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# What Are You Teaching? Curriculums, Expectations, and Experiences of High School Writing Teachers and First Year Composition

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WHAT ARE YOU TEACHING?  
A CASE STUDY OF CURRICULUMS, EXPECTATIONS, AND EXPERIENCES OF  
HIGH SCHOOL WRITING TEACHERS AND FIRST YEAR COMPOSITION  
TEACHERS

By

Kathryn Elizabeth Fullmer

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree  
of Doctorate in Education

Hamline University

St. Paul, MN

Summer 2016

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Reader: Kristina Deffenbacher  
Reader: Jennifer McCarty Plucker

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To my parents who told me I could be whoever I wanted as long as I had an education.

To my sister who was my first student.

To my nieces who will someday know what Auntie Kate did.

To my grandmothers who are the two strongest women I know.

To my students who couldn't believe I wanted to go to more school.

To the women teachers who went before me.

And finally, to all students who ever struggled in school.

“Everywhere I go I’m asked if I think the universities stifle writers. My opinion is that they don’t stifle enough of them. There’s many a best seller that could have been prevented by a good English teacher.

-Flannery O’Connor

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Thank you to the five writing instructors I interviewed and who shared teaching documents with me as well as their passion.

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### Abstract

Fullmer, K. *What Are You Teaching? Curriculums, Expectations, and Experiences of High School Writing Teachers and First Year Composition* (2016)

The purpose of this study was to explore the teaching of writing in high school and first year composition. In depth interviews and document analysis were employed to allow five writing instructors to detail their curriculums, expectations, and experiences of teaching writing. Findings suggest that the teaching of writing is nuanced and is affected by many outside variables. Implications for future research include the possibility of developing better communication between high school and colleges, more and better professional development for writing instructors at both levels, and an evaluation of current practices at the high school and college level.

### Definition of Terms

ACT (American College Testing)--This is a standardized test that high school students take to determine college readiness and college admissions. They are tested on reading, grammar, math, science and reading. The College Board produces it.

Advanced Placement classes (AP)-- In the 1950s the College Board developed a series of classes for advanced high school students to earn possible college credit. Today, high school teachers teach these classes and students can earn college credit by taking a test in May. They are often combined with high school English content. For the purpose of this dissertation, AP refers to AP Literature and Composition and AP Language and Composition.

AMA –American Medical Association--A writing style used primarily in the medical field.

APA – American Psychological Association-- A writing style format used primarily by the social sciences.

ASA –American Sociological Association--A writing style used primarily in the sociology field.

Chicago--A writing style used primarily by history departments.

College Board--an organization that prepares and administers standardized tests that are used in college admission and placement.

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)--Corestandards.org (2016) states, “The Common Core is a set of high-quality academic standards in mathematics and English language arts/literacy (ELA). These learning goals outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade. The standards were created to ensure that all students graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career, and life, regardless of where they live. Forty-two states, the District of Columbia, four territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) have voluntarily adopted and are moving forward with the Common Core.”

Communities of Practice (COP)--According to Wegner, McDermott, and Snyder (2002), a community of practice is a group of people who engage in a process of collective learning. They are also groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.

First Year Composition (FYC)--for the purpose of this dissertation, First Year Composition (FYC) is any freshman level English class. Other descriptors might be English 101, Freshman Comp, and Introduction to College Writing. This class might fall under the English department, the rhetoric department, the General Studies Department, or as its own department.

Five Paragraph Essay (FPE)--an organizational pattern for essays. It includes an introductory paragraph, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion

Minnesota Academic Standards for the English Language Arts (MNELA Standards)--include reading, writing, speaking, viewing, listening, media literacy, and language standards, were revised in 2010. All schools must implement the 2010 standards by the 2012-2013 school year. The standards will be reviewed again during the 2018-2019 school year.

MLA (Modern Language Association)-- A writing style format used primarily by English departments and other humanities.

SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test)--Similar to the ACT, it is a standardized test that high school students take to determine college readiness and college admissions. They are tested on math, critical reading, and writing. The College Board produces it.

Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) --is a movement within contemporary composition studies that concerns itself with writing in classes outside of composition, literature, and other English courses.

Minnesota Academic Standards for the English Language Arts (MNELA Standards)—include reading, writing, speaking, viewing, listening, media literacy, and language standards, were revised in 2010. All schools must implement the 2010 standards by the 2012-2013 school year. The standards will be reviewed again during the 2018-2019 school year.



## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction to the Research Question

All teachers want to help students learn academic skills, be prepared for the next level, and be good citizens of this planet. As a high school English teacher, I want to help my students communicate well and be prepared for the next level—college English. Is it possible for high school writing teachers to prepare students for a variety of colleges with differing expectations and an even more diverse college writing curriculum? In this study, I am interested in bridging the gap between high school writing and first year composition (FYC). I want to explore the curriculums, expectations, and experiences found in both high school and college composition courses. This dissertation will seek to find commonalities and differences that will help to inform and align instruction in the writing process.

In this chapter, a presentation of the primary research question will provide the foundation for the work and its three related areas of literature. This chapter will also include my research journey and my personal experience as a writing teacher. A rationale for the research question will be presented and a conclusion will close the chapter with ideas leading to the literature review.

#### Journey to the Research Question

Teaching has been wrought with conflict ever since Horace Mann (1796-1859) decided to take on the task of uniting America's fledgling schools. What should be taught? Who would teach? What kinds of students? What is the purpose of our public

schools? The curriculum conflicts continued through the twentieth century as John Dewey (1859-1952) and Edward Thorndike (1874-1949) argued, then Sputnik was launched and scared Americans about their education (Ravitch, 2013). Further challenges were marked by the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (1984) and then the establishment of IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) in the 1970's, which has been reauthorized many times since then. *No Child Left Behind* began the early twenty-first century. The curriculum wars are still being fought today through the Common Core State Standards, Race to The Top, and currently the ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act) renewal. The most recent attempts at education reform are a result of America's middling scores on international tests (Ripley, 2014) and the 2012 PISA (Programme for International Assessment) scores, which show the same results (Kelly, Nord, Winquist, Jenkins, Chan, Ying, and Kastberg, 2013). However, when the adverse effects of poverty and race are accounted for, the U.S. is actually at the top of the PISA rankings (Ravitch, 2013; Ripley, 2014; Dufour, Dufour, and Eaker, 2015).

More specifically, teachers of composition have continually confronted the question, "Does writing instruction really have any effect on students' writing? And do students learn to write simply by practicing, reading, and being encouraged (Beach and Bridwell, 1984)? In addition, Elbow (2000) writes a great deal on the conflict surrounding whether students should read more or write more (he believes they should work together). Finally, there is the long-held grammar conflict: prescriptivist vs. descriptivist. Pinker (2014) describes teachers of grammar as being either prescriptivist (correct language, language purists) or descriptivists (language is fluid, context-based). If this cadre of leaders in the field cannot agree, then how should teachers teach writing?

The notion that students are going to college unprepared for college level work is another example of these conflicts. According to the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (2010), 60 percent of first year students discover they are not ready for post-secondary studies in English or math. Additionally, as stated by the report Strong American Schools (2008) more than 1/3 of students entering college require remedial courses. In the ACT Retention and Completion Summary (2012), 34 percent of students who enter college drop out within the first year. Schaffhauser (2015) posits that only 14 percent of four-year college instructors believe high schools are doing an adequate job of readying students for what came after high school. Schaffhauser (2015) also found data showing that eighty-two percent of college instructors found students to be severely lacking critical thinking skills, the ability to comprehend difficult materials, the ability to conduct research, and the ability to write for college. More specifically, are high school students prepared for the writing demands that await them at a four-year college? Do they enter college with the abilities and skills needed to be successful writers?

In this study, I am interested in bridging the gap between high school writing and first year composition (FYC). To add complexity to the transition from high school writing to first year composition, colleges name and treat their introductory college English classes very differently, and it has been said there are 4,000 iterations of FYC for the 4,000 schools offering this introductory writing course (Hansen and Farris, 2010).

For the purpose of this dissertation, the term First Year Composition (FYC) will be used to generically describe these many different iterations of the same course. I will be exploring not only the conflicts listed above, but also the tensions and conflicts surrounding college readiness, specifically in the area of writing. I will examine the

curricular alignments and discrepancies (or misalignments) between high school writing and FYC as I explore the expectations and experiences in both levels of instruction.

Accordingly, for the purpose of this dissertation my work will focus on for-credit FYC, not remedial classes. My dissertation work will also focus on Minnesota high schools and four-year universities located in the state of Minnesota.

### The Significance of the Research Questions

The primary research question for this study is:

*How do the curriculums, expectations, and experiences of high school writing courses align with that of first year college composition courses?*

The secondary research questions are:

1. Curriculum: How does the high school writing curriculum compare to the college writing curriculum?
2. Expectations: How do the expectations placed on high school writers compare to the expectations placed on college writers?
3. Experience: How do the classroom teacher experiences in high school writing classes compare to the classroom instructor experiences in college writing classes?

Kiuhara, Hawken, and Graham (2009) report that in 2007, fifty percent of high school graduates were not prepared for college writing. For the purpose of this study, I will be studying the other 50% who have been deemed prepared to write at the next level, and this will include AP (advanced placement) students. I am focusing on this group of students because there is a lot of research on remedial writers and those attending community college, but not as much research focusing on students who are probably

prepared for the next level. I would additionally like to explore how high school teachers can best prepare students to be successful in college writing, study the best practices in writing instruction at both levels, and examine ways to create bridges between high school and college writing instructors. In essence, I will be studying the writing curriculum, teacher expectations, and teacher experiences in both settings. As Hoffman, Vargas, Venezia, and Miller (2007) claim, “high school teachers and college faculty must communicate directly with one another; colleges must better communicate regarding placement methods, standards, and tested content to promote better alignment between exit level high school courses and the college placement test” (p. 101). In fact, some other predictors might be better—a mother’s education level, for example (Dubow and Huesman, 2009) or even a student’s GPA (Barshay, 2016). When high school and colleges collaborate, we can increase the likelihood students are prepared for college writing.

Patterson and Duer (2006) claim “English teachers strive to teach the skills they think colleges and universities want from their students, but these teachers may have no way of knowing how well their efforts match up with the expectations of instructors of first-year courses at post-secondary institutions” (p. 81). While high school teachers may not be harming their students, they may not be helping them either. Consequently, FYC instructors might not be familiar with the 9-12 writing curriculum or the AP curriculum. In other words, high school teachers believe they are preparing students for college, but they might not be and FYC instructors might believe students are coming from a certain type of background, but they are not. First, because we’re leaving a gap that only certain students can bridge—a social justice and responsibility one—as well as a financial one.

In addition, some external sources are critical of all levels of education. For example, K-12 schools are barraged with “reform” measures, but “currently the K-12 standards movement is not connected to efforts to improve access and success in higher education” (Hoffman, Vargas, Venezia, Miller, 2007, p. 46) as the CCSS are aligned K-12, not K-13 or K-16. Though higher education is not without its own critics and reform.

Educators also know the school transition points are where we lose so many of our students: third grade to fourth grade, middle school to high school, and high school to college. Additionally, many students leave college between the first and second year and performance in FYC is a strong predictor (National Council of Teachers of English, 2013). “The transition between high school and post-secondary education is especially problematic because these two key features of an integrated coherent system are lacking. Adding them [these features], and promoting research to track success of these policies with students belong at the top of states’ policy agendas if they wish to promote not only access to post-secondary education, but also the likelihood that students will be prepared once they get there” (Hoffman, Vargas, Venezia, Miller, 2007).

Conversely, Sullivan (2006) states “increasingly we have let college-level writing be defined for us by state and national legislatures, national task forces, national testing agencies, and even some activist individuals who have strong convictions and large political constituencies” (p.18), and if teachers support one another then it will be harder for some of external forces to criticize us. Teachers are the experts in our classrooms, so we should put that knowledge to work. While there is much research showing school district leaders creating sustainable and wide spread excellence, this might not be the case in some schools. For example, my particular district has had four different curriculum

leaders in as many years. Currently our curriculum leaders are a Director of Technology and Learning and a Director of Digital Curriculum. These positions show an emphasis on technology, not curriculum development. Additionally, the entire district office has been in disarray while district leaders come and go and restructure. Also, curriculum leaders come from a myriad of content areas and grade levels; they do not necessarily know best what happens in an eleventh grade American literature classroom or a fourth grade math classroom. While teachers should be collaborative with all district leaders and many are, it is often times the classroom teachers who have the best knowledge of their district's classroom practices. Furthermore, Harrison and Bryan (2008) claim that while there are different types of data conversation at all levels of a school district, it is only when the teachers implement the findings that classroom change begins. This aligns with the work of Solution Tree/PLCs at Work conferences (Dufour, Dufour, and Eaker, 2015). The leader in Professional Learning Community (PLC) work, Dufour, Dufour, and Eaker (2008) believe the most promising strategy for sustained, substantive school improvement is developing the ability of school personnel to function as professional learning communities. Dufour (2015) believes more effective central office leadership does not work, or works only minimally, unless there are strong structure and culture changes.

#### Personal Experiences with the Research Question

I am drawn to this question because I am a high school English teacher and I am interested in preparing my students for college. As a former AP Language and Composition teacher, an English 11 teacher, and an English 12 teacher, I am specifically interested in college-level writing. My interest in the teaching of writing has developed

through my career, but only recently has it become a source of conflict as we work through instruction, preparation, basic requirements, and focus.

My English department's tensions and questions. I am also fascinated by this topic because of the many conflicts in my teaching experience. The first conflict can be found in the tensions and questions within my high school English department. For example, there is cyclical blame in education: the professors blame the high school teachers who in turn blame the middle school teachers who blame the elementary teachers who blame the parents who blame the teachers. But what if we can only blame ourselves? English departments have a bad reputation for engaging in conflict and my English Department is no different. There are twenty-four teachers within our department and twenty-four viewpoints about what and how to teach kids to write. While we have lengthy discussions regarding all elements of writing instruction (from the importance of grammar, to the faults of machine scored writing tests, to genres of writing), some of our most divisive conversations regard college preparatory writing.

As an English 11 and 12 teacher, the crux of my curriculum, regardless of level, is the research paper and position paper. While there have been many iterations of the expectations for these papers, the nuts and bolts prove the most problematic. For example, how long should the paper be? Is a three-page paper enough to prepare students for college writing? Should we focus on a correctly written paper or deep content analysis? Interestingly, our undergraduate days are long past us; therefore, we no longer know or remember what writing looks like in FYC. And is the research paper still the most relevant summative assessment of a student's ability to argue or to persuade? Besides fulfilling Common Core Standards (11.7.4.4-11.7.8.8), is the research paper still



the most relevant summative assessment to assess good writing? Do FYC instructors expect a traditional research paper or the skills with which to do research and publish in a variety of media?

Interestingly, much of this conflict is adult-centered, not student-centered. For example, my colleagues don't want to assign longer or more writing because of the grading time. This is despite the fact that more writing will be valuable to our students' preparation. For example, currently the research paper is two to six pages long depending on the class level. Consequently, the senior English position paper (in Honors and regular course levels) is two to three pages. All of my department's writing assignments are a standard five -paragraph essay and we never ask them to move beyond that format. Even though this format does not align with the 4C's (communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity) and the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills (2015), we keep teaching this format. Erkens (2015) claims there is no such thing as a five-paragraph essay. If our format is not helping kids be prepared for FYC or our current century, then why are we still teaching it? Because it is easier for adults to grade. Or perhaps the adults don't know what they don't know.

The research paper required by our English Department asks students to explain and report on a Supreme Court case, and the position papers asks students to clearly take a side and develop it. In contrast, Weinstein (2001) believes "many college instructors prefer a paper that fails to answer a question definitively—but reflects real grappling with that question over any paper in which has merely taken a stand [. . . ] Most teachers at the college level want students to practice intellectual honesty and rigor, not just to 'pick a side and defend it'" (Weinstein, 2001, pp. 49-51). Interestingly, the new ACT and new

SAT writing sections require students to do just this; students have to read provided sources and develop an argument (College Board, 2014). Since this is the only expository research writing our students do, is this enough? Is it long enough? Is quantity even the important factor? Are we assigning the right genres? And since we are only assigning one large paper per class, how might we handle revisions and experimental writing? Are we doing a disservice to our students if we are not helping them be prepared for college work or is this simply a matter of differentiation between high school and college? In fact, Steinberg (2011) found fifty percent of students did not take a single high school course in which they wrote more than twenty pages over the course of the semester. I know my students are not writing more than twenty pages in my class including formal and informal writing. In a similar study, Matthews (2010) found few American high-schoolers, except those in International Baccalaureate programs, were ever asked to do a research project as long as 40,000 words (approximately 13 pages). The statistics are even bleaker in the other content areas. For example, many students claim they did not write more than a paragraph in social studies or science (Kiuahara, Hawken, and Graham, 2009). Even AP English students did not do this. This idea also touches on the importance of transference of skills across disciplines—something that high school and FYC instructors cannot do in a single course.

If lack of writing is a problem with high-achieving students, what must be occurring with the average high school student? In fact, Patterson and Duer (2006) acknowledge, “differentiation and tracking influence the kind of instruction students get—are all students getting adequately equipped with appropriate reading and writing skills?” (Patterson and Duer, 2006, p. 82). No wonder over half of all college students

take remedial classes (National Center for Public Policy in Higher Education, 2010a). If my students are not writing enough, then does my curriculum align with college writing curriculum? Do the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) prepare students for college? While there are many elements that make high school different from college, class size being one, my job is to prepare students for college work.

