

AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

Angela D. Obery for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education presented on March 20, 2012.

Title: An Examination of Oregon Writing Project Teachers: A Qualitative Study of Professional Development Experiences

Abstract approved:

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Kenneth J. Winograd

This qualitative study examined the influence of the 2011 Oregon Writing Project (OWP) Summer Institute (SI) on the professional development of six teachers in the following ways:

1. The development of case descriptions of teachers' personal and professional backgrounds relevant to their teaching of writing.
2. An examination of the effects of the Summer Institute on participants' self-reported teaching practices, attitudes, and beliefs about the teaching of writing.
3. An examination of participants' perceptions of aspects of the SI program that they deemed 'influential' in their professional development.

Data was collected from Summer Institute application materials, written coursework, and follow-up interviews. Using inductive reasoning, systematic analysis of the data resulted in the following findings:

1. Teachers reported a neglect of writing education in their teacher preparation programs, as well as in the professional development programs offered by K-12 schools.

2. Participants tended to report change in their professional and personal practices, attitudes, and beliefs related to writing following the Summer Institute.
3. Participants unanimously identified the characteristics of time and a safe learning environment as significant in their professional development experience.

The study suggests the need for more comprehensive inclusion of writing instructional methods in preservice and professional development programs. The study also reinforces pre-existing research that supports professional development models that are designed to be teacher and context-centered within a collaborative community. The present research highlights the need to consider factors of time and participant feelings of “safety” when designing professional development programs. Finally, the study maintains that effective professional development may offer the important teacher learning and confidence needed in K-12 schools

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An Examination of Oregon Writing Project Teachers:  
A Qualitative Study of Professional Development Experiences

by  
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I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University Libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.

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Angela D. Obery, Author

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Finally, I take this opportunity to thank the local teachers who participated in this study and shared their Summer Institute experience. May the writing and the learning continue for us all.

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# AN EXAMINATION OF OREGON WRITING PROJECT TEACHERS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES

## Chapter 1: Introduction

This study examined how the 2011 Oregon Writing Project Summer Institute influenced the practices, attitudes, and beliefs (related to the teaching of writing) of teacher participants and identified the similarities and differences among teachers at different grade levels. In this chapter, I address the place of writing as the “Neglected R” in U.S. schools and identify studies that have addressed the problem of teacher preparation in this area. I note the gaps in the research literature and outline how the present research may address those deficiencies. Finally, I describe the significance and audience of this study, as well as how my worldview and past experiences have influenced the design and purpose of the work.

### **The “Neglected R” in U.S. Schools**

In 2003, the College Board published the first report by The National Commission on Writing intended to “focus national attention on the teaching and learning of writing” (College Board, 2003, p. 7). In *The Neglected R: The Need for a Writing Revolution*, the Commission called for the nation’s leaders to “place writing squarely in the center of the school agenda” (p. 3). The Commission determined writing today to be “not a frill for the few, but an essential skill for the many” (p. 11). Since 2003, seven reports have since been published by the Commission and have continued to fuel the academic conversation surrounding writing in the K-12

classroom. In *A Ticket to Work or a Ticket Out* and *A Powerful Message from State Government*, the Commission asked employers in both the public and private sector about the importance of writing in the U.S. workplace. The message was overwhelmingly clear: U.S. schools must improve instruction in order to prepare students for future success (College Board, 2004; College Board, 2005).

As a writer and an educator, I find this national interest in writing wonderfully exciting. As a parent and an administrator, it causes me to reflect on who is teaching writing and how we are preparing students and teachers for the challenges of composition. Recent research has shown that the majority of current upper-elementary and high school classroom teachers believe they were inadequately prepared to teach writing (Gilbert & Graham, 2010; Kiuahara, Graham, & Hawken, 2009) with only 28% of nationally surveyed primary teachers rating their pre-service preparation to teach writing as very good or outstanding (Cutler & Graham, 2008). This perceived lack of preparation, coupled with the belief that effective reform related to increased learning must include all grade levels (Cutler & Graham, 2008; Graham & Perin, 2007; Slavin, Karweit, & Madden, 1989), provides added strength to the National Commission on Writing's (2003) call for better teacher preparation and training in the area of writing.

The question therefore is raised – where and how do teachers in the U.S. learn to teaching writing? How do they gain knowledge and hone their instructional strategies? Keeping in mind Haycock's (1998) assertion that “when teachers have too

little knowledge of the subjects that they teach, their students are denied the most basic learning resource” (p. 10), professional development seems a necessary investment in order to enhance both current teaching and learning in the area of the “Neglected R.”

### **The National Writing Project and the Research Deficiencies**

While professional development for teachers in the area of writing can take a variety of forms, one professional development model for U.S. schools is the National Writing Project. Derived from the 1974 Bay Area Writing Project, the National Writing Project (NWP) is a teacher collaborative model of professional development that now serves more than 200 affiliate sites, located throughout the 50 states.

Working in tandem with universities and local K-12 school districts, NWP and its affiliates provide locally based professional development programs for K-16 teachers which aim toward a “future where every person is an accomplished writer, engaged learner, and active participant in a digital, interconnected world” (National Writing Project, 2010a). Cited as the “longest standing and largest professional development program (for teachers) in U.S. history,” (p. 7), St. John and Stokes (2009) calculate that NWP project sites provide 6,000 programs serving 80 to 100 thousand teachers each year. A wealth of research by and about NWP (reviewed at length in Chapter 2) has examined both teacher and student outcomes to determine the effectiveness of this professional development program (Buchanan, Eidman-Aadahl, Fredrich, LeMahieu, & Sterling, 2006, p. 13; Nagin, 2006).

NWP founder Jim Gray (2000) asserted that “teachers are naturally curious about the learning in other classrooms and at other grade levels, and yet seldom have the chance to find out what’s really going on in any other classroom than their own” (p. 55). Following this thread, the early establishment of NWP’s core professional development program, the Summer Institute, was based on the inclusion of K-16 teachers. However, despite the value placed on the perspective and experience of participants who teach at the K-16 level, much of the research on the effects of NWP is focused on middle and high school teachers and students (DiStephano & Olson, 1980; Shook, 1981; Wilson, 1994). Only a small percentage of research relates specifically to NWP teachers of students grade K-5 (Long, 1992; DeBenedictis, 2006). In addition, while yearly exit surveys have documented feedback provided by NWP program participants who teach different grade levels (Dickey, Hirabayashi, Murray, St. John, & Stokes, 2006), no qualitative studies have examined the program experience of these practitioners. My work here aimed to explore the professional development experiences of teachers from different grade levels so that I might address this knowledge gap in the research literature.

### **Purpose of this Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how the 2011 Oregon Writing Project (OWP) Summer Institute (SI) may have influenced the practices, attitudes, and beliefs (related to the teaching of writing) of teacher participants and to identify the similarities and differences among teachers at different grade levels. This

study examined the influence of the OWP SI on the professional development of six teachers in the following ways:

1. The development of case descriptions of teachers' personal and professional backgrounds relevant to their teaching of writing.
2. An examination of the effects of the Summer Institute on participants' self-reported teaching practices, attitudes, and beliefs about the teaching of writing.
3. An examination of participants' perceptions of aspects of the SI program that they deemed 'influential' in their professional development.

### **The Significance of the Study and its Audiences**

A locally based study of NWP teacher participants had a layered significance to those interested in the teaching and learning of writing. At the micro level, this qualitative, study allowed both researcher and participants to learn by reflecting on the professional development experience of the 2011 Summer Institute. As a researcher, I was given a unique view of the participant's SI experience and their later reflection. As active classroom teachers, this study gave participants an additional opportunity to consider the influence of their professional development experience in a thorough and systematic manner.

This research also has significance at the local level, as the Oregon Writing Project at Willamette University has never before engaged in a locally-based, systematic study related to its core professional development program. Since its inception in 1995, the Oregon Writing Project at Willamette University has steadily expanded. Participant feedback from the Summer Institute, throughout the 15 years, has been consistently strong with the most recent surveys collected by the National

Writing Project showing that 2010 SI participants unanimously reported that the OWP Summer Institute at Willamette University strengthened their own ability to write and supported their efforts to improve the writing of their students. This current study, however, went beyond the general course feedback and, for the first time, systematically explored the thinking and experience of teacher participants throughout the five week program. The Advisory Board of OWP at Willamette University welcomed this locally-based research as it believed that the findings could help the program leadership better understand the SI participant experience, reinforce or disprove current perceptions of OWP@WU SI impacts, and inform future OWP programming.

In addition, at both the regional and national organizational level, this study may provide the Oregon Writing Project at Willamette University and the National Writing Project with a greater understanding of how Summer Institute programs may influence teachers across grade levels. Greater understanding can lead to better program planning and inform both NWP-associated and independent researchers in future inquiries of this population.

Finally across the general landscape of education, this study may inform university level preservice programs and professional development providers. After decades of writing being the “Neglected R,” any added attention and knowledge related to the development of teacher practices, attitudes, and beliefs related to writing has the potential to influence policy and program implementation related to the

successful preparation of K-16 teachers of writing. In addition, this study also has the potential to inform research in the general area of teacher efficacy and teacher leadership.

### **Worldview**

I engaged in this research work with a general view of reality that stems from a pragmatic world philosophy. I view the world as a dynamic and evolving universe where truth is relative (Cohen, 1999) and true understanding evolves from actions, situations, and consequences (Creswell, 2009). Both my work and my relationships are ever changing, evolving, and determined by the actions I choose (as well as by my reflections on those experiences). I hold educational ideals of constructivism, pragmatism, and progressivism, but as a practitioner I am extremely uncomfortable with the convictions of “always” or “never” in terms of epistemology. Instead, I strive to be flexible and responsive to the environment, conditions, and population with which I work at any given time. I have a strong connection to the social constructive philosophy of learning. I openly and willingly consider other perspectives when faced with new challenges. My worldview, combined with my openness to consider the previously unknown, led me to a research paradigm and methodology that, as Yin (1994) describes, requires a researcher who has “a firm grasp of the issues being studied” as well as the adaptive nature to see new situations as expanded opportunities (p. 56). In this way, the qualitative research method chosen here is compatible with my perspective, my goals, and the chosen study.

**Research Methodology**

Qualitative data was collected and organized using an analytic inductive approach typical of qualitative research. Data was coded to identify common themes in relation to a teacher's overall participation, across data from the other participants' data and in relation to the literature review completed by the researcher.

**Personal Disclosure Statement**

As a researcher, I come to this study with personal knowledge of the content and setting. As a former elementary school teacher and principal, I participated in the 1996 Oregon Writing Project Summer Institute and have served as an OWP@WU Advisory Board member since that time. In the last five years, I have worked as the Inservice Coordinator for the project site and continue to teach a number of graduate level courses within the site's inservice branch.

My continued participation in National Writing Project programming reflects its writing focus, the organization's respect for practitioner wisdom, and the collegial support I have personally received. My professional role with the Willamette University project site leaves me vulnerable to a predetermined bias toward the site's current work and goals. It was crucial that I removed myself emotionally from my professional role with OWP@WU so as to not inadvertently promote the status quo of the organization or discount a participant's experience, which may have not aligned with my own personal experience within the organization.

To that end, the study design was not created to evaluate teacher participant skill or program effectiveness. Instead, the study was geared toward exploring the various perspectives of recent OWP SI participants. The dissertation committee reviewing this research includes individuals familiar with OWP and NWP, as well as individuals with no past affiliation or knowledge of the organizations or programs. This mix provided additional balance and oversight to the work.

### **Definition of Terms**

As a prelude to the subsequent chapters, the following operational definitions are offered for the key terms and acronyms used within this report:

*National Writing Project - NWP:*

A nation-wide teacher network focusing on professional development in the area of writing.

*Oregon Writing Project - OWP:*

Oregon based affiliates of the National Writing Project. In this study, I refer solely to the Oregon Writing Project at Willamette University (OWP@WU) in Salem, Oregon.

*Summer Institute - SI:*

The core professional development program of the National Writing Project and its affiliates. The SI is held annually during the summer break on local college campuses.

### **Conclusion**

This study aimed to examine how the 2011 OWP@WU Summer Institute professional development program influenced the practices, attitudes, and beliefs (related to the teaching of writing) of teacher participants and to identify the similarities and differences among teachers at different grade levels. In Chapter Two,

I review the research literature as it relates to writing in the K-12 classroom, general professional development, and specific research related to outcomes for teacher participants in the National Writing Project. In Chapter Three, I describe the methodology for this study and the reasoning behind the strategies chosen. In Chapter Four, I present the findings, including illustrative data and case study descriptions of the participating teachers. Lastly, in Chapter Five, I engage in a discussion of the findings and implications for teachers, university based pre-service programs, and professional development providers. Suggestions for further research at this Writing Project site and across the general landscape of teaching and education are also included.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

This second chapter will address the literature related to the content and the setting of this research study. As this research project examined the experience of K-12 teachers of writing, the history of the dominant approaches to writing instruction in U.S. schools will be reviewed through three modes of classroom instruction recognized by Hillocks (1986). The writing process (as a key component in two of these modes) will also be explored.

Both researcher and research participants were based at the Oregon Writing Project at Willamette University, which is a National Writing Project (NWP) affiliate. To provide a general overview of this research, this chapter will also address the National Writing Project and its history, model of work, programs, and effects on participating teachers and their professional success. I will also address the major approaches to K-12 teacher professional development, characteristics of effective professional development and current models in the U.S. context for K-12 teachers of writing.

The search for the literature reviewed here included the use of the Oregon State University Library (including both the Summit Library and Inter Library Loan program). The search was also aided through the EBSCO Education data base and the Goggle Scholar search engine. Much of the research related to the National Writing

Project (NWP) was aided through the Inverness Research Associates archives and the NWP research database. My own reading library and work-related resources provided a base from which to reach out to other sources, as the identification of references listed in various source articles and books served as one of the most useful tools in locating new and additional materials.

### **Dominant Approaches to the Teaching of Writing**

This section addresses the teaching of writing in U.S. schools. Hillocks' (1986) modes of instruction (presentational, natural process, and environmental) will serve as the organizational framework by which I will trace the historical trends and current applications. The writing process, a key component in two of these three modes, will also be explored as related to instructional practice.

**Presentational mode of instruction.** In generations past, the typical teaching of writing could more adequately be called the “assigning” of writing. English courses in U.S. schools consisted of book reports, analysis of teacher-selected literature “classics,” and essays geared to assess the student’s ability to master conventions while parroting back the ideas of the instructor (Applebee, 2003; Nagin, 2006; Reif, 2006). Hillocks (1995) refers to the traditional instruction model as “presentational” (p. 55) and explains that in this mode “teaching is tantamount to telling” (p. 27).

School-based teaching of writing within the presentational mode of instruction is dominated by teachers explaining a chosen model text and a corresponding

assignment. Teaching is complete “when the proper basic formulas about writing have been presented” (Hillocks, 1995, p. 28). It is presumed in this method that knowledge is best transferred to students through “verbal formulas, rules, examples, and admonitions” which students then appropriately apply to their own writing (Hillocks, 1986, p. 118). Moffet (1994) speaks of his own experience in such a traditional classroom explaining that his teachers “didn’t care much about what I might be saying, but they wanted me to say it right” (p. 17).

Within the presentational mode of instruction, the five paragraph essay serves as the dominant course assignment (Emig, 1971; Nystrand, 2006). Essays are expected to consistently include an introductory paragraph, three main points defined within a three paragraph body, and a final concluding paragraph. Regardless of topic or author, this “unique” school genre “prescribed a three-point text structure” that did not change on account of a writer’s purpose or argument and “came to define the essay genre for a generation of American students” (Nystrand, Greene, & Wiemelt, 1993, p. 275). Assessment and further teaching of the five paragraph essay came from teacher-provided comments on the errors found within the essay (Emig, 1971; Sommers, 1982).

While generations of Americans experienced this traditional type of writing instruction, research suggests that isolated skill drills and direct grammar instruction fails to improve overall student writing (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985; Hillocks, 1984; Nagin, 2006). Squire and Applebee (1968) concluded that within this

instructional model, text errors became the focus of instruction and correcting papers soon became “synonymous with teaching writing” (p. 122). Research also suggests that a focus on grammatical errors encourages student writers to attend to these errors (rather than placing importance on the actual meaning of the composed text) and, therefore, typically results in nominal student-revision (Sommers, 1982). Hillocks’ early (1984) meta-analysis of classroom writing instruction concluded that presentational instruction has the least impact on student writing in comparison to the other defined modes. Relying on student scores along an established scale of writing quality, this work showed “posttest scores only slightly better than pretest scores” (Hillocks, 1995, p. 57).

**Writing process.** Before discussing Hillocks’ second mode, the natural process, the writing process in general needs to be understood. After decades of traditional teaching, a formal call for a shift in the understanding and practice of writing instruction came from academics, educators, and researchers “from both sides of the Atlantic” at the historic Dartmouth Seminar in 1966 (The Anglo-American Conference on the Teaching of English). Attendees advanced the idea that “school writing was too often formulaic” and “that instruction should move away from traditional models and toward individual learning and processes of the mind” (Nystrand, 2006, p. 12-13). This new focus on the process of writing helped spur the emergence of the writing process as a “pedagogical approach” in the 1970s (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006). This shift was again addressed in the 1982 American

Association of School Administrators Critical Issue Report, *Teaching Writing: Problems and Solutions*. This published report sought to contrast the traditional *assigning* of writing with the true *teaching* of writing and outlined that the assigning of writing relied on product, while the teaching of writing overwhelmingly concentrates on process. Nagin (2006) later adapted this checklist so as to identify twenty-one criteria that an administrator could use to evaluate school writing programs. Indicators of *assigned* writing include: “Students are asked to write only on teacher-generated topics” and “Teacher corrects every paper” (Nagin, 2006). Indicators that are observed when writing is being *taught* include: “Students have the opportunity to generate and develop topics that matter to them” and “Teachers encourage self-evaluation and group evaluation of papers” (Nagin, 2006).

Although writing process practices have long been identified, the writing process instructional model was not introduced to mainstream U.S. schools until the early 1970s (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006, p. 276). Pulitzer Prize winner and writing teacher Donald Murray (1972) wrote passionately in support of the new process-oriented approach to the teaching of writing and proclaimed, “Instead of teaching finished writing, we should teach unfinished writing” (p. 4). The National Council for Teachers of English and the International Reading Association codified this sentiment in 1992 when they established content standards which set the expectation that K-12 students will strategically use “writing process elements” as part of their classroom experience (De La Paz, 1999, p. 1).

The writing process was initially introduced as including seven basic steps: conception of a need, preparation, incubation, intimation, illumination, verification, expression, revision (Day, 1947). Since that time, teachers and writers have continually redefined and renumbered the steps. Murray (1972) once said that the writing process contains only three elements: prewriting, writing, and rewriting; with prewriting taking up to 85% of the writer's time. However in later publications Murray (1994) defined a five, then six, then seven step process. More recently, Nagin (2006) has attempted to summarize the varied research definitions of the writing process stating that writers move through the three acts of planning, translating, and reviewing. Those entering today's classrooms will find the writing process most commonly defined for K-12 students as including the following steps: prewrite, write, revise, edit, and publish.

In reviewing the literature, it appears that the only aspect of the process on which the experts can all agree is that the writing process is recursive rather than linear (Dyson & Freedman, 2003; Hillocks, 2002; Murray, 1972; Murray, 1978; Murray, 1985; Nagin, 2006; Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006; Rief, 2006). The writing process will change according to the writing task, the intended audience, and the author's experience, and writers will instinctively pass "through the process once, or many times, emphasizing different stages during each passage" (Murray, 1985, p. 4).

Donald Murray (1985), Lucy Calkins (1983), and Peter Elbow (1973) have shared a variety of stories of students' writing success through the lens of process

writing. A thorough review of the literature regarding the effects of the writing process shows that a process approach to the complex work of composition does have a positive effect as related to student achievement. Studies show a strong correlation among a positive effect on development of student ideas, an increase in positive attitudes toward writing, greater engagement in the revision of drafts, and higher than average proficiency in school-based writing tasks resulting from the application of a writing process program (Goldstein & Carr, 1996; Hillocks, 1986; Howgate, 1982; Nagin, 2006; Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006; Sommers, 1982). Because of the considerable empirical support for writing process, there is near-consensus among language arts educators that the overall process approach is an improvement on the traditional method of grammar instruction and writing assignments (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006). This shift in the teaching of writing through process is addressed in Hillocks' natural process mode and is also related to the third mode of instruction known as environmental.

*Natural process mode of instruction.* When the writing process first emerged and was researched in K-12 classroom settings, the approach suggested minimal teacher-directed instruction. This “non-directional model of instruction with very little teacher intervention” (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006, p. 275) reflects Hillocks (1986) second identified mode of instruction. Labeling this the “natural process” mode, Hillocks explained that this non-traditional mode of instruction aims to increase student fluency and general skill in writing. It rejects the use of models and insists

that students find their own topics and structures (Graves, 1983; Hillocks, 1995). Student-chosen topics are explored through writing and developed for an audience of peers and outside readers. Rather than just writing a piece for the teacher to assess, students in the natural process mode are encouraged to “write about something to someone” (Nystrand, Greene, & Wiemelt, 1993, p. 279). This method strives to have students engage in the same work as professional authors. Moffett (1994) explains that the process-approach is “teaching writing as adult practitioners go about it” (p. 22).

Key components in a natural process classroom include opportunities to receive (generally positive) feedback and time to extensively revise each writing piece. Teachers (often referred to as “facilitators”) who are engaged in this mode of teaching reject “the possibility of imparting knowledge about writing directly through lecture and textbooks” and strive to create a supportive writing environment that centers on the “need for knowing and using general writing processes” (Hillocks, 1995, p. 56). Proponent Donald Murray (1972) cautions process teachers, “When you are talking, he isn’t writing” (p. 5). In contrast to teachers engaged in the presentational mode, teachers in the natural process shift away from editing feedback and place their attention on response to a student’s development of ideas and content.

In the same work that defined the natural process, Hillocks (1995) published results showing that students taught within a natural process mode of instruction “made considerably more progress” than presentational. However, the historical shift

to teaching a process-oriented approach to writing did not pass without criticism. Applebee (1986) argues that educators must be wary of a “radical response” to traditional methods (p. 96). Although Applebee agrees that “properly implemented process approaches are more effective,” (p. 102) he, along with others, fears that overgeneralization and inappropriate implementation of process-approach instruction could possibly result in a “lock-step” formula that would simply trivialize any progress made by this new mode of instruction (Applebee, 1986; Olson, 1999; Pullman, 1999; Tobin, 1994). In addition, more recent research has criticized the unstructured process approach Hillocks’ defined as natural process on the grounds that it may fail to address the needs of minority language learners as they seek to gain voice in a dominant language culture (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Gutierrez, 1992; Valdes, 1999). Giving students only unstructured opportunities to explore language may place students who do not speak English as a first language at a disadvantage.

***Environmental mode of instruction.*** The third mode of instruction discussed here is what Hillocks (1984) identifies as the “environmental” mode. While the environmental mode is (in certain ways) similar to both the presentational and natural process modes, Hillocks (1995) claims that it also stands in “sharp contrast to both” (p. 56). It is a process-oriented and student-centered approach, but is simultaneously guided by teacher designed problems and scaffolded tasks (Applebee, 1986; Hillocks, 2002). Hillocks (1984) labeled this mode as environmental so as to illustrate the way this mode “brings teacher, student, and materials more nearly into balance” so as to

take full advantages of all resources present in a typical classroom environment (p. 160).

As defined by Hillocks (1986), a teacher using the environmental mode assumes that teaching “can and should actively seek to develop identifiable skills in learners” (p. 125) and that use of these skills orally as a means of prewriting may be developmentally appropriate. Teachers using this mode acknowledge the complexity of writing and see collaboration with others as a means of gaining understanding and acquiring skills. Developed from very clear (teacher identified) objectives and materials, activities of this mode rely on Vygotskys' (1962) zone of proximal development in that teacher-posed problems lie just ahead of a student’s current understanding, leading students to newly developed independent abilities (Hillocks, 1995). Models, or mentor texts, may be used. These mentor texts “serve to show, not just tell, students how to write well” (Dorfman & Cappelli, 2007, p. 4). Teacher lectures are present within the environmental mode but minimized so as to introduce structured activities that aim to create collaborative work in order to “generate ideas and learn identifiable writing skills” (Hillocks, 1986, p. 123).

Hillocks advocates for this mode of instruction as he considers it to be the strongest of all instructional modes. His 1984 meta-analysis showed that the environmental mode of instruction demonstrated greater gains in student writing than the presentational or natural process modes. The environmental mode had “2.3 times the effect of the natural process” (Hillocks, 1995, p. 57). Hillocks (1986) concluded

that while the presentational mode also provides knowledge, the environmental mode goes on to give students the opportunity to put the newly acquired knowledge into true practice. Along those same lines, while the natural process mode provides general instruction and opportunity, the environmental goes on to develop high-level skills and strategies. Hillocks (1986) concluded that incorporating the best of both the two previous modes, the environmental goes beyond to create a more powerful approach to writing instruction.

For the purposes of the present research, Hillocks' definition of presentational, natural process, and environmental is helpful in providing a framework from which to discuss the wide range of instructional strategies used in the teaching of writing. However, Hillocks' (1984) meta-analysis has not gone unchallenged in the literature. Although many welcomed the academic conversation (Applebee, 1986; Durst, 1987; Newkirk, 1987), there was debate over Hillocks' final conclusions. Durst (1987) and Newkirk (1987) criticized what they believed to be Hillocks' over confidence in the study results since the original sample size only contained 60 studies (several unpublished). Applebee (1986) also argued that the study's conclusions were misleading since he believes that the environmental mode and the natural process mode are both (at their core) process-oriented. Applebee offered that the environmental mode might better be labeled "structured process" (p. 105) so as to more accurately illustrate its intimate link to the natural process mode.

While Hillocks' wording of "presentational," "natural process," and "environmental" never caught on in the field, the ideas presented in his original definitions continue to be seen in the literature as well as in modern U.S. classrooms. Although never labeling it an environmental strategy, Moffett (1994) called for both individual and collaborative work across the curriculum driven by projects "designed by learners with the help of teachers" (p. 27); Graves (1994), an early champion of a process-approach to writing instruction, called for teachers in modern schools to "step in" and "teach more" so as to ensure student success (p. xvi); and Calkins (1994) has outlined a popular mini-lesson approach to provide direct instruction as a means of serving the needs of students as they engage in the writing of their own choosing. Teachers and researchers (Atwell, 1987; Calkins, 1983; Fletcher, 2001) continue to expound on the roles of both teacher and student in process-oriented classrooms.

Also described in recent literature, a "self-regulated strategy development" mode of instruction has been described and analyzed by a wide number of researchers (De La Paz & Graham, 2002; Graham & Harris, 1993). Mirroring many components of Hillocks' environmental mode, self-regulated strategy development (SRSD) calls for goal setting, direct instruction, scaffolding, and collaborative work between teacher and student. This method aims for the eventual independence of students through the gradual withdrawal of teacher interventions once the designated skill has been internalized. Students aim to self-define goals, self-regulate tasks, and self-evaluate products while receiving relevant information and specific skill instruction as they

work toward a particular goal. Originally theorized as a mode of instruction for students with learning disabilities, the SRSD model has since also been applied to mathematics and general student work in the area of composition (Zito, Adkins, Gavins, Harris, & Graham, 2007).

Literacy curriculum materials and professional development programs most recently in schools have called for very similar model that has been labeled a gradual release model of responsibility in instruction (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Fisher & Frey, 2008; Routman, 2008). This model again relies on the gradual release of responsibility from teacher to student, with teacher-directed instruction “slowly and purposefully” shifting to student-directed learning and responsibility (Fisher & Frey, 2008, p. 2). The gradual release model transfers classroom power to students as they develop new skills under the watchful eye of their instructor. Fisher and Frey (2008) tie this type of instruction to Vygotsky’s zones of proximal development, scaffolding, collaboration, and clear learning objectives based on an identified problem.

Explaining it in a series of three examples Fisher and Frey (2008) state that the gradual release model is not an “I do it/You do it alone” model that relies on lecture and assignments, nor is it a model of “You do it alone” that involves virtually no direct instruction. Instead it is an “I do it/We do it/You do it alone” model of instruction which balances the responsibility of both teacher and student (p. 10-12). This three-tiered example mirrors Hillocks’ presentational, natural process, and environmental

mode definitions and equally advocates for the latter, in terms of quality instruction for U.S. classrooms.

