of the students began the course confident that their academic behaviors would support successful completion of the course (see Table 5). The confidence level in academic behaviors decreased by 0.87% overall for those students. It can be argued that this is a positive development stemming from the practice of writing reflective journals.

In the journals, students were encouraged to make a study plan and timeline for completion of a specific assignment. Part way through the course, students were asked to evaluate the success of their plans and strategies. Many of the originally highly confident learners were surprised by their lack of ability to stick with their plans. It may be that a decrease in confidence in their academic behaviors promoted a more realistic perspective of their ability to organically control the academic process. Most of the students reporting a decrease in self-efficacy towards academic behaviors reported benefiting from the self-regulatory exercises (see Table 8). All five of the students reporting a decrease in self-efficacy towards academic behaviors eventually recognized their overconfidence at the beginning of the semester and remained positive in terms of their academic success in the future (see Table 7). In these cases, the decrease in self-efficacy towards academic behaviors was beneficial.

Analysis of anecdotal evidence further supports a connection between self-regulatory behaviors and self-efficacy beliefs (see Table 7). The conclusions from this exploratory study provide a foundation for future research into the ways that encouraging



self-regulatory behaviors through reflective journaling might promote positive self-efficacy for writing tasks (Bandura, *Social*).

### **Reflective Journaling as a Learning Tool**

The criterion of interpretation (communication) was met through the reflective journaling activity. The objectives of inquiry (critical thinking) and evaluation (critical thinking) were addressed but should also be supported through other course activities. It is possible that rephrasing some of the journal prompts could promote more satisfactory outcomes in these two areas.

It is important to note that students who did not address the criteria in a prompt received a score of zero for meeting the criterion, although they may have met the criterion in a previous prompt. Future research involving the scoring of objectives met in reflective journaling should include a more in-depth analysis of the how each prompt meets specific criterion. It would be beneficial to evaluate the responses using a unique set of criteria established for each specific prompt.

The reflective journal activity did not seem to address the criterion of ethical self-awareness in the personal responsibility core objective. This result is most likely influenced by the focus of the reflective prompts. The first reflective prompt was the only one that overtly asked students to discuss their core values. The mean score of student responses for this criterion on the first reflection was 8.15. The subsequent reflective responses had much lower scores. This again demonstrates a weakness in the methodology of the measurement of the core objectives being met. An investigation of

how best to score the reflections in this area is beyond the scope of this exploratory study but should be addressed in future research.

In regard to writing skills, students demonstrated growth in the areas of word choice, fluency, and conventions in their writing. There was a more noteworthy growth in student writing scores when the first reflective journal was compared to the final reflective essay than there was when the first reflection was compared to the fifth reflection. A possible explanation for this discrepancy could be the amount of effort the students put into each reflection. The first reflection prompted students to write a positive description of themselves and their perceived strengths. This was at the beginning of the semester and the students were energized to finally be in a college level course. By the end of the eight weeks, students were tired and anxious to complete the course. The fifth reflection may have been seen simply as a required task and may have been completed with limited effort. The final reflection was part of the final assignment which students wrote in class and had a much higher impact on the final grade than the other reflective tasks. The students most likely put more effort into their writing for the final reflection than the fifth reflection.

Surprisingly, student writing scores for voice decreased. An explanation for this decrease could be that the nature of the assignment did not require the writer to engage the reader (see Appendix F). The journal assignments were focused on behaviors that promoted a more simplistic recounting of events as opposed to writing with an audience

in mind. If the students were encouraged to explore their feelings and attitudes about learning, they may have added more personal voice to their writing.

This data suggest that reflective journaling provides low-stakes opportunities to write which in turn results in a greater comfort level writing (fluency) and to some extent has a positive impact on student writing conventions and word choice.

### **Classroom Environment and Attitudes**

*Student Perspectives.* Student journals reflected the students' consistent positive attitudes toward the learning process and an overall increase in academic confidence. Although students did not directly attribute their confidence to the journal writing activities, they did attribute much of their success to the development of self-regulatory behaviors.

Students C and F acknowledged that their successful completion of the course was a result of hard work and persistence. Two other students reported establishing better study habits and time management skills (students I and J).

Overall, the atmosphere in the classroom stayed positive throughout the semester. The classroom became a community of learners, struggling and succeeding together.

*Instructor Perspective.* I journaled in a more unprompted and spontaneous manner than the students throughout the eight weeks of the course. The following is a discussion of my thoughts found in my journal that are relevant to this discussion of adding reflective journal assignments into the English Composition I course.

From the review of my reflections of this course, I did notice some student fatigue with the process midway through the course. However, by the end of the course, there

was some very real evidence of growth in academic behaviors and confidence. This “evidence” came from my observations of student determination and commitment to persist through a hard sequence of tasks and the development of a real sense of community in the classroom.

Some specific “evidence” that was observed provides further insight into the potential impact of the reflective journaling process. I observed a young man acknowledge he was easily distracted by his hobbies at home and begin to show more consistency in turning in assignments on time. A young woman reported that she surprised herself by staying home on a Friday evening to do homework because she had set a goal and wanted to accomplish it. The most gratifying moment in my semester, however, was when I invited a couple into the classroom who had been waiting for a student to finish her final. It was the woman’s husband and mother-in-law. The woman’s husband recounted how he had seen growth in his wife’s academic confidence and motivation to succeed over the semester. This new immigrant to the United States found a place in the classroom where she could take risks, make friends, and develop confidence.