Relatedly, as of right now my English department is a grammar and format focused department. This means comma rules rule, and content, style, and analysis are secondary. This focus aligns with one side of the divide noted by Ziv (1984), who writes about the differing priorities of teachers as they evaluate student work: some teachers respond primarily to mechanics grammar, usage and vocabulary while others were more concerned with content and organization. Many students are able to write an “A” paper for our classes because they proofread and followed MLA formatting, yet have said nothing meaningful. Does this make good writing? Does this prepare them for college? According to many colleges, content and the analysis of that content takes precedence over modifiers and participles (Sullivan and Tinberg, 2006; Weinstein, 2001). If college writing focuses on analysis, then why do my colleagues and I spend so much time teaching MLA format and elimination of passive voice? In large part, because the teaching and assessment of these skills is easy. Parents cannot squabble over a grammar rule that Strunk and White (1999), the authors of the grammar book we use, set in stone. I can send a student to a multitude of grammar guides to find an answer. I can prove the paper has thirteen grammar issues on page three. Grammar and formatting errors are easy for students to fix and for teachers to assess, diagnose, and address. Critical thinking and analysis are not easy for students or teachers. How do I explain to a mother

her daughter didn't understand the paper topic or a dad that his son's argument is unsubstantiated?

Variable use of advanced placement credits. Another conflict that led me to this research topic is that of AP credits. Since the 1950's colleges have been allowed to grant college-level credit to high school students who score high enough on a standardized test. Generally, passing this standardized test exempts students from FYC if they score a 3, 4, or 5. This exemption allows students to earn college credit, and they are not required to take the college course equivalent. However, this system of granting college-credit is changing. Today many colleges are instead choosing to advance students (hence the Advanced Placement level) to the next level. For example, at a local university, first year students who earned a passing score on the AP English test still take the required college writing class, but they are eligible to take an advanced level of the course. Interestingly, while some Minnesota colleges may follow this system, it is not true for all of the Minnesota colleges and universities. This scenario can also be found at many highly selective universities. Many universities consider the AP English test to be an assessment and no longer grant credit towards graduation. If they do grant credit it is often an elective or general credit that can allow students to move ahead of the line in registration, but not fulfill graduation requirements. Additionally, the college's own course scope and sequence might have something to do with AP credits. At some schools, FYC is a two-course sequence, but it is not at others (Hamline University, for example). This sequence is outlined according to the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA) outcomes. This multi-course sequence allows students' writing ability to diversify, not just improve (CWPA, 2014). While I have a myriad of theories to explain this

discrepancy in AP credits, ranging from teacher preparation and knowledge, tuition money, job retention, brand management, and political agendas, I wonder to what extent the curriculum affects the decision to offer FYC as a multi-course sequence? Regardless, the many different scenarios for the use of AP credits create complexity in preparing high school students for the college-level writing expectations that lie ahead.

It is also interesting to note that AP students may not be able to earn AP credit from the college of their choice, which is one of the tenets and selling points for AP classes (College Board). Approximately 80% of our students earn a three, four, or five as their score on the AP test, which is considered passing and worthy of college credit. Yet more and more of my students are not earning college credit, despite their passing scores. According to Adams (2013), Dartmouth considers AP tests to be an assessment tool and they no longer qualify as credit granted towards graduation. This is a recent policy change, and I wonder why? In order to teach AP I need to have a Master's degree, undergo training, and work from an approved (audited) syllabus. The tests and class framework were designed by college professors and are graded mostly by college professors. The tests are sold to students at \$89 per test as a way to save college tuition, yet Dartmouth's policy is "rooted in our faculty's belief that high school AP exam scores are not a substitute for a Dartmouth undergraduate class" (Pope and Rubing, 2013). Why the discrepancy?

While I know my literary knowledge is nowhere near a Dartmouth professor's, full university professors often do not teach FYC and it is left to graduate assistants and adjuncts. This is a change from the past. Most high school English teachers do not have advanced degrees in English, like their university counterparts (Mustenikova, 2006, as

cited in Sullivan and Tinberg, 2006, p. 65). While this is problematic, this has always been the case. At one time Dartmouth and others believed AP classes were equivalent to their undergraduate classes. While I'd like to believe this is an economic, advertising, or even political statement, what if my AP colleagues and I are not doing our jobs?

What if the College Board's newly established philosophy of access and equity is backfiring? Of course, a fundamental problem with AP vs. FYC is the context. For example, "how can a pre-college program teach students thoroughly about reading and writing in post-secondary settings when the two sets of context are different" (Hansen and Farris, 2010, p. xi) and of course, one cannot ignore the effect of the AP test. As Hansen and Farris (2010) believe, AP classes focus on the test prep writing—timed essays, not necessarily good writing. While I tried to improve my students' writing, most of my instruction focused on writing better for the test.

Defining the goals of college-level writing. There is a third conflict that is experienced by high school English teachers across the state. (While this might be a national issue, this research focuses only on a large metropolitan area). We do not really know what undergraduate college writing looks like and college writing curriculums/expectations vary from place to place. In fact, when working with my seniors, I frequently say they will be taking an English class in some form next year. I cannot tell them what the curriculum or writing expectations will be, only that they will be taking a writing course. Sullivan and Tinberg (2006) believe there is no consensus on what college-level writing is and that if "we cannot clearly define for ourselves what we mean by college-level writing, how can we hope to do this for our students? Being able to distinguish and articulate clearly the differences between college-level work and pre-

college work has become a vitally important skill on our campuses” (p. 6). Additionally, Harris (2006) states there is wide disagreement among composition programs and faculty about the goals to be achieved in writing programs” (p. 122). Is college writing just the writing expected in FYC or does it encompass writing in other content areas? Does college-level writing include writing for all of the undergraduate years or just the first year? Or does it simply mean, as White, E. (2006) believes, college level writing is writing done in college for a college professor for a college grade.

Additionally, Sullivan and Tinberg (2006) believe the biggest problem with defining college writing is the lack of a common definition of college writing, though the Council of Writing Program Administrators (2014) now has a statement of common goals for FYC. Writing skills vary tremendously from school to school and major to major. College itself is a vague term for community college and four year universities. As a high school English teacher, I have to prepare my students for all levels of college writing, not just English class and “different colleges in the same area have different developmental writing classes and ideas of what college writing is” (Gentile, 2006, as cited in Sullivan and Tinberg, 2006, p. 314). Sullivan and Tinberg (2006) also assert that writing is complicated because communication is complicated. In fact, most professors can’t come to a concise definition of what college writing is. If the instructors teaching FYC cannot define it, then how are the high school teachers supposed to prepare students for it? Thompson (2002) agrees because “depending on which first year writing director you ask, you’ll get a wide variety of answers” as to what college level writing is. This variability can also be attributed to the institutions and their student profiles.

Preparing high school students for many different college experiences. With the implementation of the national Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and a focus on college and career readiness, preparing students is of utmost concern. As an AP teacher I have to prepare my students for college writing because for some of them my class *is* their college writing class. Additionally, because I teach in a high-achieving school with high levels of parental pressure, I also have to prepare many students for the Ivy League and other highly selective schools. My students go to Harvard, MIT, and Stanford. They also go to small private schools and land grant institutions; however, many of my students choose to stay in Minnesota. The top Minnesota colleges for my AP students are the University of Minnesota, St. Thomas, and Saint Olaf. For my non-AP students, most attend the U of MN, Saint Thomas, and University of Minnesota-Duluth.

Problematically, all three of these diverse schools seem to handle AP credits differently in order to reflect their institution's curriculum and student profile. The University of Minnesota may exempt students with a three on the AP test, but St. Thomas and Saint Olaf may only accept fours and fives. While my students can take AP Language and AP literature, they are only given credit for one of them and at this time AP Language aligns more closely with the College Curriculum (College Board). The other Minnesota State College and University (MNSCU) and Minnesota Intercollegiate and Athletic Conference (MIAC) schools handle AP credits differently and there doesn't seem to be any standard. How is it that Minnesota high school alum matriculating to a Minnesota university can be met with such different standards? How can I as a teacher prepare my students for college writing success? Does my AP class meet the writing needs of students at the



University of Minnesota and others? If some colleges say the curriculums and expectations are acceptable, then why do others say the opposite?

The teaching of reading and writing is riddled with conflict. High school English teachers are pitted against policy makers, parents, and future professors. We are met with challenges to meet the needs of all students, to raise test scores, to ensure college ready writing, and to make our classrooms engaging. We are tasked with balancing national tests such as the ACT and the AP tests with the CCSS and the expectations of the community. Additionally, we are in conflict with ourselves as we construct rubrics and assignments. Hopefully as high school and college writing instructors work together to vertically align our curriculum, our students will find success.

#### Description of Theoretical Foundations

To guide my research, I will be using the Communities of Practice (COP) Theory (Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder, 2002). A community of practice is “formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor” (Wenger, 2013). Additionally, communities of practice are “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger, 2013). This theory applies to my research questions because we are all writing instructors who want to help our students be successful writers. Communities of practice is also a viable theory for my research because “COP can connect local pockets of expertise and isolated professionals, diagnose and address recurring business problems whose root causes cross team boundaries, analyze knowledge-related sources of uneven performance across units performing similar tasks, work to bring everyone up to the highest standard, and coordinate unconnected activities addressing a similar

knowledge domain” (Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder, 2002, p.14). The communities of practice theory connects to my research question of *how do the curriculums, expectations, and experiences of high school writing courses align with that of first year composition courses* because it will connect the local high school writing teachers to the local first year composition instructors. As a group of professionals, we share the passion and the focus to help our students become successful writers who are ready for the next step.

To further guide my research I will also be engaging in what Flower (1994) describes as Situated Theory. Situated Theory is made up of cognition, reflection, and grounded theory—concepts used to describe acts of knowledge making by students, teachers, and researchers. This theory describes a “theory maker who links reflection and situation” (Flower, 1994, p. 7). Some additional features of Situated Theory are construction and informed prediction. Construction is “a complex and elaborated scenario, a series of ‘if-then images, a network of expectations about what students in this class will bring, and predictions about what might be produced by alternative moves on the part of teacher or student” (p. 8). Informed prediction is grounded in research and observation. It takes a teacher’s personal experience and “engages in an energetic dialogue with prior research” (p. 9). This theory helped form my seminal work regarding process writing, but it also acknowledges the informal research teachers have always done.

### Conclusion

The objective of the primary dissertation question, *how do the curriculums, expectations, and experiences of high school writing courses align with those of first year*

*composition courses*, empowers high school teachers to acknowledge, understand, and utilize the information presented in this study to better prepare students for college. It will also help college writing instructors to understand where their FYC students are coming from in terms of curriculum, experience, and culture. By understanding both perspectives, we can begin bridging the chasm of college readiness for all.

The upcoming chapters of this dissertation will further explore the transition between high school and college writing. Chapter Two will review the literature to establish the foundation for this study. Chapter Three will describe my methodology to gather the data necessary to understand the alignment of high school writing curriculum and college writing curriculum. Chapter Four will present my findings regarding writing curriculum and Chapter Five will present my thinking regarding the findings from my research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

It is no big secret that high school and college are very different. The students are not the same, the instructors are not the same, and the curricula are not the same. So why is there so much controversy surrounding college-ready writing? While other educational transition points (elementary to middle school, middle school to high school) might be different, students receive a similar overall learning experience from year to year. Yet, the transition from high school to college stymies so many young minds. Kiuahara, Hawken, and Graham (2009) state college instructors report 50 percent of high school graduates are not prepared for college work. Hoffman, Vargas, Venezia, and Miller (2007) claim the transition between high school and postsecondary education is especially problematic because these two systems lack a coherent alignment across the two levels. In fact, “college and high schools are different structurally and culturally. They think differently. High schools focus primarily on transmission of content and colleges on utilizing content as a means to stimulate ways of thinking and knowing” (Hoffman, et al., 2007, p. 97). Additionally, “a lot of first year classes cover the same content area as high school, but go faster. For some college students, their struggles may not be a problem with content, but with their ability to keep up with the pace” (Hoffman et al., 2007, p. 100). This might also show that the problem is not with writing instruction or ability but with critical thinking and reading. In fact, some professors

believe that students' writing abilities slide back as they grapple with new content and context (Deffenbacher, 2015).

The transition points in K-12 (elementary school to middle school to high school) align, though much work is needed on this alignment, so why not at the grade 12-college handoff? If the K-12 schools are trying to align, why is this same attempt not happening at the undergraduate level? The truth is, unlike the closely aligned K-12 curriculum, college curriculum is not aligned. While some universities are aligned system-wide, there is little alignment from high school to college or from university to university, and this is the gist of the problem. High school teachers have to prepare students for community college, state colleges, local private colleges, and the Ivy League. This preparation for all colleges students will attend reflects the common belief that high schools have to be all things to all students and often times fail and lack coherence (Hoffman, et al 2007; Thompson, 2002). How can my high school teachers prepare high school students for writing instruction at so many different settings? Since there are so many students attending so many schools, might there be certain skills that translate across contexts? What are those skills? This leads to the primary research question, *how do the curriculums, expectations, and experiences of high school writing courses align with that of first year composition courses?*

The secondary research questions are how does the high school curriculum align with the first year curriculum, how do the expectations of high school and college writing align, how do the experiences and perspectives of high school teachers align, and how does the classroom culture of high school and college align? This literature review is

organized around the themes found in the secondary research questions: curriculum, expectations, and experiences.

### Writing Curriculum in High School and College

This first section will explore how the high school writing curriculum aligns with the first year college composition curriculum. It is important to understand that high school and college instructors do agree on some curriculum points: use of the writing process, well-developed arguments, strong conclusions, and analysis with evidence (Patterson & Duer, 2006). They also agree that good writing follows the assignment criteria, has organized thoughts, and is grammatically correct. But that is where the similarities end. While high school and college curriculum should be different because the contexts and students are different, they may not align. For example, a third grade English Language Arts class might be learning to write a clear paragraph; a high school class will be learning to write clear paragraphs in a longer paper. This vertical alignment can be found in the 2010 Minnesota Academic Standards for English/Language Arts (see Table 2.1: 2010 Minnesota Academic Standards for the English Language Arts).

**Table 2.1: 2010 Minnesota Academic Standards for English Language Arts**

<b>Third Grade 3.1.4.4</b> Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from nonliteral language, including figurative language such as similes.
<b>Fourth Grade 4.1.4.4</b> Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including those that allude to significant characters found in mythology.
<b>Fifth Grade 5.1.4.4</b> Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.
<b>Ninth Grade 9.4.4.4</b> Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).
<b>Eleventh Grade 11.4.4.4</b> Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific words choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language

that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare and other authors).

The standards in Table 2.1 demonstrate alignment of skills across the grade levels, but “how to teach” (e.g. the assignments and expectations) is left up to the teachers and can be very different. Many teachers know students have been writing narratives since third grade, they know what books the sixth grade teachers assign, and they know what grammar rules are covered in eighth grade. This is true not only in local districts, but also in the country as the national Common Core State Standards (CCSS) enables teachers to view the curriculum framework vertically. Unfortunately, there is not the same vertical alignment between the high school writing curriculum and the college writing curriculum. Patterson and Duer (2006) assert, “English teachers strive to teach the skills they think colleges and universities want from their students, but these teachers have no way of knowing how well their efforts match up with the expectations of instructors of first-year courses at post-secondary institutions” (p. 81).

Curriculum at all levels can be broken down into assignments, instruction, and assessments. These three elements are fluid, dynamic, and recursive, but these are the basic elements. While some school districts use an Inquiry-based approach, many other local school districts use *Understanding By Design* (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005) and their concept of Backwards Design. Backwards Design follows the formula of 1. Identify results (assessments), 2. Determine evidence (assessment, assignment), and 3. Plan learning experiences and instruction (instruction, assignment). These curriculum plans, used by many high schools, help teachers to plan their units and assessments.

Writing assignments. Some common high school assignments are literary analysis papers, summaries, reading logs, journals, and stories (fiction and non-fiction), but these

may not align with college assignments. Interestingly, “college and university coursework in English still tends to focus more on literature, literary study, and reading than on the teaching of writing” (Troia, Shankland, and Heintz, 2010, p. 260). While high school and college English courses include reading assignments, they don’t often include writing assignments. This helps to explain why many professors believe students are unable to write for college English as well as the other content areas—high school teachers do not seem to be teaching writing. Indeed, “widespread limited proficiency in writing also has been noted in post-secondary environments, with three-quarters of college faculty and employers rating students and employees writing as fair or poor” (Troia, Shankland, and Heintz, 2010, p. 3).

*Incomplete syllabi.* One way to examine the required assignments is to look at the syllabus. High school syllabi focus on discipline and procedures, not content to be learned, means of assessment, or other substantive aspects (Hoffman, Vargas, Venezia, and Miller, 2007). The syllabi for some high school courses list all of the books read and a statement regarding the major writing assignments—research paper and position paper for example. However, many syllabi do not even list the Common Core State Standards covered in the course. Hoffman, Vargas, Venezia, and Miller (2007) is right, students (and parents) in many classes will not know what they’re supposed to learn by looking at the course syllabus. In contrast, an FYC syllabus from Hamline University lists a series of learning outcomes and describes the types of writing. In comparison, the syllabi for the EdD program at Hamline University were close to twenty pages for every course. While there is obviously a difference between undergraduate and graduate programs, the EdD syllabus aligns with the school of education conceptual framework and the university



writing standards as a whole. However, a quick glance back at other high school course syllabi showed no explanation of writing expectations other than to use APA formatting.