**No one “right” mode or method.** Beyond Hillocks’ directives as related to his environmental mode of instruction, most experts agree that there is no single “right way” or fail-proof instructional approach to literacy (Allington & Cunningham, 2007; Applebee, 1986; Gray, 2000; Murray, 1985; National Writing Project, 2010a; Smagorinsky, 2009; Zinsser, 1988). Arguably, the possible mandating and systemic-standardization of any one instructional approach could strip that instruction of its potential. However, faced with state mandated assessments, school-site directives, and the rise of data-driven evaluation, teachers in many current U.S. classrooms struggle to follow their own professional judgment as related to their employed strategies of instruction. Teachers often feel that they are expected to teach writing using only one district-approved method. For example, high stakes testing may demand the direct instruction of the presentational mode so as to target the weighted aspects of an assessment tool, whereas development of overall motivation, development of ideas, and general writing skills may call for a natural process or environmental approach to classroom programs. This may have been the case in Oregon, as writing assessments traditionally gave double weight to conventions in grade 7 and 12 (Oregon Department of Education, 1998). Teachers face this tension and strife as they plan and implement writing instruction (Hillocks, 2002; McCarthy, 2008; Stodart, 2010; Strickland et al., 2001). In *Teaching the Neglected “R”* Newkirk

(2007) echoes Applebee's (1986) concerns on this very issue as related to writing instruction. He laments the confusion that often occurs between standards and standardization, which can encourage every teacher to do "the same thing" (p. 5) and therefore prescribes a *silver bullet* that, in the end, will not be effective.

### **Teacher Professional Development**

Over time, professional development for teachers has been referred to by a variety of names: inservice, teacher education, continuing education, staff development, teacher renewal, and teacher training (Harris, 1989; Hyde & Pink, 1992b; Lieberman & Wood, 2002). Regardless of title, Harris (1989) defines such projects as "planned programs of learning opportunities" provided to educators for the purpose "of improving the performance of the individual" (p. 18). Traditionally these labeled programs translated to either mandated, district-based programming or independent university courses tied to degree granting programs and salary schedule increases (Guskey, 2000; Stein, Silver, & Smith, 1999; Wilson & Berne, 1999). However, a more recent paradigm shift has expanded available professional development programs so as to meet a variety of goals through varied models of programming.

**The old and new paradigms.** The old paradigm of professional development in education relied strictly upon two models: on-site planned programs and off-site university based coursework. The district planned programs were aimed to improve the job performance and influence classroom practice at the host site and included the

transmitting of “a specific set of ideas, techniques, or materials” (Stein, Silver, Smith, 1999, p. 239). Typically organized as isolated workshops offering prepackaged solutions with little link to outside resources (Little, 1993; McLaughlin & Marsh, 1978; Stein, Silver, & Smith, 1999), such programs have been described as shallow, fragmented, and market-driven (Hawley & Valli 1999; Little, 1989). Miles (1995) explains that these programs integrated into the standard work week were “imposed rather than owned” and left many classroom teachers with little new knowledge and feeling more isolated than before (p. vii).

Elective participation in university-based professional development programs came in the form of graduate courses, brief workshops, or summer institutes. These programs were often led by university based instructors and included little or no follow-up (Stein, Silver, & Smith, 1999). These programs took place outside of the K-12 school context and developed individual activities, ideas, and materials related to a specific theory or teacher practice (Stein, Silver, & Smith, 1999). While a contrast to the school mandated programs, McLaughlin and Marsh (1978) believe that these university programs did little to address the difference between teachers new to the classroom vs. the more experienced veterans in the field.

A recent paradigm shift is now seeking to expand these two original models of professional development as school improvement and increased student achievement is seemingly impossible without the revived engagement of instructors (Wilson & Berne, 1999; Wei, Darling-Hammond, & Adamson, 2010; Wei, Darling-Hammond,

Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). A new paradigm calls for the field to move away from deficiency-based models (Guskey, 2000; Hyde & Pink, 1992b; Kershaw, 1995; McLaughlin & Marsh 1978; Smylie & Conyers, 1991) and toward more proactive measures, grounded in content and context, and enacted within a community of educated professionals (Hyde & Pink, 1992b; Stein, Silver, & Smith, 1999). Moving away from the past attempts at translation of new knowledge, this new paradigm seeks to collaboratively scaffold learning so as to build greater capacity for understanding and participation (Stein, Silver, & Smith, 1999). Smylie and Conyers (1991) call this change a movement from “replication to reflection” (p. 14). It moves professional development away from a model of consumption toward a new model of creation.

**Characteristics of effective professional development.** Although the factors influencing a teacher’s practice is complex and varied, research related to teacher professional development has sought to identify the characteristics of “effective” programs. In summary, the literature (Guskey, 2000; Hyde & Pink, 1992a; McLaughlin & Marsh 1978; Abdal-Haqq, 1996) promotes effective professional development that is teacher and context centered, guided by quality leaders but constructed within a collaborative community, and both systematic and broad in design.

***Teacher and context centered learning.*** McLaughlin and Marsh (1978) argue that the success of a professional development program “is unlikely unless teachers

want to work hard to make it happen” (p. 72). Effective programs must be teacher driven and clearly tied to the real-life reality which within they work each day (Hyde & Pink, 1992a; McLaughlin & Marsh, 1978). Although it is believed that teachers have the “best clinical expertise available” (McLaughlin & Marsh, 1978, p. 87), historically it has been challenging for classroom teachers to have the time or resources to fully access research, engage in inquiry, or otherwise validate their voice with school structures (Little, 1993). However, the Change Agent Study sponsored by the United States Office of Education shows that it is a teachers sense of “professional competency” that is the most influential factor related to the power of inservice results (McLaughlin & Marsh, 1978, p. 85). This self-efficacy for teachers seems to be impossible without the time and opportunity for them to personally engage in the learning underway in a given inservice program.

Research shows that relative to the local context of teaching and learning in a given community, successful professional development programs have been grounded in the big picture of learning while simultaneously tied to the classroom application of local practitioners (Guskey, 2000; Hyde & Pink, 1992a; Little 1993). Little (1993) suggests that teachers should be treated much like we want them to treat their students. Engaging students in their own academic learning should be seen as keenly akin to engaging teachers in their own craft development, thus considering a district’s goals and policies as well as the needs of the individual teacher (Guskey, 1995; Putnam & Borko, 1997; Wilson & Berne, 1999). When built on the principles of adult learning,

in-service programs have the best chance of impacting school improvement (Guskey, 1995; Little, 1993; National Staff Development Council, 2002; McLaughlin & Marsh, 1978; Abdal-Haqq, 1996; Wei, Darling-Hammond, & Adamson, 2010).

***Guided by quality leaders but constructed within a collaborative community.***

While the literature calls for a clear break from top-down implementation of professional development for teachers, strong leadership at program events and from the district hierarchy is seen as fundamental to overall program success. It is positioned that teacher participants will not fully engage in a program of change unless they believe that project directors are both knowledgeable and competent (McLaughlin & Marsh, 1978). Additionally, faculty will not likely invest in program commitment unless they perceive that the project is part of a multi-level, long-range, big-picture plan (Guskey, 2000; Hyde & Pink, 1992a; Little, 1993; McLaughlin & Marsh, 1978).

While factors of both short and long term leadership are important to the success of any professional development programming, teachers must also feel they are part of the process rather than mere consumers of a product. Balanced with district policies, there must be space for teachers to help plan, facilitate, and impact policy regarding professional development within schools and districts (Sparks & Loucks-Horsely, 1989). Collaboration among colleagues, administrators, and university faculty provides richer programs in which teachers feel ownership (Hyde & Pink, 1992a; Wilson & Berne, 1999). To make this ownership possible, teachers must be

empowered as professionals and both encouraged and supported as they take professional risks, voice dissent, provide authentic program feedback, and work with outside academics and resources (Guskey 1995; Hyde & Pink, 1992a; Little 1993; Putnam & Borko, 1997; Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009).

***Systematic and broad in design.*** By nature, the act of learning is complex. Hyde and Pink (1992a) state that the same can be said for professional development. Guskey (2000) asserts that professional development programs seeking to improve teacher knowledge, understanding, and practice must be systematic, intentional, and ongoing. In direct opposition to the former paradigm of one-shot workshops from outside experts and disconnected from the classroom, professional development is now understood to be most effective when new learning is integrated with the ongoing daily work of classroom teachers (Guskey, 1995; Guskey, 2000). Ongoing support is required for teachers who need it (Sparks & Loucks-Horsely, 1989). Additional allotted time is also essential so that teachers can “assimilate new learnings” (Loucks-Horsely et al., 1987, p. 12). Only when given time, space, and support to engage in meaningful inquiry of both learning and learners will the involved teachers fully achieve the program goals (Abdal-Haqq, 1996; Guskey, 1995; Hyde & Pink, 1992a; Little, 1993; Wei, Darling-Hammond, & Adamson, 2010).

**Current models of professional development.** While the traditional on-site professional development paradigm offered instructors limited, one-day-event,

professional development opportunities, teachers today may experience a wider variety of models in their continuing education. The expanded repertoire of professional development programs currently practiced include both school-based models (tied to district initiatives and goals) as well as in independent models available for teachers seeking individual renewal and support. While no one model of professional development can be hailed as effective in all situations or with all teachers, educators can discern which model is appropriate in a given context at a given time and can call for a combination of models in response to both organizational and individual teacher development needs (Guskey, 2000). Five general professional development models discussed in the literature include: training, observation/feedback, teacher as researcher, teacher collaborative, and individually guided professional development opportunities.

***Training.*** Aligned with the more traditional approach to professional development, training is still an active model of teacher inservice. Sparks and Loucks-Horsely (1989) theorized that this enduring model is supported by the underlying assumption that there are “behaviors and techniques that are worthy of replication in the classrooms” (p. 48). Training programs allow information and vocabulary to be shared with large groups of teachers at one time and therefore are seen as highly cost-effective (Guskey, 2000; Sparks & Loucks-Horsely, 1989). Such training programs are well documented, manageable, and easily quantified, unlike more conceptually “messier” models (Little, 1993, p. 142). Modern twists on the model include

incorporations of classroom practice and feedback, as well as programs of “training the trainers” which asks small groups of teachers to share their gained knowledge with their peers after completing extended professional development programs (Sparks & Loucks-Horsely, 1989). When combined with other teacher and context-centered programs, many still consider the training model of professional development to be a valid mode of professional development (Sparks & Loucks-Horsely, 1989; Tallericco 2005).

***Observation/Feedback.*** Guskey (2000) defines the professional development model of observation/feedback as a method of using “collegial observation to provide educators with feedback on their performance” (p. 23). This model requires commitment and time from instructors during the school work day as it includes peer coaching and, to be effective, must remain strictly separate from evaluation issues (Ackland, 1991; Guskey, 2000; Showers & Joyce, 1996; Tallericco, 2005). When successfully implemented, this type of professional development provides individualized support, builds connections between colleagues and brings new learning to both the observer and the observed (Guskey 2000; Showers & Joyce, 1996; Sparks & Loucks-Horsely, 1989). The model typically includes a pre-observation conference, an observation, and a post-observation conference where the colleagues can reflect, share comments, and make suggestions for further development (Sparks & Loucks-Horsely, 1989; Tallericco, 2005). Mentoring and coaching are variations on

this same theme, often pairing a more inexperienced instructor with a colleague who is respected for their knowledge and practice (Guskey 2000).

***Teacher as researcher.*** A third model of professional development available for current faculty is called teacher inquiry, teacher research, or action research (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2003; Sullivan & Glanz, 2009). This model relies on those closest to, and most acquainted with, a given dilemma to generate improvement and innovation (Sparks & Loucks-Horsely, 1989). This work can be done individually or by a group of educators seeking to review past policies, designing new programs, or solving particular problems. Teachers working alone, or in small groups, identify a question, collect data while testing possible solutions, and ultimately change their practice based on their learning (Tallerico, 2005). Sparks and Simmons (1989) praise this model for allowing teachers to act as reflective practitioners and “enlightened decision-makers” (p. 126). Guskey (2000) commends such developments and improvement process programs as they allow teachers to acquire both new knowledge and skill in an area of strong interest. However, Guskey (2000) does stipulate that access to appropriate information and expertise in such efforts is a vital factor in the success of such professional development.

***Teacher collaboratives.*** The broad professional development category referred to as teacher collaboratives includes teacher study groups, professional learning communities, teacher networks, school-community partnerships, and subject matter associations. These site-based study groups divide school staff into small

groups who work together over a long period of time. In theory, the group self-selects their specific area of study and then seeks to collaboratively improve teaching and learning through gained knowledge (Guskey, 2000; Murphy 1992). This organized model of professional development is focused, time-consuming, and requires true collaboration so that one member of the group doesn't take control while others disengage (Guskey, 2000).

Larger teacher networks and organization partnerships also gather teachers around particular subjects or reform agendas. These larger teacher collaboratives cross grade levels, districts and even states. Lieberman and McLaughlin (1992) credit the success of such networks to the focused creation of a discourse community which encourages teacher leadership among its members. Often linked to a local university or community group, such organizations often provided special institutes that provide in-depth, focused professional development opportunities. Subject matter associations within this heading include groups such as the National Council of Teachers of English, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, and the National Science Teachers Association. These large nationwide organizations provide local, regional, and national professional development conferences. However, Little (1993) defines the bulk of their work as giving teacher voice to the “articulation of subject curriculum and assessment standards” (p. 135).

Research of teacher collaboratives offers a variety of insights into the strengths and challenges of such programs. Little (1993) notes a Philadelphia-based humanities

collaborative known as PATHS (Philadelphia Alliance for Teaching Humanities in the Schools) as a subject collaborative that can deepen teacher understanding of subject matter while also supporting their voice in the reform of “curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment” (p. 134). Little (1993) also cites the Urban Mathematics Collaboratives and the National Writing Project as additional teacher networks/collaborative organizations seeking to involve teachers in “the construction and not mere consumption of subject matter teacher knowledge” (p. 135). Little (1993) notes that the special institutes of these teacher networks typically earn positive feedback from teacher participants as the programs provide “adequate time to grapple with ideas and materials” (p. 137). However, as these institutes are voluntary and outside the regular school program, Lieberman and McLaughlin (1992) site the lack of time and overextension of teachers as possible problems for teacher trying to balance their new learnings with the primary demands of their classroom and school district.

***Individually guided professional development.*** The final model of professional development relies on individual practitioners to design and select the professional development activities which best suit their needs. These individually guided models provide learning that “is designed by the teacher” (Sparks & Loucks-Horsely, 1989). Within this model, teachers document their process of reflection, planning, implementation, and assessment. Programs based in such independent decision- making relies on the motivation of each professional and provides for a great deal of flexibility. In response to this model, many educators lament that such

programs often allow for little collaboration or school-wide attention to a particular need (Guskey 2000; Tallerico, 2005) and thereby can exacerbate the problem of teacher isolation.

### **The National Writing Project**

This next section examines the nation-wide teacher network, the National Writing Project. Its history, model of work, programs and effects on participating teachers and their students are described. Particular care has been given to situate the Writing Project in both the landscape of teaching of writing and the professional development models practiced in the area of education.

#### **A model of professional development for teachers in the area of writing.**

Formed in response to the need for quality professional development programs in the area of writing, the Bay Area Writing Project Summer Institute was launched in 1974 through the joint efforts of the University of California Berkley and a dedicated teacher of English and adjunct professor, Jim Gray. Fueled by a growing concern for student writing achievement in the U.S., word quickly spread about this new professional development model for K-12 teachers and Gray received invitations to share this model with other universities, state departments of education, and media outlets across the nation (Gray, 2000). Affiliate Writing Project sites were quickly established in other states; all closely following the central principles that “K–12 teachers deserved the same opportunities as professors to be continuing scholars, published writers, and leaders in the field” (Smith, 2006, para. 12). In 1976, the Bay

Area Writing Project gave way to the National Writing Project (NWP) and from there grew into what Lieberman & Wood (2002) argue is “the most successful teacher network in the United States” (p. 40).

Originally a local teacher collaborative, NWP programs have expanded to offer U.S. teachers a variety of opportunities, formats, and locations for professional development. Now reaching across all 50 states, more than 200 National Writing Project affiliate sites work across the nation to develop classroom teachers’ teaching and writing and, in turn, impact student writing and learning in the K-12 classroom (National Writing Project, 2010a). In total, NWP project sites provide 6,000 programs serving 80,000 to 100,000 teachers each year (St. John & Stokes, 2009).

Operating at both public and private universities and working in partnership with local K-12 school districts, both funding and expertise are leveraged to provide K-16 professional development for teachers of every discipline. Designed to provide a quality professional home for teachers who are dedicated to refining their professional practice, NWP sites have a three branch system of service that includes the original Summer Institute, on-site school inservice programming and continuity programming for NWP teacher participants after they have completed a Summer Institute. This range of programming encompasses university-based coursework, hands-on training, instructional coaching, teacher research, local study-groups, and larger conferences. While local control allows programming to be responsive to local needs, each of the local sites follows these core NWP principles when serving their community:

- Teachers at every level—from kindergarten through college—are the agents of reform; universities and schools are ideal partners for investing in that reform through professional development.
- Writing can and should be taught, not just assigned, at every grade level. Professional development programs should provide opportunities for teachers to work together to understand the full spectrum of writing development across grades and across subject areas.
- Knowledge about the teaching of writing comes from many sources: theory and research, the analysis of practice, and the experience of writing. Effective professional development programs provide frequent and ongoing opportunities for teachers to write and to examine theory, research, and practice together systematically.
- There is no single right approach to the teaching of writing; however, some practices prove to be more effective than others. A reflective and informed community of practice is in the best position to design and develop comprehensive writing programs.
- Teachers who are well informed and effective in their practice can be successful teachers of other teachers as well as partners in educational research, development, and implementation. Collectively, teacher-leaders are our greatest resource for educational reform (National Writing Project, 2010a)

It is important to note that many of these principles embody the writing process as expressed in both Hillocks' (1986) natural process and environmental modes.

However, NWP stands within a dedicated mission that does not promote any “sure-fire formulas,” “teacher-proof materials,” or a designated “writing curriculum” (Gray, 2000, p. 50 & 84).

Lieberman and Wood (2003) state that the national network of NWP sites has created a learning community that provide “enduring professional growth and

development” (p. 4). Structurally, the NWP model of teacher collaborative aligns itself with strong value commitments, while also implementing methods and means that are “nonideological” (Lieberman & Miller, 2001, p. 183). Wood and Lieberman (2000) cite that NWP programs center on “authority,” “authorship,” and “authorization,” therefore building a program model that strives to improve each teacher’s teaching *and* writing, as well as build support and recognition for teachers as learning professionals (p. 260). Rather than “teaching as telling” it relies on teaching as “learning by doing” and “learning in relationship” within an “authentic learning” community (Lieberman & Wood, 2003, p. 26). These comments again, evoke the same type of message conveyed in Hillocks’ (1986) defined modes of writing instruction (presentational, natural process, and environmental).

**The Summer Institute.** The core program of the National Writing Project model is the intensive Summer Institute (SI). While the Summer Institute, held annually at every affiliate site, is locally managed (and therefore varies in specific day-to-day activities), the overall “teachers-teaching-teachers model” remains in place at each location and seeks to draw on the knowledge, leadership, and expertise of successful classroom teachers (National Writing Project, 2010b). Average Summer Institute enrollment numbers are held to approximately 20 teacher participants each summer. Teacher participants who enter the voluntary SI program are, in theory, individuals who wish to develop their writing skills and improve the effectiveness of their teaching. In 2001, a survey conducted by Inverness Research Associates found

that 98% of the participating teachers indicated that the overall quality of the SI as high. Ninety-five percent of the participants also ranked the Summer Institute as better than other professional development programs in which they had participated and as a program that helped them understand how to more effectively teach writing (St. John, Stokes, & Hirabayashi, 2001). This survey was duplicated annually until 2006, yielding similar results and demonstrating that, over time, NWP Summer Institutes are of stable and reliable quality (Dickey, Hirabayashi, Murray, St. John, & Stokes, 2006).

Like Jim Gray's first SI, today's local programs remain committed to three basic course elements: 1) Daily writing, 2) Demonstrations of practice, 3) Professional study. Daily writing for all NWP Summer Institutes participants includes the opportunity for participants to engage in both personal and professional writing during each day of the Institute. Guided through a process oriented approach to writing, SI participants are encouraged to write in response to both prompts and topics of their own choosing. Through practice, peer feedback and reflection participants are encouraged to find their unique voice as a writer and to publish their writings in a program anthology at the end of the summer. This component of daily writing, linked to professional and personal reflection, allows the Institute work to be individualized and is an example of professional development that is both teacher and context centered.

The second and third SI components of “demonstrations of practice” and “professional study” come to life through practitioner demonstrations that are facilitated daily during the five week institute. Course instructors and SI participants undertake individual research projects so as to reflectively inquire about what “works” in their own classrooms. These 50 minute presentations, offered by each Institute participant, include the sharing of professional practice as well as links to academic literature related to effective strategies and resources in the field of writing education. Development and reflection of these peer presentations occurs through individualized coaching by SI faculty, and through small and whole group discussions. Collegial discussion and questioning during and after the presentation is encouraged in order to expand the conversation beyond any perceived “right” approach to teaching and to facilitate true reflection on the theory and practice. These two components create a space within the SI program for teachers to act as researchers, as well as simultaneously receive training and observation/feedback within a collaborative community.

**Effects of NWP on participating teachers.** A wealth of studies has examined National Writing Project programs. The following section addresses the existing research of the effects of National Writing Project programs on participating teachers in relation to their professional practice, self concept of teachers as writers, leadership development and transformation, and associated student achievement.

*Teacher practice.* Studies have shown that NWP participation tends to have a positive impact on teacher practice and brings a deeper and wider exploration of writing instruction in American schools. Looking at the make-up of a regular work day, research shows that more time is devoted to writing in a teacher's classroom after that teacher has participated in NWP programming (Bates, 1986; Nagin, 2006; Roberts, 2002; St. John, Stokes, & Hirabayashi, 2001). On the whole, NWP participants acknowledged the importance of frequent student writing and spent more classroom time on writing instruction than the national average (Wilson, 1988, Nagin, 2006). Nagin (2006) compared NWP teacher classroom practices with non-NWP teachers in 3rd and 4th grade classrooms across five states. NWP teachers surveyed noted that they made writing an integral part of their overall classroom routine; "Rather than treating writing as a separate subject, they see it as fundamental to teaching all subjects and integrate it across the curriculum" (Nagin, 2006, p. 51).

As well as the amount of writing time occurring in classrooms, research studies have sought to explore the variety of writing instruction strategies employed in classrooms of NWP participating teachers. A 2001 Inverness Research Associates report surveyed NWP participating teachers and found that more than 90% of participating NWP instructors reported gaining "concrete teaching strategies" and "up to date research and practice" from their time in the NWP institutes (St. John, Stokes, & Hirabayashi, 2001, p. 11). One of the very first studies taking place at the Bay Area Writing Project showed that more than 75% of the teachers participating in the

programs reported an increase in their ability to “relate theory to practice in the teaching of writing” (Stahlecker, 1979, p. 5) and other research documented reports of change in instructional practice and beliefs by participating teachers (Brathcer & Strobel, 1994; Carter, 1992; Hampton, 1990; Pitts, 1992). Pritchard and Marshall (1994) reported that participating teachers in pre and post NWP surveys reported using a greater variety of activities to teach writing than their peers who had not yet experienced NWP programs.

The instructional strategies utilized in classrooms of NWP teachers are most often aligned with a process-orientated approach to writing instruction (Hampton, 1990; Tindall, 1990). This approach applies to both Hillocks’ natural process mode and environmental mode. Studies have shown a rise in both self-reported and researcher-documented instructional strategies of NWP teachers when compared to their non-NWP peers. These instructional strategies include the use of modeling as an instructional tool (Roberts, 2002), incorporating grammar instruction in a process-oriented classroom (Pritchard & Marshall, 1994), designing a greater number of prewriting activities (Pritchard & Marshall, 1994; Virginia Writing Project, 1985), and using peer groups as a component of writing instruction (Virginia Writing Project, 1985). NWP teachers also report an increase in their awareness of strategies that help motivate students of writing (Pritchard & Marshall, 1994).

*Self concept as writers.* The first report relating to the impact of NWP programming on the self-concept of teacher participants as writers came from the

original Bay Area Writing Project (BAWP) program site. A 1979 BAWP study noted that 60% of participants reported that the professional development experience increased their efficiency as a writer (Stahlecker, 1979). A more recent survey completed by Whyte et al. (2007) showed that, of thirty-five 7-12 grade English Language Arts teachers in a southeastern state, NWP participants were almost five times more likely to have an active “writing life” and Pritchard (1987) boldly claims that “virtually every study of teachers who have participated in NWP training indicates that teachers show a striking improvement in their attitudes about themselves as writers and as teachers of writing” (p. 52). Wood and Lieberman (2000) conclude that once a teacher writes within NWP programs, they return to their classrooms with an emboldened self-concept as a writer which strengthens their sense of purpose and engagement in the teaching of writing. Within NWP, they have the opportunity to earn authorship by writing about what matters to them (Wood & Lieberman, 2000). Rich with participant quotes and testimonies, there are a wide number of other studies that support his claim that NWP programming increases teachers’ self concepts as writers (Gere, 1980; Hawkins & Marshall, 1981; Street & Stang, 2009; Pritchard, 1987). However, some researchers also argue that self-concept is a complicated variable and difficult to analyze in isolation. It may be possible that teachers who already frequently write may be more attracted to Writing Project programs (Whyte, et al., 2007) or that professional development programs outside of the NWP (and taken in tandem) may influence the data (Street & Stang, 2009).

*Leadership and transformation.* While the literature speaks of the National Writing Projects as a means of professional development, it also often addresses the NWP model as a path to leadership for K-16 teachers. Lieberman and Wood (2003) note that Summer Institute directors make a concerted effort to find teachers with leadership potential and, within the model, provide them with shared leadership experiences so as to develop and encourage those abilities. Lieberman and Miller (2004) conclude that NWP Summer Institute participants are “not only prepared to be better teachers of writing but also prepared to be teacher leaders” (p. 37). Likewise, Wolfe and Manning (1997) encourage teachers to take charge of modern school reform. Of the eight listed actions recommended for teachers seeking to become leaders, one directive was to “join a National Writing Project site” (p. 37).

Qualitative studies have shown that NWP program participants do, in fact, go on to assume a variety of leadership roles; often providing professional development duties at their school, district, site, state, local education organization, and universities. A survey of almost 2000 teachers who participated in Writing Project programs (spanning a period of time from 1974–2006) showed that less than 1% of respondents left education, 72% indicated they stayed in “teaching” until retirement, and more than 50% of the NWP participants went on to have some involvement in the development of curriculum and/or policy. Participants of this research cited the NWP experience as a transformational turning point in their teaching careers (Friedrich, Swaim, LeMahieu, Fessehaie, & Mieles, 2008). Leadership and transformation has also been

documented in case-study reports of NWP programs within the State of Mississippi and California. In Mississippi, teachers participating in NWP SI programs were shown to be almost 65% more likely to achieve National Board Certification than non-NWP teachers (United States Senate, 2001). In California, interviews with a small grouping of K-12 NWP teachers revealed that the SI experience increased their confidence in their professional judgment and caused them to feel changed by the experience (Whitney, 2008). Across the network, SI participants have been known to claim that the Summer Institute experience changed their life (Inverness Research Associates, 1997; Piper, 2007; Wilson, 1994; Whitney, 2008) and have indicated that the NWP institute experience motivated them to seek further professional development and leadership opportunities (Mason, 1981; St. John, Stokes, & Hirabayashi, 2001).

*Student achievement.* Research on teachers' learning and subsequent teaching performance at NWP affiliate sites has also shown corresponding results as related to student achievement. General teaching strategies used in classrooms by NWP teachers (such as the planning of writing, completing multiple drafts, and conferencing with students) have been linked, through studies by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, to specific teacher practices that correlate with high performing 4th, 8th, and 12th grade students on writing and reading exams (Nagin, 2006). Furthermore, studies across the NWP network have documented significant differences in pre and post essay evaluations of students of NWP teachers and their

peers in non-NWP teacher classrooms (DiStephano & Olson 1980; Haugen, 1982; Pritchard, 1987; Pritchard & Marhsall, 1994; Roberts, 2002; Shook, 1981; Shortt, 1986).