By the third reflection, I was also starting to feel the pressure of responding to the students’ reflections in a timely manner. I had a sense, however, that my responses to student journal entries helped to build a sense of community and to maintain student engagement and persistence. Three quarters through the semester, I wrote that:

I am highly satisfied with the impact of the reflections on the class atmosphere. My relationship with the students is good and I feel much more connected and invested in their success [than in previous courses I have taught]. The students are commenting that they are learning how to schedule their time and are gaining confidence in themselves as learners. Many students are giving themselves pep talks through their reflections....and I am forced to encourage them, which I want to do, but sometimes am so goal-oriented that I forget.

The final reflection I wrote contained the following thoughts:

As usual, I feel a real bond to the students. This semester, however, I feel that the bond is greater, and I have seen some attitudes turn around... The reflections have not only encouraged the students, but they have encouraged me. I feel a better connection with them and that I am able to have more personal discussions with them. It seems that the students can understand I care about them more through the reflection comments than through the interactions in everyday life. Overall.... connection is key to motivation.

Adding an assignment into coursework that includes an additional grading component for the instructor can become a burden rather than a tool. However, the students participating in this study were more engaged in classroom conversations and the atmosphere in the classroom was relaxed and enjoyable. I cannot conclusively state that adding the reflections into the coursework is the source of this positive atmosphere, but the passivity of students in the classroom that I had noticed in past years was not

present in the classroom that was studied. The reflections are a vessel for me to encourage students on an individual basis and I believe that contributed to a more engaged classroom.

### **Suggestions for Future Implementations and Research**

Although the results of the analysis of demonstrated self-regulatory behaviors were encouraging, the students did not meet my expectations in terms of setting effective goals and self-monitoring. In future courses, it would be advantageous for the prompts to focus more specifically on setting goals and monitoring those goals throughout the writing process. In a slower-paced course (16 weeks), classroom, discussions focused on strategies that promote success can be implemented to encourage more active involvement of students in setting and monitoring their goals for the course.

This study was exploratory in nature and points to some interesting new hypotheses to explore in future research. The data suggest that students developed self-regulatory behaviors and increased in academic confidence. A more formal study with measures to connect the two learning behaviors can be built upon these results.

A further evaluation of which questions students were the most responsive to would also inform the development of future reflective journaling prompts. Reflective journaling can be time-consuming for both the students and the instructor. Knowing the type of questions that are most effective in helping student demonstrate reflective and self-regulatory behaviors would ensure the activity is beneficial.

A comparative study of two English courses taught by the same instructor with similar student demographics would be informative. Interactive reflective journals would be integrated into one course, while a control group using a simple discussion board would be integrated into the second course. A study of the difference in student behaviors, attitudes, and classroom environments would further inform the suggestion that reflective journaling can encourage self-reflective behaviors and increase student self-efficacy.

An additional approach to further research is to have two different instructors with varied teaching approaches and assignments introduce the reflective journaling activity into their coursework. A detailed study of the impact instructor teaching style and writing component priorities has on the reflective journaling activity would be informative.

From my personal experience, self-regulatory behaviors are lacking in many developmental college students enrolled in the Composition I classroom. Although there are admittedly some weakness in the methodology and analysis in this study, this exploratory study has provided support for the hypothesis that supporting students' success in the Composition I classroom by encouraging self-regulation is beneficial.

Overall, I have learned so much from this process and have been able to deeply identify with my Composition I students. They have enjoyed seeing me struggle through the process and I have been able to truly empathize with their insecurities in the writing process. I have become a better student and a better teacher. I hope to continue to integrate reflective journal prompts into my future courses.

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## APPENDIX A

### Definitions of The Phases of Self-Regulation

# Definitions of the Phases of Self-Regulation in the Learning Process

Self-Regulation Phase	Zimmerman “Developing”	Kitsantas and Cleary	Ertmer and Newby
<b>Forethought</b>	<p>Includes the pre-learning processes and beliefs of students which lay the foundation for learning.</p> <p><b>Cognitive Demands</b></p> <p>Task Analysis Goal Setting Strategic Planning</p> <p><b>Motivational Demands</b></p> <p>Self-Motivation Beliefs Self-Efficacy Beliefs Outcome Expectations Intrinsic Interest/Value</p>	<p>Involves a variety of processes such as goal setting, strategic planning, and self-motivational beliefs.</p> <p><b>Cognitive Demands</b></p> <p>Task Analysis Goal Setting Strategic Planning</p> <p><b>Motivational Demands</b></p> <p>Self-Motivation Beliefs Self-Efficacy Beliefs Outcome Expectations Intrinsic Interest/Value</p>	<p>Considers various ways to approach a task given the task demands and personal resources available.</p> <p><b>Cognitive Questions</b></p> <p>What is the goal? What are effective strategies for completion?</p> <p><b>Motivational Questions</b></p> <p>How do I feel about this kind of task? Does the task require a great deal of concentration and effort?</p>
<b>Performance</b>	<p>The processes involved in learning which impact the level of concentration and performance achieved.</p> <p><b>Cognitive Demands</b></p> <p>Self-Instruction Task Strategies Self-Observation Self-Recording Self-Monitoring Self-Experimentation</p>	<p>Self-observation and self-control. Monitoring the learning process with the goal of improving the likelihood of success and persistence.</p> <p><b>Cognitive Demands</b></p> <p>Self-Instruction Task Strategies Self-Observation Self-Recording Self-Monitoring</p>	<p>The awareness of what one is doing and understanding where it fits into the final goal. Anticipating and planning of the next steps need to accomplish a goal.</p> <p><b>Cognitive Questions</b></p> <p>Are the strategies I’ve chosen working? Do I understand what I am doing? Am I making progress towards the goal?</p>