*Five paragraph essay.* Besides a syllabus in the high school, the assignments are often a myriad of test preparation activities and worksheets. It is no wonder students arrive at college unable to read the textbook and write the papers (Schmoker, 2012). Many high school teachers also teach the same assignments year after year, namely the five-paragraph essay. Yes, this could be an example of vertical alignment as students are taught this format and repeat this format since elementary school, but it may not be the best way to prepare students for college writing (Schmoker, 2012). Sullivan and Tinberg (2006) posit that teachers keep “repeating the process of the five paragraph essay instead of moving students beyond the basics. Students should master this in late elementary school or middle school” (p. 33). For example, after years and years of writing a five-paragraph essay, my students struggle with their college application essays, which are not five-paragraph essays. Additionally, many students do not know how to write a paper that is longer than five paragraphs—they just write five really long paragraphs. However, this format is a formula and a model and many students need to follow a formula. Relatedly, many FYC instructors (and high school teachers) have adopted the text *They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing* (Graff and Birkenstein, 2014) to give students formulas/models that help them transition to the kind of intellectual moves in analysis and argumentation expected in academic contexts, such as the reading/writing reciprocity where writers think about their readers and readers think like writers.

*Formulaic writing assignments.* Mustenikova (2006) claims, “high school writing is formulaic. We have too many students and too little time for grading, so we often allow students to follow a formula to produce a product” (p. 58). It seems as if student needs are placed on the back burner to adult time management. However, as predictable and formulaic as this writing seems, it does provide us the validity and continuity of grading that parents and school boards demand. For example, some local schools are PLC (Professional Learning Community) and Common Core schools, so all assignments need to look the same and be graded the same way for each grade level. Teachers then use student data to inform their practices. A five- paragraph essay mollifies parents as it is easy to understand and it is easy to grade even though it might not be the best type of writing assignment. Because of this new trend towards standardization, high school teachers are discouraged from deviating from common assignments even if their experience and research informs the differently.

Writing instruction. While there are many facets and underlying theories regarding curriculum development and design, there are other external factors. Accrediting bodies, school boards, media, politicians, parents, and businesses all influence curriculum through course approval processes, entrance exams, and public pressure.

*Conforming and covering an approved curriculum.* Sullivan and Tinberg (2006) believe that just like high school students, high school teachers have to conform to and cover the curriculum approved by school boards because everything they do is closely monitored by standardized testing (p. 61). As Sullivan and Tinberg (2006) assert, “it is important to note that most high school English departments have their own departmental

procedures which protect and justify their actions when it comes to explaining graded papers to students' parents (p. 65). On the other hand, it is important to note that college writing curriculum is not a free-for-all. Gentile (2006) points out "the college writing course typically functions within the context of the institutional program and outcomes—as a prerequisite for other courses and as a central component of most colleges' core curriculum requirements" (p. 311). Many FYC programs, indeed, draw from common assessment tools such as VALUE Leap Rubrics (American Association of Colleges and Universities, 2009) and the controversial Collegiate Learning Assessment Exam (Council for Aid to Education, 2015), though these programs tend to be controversial among scholars of writing (Deffenbacher, 2015).

*Preparing students for college entrance exams.* While "the five paragraph essay is easy to teach, it is not good writing. Grading for grammar [and following a formula] is easy and clear" (Kittle, 2007, p. 138). In fact, Brockman (2011) agrees. He says (of an interview he conducted), "not one professor mentioned five paragraph essays or traditional high school research papers" as essential to college writing (p. 76). Yet this is the exact format found to be most useful on the ACT and SAT writing tests.

As a junior and senior teacher the ACT and SAT tests for college entrance are front and center. Both tests feature writing, and both are best answered by the formulaic and staid five-paragraph essay. In fact, the SAT writing test is so formulaic many students can simply make up all of the details and have no sense of organization and development in their submitted piece (Jaschik, 2014; Malady, 2013). Unfortunately some high schools use the SAT and ACT writing tests for assessments (Malady, 2013). This is, of course, why the SAT writing test has been revamped. While my high school teachers

can be accused of not preparing students to write for college, they are in fact preparing students for college entrance exams.

*Irrelevant extension activities.* Miller (2009) supports the belief that high school students are doing irrelevant extension activities when they should be reading and writing. She believes English classes are filled with arts and crafts activities—extensions and fun activities that suck up time students could be reading and writing (Miller, 2009). One example of an irrelevant activity, using digital media, may come from the Minnesota state standards (see Table 2.2: 2010 Minnesota Academic Standards in English Language Arts).

**Table 2.2: 2010 Minnesota Academic Standards in English Language Arts**

<p><b>Eleventh Grade 11.9.5.5</b> Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.</p>
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<p><b>Eleventh Grade 11.9.8.8</b> As an individual or in collaboration, create a multimedia work, a remix of original work and the work of others, or a piece of digital communication for a specific purpose (e.g., to connect literature to a culture or a literary period, to recast a piece of literature into a different time period or culture, to critique popular culture, to create a parody or satire)</p>
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While some may view these standards as being a different type of writing for the twenty-first century and it might even demonstrate a lack of integration of the standards, it also shows a lack of writing. Miller (2009) expresses this same sentiment when she asks teachers to examine practices and question their purpose. Yes, the assignment is accomplishing the goal of using technology and meeting the CCSS, but is it really the best assignment to help students? Because this was a common summative assessment for English 12, teachers had to assign it even though it did not help their students with their reading or writing. The teacher spent class time teaching how to use the technology, not how to develop ideas in paragraphs.

*Instructional focus on content or conventions.* Another difference in approaches to high school and college writing instruction is the focus on content and thought vs. conventions. One criticism of FYC instructors is that students lack the depth of thought and analysis required for college, the level of sophistication, eloquence, and vocabulary, as well as the ability to reflect the needs of the audience (Sullivan and Tinberg, 2006). Conversely, Collins and Williamson (1984) believe adolescents do not have the brain development to understand the needs of diverse audiences.

However, as Sullivan and Tinberg (2006) point out, “high schools cannot teach critical thinking because they are supported by the local community; colleges can” (p. 371). This means assignments have to reflect the beliefs of the local community. Most high school teachers do not have the same academic freedom as many university instructors. In fact, K-12 teachers in Kansas can now be fined and jailed for using controversial materials (Arnold, 2015). A college instructor may use controversial literature, though currently this use of controversial materials is being debated on college campuses in relation to the use of trigger warnings (Parker, 2015). Hansen and Farris (2010) acknowledge this content difference as they understand “some readings and writing topics are just not appropriate for high school and parents would ‘freak out’” (p. 181). Brockman (2011) also supports this claim. Professors value critical analyses and research-based writing, understanding an author’s argument, and evaluation of sources (p. 76). He also claims faculty valued a kind of complexity of thought that first year college students usually have not developed; tying it all together, connection and coherence” (Brockman, 2011, p. 76).

Assessment in writing. A large part of teaching in a classroom is assessing (grading) assignments. These assessments describe to a student how she is doing, to a parent how his son is doing, and to a teacher, how her students are doing (though assessments are also being used to evaluate teacher effectiveness). The grading of writing is complex because it is a set of skills, not bits of knowledge, and it also differs from assignment to assignment and instructor to instructor.

*Role of grammar in assessment.* High school and FYC assessments are rarely aligned. Sullivan and Tinberg (2006) agree with this assertion. They suggest, “Most high school English teachers think that a grammatically correct piece is what is needed for college. In fact, they also have to consider the sophistication of ideas as well” (p. 65). FYC instructors have plenty to say about this too. Sullivan and Tinberg (2006) believe “of course work that impresses a ninth grade teacher accustomed to students who cannot be bothered to use apostrophes or punctuate sentences will not necessarily electrify a college professor who reads thousands of pages of student essays each year” (p. 304). Unfortunately, high school teachers really are doing their job. Teachers are held accountable to standardized tests (AP, ACT/SAT) where the ability to write correctly trumps the ability to think deeply (Jaschik, 2014; Malady, 2013).

*Align assessment with instruction.* An important concept in education is assessing what students know and can do. This is everything from state tests to ACT/SAT, to AP tests and IB portfolios. Teachers need to be sure they are measuring what is being assessed (Office of Educational Technology, 2010). They also need to think about what is being instructed versus what is evaluated (Williams, 1998). For example, as stated earlier, the English 11 and 12 papers at my high school have grammar and citation worth

50% of a student's grade. Teachers spent a lot of time on MLA citation in English 11, but very little time on grammar skills. In English 12 teachers spend almost no time on grammar and citation skills, yet in both cases half of their grade is based on something they are not directly teaching. Not only is this grading not fair to students, but also it is not even best practices; assessment did not match instruction. In addition, the assessments they have elicit very different scores depending on the teacher. Last year the English 11 team tried to norm-reference a few papers. They had five different scores for five different teachers, and they were not even the same letter grades with a few points difference. Williams (1998) supports this claim. He believes there is little reliability in some kinds of assessments—students can get many different scores for the same writing assignment.

Though high school and FYC curriculums align in principle, the specifics of their assessments and assignments show the opposite. In order to help students as they transition from high school to college writing, teachers need to have better communication about assignments, instruction, and assessments.

### Expectations of High School and College Writing

How do the expectations of high school and college writing differ? As I work with my seniors in class and on their application essays, we talk about how “this time next year your whole life will be different.” But will it? How? Sure, they might have new friends, a new love, and be living in a new town, but how different will their classes be? How different are the expectations of high school and college?

Organizational structure. One way to think about these differences is to look at the organizational structure of papers written in high school and college. For example, Troia,

Shankland, and Heintz (2010) claims high school approaches to writing “tend to be top-down and model heavy [ . . . ] the teacher explains the features, students imitate these features, with minimal attention to the content that might fit the form or the processes through which such forms might be generated” (p. 278). This is true in some high school teaching. For example, many English teachers have students look at papers from past students, and then give them a sample thesis statement and topic sentences. They do not have to think of their own topic, thesis, or even how to paragraph appropriately. Then teachers provide the organization for them in a top down manner. When teaching MLA formatting, some local teachers have them look at the sample page, then type exactly what they see onto their own documents. They do not even have to figure out the correct formatting on their own. Of course there are still students who cannot turn in a paper that even looks correct on the page, and while it angers many a teacher, it is also part of the learning process.

Large class size. Hoffman, Vargas, Venezia, and Miller (2007) believe writing is not taught well in the high school because large class sizes limit the teacher’s ability to pay careful attention to each student’s needs. Many high school teachers in other content areas do not teach writing because it is too subjective, it takes too much time, and many believe they are not good writers themselves. This mirrors Hoffman, Vargas, Venezia, and Miller (2007) because he emphasized that 75% of students never receive writing assignments in high school history or social studies courses, yet these college level courses will require a significant amount of writing.

Resources available and faculty background. Hansen and Farris (2010) declare about college writing, “The particular shape of an FYC course will depend on the



resources available at an institution and, to a large extent, the education and inclinations of the faculty who construct the curriculum and hire and supervise the teachers” (p. 9). Colleges often do not hire first year composition teachers, they hire a Shakespearean tragedies expert or a Dickinson expert and the “tenure lines tend to go for specializations other than FYC” (Deffenbacher, 2015) and many tenured specialists do not teach FYC. Many of the instructors are specialists in literature, not writing (Gilles, in Roen, et al. 2002; and Royal, 1966). In comparison, many high schools are frequently only hiring new-to-teaching teachers because they are cheap (Shepherd, 2013; Harris, et al. 2010; Ravitch, 2014). It could seem that schools at both levels are hiring instructors for reasons other than an ability to teach writing. Royal (1966) lamented and complained about this lack of writing instruction preparation fifty years ago when he wrote “the beginning [high school] teacher, schooled only in the study of literature and literary criticism before he is turned loose upon the high school composition program, is too often unable to make the transition from the college lecture hall atmosphere to that of the secondary English classroom” (p. 45). It seems as if there was a problem with teaching writing generations ago; it is not just a problem today.

Lack of qualified writing instructors. Can the expectations of high school writing be this bad? In many cases it is. In fact Royal (1966) brings forth the criticism there is “utter chaos in high school English—lack of qualified teachers, no administration of the course, unworkable or non-existent courses of study, and no coordination within the department or with the school administration—anything goes and anyone can write” (p. 7). Fifty years later this is only partially true. The lack of qualified teachers is open for debate, as there is stringent administration of the course (by non-English administrators)

and varied coordination within the department. Perhaps one of the redeeming qualities of CCSS is the alignment of skills—teachers all teach the same writing skills and it is no longer laissez faire. That way, teachers of all backgrounds are teaching the same thing.

Hansen and Farris (2010) explain that while high school teachers are not ill trained or negligent, they are guilty of good, but wrong intentions. They claim,

“Secondary teachers often assume they are preparing students for college courses when often those teachers may be completely unaware of the content of college courses. Even when they are aware of the content of each other’s courses, secondary and post-secondary teachers may serve different masters as high school teachers usually face a mandate to prepare all of their students to pass standardized multiple choice and time essay exams whereas college teachers often have more freedom to take time in their classrooms to help students write several drafts of papers and explore the content of reading in some depth.” (p. 169)

This example shows high school teachers not only being unaware of college writing expectations, but also aiming their intentions to the wrong place. They are trying to teach their students well, but are teaching them the wrong focus. Perhaps high school teachers are, with their unawareness of college content, lacking in some qualifications to teach writing.

One cannot solely blame the low expectations on teachers, however. Gorzelsky (2009) believes because students pay for higher education they and their instructors are obligated to focus on students achieving these goals. Thompson (2002) also believes college students are held responsible for their own grades, yet at the high school level it is

the teachers who are commonly held responsible for students' grades. Additionally, high school teacher's jobs are being connected to standardized tests that have a high impact on college admissions, but no effect on students writing preparedness. At this time, this is untrue of college instructors.

Types of evaluation. High schools are judged on how well students perform on the ACT/SAT and AP tests, yet similar to all other test results, these scores can be determined more by socio-economic background than classroom learning (Ravitch, 2014). In addition, FYC instructors "observe weakness in student papers that are characteristic of unrevised first drafts—for example, unclear theses or arguments, insufficient thought about the topic, poor organization and development, and careless proofreading" (Brockman, 2011, p. 77). In fact, Brockman (2011) concurs as he posits students believe FYC is just a hoop to get through and has little connection to their major.

*Types of evaluation.* First Year Composition Programs and high school writing programs are different. First Year Composition programs tend to focus on the following programs: five paragraph form, classical rhetoric, sociopolitical, writing across the curriculum, first year orientation and professional writing and emphasize skills such as rhetorical knowledge, critical thinking, process writing, and conventions (Sullivan and Tinberg, 2006). High school tends to focus on test preparation, five paragraph essays, and "group deficiencies rather than strengths" (Sullivan and Tinberg, 2006, p. 344) and students are therefore evaluated differently.

#### Experiences and Perspectives of High School and College Teachers

This section will explore how the perspectives and experiences of high school and college writing teachers differ. As in most areas of education, the perspective of teachers

is rarely acknowledged. It seems in the student-centered world of education, at the high school and post-secondary level, children have not been left behind, but plenty of teachers have. In addition, there are reading specialists, reading intervention programs, reading enrichment programs, and debates over student choice or teacher choice books, but very few writing specialists. Additionally, Kiuahara, Hawken, and Graham (2009) posits that little information exists on teachers' use of writing practices and assessments.

Little teacher training in writing instruction. Teacher preparation programs at universities emphasize literature, not writing. Kiuahara, Hawken, and Graham (2009) reports that 71% of teachers felt they received little to know instruction in the teaching of writing and 44% continue to feel this way. At the 2014 MCTE conference, the training was on close reading, not writing. To add on to this problem, many of the well-regarded literacy coaches such as Lucy Calkins (2013, 2012, 2010, 2005, 1983), and Nancie Atwell (2015, 2014, 2007, 2002) never touch on high school and college writing. Their experience and perspectives focus primarily on the teaching of writing in the elementary and middle grades. Conversely, FYC instructors, who are well versed in *how* to write, in general receive even less training in the *teaching* of writing. Troia, Shankland, and Heintz (2010) supports this claim because “even in the teaching of college writing, instructor preparation for teaching writing is frequently a problem for graduate students and adjunct faculty” (Troia, Shankland, and Heintz, 2010, p. 260). Moreover, “despite their training in language, literature, and related studies, college-level instructors of writing have not been trained in the study of writing research and research on the teaching of writing” (Troia, Shankland, and Heintz, 2010, p. 260).

Teachers do not write themselves. K-12 teachers are not up to date in writing research because they “lack the exposure to English graduate classes and university held workshops” (Sullivan and Tinberg, 2006, p. 65). They also rarely write themselves and those who do write find very little reward for doing so (Soven, 1999). They are also generally not publishing books or conducting academic and peer reviewed research (Soven, 1999; and Sullivan and Tinberg, 2006) because as Durst (1992) elucidates, “for most elementary, secondary, and community college teachers, however, writing is not a necessary part of the job. On the contrary, the responsibilities of their jobs generally work against finding time and energy for writing. And, of course, there are few job-related rewards for being a teacher who writes (p. 262). Many secondary teachers do not have advanced content area degrees (Sullivan and Tinberg, 2006). Many teachers would love an MA in English, but the few programs in the Twin Cities area do not offer the scheduling flexibility (or price) that the Schools of Education offer. Along with this, many high school English teachers do not believe a Masters in English is necessary for what they teach and based on Goldstein (2014) an advanced content area degree only makes a difference in math. Conversely, according to the Center for Public Education (2005) the effect of advanced degrees are mixed, but content area degrees do seem to make a difference on student learning.