A 2003 study compared student performance on writing assessments of local high school students taught by teachers who had participated in the National Writing Project at Kent State University to students whose teachers had not participated. Students of teachers who had participated in the Summer Institute at Kent State University did in fact earn better scores on writing tasks aligned with the Ohio Graduation Test than those students from the comparative classrooms (Buchanan, Eidman-Aadah, Fredrich, LeMahieu, & Sterling, 2005).

In 2006, The Gateway Writing Project (GWP) at the University of Missouri in St. Louis examined students (grades 3 through 5) and their GWP classroom teachers. Specifically, the study tracked GWP teachers who participated in a yearlong NWP professional development program that asked them to collect and analyze data from their own classrooms, reflect on their practice, and examine new classroom strategies. When reporting the Writing Project's effect on student achievement in writing, the study showed that "program students' writing scores increased more than comparison students on both the holistic assessment and all six analytic measures." Interestingly enough, the scores of "program students" on the Gates-MacGinitie reading test also increased more than comparison student scores. "These differences were statistically

significant” (Buchanan, Eidman-Aadahl, Fredrich, LeMahieu, & Sterling, 2006, p. 13).

More recently, sixteen studies outlined in a NWP research brief showed that NWP professional development (across seven states) has “a positive effect on the writing achievement of students across a range of grade levels, school and contexts” (National Writing Project, 2010c). This data supported NWP’s *Profiles of the National Writing Project: Improving Writing and Learning in the Nation’s Schools* (1999) which highlighted student success spanning grades K-16 in the U.S. and included data focused on rural education, urban education, second language learners, at-risk students, and even children of military families living abroad. Key findings published in the related NWP (2010c) research brief documents recent studies showing that when using holistic measures, “improvement of students taught by teachers who had participated in NWP programs exceeded that of students whose teachers were not participants” (p. 1). As well as strong and favorable student results in development of ideas and organization, students in classrooms of NWP teachers more often made gains in the area of conventions (p. 1).

In addition to students’ achievement scores, researchers have also aimed to understand how student attitudes toward writing are affected by NWP teachers. An analysis of student attitude surveys in Florida noted a significant difference between control and treatment groups. The collected data suggested that NWP training of teachers positively influenced students’ attitudes toward writing (Roberts, 2002). That

same study supported the results of a report issued early in NWP history that documented Bay Area Writing Project teacher participants reporting that their own NWP experience led to a substantial increase in their students' enjoyment, confidence, and sense of value in writing (Stahlecker, 1979). In addition, another qualitative study showed that students of NWP teachers showed signs of greater academic engagement during instructional time than those students in classrooms of non-writing project teachers (Shortt, 1986).

**Limitations of the NWP model.** While academic literature and practitioner reports laud NWP affiliates and their programs, the NWP does face a number of challenges in their work to provide professional development for K-12 teachers. Those challenges include the difficulty in designing research that can factor for the seemingly endless variables impacting analysis. Research supports NWP's claims of improving teaching and learning in American schools; however, the complexity of the writing process, teacher practice and factors influencing student success makes analysis of writing education difficult and requires more research (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006; Street & Stang, 2009; Whyte, et al., 2007).

In addition to the complexity of teaching writing, the negotiated state of each affiliate site's partnerships can challenge the success of the NWP model. The Oregon Writing Project, like all NWP affiliates, occupies what NWP Director of National Programs and Site Development, Elyse Eidman-Aadahl, describes as a "third space" (Lieberman & Wood, 2003, p. 88). Writing Project sites are professionally connected

and financially tied to partner universities and local K-12 schools, but are also simultaneously independent in decisions of programming and leadership. This allows academic freedom and flexibility for the site, but also results in a continual need to carefully negotiate the local connections. This issue was exacerbated by a long-term spending bill signed by the President in April 2011. Budget cuts within the bill resulted in the loss of all direct federal funding for several education programs, including the National Writing Project. Consequently, NWP affiliates lost their NWP site grants for the 2012-2013 school year, as well as the previous local matching grants (required by the federal grant) secured by each affiliate. While NWP has continued to lobby for returned funding and the opportunity to compete for federal funds as a national non-profit organization, local sites have had to grapple with their own financial security and growth as they renegotiate with their local funding sources.

NWP may be particularly vulnerable to these financial changes as its programming has remained dedicated to smaller and more personalized programs. In the past, a key component to the success of the NWP Summer Institutes has been the social design model that allows professionals to learn from each other (Lieberman & Wood, 2002). In order to facilitate this interactive model, core Writing Project programs have usually included only a relatively small number of practitioners at any one time, so as to allow for close personal and professional connections to be nurtured. With no more than 20 participants each year, the average SI provides ample time for even smaller study groups formed from the whole. While researchers have noted that

small groups such as this allow for greater engagement of individuals (Murphy, 1992), the model certainly has its limitations as only a small number of teachers can participate in the local SI during a given year. In addition, while programs of “teachers teaching teachers” aims to provide individual attention while valuing multiple voices, such a model requires a substantial number of skilled facilitators for each program. This also can affect program growth, as the demanding work of classroom teachers can make it difficult to find local educators who have enough time to direct and facilitate programming.

Lastly, although NWP affiliates are authorized to receive federal funding under Title II, Part C, Subpart II of the No Child Left Behind Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2001), NCLB and other accountability measures have created an atmosphere in education that is not always hospitable to NWP professional development programs. NCLB is referenced as the cause for many school districts to focus on math and reading scores at the expense of other subjects (Dillon, 2006). While research does demonstrate a link between better student writing and an increase in student reading scores (Nagin, 2006), district approved boxed-sets and in-house defined expectations are often preferred over an independent NWP model. These issues of control can make the work of partnering with local districts a working challenge for NWP sites (Tam, 2001) and teachers may feel torn between their professional judgment, their work with NWP affiliates, and the (possibly opposing) mandates from their local school district (Lieberman & Wood, 2003).

## **Conclusion**

Using Hillocks' defined modes of instructions as a lens for viewing the teaching of writing, this chapter has explored both the traditional strategies engaged in U.S. classrooms as well as process-oriented instruction, expressed in both the natural process and environmental modes. While research has shown the traditional presentational mode (focusing on grammar, errors, and skill-and-drill activities) as largely ineffective, both natural process (challenging students to work as real authors crafting writings of their choice) and environmental instruction (engaging students in teacher-designed problems and activities as part of their writing process) have shown positive results in the improvement of student writing.

Professional development, in writing and across other disciplines, has blossomed from a one-size fits all paradigm to a broad variety of programs that seek to help professionals improve their craft. Teacher training, observation/feedback models, opportunities for teachers to act as researchers, teacher collaboratives, and individually guided professional development opportunities are five new models explored in recent educational literature. Because of their complex nature, changes in pedagogic behaviors and beliefs are hard to predict or quantify, but research has shown that programs within these professional development models can be influential when they contain certain characteristics. Programs that are teacher and context centered, guided by quality leaders but constructed within a collaborative community, and both systematic and broad in design have been found to be effective. In current practice,

such characteristics can be found in a variety of models that support teachers in a variety of settings and disciplines.

One example of a teacher collaborative dedicated to the teaching of writing is the National Writing Project (NWP). A nationally recognized leader in professional development, the NWP has established 200 annual Summer Institutes across the nation as an entry point for thoughtful practitioners to improve writing and learning for both themselves and their students. While NWP affiliate sites face challenges to their ongoing work, NWP participants continue to find further opportunities to impact student learning from within this professional home.

The present research aims to consider the instructional approaches used in K-12 writing education, the models of professional development available for teachers, and the convergence of these subject areas within the National Writing Project model. In gaining understanding of the influence of the Oregon Writing Project Summer Institute on the practices, attitudes, and beliefs of participants, this research will provide local exploration of participant experience and needed comparison of teachers at different grade levels within the National Writing Project research base. Across the general landscape of education, this study may inform preservice programs and professional development in both the area of writing and across the curriculum.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how the 2011 Oregon Writing Project (OWP) Summer Institute (SI) may have influenced the practices, attitudes, and beliefs (related to the teaching of writing) of teacher participants as well as to identify the similarities and differences among teacher thinking at different grade levels. Specifically, this study examined the influence of the OWP SI on the professional development of six teachers in the following ways:

1. The development of case descriptions of teachers' personal and professional backgrounds relevant to their teaching of writing.
2. An examination of the effects of the SI on participants' self-reported teaching practices, attitudes, and beliefs about the teaching of writing.
3. An examination of participants' perceptions of aspects of the SI that they deemed 'influential' in their professional development.

In this chapter, I outline the research methodology. An explanation of the participants, the sources of data, the coding strategies, and the analysis procedures are included. I also address the trustworthiness of this study and the ethical considerations.

### **Participants**

Participants of this study attended the 2011 Summer Institute at the Oregon Writing Project at Willamette University (OWP@WU). The Summer Institute (SI) is

an annual program that takes place on the Willamette University campus in Salem, Oregon during the traditional summer break. The program is five weeks in length and serves as a four semester-credit, graduate-level course through the Graduate School of Education.

The teachers who participated in this study came from a variety of local K-12 schools and were screened for eligibility by review of the 2011 OWP@WU Summer Institute roster. Information from the roster included teacher name, school and grade level assignment at time of application, email address, and telephone number. As the Inservice Coordinator for OWP@WU, access to this information was not outside my regular job responsibilities or actions. However, consent for review of the 2011 program roster was attained from Dr. Karen Hamlin, the Director of the Oregon Writing Project at Willamette University.

Recruitment for this study began in the two months leading up to the OWP@WU SI program. All SI Participants were told of the research study by the course instructors. Formal letters of invitation were then sent to the potential participants. An attached consent form (see Appendix A) outlined the aspects of the study important for the teachers to consider as they determined their participation. The purpose of the study, the benefits and time commitment for participants, and the general methodology were clearly explained. Initial discussion and questions were encouraged.

Recruitment continued throughout the SI program until purposeful sampling led to the recruitment of two elementary level classroom teachers, two middle school teachers, and two high school instructors of English. This equal distribution of study participants across the three levels of instruction was aimed at providing an initial base for cross comparison. Although random sampling is often employed in quantitative research, Patton (Creswell, 2009) encourages this type of purposeful sampling in qualitative research as it allows the research to select information-rich cases that could best explore the research problem.

### **Data Collection Strategies**

A variety of data collection strategies were used. Summer Institute application materials and written coursework completed during the five week program provided the bulk of the data in document form. Follow-up interviews were held two months after the completion of the SI program and provided additional data. Pseudonyms were used throughout the research process, as well as in this report. Prior to study publication, participants were given the opportunity to review the case study descriptions and full research analysis.

**Documents.** Five sets of documents (per participant) were collected as part of this research. The first two documents were required components of the SI application process. These documents included a personal essay submitted by each participant with their application for SI enrollment and written notes created during an entrance interview with the Institute director. In the entrance essay, SI participants were asked

to describe how they taught writing or used writing as a means of learning in their classroom. In the interview notes, participants were asked to respond to three questions: Who are you as a writer right now? Who are you as a teacher right now? What do you wonder about in your classroom or in education? Both of these pre-SI documents served as valuable data sources.

The next two set of documents gathered in the research process, were created by participants during their SI experience. The first document was actually a compilation of 19 worksheets completed by each participant over the five week course. These worksheets (see Appendix B) were the handwritten feedback each participant offered to their SI peers after the sharing of a lesson presentation. Each person enrolled in the course made one lesson presentation during the five weeks and each received feedback in this same format from all their peers. Within these feedback forms, participants recorded what they noticed during the presentation, probing questions that emerged, how the lesson presented might be adapted or modified to the needs of their own grade level or discipline, and what ideas would stay with them as they returned to their classroom work.

The second document collected during the SI program was the written self-reflection that each study participant authored after they completed their own lesson presentation. This written reflection included the participant's thoughts about the completed presentation as well as the feedback they received from their peers. Two pages in length, the format was unstructured and varied by participant.

The final document collected from each participant as part of this research was an essay written at the end of the five week SI program. This document, called the SI exit essay, was created when each participant was asked what new ideas they planned to take back to their own classroom after this professional development experience. Handwritten during a final class gathering, this essay served as a tool for participant reflection and consideration rather than as a plan to which they would be held accountable.

In bulk, these five sets of archived documents were convenient to access and allowed me to obtain original wording from each of the participants on the given topic (Creswell, 2009). Collection was unobtrusive as the documents were a “ready-made source of data” (Merriam, 2009, p. 139). None of the documents were created for this research; rather each document was part of the regular OWP@WU SI program experience. The collection of the documents provided both a snapshot of the participants’ pre-SI attitudes about writing and its instruction, as well as their thinking over the course of the five week program. Stable and broad in coverage, these documents represent the thoughtful coursework of the study participants which then were repeatedly reviewed to enhance the study analysis (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 1994).

**Interviews.** Once the Summer Institute coursework was complete, a follow-up interview with each participant was scheduled so as to reflect on the data and my initial coding and analysis (see Appendix C). One-on-one and conversational in tone, these interviews aimed to help further understand the context of the collected

documents, as well as ask follow-up questions of each participant and share emerging findings. The interviews were audio taped and transcribed for analysis.

Yin (1994) classifies interviews as an “essential source of case study evidence” (p. 85), and I viewed the interviews in this study as a crucial element in my research plan. They provided my first opportunity to personally talk with the participants about their professional development experience and their understanding of the teaching of writing. As a conversation-with-purpose, these interviews had the potential to provide historical information as well as explanations or links to other important knowledge which was previously unknown to me as a researcher (Creswell, 2009; Dexter, 1970; Stake, 1995). The interviews also provided “indirect information filtered through the view of interviewees” and “information in a designated place rather than the natural field setting” (Creswell, 2009, p. 179). Lastly, the interviews served as a method of triangulation and validity check as participants responded to the initial themes I had identified (Marhsall & Rossman, 2006).

During the two-hour interview, participants were asked to detail general information about their education background. Each participant was asked about the timing, location, and motivation for the educational training that led to their position as a licensed teacher. Participants were also asked about their pre and post SI job assignments, their reasons for enrolling in the Summer Institute, and details of any preservice learning or professional development related to writing that they had experienced prior to this summer program.

After establishing this background information, participants were asked how they thought the Institute experience had influenced their practices, attitudes, and beliefs in the area of writing. Additional questions explored participants' thoughts regarding the K-12 platform of the SI, their sense of encouragement among peers in the program, and their own experience as a writer within the Institute. Three or four themes and patterns that were initially identified in the data were also shared during their individual interview. Participants were encouraged to respond to the data, the early analysis, and the implications it may have for their ongoing professional story.

Finally, in the follow-up interview participants were asked what they thought students and teachers need in the area of writing, as well as what they thought might come next in their own professional journeys. Specifically, each participant was asked if they had plans to participate in further professional development in the area of writing. Participants were encouraged to ask questions or share other information that would more accurately depict their thinking and learning as related to their professional development experience. It was made clear to participants that at any time in the interview they were free to decline answering any question asked by the researcher.

**Member check.** Lincoln and Guba (1985) call member-checking the “most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314). As an opportunity to check back with members of the study, Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2006) explain that a member check is the chance for researchers to “test their own meaning making by

going back to and asking for feedback from those studied” (p. 104). While the one-on-one interview held with each participant served as the initial method of member-checking, a second member check was completed before formal publication of the study results. Each research participant was asked to review the case description pertaining to their contribution and an executive summary of the data and analysis. This member check gave each participant the opportunity to provide feedback, correct any factual errors, and to give voice to previously unspoken realities. Feedback from participants served to more accurately depict their case. Yin (1994) reports that such review of the report by key informants helps to construct internal validity of the final report.

### **Analysis Procedures**

After receiving the initial data in the form of course documents, I coded and analyzed each participant’s materials for themes and perspectives. I then created a list of concepts that appeared for each participant, noting the frequency within a theme, as well as statements that seemed in conflict for that one individual. Following Merriam (2009), Patton (2002), and Yin (1994) for the building of case descriptions, I reviewed individual participant data before considering any analysis across individual or grade levels. My intent during this process was to capture the entirety of each individual’s experience.

Following the initial construction of all six cases in this study, I began a comparison of data across participants, noting differences and similarities. Teachers

were compared with their same-level peer; pairs of grade level teachers were compared with pairs at different levels; individuals were compared with teachers at alternate levels.

Once able to test out my ‘understanding’ through questions and further discussion at the face-to-face interviews, I again coded and analyzed the new data for each individual and revisited my initial findings so as to add my emerging findings. In some cases, the interview transcripts added further explanation, in the participant’s words, for an already developed theme. In other cases, new topics were brought to light, which caused me to search the original data sources for support or dissent of my new understanding. As final case descriptions and themes were constructed, the process of cross comparison was repeated so as to bear out any additional understandings.

**Coding.** Saldaña (2009) defines a code as a “word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of a language-based or visual data” (p. 3). Simply said, codes are the handles which a researcher can hold onto to during the later analysis process. These handles allow the researcher to organize and reconfigure information that has bubbled up from the data sources so as to identify emerging patterns and themes. This coding and definition of key phrases related to the study was an essential tool as I attempted to make sense of the collected data and its meaning.

Heeding Saldaña's (2009) wisdom that coding too much data is preferred to the risk of tragically discarding data that could inform the study in unknown, but important ways, I coded each data source through the utilization of NVIVO 9 research software. After first reading through the data material provided by the participants, I digitally uploaded each document to NVIVO 9 and used the systematic framework of the software to identify, organize, and store each recorded code. As Creswell (2009) suggests, I found the use of technology to be an efficient way to compare codes across multiple data sources and participants. It also allowed for coding to overlap within any one passage that seemed to possess multiple meanings. Overall, more than 20 distinct codes were derived for the work through descriptive and holistic coding (See Appendix D). An additional 20 detailed sub-codes were also noted within the homogenous groupings. (For example, the code of "Modes of Instruction" included the sub-sets of "Presentational," "Natural Process," and "Environmental.")

***Descriptive coding.*** Saldana (2009) defines descriptive codes as a word or short phrase summarizing "the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data" (p. 70). The descriptive codes used in the initial phase of coding in this study were derived from the related literature review. A logical place to start, these predetermined codes grounded the first cycle in what I had previously learned about the chosen topics. Descriptive codes for this study included Hillocks' (1986) defined presentational, natural process, and environmental modes of instruction, writing process (prewrite, write, edit, revise, publish), and the noted characteristics of effective professional

development. Other preliminary codes included the components of teacher as leader, teacher as writer, and teacher as practitioner.

Descriptive codes were also identified from the topics introduced by the study participants in their own writings and in the research interview. For example, during the coding of the first case, one participant defined what she believed to be the three things related to the teaching of writing that students need. Her terms, as well as the overall concept of a three pronged list, became an additional means of coding data for all participants. Coding related to mentor texts, technology, and student motivation also came directly from data collected from participants. For example, coding related to increased teacher confidence and issues of teacher isolation evolved from comments made by teachers during the study interviews. Each time a new code emerged, all data sources were fully reviewed so as to consider the newly added structure.

***Holistic coding.*** Holistic coding was an additional tool I used to explore the research data. Described by Dey (1993) as a way to understand basic themes by “absorbing them as a whole” (p. 104), holistic codes allowed me to use the OWP@WU SI entrance and exit essays as before and after snapshots for each participant. Using the holistic coding method, I assigned a title to each essay based on the overall arching theme or topics covered within the source. For example, I assigned the entrance essay of one participant the title: “My Journey as a Teacher of Writing: The Process of Communication.” I assigned the exit essay of this same participant: “My Journey as a Writer: A Path to Better Teaching.” Following this method, I then

compared these titles (for each participant and eventually across participants) as a means of discerning any shifts in practices, beliefs, or attitudes influenced by the professional development program experience. This strategy resulted in hunches about each case which I was then able to substantiate or refute based on the other data collected, as well as confirm or discredit within the face-to-face interview.

**Analysis.** Once all the documents from a particular participant were collected and coded, they were organized by category. Seeking to then condense the extensive raw data down to manageable form, I began to build broad categories based on the frequency of particular codes. Referring back to the participants' writings, I then isolated phrases from the written documents that best illustrated the categories and noted quotes that also signaled a discrepancy in my reasoning. Through inductive reasoning, I then began to describe what I believed to be "the underlying structure of experiences or processes" present for each participant (Thomas, 2006, p. 238). This analysis of the "raw units of information" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 203), coupled with the categorization of the coded data, allowed for the development of a hypothesis related to each participant's experience. Specifically, through what Patton (2002) calls the "immersion in the details and specifics of the data" (p. 41), I sought to describe the "important patterns, themes, and interrelationships" (p. 41) related to the overall background, instructional approach, and professional development experience of each teachers related to the teaching of writing.

Once all the data and analysis had been compiled independently for each case, I then systematically compared the categories identified for each participant across their peers, within their grade level, and across grade levels. Saldana's (2009) recommends that researchers create a "top ten" list to both reflect on significant findings as well as organize the research report (p. 186). He also encourages researchers to then narrow their work to an ideal "trinity", or three major themes (p. 186), so as to focus the ongoing work. I followed this advice and worked to build an overall description of three key categories visible across participants by drawing on the extensive and rich quotes collected in both document and interview form. This process was then repeated as it related to patterns of discrepancies.

Finally, a case description for each participant was drafted so as to provide a description and backdrop for each teacher's professional development experience. These description were created in both narrative and chart form, so as to allow for full illustration of teacher story, as well as quick reference and comparison by the reader.

### **Ethical Dimensions**

Taking part in this research study was completely voluntary for all the participants. Each teacher was notified of this at the start of the process as well as during subsequent interactions. The participants could choose not to take part, or stop participating at any time, without any penalty. Their participation, or lack thereof, did not affect their professional standing within OWP or in relation to further OWP activities.

Pseudonyms were used throughout the research process in both transcriptions and researcher memos as a means of maintaining participant confidentiality. However, it should be noted that because of the small size of the pool from which participants were recruited, absolute anonymity of participants cannot be insured. Before and during the study, participants' identities were known only by the researcher and the OWP@WU Director Karen Hamlin. After the research is published, it is possible that individuals involved with the 2011 OWP@WU SI program or in OWP leadership positions may come to know the identity of study participants through the descriptions included here.

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness or internal validity of this study, in the sense that the findings accurately reflect the participants and their experience, came from triangulation and the process of soliciting feedback from the participants themselves. To enhance trustworthiness, I used the following strategies:

- Triangulation from the coding and analysis of multiple data sources (various documents created as part of the SI program and the follow-up interview) from multiple participants (two teachers at each grade level). The discovery of similar data from more than one data source or participant, as well as finding discrepancies in data across sources for an individual or across multiple participants, provided a rich base from which to examine meaning.

- Prior knowledge (grounded in the literature) related to the field of writing education and professional development. Consideration of the connections between the emerging findings and pre-existing research aided in the establishment of confidence in the findings.

- Prolonged engagement with data participants, so as to allow for the confirmation of experience and meaning. The depth and detail of attention applied to the data provided by participants contributed to the trustworthiness of the study findings. Detailed, and often multi-layered, coding as well as the process of member checking was important to establish trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that, in naturalistic inquiry, study trustworthiness is verified through the demonstration of the researcher's interpretations of data as credible to the very research participants who first provided the data (p. 296). In the present study, participants were asked to respond to early study analysis as part of the follow-up interview, as well as after receiving a draft of the final report before publication. As both researcher and participants are informed constructors, the truth is a matter of their consensus rather than a matter of inert, universal, or objective reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 44). In this study, participant feedback consistently confirmed the final written report.

External validity of this study cannot be insured, as the findings of this study cannot be generalized across time and space. However, the complete reporting of the related literature, chosen methodology, and participant descriptions can provide the

information to the reader needed to determine the applicability of the research to their particular situation.

### **Conclusion**

The present research sought to understand how the OWP SI influenced the practices, attitudes, and beliefs (related to the teaching of writing) of teacher participants. Through the collection, coding, and analysis of documents and interviews, case descriptions of six teachers (spread equally across elementary, middle, and high school grade level teaching positions) were developed. Analytic induction was used to examine patterns among individual participants and among grade levels. Findings were organized to communicate the central themes of similarities and differences. Case descriptions were created to illustrate the experience of each participant.

## **Chapter 4: Findings**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how the 2011 Oregon Writing Project (OWP) Summer Institute (SI) may have influenced the practices, attitudes, and beliefs (related to the teaching of writing) of teacher participants and to identify the similarities and differences among teacher thinking at different grade levels. Written coursework and one-on-one follow-up interviews were collected from six teachers before, during, and after the Summer Institute. In this chapter, I first present a case description of each of the six teachers. These case descriptions show the participants' personal and professional experience prior to the SI. After the case study descriptions, findings are presented that show how the SI may have influenced the practices, attitudes, and beliefs of the participants. Both similarities and differences regarding the effects of the SI experience among the participants and the limitations of these comparisons are displayed.

### **Case Descriptions**

All six participants taught in public schools located in the Willamette Valley of Oregon, and all were responsible for teaching writing to their assigned grade-level students. Yet, the backgrounds of these six teachers are unique, and the case descriptions that follow provide a glimpse into varied personal and professional lives.

These cases can be used by the reader to contextualize the later sections of this chapter that examine similarities and differences in how the participants made sense of the SI.

**Elementary teacher Elaine Oaks.** Although Elaine Oaks's pathway to the classroom would not be considered the "fast track," in the end it seems like a "perfect fit." Oaks had tutored children, both inside and outside of schools, since she was a teenager, but she did not actually begin her undergraduate studies as an education major until she was 32 years old. Asked why she chose teaching as a career, Elaine responded:

I think I've been a teacher my whole life... If you really look at the grand scheme of things no matter what my job has been in my life I've always been a teacher in that job. So when I went back to school there was no question knowing what I was meant to do and I couldn't imagine myself doing anything else. It's just been natural.

At the start of the Summer Institute, Oaks was 38 years of age and had just completed her second full year of teaching. Oaks held a Bachelor of Science in Education and an ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Endorsement that she had earned just three years prior from a state university in Oregon. Serving in the public schools of Salem since her college graduation, Oaks taught at the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> grade levels prior to enrolling in the Summer Institute. A new-teacher mentor provided by the district encouraged Oaks to learn more about the teaching of writing by applying for the 2011 Summer Institute. Sadly, budget cuts for the 2011-2012

school year caused Oaks to be laid off from her teaching position in June of 2011. Despite the layoff, she decided to proceed with the professional development while applying for other available jobs in the district. It was later, in the midst of the Summer Institute, that Oaks was rehired (by the same school district) in the role of Instructional Coach at a Title I elementary school for the 2011-2012 school year. Although relatively new to the profession, Oaks had quickly been identified as a teacher leader.

Beginning with her own learning of writing as a K-12 student, Oaks remembered back to her 7th and 8th grade experience in a language arts classroom. The instruction she described seems most closely aligned with the traditional presentational mode of instruction:

We spent a long time diagramming sentences, really hitting the grammar really hard. It did nothing for me as a writer. It's not that I didn't learn those and I didn't apply those rules to my writing, but it didn't necessarily create - me becoming a better writer as a person or honing any kind of craft.

Overall, Oaks described her elementary and middle school experiences with writing as unmemorable: "I remember writing one essay in 7th grade." It was only when she began to speak of her experience in high school that Oaks's demeanor noticeably brightened:

I have really brilliant memories of what we did in those classes... Thinking back to high school I was really blessed with a couple of amazing literacy

teachers; Miss Sorenson... really pushed me; and Ms. Beverly Morgan who was probably the wackiest woman I had ever met... she pushed me really, really hard because she pushed me to my maximum and it made me realize then that I was really capable of doing a lot more and I didn't have to settle for anything.

Asked more specifically about the instruction methods used by Ms. Morgan, Oaks offered:

We did a lot of writing in that class. I remember our final was on *Romeo and Juliet* and we had to write this response paper. I don't know how many times she must have given me that rough draft back like, "I want more. I want more." We really got to put our own feelings and that kind of thing into our paper... She just empowered me to do better and to really think about my process of what I'm doing. I think before it had been so formulaic that I was able to type out on the typewriter those papers without putting any thought into them and still getting good grades.