Self-Regulation Phase	Zimmerman “Developing”	Kitsantas and Cleary	Ertmer and Newby
	<b>Motivational Demands</b>  Self-Control Attention Focusing	<b>Motivational Demands</b>  Self-Control Attention Focusing	<b>Motivational Questions</b>  Is the task holding my attention? What are my feelings while working on the task? How confident am I that I can complete the task successfully?
<b>Self-Reflection</b>	Processes which occur after the learning efforts which influence a learner’s reactions to the experience. The outcomes of this phase influence the learner’s attitudes towards future academic tasks.  <b>Cognitive Demands</b>  Self-Judgment Self-Evaluation Casual Attribution  <b>Motivational Demands</b>  Self-Satisfaction/Affect Adaptive/Defensive	Self-judgments and reactions to learning efforts.  <b>Cognitive Demands</b>  Self-Judgment Self-Evaluation Casual Attribution  <b>Motivational Demands</b>  Self-Satisfaction/Affect Adaptive/Defensive	Evaluation of the learning process and product achieved after completion of the learning task.  <b>Cognitive Questions</b>  How well did my approach work with the task? What did I do when strategies didn’t work? When else could I use this approach? Did I achieve the goal? What new goals do I have now?  <b>Motivational Questions</b>  Did I stay motivated? How do I feel about the outcome?

APPENDIX B

Reflection Questions

## Reflection #1 – Week 2

Imagine you have been asked to write a profile of yourself that will be submitted to the “Extraordinary People” website. In two paragraphs or more, reflect on what you would write in the profile. Include characteristics of yourself that you are proud of. You may also want to discuss your values and how those values impact the decisions you make. Include areas in life you are especially good at. Lastly, discuss which academic areas of study you have excelled at in the past or have the potential to excel at given the time and energy to pursue them. It’s ok to be bold and brag a bit in this reflection.

## Reflection #2 - Week 3

Write a reflection of at least two paragraphs answering the following questions:

1. How have you organized your time in the past two weeks to complete the work required for this course?
  - When did you study? (Record days and time periods)
  - How long in each sitting did you work on the assignment?
  - Did you ask anyone for help or clarification on the assignment?
  - Did you look at any sources other than those given to you by the instructor to help you understand the idea of discourse?
  - What other study tasks helped you to complete the assignments?

What worked well in the above strategy?

What could you change in terms of focus, time line, and environment to allow you to be more productive in your study time? (You may want to get feedback from those that have observed you study).

2. What have you done well in the first two assignments of the course (Profile Assignment & Visual Analysis)? What changes do you need to make in your study habits to improve your grade on the Definition assignment (Discourse Definition)?
3. Create a schedule for completing the Discourse Definition paper. Specify a specific day and time that you will complete each part of the assignment due in the next two weeks (See Weekly Checklist).

### **Reflection #3 – Week 4**

Write a reflection of at least two paragraphs answering the following questions:

1. Read the teacher feedback on the Discourse Define Paragraphs rough draft.  
Discuss the teacher feedback.  
What did you do well?  
What needs to be changed?
2. Reflect on goals set last week  
What worked ...what did not work?  
Did you stick to your study schedule?  
Which study habits proved beneficial?  
What distracted you from completing your goals?

### **Week 5 – No Reflection**

### **Reflection # 5 - Week 6**

Choose from one of the reflection questions and write a response of at least two paragraphs.  
Please respond to a different question than you responded to in the previous reflection.

1. We are now over half-way through this course. What have you learned so far in the course about writing papers? What have you enjoyed? What have you found challenging? What adaptations to your learning habits have you made to ensure success in the course?
2. English 1301 is a core class required of all college students. Why do you think the administration feels this is an important course?

How have the assignments in this course so far built a foundation for success in future college coursework?

How have the assignments in this course so far built a foundation for success in your future career?

3. What insights have you gained from the assignments so far that will help you continue to be successful in college coursework? You may want to address insights into your habits as a student, both good and bad, research strategies that will be helpful, strategies to be successful working in a group or any other thoughts you would like to explore.

4. Discuss a grade that you received on an assignment. Were you happy with that grade? What do you feel proud of regarding the assignment? What do you feel you need to work on to improve your writing in future assignments?

### **Reflection #6 – Week 7**

1. What assignment are you most proud of? Discuss what behaviors and skills led you to complete a quality product?
2. What assignment are you least proud of? Discuss why this assignment wasn't your best work.
3. Refer to your previous reflection assignments. How can the skills that you learned in the past 8 weeks help you in future courses?
4. Are there any skills or study habits that you need to change to be more successful in the future?
5. What advice can you give to students in the next English 1301 course that will help them be successful?
6. What advice can you give to the professor that will support student success in future course?

### **Final Reflection Assignment**

Write a reflective essay on your learning and experience over the semester in English 1301.