High school schedule. However, the differences between high school and college instructors go beyond perspectives on reading and writing. Their jobs are different. Mullen (2007) asserts that high school teachers can’t teach the way FYC instructors do because they have to teach within the confines of a high school schedule. That means K-12 schools have interruptions colleges do not: announcements, pepfests, testing

schedules, field trips, registration meetings, AP testing, state tournament games, etc. (Mullen, 2007). High school teachers also have to keep students for the allotted time in the allotted space. Because of these time constraints, “students may not be able to sustain the attention necessary for extended critical thinking and writing work, and teachers cannot encourage or intervene in process work in the same way college instructors can” (Deffenbacher, 2015). Many cannot let students go early if their work is done, let them work in small groups in another part of the building, or meet with them individually regarding their writing. It is possible to hold in class writing conferences, but these are not private and teachers will still need to plan learning activities for the other students. Because of these time and location constraints, students might lose focus or inspiration and teachers have to manage classroom behavior, not just students’ writing skills.

College schedule. Yes, college instructors have many demands placed on them, but their workdays do have more flexibility. This is upheld because Sullivan and Tinberg (2006) acknowledge, “while tenured faculty teach fewer classes, and have more time to work with students, they have other university obligations” (p 105). Additionally, Connolly and Vilaridi (1986) argue “teaching two twenty-two student courses each semester grinds away at a teaching assistant: it is more work than most people can perform with enthusiasm and still sustain interest in graduate school for more than two years” (p. 3).

Workload. Perhaps Troia, Shankland, and Heintz (2010) best summed up the perspectives and the problems of high school teachers (and adjunct instructors) when they wrote “we know a lot about how to do writing instruction well, but often the working conditions in schools are not what they should be to enable teachers to put these

strategies into place”(p. 268). Sullivan and Tinberg (2006) believe the same: “because of workload issues, it is often just not possible to give each student the individual attention they deserve, no matter how much we might want to” (p. 105). Soven (1999) concurs. She claims “with a student load of 125, a teacher who makes a single writing assignment and then spends twenty minutes on each paper has committed more than twenty hours to out of class time” (p. 112) and that’s not grading reading quizzes, digital media presentations, or character comparisons. Thirteen years ago, Lindeman (2001) found the same idea:

Teaching writing has become more difficult than it was when this book first appeared. In many places, writing classes are still too large. Many writing teachers are undervalued; especially in institutions that exploit part-time labor or that assign teachers trained in other fields to ELA classes. Today’s classrooms also present challenges for teachers who applaud, but don’t know how to reach their students of various backgrounds. And for all teachers new technologies present both problems and possibilities that we could not even have imagined. (p. xi)

Teaching grammar and punctuation. There are also diverse perspectives in the teaching of grammar, punctuation, and syntax. Hoffman, Vargas, Venezia, and Miller (2007) believes grammar skills are no longer taught in high school because “teachers eschew instruction in grammar and conventions, either because it does not interest them or it is not their strong suit in the first place” (p. 96). In addition, students often complain vehemently about grammar and it is not always engaging; therefore, a teacher might be evaluated poorly.

Standardization. The high school writing class is not just about grammar rules, but there is also a lot of variation in the high school English curriculum—differentiation, American literature, world literature, electives, remediation. While some students may get a heavy dose of writing instruction, others might not. Even the quality of thought has a different level of expectation. FYC instructors value “full engagement of the mind over presentation of final, definite solutions or answers” (Weinstein, 2001, p. 9). Moreover, high school teachers have to cover curriculum that has been approved by the school board and curriculum committees because “everything we do is closely monitored by standardized testing (Sullivan and Tinberg, 2006, p. 60). This is also true of FYC because there is so much variation in expectations among professors in the same college (Sullivan and Tinberg, 2006).

Underprepared students. Interestingly, despite the differences in perspective, one thing all English instructors have in common is that “English teachers spend more time—both qualitatively and quantitatively—with underprepared students than any other single group of college staff” (Sullivan and Tinberg, 2006, p. 8). Because of this stress, as Sullivan (2006) notes, a long-term effect of teaching underprepared students is that English professors simply become “worn down emotionally and lose the perspective that many of our colleagues share simply because they deal much less with underprepared students” (p. 13).

Communication between high school and college. Sullivan and Tinberg (2006) note the “avenues of communication between high school and college teaches of writing are not nearly as open as they should be. The effect of these two factors is widely differing sets of expectations among students, high school faculty, and college writing



teachers” (p. 140). Also, since FYC courses are taught mostly by adjunct faculties who have a myriad of teaching experiences, these instructors have different ideas of what college writing is (Sullivan and Tinberg, 2006). Sullivan and Tinberg (2006) express this thought:

Every experienced teacher who has taught in a range of secondary schools and colleges knows that any attempt to define the boundary between college and high school writing instruction or student writing, without reference to the particular schools and classes to which the definitions aptly apply, is likely to yield misleading generalizations and educationally dubious policies about student placements and academic credit. (p. 364)

Of course, avenues of communication are never paved when “too many college composition faculty berate secondary school teachers, blaming them for college students’ inability to punctuate, to cite, and to synthesize” (Thompson, 2002). Yet, many of these instructors probably don’t have a good sense for what FYC is actually like as many of them never took it—they would have tested out due to AP classes and other college placement tests; thus, “they have no idea what goes on or what ‘normal’ students are like” (Thompson, 2002, p. 77).

Writing classroom culture. How does the high school writing culture differ from the college writing culture? When students leave high school writing classrooms in June, they are not the same students who arrive in college writing classrooms that September. They grow and mature over the summer, have a chance to start over away from peers and a reputation they’ve known for twelve years, and many are choosing to be there. Because many FYC students are paying for the class, they try to take it more seriously. This

difference in culture can affect writing instruction because students tend to take college courses and instructors more seriously. Moreover, because students are generally more serious, their behavior is different. The FYC instructor does not have to manage a classroom in the same way as high school teachers, and students might feel more comfortable sharing their writing with their classmates. Each teacher helps to establish a culture with students, and high school and college classrooms have very different cultures

Tracking. One way classroom culture is determined in high school is through tracking. While this practice is controversial, it is common. Patterson and Duer (2006) claim differentiation and tracking influence the kind of instruction students get—are all students being adequately equipped with appropriate reading and writing skills? Kittle (2006) reflects this same belief because he notes, “the circumstances and contexts of high school and college writing classes are very different and those circumstances and contexts strongly impact pedagogy” (p. 140). High school writing teachers teach many levels of classes and teach them differently. Teachers of advanced level students also tend to go more deeply into the literature because students are more willing to do so. Sometimes this has little to do with ability, but willingness. Yet this willingness also has to do with confidence. Struggling writers can often express themselves more clearly in other manners (discussion, art, film, speech), or in their native language, than in writing (Deffenbacher, 2015).

Patterson and Duer (2006) also present the idea that students in higher track classes are more likely to be in classes that emphasize literature study, analytical writing, and formal writing than students in lower tracks. Sullivan and Tinberg (2006) believe the same, adding, “the ability to discuss and evaluate abstract ideas is, for me, the single most

important variable in considering whether a student is capable of doing college-level work” (p. 16). They also believe that students must be able and willing to take responsibility for engaging with the course materials and discussions (Sullivan and Tinberg, 2006). High school classes are also filled with adolescents and universities are filled with adults. Any teacher knows the fall semester students are different than the spring students, and students are different in freshman year than junior year.

The same holds true for high school to college. Universities do not have tracking in the same way; if students were admitted to the university then ideally, but not always, they all had a minimal level of competency. Some schools, especially state schools and small private schools, have “‘conditional admits’—students who do not meet baseline expectations in an area or two, but are seen as having broader potential” (Deffenbacher, 2015). This type of admission shows some students come in without the requisite skills, but are talented in other areas; this might distort the perspective of FYC instructors (and perhaps the statistics regarding how many students enroll in non-credit bearing courses). There are some additional problems with the number of students taking remedial courses. For example, Hawkins, Nehill, and Palazzolo (2015) state 25% of Minnesota students take remedial classes in math and writing when they matriculate at Minnesota colleges. However, many of these students enroll in community college, not four-year universities. For the purpose of this dissertation, I will be focusing on those students who enroll in credit-bearing classes.

Relatedly, colleges generally choose their students (there are a few open-enrollment exceptions), and public high schools (non-charters), do not choose their students. Additionally, high school students have to be there; university students do not

have to be there. And of course high school students are not paying to be there while university students are paying to be there—they have more skin in the game and the stakes are higher. Sullivan and Tinberg (2006) also believe that college classrooms are different because “college students are serious and responsible and try hard to keep their scholarships and justify expenses” (p. 65).

Different department focus. The classroom culture of high school and college is also different because the departments have a different focus. Troia, Shankland, and Heintz (2010) believes “in departments of English, faculty are relatively unconcerned with the issues that consume faculty in K-12 English education: the personal growth of students, a democratic view of language and expertise, attention to learning processes, the personal and idiosyncratic construction of meaning” (p. 281), though the culture of Council on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) may disagree with Troia’s assertion. Hoffman, Vargas, Venezia, Miller (2007) mirror Troia’s claim because they believe “college and high schools are different structurally and culturally. They think differently. High schools focus primarily on transmission of content and colleges on utilizing content as a means to stimulate ways of thinking and knowing” (p. 97). FYC classes also have the added role of teaching students to write for the particular university’s system. As Sullivan and Tinberg (2006) believe “its reading and writing curriculum is designed, at least in part, to prepare students for the type of work necessary for most other college courses they take” (p. 312). Hansen and Farris (2010) also acknowledge that “FYC should introduce students to the rhetorical practices of the academy—the intellectual and discursive moves that are common to all disciplines—moves that students need to know how to make if they are to succeed in college” (p. 10).

Royal (1966) believes “the purpose of the high school composition program, then, is clear: to provide a training ground where young minds will be able to assimilate the essential writing skills and students will receive as much practice as possible preparing to enter a vocation or institute of higher education” (p. xi). Yet, Hjortshoj (2009) also acknowledges “there is no guarantee that a student who does well in high school English will do well in college composition” (p. 1). The expectations vary greatly between colleges and professors in the same college, though with a greater emphasis on assessment, outcomes, and standards, these differences seem to be lessening (Deffenbacher, 2015).

Influences on class experience. Classroom culture also lays with the person at the front of the room—the teacher. The teacher’s influence can also explain attitudes towards writing. While some teachers believe students don’t care about writing, this lack of care regarding writing by students (Sullivan and Tinberg, 2006) is seen in the negative attitudes many in academia have about FYC. Sullivan and Tinberg (2006) note these negative attitudes are “clearly reflected in who ends up teaching it. In the four-year colleges and universities, some full-time tenured faculty prefer and usually get specialized courses they like and only teach the FYC classes if they have to. Teaching FYC writing is seen as a dreary and undesirable task that many established faculty avoid” (p. 105). Hansen and Farris (2010) make a similar claim: “writing, as an independent course of study, has a minimal and marginal presence in the post-secondary curriculum—taught by grad students and adjuncts with little teaching experience” (p. xxi). Elbow (2000) agrees. He claims:

It is fairly common for English departments to ‘live off’ writing teachers—paying them poorly, denying them the possibility of tenure, much better pay, and a lighter teaching load to teachers of reading and literature. People who teach writing are apt to be TA’s or non-tenure track lecturers or adjunct part-timers who must piece together jobs at two or three institutions and are often paid less than \$1000 per course—with no benefits. (p. 287).

Yet it is not different at the high school level. Many students, especially AP students, have great connections and experiences with their high school teachers, but they are frustrated with their preparation for college-level composition. Perhaps the “arts and crafts-ification” of English is reflected in this thought. Moreover, much of the misalignment of classroom culture comes from prejudices of high school and college instructors even though they should all be in it together. Hjortshoj (2009) claims “professors often imagine mythical high schools as the logical extensions of everything students should have learned in preparation for college work—‘don’t they teach that in high school?’” (p. 9).

Society can also be blamed for the culture clash between high school and college and the negative perception of teachers. Many believe the schools are failing (Ravitch, 2014) and students do not know as much as students in previous generations did and this lack of knowledge is perceived to be due to teachers. Perkins (2007) believes we are not reading as much as a society, and consequently, “many kindergarten through grade twelve teachers have accepted the decline of reading and so do not ask for as much reading from their students as was typically asked of the teachers themselves when they

were in school” (Perkins, 2007, p. 233). This viewpoint is also mirrored in Gold (2008) who ascertains that part of the problem with writing ability is the fact that many students attending four- year universities today would not have done so years ago. He also believes the focus on writing ability is couched in middle class fears of economic safety and of academics. MacArthur, Graham, and Fitzgerald (2006) concur as they believe that motivation to write is a problem at all levels because there is not immediate feedback, it is solitary, and requires persistence other fields do not. However, November (2015) and Jacobs (2010) believe that as teachers and students move towards on-line writing, asynchronous writing, and other twenty-first century skills, students will be more motivated to write as the audience becomes real. They also believe people struggle with revising because they actually only do proofreading; revising is hard work.

### Conclusion

In this chapter, three main elements of the teaching of writing were presented—writing curriculum, expectations of high school and college writing, and experiences in high school and writing classrooms. Knowing how these three areas connect will be useful when studying my methodology. Understanding the high school and college level of writing instruction gives important contextual information. By understanding the writing curriculum at the high school or college level, teachers can better prepare their students for college writing success. In the next chapter, the methodology for conducting the research will be explained and discussed.

## CHAPTER 3

### Methodology

#### Introduction

The question, *How do the curriculums, expectations, and experiences of high school writing courses align with that of first year college composition courses* can be answered through qualitative research. This study attempts to bridge the gap between high school writing curriculum and college writing curriculum. The nature of this study is qualitative in its research method and reporting method, highlighting the multiple experiences of those involved in the writing process and community: high school teachers, FYC instructors, and a writing center director. Document analysis and interviews were the primary research methods. Document analysis allowed me to understand what is supposed to happen in both the high school and college writing classrooms—the assignments, the assessments, and the grading practices. The documents analyzed included class documents such as assignments, rubrics, and syllabi; however, this analysis also included the curriculum frameworks reflective of the school district or university, the departments, and the grade/level of the class. Finally, interviews of two high school writing teachers, two college writing professors, and one writing center director were used to “fill in the blanks” of pedagogy, practice, and performance. By using two qualitative research data methods and the perspectives of three of three demographics of participants, I was able to triangulate my findings, thus creating reliability and validity. These methods also allowed for a holistic representation of what



occurs in the writing classroom. The use of these methods fits the socio-cultural context and informative purposes of this dissertation research.

In this chapter, I outline the research framework for the qualitative methods used in this study and the qualitative paradigm will be explained. The role of the qualitative researcher is discussed. The setting and participants will be discussed in the following section providing context for the work. In the subsequent section, my data collection techniques will be described. I will then describe my process for data analysis. Last, a critique and evaluation of the methodology are discussed, followed by a conclusion.

Kvale and Brinkman (2009) describe the purpose of qualitative research as such: “to understand the world from the subjects’ point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, and to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations” (p. 1).

Bogdan and Biklen (2003) also describe the qualitative researcher’s goal as better understanding human behavior and experience. By using two research methods and three different types of participants, I will be able to better understand what happens in a high school and college writing classroom. The information gleaned from this study will support writing teachers at all levels as they work to bridge the gap between high school and college writing instruction. This study may also provide information to support students as they transition between these two different learning environments.

#### Qualitative Research Framework

Qualitative research is described by McMillan and Schumacher (2010) as an in-depth study using face-to-face or observation techniques to collect data from people in their natural setting. Additionally, Creswell (2007) provides the following definition:

Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a narrative setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes voices of participants, the reflectivity of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem. (p. 37)

Additionally, qualitative research is intended to approach the world out there and to understand, describe, and sometimes explain social phenomena from the inside in a number of different ways: by analyzing the experiences of groups, by analyzing interactions and communications in the making, and by analyzing documents (Rapley, 2007). Marshall and Rossman (2006) claim qualitative research takes qualitative researchers into natural settings rather than laboratories. Because my research question, *how do the curriculums, expectations, and experiences of high school writing courses align with that of first year college composition courses*, studies the perspectives of high school and college writing instructors, the qualitative design framework seems to fit best. I am looking at the experience, or the phenomenon, of teachers teaching writing as students transition to college writing. I am seeking to understand the writing classrooms at both levels and to analyze the artifacts and experiences of teaching and learning.