The emphasis placed on student engagement in a writing process indicates Oaks's later teachers favored a natural process or environmental mode of instruction; working with students to create multiple drafts and author original ideas. In high praise of Ms. Morgan, Oaks shared: "She pushed me to be a better writer."

Leaving her student role and entering the role of teacher, Elaine Oaks began work in her own elementary school classroom as a teacher faced with the task of

teaching writing and finding herself “kind of scrambling.” She relied heavily on the district provided teaching guides and instructed her students mainly through the presentational mode. Unhappy with the teaching and learning in her classroom, Oaks then began to change her writing instruction with the help of a new-teacher mentor provided by her district. Working side-by-side with her mentor, Oaks expanded the Reader’s Workshop model (that had been taught to her as part of her preservice education) to also include a Writer’s Workshop model. At the time of her Summer Institute entrance, Oaks’s instruction had shifted to strategies more closely aligned with the environmental mode. At her SI entrance interview, she described herself as a teacher of writing with the following words:

As a teacher of writing, my priority for my students is to enjoy writing! While I understand my responsibilities of being a teacher and making sure I am meeting the corresponding standards, I want students to be surrounded by rich mentor texts, exploring various crafts of other authors and allowing them to find their voice and share it.

The coursework completed during the Summer Institute painted a picture of Oaks as a personally-charming and academic-savvy student, teacher, and colleague. A thorough review of all the comments written by this elementary teacher while participating in the Summer Institute fails to reveal a single statement pointing to the deficiencies of a learner. This same pattern is repeated in her written comments to SI peers. On the presentation feedback forms she completed during the summer, Oaks

wrote statements of encouragement or positive acknowledgment to her 17 peers a total of 26 times. Seemingly entrenched in the elementary teacher practice of *catching people doing well*, her feedback to classmates was laced with encouragement:

I love that you hooked us with a humorous mentor text.

You have such a beautiful warm demeanor: you make people want to learn.

[You are] a forever teacher.

I noticed your ease of confidence. I'm sure it is infectious to your students in the way that they too become confident in their work.

In relation to professional knowledge, Oaks was well versed in the themes currently at the forefront of the local school district's curriculum program. In her Summer Institute writings, Oaks mentioned the following: mentor text, scaffolding, standards, genre studies, ELL, and 'Children of Poverty.' She spoke of mentor text and its importance in almost half of her feedback forms to peers:

I noticed the importance of mentor text to give an example of what authors do.

I love the use of student writing as a further mentor text.

Wonderful opening mentor text.

Great use of mentor text!

The importance of mentor texts! Mentor text! Mentor text!

When asked later, in the face-to-face interview about where she first encountered the idea of mentor texts, Oaks credited her new-teacher mentor.

Referencing her preservice preparation on the topic, Oaks shared:

I had a wonderful literacy teacher, who exposed us to all kinds of books for reading. It was, “Read this to your class; it’s a good book,” which was wonderful exposure for me to hear all kinds of books, but I never really had the exploration of, “This is what you would do to teach with this book.”

Passionate and articulate, Oaks’s entrance essay spoke directly to her convictions in the area of writing:

When we allow students to find their voice and provide them with the tools and time that they need to allow that voice to flow out of their pens and pencils, we are opening a door for them to take an unending journey of learning.

While Oaks’s pre-Institute statements signified that she believed students need voice, tools, and time, she reflected on these same components post- Institute and commented:

I guess “tools” is kind of broad. Maybe I could elaborate a little bit on that: I think students need exposure to as many different kinds of writing as they can get their hands on - whether that be self-immersion, teacher helping with that immersion, or teacher modeling what it looks like to read a text from a different scope.

It seems fitting that, because she entered the SI as a teacher and exited as an Instructional Coach, Oaks’s writing and thinking would expand from student to both

students and teachers. This shift was evident in her continued post-SI reflection of what is needed in the area of writing. In her exit essay, Oaks shared:

Time. Inspiration. Discovery. These three things seem to me to be of the essence - the must haves in our classrooms and schools for both teachers and students alike. Time for teachers to create thought out and real plans to meet the needs of diverse classes.... Inspiration coming from colleagues, mentor texts and getting to know our kids... And for all involved the element of discovery; searching for the pieces that fit each of us rather than the reliance of cookie-cutter teaching and learning.

Lastly, when asked in the interview if there was anything else about the Summer Institute or about the teaching of writing that she may want to share, Oaks seemed to speak directly to the teachers of writing who may feel as unprepared as she was during her first year of teaching. She addressed the issues of time, confidence, and professional growth, offering:

The only thing I could say is if we could have teachers recognize the beauty and the gift that [the Summer Institute] is to alleviate some of that fear and some of that stress. Yes, it's five weeks in your summer. Yes, there's some work involved in it. But it will change you dramatically and not for the worst. It only gets better.

**Elementary teacher Ellen Trenton.** Ellen Trenton's goal to be a classroom teacher formed long before she entered college. Teaching was her earliest wish, and her sole choice of professions from the very start of her life:

At two I wanted to be a teacher. I don't know why, I just always knew that was my career path... from the moment I could talk I said that's what I wanted to do. I played school all day growing up.

Eager to make her dreams a reality, Trenton began taking classes at a local community college when she was 13 in hopes of reaching the teacher's desk as quickly as possible. After completing high school, Trenton enrolled as an undergraduate at a small private college in the Willamette Valley. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education degree after four years and then went on to secure an ESOL Endorsement. In 2009, Trenton was hired by Salem-Keizer public schools to teach in a 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classroom and again in 2010 to teach 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade ESOL. During her second assignment, Trenton was assigned a new-teacher mentor by the school district. This mentor (the same mentor assigned to Elaine Oaks at another school site) recommended that Trenton attend the Summer Institute. Trenton reflected on the writing lessons she and her mentor had been developing together in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class and thought, "Okay, how can I make this bigger?" Trenton explained in her Summer Institute entrance essay, "I believe attending the Summer Institute will be just what I need to take my instruction to the

next level.” Sadly, at the end of that same year, extended budget cuts in the district caused 24 year old Trenton to lose her teaching position.

Already enrolled in the Summer Institute, Trenton proceeded to participate in the professional development program, although she was uncertain about her future. Once the summer was complete, Trenton was pleased to be rehired by the school district as a half-time Kindergarten teacher and a half-time Reading Intervention specialist. She was also thrilled to learn she was pregnant.

When Trenton tried to think back to her own childhood education in the area of writing, she admitted to having few memories related to her learning:

I do not remember any good teaching of writing growing up. I remember you wrote in your journal. You were given a prompt. And that's all I remember.

Or you were given a report, and even then you were given the formula.

Instead, it was her parents that Trenton credited for contributing to her early writing abilities. Trenton felt that her parents fostered in her the “freedom to be an individual’ which gave her a feeling of acceptance as a “good writer.”

Trenton entered the classroom as a teacher without any specific plans or preparation for the instruction of writing. In her first teaching placement, Trenton admitted to feeling free to sidestep writing instruction with her young students: “As a 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher, I found it easy for me to tell myself that my kids were too young to write.” However in her second year of teaching (with 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders), Trenton reported coming face to face with the issue and asking herself, "How the heck

am I supposed to do this?” She sought help from colleagues in her school building, but found that “everyone else admitted that they felt the same inadequacy when it came to writing instruction.” She reports changing her “ideas of what writing was” only after her new-teacher mentor addressed the topic. Trenton began to integrate writing within her already established Reader’s Workshop model, and started teaching mini lessons related to writing. Her approach, previously presentational or non-existent, developed into instruction that generally centered on the environmental mode; allowing for a great deal of student “freedom” yet also recognizing her district’s call for the “gradual release model” of instruction that she felt was “perfect for kids if done correctly.”

Reviewing Trenton’s work during the Summer Institute, her writings seemed closely aligned both with her teaching philosophy and, in the end, her current position in her personal life. When talking about her work as a teacher she explained:

When you come into my classroom the thing you'll notice the most is our environment, that it's family. I always said that if they leave my class learning how to love better or learning that they were loved, then I'd done my job. And when you have that environment, you can teach them. So I focus on that first. It's always been the heart of the kid. The brain falls in there, but the heart of the kid's the most important thing to me.

This focus on the personal aspect of student engagement was seen again and again in the summer writings Trenton shared with her peers. Reflecting on lessons presented by peers, Trenton said:

I noticed the personal connection to learning.

The lesson had a personal connection – it was not just about dates and events.

[This lesson is] very applicable to your students – it hits home for them.

You challenged us and made it personal – outside your curriculum.

Trenton’s course comments referenced instructional issues such as scaffolded lessons to meet “the many needs” of students, the “important” connection between reading and writing, and the “incorporation of mentor texts.” However, the strongest thread throughout Trenton’s data was the belief that true engagement of students comes through a personal connection to writing assignments. It seemed that Trenton believed that having students write about their personal feelings was more valuable than having them write grammatically correct statements. That said, Trenton simultaneously held the belief that students who write about what they feel will, in the end, have more opportunities to learn how to create statements which follow traditionally acceptable grammar rules. As a teacher working with students whose first languages may not be English, Trenton clarified these sentiments in her Summer Institute entrance essay when she wrote:

I now teach writing to my students as a form of communication. We talk about how powerful our words can be when used for communication. I’ve found that

the population of students I teach needs this tool more than most. It has been life-changing, for me and my students to see the empowerment that comes from helping these kids express themselves.

This attention to the personal aspect of a student's writing life is also extended in Trenton's Summer Institute coursework to the writing lives of teachers. Applying for the summer program, Trenton's entrance essay spoke to her understanding of her professional classroom responsibilities. However exiting the program, Trenton was unemployed and had turned her attention to the development of her new family. Her exit essay illustrated this shift as the ideas expressed seemed to be drawn from a more personal understanding of writing:

I think more than anything else, OWP has changed me as a writer and that in and of itself means a lot of change to who I am as a teacher. I didn't write for myself before. I had the desire to, but never the time. My journals would stay empty, though I bought new ones frequently. Now, I'm going to be making a true effort to put time for writing in my life. I want to capture moments in words... I desperately want my students to get to the same place in their writing. I want it to be less about assignments and more about the joy that comes from writing... I want this to be a true place of expression, where art can be created. I want them to feel success and the freedom/fun that comes from playing with words.

This theme continued in the interview when Trenton was asked what students need in the area of writing. Trenton listed freedom and safety as key to student writing success and shared that she may not have named those factors before her Summer Institute experience:

I didn't understand how important they were, because I was never the writer myself. So even doing the units of study [with students prior to the Institute]...it was still them doing what I wanted them to do and it wasn't about freedom. It changed a lot of views about safety... like what I will read and what I won't read from their journals and making sure they have that time to write for themselves. I didn't understand the value of it before... I want [students] to see that [writing] can be freeing... It doesn't have to be my formula or my rules; it can just be about writing.

When asked what teachers need in the area of writing, Trenton succinctly answered, "Help. They need help." She went on to describe the help she received from her new-teacher mentor before the Summer Institute and the lesson ideas and resources she gained from the teachers she met during the Summer Institute. She said that her writing instruction changed the most when she had time with other teachers who were "able to talk and spur each other on for better things."

Given the opportunity to provide additional comments to inform this study, Trenton wanted to make it clear that although her experience in the Summer Institute was positive, she was aware of colleagues in the program who did not have compatible

personalities or work styles and therefore experienced some tension. With personal safety and connection so important in the act of writing, she felt this may have dampened the overall experience for those individuals. Acknowledging that “such different personalities and such different drives” are also frequently present at a school site, she cited the *saving grace* of the Summer Institute as a selection process that identified “people who chose to come during their summer and all wanted to get better.” Overall she felt that:

Everyone came with this attitude of, “Let's learn together. Let's teach each other.” And we all learned something from every single person. It totally changes things when it's a choice to be there. It's about being better at what you do.

**Middle school teacher Marcy Ochoa.** Marcy Ochoa knew in high school that she would one day become a teacher. Married right after graduation, Ochoa postponed her college entrance in favor of starting a family, but once her children were grown she returned to school and began moving towards the career she “always kind of planned to do.” Ochoa first enrolled at a community college, then at a four-year college in pursuit of her Bachelor’s degree in English. Moving on to a Master of Arts in Teaching program at a private university in Oregon, Ochoa served as a substitute teacher in her home town until her children graduated from high school.

Previous to her enrollment in the Summer Institute, Ochoa taught 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade language arts in a middle school located in a small town in the Willamette

Valley of Oregon. At 55, Ochoa had just completed her second year in this same position, having previously worked in a variety of teaching and school librarian positions around the Valley for over 10 years. She enrolled in the Summer Institute after her principal explained that funds were available for professional development (as a means of improving student achievement). Ochoa had heard about the Oregon Writing Project from a former colleague and considered the teaching of writing her “weak link.” Upon completing the 2011 Summer Institute, Ochoa returned to her 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade language arts classroom at the same location.

Reflecting back on her own days of being a K-12 student of writing, Ochoa shared:

Oh my, I don’t remember being taught to write. I have always been a voracious reader and I know that that helps me write because I’d read enough to understand how things like that work... I mean partly because of my age, I’m sure that there were more formal things that we did.

Ochoa did remember taking a required “Writing 121” course when first enrolling in college, but stated, “The only thing I remember from that class, really, is how to write a thesis statement.” Later, she also took a “Research Writing” course which she cited as interesting because she was able to choose her own topic: “I wrote my paper on left-handedness because I’m left-handed.”

When Ochoa began her own work as a teacher of writing, she employed mostly traditional methods of writing instruction. Within a presentational mode,

Ochoa taught students the “laws of writing.” Just a year before the SI, she had placed a poster of these rules prominently at the front of her classroom, however she found students seemingly forgot about the poster as the year went on and were unable to integrate the rules into their overall class work. Students turned in their writing assignments when due and Ochoa marked the essays to indicate where the *laws* had been broken before returning the papers to students with a final grade.

Prior to the Summer Institute, Ochoa’s teaching was also guided by a curriculum map designed by her school’s faculty:

We went through and made up this curriculum map... we had these notebooks that we created... and then we have all these things in there. The theory was: if you walked into my classroom, I could hand this to you and say, “This is what we do.”

At the 2011 Summer Institute, Ochoa began making new plans for her teaching of writing. Ochoa’s writings (in the form of feedback written to her Summer Institute peers following their SI presentation) documented the accumulation of new ideas and approaches in her classroom:

Something that will stay with me is to remember to utilize common, simple things to write about – something that everyone can identify with... I could ask students to write about how their room is decorated: “Write a persuasive paper. Should I be allowed to decorate my own room? Maybe write about how the

pictures/posters and other things ‘say’ something about you. What do they say?”

Also present within Ochoa’s written feedback to peers was her active search for new resources. Again and again, she identified and requested resources she could bring from the Summer Institute back to her classroom:

Could you send us your PowerPoint presentation?

I would like to have these bare books for my kids. Did you get them through the Willamette Educational Service District?

I’d like to get a copy of that book: *Circuit*.

Could we have a copy of the template you used for the questions?

At the completion of the Summer Institute, Ochoa identified the three things students need in the area of writing as “confidence, freedom... and ownership.” When asked if she would have said those same things before the SI, she laughed and said:

I probably wouldn’t have said that. No. I would’ve said something probably more academic... You know, to be able to write a correct sentence, to be able to craft a paragraph, to be able to write a five-paragraph essay - because that’s what I did.

However, even with this admission of retreat from the hyper-focus of the traditional writing genres of the U.S. classroom, Ochoa maintained much of her belief in the basics of the traditional writing classroom:

My example is: I think it's important that kids learn multiplication tables. We all have calculators but you still need to know how that works. Even if you don't do math in your head or on paper, you use that, something with buttons to understand how multiplication works is important. I'm not going to throw the baby out with the bathwater... I still think you have to be able to punctuate a sentence.

While Ochoa still believed students should know the laws of writing, she appeared to gain from the Summer Institute an understanding that there may be an instructional approach that enables teacher and student to enjoy writing while also maintaining the writing rules of English composition. In reference to the acquisition of new resources as a means of resolving the conflict between the laws of writing and the joys of writing, Ochoa shared that she looked back over the notes taken throughout the Summer Institute and could see her own transformation:

If you read through the whole thing, there's definite change in tone... I think you put your finger on it really well, just to say that there was that disconnect... but I think through the process I was able to find a spot to say, 'Oh, if I just used this one little tool here...'

At the end of this study, Ochoa appeared eager to talk about the changes underway in her middle school writing classroom. She readily spoke about her continued exploration of writing and its instruction. When asked if she had any additional comments about the Summer Institute or this individual study, Ochoa

shared that she felt the Summer Institute had been an “absolutely” positive experience and has recommended it to many of her coworkers. She also returned to the topic of preservice education stating, “I’d like to have you prove the case that nobody really teaches how to teach writing.”

**Middle school teacher Mikayla Townsen.** As a child, the prospect of growing up and becoming a teacher seemed like an impossibility for Mikayla Townsen. No one in her family had ever attended college and financial support was not available to support her own interest in further schooling. With little “opportunity... models or examples,” Townsen was unsure how to achieve her goals. As a child who loved books and reading, Townsen reveled in the work of Laura Ingalls Wilder and nursed the dream of being “a teacher” just like her favorite author.

Townsen first tried to seek further education out of state after her high school graduation. Struggling to balance school and full time work, Townsen returned home unsure of her next steps. Soon she married and started a family, all the while continuing to search for affordable schooling. After several years, she discovered a program for low-income, first generation students through a local community college. Two years enrolled in that program led to three more years at a local state college and culminated in a Bachelor of Science degree in both Sociology and Education. Armed with her hard earned teaching certificate, Townsen was immediately hired in her home town to teach 6th grade English and Social Studies.

After five years of teaching at the middle school level, and at age 35, Townsen found that she was eager to complete the credit requirements necessary to renew her Oregon teaching license. She learned about the Oregon Writing Project Summer Institute while researching local master's degree programs and thought it was a good fit because she liked to write and could receive graduate credit at an affordable rate. The K-12 professional development program took on added meaning, when Townsen found out that she would be transferred to a self-contained 4<sup>th</sup> grade classroom by her school district for the 2011-2012 school year. She spent the summer focusing on writing and on her new grade level responsibilities.

When asked how she was taught to write as a K-12 student, Townsen shared that she could not exactly remember:

I remember one teacher that really made me feel good about myself as a writer. It was an 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher and I think it was just some encouragement that she gave. She gave feedback and I was able to see a whole bunch of growth over that year... Other than that, I don't remember being taught techniques or strategies to write.

Overall, Townsen said that the teaching of writing was mostly absent from her K-12 experience and thought "it's still not there in education today."

Before coming to the 2011 Summer Institute, Townsen's teaching of writing generally corresponded with the natural process and environmental modes associated with a process methodology. In her 6<sup>th</sup> grade classroom, she reported using Writer's

Workshop to develop ideas with an emphasis on the personal connections for students.

She explained:

As a writing and language arts teacher... I believe that there are many different pathways to writing. There is no single formula for becoming a great writer, the secret of writing is learning processes, discovering how to use those processes, and figuring out what works best for you. In my 6<sup>th</sup> grade writing classroom, I teach students how to learn the various skills to becoming a good writer using several strategies and resources.

As part of her regular instruction, Townsen did not grade everything her students wrote (although earlier in her teaching career she had done so). Instead, each time students turned in their work, she focused on “a couple of traits at a time instead of doing them all.” Her statements made it clear that she believes writing is a creative process and rejects any lock-step formulas for success.

Process-centered at the start of her Summer Institute experience, Townsen’s plans of instruction seemed more student-centered at the completion of the program. When listing what students need in the area of writing, Townsen shared that, just as before, she believed students continually need time to practice their writing skills. However, after the Summer Institute she also emphasized “choices” as an important factor in student writing success:

I think that’s really important because it motivates them... That’s something that I’ve probably gained from the SI, was that when I had choices, I felt like

more came out of me... They didn't specifically tell me, "This is what you need to do" and I think, before that, I might have been more of a teacher who would give [students] a prompt and say, "This is what I want you to write to." Now, I give them guidelines.

Unlike the other study participants, Townsen strongly identified herself as a writer before entering the 2011 Summer Institute. She shared that her first interest in writing began when she was a child and wrote "little choose-your-own adventure books" and tried to share them with her family and friends. In her entrance interview, Townsen shared that as an adult she also worked on a variety of pieces:

Currently I have several projects I am working on. The first is a play that I had written for the students of the drama program to perform last spring. I am in the process of getting it ready to submit to play publishers. I have submitted a children's book and am lacking art work for it. I'm currently developing a resource guide for teachers to use in their classrooms that teaches students how to use a Writer's Notebook. I have other ideas floating around for adolescent novels, but feel pressed for time during the school year.

In her interview, Townsen shared that the act of improving her own writing in the Summer Institute served as a valuable tool in improving her practice as a teacher. The experience of personal learning through a particular lesson or methodology helped convince her of the usefulness of such pedagogy in the classroom. She stated that the

ideas shared by her peers “might not have been as important, or useable, if they didn’t impact me in some way.”

Also unlike the other participants, Townsen identified herself as someone who is “really, super shy.” Visible in her course writings are statements that acknowledge her hesitancy and her appreciativeness of peers who welcomed her. As the summer progressed, Townsen seemed more relaxed and more willing to give and receive feedback from her peers, commenting to them:

I appreciated how you gave clear and calm direction.

I noticed how your voice and your use of it calmed the room and made me feel safe.

I wish I would have had you for a teacher. I actually might have learned Spanish and paid attention in high school.

Thank you so much for sharing this with us. I was worried about how I was going to put everything together and you have helped me get unstuck. Thank you! Thank you!

Finally in her reflection of the peer feedback she received from her own presentation, Townsen told peers:

I thank everyone for their comments and ideas. It was truly a safe and supportive place to share my ideas and to get feedback. All of your comments have made the future use of this lesson stronger and more successful for students.

In the final moments of the face-to-face interview, Mikayla shared that as a very young child she had “always wanted to go to Willamette University.” Unsure of the opportunities that would be available to her, the present reality of studying on the university campus and buying a Willamette University t-shirt at the book store gave her a sense of belonging and new inspiration. Since the Summer Institute she has asked herself, “Okay, which direction am I going in right now?” Acknowledging her interest in pursuing her Master’s degree and perhaps even a doctoral program, the possibilities for Townsen seem endless.

**High school teacher Scott Owen.** Like many of his peers, Scott Owen chose teaching as his career because it seemed like a “good fit.” After earning a Bachelor of Arts in English, he took a year off from college before returning to the Master of Arts in Teaching program at the same private university in Oregon:

It seemed like a natural fit, for me. I’ve always been athletic and so the thought of teaching and coaching was very appealing. I was able to volunteer during my undergrad... at various high schools and it was great. I’m a kid at heart so it just seemed like a natural fit.

Entering the Summer Institute following his 16<sup>th</sup> year of teaching, Owen had previously taught both a self-contained middle school classroom as well as high school English and Social Studies. His most recent teaching duties at age 40 included teaching honors, standard, and credit-recovery English courses for grades 9 through 12 in Salem, Oregon. Owen had previously heard of the OWP Summer Institute, but he

never applied because of job responsibilities that conflicted with the summer schedule. In the fall of 2010, Owen met several OWP leaders during a technology professional development program and they invited him to attend the five-week Summer Institute at Willamette University. The idea stuck in his mind, and when his schedule shifted, he enrolled for the coming summer.

When reflecting on his own K-12 learning in the area of writing, Owen lamented, “The five paragraph essay was drilled.” His memories of elementary school included “sterile” lessons “that were in the books, where you would copy down a sentence and make the changes necessary. “It was “drill, drill, drill, drill, drill” and “boring, boring, boring, boring, boring.” Middle and high school were much the same, with just one exception:

I was taught to diagram sentences in Middle School. I was taught to do Daily Oral Language in high school - where they would slap up the overhead with all the errors in the sentence... It wasn't until I got into my junior English class, which was humanities, where there was kind of a focus on developing paragraphs with some kind of power.

Owen recalled regretfully having “very little time to hone my craft” in high school, and he entered college with, what he called, “a limited bag of tricks: a five-paragraph essay with various introductions and conclusions.” He shared that these skills “would get me in the race with most assignments, but rarely allowed me to feel

like a winner.” He entered college feeling underprepared for the writing required of him:

I got crushed my freshman year. I got C’s and that was not me. I think [I learned about] constructing sentences in college from the feedback my professors gave and especially in a creative writing class from my professor... That’s what helped me write.

When Owen began his work as a teacher of English, he used strategies most aligned with a presentational mode of instruction. Owen assigned essay themes which often required students to “regurgitate” what he said in class the day before. He then spent a lot of time marking and scoring the essays before returning them to his students. Having “always loved English” and earning a minor in Speech and Rhetoric, Owen truly wanted his students to enjoy language and communication as much as he did, but struggled to achieve the level of engagement that he desired. Owen seemed to hold a variety of natural process ideas (“Sometimes one choice a writer makes is better than another one” and those choices lead to “learning opportunities, not necessarily wrong answers”), however the bulk of his classroom instruction continued to stem from traditional methods which gave students a limited amount of freedom or personal engagement with the topics.

Owen’s written reflections during the Summer Institute spoke to the use of mentor-texts, the integration of technology, prewriting activities as a means of engaging student writers and genre as a way to organize classroom units. However, it

was his overwhelming desire to learn as much as he could from other teachers that *leapt from the page* while reviewing the data. Responding to peer presentations, Owen enthusiastically described ways the lessons could influence his own classroom instruction:

Infinite possibilities with this [elementary lesson]: I will use this one as a story starter.

I will use the categories [from this elementary lesson] and maybe extend them out to other areas.

It is a great [middle school] template to get kids to write – perceptions vs. realities. The fact that it is couched in humor helps hide some of these creative high level thinking skills that are certainly happening here. The kids will work hard while feeling like they are not.

A great editing activity: I would add this to my own writing activities – giving students a starter list to use as a reference wonderful here (I'll borrow yours to start with).

Also as part of the written work completed in the Summer Institute, Owen thanked his peers for working alongside him in the Summer Institute. He continually encouraged or positively acknowledged the work of others. In the written reflection completed in response to his own SI presentation, Owen told peers:

I enjoyed giving this lesson... Thank you for all of your feedback. I am glad I was able to share something I have been wrestling with for a long time. I hope someone can take this and make it even better.

When asked in the follow-up interview about this seemingly intrinsic drive during the Summer Institute to learn and improve his teaching, Owen shared:

Yes... I'm very vain in some ways. I want to be *that* teacher. Having some different tools to use makes me feel that not only are kids getting a good personality with their teacher, but they're actually getting some good lessons that make sense... I love to putter with my teaching and find better ways to do things and that's my job... So, yes, I wanted to improve my craft a ton. It was important.

Drawing on his traditional background as well as the natural process and environmental mode ideas which are emphasized by SI, Owen reflected on what students need in the area of writing during the follow-up interview:

I think [students] need to understand how to develop an idea. I think they need to understand how to take the idea they've developed and convey it to the reader effectively and I think they need to understand how to revise, along the way, various pieces of that idea to make it better.

When asked if he would have said the same three things before the Summer Institute, Owen stated that while his goals for student writers are much the same; his

understanding of the teaching methods that can be used to reach these goals had been altered:

I don't think it's changed. I'm pretty sure what three parts I'd use. I think how I would have gone about it would have been a little different if I hadn't gone into the program. I think that by backing off and giving kids different ways to come at an idea - more imaginative ways; those types of exercises I got in the Summer Institute - they're going to have more options that are more appealing to them, so... more tools, more vehicles to get kids thinking. [Before the Institute] I didn't have that.

Lastly, when asked if there was anything else he'd like to share about his overall professional development experience, Owen talked about the impact that the personal writing had on him during the Summer Institute. Always keeping his teacher responsibilities in the forefront of his mind, Owen spoke of how his personal experience as a writer informed his practice as a teacher of writing:

I think being able to write about what I wanted to write about this summer was really important... There were some things that I wanted to write about that I hadn't had time to process necessarily.... I wrote about my sister. I wrote about fan fiction. And I wrote some humorous pieces in between... I liked the fact that I could write in so many different voices. So that translates over into what my kids are going to be doing, too. Again freedom, but having that freedom directed towards some kind of ultimate goal.