1. The first portion of the essay is to explain the benefits of reflection in the learning process. Use the information you retrieved from the YouTube video "Reflection in Learning: A Basic Introduction" as well as the article "Learning Through Reflection". Describe the various steps involved in the Gibbs Reflective Cycle. Use the notes you created in preparation for the final and CITE the articles using parenthetical citations. Cite both articles. (Be sure to include a Works Cited Page at the end of the essay).
2. Reflect on two assignments you completed (or did not complete) during the past 8 weeks of English 1301 (one assignment at a time). Follow the Gibbs Reflective Cycle steps to reflect on each assignment individually. You may write this portion in 1<sup>st</sup> person. Each reflection needs to be written in paragraph format and should be at least ½ page, double spaced in length.

(You do not have to answer all the questions, but you do need to answer at each step of the cycle (Description, Feelings, Evaluation, Analysis, Conclusions and Action Plan).

- A. Description: Describe the assignment.
- B. Feelings: What were you thinking and feeling when the assignment was assigned?
- C. Evaluation: What was good and bad about the process of completing the assignment?
- D. Analysis: What were the experiences of your other classmates?
  - Were they similar?
  - Were they different?
  - How did the writing assignment compare to other writing assignments you have had?
- E. Conclusions: What could have been done differently?
  - Did you do something well that should be replicated in future assignments?
  - What did you learn?
- F. Action Plan: What are you going to do differently in future assignments?
  - (in English courses, or in your future coursework)

This may include study habits, time management, writing techniques or other academic skills that you may have been encouraged to integrate into your future school experiences. Are there any skills or academic habits that you need to develop further?

Lastly, write a conclusion giving a general reflection of the course. What aspects of the course were helpful and what aspects of the course would you change.

APPENDIX C  
Self-Efficacy for Writing Surveys

### English 1301 Appraisal Inventory – Beginning of Course

This questionnaire is designed to give you an overview of some of the key skills that are needed for successful navigation through your college career. Many of these items are skills you will learn in this course and you are not expected to be highly certain in accomplishing them. Students vary in their levels of confidence in completing various tasks, some will be better at one skill but lack confidence in another skill. For each question, use the following rating scale to rate your confidence in the specified task. Please answer the questions honestly.

*Rate your degree of confidence by recording a number from 0 to 100 using the scale given below:*

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Cannot do at all			Moderately can do				Highly certain can do			

<b>Academic Behaviors</b>	
I can break a writing assignment into pieces and set personal due dates for each piece of the process (research, outline, rough draft, revision, peer review, revision)	_____
I can keep track of assignment due dates and turn in assignments on time.	_____
I can create a study schedule for the week and stick to it.	_____
I can attend every class session and stay focused on the topic the entire time.	_____
I can create academic goals and accomplish them.	_____
I can seek additional help on a task if I am unsure how to complete it.	_____
I can work effectively with a group to complete an assignment I can be proud of.	_____
I am comfortable asking other classmates questions	_____
I am comfortable asking my teacher questions.	_____
<b>Writing Skills</b>	
I can craft a thesis statement that is clear and concise.	_____
I can prepare an outline of a paper that includes a clear thesis statement, topic sentences and supporting evidence.	_____
I can edit text for correct spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.	_____



I can submit a final draft that is easily read and has few or no grammar, syntax or spelling errors.	_____
I can write a paper with correct MLA formatting and give appropriate credit to the various sources of information I use to support my thesis.	_____
I can use the school databases to find scholarly information to support an argument.	_____
I can write an argument that is supported by evidence, examples and addresses counterargument.	_____
I can write an argument in a neutral, non-judgmental tone.	_____
I can use source material without plagiarizing.	_____

What strategies are you going to use to:

Manage your time:

Keep up the motivation to complete quality work:

Ensure that you receive the academic support you need:

### English 1301 Appraisal Inventory – End of Course

Now that you have almost completed the course, fill out the Appraisal Inventory again. For each question, use the following rating scale to rate your confidence in the specified task. Please answer the questions honestly.

*Rate your degree of confidence by recording a number from 0 to 100 using the scale given below:*

<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Cannot do at all</b>					<b>Moderately can do</b>					<b>Highly certain can do</b>

<b>Academic Behaviors</b>	
I can break a writing assignment into pieces and set personal due dates for each piece of the process (research, outline, rough draft, revision, peer review, revision)	_____
I can keep track of assignment due dates and turn in assignments on time.	_____
I can create a study schedule for the week and stick to it.	_____
I can attend every class session and stay focused on the topic the entire time.	_____
I can create academic goals and accomplish them.	_____
I can seek additional help on a task if I am unsure how to complete it.	_____
I can work effectively with a group to complete an assignment I can be proud of.	_____
I am comfortable asking other classmates questions.	_____
I am comfortable asking my teacher questions.	_____
<b>Writing Skills</b>	
I can craft a thesis statement that is clear and concise.	_____
I can prepare an outline of a paper that includes a clear thesis statement, topic sentences and supporting evidence.	_____
I can edit text for correct spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.	_____
I can submit a final draft that is easily read and has few or no grammar, syntax or spelling errors.	_____

I can write a paper with correct MLA formatting and give appropriate credit to the various sources of information I use to support my thesis.	_____
I can use the school databases to find scholarly information to support an argument.	_____
I can write an argument that is supported by evidence, examples and addresses counterargument.	_____
I can write an argument in a neutral, non-judgmental tone.	_____
I can use source material without plagiarizing.	_____

1. Compare the Appraisal Inventory from the beginning of the course to the one that you filled out at the end of the course. How are they different?
2. What areas did you increase in confidence?
3. Discuss the activities or accomplishments which led you to raise your confidence score in those areas?