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) outline critical elements of qualitative research. Qualitative research is about the perceived experiences of participants in a

natural setting, is sensitive to context, uses narrative description, asks for participant perspectives, and utilizes an inductive data analysis and emergent design. It also takes into account the “complexity of understanding and explanation” (p. 321). In addition, Ely (1991) reiterates the traits above, but stresses the context and immersion of the researcher in the setting. I researched instructors in their natural setting: their classrooms and offices. I also used their natural materials: syllabi, assignments, rubrics, and other artifacts that might provide the framework for what is taught. Further, it is important to note “historically, qualitative researchers cited two major purposes of a study: to describe and explore and to describe and explain” (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010, p. 324). I described the curriculum of two high school classrooms, two First Year Composition (FYC) classrooms, and a writing center director, and then explaining the similarities. Because I wanted to understand the phenomena of teaching students to write at two closely related levels, the last two years of high school English and the first year of college writing, I engaged in what McMillan and Schumacher (2010) describe as “descriptive explanatory” (p. 324). The descriptive explanatory purpose is to “describe and explain the patterns related to the phenomena, and to identify the relationships influencing the phenomena” (p. 324). Crabtree and Miller (1992) also describe this as a hermeneutical paradigm: participants give meaning to their actions. This research methodology allowed me to contribute to the practice of both high school writing pedagogy and college writing pedagogy.

#### Qualitative Researcher

The work of a qualitative researcher is interpretive, narrative, theoretical, political, and methodological (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). The researcher is responsible

for analyzing and interpreting data through their own perspective and experience and often generates or constructs knowledge, hypotheses, and grounded theory from data collected during field work (Johnson and Christenson, 2012). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) believe “in the field, those collecting data develop a research role, which establishes the position of the investigator and his or her relationship with others in the situation” (p. 348). Due to the nature of my research, my role was that of a complete insider; that is, because I am currently teaching in the high school writing classroom I have “an established role in the setting in which data are collected, engaging in genuine and natural participation” (p. 348). Ely (1991) posits this familiarity is a boon, not a bane because “familiarity with the subject at hand—the subculture, jargon, the unwritten codes of behavior—may enable a researcher to delve deeply into the research without having to do all of the preliminary work” (p. 124). While being a participant in the high school writing classroom, one limitation is that I do not have experience or knowledge of the FYC classroom. Similarly, Creswell (2007) adds that the researcher “keeps a focus on learning the meaning that the participants hold about the problem or issue, not the meaning that the researchers bring to the research or that writers express in the literature” (p. 185). As a complete observer, and practitioner, I wanted to know what teachers believe the curriculum problems are, not what external sources believe the problems are (i.e. NCTE, College Board, journalists, politicians). Of course, I engaged in what Creswell (2007) describes as reflexivity: the researcher reflects about how their role in the study and their personal background, culture, and experiences hold potential for shaping their interpretations (p. 186). By acknowledging and understanding my role in

the research, I am aware of bias, but I am also able to understand the findings as a practitioner.

Corbin and Strauss (2008) describe what characteristics qualitative researchers have. They have curiosity, creativity, imagination, and the ability to live with ambiguity. They also are more likely to have an appreciation for the complexities of humans and human interactions. Qualitative researchers are part social scientist and part artist. This work blends disciplines to construct meaning and knowledge.

### Phenomenology

Phenomenology falls under the qualitative interpretive research design. This study is phenomenological because I am studying the phenomenon of teaching students to write in a high school and college classroom. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) describe phenomenology as “research that describes the meaning or essence of a lived experience” (p. 489). Willis (2007) describes phenomenology as “the study of people’s perception of the world” (p.107). Additionally, they believe the researcher “brackets, or puts aside, all prejudgments and collects data on how individuals make sense of a particular experience or situation” (p. 24) in order to increase the “understanding of a lived experience” (p. 338). Creswell (2007) describes it as such: “phenomenological research is a design of inquiry coming from a philosophy and psychology in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by the participants (p. 14).

As a current high school teacher, my students come back to tell me they are prepared for college writing (and often more prepared than other students). Yet, I also hear the complaints of so many college instructors and employers that students are

coming to them unprepared to write. I want to help my students, as so many teachers do, be ready for college writing. I want to be a better writing teacher for them. The expectations are different, and if writing is a process, then moving to a college writing classroom is part of that process. Students should not feel entirely successful in a college writing classroom—they need to grow and learn, but they should not feel as if they do not have a base from which to start. Answering my research question, *how do the curriculums, expectations, and experiences of high school writing courses align with that of first year college composition courses*, through phenomenological research allows me to see what is working and what is not working from multiple perspectives: high school teachers and college instructors. It also allows me to make meaning of the experience and share this information with colleagues at all teaching levels.

Because phenomenology describes a lived experience, I triangulated three perspectives: high school writing teachers, college writing instructors, and a writing center director. I also analyzed teaching documents and interview transcripts. These methods allowed me to closely see how the materials of teaching translate into the class activities and environment. I also conducted the interviews to receive a more in-depth perspective on the lived experience of teaching writing from Minnesota high school and college teachers.

### Case Study

This research project, besides being phenomenological, is also a case study. Yin (2009) states that case study helps explain how or why a phenomenon occurs. In addition, “in case studies, the richness of the phenomenon and the extensiveness of the real life context require case study investigators to cope with a technically distinctive

situation” (Yin, 2009, p. 2). Merriam (1988) also believes case study is “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit” (p. 8). This research project also fits the description of case study because, as Merriam (1988) states, “social scientists and practitioners are engaged in case exploration, sometimes known as casework or case history, in that they observed as a doctor does a patient or a reporter an event” (p. 8). As a writing teacher, I researched other writing teachers and I reported on the event of teaching students to write. I studied two cases with five examples, which is an example of a multiple case design (Yin, 2009) or collective case study (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010). I researched two high school writing instructors, two university writing instructors, and one university writing center director. These cases are representative or typical cases (Yin, 2009) and are by no means extensive. Barone (2011) defines case study research as a representative case that showcases a typical situation, and this is true of the instructors and institutions chosen.

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) support these definitions as they cite “case study is an in-depth analysis for a single entity” (p. 344) and is an in-depth exploration of a bounded system. A bounded system is a particular activity, event, process, or individuals based on extensive data collection. The bounded system I studied is the phenomenon of teaching writing and the five individual writing teachers.

Merriam (1988) further defines four additional characteristics of case study research. She believes case study research is particularistic (centered on a particular action, program, event, or phenomenon, or person), descriptive (the researcher gathers rich description of the object of study), heuristic (the study enriches a reader’s understanding), and inductive (the data drive the understanding that emerge from the

study. Likewise, Stake (2000) believes there are three purposes for case study research. The first purpose is that case studies are intrinsic, that is the researcher is seeking a better understanding of the case because it is interesting to the researcher. The second purpose is that case study research is instrumental because the researcher is looking for insight into an issue. The final purpose of case study research is to study a phenomenon, group, composition, or event. These purposes also align to the work of Barone (2011). He posits, “when a researcher assumes a critical stance in case study, he or she can use what is discovered during research study to improve the conditions of learning and therefore change the environment that is being investigated while the study is occurring” (p. 22).

### Setting and Participants

I studied two suburban high school writing teachers, two urban university first year writing instructors, and one writing center director. One high school writing instructor was another teacher in my high school and the other was a colleague who taught for fifteen years at a prestigious Catholic school in a nearby suburb and is now teaching at an alternative school, also in a suburban setting. I chose a personal colleague because I want to be able to apply the findings of this dissertation to my own teaching and to my own department. I am hoping the findings of this research will help to temper our departmental conflicts. I chose the second teacher because of his diverse teaching experience—at a private suburban school and at a suburban ALC. My school is a high-achieving suburban public high school with about 3,000 students. The private suburban school enrolls 600 students and the ALC enrolls fewer than 100. I chose two FYC professors who are adjuncts at two private urban colleges, and a writing center instructor at a private urban college and was a professional contact. I chose these instructors from



the E12 writing center list serve, of which I am a member and the writing center director works at a university of which I am affiliated. In addition, these local schools enroll many Minnesota public school students and it is beneficial to know that the expectations are at both levels. I was not able connect with a public university writing instructor because of location, student demographic, and willingness. This lack of public university instruction is a detriment to my research, but the two college instructors I worked with taught at the large public university as well as the smaller state universities. Finally, I studied a university writing center director/instructor. This was an interesting perspective because a writing center instructor is able to work with a myriad of students and instructors. All of these teachers and locations are considered to be typical case studies (Yin, 2009). Furthermore, these five instructors uphold typical case sampling (Johnson and Christenson, 2012) because they are believed to be average cases, and stratified purposeful sampling (Hatch, 2002) because they are selected to represent particular subgroups of interest.

### Methodology and Data Collection

As this study is qualitative, Johnson and Christenson (2012) elucidate that qualitative research “collects qualitative data such as interviews, observations, field notes, and open ended questions” (p. 34). Therefore, I engaged in document analysis and interviews.

Document analysis. As a teacher, I am very much aware of the endless drawers and folders (electronic and paper) that hold a teacher’s life: scraps of papers with ideas, sample student work, rubrics from previous semesters, and iterations of assignments. I am also aware of “The Binder” present in all school/department offices that lays out the

curriculum. At my particular school it is the English Language Arts (ELA) Vertical Alignment that outlines the key Common Core Standards and the summative assessments used to show mastery on those standards. In theory, I know what every ELA teacher in the district is teaching and when, and I know what my high school colleagues are teaching. Unfortunately, I know neither the curriculum of other schools nor the curriculum of the local colleges. And perhaps this is part of the problem delineated in my research question, how can we best prepare students for the next level of writing when the next level of writing is unclear?

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) describe artifact collection as a “non-interactive strategy for obtaining qualitative data” (p. 360). They describe artifacts as personal documents, official documents, and objects. Additionally, Bogdan and Biklen (2003) describe document analysis as qualitative content analysis and might be made up of personal documents (those produced by individuals for private purposes and limited use) as well as official documents (produced by organizational employees for record-keeping and dissemination purposes such as memos, newsletters, files, and yearbooks). Some examples of personal documents in a teacher’s life might be: teaching notes, notes and annotations about what to do differently, examples of their own writing they show to students, assignment handouts, syllabi, and rubrics for that particular writing assignment. It might also reflect the in-class or daily work—the worksheets on developing a thesis statement, the lesson plan about documentation, or the questions to ask during peer revising. Official documents may include student grades, an all-department or all-school rubric, sample essays for norming purposes, and the curriculum framework. All of my

artifacts are hard copies of teaching documents and no student work was shared with me or analyzed by me.

Artifact collection and document analysis provided me with valuable information because as Marshall and Rossman (2006) state, qualitative “researchers supplement participant observation and interviewing with gathering and analyzing documents produced in the course of everyday events or constructed for the events at hand” (p. 107). One strength of document analysis is it is an unobtrusive method, “rich in portraying the values and beliefs of participants in the setting” (p.107). Conversely, a weakness is that analysis of the content entails interpretation by the researcher and is therefore biased (p. 109). Marshall and Rossman (2006) believe the goal is to demonstrate that the inquiry was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the subject was appropriately identified and described (p. 201).

Additionally, the University of Texas-Austin (2013) describes document analysis as the systematic examination of program documents such as mission statements, training materials, policy and procedure manuals, and client instructions. It believes document analysis focuses on critical examination, not description, and is used to gain insight into programs, examine trends and consistency in documents, and to provide a preliminary study for an interview, survey, or observation, though some limitations might be incomplete or missing data, being restricted to what already exists, and does not evaluate current needs.

Likewise White and Marsh (2006) refer to document analysis as content analysis. They believe content analysis is a flexible research method for analyzing texts and describing and interpreting the written artifacts of society. Babbie (2004) also describes

content analysis as a “study of recorded human connections such as books, websites, paintings, and laws” (p. 29). And Hoffman, Wilson, Martinez, and Sailors (2011) believe content analysis involves the inspection of “patterns in written texts, often drawing on combinations of inductive, deductive, and adductive analytical techniques” (p. 29). He also believes content analysis, as a research tool “in the context of curriculum materials, typically focuses on the presence of certain words or certain concepts within the texts or sets of text” (p. 31).

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), the collection and analysis of artifacts requires the use of these five strategies: location of artifacts, identification of artifacts, analysis of artifacts, criticism of artifacts, and the interpretation of artifact meaning. This also reflects what the U.S. National Archives presents regarding Written Document Analysis (See Appendix A: U.S. National Archives Written Document Analysis).

As part of my document analysis and artifact collection I collected course syllabi, assignments, and rubrics, from each of the five writing instructors (two high school teachers, two college instructors, one writing center instructor). These authentic samples provided me with a tangible record of what is planned and taught in writing classrooms. They also allowed me to see if high school assignments and grading practices align, and are therefore beneficial, to preparing students for first year composition.

Once I collected the artifacts from each teacher, I labeled and coded each item. Each item was coded to match the teacher’s name, location, and grade/course level. Documents were printed/copied onto an assigned color of paper and are being stored in a secure file at my residence. I also labeled each item as to what it is (i.e. rubric, writing

sample, mini-lesson). I looked for alignment among each teacher's documents (i.e. does the rubric assess what the assignment is asking for?) and I looked for and coded similarities between like-courses. For example, where do the two high school writing teachers' materials align and do the two FYC instructors' align? When documents from all five instructors were collected, I also looked for and coded similarities between the two levels.

I used a modified document analysis worksheet from the National Archives (See Appendix A: National Archives Written Document Analysis and Appendix B: Modified Written Document Analysis for Writing Curriculum). This modified form was filled out by hand and attached to the particular item(s). I paid close attention to: 1) Type of document, 6a) Name three things the author said that you think are important, and 6d) List two things the document tells you about writing curriculum (See Appendix A: US National Archives Written Document Analysis). Focusing on these three questions allowed me to gather specific information related to curriculum, expectations, and experiences. Each item was coded as curriculum (C), expectations (E), and experiences (e). These three questions were also compared to the interview notes and transcripts from each teacher. I looked for themes, commonalities, and alignment. I compared the worksheets between the two teachers at each grade/course level, and then to all five instructors. I looked for alignments, or the absence of alignment, among all five writing instructors. Documents were analyzed within twenty-four hours of receiving them. Documents are being held for the duration of the research and writing process. No findings included in the publication of this dissertation will include any identifying marks in order to protect the anonymity of the instructors and the schools.

Interviews. Kvale and Brinkman (2009) believe “qualitative research interviews attempt to understand the world from the subjects’ points of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, and to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations” (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009, p. 1). They believe research interviews are based on conversations of daily life and are a professional conversation. They also posit that the purpose of qualitative research interviews is to understand the themes of the lived daily world from the participants’ own perspectives. Additionally, Hatch (2002) defines interviewing as “uncovering the meaning of structures that participants use to organize their experiences and make sense of their world” (p. 73). Accordingly, there are five outcomes of interviews: here and now construction—participant explanations of events, activities, feelings, motivations, and concerns; reconstruction—explanation of past events and experiences; projection—explanations of anticipated experiences; and triangulation—verification or extension of information developed by the researchers (Hatch, 2002). With that, the central strength of interviewing is that it provides a means for doing what is very difficult or impossible to do any other way—finding out what is in and on someone else’s mind (Hatch, 2002)

As qualitative research, it is important to understand the purpose of interviewing. Kvale and Brinkman (2009) believe the purpose is as thus:

The qualitative interview seeks qualitative knowledge as expressed in normal language; it does not aim at quantification. The interview aims at nuanced accounts of different aspects of the interviewee’s life world; it works with words and not with numbers. The precision in the description

and stringency in meaning interpretation in qualitative interviews correspond to exactness in quantitative measurements (p. 30)

To gain the best data for my research, I used descriptive interviewing, that is I encouraged the subjects to precisely describe what they experience and feel and act as they teach their students. The primary task is why teachers teach what they do and how they experience it. Warren and Karner (2005) concur as they describe the interview as being “focused on the meanings that life experiences hold for the individuals being interviewed” (p. 115). Additionally, I conducted semi-structured, in-depth, formal interviews. This means I as the researcher was in charge of leading the interview, there was a set time, and it was recorded. I interviewed the five identified instructors (two high school, two FYC, one writing center) at a location of their choosing, so they were comfortable.

The interview was at a private and comfortable location as determined by the participants. This was an office, a classroom, and a coffee house, for example. These settings allowed for minimal distractions and auditory feedback while tape recording. These locations were also an extension of the teacher’s natural setting—where they do their best work.

I used the same interview questions in the same order (See Appendix C: Interview Questions) for each interviewee, but some additional questions were asked depending on the course of the dialogue. The questions asked the teachers to reflect on their teaching lives personally and professionally. Additionally, they are organized around the themes of my research question: curriculum, expectations, and experiences.

I electronically recorded the interviews and hand-wrote notes on the interview form as the teacher spoke. I hand wrote as this is my preferred learning style and the interview conversations were transcribed. The interview form was labeled and coded to match the documents and observation forms. Within one week, I reviewed and coded the interview notes and transcripts. I coded for information in the categories of curriculum, expectations, and experiences. I also looked for deeper information than what was gleaned from the document analysis. In a sense, I looked for the interview to “fill in the blanks” of the information from the documents. This interview also added a personal element to the professional documents and classroom persona. I compared the documents and the interviews. The recordings are being held in my home for the duration of the dissertation writing process. Upon completion of the dissertation process and requirements, they will be destroyed. In addition, I am keeping the interview forms in a file with the other materials. The transcripts are being held in my residence and will be destroyed upon completion of the dissertation process and requirements. They may be included in this dissertation.

#### Ethical Considerations

To meet the requirements of the Human Subjects Review Board (HSR) at Hamline University, I required all of my participants to sign a consent form (See Appendix D: Consent Form). This consent form explained the nature of my study, my methodology, and the ethical matters. All participation was voluntary and pseudonyms were used to protect the anonymity of the teachers and their schools.