**High school teacher Susan Tanner.** Susan Tanner was the only study participant who did not earn a college degree in the state of Oregon. Instead, Tanner hailed from Texas where she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and a Texas teaching certificate. Reflecting on her path to this chosen career, Tanner shared that, as a child, she considered pursuing a variety of jobs (teaching among them):

I think I went through phases when I was a kid: I was going to be a nurse; I was going to be a doctor; I was going to be a dentist; I was going to be a secretary at a doctor's office.... My dad actually bought a dry erase board, at one point.... he mounted it on the wall and I actually sat my sister down and we pretended we were at school and I was the teacher... in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade I was teaching her how to multiply and divide, and things like that.

More than a decade later, at age 22, Tanner found herself in a real classroom serving as a student teacher. She enjoyed the work even more than she had anticipated.

Before moving to Oregon, Tanner taught high school English in Texas for three years. At that point, she moved to the Willamette Valley and was hired at a large public high school in Salem. She taught 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade English. She also began an online Masters in Education degree program. Midway through her first year in Oregon, Tanner's department chair recommended the Oregon Writing Project Summer Institute as a way for Tanner to secure the Master's credits required to teach the "college writing" course based at the high school and accredited through a local

community college. With budget cuts looming, Tanner enrolled in the Summer Institute in hopes of achieving job security: “It was more of a career move than a... ‘I want do this’.” In the end, the requirements for college writing changed and Tanner was transferred to an alternate high school in the same district. While these changes occurred before the first day of the Summer Institute, Tanner decided to proceed with her participation in the professional development program.

Reflecting back on her own K-12 education in the area of writing, Tanner was hard pressed to remember the specifics of the instruction she received. “I think it was kind of an age of drill and kill,” she said. Writing instruction in the elementary grades was limited to letter formation: “how to write words ... then teaching me how to do cursive.”

Later in high school, Tanner was taught using the “Jane Shaffer method.” This method relies on a model created by educator Jane Shaffer and prescribes the creation of paragraphs which contain a certain number of sentences and words. Sentences must follow an approved pattern of topic sentence, concrete details, and commentary statements (Schaffer, 2002). Tanner explained:

In freshman and sophomore year it was all about getting the model – following the model perfectly... I remember we used to write quite a bit, I think every three weeks we had an essay that we were doing... then junior and senior year was when they started trying to teach us ways to modify the formula and adjust it.

As Tanner began to earn good grades in high school, she gained confidence. However even as an undergraduate English major, she didn't necessarily enjoy the act of writing. When given a choice between a project or writing an essay for a course, she "never chose to write the essay."

Once a teacher of English herself, Tanner primarily focused her instruction on the literature assigned to her students. Tanner used writing as a way for students to complete the "short answer" questions needed to demonstrate their understanding of the "the book." When she did commit time to teach composition, the instruction generally followed the presentational mode. Just as in her high school experience, Tanner used the Jane Shaffer model and, in her initial teaching position in Texas, often geared instruction towards the tests provided by the state. When student writing was completed, she marked and scored every paper. This assessment method was very time consuming, but Tanner felt pressured by the "need to grade... every single essay."

Entering the Summer Institute, Tanner admitted, "I always felt like writing was my weak spot." Her teaching methods were previously based on her own student experience and the approved resources provided to her school sites. Although Tanner was not convinced of the overall success of these methods, she seemed cautious as she entered the Summer Institute and hesitant to abandon the known so as to explore unfamiliar strategies or perspectives. This tension, between the presentational mode of her past and the more progressive modes offered in the Summer Institute, was

illustrated during the follow-up interviews. Tanner spoke of the things she believed students needed in the area of writing:

When I have my kids write, I want them to be able to express themselves and express their ideas... but I still support, and I still believe in, the academic kind of writing (like the one chunk, two chunk model), because it's just a good way for them to present an idea and defend it with evidence.

Tanner seemed to find the most insight from the Summer Institute presentations that placed her in the role of student while simultaneously modeling the specific methods employed by a teacher of writing:

A lot of the people that presented... took on the role of the teacher and everybody else took on the role of the student... I think that's what made it helpful, is that we know the process as a student, and we got to see the process as the teacher. I mean, we actually went through and we actually did all of the writing that we would be expecting our students to do.

I think that was helpful, also, because then I could say, "Okay, I really struggled with this part of the assignment. So how can I modify it or simplify it for the students who are my same ability, or my same kind of mindset?"

Maybe I can modify it to help them a little bit, or explain it in a different way so that this group can also get it.

When asked in the interview about the variety of grade levels represented in the Summer Institute by participating teachers, Tanner shared that she liked talking with “people in different areas” of education. She explained it as:

Neat to see the different ways that people could approach things. And it was kind of nice to see it and then to have that question, “How would you modify it?” to really think about how would I put this in there.

Lastly, when asked if she had any other comments to contribute to this study, Tanner spoke to the differences between the Summer Institute and other inservices she had previously attended. Tanner seemed to feel that the time devoted in the summer program gave her an added edge in learning.

For some reason, with the Summer Institute, I feel like I’ve gotten so much more out of that than any of the district trainings that we’ve been to... I feel like I remember this stuff, and this stuff has really stood out... Maybe it was the way that we did it, and maybe that day after day after day after day.

In reference to further professional development in the area of writing, after the Summer Institute, Tanner expressed interest in finding additional opportunities that would offer a similar sustained format and model. “Because for me,” she articulated, “this has really sunk in and this has really worked.”

**Summary chart of the case descriptions** As a means of summarizing and comparing the case descriptions, the following charts have been included (see Tables 4.1-4.4):

Table 4.1  
General Participant Information

	Elementary		Middle School		High School	
	<i>Elaine Oaks</i>	<i>Ellen Trenton</i>	<i>Marcy Ochoa</i>	<i>Mikayla Townsen</i>	<i>Scott Owen</i>	<i>Susan Tanner</i>
<b>Began pre-service education...</b>	later in life.	immediately after high school & college.	later in life.	later in life.	immediately after high school & college.	immediately after high school & college.
<b>Participated in this study when...</b>	over the age of <u>35</u> .	under the age of <u>30</u> .	over the age of <u>35</u> .	over the age of <u>35</u> .	over the age of <u>35</u> .	under the age of <u>30</u> .
<b>Earned teaching certificate from...</b>	public university in Oregon.	private university in Oregon.	private university in Oregon.	public university in Oregon.	private university in Oregon.	public university in Texas
<b>Earned teaching certificate...</b>	within the last <u>5</u> years.	within the last <u>5</u> years.	more than <u>10</u> years ago.	<u>6</u> years ago.	more than <u>10</u> years ago.	within the last <u>5</u> years.
<b>Prior to the SI, taught...</b>	full-time for <u>2</u> years.	full-time for <u>2</u> years	for more than <u>10</u> years.	full-time for <u>5</u> years.	full-time for <u>16</u> years.	full-time for <u>4</u> years
<b>Enrolled in the SI...</b>	after a recommendation from her mentor.	after a recommendation from her mentor.	when school funds became available for professional development.	to secure credits for renewal of her teaching license.	at the invitation of OWP leadership.	in an attempt to secure her job position.

Table 4.2  
*Writing Education of Participants Prior to the Summer Institute*

	Elementary		Middle School		High School	
	<i>Elaine Oaks</i>	<i>Ellen Trenton</i>	<i>Marcy Ochoa</i>	<i>Mikayla Townsen</i>	<i>Scott Owen</i>	<i>Susan Tanner</i>
<b>Experienced K-12 writing primarily through...</b>	the presentational mode.	the presentational mode.	(Remembered few school writing experiences.)	(Remembered few school writing experiences.)	the presentational mode.	the presentational mode.
<b>Cited...</b>	no meaningful preservice preparation in the area of writing.	no meaningful preservice preparation in the area of writing.	no meaningful preservice preparation in the area of writing.			
<b>Began teaching career using...</b>	the presentational mode.	the presentational mode or avoidance of writing.	the presentational mode.	the presentational mode.	the presentational mode.	the presentational mode.
<b>Prior to the SI this teacher...</b>	adopted environmental mode after working with a mentor.	adopted environmental mode after working with a mentor.	cited no meaningful professional development in writing.	adopted natural process and environmental mode after extensive reading.	cited no meaningful professional development in writing.	cited no meaningful professional development in writing.

Table 4.3  
Participant Summer Institute Experience

	Elementary		Middle School		High School	
	<i>Elaine Oaks</i>	<i>Ellen Trenton</i>	<i>Marcy Ochoa</i>	<i>Mikayla Townsend</i>	<i>Scott Owen</i>	<i>Susan Tanner</i>
<b>During the SI...</b>	recognized mentor text as vital to writing instruction.	recognized the importance of personal writing.	sought to accumulate new classroom plans and resources.	was introduced to additional natural process and environmental mode strategies.	displayed notable drive to improve practice.	was introduced to new natural process and environmental mode strategies.
	interacted with colleagues using an asset model.	recognized the importance of personal safety in the classroom	recognized the importance of student ownership in writing.	identified herself as writer who benefited from SI work.	was introduced to new natural process and environmental mode strategies.	approached new ideas and instructional methods cautiously.
		found reconciliation between joy and laws of writing.		identified herself as a shy person who found safety in SI work.	recognized the importance of student choice in writing.	

Table 4.4  
*Overview of Participant Experience*

	Elementary		Middle School		High School	
	<i>Elaine Oaks</i>	<i>Ellen Trenton</i>	<i>Marcy Ochoa</i>	<i>Mikayla Townsen</i>	<i>Scott Owen</i>	<i>Susan Tanner</i>
<b>Began the SI as...</b>	an elementary school teacher; 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade.	an elementary school teacher; 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade.	a Language Arts middle school teacher.	a L. A. and Social Studies middle school teacher.	a Language Arts high school teacher	a Language Arts high school teacher
<b>Exited the SI as...</b>	an elementary instructional coach at a <u>new</u> school.	an elementary school teacher; K and reading at a <u>new</u> school.	a Language Arts middle school teacher at the <u>same</u> school.	an elementary school teacher; 4 <sup>th</sup> grade at a <u>new</u> school.	a Language Arts high school teacher at the <u>same</u> school.	a Language Arts high school teacher at a <u>new</u> school.
<b>Exited the SI with...</b>	a confirmed environ-mental mode methodology.	a confirmed environ-mental mode methodology.	a new environ-mental mode methodology.	a new environ-mental mode methodology.	a new environ-mental mode methodology.	additional questions about all modes of writing instruction.
<b>Advocated for...</b>	teacher participation in Summer Institute program.	teacher choice in professional development participation.	drawing attention to the “Neglected R” in preservice programming.	continuing education for herself in the near future.	professional development that incorporates personal writing.	professional development that offers the duration and intensity needed for learning.

### **Similarities Among Summer Institute Participants**

The preceding case descriptions describe the unique personal and professional journey of each participant. However, there are many similarities and a few differences among these participants. The next sections explore these findings.

There are three central findings that indicate similarities in the participants' experience of the 2011 Summer Institute. The three central findings related to the prior learning of participants as related to the teaching of writing, the reported changes in practices, attitudes and beliefs of participants after the Summer Institute, and the role of the Summer Institute in effecting change in the participants.

**Prior learning as related to the teaching of writing.** In order to understand the experience and engagement participants had with the subject of writing education prior to their Summer Institute enrollment, participants were asked to describe themselves as a teacher of writing in a pre-Summer Institute entrance essay. During the face-to-face interviews after the Summer Institute, participants were also asked to detail where and how they had been taught to teach writing prior to this professional development experience. Finding that preservice training for the six participants spanned various academic majors across five different universities in Oregon (and one in Texas), I expected to see variation related to the content and recency of preservice programs. In addition, as the teaching experience of the participants reached across a variety of school districts, I also anticipated a diversity of professional development experiences. However, the data shows relative consistency across all six participants.

*Inadequate preservice education in the teaching of writing.* All the participants reported inadequate preservice education in the area of teaching writing. This finding was consistent over multiple teacher education institutions and dates of graduation.

High school teacher Scott Owen, who received the earliest training and teaching certificate, spoke of his lack of prior preparation related to the teaching of writing in his Summer Institute entrance essay. He shared, “I began my educational career receiving little instruction in the way of teaching writing.” He described his student-teacher assignments (in two different classrooms) as an experience in “instructional schizophrenia.” One cooperating teacher demonstrated classic presentational teaching and another lauded the natural process:

Both my supervising teachers were focused on ideas and organization.

However they differed on what else to assess: one weighted assignments with grammar and spelling making up a third of the total score; the other felt that middle-schoolers should not be held accountable for spelling and grammar because focus on those fundamental processes stilted the ‘creative mind.’

Upon graduation from his teacher preparation program, Owen shared that he felt confused and unprepared for “formal teaching” in the area of writing.

More recent graduates Elaine Oaks, Ellen Trenton, Mikayla Townsen and Susan Tanner, believed they also had received inadequate preparation in the

instruction of writing. In the very first paragraph of her entrance essay elementary teacher Ellen Trenton shared:

It would be putting it lightly to say that during my first year, I hobbled through my writing instruction. In fact, it would be putting it generously to say that my writing instruction that first year was ‘instruction’ at all... I knew I wasn’t teaching writing well but I didn’t know where to begin to change that. I struggled all year with feeling inadequate, wanting to give my students more... It seemed that when I did seek out help, everyone else admitted they felt the same inadequacy when it came to writing instruction. Only then did it occur to me that writing is the area that our education programs lack. The only writing instruction I’d received was when I was in elementary school myself.

During the face-to-face interviews, the question, “Before coming to the Summer Institute, where and how were you taught how to teach writing?” was generally met with nervous laughter. “I wasn’t” responded Marcy Ochoa. “Well, that was the problem,” shared Ellen Trenton,. “No one tells you how to teach writing,” said middle school teacher Mikayla Townsen. Rather than relying on her preservice training, Townsen explained that all of her previous learning related to writing had come from books she had sought out on her own accord:

I don’t even think my [preservice] program ... taught you how to teach writing at all. It was language arts, so it was all for reading, and it was elementary-

based, so elementary is very focused on that reading piece, and not on the writing piece.

The only participant of the six who named a specific preservice level course that addressed the teaching of writing was elementary teacher Elaine Oaks. Sadly, she described the course content as “surface information” that served as a mere “snapshot as to the different things that you have to think about as a writing teacher.” Course lessons often centered solely on the scoring of student writing. Oaks reported leaving the course thinking sarcastically, “This sounds great. How do I do that?” She said she believed the class was, in fact, “setting-up teachers for failure.” She said she felt “kind of scrambling” when finally faced with the task of teaching writing in her first classroom.

High school teacher Susan Tanner (who was unable to name a preservice course on the teaching of writing) fell just short of stating that writing instruction had been absent from her undergraduate college program, “There must have been a course or two... I never took it, though.” Instead, Tanner reports that her initial instructional practices in the teaching of writing came from her own days as a K-12 student. “I remember getting that [Jane Shaffer Model] instruction when I was in high school, and I remember thinking it was great. It helped me out in college and so I started teaching that.”

Related to preservice learning, middle school teacher Marcy Ochoa stood out from the rest of the group as the most memorable. Citing no coursework related to the

teaching of writing in either her undergraduate or graduate work, she explained, “As an English major, I wrote, of course, all the time but to be able to translate what I do, in my head, to write something, to tell you how to do it, I don’t know!” In college, she felt she was expected to pick up the skill of writing by “osmosis” and therefore as her professors treated her (“I know how to do this, therefore you should”), she began her own career as a teacher by treating her students the same way. Ochoa’s statements were quickly followed by the admission that when thinking back to the writing courses she had taught in the past, “I really blew it! There were so many things that I didn’t know how to do.” She shared, “I’m the primary language arts person” in my school building and yet “I feel like I have the least amount of experience... I always knew it was my weak link... I was never taught how to do it.”

*An absence of professional development in the teaching of writing.*

Participants also reported a relative absence of professional development in the area of writing after they began their work in a K-12 classroom. Middle school teachers Marcy Ochoa and Mikayla Townsen reported they had no professional development experience in the area of writing since beginning their teaching careers. High school teachers Scott Owen and Susan Tanner commented on the little district-sponsored professional development they had received. Elementary teachers Elaine Oaks and Ellen Trenton spoke of a mentoring experience which introduced them to the topic of teaching of writing and which, in turn, brought them to the Summer Institute program.

When participants were asked to describe how they came to learn what instructional writing methods to use in their writing courses, high school teachers Owen and Tanner spoke of information provided informally by peers in their school buildings. For example, a veteran teacher would approach the newly hired teacher and explain the methods used in this new location. Tanner reported that at one school, “I had a coworker that came up with a really great revise and edit strategy that I’ve used with some great success.” After moving to a new school, Tanner was told by colleagues that the “Jane Shaffer” method was used in that building, so she focused her instruction in that area. Owen, serving at this same school, also reports being “given materials” when he started at the school but followed that comment by explaining that he was mostly “left to sink or swim.”

Owen did recall his participation in a state writing assessment workshop facilitated by the local Educational Service District as a “meaningful” in-service, calling the experience an “exception” to the rule. However, he labeled most of the district-sponsored professional development programs as “hit and miss,” programs that functioned like a “peeing contest” where teachers *postured* themselves in order to look knowledgeable in front of their peers and school administration. They seemed to feel uncomfortable discussing their own questions or challenges. He said, “You don’t want to look like you’re stupid.” Ellen Trenton recalled similar mandated “suck you dry meetings” as ineffective and “a waste of time.”

In contrast to the other participants, elementary teachers Oaks and Trenton received additional, targeted professional development through a teacher mentoring program provided by their district. Oaks and Trenton (both in their second year of teaching) were assigned a mentor who entered their classrooms on a regular basis to observe, offer feedback, and teach in-tandem with each mentee. Although these two elementary teachers served different populations at different schools, they were assigned the same district mentor and both reported substantial learning as a result of that experience. Ellen Trenton reported a total change in her understanding of writing and Elaine Oaks reports an “aha moment” that dramatically changed her practice. Interestingly enough, the specific mentor assigned to Trenton and Oaks happened to be a former Summer Institute participant, OWP Advisory Board member, and OWP program facilitator. Both elementary teachers in this study cited this same mentor as the catalyst for their initial learning about the teaching of writing and their primary inspiration for enrolling in the 2011 Summer Institute.

Overall, all the teachers in this study reported an absence of preservice coursework to prepare them for their K-12 classroom responsibilities in the area of writing. Once on the job, district-sponsored programs were absent or considered “hit and miss.” The only statements contrary to this general perception were made by the two elementary participants. These teachers noted that interaction with their teacher mentor greatly influenced their development of teaching practices in the area of writing.

*Past teaching of writing linked to level of past preparation.* Participants' approaches to the teaching of writing at the beginning of their teaching careers were relatively consistent. All six participants disclosed their use of the presentational mode of writing instruction, which was often based on their own experience as K-12 student. Just prior to the Summer Institute, the participants used a variety of instructional methods based on additional knowledge they had gained during their classroom teaching experience. Patterns related to instructional within or across grade level were not evident. However, comparisons between participants who had experienced similar types of professional development prior to the SI did show common trends. Those who had no professional development maintained their original presentational mode. Those who had worked with a mentor related to the Oregon Writing Project, or had engaged in extensive reading in the area of writing, had developed natural process and environmental mode strategies.

Middle school teacher Marcy Ochoa's *conflicting* relationship with the presentational mode of instruction was first apparent in her Summer Institute entrance interview and essay. Her entrance essay poetically reflected on the joy of writing:

Young children love to write their stories and share them with anyone who will listen... Unfortunately, as children become school age, they are hammered with grammar rules, editing marks, and demands for proper format. As necessary as it is for them to know these 'laws' of writing, it often deflates the joy and spontaneity of their writing.

Her entrance interview then described her work as a teacher of writing. Ochoa stated:

I am sometimes the meanest person in the room. I have 10 LAWS of writing posted at the front of my classroom. They include things like, ‘Always capitalize the first letter of a sentence.’ It is amazing how many students don’t, or sometimes won’t, do this. I have some other LAWS.

Ochoa’s statements showed that she believed that “laws” took all the joy out of writing, yet her teaching practice tended to centralize these laws, hereby possibly making her the very instrument that was removing the joy from writing. When asked in the follow-up interview about the friction between these two pre-Summer Institute outlooks, she responded, “That’s why I signed up for this crazy class!” She called it a “disconnect” that she was unable to name before the Summer Institute, but was able to begin addressing by the program’s completion.

Like Ochoa, high school teachers Scott Owen and Susan Tanner had almost no prior instruction in the area of writing education, and their teaching reflected the presentational mode. Owen and Tanner reported that they stayed with what they had experienced as part of their own K-12 education or used the strategies that had been recommended to them by colleagues as part of on-the-job conversations and discussions, yet both desired to learn new methods and strategies that might be more effective and enjoyable. Tanner admitted she felt most within her “comfort zone” when using the “Jane Shaffer model,” but generally assessed herself as “stumbling in

the teaching of writing.” In her Summer Institute entrance essay, Tanner spoke of her instructional challenges related to offering effective feedback, motivating reluctant writers, and making writing relevant to all her students. She appeared to be searching for techniques that will allow her to address these issues more effectively.

Owen shared many of these same concerns, but he also displayed a pointedly cynical attitude toward the presentational mode. When asked to describe himself as a teacher in the entrance interview, he spoke more to his frustrations with the instructional model in which he worked, “As a teacher, I am emerging. Looking to find my voice; I have been in the choir singing the state’s song. I’d like to choose more songs for myself.” As part of the Summer Institute coursework he shared, “I wonder what different things I can do in my classroom.”

Middle school teacher Mikayla Townsen began her pre-Summer Institute description of her classroom practice with a quote from author Ralph Fletcher (2000), “The Secret of Writing may surprise you! There is no secret. But there is a process” (p. 3). Although Townsen couldn’t cite any prior coursework or workshops relating to writing instruction, she was familiar with a variety of literature on the subject. Defining her job as teacher as enhancing “the learning of the writing process within my classroom,” Townsen based her classroom practices on the information she received from recent publications in the area of writing. In her entrance essay, she cited a variety of authors who outline instructional practices that would be consistent with Hillock’s (1986) natural process and environmental modes:

First, I use what Ralph Fletcher and Aimee E. Buckner call a writer's notebook. Our writer's notebook is a collection of tools, examples of good writing, and our own writing; the playful way we explore, mold, and craft our words... Along with our writer's notebook, we explore the 6 traits of writing using the book by Ruth Culham, *6+1 Traits of Writing*. It is full of ideas, lessons and activities to cultivate student learning.

While more confident in her instruction than those participants employing presentational modes, Townsen did state in the post-Summer Institute interview that the OWP program was the “first time” she had actually seen “some of the things that I was thinking about (and trying to figure out how to do) being done.”

Finally, elementary teachers Elaine Oaks and Ellen Trenton seemed to be most strongly aligned with the environmental mode prior to their participating in the Summer Institute. However, this mode was in contrast to the methods they used when first entering the profession. At the very start of her teaching career, Oaks engaged in methods that would be found squarely within the presentational mode. She recalls that after a few months, she wanted to “stick a fork” in her eye in response to the “dry” work. Writing was unenjoyable for both her and her students. Likewise, Ellen Trenton reported a very similar start with presentational methods: “My teaching of writing was basically prompt based, with a focus on capitals and periods.” However, during the first two years of teaching, both teachers received powerful professional development in the area of writing through their district’s mentoring program. Oaks

and Trenton were inspired by their mentor to construct classroom writing processes that engaged students within a gradual release model through the employment of scaffolded learning activities. Both teachers entered the Summer Institute using strategies aligned with the environmental mode of instruction. To this point, Oaks explained that instruction of the writing process should be driven by classroom observations, “paired with standards,” and working toward a “targeted goal.”

*Summary.* A review of these initial findings speaks to the participant’s stance (prior to the Summer Institute) along the continuum of writing instruction modes: presentational being the most traditional; natural process being an about-face reaction to the older rigid format; and environmental being a progressive blend of the two with added attention to the variety of learners present in any given classroom. It appears that those teachers with the least amount of professional development experience (Marcy Ochoa, Scott Owen, and Susan Tanner) were most entrenched in the traditional instructional practices aligned with Hillocks’ (1986) presentational mode. These same participants expressed the most dissatisfaction with their pre-Summer Institute teaching of writing in comparison with other study participants. In contrast, those teachers who had more exposure to the topic of writing were more likely to question the presentational mode and seek out alternative methods. Mikayla Townsen, who had explored the area of writing through published texts within a self-guided means of professional development, broke from traditional strategies and displayed methods typically related to the natural process mode of instruction, as well as some

environmental strategies. Lastly, the two teachers who reported receiving the most positive experience of professional development in the area of writing (in this case, as a result of their partnership with a veteran writing teacher) seemed the most committed to their practices and spoke of an instructional stance fundamentally aligned with the Hillocks' (1986) environmental mode of instruction.

**Reported changes in practices, attitudes, and beliefs after the Summer**

**Institute.** The second central finding related to similarities among the six participants centers around the self-reported changes in practices, attitudes, and beliefs following the Summer Institute. All six participants reported changes in writing instruction practices, beliefs or attitudes after participating in the 2011 Summer Institute. For some participants, these changes were related to their professional work. However for other participants, the self-described changes related to their personal lives. Teachers described a general increase in confidence (in their professional work or their personal writing) and all reported an interest in pursuing continued professional development in this area. Following the Summer Institute, four of the participants made specific plans to pursue teacher leadership positions in the area of writing instruction.

***Reports of professional learning.*** When asked how they thought the Summer Institute experience influenced their practices, attitudes, and beliefs related to writing, participants overwhelmingly declared they had gained new tools, strategies, and resources. Marcy Ochoa shared that she gained “a whole toolkit” from the Summer Institute which she could now bring to her writing instruction. Owen said, “I’ve got a

whole notebook of stuff and digital files that I can tweak and make my own.” Tanner stated, “I feel like I have more ideas that I can pull from and more ways to get [students] to write different things.”

Movement across the continuum of presentational, natural process, and environmental modes corresponded with an increase in professional development. The more professional development in the area of writing attained by a teacher, the more progressive the practices utilized by the teacher in the instruction of writing. At follow-up interviews, participants spoke of student-centered writing opportunities guided by teacher-designed objectives. Each of the teachers also embraced the use of mentor texts and scaffolded classroom lessons within a process model of writing that included freedom for student authors. While participants did not wholly reject the traditional five paragraph essay format, all the teachers expressed an understanding that this format was insufficient as a sole measure of quality writing in an academic setting. Moving away from the presentational methods of assessment based on the parroting back of teacher approved ideas, both high school teachers expressed interest in hearing something new in student work rather than just a regurgitation of what they had presented as part of the curriculum. Scott Owen declared, “I’ve been reading those essays for years. Of course I know what the symbolism is. I’m the one who assigned the paper.” Back in the classroom after the Summer Institute Owen described this shift in practice:

I don't know everything and I think I learn a lot from my kids... I'm not the arbiter of all things English related. We're going to figure this out together and that's freeing, too. The pressure's off. There are things that I know more about. I'll get them there, but there are things that we're going to discover together or we're going to be re-reminded of and I like that idea. And when that barrier between teacher and student is taken down a peg, when there's more of a collaborative feel, I think kids won't feel as intimidated to experiment, to try and maybe to fail. And so lots of things are changing in my teaching craft to do that.

Susan Tanner explained a similar change in her work, noting a shift to writing assignments with a student-centered focus. "What I missed in the past was adding that 'use what we've read' to tell me something new," she explained. "That's a component that I've started doing more of this year."

Additional examples of movement away from presentational methods toward more environmental methods of instructional practice were found in the areas of writing frequency and strategies related to writing assessment. While the elementary teachers in this study reported integrating writing throughout the school day prior to their Summer Institute experience, three of the middle and high school teachers reported only a limited amount of student writing related to the assigned coursework. In reflection on past practices, high school teacher Susan Tanner admitted she wasn't "having [students] write often enough." However, following the 2011 Summer

Institute, all the middle and high school teachers suggested that they now required their students to write more. Middle school teacher Marcy Ochoa explained:

About two thirds of the way through the Summer Institute, I started buying these crazy composition books... I was so convinced that I wanted to try this with my kids... and I didn't have it on the purchase list of things for them to buy. I knew that they wouldn't come with them, but I wanted to try it.