## APPENDIX D

### Rating Form for Self-Regulatory Behaviors

# SELF-REGULATORY BEHAVIORS

Self-Regulatory Phase	Self-Regulatory Activity	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	FR
Forethought	Quality Goals	Not Rated		Not Rated	Not Rated	Not Rated	Not Rated	Not Rated
	Learning Goal Orientation	Not Rated						
Performance	Self-Monitor Process	Not Rated						
Reflection	Positive Attributions							

Quality Goals	Learning Goal Orientation	Self-Monitor Process	Attributions
(10) Setting hierarchical, challenging, and achievable goals. Evidence includes the creation of goals that are broken down into steps.	(10) Acknowledges learning through the process in contrast to focusing simply on the final product. Evidence includes mentioning accomplishing steps in the writing process.	(10) Evaluates appropriateness and success of learning strategies. Evidence includes mentioning productive and unproductive learning practices.	(10) Attributes success and/or disappointments to strategies, learning methods and study habits. Evidence includes mentioning hard work and planning.
(8) Somewhat Achieved	(8) Somewhat Achieved	(8) Somewhat Achieved	(8) Somewhat Achieved
(6) Attempt Made	(6) Attempt Made	(6) Attempt Made	(6) Attempt Made
(0) No Attempt	(0) No Attempt	(0) No Attempt	(0) No Attempt

## APPENDIX E

### Task-Specific Changes in Self-Efficacy Beliefs

An analysis was completed based on the specific tasks reported on in the self-efficacy survey that promote self-regulatory behaviors or provide other sources of positive self-efficacy beliefs.

Academic Behaviors and Tasks	Overall		Beginning Self-Efficacy ≥ 90				Beginning Self-Efficacy < 90		
			Overall	Behaviors	Writing		Overall	Behavior	Writing
Self-Regulation Forethought Phase Task Analysis/Goal Setting/Strategic Planning									
Break Writing Process into Pieces	10%		-3%	6%	0%		22%	19%	13%
Create Academic Goals and Accomplish	8%		0%	-2%	13%		14%	27%	6%
Self-Regulation Performance Phase Self-Control, Self-Monitoring									
Keep Track of Due Dates Turn in Assign on Time	4%		0%	2%	0%		8%	9%	5%
Create a Study Sched and Stick to It	-1%		-3%	-3%	-10%		0%	3%	1%
Find Resources for Help	-6%		-8%	-10%	18%		-5%	0%	-12%
Emotional and Psychological States (Safe Environment)									
Work Effectively in a Group	8%		-3%	-3%	18%		16%	31%	6%
Comfort Asking Peers Questions	7%		3%	0%	18%		11%	22%	5%
Comfort Asking Teacher Questions	0%		0%	0%	5%		0%	0%	-1%

The initial phase of self-regulatory behaviors includes analyzing the task, setting goals, and creating a specific plan to complete the assignment. The

reflection in week 3 asked students to review their study habits in the first three weeks of the course, describing what worked well and what did not work well. The students were then asked to create a plan for a definition paper using the strategies which worked well and adjust the strategies that did not work well (study location, use of resources, etc.). In week 4, students were asked to read and respond to teacher feedback on the initial draft of the definition paper and reflect on their study habits of the previous week.

The self-efficacy beliefs had the highest positive change for those tasks within the forethought phase: breaking the writing process into pieces (+10%) and creating academic goals (8%) (see Table 10). Overall, students with lower confidence had the most substantial increases in self-efficacy beliefs (+ 22% for breaking writing processes into pieces and +14% for creating academic goals and accomplishing them). The more confident learners reported negative (-3%) or static (0%) change in self-efficacy beliefs for the same tasks.

Self-efficacy belief gains for tasks in the performance phase of self-regulation (see Table 10) were mixed. Overall, students felt more confident in keeping track of due dates and turning in assignments on time (+4% overall, +8% non-confident learners, 0% confident learners). Students generally decreased in confidence for creating and sticking to a study plan and finding outside resources for help. Although these tasks were addressed briefly in the journal prompts, they were embedded in a multi-level question, and it is possible that the students did



not give adequate thought and reflection to finding strategies to stick to a schedule and find the help they needed using outside sources.

The students reported having a positive change in self-efficacy beliefs in regard to working with a group and asking peers questions. There was no noteworthy change in self-efficacy beliefs in regard to their comfort level in asking the instructor questions. It is not likely that the comfort level of the students working in groups and interacting with their peers was impacted by the writing of the reflection journal responses. There is no evidence from this data that writing reflective journals increases the self-efficacy of students interacting with the professor or receiving any type of encouragement from the instructor via the reflective journal process.