## Conclusion

Telling a teacher's story through class documents and interviews is a powerful way to understand the phenomenon of teaching writing to high school and college students. By understanding how and what a teacher teaches, we can shape a K-16 writing curriculum, not just a K-12 writing curriculum. This will help our students be academically successful in college and help connect the work of high school teachers and FYC instructors.

The methods bring together the perspectives of high school teacher, FYC instructors, and writing center directors. The research ties writing curriculum to practice, connects the classroom work of high school teachers and college instructors, and links college-readiness tools to writing skills. The methods used will help writing teachers understand how their work vertically aligns and will help establish curriculum.

In the next chapter, the interview process, data analysis, and results will be discussed and reported. Research findings will be reported to show the perspectives of high school and college writing instructors.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Results

#### **Introduction**

As a teacher researcher, I am in a pivotal role to bring the voices of teachers to light. Being a junior and senior English teacher, and a former AP teacher, positions me as a link between K-12 education and higher education. My students and I work our way through the approved district and state curriculums plus larger curriculums such as the College Board (AP, ACT/SAT). My students do not just go on to the next grade in our school; they go on to a new life. High school English teachers have to prepare students for writing at community college, state colleges, private colleges, and highly selective universities. At times, I also need to prepare my students for the military and jobs. I do not choose my students and there are no placement tests; I can only teach the students in front of me. Yet, the teaching of writing at any level is fraught with conflict and is just simply hard. We cannot change a family life that didn't value reading or a country that doesn't seem to value the craft of writing. Yet, while we cannot always change a student's motivation or fear or previous failures, teachers are able to control the conditions and help students overcome these previous failures. The best we can do is change the curriculum to help our students be successful in the next stage of their lives.

In this chapter, I will attempt to sift through the data to present a "status update" on my research question, *how do the curriculums, expectations, and experiences of high school writing courses align with that of first year college composition courses?* This

chapter describes the participants, and presents the results discussed through document analysis and interviews. Chapter four presents the process of the research project, including the results, an interpretation, and an analysis. The following sections organize this chapter: curriculum, expectations, and experiences. Each section is subdivided into high school and college and further subdivided by interview question. The chapter will also include an introduction and a conclusion. Interview questions were organized and asked in the order of curriculum, expectations, and experiences, and this is how the findings will be presented.

### Participants

High School Teacher #1. HST1 is a veteran teacher of 30+ years in the same district and has seen a large, suburban district through a strike, building additions, a myriad of administrators, hundreds of educational ideas, and a school demographic change. HST1 teaches ninth grade and AP Literature, a 12<sup>th</sup> grade course in his school. He also teaches theater and the school's student produced news show, but we focused on HST1's work with the teaching of writing in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade AP classroom. HST1 comes from a writing experience in a tiny Minnesota town where he couldn't "think of an English class that didn't involve writing." His undergraduate experience was in composition studies and his graduate experience was in literature. He believes that "everybody has something to say and should be encouraged to explore ways to say it."

High School Teacher #2. HST2 is a veteran teacher of 20+ years and has had a myriad of teaching experiences. He spent seventeen years at a private Catholic high school in the suburbs, decided to change schools (for personal reasons), and has worked at three suburban public high schools. He is currently working at a charter school that

meets the needs of a very specific student population. While teaching at the private school, HST2 taught mainly senior English, but also taught ninth grade and some electives. His school embraced a Writing Across the Curriculum approach; therefore, his students were practicing extensive writing in all courses. His other positions allowed him to teach a variety of courses and students and he now teaches a mixed age group of high school students. Because of the specific needs of his current students, he is the sole English teacher for all students grades 7-12.

College Instructor 1. C1 is an FYC instructor at an urban private university. She has taught at a variety of institutions and her work is in composition studies. While her teaching load is mainly FYC, she has also taught upper level courses at her institution. She is also the director of a writing certificate program for high school teachers in the state.

College Instructor 2. C2 is an FYC instructor at a different urban private university. She spent two years teaching high school English, but was drawn to a PhD program and higher education. As so many higher education instructors, she has taught a variety of courses. Officially her work has been in literacy studies, so much of her teaching load has been working with classroom teachers; however, she also teaches FYC each semester and has taught in her university's writing center.

Writing Center Director. The writing center director (WC) works at an urban, private university and her writing center is fully integrated into student support services. She has held different roles at the university since 2007 and has been the director since 2012. In addition, the WC also has the opportunity to teach FYC on occasion so she can stay current in the classroom. I decided to research a WC director because the writing

center is an integral part of writing instruction at a university. Writing centers work with students of all abilities and with countless professors, and they serve the most at-risk students: ELL, transfer, first generation, and non-traditional students. In addition, I chose her because of the work of this dissertation, as part of triangulation. The work of a writing center presents itself differently depending on the university; in the case of this university, the writing center is immersed and integrated into all other tutoring and student support services. Her curriculum does present itself differently than the high school and FYC instructors, as she doesn't create or grade writing assignments. She does, however, train her student tutors, teach students, and help other instructors with writing.

### Curriculum

All writing instructors answered the same questions; some additional questions were asked as the conversation necessitated (See Appendix C: Interview Questions). Each participant spoke from his or her perspective and current experience. Except when specifically asked, participants did not discuss the practices of colleagues or past jobs. Participants also only shared information regarding the writing curriculums. While high school English is also a literature course, as well as a speech and media course, we did not discuss literature, speech, or media curriculum. At times, specific books were mentioned because they were used as the writing assignment. Findings will be presented by question, by high school instructors' responses, and college instructors' responses. Lastly, the writing center director's responses will be described.

High School—Tell me about the writing curriculum you use. Neither high school teacher uses a prescribed writing curriculum, but each has a tightly aligned literature

curriculum. HST2 followed the PLC model like in most schools, so his common assessments and essential learnings were identical to his colleagues' assessments. HST1 teaches in a school with the PLC model and all assignments are identical, but he has decided to remove himself from that PLC work for the AP class. HST1 still aligns assignments to the CCSS, but his assignments are not aligned to the other English 12 classes. Both instructors are heavily influenced by outside curriculums such as AP and ACT. HST1 knows he has to prepare his students to write well for the AP Literature test and HST2 knows he has to prepare his mixed age and ability students to take the ACT. HST1 uses, on occasion, a writing book from Holt Rinehart and Winston, but this book has a 1980 copyright. His department has another writing text he could use, but he has decided to keep this one. Both instructors are heavily influenced by *Strunk and White* and other grammar guides. Interestingly, though they both do not use a formal writing guide, they use mentor texts and sample essays from former students.

High School--How do you choose materials? HST1 chooses his writing materials based on the AP College Board requirements. Each year his syllabus is audited and approved by the College Board and his own Gifted and Talented Coordinator. Some materials are personal selections and some are based on feedback from alum. The course has remained relatively unchanged for years (he made the CCSS fit his already established curriculum versus creating materials to meet the standards). He assigns four to five major papers each course and it is simply time that determines if the fifth paper, a narrative, is taught. He lamented that it is harder and harder to teach the fifth paper because of the other constraints on class—varied schedules, a more diverse student population, school-wide grading practices, and paperwork. HST1 teaches a position

paper, three literature-based essays, and the narrative. HST2 has a slightly different experience with choosing curriculum. He currently chooses all materials himself and as long as it meets the standards, his director is fine. At his previous school, he could not have veered from the course curriculum. Representatives from his department chose all materials. They had a common literature textbook (i.e. American Literature) and teachers supplemented from a list of approved books.

High School--Where do the standards come from? HST1, the public school teacher, said his standards come from the College Board and those standards take precedence over the CCSS. While the AP and CCSS are aligned in many ways, AP literature focuses on fiction and poetry and the CCSS emphasizes non-fiction. In addition, AP asks students to write literary analysis and literary theory essays, CCSS does not—at least not to the same degree. HST1 has made a concerted effort to meet the CCSS and has revamped his position paper to do so. In addition, HST1 does not focus on form and technical writing elements, as students should know how to cite sources or know how to use a comma. If they have concerns about their abilities in this area, then they are to learn it themselves or ask for outside help. It is not the focus of writing instruction. HST2, the Catholic and alternative school teacher, has a very different experience. HST2 has focused on the CCSS since its implementation. When he was teaching at the private school, each teacher taught the same book, the same writing assignment, and the same standard(s) at exactly the same time. At his current position, made up of highly mobile students with significant personal needs, he does his best to teach to the standards. Depending on student mobility and attendance, the students might not hit the standards they are supposed to.

High School--What are some of your goals for writing? HST1, public school teacher, is a firm believer in challenging and difficult, sometimes, disturbing literature. He believes literature should rattle us because otherwise we would not advance. With that, the disturbing literature often creates the best writing from students because it sticks with them the most. They find they have more to say, more questions to answer, about the difficult writing. HST1 also wants to make sure his students feel comfortable in his class, as well as in their future writing classes. He also encourages them to be self-reliant and not be afraid to write. He also wants students to feel empowered and take ownership of the writing process and project management. He does not follow the writing process that so many high school and college instructors use; instead, he has students turn in a final draft. They may ask questions or come in for help, *“but I do not do some of the process work that I do with the younger writers I teach to. I do not look at drafts, I do not do rough draft check-ins, and when a due date is announced, we don’t typically have a lot of class work time.”* He pushes his students to work on the process themselves, so more class time can be allocated to literature discussion. HST2, because of his specific population at a Catholic and alternative school, has the opposite situation. His students have a pronounced gulf of skills. Some are on track for college, but some are deficient in academic, study, and life skills. He does teach mechanics, but spends most of his time on writing basics. He spends a considerable amount of time teaching students to write paragraphs, which lead to shorter expository essays, which culminate in some sort of research paper. He feels the need to stay small, but also works on vocabulary and reading comprehension. HST2 also has site-specific goals of helping his students maneuver through their complicated lives. When he taught at the private school, they taught



mechanics and format in ninth and tenth grade, but emphasized style and content for upperclassmen. They had to do so; the senior paper was a twenty-page research paper. HST2 did stray from his colleagues and used the writing process in a different way. He had students submit rough drafts to him, he provided feedback, and if they were a C or below then students were required to meet for a writing conference. This was partly meant to be a time saver for him, so he didn't have to grade the same bad essays, but it also served as one-on-one remedial instruction.

High School--What are some goals and tasks for the assignment you shared?

HST1, the public school teacher T1 knows students have to write argument and position papers in college. He often has students come back and say *“oh my professor is more interested in ideas than whether I have my MLA format correct”* or *“my professor would rather see my ideas than where I put my commas.”* HST1 deviates from his other English 12 colleagues, however. The other teachers at his school assign a position paper based on current events. This year the position paper was about the finances of college or the literature being studied (Is Oedipus a product of his fate?) depending on which iteration of English 12 they are teaching. He acknowledges he should be in alignment with his colleagues, but this paper is a personal interest of his and is the benchmark assignment for students who take AP Literature—students have written this same paper for years and all commiserate. In addition, he always allows for students to write for an authentic audience. In this case, they submit their paper to a legislator, company executive, or organization director.

HST2, Catholic and alternative school, shared a research paper assignment from his private school experience. It was generally twenty pages of text, plus ancillary

materials such as references and appendices. He did not design this assignment as it was in place before he started. He didn't particularly enjoy the assignment, and would have made changes if he could, but students were able to choose their own topics (with some constraints of school MLA formatting). In his current position, students are too fluid and mobile to allow for long-term assignments. Instead he assigns his students writing prompts from the ACT test. This allows students to develop an argument and take a position, but it can be done in a single sitting. Preparing for the ACT also provides his students with an authentic purpose and goal. Additionally, for his most reluctant writers, it is entirely possible to fulfill the assignment with just a few paragraphs. He does work individually with those students who are planning on attending college to make sure they begin developing research skills, but as a whole, this is not part of his teaching repertoire.

College--Tell me about your writing curriculum. C1 teaches a literature and writing course where she challenges her students to “*value ambiguity and being confused.*” Like HST1, she wants her students to wrestle with difficult texts. On the other hand, C2 “*teaches writing for writing’s sake.*” While she acknowledges many FYC courses teach writing around novels, she and many of her colleagues do not. She wants students to improve their academic writing, so they read a lot of non-fiction and academic writing. C2’s curriculum builds “*writing skills in the context of working on the larger project*” which is a researched argumentative paper. She also assigns a narrative essay to her students at the very beginning of the course, but this serves as a “getting to know you” activity as well as a refresher of the writing process.

College--How do you choose your materials? Unlike their high school colleagues, C1 and C2 have a lot of freedom and autonomy in their material selection. C1 asks her

colleagues and uses a catalog of books, such as the Norton catalog. Moreover, she also culls essays from zines and magazines such as *Atlantic* and *The New Yorker*. She also finds conferences to be valuable resources for writing texts. Additionally, C1 does teach novels and other books, but she admits choosing those texts is a “*total crap shoot*.” She and a handful of her colleagues try to assign current books, such as Ta Nehisi Coates, and Claudia Rankin. Some of her colleagues, on the other hand, assign works from the canon and poetry in particular because many of her colleagues are poets. They are encouraged to teach literature from a variety of centuries and from all genres, but this is not enforced. Because she often teaches contemporary, and challenging texts, she has had a few problems with censorship. These challenges are because it is a religious university and some of the books do not align with the religious beliefs. For example, a few years ago instructors in her department taught *The Handmaid’s Tale* and there was an explosion of hate mail to the department chair and there was a website against the university. C1 did express that censorship issues at her university are different from trigger warnings; the censorship stemmed from the university’s religious beliefs, not student experiences.

Similar to C1, C2 also has a lot of freedom to choose materials. Her only curriculum requirement is to assign a research paper. She uses the text, *Everything’s an Argument*, to ground her teaching. It is also a text used by many of her department colleagues as well as other FYC instructors (and some high school AP teachers). In comparison, C2 also looks to her colleagues for suggestions. While they have lax curriculum requirements, it does make practical sense if instructors are mostly aligned. C2 also encourages her students to read from diverse perspectives and essays on the same related topic. She acknowledges her students are religiously homogenous, so the diverse

perspectives, and focus on audience are of utmost importance to her. She also allows for student choice and frequently chooses essays based on their interests. C1, at times, also allows students to bring in essays of their own selection.

College--What are your goals and objectives? C1 follows her department's goals and objectives, but she feels they are purposely vague and standard to just about any writing course. They mirror the course description and objectives presented in the course catalog. She also draws from her training as a compositionist and rhetorician. That's where her "*wrestle with texts*" and "*ask questions*" philosophy comes from. She wants her students to write analytically and persuasively, but to also understand how genres can be "remixed" and are hybrids. She believes all texts are composites and often challenges her students without non-standard assignments such as visual arguments. C1 has been met with criticism from members in her department, but she is coming from a different writing background than her colleagues. Interestingly, many of the goals C1 sets forth for her students are goals for humanity. Generally, she wants her students to be good people and she relishes the idea of shaping young minds, even if it sounds trite. She wants her students to go out into the world and be empathetic, critical, and have humility. She pushes her students to use evidence to develop their argument, not just their own opinions. She wants her students to examine assumptions and biases and often grounds her writing organization in the Toulmin method of claim, evidence, warrant—a very formal outline of academic debate, very unlike the political culture of today.

C2, on the other hand, is loosely affiliated with the English department; rather she is part of the General Studies Department. There is one person in charge, a director, and that person meets with the FYC instructors. Most of the FYC instructors are adjuncts,

and C2 understands some of the disconnect with adjunct instructors, but she also believes this disconnect is what gives her curriculum freedom. Related to C1, C2 also teaches at a religious school, so she does have some constraints regarding materials. Her institution is a faith-based one, so faith strongly influences materials.

College--What are some goals for the major writing assignment shared with me?

C1 shared a few assignments with me. The first is what she describes as a Discovery Draft. This is meant to be informal writing where students are stirred to discover what they don't know and what they do. It is designed to be a "*place of discovery, not transcription.*" She laments writing as transcription—students don't want writing to be messy and hard, they want it to be perfect and finished. Perhaps that is a carry over from high school writing? C1's goals are also derived from Writing Across the Curriculum training (WAC) and the course goals determine the assignment goals. For example, one of the course goals is to use a variety of sources to support the writer's opinion, so she designs lessons to set her students in that direction. Another goal that she has is to have her students ask questions of the text, not just use the text to answer their questions. She also has a personal goal, because of her post-doctoral work, to get her students to think about language as identity. She believes *when we deny people their home language, we deny them an identity.* Because so many of her students are middle class, white, and conservative, this provides a new and subversive challenge. C1 has taught at many schools and those schools have allowed her to try diverse assignments, but these assignments were met with criticism when tried at her current university. She acknowledges that she has had to "*get in the box*" because she is playing the tenure game.

C2 has had a similar experience. She shared with me a position paper assignment where the objective is purpose and audience acknowledgement. Like C1, she starts her students with the writing process. She knows her FYC students have been taught the writing process, but many don't follow it, as they prefer to write one draft and turn it in. This of course doesn't make for good writing, but it is part of the college learning process. She also assigns reflection writing along the way. Her students hate it, but she believes it is how writers and students grow. She also leads her students through the research process because FYC students have a variety of experience with research. Some students are comfortable with Boolean searches and academic journals, some have not ventured past Google. She knows this gulf of research skills is probably not due to a deficiency of her high school colleagues, but immaturity of her students. In addition, because the large research paper is a position/argumentative paper, C1 also spends time on the elements of persuasion and *"creating an argument using research to do so."* Relatedly, she also teaches her students to *"look at the way the information is presented and not just take it for face value –how it's constructed, not just what it says."* The paper topics are chosen by the students and are often extensions of the essay topics read in class.