Those "crazy composition books" were simple bound notebooks in which Summer Institute teachers were asked to take down notes, write during presented lessons, record their personal writings, and revisit their writings when working in small groups. Participants brought the composition book to class daily and were asked to write in it multiple times each day. Ochoa used this same method with her own students when she returned to her middle school classroom, later reporting, "I love it."

Although middle school teacher Mikayla Townsen had previously used a similar writer's notebook format with her own students, she reported adding the strategy of having students "writing yourselves into the room." Writing "into the room" was a daily practice of the Summer Institute that asked participants to start each class period with ten minutes of unstructured, free writing. This method of getting pencils moving "really helped me to calm down every day when I came in, and be in a place where I could learn," explained Townsen. She felt this practice now has the same effect on her students, buffering them from the (sometimes chaotic) world outside the school room.

Notably, this increased frequency in writing may have been made possible for the middle school and high school teachers because of the corresponding change in practices and beliefs related to writing assessment. Prior to the Summer Institute Marcy Ochoa, Scott Owen, and Susan Tanner had felt compelled to grade each piece of student writing. “I would spend the evening in the recliner, working on papers... one after the other,” shared Ochoa. Tanner explained, “When they did write, I felt like I needed to grade it.” Owen remembered spending a lot of his time grading the papers, and feeling as if his efforts weren’t making a difference:

What I was doing wasn’t working always, and kids weren’t growing necessarily and producing meaningful work, and they didn’t care about it. So here I am. I grade papers all the time. If they don’t care about it, their papers show it and then I’m wondering why their scores aren’t improving.

However, after the Summer Institute, all three teachers began a system of acknowledging student writing efforts while focusing on publication of only selected pieces for formal assessment. Tanner called this new strategy “checking journals” once a week and looking for “completion” rather than assessment on the student daily writing. Ochoa began to place a “little stamp” in the corner of a page in a student’s composition book to “say it’s been received.” She explained to her students that not all the writing in the book has been read, but that she has acknowledged that the work has been turned in. Any questions later in the term about how much writing was done

could be easily addressed because everything was saved within the composition book:

“They keep it...we can go back and revisit it...we can use it as a mentor text.”

High school teacher Scott Owen also addressed this change when he moved toward instruction that gave students a “chance to start assignments, but not necessarily finish them.” During the first school term after the Summer Institute, Owen asked students in his English classes to turn in their best four essays for formal assessment. Students seemed surprised by these new guidelines. Owen seemed pleased with the change saying, “That notion of not having to finish everything that you start is also freeing for me as a teacher, and I don’t think I would have come to that conclusion if I wouldn’t have been at the Summer Institute.” Referring to student writers he explained, “I want them to turn in something that they’re really proud of.” This switch, he shared, “allows me not to grade everything.” He calls this freedom from constant grading an “added bonus, because ... I will have a chance to get around to every kid because I’m not going to be grading everything every day.” This freedom from constant assessment also led to what Owen characterized as freedom for students:

I’m trying to make sure that the essays that I assign are ones that I want to read and give kids a chance to throw their own voice into it and make other connections... There’s a lot more room for kids to kind of find their own voice.

Owen asserted that his students may be “turning in” fewer formal essays now, but the essays have shown to be “better” than ever.

The change in the frequency of assessment came with an additional change in the use of *feedback as instruction* rather than the traditional model of *feedback as a form of evaluation*. In addition to how often she graded student writing, Marcy Ochoa also reported a significant shift in how she approached student feedback after attending the Summer Institute. Reflecting on her “extremely time-consuming” practice of marking papers each evening at home with conventions, misspellings, and fluency issues, Ochoa realized, “I already know how to do this! They don’t! So why am I doing it for them?” After the Summer Institute she decided, “I’m not going to sit there and edit all their stuff, they’re going to do it.” Relinquishing her red pen (because “I know what that must feel like to get your little paper back, full of red marks”), she began writing comments to students on sticky notes which she then attached to the writing pieces secured within their writing composition books. She also moved to a strategy of one-on-one conferences so as to provide feedback before a draft was fully completed. After the Summer Institute, students in her class took their own notes while she talked with them about the content, the conventions, and the fluency of each writing piece. “They’re making mistakes all over the place,” she declared. “But I decided also I need to pick my battles” and focus on “what is really important here.” She credits the Summer Institute with inspiring her to transfer the editing responsibility from herself to her students. Ochoa explained that her practice shifted from a teacher-centered understanding of conventions, to the facilitation of student-generated corrections that develop from what “makes sense to them, as an

editor.” Ochoa hoped that this change in practice would bring greater student engagement that would also result in greater achievement. Although Ochoa did cite the classroom management required to facilitate this one-on-one method of conferencing as “very hard,” she called the overall conferencing method “awesome!”

*Reports of personal learning.* Just as there was a reported increase in the frequency of student writing, the teachers in this study also indicated they themselves wrote more after their Summer Institute. Some of this new writing was done in their classroom and served as a form of modeling for students, but much of the writing was personal and done outside of their standard work day.

Middle school teacher Marcy Ochoa had filled five composition books within the first two months of school as a means of continuing her own writing and modeling writing for her students. High school teacher Susan Tanner said that since beginning to write in her classroom with students, she feels her visible actions as a writer have helped her students act as writers as well:

While they’re writing, I’m sitting there writing and I think it’s helped some of my students actually to complete the writing. I’ll write and then I’ll take a break and I’ll kind of look around just to see, you know, who’s still working and things like that and sometimes I’ll have the one that sits there and hasn’t written anything, and I’ll just kind of, you know, look at them, and then start writing. And I’ll, kind of out of the corner of my eye, see that, “Oh, they’re starting to write now, too.”

Although elementary teacher Elaine Oaks did not return to a regular classroom after the Summer Institute, she also recounted how she continued to carry around her SI composition book, and she integrated the act of writing into the professional presentations she made as an instructional coach. She also began a blog, “just to get [my writing] out and have somebody else read it.”

Middle school teacher Mikayla Townsen indicated that the Summer Institute helped her own personal writing. As part of the feedback to peer presentations, she commented on several occasions to different presenters: “I noticed that you helped me become unstuck on a story I have been working on” and “I enjoyed the way you let us write our own sentences. I was able to use one of the sentences for a short story I am writing.” After completing the Summer Institute, she continued writing outside of her professional work day at the encouragement of another teacher she met at the Institute: “He keeps encouraging me to send him things so he can read them, which is nice.”

Perhaps the most memorable comments related to personal growth came from elementary teacher Ellen Trenton. The 2011 Summer Institute took place during a time of great personal change for Trenton, and she cited the overall experience as “therapeutic.” “I understand the power of writing,” she explained, “but I see it so much more clearly and I'm making time for it now, compared to before the Institute.” Trenton shared that her writings during and after the Summer Institute centered on her family. She realized that much of her shared writing described memories of her father. “We're very close, but because of our personalities being so similar, we're not

mushy. We don't talk," she explained. Of her writing created during the Summer Institute she said:

I'm putting together this book as a gift to him of all my writings of either memories or tributes to him... The writing that we did in the Institute made me feel the power of our words and the need to not sit on them.

As the summer unfolded, Trenton found out that she was pregnant and many of her writings shifted to that of her unborn child:

We found out that I was pregnant this summer, so I've been writing a journal to my baby so that when he (or she) grows up they remember the moments I'm going through right now. I can't capture that in pictures. I can't go back and explain that in any other way but I try to write at least once a week to my child because I think how valuable words are to capture it.

The writing has been "very personal to me" she elaborated. "I think more than anything else, OWP has changed me as a writer."

***Increase in reported teacher confidence.*** At the completion of the 2011 Summer Institute, participants reported feeling new confidence in their own personal writing skills, as well as new confidence in their skills as teachers of writing. Elaine Oaks, Marcy Ochoa, Mikayla Townsen, Scott Owen, and Susan Tanner stated in the follow-up interview that they returned to the classroom more confident in their own writing skills. Scott Owen shared, "I feel more confident" and former English majors

Ochoa and Tanner stated, “I’m back to knowing I can do it” and “I feel more comfortable with it.”

For Elaine Oaks, Marcy Ochoa, Mikayla Townsen, and Scott Owen the Summer Institute also increased their professional confidence. Oaks and Townsen felt the Institute confirmed the teaching strategies and methods they had chosen before arriving at OWP and seemingly bolstered their convictions. “I think it just made me realize that I had kind of stumbled upon a good thing this last year and that I can keep growing those practices and making them better,” commented Oaks. Townsen shared “It’s reinforced some things that I already knew.” Owen, who prior to the SI was searching for alternative modes of instruction, stated that the SI reminded him of what he did well and also gave him the opportunity to further develop the ideas where he felt most challenged. To his peers at the end of the summer program he stated, “I’m glad I was able to share something I have been wrestling with for a long time.”

Middle school teacher Marcy Ochoa explained it succinctly, “If I don’t feel prepared then I don’t feel confident!” Ochoa tended to show the most dramatic changes in her instructional practices after the Summer Institute and visibly expressed her delight over the new ideas and activities that she had begun to employ. She commented that following the Summer Institute she had a reserve of instructional practice that she “never had” before, which allowed her to feel confident and ready to face the “teachable moments.”

This confidence seemingly propelled two of the teachers into new areas of teacher leadership. Elaine Oaks and Scott Owen both expressed a new sense of self-assurance in their abilities related to teacher leadership roles in the area of writing, expanding the realm of confidence from writing instruction to also include leadership in the area of writing instruction. Both teachers followed their Summer Institute work with conference presentations during the following school year at a local professional development event. When asked if they would have submitted a conference proposal before attending the Summer Institute, both teachers said, “No.”

“I probably would have giggled and said, ‘Thanks but no thanks,’” explained Oaks. Owen explained, “I don’t know that I would have put my neck out there last year for, I guess, a lack of confidence.”

This new confidence in leadership ability was particularly timely for Oaks as she completed the Summer Institute and immediately entered her new job as an elementary school instructional coach. She had enrolled in a graduate degree program at her old alma mater (to start in September 2011), but after the SI she withdrew from that program because she felt the confidence to step out of her comfort zone and pursue schooling at a university she felt was more challenging. Oaks explained:

I knew what [my past professors] were going to expect from me, and I knew I had gotten a 4.0 from them before that I could probably do that pretty easily again. Deep down I wanted a richer experience and ...through the Summer Institute I recognized that there’s this whole other part of university experience

that I had never received before... I truly, truly valued the dialogue and the openness of people [at the Summer Institute].

Oaks concluded, it was like “somebody telling me that I don’t have to settle.”

***Intentions for future professional development and teacher leadership.***

When asked if they had plans to participate in any further professional development in the area of writing, all six participants expressed an interest in engaging in such work. Four of the participants immediately enrolled in the Oregon Writing Project’s Certificate of Writing program at the Graduate School of Education at Willamette University for fall of 2011. This 18 credit certificate program is a newly established extension of the OWP Summer Institute and seeks to prepare practitioners and teacher leaders in the area of writing. Elaine Oaks stated that her decision to begin the certificate program was prompted by a desire to “continue learning more about writing.” Scott Owen shared his excitement about enrolling in the program by explaining:

I can actually work on my craft and make sure that I’m teaching things well, and I’m enjoying what I’m doing and growing that way. And ideally, I will get this writing thing down to where it’s just automatic. I’ll get more involved in OWP, or offshoots of that, and look for other areas to really practice and hone those leadership skills that you want. To find something to sink my teeth into... there’s a lot of options out there.

As well as continuing their education and presenting at a local teacher conference in the fall of 2011, both Scott Owen and Elaine Oaks accepted leadership positions when invited to serve on the OWP Advisory Board as representatives of the 2011 cohort.

Certificate completion as a path to leadership was also a consideration for middle school teachers Marcy Ochoa and Mikayla Townsen. When asked why she enrolled in the certificate program, Ochoa shared, “I guess I was just inspired... it’s not going to hurt anything to have additional training.” She implied that completion of the program would give her the credentials and the know-how that would be fitting of her role as the lead language arts educator at her school. This same idea occurred to Townsen, who explained that enrolling in the certificate program may “lead you down the road to be a writing leader or an instructional coach in the future.”

As part of the follow-up interviews, Ellen Trenton and Susan Tanner (who did not enroll in the OWP Certificate in Writing Program) did express interest in the additional professional development programs. “I’ve tinkered with the idea of doing the Writing Certificate,” shared Trenton. However, “right now I’m just kind of at a standstill trying to figure out who I am as a teacher of kindergarten students.” When asked about other opportunities outside of the certificate she reflected, “I don’t know where else to turn outside of this little circle that we’ve created with SI.” Tanner, too, expressed some interest in the certificate program stating that she does believe she would benefit from the program, but she feels unable to dedicate any more of her

“busy” life as she works to complete her master’s program by the start of 2012. Instead, Tanner shared that perhaps she would explore the opportunity to return next summer to the Summer Institute to “see the presentations and just to get the ideas from people.” This corresponded to her earlier expression of need for teacher preparation in the area of writing, “I think I would like to continue to gather things for my bag of tricks, and to continue to try out these different ideas.”

*Summary.* All six participants reported professional or personal growth influenced by the Summer Institute program. Participants cited the accumulation of declared new tools, strategies, and resources in the area of writing. Those citing *personal* growth noted the further development of their own writing skills or their understanding and desire to write for personal purposes. Participants also spoke of an increased level of confidence as related to writing and expressed interest in pursuing further professional development or a position of leadership in this area.

**Role of Summer Institute in effecting change in participants.** The final similarities found consistently across participants, relate to the role of the Summer Institute in effecting change in participants. After examining the changes in teachers’ (self-reported) practices, attitudes and beliefs, the focus in this next section examines participants’ perceptions of aspects of the SI program that they deemed “influential” in their professional development. Participants expressed that the dedicated time and the feelings of safety the Summer Institute provided for their work and learning made a considerable impact.

*Time provided by the Summer Institute.* The participants noted an insufficient amount of time during their regular work schedule for in-depth study, reflection on new knowledge, and professional collaboration. When asked in the interview what three things teachers need most in the area of writing, elementary teacher Elaine Oaks responded, “They need time.” High school teacher Scott Owen repeated this sentiment by saying, “Time, time, and time.” Both teachers felt that meaningful professional development in writing can only be facilitated if teachers are given the time to study and reflect on the issues most related to writing. Owen shared, “If we don’t give teachers time enough to develop meaningful lessons, then we’re going to get the same drill out of the work that we’ve been getting for the last 50 years.” Referring to classroom teachers who continue to teach writing through a rigidly traditional mode, Oaks lamented, “They teach those really formulaic ways, but what they’re not taking the time to reflect on, is that those ways haven’t been working.”

My analysis of the data suggests that the five-week Summer Institute gave teachers the time they needed. It was a sustained period of professional development work that is largely unavailable during the regular school year. “When you’re coming from the end of your school day, you’re tired and it’s not frequent enough,” explained Ellen Trenton, reflecting on the general inservices provided by her district. Susan Tanner concurred. The daily, uninterrupted, collegial work inside the Summer Institute allowed Tanner to focus on the instructional content as never before. Tanner shared that she felt like she learned “so much more” from the SI than “an entire year

of district trainings.” Explaining the difference between this intense professional development experience and others, she commented:

Maybe it was the way that we did it. Maybe it was that day after day after day after day... we went through the lessons and we reflected on them and shared back our ideas from our sheets, our feedback... So I think having that reflection, that constant – or multiple opportunities, I guess, to reflect and give feedback and think about it. Maybe that’s why the SI, and the lessons presented in the SI have stood out so much.

Also grateful for the dedicated time to work collaboratively within the Summer Institute, middle school teacher Mikayla Townsen related that although her school had tried to make time for such sharing through professional learning communities, it had so far been ineffective. “They’re not to a point yet where people are ready to share what’s working,” she explained.

The day-after-day Summer Institute routine of working closely with colleagues seemed to make a marked impression on all the teachers involved in this study. The uninterrupted nature of the intensive program was noted by middle school teacher Marcy Ochoa as well. Sitting side-by-side with other K-12 teachers all day, every day for five weeks, felt dramatically different than the brief passes in the hall or the lunch room chatter that she experienced in her school-year routine. Although having worked at her current school for five years, Mary Ochoa commented that she has not actually spent an extended amount of time with many of her school colleagues: “If they’re not

an 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher or a language arts teacher - I don't have a lot to say to them, really." Ellen Trenton commented that the Summer Institute daily routine "from the very beginning" set the stage for the collaborative work that made her learning possible. "The way we sit in a circle, the calm that's created in the room, the expectation that you come in the morning and it's a routine that we're going to write every day together." She felt the regular contact made a distinct impact on the quality of her engagement and her relationship with her peers.

*Safe learning environment.* While the time provided within the intensive Summer Institute played a role in participant learning, a psychologically safe environment was also noted by participants as having impacted their professional development experience. Participants all indicated that the SI environment felt "safe" in terms of sharing their professional and personal work and taking professional and personal risks. Analysis of the data related to this safety and risk-taking revealed two factors identified by participants as contributing to their sense of personal and professional safety: personal writing and the program's feedback model.

*Personal writing.* All of the teachers in this study credited writing and sharing personal writing with their SI with providing them a sense of safety which supported their engagement and acquisition of new professional knowledge. The teachers valued the freedom to write pieces they personally valued and were encouraged by the feedback from peers when they shared such work aloud. Elementary school teacher Ellen Trenton spoke at length about the impact of such interactions saying:

You end up writing these personal things you didn't even know you had inside of you and then you have these opportunities to share. So we come as this group of strangers and we're all of a sudden sharing secrets, and these moments and laughs and we're crying together. So it's not a threatening situation at all, like where you're at a professional development situation where it's just sit-and-get kind of situation. You would kind of feel threatened and “Are you a good teacher?” As far as OWP, we come in there, total strangers, bonded really fast because of the stuff we're writing and then I think you can't help but want to encourage those people to do their best because you know who they are.

Talking about the personal writing she completed as part of the course, Elaine Oakes related personal struggles to professional struggles and shared:

It was not only teacher changing. It was kind of life changing. I had a lot of old stuff that came up in my writing that I didn't realize that I still was dealing with and it was fine. It made it okay to share... and have [the group] give me feedback to make it even better... I mean the second day we were crying together. I'm like, 'Oh my gosh, this is pretty powerful,' and to know that kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade we are going through the same struggles as teachers of writing ... That was amazing to me.

Summer Institute leaders modeled and facilitated personal writing and its sharing throughout the SI program. Participants were encouraged to choose

personally meaningful writing topics and facilitators often shared their own poems and narratives that were based on personal experience. The component of the personal writing and sharing seemed to strengthen in power as participants began to share and receive positive feedback from their peers. Ellen Trenton explained that personal safety translated into the professional safety necessary for more authentic learning:

I think you have to have that support and to feel safe, or you're not going to feel safe enough to share, or safe enough to take those risks to teach in front of each other, or to read your writing in front of the others if you don't have that, I don't see it being valuable at all. I feel like that was the most valuable part, is that we did feel safe and could talk that way.

The relationship between feeling safe and increased engagement through personal writing and sharing was articulated by Mikayla Townsen as well. When questioned about this connection she shared, “I’m kind of guarded, so it takes me a little while to warm up to people, or to feel safe, and it didn’t take that long there [in the SI].”

In addition to the feelings of safety that came from the opportunity to share personal writing, many participants also used their Summer Institute writing experience to rethink the personal writing done by their own students. Scott Owen explained that his experiences with personal writing would translate to his goals for his own students:

I think being able to write about what I wanted to write about this summer was really important... That translates over into what my kids are going to be doing, too... I don't care what they write anymore, so much, as long as they are writing and it's theirs and they're proud of it and you can see growth.

In fact, following the Summer Institute, all six teachers listed "freedom" or "choice" as one of the top three things students need in writing. It was as if their own experience of freedom and personal safety resulting from personal writing showed them that their students could benefit from the very same. "It really doesn't matter what you're saying, you know, as long as you're writing. The key is to write. That's something that I've probably gained from the SI," explained high school teacher Susan Townsen. "When I had choices, I felt like more came out of me."

*Feedback protocol.* While the time and personal writing shared during the Summer Institute were powerful factors in the creation of a safe and encouraging environment for teacher participants, one other factor that participants credited as influential in their learning was the *feedback model* used in the Summer Institute. During the Summer Institute, each participant was required to facilitate a 50 minute presentation for their peers featuring an effective strategy in the teaching of writing. After each of these presentations, a standard protocol for participant feedback followed this pattern:

- Silence followed each presentation.
- Participants reflected on the presented work and responded in written form

(see Appendix B). Written responses (on provided copy sheets) were organized in four distinct categories:

- 1) What I noticed.
  - 2) Probing questions.
  - 3) How can this lesson be modified/adapted to my classroom?
  - 4) What will stay with me from this lesson?
- After an extended writing time, all participants took turns verbally sharing one written comment with the larger group.
  - The written responses were then collected and given to the presenter.

During the verbal feedback of this protocol, the presenter was not allowed to defend the work nor respond to the noticings or questions. Instead, outside of class time, the presenter wrote a reflective essay on the overall presentation and the feedback received to later share with peers.

All six study participants described this particular feedback model as a significant factor in their Summer Institute professional development. “It was very apparent after the first week of class how important that feedback was,” explained Owen. He recalled that being shown new “constructive ways to offer feedback” put the focus on the content and helped to create “an environment where you could grow.” Ochoa and Townsen both shared that they’d never before been “taught how to give or to receive feedback.” However, the repetitive use of the model (first with presentations made by course leaders and then with presentations made by participants) provided a stable and predictable method of thoughtful reflection.

Discussing her anxieties about giving a presentation in front of all the SI participants, Marcy Ochoa said, “I was nervous just because I’d never done it, but I

did not have any fear of having somebody go, ‘Well, that was stupid.’” Witnessing the verbal sharing of feedback of those presentations prior to her own, Ochoa explained, “because we had been doing that stuff long enough” she was confident that comments made to her would not be “anything hurtful. I didn’t have any fear of that,” she explained. Tanner also had this experience, sharing, “I think it helped seeing everybody else give that positive feedback to each other.” Trying to calm her own nerves before her presentation, she remembered telling herself,

No one here is trying to attack me. No one here is going to point out, you know, the weaknesses of my lesson...I think that was the thing about the feedback was that it wasn’t about pointing out weaknesses, it was, you know, if I were to modify this I would do it this way.

Commenting on that assurance of constructive and encouraging feedback, Elaine Oaks explained, “It made it okay to take risks.”

**Summary.** When prompted to reflect on the aspects of the Summer Institute that played a role in the changes reported in their practices, attitudes, and beliefs, all of the participants indicated that the dedicated time and the safe environment of the Summer Institute were meaningful. It was the intensity of such programming that participants identified as responsible for the collaboration and reflection needed for their leaning. This collaboration was also made possible through the feelings of safety experienced by cohort members. My analysis of the data related to this safety and freedom to take risks expressed by participants, suggest that personal writing and the

program's feedback model were key components in the SI and participants' reported professional change.

**Summary of Similarities Among Participants.** All the participants indicated a lack of meaningful preparation in the teaching of writing prior to their first teaching position. The participants all tended to have begun their careers as teachers of writing with an instructional focus related to the presentational mode. All the practitioners reported changes in their teaching after receiving professional development facilitated by Oregon Writing Project leaders. For the elementary teachers, the professional development came from a teacher mentor (who, herself, experienced the SI earlier in her career) as well as the Summer Institute that then reinforced their learning. For the middle and high school teachers (who had not received any memorable professional development in writing prior to the SI), it was the 2011 Summer Institute experience that meaningfully exposed them to the environmental mode of instruction. All the participants cited time and a safe learning environment, established through personal writing and the SI feedback model, as the most influential components of the SI professional development model.

### **Differences Among Summer Institute Participants**

While there were numerous similarities across all six participants, it is important to note that participants' personal experience and professional backgrounds inevitably influenced differences in how they experienced the Summer Institute.

While the data was not extensive enough to support solid assertions in this area, there

were a few minor areas of interest that are worthy of mention. This section addresses these differences.

**Discrepancies of confidence.** At the completion of the Summer Institute, the only two teachers who did not emphatically state a newfound sense of confidence in their professional work were the youngest of the study participants, Ellen Trenton and Susan Tanner. These teachers did cite new practices, attitudes, and beliefs gained from the Summer Institute, but they fell short of declaring a strong sense of efficacy in the area of writing instruction.

In the case of elementary teacher Ellen Trenton, the absence of a statement of newfound professional confidence appeared to reflect personal issues in her life during the summer. She was laid off from her job, became pregnant, and embraced the Summer Institute as a means of developing her own writing skills. As the Summer Institute unfolded she seemed to focus more on the personal growth she experienced, thus stating in her exit-interview, “I think more than anything else OWP has changed me as a writer.” In the follow-up interview, she explained that even with the personal issues in her life, the Summer Institute did influence her practice, beliefs, and attitudes about writing instruction. However, her work prior to the SI with her new-teacher mentor was where the bulk of the change in her practice and efficacy had occurred:

[The Summer Institute] didn't change my world about teaching writing so much as I realized what it felt like to be a writer, and what I needed as a writer, and therefore what my students will probably need.

It depends on what you came in [to the Institute] with, because I was already doing Writer's Workshop. I already had this freedom approach. [Others] probably walked away with, 'Oh my gosh,' and their worlds would probably change the core of how they teach it. For me it was more the feeling; how I want my students to feel in writing, how I want us to share, how I want to make it a priority.

Therefore, in the case of Ellen Trenton, the absence of a statement of confidence seemed to be born from the personal issues faced during the summer, as well as her stance as an already confident teacher who experienced the Summer Institute as a fine tuning of her already progressive instruction rather than an introduction to new, unexplored practices.

For Susan Tanner, however, the issue of confidence seemed more complex. Tanner appeared to continually wrestle with her new learning. In the follow-up interview, she stated both, "I feel more prepared... I think maybe [I gained] some confidence" and "I still need to learn how to teach [writing]." Detailing her classroom teaching after the Institute, Tanner explained, "I've liked parts of what I've had my kids do so far, but there's other parts where I'm kind of, like, 'I still need to figure this one out.'" During the follow-up interview, Tanner seemed somewhat skeptical of her new-found strategies and her ability to effectively translate these strategies into student gains.

Her confidence is particularly interesting in light of her cautious nature before the start of the Summer Institute. While she noted that writing was her “weak spot,” Tanner seemed hesitant to abandon the methods previously known to her and was markedly cautious when approaching with unfamiliar strategies or perspectives. This thoughtful skepticism was reflected in her statements about her experience as a writer in the SI, in her probing questions to peers, and in her explanation of the lessons she most appreciated from her SI experience. In reference to her own writing practice at the Institute, Tanner shared:

One of the things that we did on a daily basis, whenever we would arrive, we would do the ‘writing into the room’ for 10-15 minutes.... I’ve never really been that kind of a writer. I’ve always been a plan-everything-out kind of writer, and so I decided that for the Summer Institute: I’m really going to give this a shot. I don’t know if I’m buying into it, but I’m going to do it... even if I was kind of skeptical, I feel like I really have to give it an honest to goodness try before I say, “No, that doesn’t work.”

In response to peer presentations, Tanner asked a variety of questions that seemed to seek confirmation of the validity and reliability of the new and different lessons shared in the Summer Institute:

How much improvement is seen in sentence fluency after this lesson?

Have you seen improvement in their writing since implementing this lesson?

How long does this process take with one piece of writing?

Do you see improvements in students' writing after this process?

Have you done this activity with older kids? How well did it work?

Overall, it seemed that Tanner was most comfortable with the SI presentations that spoke directly to her responsibilities as a high school English teacher and fit her pre-existing model of instruction. In the follow-up interview, Tanner shared:

I think the assignments that I appreciated most were the ones where I could sit and look at it and say, 'I don't have to modify a thing. You know, this is awesome, I can use it just like this.'

This cautious approach, and apparent discomfort with material that did not offer direct implications for her own teaching position, continued throughout the Summer Institute and seemed to cause added hesitation when Tanner returned to her high school classroom. Speaking of the changes in practice she tried in her classroom after the Summer Institute, Tanner offered, "I'm still trying to feel my way around it and trying to figure out how to do it."