## APPENDIX F

### Modified Six Traits Writing Rubric

#### Six Traits Rubric for Grades 3–12

- ❖ Voice
- ❖ Word Choice
- ❖ Sentence Fluency
- ❖ Conventions

Modified by Jennifer McMillin  
for the assessment of a reflection assignment in a college Composition 1 course

Education Northwest. “6 +1 Trait Rubrics”. *Education Northwest*, December 2012,  
<http://educationnorthwest.org/traits/traits-rubrics>

The 6 + 1 Trait Writing Model of Instruction & Assessment was created by Education Northwest as an aid for instructors to provide consistent, and research-based feedback on student writing. The traits correlate with the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts (Education Northwest). Education Northwest recommends that writing be evaluated using the traits that are appropriate for the writing assignment. This study's measurement of the quality of writing was based on *voice*, *word choice*, *fluency*, and *conventions*. Since the objective of the journaling was for students to demonstrate and reflect on self-regulatory behaviors, the traits of *main idea* and *insights*, *organization*, and *presentation* were not measured. The assessment rubric given by Education Northwest was modified to fit more precisely into the parameters of the reflection assignment and to simplify the assessment process.

Voice		Key question: Does the reader clearly hear this writer speaking in the piece?				
	Not proficient			Proficient		
	1 Beginning	2 Emerging	3 Developing	4 Capable	5 Experienced	6 Exceptional
	Appears the author is indifferent, uninvolved, or distanced from the topic, purpose, and/or audience	Relies on simplistic phrases such as “I like it” or “It was fun” to convey any personal quality	Has an emerging voice that is not distinct or unique; gives the reader an incomplete impression of the author’s relationship to the purpose and topic	Portrays the author as sincere, yet not fully engaged or involved; offers a pleasant or even personable voice, though reader is not completely convinced of the author’s commitment to the topic	Addresses topic, purpose, and audience in a sincere and engaging way that convinces the reader of the author’s commitment to the topic	Addresses the reader in an individual and engaging way that shows ownership of purpose and topic; is respectful of audience and/or purpose
Engagement with Reader	Disengages reader with flat writing; has no content that interacts with the reader in any way	Follows a predictable approach with nothing fresh to engage the reader	Seems aware of the reader, yet writing avoids original insights, preferring safe generalities	Begins to reach audience and has moments of successful interaction	Communicates with reader in an earnest, pleasing, authentic manner	Interacts with and engages the reader in ways that reveal the author’s own personality, making unique choices to reach the audience
Individual Expression	Reveals virtually nothing specific about the author, making this a piece that anyone could have written	Offers glimpses of original thinking but is mostly flat, revealing little of the author’s perspective	Surprises the reader with occasional “aha” moments but shows minimal risk-taking	Surprises, delights, or moves reader in more than one or two places	Has moments of insight and risk-taking that strengthen the piece	Reveals individual thinking in a committed, distinctive manner that helps the reader “hear” this author
Tone	Has no evident tone	Has a tone that does not support the purpose	Conveys a flat, disinterested tone	Includes tone that begins to support and enrich the writing and clarify the message	Uses tone that supports the message and purpose most of the time	Employs tone that gives flavor and texture to message and is appropriate to both the author and purpose

Word Choice		Key question: Does the author's choice of words convey precise and compelling meaning and/or create a vivid picture for the reader?				
	Not proficient			Proficient		
	1 Beginning	2 Emerging	3 Developing	4 Capable	5 Experienced	6 Exceptional
	Uses limited vocabulary; attempts to use words to convey meaning are unsuccessful	Has flawed or simplistic vocabulary, resulting in impaired meaning; reader has difficulty understanding the message	Has vocabulary that is understandable yet lacks energy and imagination and may be repetitive; some interpretation may be needed to understand parts of the piece.	Uses vocabulary that is functional and achieves purpose; minimal overuse of words; author's meaning is easy to understand and fits audience and text types.	Incorporates precise and appropriate vocabulary; features writing suitable to audience, purpose and text type.	Uses precise, powerful, accurate and engaging vocabulary. Enhances meaning in interesting, natural ways appropriate to task, purpose and audience.
Word Choice	Uses words incorrectly, making message unclear; distracts reader with errors and frequently uses slang and/or texting language that are inappropriate	Uses words that are inappropriate (i.e., either too plain or so exaggerated that they impede understanding); includes slang and/or texting language that do not suit purpose	Chooses words that are functional but limited, conveying only a basic message; occasionally includes slang and/or texting language that are inappropriate	Demonstrates willingness to stretch and grow with attempts at creative word choice; shows mastery of appropriate vocabulary for message, purpose, and audience	Frequently chooses creative, precise words to clarify and enhance meaning	Uses words that are natural, original, and suited to purpose and audience; features effective word choice that enriches the author's message
Parts of Speech	Misuses parts of speech frequently, confusing reader and clouding the message	Has limited variety in parts of speech; uses jargon or clichés that detract from the message	Includes mechanical parts of speech that reflect a lack of craftsmanship; relies on passive verbs, overused nouns, and lack of modifiers that limit the message and make the piece uninteresting	Uses accurate and occasionally refined parts of speech that are functional and start to shape the message	Carefully chooses correct and varied parts of speech to effectively communicate message and clarify and enrich writing	Crafts parts of speech to best convey message; has lively verbs that energize the piece and precise nouns/modifiers that add depth, color, and specificity