Writing Center—What are some writing skills (curriculum) you see in the writing center? WC whole-heartedly believes that writing equals thinking and thinking is writing. If one part of the equation is not developed, then the other can't happen. She believes a challenge of FYC is that *"as a college student, they can join an academic conversation."* She encourages her students to view reading, writing, and research as this academic conversation and not simply tasks they must perform *"to earn a mark and*

*proceed into adulthood.*” She encourages students to ask questions and determine the most important question, as well as determine who is giving those answers. Often, she has students come in looking for a thesis statement, but she can’t help them because they haven’t asked a question and they don’t know what the research is saying. After they have asked questions, then they can write a clear thesis, develop organization, and have pertinent evidence to back up claims. All of this leads to compelling writing and an entrance into the academic conversation.

Writing Center—Tell me about the selection of materials. The writing center is student driven; therefore, everything is created based on student need. Much of the material she uses has been passed down from director to director, but she also shares information with other writing centers in the areas in addition to the larger writing centers such as the Purdue OWL and North Carolina-Chapel Hill. Most recently she updated materials for the research purpose since that was a strong need. This material was created to help students ask questions and develop thesis statements on their own, not just depend on a thesis statement provided by a teacher. In addition, she also creates material when she is teaching FYC. She experiences first hand what instructors need and what students need. Interestingly, as a writing center director she needs to be familiar with all of the citation styles and has a diverse collection of handbooks. While a FYC instructor only needs to know MLA and possibly APA, the WC needs to know Chicago, AMA, and ASA in addition to MLA and APA. To add another layer, the biology and chemistry departments at her university have their own citation method.

Writing Center—What are some goals and objectives for instruction. The goals of a WC come from the theory and pedagogy of the field, namely a one-to-one instruction

format. The goals are primarily help students, but there are system-wide goals to help improve writing instruction across the disciplines. She has organized workshops for ELL students and has been trying to create a writing fellows program for her university. She acknowledges the main goal is to always help students and this is elucidated in the WC flyer, *“helping students develop skill and confidence in writing.”* This philosophy helps students see themselves as writers and as participants in an academic conversation.

Of course, as so many teachers lament, the WC is part of a larger institution. She knows the past few years have been met with budget deficits, but she is managing to keep the writing center functioning. She also thinks the writing center is a low priority to the university administrators; they are never given an increase in funds nor a decrease in funds. She also claims that *“the amount of writing instruction they get in high school or college is dependent upon what’s being decided at the very top.”*

Writing Center—What are some goals for students? She pushes students to becoming more skilled and confident writers, but the goals are entirely contingent upon the student. The student might be at the early stage of an assignment and just wants to walk through it and brainstorm. Others might be at the end of an assignment where they just need a quick proofreading, though she does reiterate to students that the WC is not a proofreading service. She wants students to believe the WC serves to make them better writers, not to make better papers. She and her student tutors also value the idea of transference. While a student might come in with a biology paper, some of the writing skills and practices can transfer to other assignments in other classes. She also mentioned that the WC works mainly on higher order concerns, not just lower order concerns. For example, the thesis, organization, and the evidence are all higher level writing problems.



Style and mechanic are lower order concerns, and in fact align with her university’s universal writing rubric—organization and ideas are on the front side; syntax, diction, punctuation, and citation are on the backside.

Because one purpose of this dissertation is to compare high school writing instruction and college writing instruction, a table summarizing writing curriculum is included. (See Table 4.1: Summary of Data Addressing the Writing Curriculum)

**Table 4.1: Summary of Data Addressing the Writing Curriculum**

(Similarities are italicized)

HST1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-<i>is literature based</i></li> <li>-<i>uses a writing manual minimally</i></li> <li>-is not writing process-based</li> <li>-uses writing models from past students</li> <li>-<i>focuses on argumentation</i></li> <li>-is a group project</li> <li>-is based on student interest</li> <li>-<i>is influenced heavily by institution</i></li> <li>-is designed by the College Board/AP</li> <li>-write 5 essays using sources, evidence, audience-awareness</li> <li>-struggles with difficult text</li> <li>-focuses on ideas</li> <li>-<i>focuses on human development</i></li> </ul>
HST2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-uses Writing Across the Curriculum</li> <li>-<i>is influenced by colleagues and institution</i></li> <li>-has strict fidelity to CCSS</li> <li>-<i>is literature-based</i></li> <li>-has a lot of student choice</li> <li>-tries to build skills</li> <li>-writes 20 pages for main assignment</li> <li>-uses ACT test prep</li> <li>-<i>does not use a writing manual</i></li> <li>-uses open-source materials</li> <li>-<i>writes argumentation/opinion</i></li> <li>-<i>focuses human development</i></li> </ul>
C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-asks questions</li> <li>-struggles with difficult text</li> <li>-is somewhat influenced by colleagues</li> <li>-<i>is minimally influenced by institution</i></li> <li>-<i>emphasizes argumentative writing that uses evidence</i></li> <li>-helps students to develop as people</li> <li>-<i>follows the writing process</i></li> <li>-<i>utilizes Writing Across the Curriculum</i></li> <li>-encourages critical reading</li> <li>-doesn’t focus on mechanics</li> <li>-uses a writing manual</li> </ul>

C2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-works to improve writing</li> <li>-is <i>process-based</i></li> <li>-has teacher freedom</li> <li>-emphasizes student choice</li> <li>-uses a writing text</li> <li>-has <i>minimal colleague influence or institution influence</i></li> <li>-is not part of the English department</li> <li>-writes using <i>purpose, audience, argumentation</i></li> <li>-is research based writing</li> <li>-encourages <i>critical reading</i></li> <li>-doesn't focus on mechanics</li> <li>-uses a writing manual</li> </ul>
WC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-believes Writing=thinking</li> <li>-wants students to be in an academic conversation</li> <li>-is based on organization and evidence</li> <li>-encourages student choice,</li> <li>-believes questions+research=thesis</li> <li>-wants student to become better writers</li> <li>-utilizes higher order vs. lower order skills</li> <li>-has minimal institution influence</li> </ul>

### Expectations

FYC and high school writing expectations can also be compared. Expectations for the writing classroom can be what the teacher expects of students, what knowledge she expects students to have, as well as what students can expect.

High School--What are some of your expectations towards the teaching of writing? HST 1 expects writers to write because he believes that writing instruction is done when people write. This might be when students are engaged in continuous writing, formal and informal, as well as teachers who write themselves. He believes writing is hard work and the good writers are the ones who stick with it when others have given up and moved beyond. He also expects that writers read and that reading should always be done with writing. HST1 believes that if a student has read something and isn't moved to write, they should write anyway—a criticism, a summary, an imitation, and a response. Interestingly, similar to my other participants, HST1 also expects students to be good human beings. He wants them to be nice, to be curious, and to be communicative with him and each other. This focus on citizenry mirrors the earlier statements about

curriculum; each instructor mentioned being a good person as part of their curriculum and their expectations are reflective. In addition, HST1 also expects students to have read the materials to the best of their ability, to manage time well, and to prioritize

HST1 also expects high school writing instructors to stay engaged with current trends and practices in the teaching of writing. For example, he stays current by reading various journals from NCTE, belonging to various list serves, and attending conferences when possible. He expects writing instructors to read good writing and to make connections with other instructors at the high school and college level. He also acknowledges that expectations for students change with level. For example, he teaches ninth grade English as well as AP literature and both classes are taught differently. This is also true of course level. A student taking AP literature is met with different expectations than a student taking regular English 12. This difference in class expectation might also be different from school to school. For instance, a high school might focus heavily on canonical literature, or writing, or diverse literature. These emphases create different expectations of students and create different degrees of preparedness.

HST2, due to his diverse teaching experiences, also sets up the idea of different expectations for different students. In his current alternative school experience, his first expectation is that of safety. While teachers should, and do, strive for safety in the classroom, this is more important to him because of his fragile clientele. Many of his students do not come from safe home environments and many do not engage in safe practices themselves. He expects they will be free from self-harm and chemical abuse in a different way than more mainstream instructors. He also has a higher degree of

attendance expectations. Many of his students are attending his school because of treatment or court mandates and there are stricter penalties if students do not attend. He understands that students' ability to grasp the curriculum is not his main priority, though he tries to hold them to academic standards and accountability. To him, self-confidence, self-control, and self-image are greater expectations than the ability to write a research paper.

These expectations differ from his past experience at a private school. At that location, all teachers in all content areas were expected to teach writing. Writing Across the Curriculum allowed students to see the implicit value of writing and to transfer those skills to all content areas. While some writing skills, such as correct grammar and clear idea development transfer to all content areas, some skills such as formatting, style, and use of sources are subject specific. HST2 also expected that his students' writing assignments grew progressively more challenging each year. For instance, ninth and tenth graders might have written a few five-paragraph essays, but by the time they reached senior year the expectation was that they would write several longer assignments in a variety of genres such as literary analysis, satire, research, and a Writing Across the Curriculum portfolio.

College--What are some of your expectations toward the teaching of writing? C1 also elucidated on the expectation questions. She expects students to be interested, or at least feign interest. She also expects her students to look at the people talking—instructor or classmates—and not at their devices. She also expects, like HST1, that students communicate with her about extensions and concerns. Both college instructors mentioned the expectation of not copying others' work, but the high school instructors

did not report this. C1 expects student work to be “*original and not plagiarized, but what [she] has found is that generally her freshmen are patch writers.*” She means that students know they are to use research and citations, and they insert them into writing, but the information isn’t doing anything to move the claims forward. She mentioned a few times that sources should talk with each other and the writer, but often students just use a quote for the sake of using the quote. Interestingly, C1 and C2 both had attendance expectations of their students and had the ability to dock points after a certain number of absences. This penalty for absences might be due to the emphasis on process work—if a student is not there for the steps and feedback, then they cannot apply it towards their writing. For C1 the attendance policy was “*four times and then after that their grade gets docked.*” The high school instructors did not discuss attendance grades, but perhaps this is due to standards-based grading and PLC work.

C1 also has expectations towards preparedness. Similar to HS 1, she expects her students to have read the assignment and to have taken appropriate notes (the kind of notes differs for each assignment). Mirroring HST2, she dislikes the five paragraph essay and wishes high school teachers, especially eleventh and twelfth grade teachers, would move away from that format. She also expects students to be shocked when she expects students to unlearn the five paragraph essay and that they have no idea how to write in any other format. Because she has taught at multiple institutions, she sees a clear delineation in student knowledge and can almost predict what school environment each student came from. Her current university, which draws heavily from the Twin Cities suburbs, sees students with a clear grasp on standard written English, but very little diversity of thought. Conversely, students from city or alternative schools struggle with

standard written English, but have read diverse literature and have more diverse perspectives. She claims she would rather teach students with diverse perspectives who have lower basic writing skills than students who have better writing skills and little perspective. This preference reflects earlier research that college instructors value ideas over mechanics as well as the curriculum expectations at high schools. C1 also expects her students to not know how to outline in any manner and any purpose: outline a chapter, outline their writing throughout the writing process, and outline an author's argument. However, she has stopped teaching this step because so many students fought her. Additionally, C1 also expects students to "*ask critical questions of the text and pick out the thesis and the sub points of the text.*" She also expects students to become less afraid of starting a draft, to know how to use resources, how to revise, and how to give and get writing criticism. Her grading expectations also vary by assignment and purpose. For example, she always has students write a discovery draft (a form of brainstorming) and the expectation is that they fill a page. The discovery draft then turns into a rough draft with a thesis statement, and then into the multiple drafts along the way.

C1 also wishes students understood better the expectation of research—use databases, Boolean searches, and books, not just Google or Google scholar. She wishes students understood that research is often about finding the opposition, and there is a valid opposition, and the need to work with the opposition in writing.

C2 also had much to say regarding expectations of students. She expects to teach what she feels is important, that writing should not necessarily be tied to literature (fiction and poetry), and that her classroom will be process-oriented. She expects her students to use research in their writing because "*that's such an important part of the*

*college experience.*” Yet, she also expects her colleagues in other departments to teach research and writing. She also expects to teach her students the basics of formatting, grammar, and mechanics because they come from a lot of different high school experiences; this teaching of conventions is also supported by the WPA Outcomes (2014). She also believes the nuts and bolts should be taught because they are part of writing and if instructors are going to expect it then they have to teach it. Reflecting the other instructors, she expects her students will show up prepared for class and engage in an academic conversation. This means they’ve done the reading and writing, they’re respectful, and they do their own writing. She also expects students to do their best work even though this might not mean “A” work.

C2 expects her students to find something about writing they’re good at and that they can do it even if some of them will never enjoy writing. Unlike some universities, there is no freshman orientation element of her FYC class, but she does pay closer attention to her first semester freshmen than other students. Though she tries to take care of the students sitting in front of her, she also acknowledges “*we can’t have the expectation that everybody in high school is going to go to college.*” She believes some of the problems with students not being able to write stem from the fact that some of them are simply not college writers, at least not at this stage in their lives. Their high school transcripts reflect this as well as the ACT scores.

C2 also has the expectation of students working through the writing process. She knows her students are coming to her with familiarity of the process, but only through English class. With this process approach, she also expects students to conduct research and to be familiar with research. While C1 reported patch writing, C2 reports that most

students come to her class with a middle school mentality of “*grabbing information from an encyclopedia and putting it into the paper.*” She does, however, acknowledge the “*why do I have to do this if others aren’t*” complaints that some high school teachers hear when they encourage students to use research differently. Some of this complaining from students has been ameliorated by standards-based grading and PLC work in the high schools. In addition to expecting students to conduct research, she also expects students to “*gather information from more than a couple of sources. Don’t choose the first two sources you find.*” She expects students to purposefully integrate the sources into their writing and not just use the encyclopedia approach of using a source and quote for the sake of using a source and quote.

C2 wishes her university had a WAC expectation. She knows some of her colleagues in other departments teach writing, but not all, and this is a struggle. She wishes high school students were expected to write for different classes and in a multitude of genres because writing a chemistry paper is different from an economics paper is different from a history paper. An English teacher cannot possibly be responsible to teach all the kinds of writing a student might encounter. As she claimed, “*College writing. I can teach them about writing in general, and I can teach them how to do some research and how to write a position paper, but I don’t know how to write lab reports. And that’s something some of them will have to do.*”

Writing Center--What are some of your expectations towards the teaching of writing? As a writing center director, she understands her sometimes-important role in FYC. Some colleges have fully integrated writing centers into their writing departments, but others have a limited relationship. Many universities (and high schools) acknowledge



that a writing center is important because they are able to work with all students in all classes; therefore they might have a better understanding of student writing abilities. As a writing center director, WC also has expectations. She believes the phrase “*we expect students to know how to do this is more of a complaint from faculty. We have learned to be without expectations.*” She knows students come to the writing center with a variety of backgrounds and skills, so she doesn’t have any expectations for writing. She does, however, have an expectation for behavior and preparedness. She expects students to make an appointment online and to bring all materials a professor has provided for that assignment, including a syllabus if necessary as it helps to see where it falls in the course. Her writing center has never set the expectation that all students are required to come to the writing center, though she acknowledges this is a trend at other universities. She also expects students to understand the need to attend a writing center. Many have been encouraged to attend by professors and many view the writing center as a remedial place, but she encourages students to see the writing center “*not as a place where the bad writers go, but a place where we can talk about writing.*” Hopefully this sets up an expectation of help, not punishment. She also expects students to be wary of writing help, as many view writing as a solitary endeavor; however, they soon realize this is not the case anywhere, especially in the working world. She expects students to leave with a sense of “*what I have to do next*” immediately, but she also expects students to transfer their newfound knowledge to other assignments in other classes.

Because she is the director of a writing center, not a classroom teacher, it is expected the writing center utilizes a 1:1 approach. This aligns with her professional research, but also the anecdotal evidence of her institution. While there has never been

the expectation to keep quantitative data on her center’s efficacy, she knows from student and professor feedback that her work has been valuable. Because the writing center is 1:1 and not content specific, she and her instructors are able to delve deeper and wider into student writing. She bemoans the fact that freshmen come in not knowing how to express their opinion, though college requires them to do so. She believes *“part of K-12 is the sort of practicing with information. It’s like ‘here’s the information, now say it back to me.’”* She doesn’t blame high school teachers per se, but the K-12 system as a whole; the teachers are just doing what is expected. She believes this is due to the standardized testing environment in schools—the focus on getting it right and checking off criteria. They do not know how to shift from one right answer to multiple right answers. With that, colleges expect students to read a lot of sources and determine the significance on their own. In other words, students are expected to develop their own *“very focused opinion and backed up with evidence.”*

In high schools, there are different expectations from teacher to teacher as well as grade level to grade level. When instructors better understand the expectations of other instructors they will be better able to help students grow as writers. A summary of these expectations is provided (see Table 4.2: Summary of Data Addressing Expectations in the Writing Classroom).