Trenton and Tanner are in contrast to the four other participants, who ranged from 11 to 31 years older than Trenton and Tanner and who explicitly stated that they exited the Summer Institute with new or increased confidence in their professional work.

**Entrance motivations.** Participants gave a variety of reasons for choosing to enroll in the Summer Institute. For Elaine Oaks, Ellen Trenton, and Scott Owen, the decision to apply to the Summer Institute program was sparked by the

recommendation of a trusted colleague. Someone they knew had previously attended an OWP Summer Institute and praised the program's offerings as a worthy opportunity for local teachers. For Marcy Ochoa and Mikayla Townsen, the decision to enroll in the SI was sparked by the need or opportunity to engage in professional development and their personal interest in the area of writing. Both of these teachers were directed by outside sources to engage in professional development, but they were free to choose any program or topic they deemed appropriate.

In contrast, high school teacher Susan Tanner was told by a supervisor that the Oregon Writing Project Summer Institute might offer job security. Faced with budget cuts, Tanner's department chair suggested that the credits from the writing focused Summer Institute could "help save [Tanner's] job." Eager to avoid layoffs, Tanner enrolled in the SI explaining:

I'd had a colleague in Texas talk about the [Writing Project] down there, and how fantastic it was, but she said, "You write a lot." And I thought, "I don't want to write all summer." So, I never signed up for it down there. Then when the whole job thing came up [here], and I said, "Okay, I'll do it. Sure."

In the end, Tanner's enrollment in the Institute did not save her job. Credit requirements changed for the college English course she had hoped to teach the following year, and she was transferred to another high school in the district. "I was lucky not to get fired, and I was lucky that I just got transferred," Tanner explained.

Prior to learning about the transfer, Tanner had attended a pre-Summer Institute event which introduced participants to faculty and provided pre-course materials. Tanner enjoyed the pre-SI gathering and, although her original motivation for participation was now void, she decided to proceed with the program:

They changed their [college writing instructor] requirements, but I was already signed up for the SI. I actually debated whether or not I still wanted to do it, but from all the pre-work that we had done... I decided: I really kind of like this stuff. I'm going to do it anyway. Why not?

**Grade level responsibilities.** A thorough review of the data showed modest similarities or discrepancies based on the grade level teaching assignment of the participants. However, the small sample did offer a glimpse of two discrepancies that may indicate areas worthy of further investigation.

***Writing across the curriculum.*** During the Summer Institute, teachers at all grade levels recorded comments related to the use of writing across the curriculum. However, these comments were infrequent for the high school teachers, slightly more present in the middle school teachers, and most frequently made by the elementary teacher participants. Comments by the elementary teachers in response to peer presentations included:

Wonderful integration of history, geography, reading and writing!

I noticed how many ways this can branch into other lessons throughout the curriculum.

Great way to integrate reading, writing, and social studies!

You can definitely apply this to your social studies and sciences.

The elementary teachers also most frequently made comments related to the connections between reading and writing. Participants who worked with children 5th grade and below mentioned this concept explicitly again and again in their feedback to Summer Institute peers:

I think that I would use this with interventions in both reading and writing for struggling students.

Are the podcasts available in printable form for students to read and highlight as they listen?

I use a similar structure a lot in my reading workshop with sentence framing and sharing circle.

You did a great job of combining readers and writers workshop.

Reading is married with writing.

While comments linking reading and writing education were almost nonexistent in the coursework of 6-12 grade teachers, elementary teacher Ellen Trenton wrote in her presentation self-evaluation, “More than anything else, I wanted to remind all of us how important it is to connect our reading and writing.”

**Technology.** Another subtle variation that was noticeable among the teachers at different grade levels was the explicit focus that participants had regarding technology. Although technology was not a major focus of the Summer Institute

program, several of the SI participants included technology in their peer presentations. In response to these presentations, participants at all grade levels often noted the use of the technology. Elementary teacher Elaine Oaks praised one peer for his use of video in a writing lesson, saying, “The use of the mentor text and documentary footage were extremely moving/powerful.” To another peer, Ellen Trenton commented, “Great visuals! PowerPoint and physical!” Both middle school teacher participants specifically responded to a peer who introduced podcasts by offering:

I enjoy *Grammar Girl* and listen to her often. I’ve thought about using her podcasts in my class, but I thought they would be too hard for my middle school kids. Apparently, I was wrong because you’ve done it!

I enjoyed how you used technology to give an example of how to write a podcast.

However, at the secondary level the teachers not only commented on the use of technology, but then went on to describe future uses for the technology in their own classrooms. In response to the same presentation about podcasts, high school teacher Susan Tanner not only applauded the use of technology but noted that she herself could engage students through a modification of the podcast format: “I could modify this lesson and have my students create and update their own *Grammar Girl* videos to teach each other. I love this idea!” High school teacher Scott Owen also shared plans to use technology within his future writing instruction. In his Summer Institute exit essay, Scott stated, “I plan on using several ideas specifically in my classes. In terms

of technology, I now have Wordle.com and Animoto.com in my tool box. They will be great for short stories and word play.” Overall, the higher the grade level assignment of the teachers, the more comments they made about technology and the more willing they appeared to use that technology in their own classrooms.

**Summary of Differences Among Participants.** There were a few interesting discrepancies among the participants regarding how they experienced the SI. Susan Tanner differed from the other participants in relation to her sense of confidence in her learning from the Summer Institute offerings as well as her motivation for enrolling in the Institute. Tanner, unlike her peers, exited the program *without* a solid sense of confidence in her ability to teach writing. Also unlike her peers, Tanner originally enrolled in the Summer Institute when her department chair indicated such action may keep her from being laid off. Teachers who enrolled in the Summer Institute freely of their own accord (unrelated to their current job status) seemed markedly more confident and assured in their learning. According to grade level assignments, teachers at the lower grade levels addressed the issue of writing across the curriculum with greater frequency. In addition, elementary teachers specifically addressed the connection between reading and writing with greater intensity than peers at any of the other grade levels. In contrast, the higher the grade level assignment of a teacher the more engaged they were in the use of technology in writing classrooms. High school teachers were more concrete in their instruction plans related to technology integration than their lower grade peers.

### **Limitation of the Study**

Care must be taken not to generalize the findings of this study across all preservice preparation programs, all school districts and teachers, or to all National Writing Project affiliate Summer Institutes. It is also unclear if these findings are indicative of all the teacher participants of the 2011 Oregon Writing Project Summer Institute. These findings only examine the experience of six participants at Willamette University during the 2011 Summer Institute. Data in this study also relied on self-reporting by participants, which was most certainly shaped by subjective personal experience.

Overall, study findings based on the participants' responses to the Summer Institute experience were remarkably positive. As a researcher, I am somewhat uneasy with such affirmation of the Summer Institute, given my role as an OWP Teacher Consultant and current Inservice Coordinator. However, because participants self-selected to participate in this professional development experience and spoke with such excitement and enthusiasm in the follow-up interviews when relating their experience and subsequent teaching, I believe the findings are defensible and reasonable when viewed in light of prior research as related to writing education.

Because of my history of work with the Oregon Writing Project at Willamette University, I aimed to be sensitive to any negative comments shared regarding their Summer Institute experience. In an effort to minimize bias derived from my prior involvement with the Writing Project, I wanted to be sure these comments received

due attention during the research analysis. In the end, while comments shared by the participants were not exclusively positive, participant interviews did reflect full support for the SI program. For example, Marcy Ochoa called one activity in the SI “hokey” and she remembered “grumbling” about one fellow participant, but she went on to say that, “I’m really glad I went [to the Institute] and I’ve recommended it to my coworkers.” Elementary teacher Ellen Trenton shared much the same sentiment when she explained, “There was at least one [participant] personality that was so off-putting.” However, just a minute later she shared, “We all learned something from every single person.” She even admitted that some days after a full day of work in the Institute she told herself, “I’ve been writing so long this afternoon, I’m exhausted. I’m dead and I’m tired and I want to go home.” However, in a written self-reflection of her experience she wrote to her peers, “Thank you all again for your feedback and for the whole experience of OWP. You are all fabulous teachers and writers and I feel blessed to have been able to learn from you.” The trustworthiness of this data was reflected in both the span of the data gathered and the participants at the various grade levels. Overall, this study found that teachers engaging in self-selected professional development through the 2011 Oregon Writing Project Summer Institute at Willamette University did not report significant negatives.

### **Conclusion**

Teachers participating in this study reported that their preservice coursework in the teaching of writing was insufficient. They indicated that they entered the teaching

profession ill-prepared to teach writing. As beginning teachers they all relied on the memories of how they themselves had been taught as a K-12 student. Teacher participants also tended to generally discount the professional development provided by their school districts (with the clear exception made by the elementary teachers who had participated in a new-teacher mentoring program). However, after an intensive summer program that provided opportunities to share personal writing and created a structured format for positive collaboration and feedback, participating teachers reported professional and personal growth, newly gained confidence, and an interest in pursuing more learning and leadership in the area of teaching of writing. After participating in the 2011 Summer Institute, participants' instructional self-reported practices and beliefs moved toward an environmental mode of instruction, allowing them to return to their classrooms ready to employ methods of instruction more progressive than the traditional presentation strategies that they used prior to the professional development experience. This study also suggests that for some participants the benefits of the Institute may have been influenced by outside factors, including the motivation for the participant's original enrollment or their grade level assignment. Specifically, grade level assignments may influence the attention professional development participants give to topics of writing across the curriculum and technology integration.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how the 2011 Oregon Writing Project (OWP) Summer Institute (SI) may have influenced the practices, attitudes, and beliefs (related to the teaching of writing) of teacher participants and to identify the similarities and differences among teacher thinking at different grade levels. In this chapter, I interpret key findings in the context of prior research related to writing education, professional development, and the National Writing Project. Similarities and differences observed across participants will be addressed, as well as the implications for teacher preparation programs, teacher professional development, and current K-12 teachers of writing. Finally, I will address recommendations for further research.

### **Findings**

Findings of the study include the following:

1. Teachers reported a neglect of writing education in their teacher preparation programs, as well as in the professional development programs offered by K-12 schools.
2. Participants tended to report change in their professional and personal practice related to writing following the Summer Institute.
3. Participants reported an increase in professional and/or personal confidence as related to writing after their OWP Summer Institute experience.

4. After the OWP Summer Institute, participants unanimously stated an interest in further learning and leadership in the area of writing instruction.
5. Participants unanimously identified the characteristics of time and a safe learning environment as significant in their professional development experience.
6. Discrepancies among participants included issues of explicit confidence and motivation for program enrollment. Only two teachers did not emphatically state a sense of new confidence. Only one teacher enrolled in the SI based on the advice of a direct supervisor.
7. Differences noted by grade level teaching assignments related to writing across the curriculum and technology in the classroom. There was a greater focus on writing across the curriculum and the reading-writing connection by elementary school teachers. There was a greater interest in the use technology by high school teachers.

**Similarities among Summer Institute participants.** There were three key findings generally consistent among all participants. These findings related to a perceived neglect of writing education in preservice and professional development programs, the effects of the Summer Institute on participant practices, attitudes, and beliefs, and the characteristics of the professional development model identified by teachers as key to their learning. These findings are discussed here.

*Continued neglect in preservice and professional development programs.* As a means of understanding the Summer Institute experience of the six participants in this study, I first aimed to document their prior learning and experience in the area of teaching writing. While I expected to find some teachers with little prior learning in the area of the “Neglected R,” in the end I was surprised to see that all of the participants noted a lack of preservice and/or professional development learning in this

area. These findings were generally consistent for the two participants who completed teacher preparation programs over 10 years ago, as well as the four participants who graduated within the last six years.

The inadequacies of writing instruction in teacher preparation has been a topic in the literature since the 1960s conceptual shift from writing product to writing process (College Board, 2003; Lange, 1982; Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006; Tate & Corbett, 1970). However, reports from teachers prepared in programs across the U.S. continue to indicate a lack of sufficient coursework in preservice programs (Lange 1982; Neill, 1982; Reid, 2011; Thomas, 2000). Teachers either cannot recall engaging in any coursework specifically addressing the instruction of writing, or (very similar to Elaine Oaks in this study) they report perceptions such as, “I learned writing was important, but not how to specifically teach it” (Mathers, Shea, & Steigerwald, 2009, p. 151). Often when asked about their preparation, teachers comment that they had expected to receive the instruction they needed through language arts preservice methods courses, but that the coursework often favored reading over writing (Mathers, Shea, & Steigerwald, 2009). Researchers have speculated that this may be because there is a greater history of research in reading methods, university curriculum for English majors (who go on to become teachers of English at the high school and middle school levels) has traditionally focused on literature over composition, and (in the wake of *No Child Left Behind*) recent attention has primarily focused on reading and other subjects that can be more easily addressed by testing programs (Lange,

1982; Neill, 1982; Oswald & Still, 2004; Thomas, 2000; Tremmel, 2002). Overall, research in the teaching of writing confirms the preservice experiences reported by the participants in the current study and points to the continuing neglect of the instruction of writing in teacher preparation courses.

While teachers in this study reported that they were ill-prepared to teach writing prior to their first teaching position, they also reported receiving few opportunities to engage in professional development programs that meaningfully impacted their writing after being hired by their respective school districts. All six teachers reflected that traditional site-based professional development in the area of writing had been absent or minimally present from their careers. This is troubling as other researchers have commented that teachers who have not received training in the effective methods of writing instruction “know little about alternatives” (to the presentational mode) and so *do* what has always been done (Neill, 1982, p. 11). These teachers continue to engage in an outdated model of “assigning, collecting, and correcting writing” thereby sustaining the decades of instructional practices that research has shown to be ineffective (Spandel, 2005, p. 78).

On the rare occasion when professional development was provided, teachers in this study found the programs to be both ineffective and isolating because of the presentational format, e.g., an outside expert lecturing teachers on the practices they should be using in their classroom. Described as a “peeing contest” by participant Scott Owen, the professional development experiences seemed to be more about

posturing and mandated attendance rather than actual learning. Oswald and Still (2004) explain that professional development must move beyond “the traditional model based on the transmission of information from someone of authority” in order to effectively serve teachers and their students (p. 271). This call for change in the structure of professional development for K-12 schools is an illustration of what many other researchers have also suggested (Hawley & Valli, 1999; Little, 1989; Little, 1993; McLaughlin & Marsh, 1978; Miles, 1995; Stein, Silver, & Smith, 1999). National Writing Project founder Jim Gray (2000) explained why he felt that “teachers teaching teachers” was central to successful inservice design:

From the onset, the Writing Project adopted a different take on inservice. We believed that if school reform was to be effective, inservice programs must be conducted by folks on the ground. Classroom teachers are the linchpin of reform... real school reform can happen when teachers come together regularly throughout their careers to explore practices that effective teachers have already proven are successful in their classrooms (p. 102).

The positive response of participants to the teacher centered factors of the Summer Institute (including the teaching presentations completed by all SI participants, the feedback model that encouraged unanimous peer participation, and the close relationships nurtured through time and personal writing among peers) is an example of what could be considered a new and promising paradigm of professional

development. Teacher ownership of content, opportunities to collaborate, and peer-based learning may offer the authentic learning that schools desire.

In the present study, the exceptions to both the still dominant presentational mode of teaching writing and the ineffective top-down model of professional development was the elementary school teacher participants who were assigned a mentor through a local school district's new-teacher initiative. Both Elaine Oaks and Ellen Trenton cited their experience observing, co-teaching, and working closely with a mentor as an effective agent of practitioner change. Mentoring programs such as this have been hailed by researchers as a new and effective mode of professional development (Guskey, 2000; Troia & Graham, 2003). Pairing an inexperienced instructor with a respected colleague can offer the regular classroom feedback (separate from evaluation) that supports change. This study could be seen as additional evidence in the case made for such program initiatives in the area of writing, as it does seem to show promise in the related employment of progressive methods of writing instruction. However, it should be noted that the mentor in this case participated in a previous OWP Summer Institute and received additional teacher leadership training through the Oregon Writing Project at Willamette University. If the mentor herself had no knowledge or expertise in instruction of writing, or she was a proponent of presentational mode methods, the results may have been different. Overall, this study points to the need for continued review of how professional

development is provided to teachers of writing and supports the call for “more extensive in-service training for all practicing teachers” (Thomas, 2000, p. 40).

***Summer Institute impacts practice, confidence, learning, and leadership.***

*Practice.* There is a wealth of research pointing to positive impacts of teacher participation in National Writing Project programming (Buchanan, Eidman-Aadahl, Fredrich, LeMahieu, & Sterling, 2006; Nagin, 2006; Pritchard & Marshall, 1994). The findings of this study support this prior research while also providing a very personal glimpse into the professional and personal lives of six teachers (at varying grade levels) who were deeply involved in a professional development program.

At a time when leaders, such as the National Commission on Writing, call for more focused attention and progressive methods of instruction in the area of writing, programs such as the Oregon Writing Project Summer Institute offer promise. All six teachers in this study reported that they changed their teaching practice toward more progressive methods of instruction after participating in the Institute. One example of these changes is the change in assessment methods practiced by participants. In 1971, Emig called for teachers to abandon the “neurotic activity” of pointing out specific errors in student writing with a red pen as a means of instruction (p. 99). Neill (1982) echoed that sentiment, explaining that teachers “do not have to correct every word students write” (p. 11). Yet, participants Ochoa, Owen, and Tanner didn’t embrace this idea until after their 2011 professional development experience. It was the participation in a quality professional development program that impacted these

teachers' practices. For example, after the SI, Ochoa reflected that previously she "would spend the evening in the recliner, working on papers, one after the other," but after the Institute she thought, "I already know how to [mark a paper for revision]! They don't! So, why am I doing it for them?" and therefore changed her practice from teacher-driven revision to student-led revision.

Another example of change in teacher practice was the reported increase in frequency of writing by participants (both in and out of their classrooms). After the Institute, Oaks began a blog, Ochoa filled composition book after composition book, and Tanner offered that writing in front of her students often motivated those students to write as well. This change in teacher practice aligns with the reported experience of past Writing Project participants (Gillespie, 1985; Oregon Writing Project, 2010; Whyte et al, 2007) and seems to speak to the call for teachers to devote more time and attention to writing (College Board, 2003; Street & Stang, 2009).

Writing within the Summer Institute led some participants to consider how they themselves feel as a writer and how that may translate to the work of their own students. Gillespie (1985) believed that reflection on one's own instruction was possible when teachers write so as to "test" their own writing assignments (p. 1). Gillespie's theory may reflect the experience of the six participants, including Tanner who spoke of taking on "the role of the student" in many of the course presentations and actually doing "all of the writing that we would be expecting our students to do."

She commented that those presentations were the most enjoyable and memorable, and helped her see the work from a student's perspective.

Aligned with the belief that professional development should engage teachers in craft development that parallels the work they aim to inspire in their own students (Guskey, 1995; Putnam & Borko, 1997; Little, 1993; Wilson & Berne, 1999), Jim Gray (2000) wrote, "if we only emphasized the need for writing teachers to write, the Bay Area Writing Project would still be an important program" (p. 85), "teachers of writing need to write" (p. 88). Far from the "sit and git" that Barth (2001) cites as the sermon-like instruction of teachers, professional development that engages teachers in the doing of their content area may also offer the benefits of improved teacher understanding through engagement and improved instruction through personal reflection (p. 32). Little (1993) refers to this as the "*construction* and not mere *consumption* of subject matter teaching knowledge" (p. 135). Barth (2001) believes that, listening to one person "drone on and on while other sit in silence ... cannot engage the learner very fully or for very long" (p. 35). Instead, Barth (2001) advocates for the "profound human need to experience not just learning, but activity and joy in learning" (p. 35). These statements, as well as those made by study participants, seem to advocate for giving teachers what John Dewey (1916) has long asked for K-12 students, "Give the pupils something to do, not something to learn; and the doing is of such a nature as to demand thinking; learning naturally results" (p. 181).

*Confidence.* Graham, Harris, Fink, and MacArthur (2001) propose that when teachers feel more confident in their ability to promote student learning, they often are more positively engaged in their professional work. That proposition seems to hold true here, as the participants expressed a renewed sense of confidence in their own writing and/or their ability to teach writing at their prospective grade level while also reporting an eagerness to try in what they learned in the SI in their own classrooms. This is illustrated most clearly in participant Marcy Ochoa. She entered the 2011 Summer Institute deeply conflicted about her writing instructional practices, but left with a variety of new strategies that helped her feel more “prepared” than ever before. Her new-found confidence resulted in more progressive writing instruction for her students and, in Ochoa herself, a visible eagerness to continue learning. In light of claims made by Bailey (2000) that “substantive curricular change only occurs when it begins with the teacher,” the increased self-confidence in Ochoa holds great promise (p. 113).

*Continued learning and leadership.* At the completion of the Summer Institute, all six participants in this study expressed interest in a continuation of their learning related to the teaching of writing. Four of the teachers immediately enrolled in further coursework with the Oregon Writing Project. The fact that teachers, who devoted five weeks of their summer to participate in optional professional development, immediately sought out additional learning opportunities speaks to their desire for quality professional development. This is important in light of the statement

of Ash and Pesall (2000) who believe that “to prepare their students to be successful in this society, teachers must be willing to learn continuously, expand their own abilities, and assume ever-greater leadership roles” (p. 1). Teacher-centered and collaborative-based professional development may instigate additional teacher interest in professional development and, in turn, may lead to increased teacher leadership.

In this study, several participants were already positioned to serve in leadership roles in the area of writing. For example, Oaks as an applicant for an instructional coach position, Ochoa as the primary language arts teacher in her building, Townsen through the development of a 6<sup>th</sup> grade writing course in her district. These three teachers, as well as high school teacher Owen, developed new, concrete plans to solidify their engagement as teacher leaders after the 2011 Summer Institute as well. Following the National Writing Project’s (2010a) core principle that teacher-leaders are a tremendous resource for educational reform, the OWP SI director encouraged participants to continue their own learning and to share their expertise with others in the 2011 Institute cohort and beyond. Oaks and Owen joined the leadership team of the Oregon Writing Project at Willamette University. Townsen began work to develop Young Writer’s Camps through OWP@WU. When opportunities were presented, participants seemed eager to embrace the prospect of continued and new learning and leadership.

A variety of academics have cited the development of teacher leaders as a crucial component of school improvement (Hart, 1995; Lieberman & Miller, 2004;

Moller & Katzenmeyer, 1996; Paulu & Winters, 1998; Silva, Gimbert, & Nolan, 2000; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Ovando (1996) offers that teachers have a unique perspective that can inform decision making and Barth (2001) argues that “students learn when teachers lead” (p. 445). This study showed that the new knowledge and confidence developed by participants facilitated the interest in developing and exercising leadership skills. Lieberman and Miller (2004) seemingly explain this phenomenon within National Writing Project programs saying, “Teachers learn to become better instructors of writing, and in doing so, establish the authority to lead others” (p. 34). Findings from this study support the idea that opportunities for professional learning, coupled with concrete steps to leadership may empower knowledgeable teachers to accept positions of leadership and, in turn, lead to reform of U.S. schools from the inside.

Professional development programs in other disciplines have also seen the connection between gained knowledge, increased leadership capabilities and improved school practices. Klentschy (2008) argued that the development of teacher leaders was vital in science education reform. In the areas of math, social sciences, and foreign language (among others), the state of California currently maintains a variety of professional development programs designed to both increase subject-specific knowledge and “foster the development of teachers’ capability for leadership” (California Subject Matter Project, 2009). At conception, these Californian programs

were modeled on the first National Writing Project Summer Institute site (Bohlin, 2001) and function as K-12 teacher networks that highlight teachers teaching teachers.

*Key characteristics impact professional development learning.* Guskey (2000), Hyde and Pink (1992a), and others (McLaughlin & Marsh 1978; Abdal-Haqq, 1996) have established several key components related to successful professional development structures for teachers. This study provides some important clarification of previous studies by drawing attention to time and a safe learning environment as particularly important components of professional development.

*Time.* Researchers have previously addressed the importance of time allocated for professional development of classroom teachers (Abdal-Haqq, 1996; Guskey, 2000; Wei, Darling-Hammond, & Adamson, 2010). Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000) suggest that “expertise only occurs with major investments of time” (p. 58), and cite the “constraints on teachers’ time” as an impediment to teacher learning. (p. 190). While this study does confirm the importance of time devoted toward teacher professional development in the area of writing, it also draws attention to the potential of scheduling concentrated time for professional development rather than focusing on the total sum of teacher time dedicated over an extended timeline. Participants maintained that the marked intensity of time spent with Summer Institute colleagues during the summer was central to their ability to focus and reflect, as well as the creation of what they deemed a safe and supportive learning environment. It was the day-to-day routine of time spent together in close work that helped create a positive

learning environment for the professionals involved in this study. Sarmiento and Vasquez (2010) cite established routines as a means of creating a sense of safety. For the participants here, the uninterrupted time spent together during the Summer Institute, entwined with the daily opportunity to write and the sharing of positive feedback among peers appeared to stimulate a concentrated, safe, and supportive environment for learning.

*Safe learning environment.* When asked what components of the Summer Institute environment influenced their professional development learning, participants cited the program's personal writing and presentation feedback model as key to the creation of a safe learning environment. Participants generally felt that it was the safe learning environment created within the cohort that allowed them to take the risks necessary to gain new knowledge and change their practices, attitudes, and beliefs related to writing.

The use of personal writing to create a safe learning environment in the present study seems to extend the idea of teacher-centered work to include the supposition that teachers must be allowed to share and reflect on personal experience, as well as professional experience, if the aim is to change professional practices and beliefs. Duckworth (1997) cites the sharing of personal stories as an important component of "creating the joint commitment" required of teachers aiming to gain new learning (p. 5). Personal writing may be used to form bonds with peers within a cohort setting and create space for reflection on long held professional beliefs.

In a study of personal writing used in a preservice teacher program, Sarmiento and Vasquez (2010) theorize that the “power behind the written text can be transformational and healing” (p. 284). Bunkers (2006) expresses these same ideas stating, that writing about your own life can help you “gain a wider perspective on yourself, not only who you once were but also who you are now, and who you might become” (p. 187). As reported by participants, personal writing in the 2011 Summer Institute was a powerful component. The emotional connection teachers made with their personal writing, and with their colleagues who shared writing, serves as a prime example of the “intellectual, social, and emotional engagement” that Little (1993) cites as necessary to break free from the uninspiring and ineffective teacher trainings of the past (p. 138). Just as Levine, Kern, and Wright (2008) demonstrated that personal writing among medical interns could serve as an effective means of promoting reflection and self-awareness during an internship experience, the personal writing in the Summer Institute may also serve as an example of a program component that can influence learning of teachers enrolled in preservice programs and/or professional development work.

It is reasonable to consider that the personal writing created and shared in the Institute, which in turn aided the development of a safe learning environment, was possible because the cohort was generally made up of peers who were unknown to each other prior to this experience. Although some participants were employed at the same school before the Institute, the overall mixing of various teachers from various

schools away from those who directly evaluate their job performance, may have allowed participants to escape the singularity of their professional role and more openly expose their personal lives.

The specific feedback model used in the 2011 Summer Institute was also credited by participants as having helped nurture feelings of safety. While proponents of high quality professional development have called for teacher learning to be guided by quality leaders and simultaneously constructed within a collaborative community (Guskey 1995; Hyde & Pink, 1992a; McLaughlin & Marsh, 1978; Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009), the feedback model experienced by the participants in this study demonstrates a specific tool that can bring both of these characteristics to life. While feedback is generally considered an important element in the process of teaching and learning (Bransford, Brown, and Cocking, 2000; Race, 2001) it has also been shown to be a *dis-incentive* to learning if not appropriately employed (Young, 2000). In the case of the Summer Institute, the feedback model was praised by participants as a means of creating a safe learning environment and aiding their overall learning. The model, specifically designed by the director for the 2011 Institute, aimed to provide helpful and positive feedback for participants as they presented a developed lesson to their peers. This particular feedback model enabled both reflective writing and verbal sharing by all Institute participants. Immediate feedback was provided to the presenter and was later followed by a lengthy response to peers as written by the presenter. This interactive,

multi-step process of feedback could be described as a ‘protocol’ for collaborative learning that supports risk and encourages professional reflection.