Fluency		Key question: Does the author control sentences so the piece flows smoothly when read aloud?				
	Not proficient			Proficient		
	1 Beginning	2 Emerging	3 Developing	4 Capable	5 Experienced	6 Exceptional
	Structures sentences incorrectly so reader has to reread piece several times and still has difficulty reading aloud without pausing or substituting phrases	Varies sentences very little; uses even simple sentence structure incorrectly in places, causing reader to stumble when reading aloud	Has sentences that are technically correct but not varied, creating sing-song patterns or lulling the reader to sleep; sounds mechanical when read aloud	Has varied sentences that flow smoothly; tends to be pleasant or businesslike, though may still be mechanical in places; is easy to read aloud	Incorporates some sentences that are rhythmic and flowing, using a variety of correctly structured sentence types; flows well when read aloud	Uses sentences that flow, have rhythm and cadence, and are well built, with strong, varied structures that invite expressive oral reading
Sentence Structure	Has choppy sentence structure that is incomplete, run-on, rambling, or awkward; determining where sentences begin and end is nearly impossible	Uses sentence structure that often works, but may be overly simplistic for the purpose	Uses technically correct sentence structure, yet sentences are frequently not smooth	Uses sentence structure that is correct and smooth, but mechanical in places; sentences hang together and are structurally sound	Has sentence structure that flows well and moves reader fluidly through the piece	Uses strong sentence structure, underscoring and enhancing meaning while engaging and moving the reader fluidly from beginning to end

Fluency cont.		Key question: Does the author control sentences so the piece flows smoothly when read aloud?				
	Not proficient			Proficient		
	1 Beginning	2 Emerging	3 Developing	4 Capable	5 Experienced	6 Exceptional
Sentence Sense and Rhythm	Has no apparent sentence sense, making it nearly impossible to determine where sentences begin and end; has choppy rhythm; piece cannot be read aloud without author’s help, even with practice	Shows little evidence of sentence sense; requires reader to reconstruct sentences to make them flow correctly; does not invite expressive oral reading	Uses inconsistent sentence sense; enables reader to read aloud after a few rereadings	Has evident sentence sense; rhythm is present; most sentences lend themselves to oral reading	Conveys sentence sense that is strong, with frequent rhythmic patterns; uses construction and variety to enhance flow; employs dialogue or fragments effectively; reader can read aloud easily	Has strong sentence sense with rhythm and cadence; has structure that contributes to meaning; may use dialogue that sounds natural and fragments that add style; reading aloud is expressive and pleasurable
Sentence Variety	Has incomplete sentences that make it hard to determine quality of beginnings or identify type of sentence	Uses simple sentences (i.e., subject-verb-object) that mostly begin the same way and are monotonous	Includes sentence beginnings that sometimes vary, but in a predictable way; limits almost all sentences to simple and compound types	Varies sentence beginnings yet many are routine or generic; includes simple, compound, and a few complex sentence types	Has varied and frequently unique sentence beginnings; uses a variety of sentence types (e.g., simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex) to create balance	Adds interest and energy with varied sentence beginnings; uses a variety of sentence types that appear chosen to enhance meaning and flow

Fluency cont.		Key question: Does the author control sentences so the piece flows smoothly when read aloud?				
	Not proficient			Proficient		
	1 Beginning	2 Emerging	3 Developing	4 Capable	5 Experienced	6 Exceptional
Sentence Connections	Has weak or no transitions that create a jumble of choppy language and/or runon sentences; uses sentences that muddle the sound of the piece	Incorporates basic transitions (e.g., and, so, but, then, because) that do little to lead the reader through the piece; if used, transitions seem randomly applied	Leads reader from sentence to sentence with a few, simple transitional words or phrases, though coherence remains limited	Holds piece together with varied transitional words or phrases (e.g., either, therefore, although)	Moves reader easily through the piece with thoughtful and varied transitional words or phrases	Uses creative, appropriate, and varied transitional words or phrases that show how each idea relates to the previous one and tie the piece together



Conventions		Key question: How much editing is required before the piece can be shared as a final product? (Note: For the trait of conventions, grade level matters. Expectations should be based on grade level and include only skills that have been taught.)				
	Not proficient			Proficient		
	1 Beginning	2 Emerging	3 Developing	4 Capable	5 Experienced	6 Exceptional
	Contains errors in conventions that distract the reader, making text unreadable	Has many types of convention errors scattered throughout text	Handles conventions well at times but, at others, makes errors that distract the reader and impairs readability; displays a lack of skill with particular convention(s) through repeated mistakes	Applies standard grade-level conventions accurately on most occasions	Shows few errors with only minor editing needed to publish; may stretch, trying more complex tasks in conventions	Uses conventions effortlessly without significant errors; may use conventions to creatively enhance message
Spelling	Has frequent spelling errors, even with common words	Uses phonetic spelling with many errors	Frequently spells simple words incorrectly, although reader can still understand the meaning	Usually uses correct or reasonably phonetic spelling for common grade-level words; may be inaccurate with more difficult words	Correctly spells most common grade-level words and often more difficult words	Has mostly correct spelling, even for more difficult words; includes occasional errors that do not detract from overall quality
Punctuation	Uses missing or incorrect punctuation nearly all the time	May have punctuation present but it is usually incorrect	Features simple end punctuation that is correct, but internal punctuation (e.g., comma, apostrophe, semicolon) is often missing or wrong	Uses correct end punctuation with only minor errors; contains internal punctuation that is usually correct	Has punctuation that is almost always correct and guides reader through the piece	Includes correct punctuation that enhances readability; may use creative punctuation when appropriate

Conventions cont.		Key question: How much editing is required before the piece can be shared as a final product? (Note: For the trait of conventions, grade level matters. Expectations should be based on grade level and include only skills that have been taught.)				
	Not proficient			Proficient		
	1 Beginning	2 Emerging	3 Developing	4 Capable	5 Experienced	6 Exceptional
Capitalization	Has capitalization that is random, inconsistent, and sometimes nonexistent	Applies only the most basic capitalization rules correctly	Has capitalization that shows frequent errors except for proper nouns and sentence beginnings	Uses correct capitalization in most cases	Includes correct capitalization consistently	Includes correct capitalization consistently and may employ more sophisticated capitalization for effect
Grammar/Usage	Frequently includes noticeable errors in grammar/usage, making writing incomprehensible	Has serious grammar/ usage problems of many types that make comprehension difficult	Relies heavily on conversational oral language that results in inappropriate grammar/ usage; errors sometimes distract the reader	Employs proper grammar/usage fairly consistently; problems are not serious enough to distort meaning or distract the reader	Includes correct grammar/usage; shows few grammar mistakes and has meaning that is clear	Uses correct grammar that contributes to clarity and style; enhances meaning by sophisticated grammar/ usage

## APPENDIX G

### 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](mailto:IRB@twu.edu)  
<http://www.twu.edu/irb.html>

DATE: March 9, 2018

TO: Ms. Jennifer McMillin  
English, Speech & Foreign Languages

FROM: Institutional Review Board (IRB) - Denton

Re: *Exemption for Exploratory Study of the Implementation of Teaching Strategies Targeted Toward the Developmental Learning in College English Courses (Protocol #: 19996)*

The above referenced study has been reviewed by the TWU IRB (operating under FWA00000178) and was determined to be exempt from further review.

If applicable, agency approval letters must be submitted to the IRB upon receipt PRIOR to any data collection at that agency. Because a signed consent form is not required for exempt studies, the filing of signatures of participants with the TWU IRB is not necessary.

Although your protocol has been exempted from further IRB review and your protocol file has been closed, 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. Genevieve West, English, Speech & Foreign Languages  
Dr. Graham (Gray) Scott, English, Speech & Foreign Languages  
Graduate School

APPENDIX H  
Prospectus Cover Page

**TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY-GRADUATE SCHOOL  
PROSPECTUS COVER SHEET**

Department/College/School of English, Speech and Foreign Languages

Prospectus for ☐ Dissertation ☒ Thesis

This prospectus proposed by Jennifer McMillin 0680840

[jennimcmilllin@gmail.com](mailto:jennimcmilllin@gmail.com)

(Student Name) (ID#) (TWU Secure Email Address)

and entitled: [Title]

An Exploratory Study of Reflective Journaling in a College Composition I Course

has been read and approved by the members of her/his Research Committee.

This research (Check One)

☒ Involves human subjects or use of animals.  
(Attach IRB or IACUC approval letter and written approval letters from external agencies where data will be collected, if applicable.)

☐ Does not involve either human subjects or use of animals.

*Both the student and faculty mentor must provide evidence of completion of all required modules of the Responsible Conduct in Research (RCR) Training in accordance with TWU policy 5.11.*

☒ RCR completion certificates for student and faculty mentor are attached.

**For Graduate School Use Only**

**PROSPECTUS**

Original Signatures ☒  
Unconditional Admission ☒  
Approved Degree Program ☒  
Admission to Candidacy ☒  
Institution/Agency Approval ☒  
Human Subjects Approval ☒  
Animal Use Approval ☒  
RCR Training Confirmation ☒

Dean Approval: ☒ Date: 6/14/18  
Letter Sent: ☒

Research Committee (Original Signatures Required):

Major Professor [Signature] *[Signature]* [Date] 6-14-18

[Type Name] Dr. Gray Scott

Member [Signature] *[Signature]* [Date] 6-14-18

[Type Name] Dr. Phyllis Bridges

Member [Signature] *[Signature]* [Date] 6-14-18

[Type Name] Dr. Claudia Haag

Member [Signature] [Date]

[Type Name]

Member [Signature] [Date]

[If appropriate] [Type Name]

Chair/Director/Associate Dean [Signature] *[Signature]* [Date] 6/14/18

[Type Name] Dr. Genevieve West

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.

APPENDIX I  
Signature Page

**TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY-GRADUATE SCHOOL  
CERTIFICATION OF FINAL EXAMINATION**

11/8/18

Date of Examination

To the Dean of the Graduate School:

The undersigned have on this date examined (Name of Candidate and ID#):

Jennifer McMillin

0680840

[Name]

[ID#]

for the degree of: Master of Arts in English

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] 

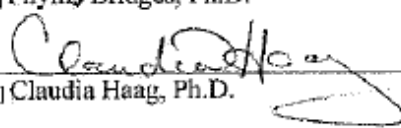
[Date] 11-8-18

[Type Name] Gray Scott, Ph.D.

Member [Signature] 

[Date] 11-8-18

[Type Name] Phyllis Bridges, Ph.D.

Member [Signature] 

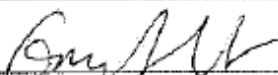
[Date] 11-8-18

[Type Name] Claudia Haag, Ph.D.

Member [Signature] \_\_\_\_\_

[Date] \_\_\_\_\_

[If appropriate] [Type Name] \_\_\_\_\_

Chair/Director/Associate Dean [Signature] 

[Date] 11-8-18

[Type Name] Genevieve West, Ph.D. Gray Scott, acting Chair

According to departmental records, this student has met all requirements for graduation.

  
Major Professor

NOTE: If filing a Professional Paper please attach a copy of the TITLE PAGE.

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.