McDonald, Mohr, Dichter, and McDonald (2003) define ‘protocol’ as a means of identifying a specific method which leaders can employ so as to structure conversations which allow everyone to speak and everyone to listen. Such protocols thereby aim to facilitate balanced meetings that are “optimally honest and respectful” (p. xiv). Regimented protocols (such as the feedback model in the Summer Institute) that outline who speaks, to what purpose, and when, aim to raise conversations between professionals from mere talking to carefully planned, scaffolded discussion that can result in new learning. Protocols “make clear the crucial differences between talking and listening, between describing and judging, or between proposing and giving feedback” (McDonald, Mohr, Dichter, & McDonald, 2003, p. 5). Not only do effective protocols provide opportunity to reflect on learning, as in the case of the participants here, but they also provide a predictable pattern of interaction with peers that create a sense of safety and encouragement. Clear in purpose, as well as procedure, the protocol from the 2011 Summer Institute is a specific example of how similar structured feedback models could decrease the need for defensive positioning by teachers during professional development programs and therefore realign professional discourse as a viable means of improving instruction.

Although many NWP programs utilize feedback models (National Writing Project, 1982; Swenson, 2006), there seems to be little research related to the feedback

structures used within teacher professional development programs. The particular feedback protocol used in the 2011 Summer Institute was developed by the OWP SI director through the synthesis of models and strategies gained throughout her professional experience. The protocol was part of a concerted effort to address the complexities of peer to peer feedback among a diverse group of relative strangers. Participants in this study praised the specific model of the 2011 Summer Institute, sharing that using the model gave them confidence and safety during what, otherwise, could be an activity that causes anxiety.

**Differences among Summer Institute participants.** The findings also indicated differences among participants. These differences related to a discrepancy in confidence for two of the teachers, motivation for teacher enrollment in the Summer Institute, and teacher commentary by grade level as related to writing across the curriculum and technology.

***Discrepancies of confidence.*** High school teacher Susan Tanner praised her summer experience and spoke of new lesson ideas and resources that she gained from the OWP Summer Institute. However, when compared with her peers, she seemed to lack an overall gain in confidence and assurance of practice. This difference may have been influenced by a number of factors. As noted, she was one of the youngest Institute participants. Discrepancies of confidence may also be related to the Tanner's personal situation. Tanner experienced the Institute during a time of relative transition; she had moved to Oregon just the year prior, transferred to a new teaching

position within her district just the month prior, and was in the midst of completing her graduate degree in the months directly following. One or all of these factors may have influenced her SI experience and learning, in particular her ability to gain significant new confidence in her teaching of writing.

*Entrance motivations.* When examining further differences among study participants, Susan Tanner again stood in contrast to her peers in regards to her motivation for enrolling in the Summer Institute at Willamette University. Although she ultimately chose to attend the summer program of her own free will, her initial motivation was derived through prompting from her job supervisor, who advised Tanner that enrolling in the Institute might save her from district layoffs. Tanner was the sole participant who applied to the SI under the guise of protecting her immediate job status. This discrepancy in motivation may or may not be related to her perspective, engagement or resulting learning from the summer coursework.

It is noteworthy to mention that the Oregon Writing Project at Willamette University has a long history of enrolling individual teachers who self-select this professional development program (Alberts et al., 2006). Schools and districts cannot contract with OWP to enroll specific teachers in the Summer Institute. Instead, individual teachers must apply and interview with the Summer Institute director before being accepted into the program. This enrollment process aims to avoid mandated professional development and capitalize on teachers seeking learning on their own accord. NWP founder Jim Gray (2000) remarked that in the early years of the

Summer Institute, program leaders recognized certain qualities in teachers they hoped to recruit. Namely, they sought teacher participants who were “interested in knowing what other teachers were doing” (p. 72). This aspect of self-selection may or may not be linked to the Summer Institute’s influence on teacher practices, attitudes, and beliefs.

Sparks and Loucks-Horsely (1989) explain that individually guided professional development enrollment, such as is the pattern with the SI, relies on the assumption that “adults learn more efficiently when they initiate” their own learning activities (p. 42). Advocating for such opportunities, Sparks and Loucks-Horsely (1989) agree that such self-selection may best accommodate teachers with varying ages, levels of experience, professional questions, and learning styles. However, self-selected enrollment may leave school districts who are looking for a common professional development experience for their full faculty without the option of participation. On a local level, the Oregon Writing Project has responded to this dilemma through the development of additional inservice programs that can be delivered at schools sites through the invitation of school administration. Although some of these programs include mandated attendance for a school’s faculty, OWP has strived to maintain teacher and context-centered learning drawn from personal writing, real-life examples of student writing, and school-specific teacher responsibilities.

Teacher Nancy Flanagan (2011) suggests that mandated professional development may not be needed if professional development is re-conceptualized as

the networking of committed professionals rather than an event or training that is “done to teachers.” Historically the paradigm of teacher professional development has shifted toward expanded teacher input and choice of design and content. Perhaps there is a place for both self-selected and district-mandated programming, so that both individual and collective needs can be addressed.

***Grade level responsibilities.*** Similarities and differences among teachers of the varied grade level teaching responsibilities were visible in two areas: writing across the curriculum and technology.

*Writing across the curriculum.* Since Janet Emig’s (1971) germinal work, *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*, educators have expanded writing education to include *learning to write* as well as *writing to learn*. This shift in understanding involves re-conceptualizing writing as not only a form of communication but also as a form of thinking and learning linked to writing across the curriculum (Zinsser, 1988). Although participants in this study did not refer specifically to writing to learn, they did often comment on instructional writing practices that could be used for a variety of purposes in a variety of subject areas in K-12 schools. These comments most frequently came from elementary teacher participants, perhaps because of their roles as the general instructor in a self-contained classroom in which integration of subjects may be natural or logistically sensible. This result also may be influenced by the preservice preparation of the participants, which typically includes broad methods

courses for elementary teachers and more focused content area methods courses for middle and high school specialists.

This difference, as well as the vocalized appreciation from high school teacher Owen for his elementary SI counterparts, draws attention to the inclusion of K-12 teachers in a single program of professional development as an opportunity for broad peer to peer learning. While grade-level focused work offers interaction with peers facing similar job assignment responsibilities, cross grade-level discussions of practice may broaden the field to include educational topics previously unexplored at a particular grade level or school.

In addition to comments related to writing across the curriculum, the elementary teacher participants, more than the middle/high school teachers, tended to make comments which referred to the connection between reading and writing. This may relate to several outside factors, including:

- 1) Reading instruction is generally addressed more vigorously in primary classrooms where children are of a younger age (Nevills & Wolfe, 2009).
- 2) Preservice preparation of elementary teachers has often favored reading over writing (Mathers, Shea, & Steigerwald, 2009).
- 3) The particular elementary teachers in this study received high quality new-teacher professional development prior to the Institute from a veteran Oregon Writing Project teacher leader who worked as a mentor within the local school district.
- 4) The local school district (in which the elementary teachers work) recently developed a comprehensive literacy model which asks teachers to integrate their reading and writing education (Salem-Keizer Public Schools, 2011). Strategic implementation of this model began in local

elementary school classrooms, thereby exposing the elementary teachers in this study to integrated reading and writing practices prior to the Summer Institute.

This connection made between reading and writing by these elementary teachers is notable, as Kutz and Roskelly (1991) remind us that reading and writing have a "symbiotic" relationship that cause the two skills areas to "mutually reinforce, enhance, and shape each other" (p. 189). With this premise in mind, it is possible that that improvement in the instruction of writing may ultimately influence these teachers' instruction in the area of reading. This is particularly significant in light of the responsibility elementary teachers have for the literacy skill development of young readers.

*Technology.* While all participants made comments related to technology at some point in their Summer Institute, results showed that the high school teachers were more likely to do so than their elementary/middle school peers. High school teachers (unlike the elementary and middle school teachers) also included commentary regarding their plans for the future use of technology in their classrooms. Although it is not clear what technology hardware and access is available at each of the participant's school sites, high school teachers may be more willing to consider the use of technology because their students are more likely to independently own or use technology. It is currently estimated that 75% of 12-17 year-olds have a cell phone (Lenhart, Ling, Campbell, & Purcell, 2010). Rainie (2009), reports that 60%-70% of teens have digital cameras and 40% of teens have video cameras. Because older

students may be more likely to have and use their personally owned digital technology (than children of a younger age), the teachers of these teens may respond by having an increased willingness to integrate technology in their classroom practice.

In a world of expanding digital access, technology related to the teaching of writing is of growing importance. Authors Hoechsmann and Low (2008) explore the nuances of this reality in their book *Reading Youth Writing* and suggest that access to “digital spaces” has resulted in youth “reading and writing more than ever” (p. 10). Open-source computer applications and user-friendly interfaces of Web 2.0 have shifted computer use for the average user from the role of mere consumer to the possible role of creator. Educators have the great opportunity to harness technology, interest, and know-how to provide meaningful educational experiences for youth that impact student engagement, reflection and overall academic success. Teacher professional development in any content area must keep pace.

### **Implications**

This study offers several possible implications for teacher preparation programs, providers of professional development, and for current K-12 teachers of writing.

**Implications for teacher preparation.** First, in the area of preparation courses offered at colleges and universities across the U.S., this study adds to the continued call for more comprehensive inclusion of writing instructional methods in preservice programs (Cutler & Graham, 2008; Hochstetler, 2007; Kiuvara, Graham, &

Hawken, 2009; Mathers, Shea, & Steigerwald, 2009; Thomas, 2000). Chambless and Bass (1995) believe that efforts to introduce, model, and engage preservice university students in process-oriented, personal writing, across coursework offerings may provide the reflection and engagement required to inform the instructional practices later employed by the preservice candidates. Lange (1982) calls for preservice preparation of English teachers to require service in college writing centers, so that all candidates would receive training and experience as writing tutors. The data from the present study also suggests that concentrated blocks of study time and the facilitation of a sense of safety might be helpful to preservice teachers as they explore a subject area. Although these are only a few considerations for program change, the findings here support a renewed review of teacher preparation programs and their hands-on instruction for K-12 preservice teachers in the specific area of writing.

**Implications for inservice professional development.** The present study supports the larger research literature that calls for quality professional development that is teacher and context-centered, built within a collaborative community, and systematic in design (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009; Hyde & Pink, 1992a). The paradigm of professional development as the one-shot transmission of information from expert to practitioners appears to be inadequate (Little, 1989; Miles, 1995). Findings of this study can inform professional development providers in the creation of new models that seek to influence teacher practice and thinking. While findings from this study suggested that mentoring may

be a promising method of professional development in the area of writing, this study specifically suggests that providers of professional development should consider the factors of sustained group time and the creation of a safe environment for teachers aiming to gain new learning. These two components may serve as the catalyst for the very “intellectual struggle” and “emotional engagement” Little (1993) suggests is required for schools wishing to depart from the “remarkably low-intensity enterprise” previously recognized as professional development (p. 148).

The protocol guiding peer feedback in the 2011 Summer Institute also appeared to be significant from the perspective of the teacher participants. Following set guidelines gave the participants a sense of predictable safety while supporting all those involved in reflective writing, speaking, and thinking that highlighted the positive and informed new learning. Protocols aim to promote further thinking rather than place judgment on past understanding (McDonald, Mohr, Dichter, & McDonald; 2003). The inclusion of such feedback models in teacher professional development programs may serve as a strategic means of encouraging professional risk-taking which could then lead to the development of professional confidence for those teachers involved. Incorporation of protocols, as a means of guiding peer to peer interactions, among teachers from both a variety of grade levels and schools may show particular promise, as it can create a static and level playing field to bridge the numerous unknown variables of teacher experience and perspective.

Specifically for the Oregon Writing Project at Willamette University and the National Writing Project, this study suggests that the ongoing Summer Institute model appears to be an effective force in the development of teachers of writing and future teacher leaders. While the research has demonstrated this effectiveness (Nagin, 2006; Pritchard, 1987; Wood & Lieberman, 2000), local anecdotal knowledge is confirmed by the stories of these participants and their changed practices, attitudes, and beliefs seemingly influenced by their 2011 participation. The work done within the local Summer Institute program reflects the research and commentary of the National Writing Project as a teacher collaborative model that continues to show how, under the right conditions, teachers can desire, benefit from, and enjoy professional development. It appears that such engagement of teachers has the potential to positively impact classroom practice, which may, in turn, influence student outcomes.

**Implications for teachers of writing.** Finally, this study can inform K-12 teachers of writing in Oregon and across the nation. For K-12 teachers who feel unprepared to teach writing or are cynical about professional development offerings, the participants of this study give voice to their concerns. Although writing may be known as the “Neglected R” in preservice coursework, school-based professional development programs, and the K-12 classroom, there is new learning available. Just as middle school language arts teacher Marcy Ochoa moved from “I always knew [writing] was my weak link” to employing new “awesome” writing instruction techniques, interested teachers can take steps to improve their craft through their

involvement in quality professional development programs. This study suggests that professional development that makes space for time, engagement, and peer support can introduce teachers to a variety of research based instructional strategies; a sense of confidence; and learning that is both enjoyable and empowering.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Further research is needed to fully understand the complex work of teaching and learning as it relates to teachers' professional development experiences in the area of writing. Reid (2011) cited a need for additional studies of writing pedagogy education programs that are "data-driven, longitudinal, or inclusive" (p. 692). The present study could be extended with additional follow-up interviews in the first and second academic years following the Summer Institute. This work could examine the depth and longevity of the new practices, attitudes, and beliefs expressed by participants as well as identify issues that arise when teachers return to their school sites following professional development. Another extension of this study would be to duplicate this study for the 2012, 2013, and 2014 Summer Institutes so as to identify patterns of shifting teacher practices, attitudes, and beliefs. Additional inquiry could also include a survey of all 2011 SI participants to determine if the identified themes are found across all program participants.

While this work examined the experience of six teachers (mostly strangers to each other), further research could explore the professional development experiences of a specific school staff (previously known to each other) who gather together daily

to pursue similar professional development in the area of writing. Would the day-after-day routine of reflection and sharing of writing impact one school staff similar to the impact made on the relatively random gathering of teachers across schools and districts that gathered at the 2011 Summer Institute? Would personal writing be equally important and again serve as a powerful conduit for learning and support? How would the limited grade level variation in one school change the peer to peer dynamics?

As the only writing professional development that was noted as meaningful by participants prior to the OWP Summer Institute was the district-sponsored mentoring program available to the elementary teachers, other research extensions could examine the complexities of mentor based professional development. In the case of this study, the mentor who provided professional development happened to be a teacher leader who was heavily involved in the Oregon Writing Project. Therefore, two questions may be raised:

- 1) Did other new-teacher mentors (unfamiliar with the Oregon Writing Project's mission or model) provide similar information to their mentees related to writing and with similar results? Was the powerful impact of mentorship, reported by Oaks and Trenton, an outcome related to the mentor based model of professional development, the result of teacher leadership cultivated by the Oregon Writing Project, or a product of the unique skills and disposition possessed by the particular mentor assigned to these two participants?

2) How do the influences of a group professional development experience compare to that of a one-on-one mentoring program? How may the learning that occurs during an off-site gathering of teacher professionals differ from the learning that comes from the co-efforts of two teachers working while embedded in a classroom of young students? How do the benefits of collegiality built within a larger group differ from the benefits of companionship (that comes from one-on-one mentorship)? How might the pairing of these professional development models influence teacher practice?

Finally, at the very start of this work I wondered, “Who is teaching writing during this exciting time in education?” At the end of this work, I find myself wondering, “Who is teaching writing instructional methods to those who are teaching writing in K-12 classrooms?” Reid (2011) has suggested that perhaps teachers of preservice programs have been unprepared to teach progressive methodology of writing as they themselves have been inadequately prepared. Research on the preparedness of teacher educators of writing is warranted. Related to this, future studies that review the syllabi of language arts methods courses in schools of education across the nation may give insight to the state of current preservice education in the colleges and universities in the U.S.

### **Conclusion**

The “Neglected R” needs our attention. Vital to student achievement, writing must be addressed in our K-12 classrooms, in our K-12 faculty rooms, and in our K-12

teacher preparation programs. Discussed widely in the literature, the lack of teacher preparation or engagement with the topic of writing instruction is poignantly illustrated in the participant stories shared in this study.

The National Writing Project Summer Institute model appears to be a viable option for addressing the current need. This study reviewed the experiences of two elementary, two middle school, and two high school teachers who participated in the 2011 Summer Institute, and showed a fairly consistent pattern of growth, increased confidence, and inspired interest in further learning and leadership in the area of writing. The NWP Summer Institute model appears to offer meaningful and effective professional development in writing and may also be able to inform inservice programming in other content areas.

Participants cited the strengths of the SI model as the sustained time devoted to the Summer Institute and the safe learning environment created through the opportunity to write and share personal stories and the use of a feedback model developed to support collaborative work among colleagues. These characteristics appear to be valuable tools in professional development related to the teaching of writing and may hold equal promise for those wanting to facilitate meaningful and effective professional development for teachers across the curriculum.

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## APPENDIX A

## Participant Consent Form

**INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

**Project Title:** Writing Project Summer Institute: Comparative Case Studies of Teacher Participants

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Kenneth Winograd, Associate Professor, OSU  
**Student Researcher:** Angela Obery, PhD Student, OSU  
**Co-Investigator(s):** N/A  
**Sponsor:** Participant compensation provided by the Oregon Writing Project at Willamette University  
**Version Date:** April 2011

**1. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS FORM?**

This form contains information you will need to help you decide whether to be in this study or not. Please read the form carefully and ask the study team member(s) questions about anything that is not clear.

**2. WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to create comparative case studies of K-12 teachers participating in the Oregon Writing Project Summer Institute (OWP SI). The case studies seek to understand how the OWP SI influences the practices, attitudes, and beliefs (related to the teaching of writing) of teacher participants and identify the similarities and differences among teachers at different grade levels. There currently are few research studies available that examine the work of National Writing Project (NWP) elementary teachers. Most research has been done with middle school and high school teachers of writing.

This study is simultaneously being conducted by Angela Obery as part of the dissertation requirements of the College of Education PhD: Teacher Leadership program at Oregon State University.

### **3. WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?**

You are being invited to take part in this study because you are participating in the 2011 OWP Summer Institute.

### **4. WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY?**

Data collected as part of this research will include the following:

#### **A) Summer Institute coursework**

1. Archived notes from the SI entrance interview
2. Archived text: SI entrance essay
3. Written reflections completed after each SI lesson presentation
4. Written self-reflection completed after making an SI lesson presentation
5. SI exit essay

#### **B) One face-to-face interview** with the researcher (Angela Obery).

This interview (approx 2 hours) will focus on your experience in the SI and your plans for the use of writing in your classroom as a result of the institute. The interview will be recorded for purposes of audio archives and transcription. (These recordings are not optional.) Audio tapes will then be transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. The researcher will have access to the tapes indefinitely.

#### **C) One follow-up phone conversation** with the researcher (Angela Obery). Study results

will be shared with participants at the final stage of the research for feedback (i.e., member checking). You will be given an opportunity to identify data which you do not want the researchers to use in the study and subsequent reports. Because it is not possible to know what studies may be a part of future work, I ask that you give permission now for us to use the data in this study for future studies/purposes/publications without your being contacted about each event. Presentations/studies would be made in an effort to promote deeper understanding of the topics at educational conferences, university courses, publications, seminars and/or inservices.

If you decide in the future that you prefer that any data related to you in the study no longer be used in public displays of the report, you may contact Dr. Kenneth Winograd at OSU or Angela Obery . We may contact you in the future for another similar study. You may ask us to stop contacting you at any time.

### **5. WHAT ARE THE RISKS AND POSSIBLE DISCOMFORTS OF THIS STUDY?**

Taking part in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part, or stop participating at any time, without any penalty. Choosing to participate or withdraw from the study will not affect any individuals' professional standing within OWP or relation to further OWP activities.

During the interview you are free to decline answering any question asked by the researcher. The interview location will be determined by you.. All efforts will be made to accommodate the busy schedule of classroom teachers.

Because of the small size of the pool from which participants are being recruited, anonymity of participants cannot be insured. Those individuals involved with the 2011 OWP SI program or those in OWP leadership positions may know the identity of study participants. (Participants who later use the provided vouchers will also, in due course, reveal the fact they participated in the study through the use of said vouchers. However at that time, that information would only be accessible by the OWP Directors, Administrative Assistants, and the leader of the chosen program. To help ensure confidentiality, we will maintain the use of pseudonyms throughout the study process and will be maintained in all later uses of data.

All data sources collected in this study will be maintained in a secure location. Data sources will be kept indefinitely in both paper and digital form. Documents and data sources related to the study will be stored in a locked file in Dr. Winograd's College of Education office at OSU.

#### **6. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?**

This study was not designed to benefit you directly. However, taking time to record and reflect upon teaching practice and professional thinking in the area of writing may lead to personal and professional growth. Comparative case studies may allow also allow you to gain greater understanding of the perspectives of your peers teaching writing at another grade level.

This study will also benefit the Oregon Writing Project. Study findings will help OWP leadership better understand the experience of teachers who participated in the 2011 OWP@ SI. The greater academic community may benefit from a deeper understanding of how the SI experience influences subsequent teacher thinking as teachers of writing at the different grade levels.

#### **7. WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY?**

Participants will receive a \$50 voucher that they may use (before September 2013) to pay for Oregon Writing Project programs/workshops of their choice. In compensation for the face-to-face interview, participants will receive an additional \$50 voucher that they may use (before September 2013) to pay for future Oregon Writing Project programs/workshops of their choice.

#### **8. WILL IT COST ME ANYTHING TO BE IN THIS STUDY?**

There are no associated costs with participation.

### **9. WHO IS PAYING FOR THIS STUDY?**

The Oregon Writing Project at Willamette University is supporting this research by providing the listed compensation for each participant. OWP@WU is also paying for the use of a professional service for the transcription of participant interviews. OWP will be given a copy of the final dissertation, but will not receive individual or identifiable raw data.

### **10. DOES ANY MEMBER OF THE STUDY TEAM HAVE A CONFLICTING INTEREST?**

One of the investigators working on this study has a potential conflict of interest. Student researcher, Angela Obery currently serves on the Advisory Board of the Oregon Writing Project at Willamette University and works in the position of Inservice Coordinator. This conflict is minimized as the research design is specifically constructed to understand how the OWP experience influenced subsequent teaching behaviors and beliefs of participants and not evaluate teaching practice.

If you have questions or concerns about this, please contact the Institutional Review Board Office at (541) 737-8008.

### **11. WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION I GIVE?**

The information you provide during this research study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. Federal regulatory agencies and the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies) may inspect and copy records pertaining to this research. Some of these records could contain information that personally identifies you. Upon completion, OWP will receive a written report of the findings from this study. In this report, as in all others that may be published, assigned pseudonyms will be maintained and your identity will not be made public.

Because SI coursework is being collected as part of this study, I will also sign the additional FERPA consent form therefore allowing course instructors to release my work to the researchers. As part of this signed form, OWP Director Karen Hamlin will know my identity and of my participation in this study.

### **12. WHAT OTHER CHOICES DO I HAVE IF I DO NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?**

Taking part in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part, or stop participating at any time, without any penalty. Choosing to participate or withdraw from the study will not affect any individuals' professional standing within OWP or relation to further OWP activities.

**13. WHO DO I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?**

Questions are encouraged.

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact:  
Dr. Kenneth Winograd, (541) 737-5988 or [winograk@oregonstate.edu](mailto:winograk@oregonstate.edu)  
Angela Obery, (503) 315-8292 or [oberya@onid.orst.edu](mailto:oberya@onid.orst.edu)

If you have questions about your rights or welfare as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office, at (541) 737-8008 or by email at [IRB@oregonstate.edu](mailto:IRB@oregonstate.edu)

**14. WHAT DOES MY SIGNATURE ON THIS CONSENT FORM MEAN?**

Your signature indicates that this study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Participant's Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Participant) (Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Person Obtaining Consent) (Date)

## APPENDIX B

## 2011 Summer Institute Teacher Presentation Feedback Sheet

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_ Presenter's Name \_\_\_\_\_

What I noticed:

Probing Questions:

How can this lesson be modified/adapted to your classroom or discipline?

What will stay with you from this lesson?

## APPENDIX C

## Interview Guide

## I. Welcome

1. Thank you for your participation.
2. Review of project's purpose.
3. Pseudonyms will be used.
4. Compensation will be provided as a \$50 voucher.
5. Logistics:
  - we'll talk tonight up to 2 hours.
  - conversation will be taped and later transcribed by an outside source.
  - you can decline any question.
  - you may offer any other statements that you feel should be included.

## II. General Info

1. Age?
2. What/Where/When was your college experience/preservice training?
3. What was your major?
4. What led you to become a teacher?
5. Teaching Experience/Background – previous jobs/levels?
6. Teaching position before SI vs. after?
7. Please describe the particular students you serve/d.

## III. Pre-Project Info

1. What/Where/When was your previous learning about writing instruction?
2. What led you to attend the Summer Institute?

## IV. SI Info

1. How do you think the SI influenced your practice and beliefs re: writing?
2. How do you feel the SI influenced your attitude about writing?
3. Was there much learning for you around the concept of writing to learn?
4. How did the inclusion of K-12 teachers impact your experience?
5. In the reflections to peer presentations, I read a number of encouraging statements and positive acknowledgements. Did you have a sense that the other course participants valued your contribution and/or were

supportive of your learning? What impact did this have on the work/learning of your OWP SI program?

6. What happens next for you in the area of teaching/writing?
7. Are you planning to participate in any further PD in the area of writing?

#### V. Writing Info

1. By what methods/where were you taught to write?
2. Did you like this instruction? Was it effective?
3. Who are you as a writer now that you've completed the SI?
4. In the area of writing, what three things do students need?  
How does this differ from what you would have said before the SI?
5. In the area of writing, what three things do teachers need?  
How does this differ from what you would have said before the SI?

#### VI. Research Analysis

*Identify the patterns/themes seen in data as related to each participant.*

1. Does this make sense to you?

#### VII. Further Thoughts

1. What else related to this topic/research project you would like to discuss?

#### VIII. Next steps

1. Once the data is compiled I will send you an executive summary that relates to your involvement. At that time you can respond to the work, and suggest changes that would more accurately depict our conversations and the spirit of your contribution.
2. What final questions/concerns do you have?
3. Thank you.

## APPENDIX D

## List of Codes

**The Teaching of Writing**

- Value of Writing
- Three Dominant Approaches
  - Presentation Mode
  - Natural Process & Environmental Modes
    - Writing Process
      - Prewrite
      - Draft
      - Revision
      - Editing
      - Publishing
  - No One Right Way to Teach Writing
- 6 Traits
  - Word Choice
  - Sentence Fluency
  - Presentation
  - Conventions
  - Organization
  - Ideas
  - Voice
- Boys vs. Girls
- Model of Instruction
  - Asset Model of Instruction
  - Deficit Model of Instruction
- What Students Need to Write
  - Personal Connection
  - Tools
  - Time

**Writing to Learn**

- Across the Curriculum
  - Reading & Writing Connection

**Teacher as .....**

Teacher as Writer  
 Teacher as Learner  
     Professional Development  
 Teacher as Practitioner  
     Humor  
     New Resources  
     Cosmopolitan View of Educators  
     Assessment  
     Across Grade Levels  
     Technology  
 Teacher as Leader  
 Teacher as Researcher

**Three Things...**

Three Things Teachers Need in Writing  
 Three Things Students Need in Writing

**Buzzwords in Writing Education**

Standards  
 Mentor Texts  
 Children of Poverty  
 ELL  
 Scaffolding  
 Units of Study

**Social Practices of NWP**

Share and Learn  
 Support Risks, Tolerate Mistakes, Value Critique  
     Feedback Model  
 Break Teacher Isolation  
     Personal Writing  
     Time  
 Treat Every Colleague as Valuable  
 Rethinking Identify and Responsible to Community  
 Be Treated Like Leaders  
 Reflect on Own Learning  
 Multiple Points of Entry

**Change**

- Change in My Practice and Belief
- Change in My Confidence
- Change in My Attitude
- Change in Me as a Writer
- Freedom
- The Overall Shift in My Focus

**Demographics**

- Age
- How I was Taught to Write
- Preservice Education
- Teaching Experience
- Pre SI job
- Post SI job
- Why I Chose Teaching
- PD Before SI
- Why I Enrolled in the SI

**Plans after SI**