**Table 4.2: Summary of Data Addressing Expectations in the Writing Classroom**

HST1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-believes teachers and students should write</li> <li>-believes reading=writing,</li> <li>-wants students to be nice, be respectful, be prepared</li> <li>-believes teachers should keep up professionally</li> <li>-teaches according to class level</li> </ul>
HST2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-needs safety and security</li> <li>-emphasizes attendance</li> <li>-wants students to work on confidence and self-image</li> <li>-uses Writing Across the Curriculum</li> <li>-believes students should not write a 5 paragraph essay</li> </ul>

C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-expects original work</li> <li>-expects students to attend, and be prepared</li> <li>-does not write a no 5 paragraph essay</li> <li>-encourages diverse ideas,</li> <li>-knows there's diverse preparation of students</li> <li>-wants students to write an outline, ask questions, revise, and research</li> <li>-utilizes the</li> <li>-writing process</li> <li>-supports multiple perspectives</li> </ul>
C2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-uses a writing process approach</li> <li>-believes FYC is different from content area writing</li> <li>-believes students should be prepared for class</li> <li>-wants to build confidence</li> <li>-understands not all students are prepared for college</li> <li>-uses research from multiple sources</li> <li>-expects complex ideas</li> </ul>
WC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-knows students have a variety of skill level</li> <li>-provides a safe place to talk about writing,</li> <li>-gives a sense of direction</li> <li>-wants transference of skills</li> <li>-learn to express their own opinion</li> <li>-supports a 1:1 environment</li> <li>-knows there are multiple right answers</li> <li>-expects students to be prepared</li> </ul>

### Experiences

The curriculum and expectations of teachers are not the only factors in writing instruction. What a teacher experiences, good and bad, while doing her job is also important to understanding the teaching of writing.

#### High School--What are your experiences as a teacher—challenges, successes?

HST1, public school, struggles the most with “*getting the work done and meeting deadlines.*” He laments that while it is tough to keep up with the work assigned by administrators, it is often the student work that creates the biggest challenge. Very few would challenge the weight and scope of the paper-grading load of a writing instructor at any level, but most instructors realize that it is part of our job and we chose it. On the other hand, it is the stragglers who create the additional stress. When they don't turn in a paper on time, there is more work for a teacher. Often times a writing instructor will hunker down and grade a set of papers, then they move on to the next assignment. If

a late paper comes in it disrupts the flow. Additionally, the late submitters almost always need additional, outside-of-class help.

Conversely, after close to forty years in the classroom, HST1, public school, has felt many successes. He loves to hear former students return from their first semester in college and say they were prepared for FYC and that they felt good about their ability to write in college. HST1 also finds success grading and reading the position paper. He finds the subjects and the manner in which the students write about the issue to be engaging and he pushes them say more. He knows his role is to push and pull students along the writing journey, but he also sees his role as providing the reason to write by making the assignment and then holding the expectation that it will come in done to a standard. Finally, at the end of the year, as he sends his seniors to college campuses and FYC classes, HST1, public school, wants college instructors to know that *“we work hard. We try. We really do try. They’re not all going to be ready, but they’re going to be more ready than if we didn’t work with them.”*

HST2, Catholic and alternative school, instead of working with AP students, has worked with some *mild special education students* (students who might receive modifications, such as extended time on assignments or a verbal test instead of a written test, but are still capable of mainstream classwork) at the private school and currently works with alternative students with emotional needs. He always experienced good relationships with kids who desperately needed to establish good relationships with adults. For example, some of his current students have fetal alcohol syndrome, which limits their ability to read and write. In addition, both his regular education and special education students are reluctant writers and dread the writing process. This element of

dread can set up a negative experience for both other students and the teacher, though it does not seem to differ from that of other students. On the other hand, HST2 loved the experience of watching his private school students finish the entire writing program. He knew they had written in many genres and for many audiences. HST2, with his current at-risk students, enjoys the experience of a job well done. He loves hearing his students say the writing assignment wasn't so bad.

Similar to his high school counterpart, HST2, Catholic and alternative school, has other successful experiences. He is a creative writer by nature and relishes the experience of teaching students to be more creative in their writing. He finds that the creative writing prompts allows students to be quirky and take risks, but also to “*get the garbage out*” of students’ consciences. HST2 also believes the experience of writing a five-paragraph essay should not be taught because “*nobody writes five paragraph essays.*” While high school students are in fact writing five paragraph essays, many FYC instructors wish they wouldn't. While HST2 appreciates the organizational structure, he believes too many rules and too strict a format impedes student thought and style.

College--What are your experiences as a teacher-challenges and successes? C1 has experienced many challenges in her FYC classroom. While making generalizations, C1 acknowledges that one of the most disconcerting experiences is *dealing with student laziness and perfectionism*. She ascertains that the young men are *crippled by laziness and the young women are crippled by perfectionism*. This student resistance piece is a huge challenge for her. The boys seem to dislike the fact that final drafts are so high stakes and the girls dislike the discovery drafts. On the other hand, similar to most teachers, C1 also has many successes in the classroom. She acknowledges that her

students seem to trust her and trust each other and relationships seem to be built. She also believes the experience of “workshopping” is successful for her students. Students begin to think for themselves and to view themselves as knowledgeable in writing. C2 also enjoys the experience of having students identify themselves as writers at the end of the course and become more comfortable as writers and not think of “*writing as this thing that will make them crazy or terrified.*” C1 also enjoys teaching academic writing mixed with literary genres. She doesn’t feel pressured to prepare her FYC students for all writing in college because her school uses a Writing Across the Curriculum model, so each department is responsible for teaching their particular form of writing. She believes this has made student writing stronger, as there is more transference of skill and more ownership from students and other professors. There also seems to be less of a blame game by other department’s professors.

Compared to other writing instructors, C1 also loves the overall experience of being a teacher. She enjoys being in front of a classroom and the energy it provides. She also enjoys grading her students’ persuasive essays because she not only sees what students have learned, but also sees how well she has taught them. C1 also enjoys the experience of being an expert in the classroom. She knows she is also expected to be a facilitator, a coach, and a leader, but she simply loves being the expert and sharing her knowledge. Interestingly, C1 acknowledges that despite her extensive composition knowledge, she has little knowledge about pedagogy. She said, “*We are rarely taught how to be teachers.*” She knows her colleagues are really smart people, but she has no idea if they can teach or not. For example, she said her department believes the best way to teach writing is through literature, but there is very little sound evidence to prove that.

If one believes literature is also non-fiction, then teaching writing through literature is sound practice, but there is very little a student can learn about academic writing through poetry and novels. She also wishes her colleagues (college and high school) would recognize that good writing can be seen in a myriad of genres: documentaries, film, oral presentations, slam poetry, and others. She also wishes instructors had more experience in rhetoric and composition, not just literature. As for high school writing, she believes students don't need to experience the modes of writing—compare, narrative, cause/effect, because writing does not work like that; it's cross-genre, especially with contemporary writing. Even modes of academic writing don't adhere to the traditional modes of writing.

C1 is also discouraged by the experience of “*bullshitting*” students, or students who don't take the assignment seriously and make up information with the hope nobody will ever notice. She also means those students who are accomplished at playing “the game” of school. She'd hate to believe this is due to a lack of knowledge, awareness, and sophistication by the high school writing teachers, but she fears this might be true. C1 also understands this experience is a by-product of helicopter parents—the teachers who confront students for made up work are often attacked by parents and administrators. Finally, C1 believes the FYC experience can be enhanced not by better instruction at the high school level, but by better communication between high school and college instructors. She says, “*What I need to know is what they're coming in with. It's less of a matter of 'y'all need to change this', but I need to know what they're coming in with. But this is the professors' fault.*” They have the means to reach out to high school teachers, but they don't.

C2 also experiences challenges in the classroom. She knows many of her students come to her hating writing, and she works to overcome this hate. She tries to provide extra help to those students who don't care and don't want to write because learning to write academically for college will determine their success. C2 also has many successes in the classroom. She loves the relationships she builds with students. She's not one to think she can have a solid relationship with every student, but she does try to connect with every student on some level at some point. She also enjoys the experience of teaching rhetorical analysis. It's a new skill for many of her students and it is a difficult concept, but after teaching for many years she has something that really works. She knows many of her students will never write brilliant rhetorical analyses, but all of them can find something the author is doing and not just saying. She's also had a fair amount of feedback on how much choice and freedom students have. Some students are comfortable with choice, but there are a few students who are overwhelmed with so much choice. Along with these successes, C2 also loves the experience of seeing improvement. She enjoys seeing students finally get it and being passionate about something. Similar to her C1 counterpart, she experiences the joy of being the authority in the classroom. She's *"always willing to be questioned, but generally I do know a thing or two about writing and they don't."* Sometimes her experience is that of a cheerleader, but she's also a facilitator and a co-writer. She also shares her experience of being a student and a writer with her students.

Writing Center--What are your experiences as a teacher—challenges and successes? Although WC has a different job, many of her experiences mirror C1 and C2. She experiences a lot of challenges as a writing center director, but the *"administrative*



*stuff eats up a lot of [her] time and attention.*” She is a director, not just an instructor, so she has a different element to her work. Her perspective, though structurally different from the FYC instructors, is valuable because she helps to fill in the gaps of FYC and student writing success. In addition, she is able to work with students without the element of final evaluation. She has experienced the “roller coaster of funding and presidency.” There are also times when she is scrambling to cover a shift after a last minute cancellation, but there are also those times when she is working with a student and she realizes just how far behind they are. WC lamented how unprepared students are, not just for writing, but college in general. However, she doesn’t blame this on high schools, rather she blames this on her university’s admission policy. Small liberal arts colleges are trying to stay afloat and often take anybody they can get, even if the student has a composite ACT of 14 (the College Board says 18-19 is considered to be college ready). She knows the student will most likely not be successful in college, but she cannot tell a student this. While university admissions policies are beyond the scope of this dissertation, they do merit discussion because colleges know students are unprepared for college work, yet take them anyway. WC also discussed how so many students are unprepared to be in college and need one-to-one support in order to be successful. They may have the academic skills, but they do not have the study skills, and most certainly do not have the life skills. She knows her university caters to first generation students, and this might explain the skills gap, but she also believes this is due to “*helicopter parenting*” (she is currently the mother to two teenagers, so she says she knows the state of parenting today).

She has also experienced many successes as a writing center director. Because her work is not contingent upon enrollment in a class, or as an evaluator, some students continue to come to her for help over their college career. She talked about one young woman with a tough background who came for help every week. When the student started, she had a D average. By the end of the term this same student was on the Dean's List. As so many teachers do, she also has a Wall of Fame—the collection of thank you cards from students who grew as writers and students because of the writing center.

Teaching is rarely just about the curriculum, and like so many other elements of life, there are challenges and successes. Despite the challenges, teachers keep teaching and instruction keeps happening. Teaching high school writing and FYC are similar and different on many accounts, and those similarities and differences are listed below (see Table 4.3: Summary of Data Addressing Teaching Experiences in the Writing Classroom)

**Table 4.3: Summary of Data Addressing Teaching Experiences in the Writing Classroom**

HST1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-is overwhelmed by meetings, deadlines, grading, and other administrative work</li> <li>-knows alumni report being ready for FYC</li> <li>-wants to provide a reason to write</li> <li>-believes teachers try</li> </ul>
HST2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-works with special education and other high risk kids</li> <li>-knows some students dread writing</li> <li>-follows a sequential writing program,</li> <li>-enjoys creative writing and personal expression</li> </ul>
C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-sees laziness and perfectionism</li> <li>-develops trust and comfort as writers</li> <li>-enjoys being in front of a classroom and being the expert, facilitator, nurturer, and leader</li> <li>-worries that FYC instructors are not taught how to be teachers</li> <li>-believes in no modes of writing</li> <li>-believes canonical literature does not equal writing</li> <li>-knows overly confident students are making things up</li> <li>-discourages the 5 paragraph,</li> <li>-wants to know where students are coming from</li> <li>-believes communication starts with professors</li> </ul>

C2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-wants to help them not hate writing</li> <li>-knows some students don't care, and don't want to do it</li> <li>-emphasizes rhetorical analysis</li> <li>-enjoys seeing improvement, being an authority, and a facilitator</li> </ul>
WC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-is overwhelmed by administrative tasks</li> <li>-is discouraged by admissions policies that fill seats</li> <li>-knows some students unprepared for life, let alone college</li> <li>-enjoys working with tutors</li> </ul>

The themes, commonalities, and differences that emerged from the interviews of the five participants will be synthesized in Chapter Five.

### Document Analysis

All of the five participants shared a collection of their instructional materials with me. While the assignments were varied and interesting, my analysis was limited by what each instructor was willing to share. Most gave me a major writing assignment and a syllabus and the findings from the document analysis are delineated in the following chart (See Table 4.4: Data Addressing Instructional Documents)

**Table 4.4: Summary of Data Addressing Instructional Documents**  
(similarities are italicized)

	Assignment	Requirements	Skills	Other
HST1	Position paper on a policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-5-7 <i>pages</i></li> <li>-variety of sources</li> <li>-group work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Clear position,</li> <li>-<i>research</i></li> <li>-group dynamics</li> <li>- <i>audience awareness</i></li> <li>- outline</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-<i>MLA</i></li> <li>-<i>part of a literature class</i> general topic is chosen by teacher, but students choose the specific topic (i.e. technology=cyber bullying)</li> </ul>
HST2	Research paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5+ <i>pages of text</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-<i>MLA</i></li> <li>- 5 paragraphs</li> <li>- <i>research</i> skills</li> <li>- writing structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Turnitin.com</li> <li>- focus on structure of paper</li> <li>- for his private school students, not his alternative school students</li> <li>- <i>part of a literature class</i></li> <li>-no student choice</li> </ul>

C1	Rhetorical <i>analysis</i>	-2 single spaced pages - synthesis of sources	- <i>MLA</i> - <i>writing process</i>	- <i>Student choice</i>
C2	Analysis <i>Essay</i>	- <i>5 pages</i> -articles not used in class	-Viewpoint not their own - <i>audience</i> <i>awareness</i> -research - <i>writing process</i>	- <i>Student choice</i>
WC	Variety of student assignments	-1:1 -bring course materials	-Higher order writing skills	-Not a classroom

Other results from document analysis. All three college participants expressed concern over student study skills. All participants were concerned about students' inability to read and outline critical texts, to follow assignment criteria, and to keep deadlines. C1 and C2 gave me a course syllabus in addition to the assignments. Both FYC instructors had penalties for late work and attendance and other behavior issues such as inappropriate use of technology. Many schools, with the adoption of the PLC models and a push towards standards-based grading, have eliminated grade penalties for late work and absences. Students are allowed to re-do assignments until mastery and do not receive penalties for late work. At some high schools, teachers are not allowed to penalize students for attendance and lack of participation and preparation. While teachers want their students to be successful and do their best work, these new grading practices might be hindering students and their ability to do college work. While the content area standards might be in alignment with FYC, the study skills expectations are not in alignment. High schools need to examine their grading practices to ensure students are able to transfer habits and skills to college.

### Summary

Interviews and document analysis and triangulation of high school instructors, FYC instructors, and a writing center director all work together as research methods in order to better understand my primary research question, *How do the curriculums, expectations, and experiences of high school writing courses align with that of first year college composition courses*. Each participant alone provides a valuable glimpse into the teaching of writing, but when analyzed together begin to form a larger view of writing pedagogy across contexts. The next chapter will summarize and interpret the findings and begin to draw implications for the writing classroom. Chapter Five will also include a personal reflection as a teacher and researcher, which will hopefully help to heal the schisms in my department and across the high school to college transition.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Conclusion

Teaching is hard work. Teaching is similar to parenting and each level has its own share of stresses and successes, but teaching writing seems to be fraught with a myriad of unique and complex challenges. Writing is public and private, is efferent and aesthetic, and can propel a student forward or pull them back professionally. It is both testable and teachable, yet it is an artistic talent. And it is highly variable—fiction, social, journalism, business, academic, scientific, creative. So what makes for good writing? What makes for good writing instruction?

Chapter Five serves as the closure of this research. In previous chapters, the introduction, literature review, and methods chapters provided my journey to the research question, a rationale for this research, my research methods, and data collected. My research attempted to gather curriculum, experiences, and expectations from five writing instructors and present the findings using document analysis and interview methods. In this final chapter, conclusions will be presented through the key understandings of my research questions, implications of the research, recommendations, and a summary.

#### Key Understandings of Primary and Secondary Questions

The primary dissertation question, *How do the curriculums, expectations, and experiences of high school writing courses align with that of first year college composition courses*, allowed me to look at the teaching of writing from multiple perspectives. By interviewing and studying teaching documents from high school writing

instructors, I was able to better understand what kinds of writing was being taught and how teachers arrived at those assignments and assessments. By studying the teaching documents of college writing instructors, I was able to see first-hand what many of my students would be expected to do in FYC, a few short months after leaving my class. Finally, by working with a writing center director, I was able to hear what writing skills students were struggling with in all content areas, as well as the effect of study skills and life skills. By presenting these findings, teachers at both the high school and college level can help our students find success as writers.

#### How Does the High School Curriculum Compare to the College Writing Curriculum?

Assignment alignment. I found the two high school assignments, in general, do align with the two FYC assignments. For instance, HST1 and HST2 both assign argumentative and opinion writing assignments, just like their FYC counterparts do. The specific assignment requirements vary, and the instructional goals vary, but all assignments ask students to take a stance and use research. High school is not college and the instruction has to meet the context and audience, just as writing needs to meet the context and audience. High school instructors have very tight curriculums aligned to colleagues, the CCSS, and the College Board (AP, ACT/SAT). Both HST1 and HST2 felt there was little room for teacher autonomy, and if they veered too far from the approved curriculum there were consequences. The high school teachers felt beholden to safe readings, typically canonical literature. This might be due to child development issues, censorship issues, and even child safety issues as in the case of HST2 who is currently working with fragile students. College instructors experienced a little more curricular autonomy and allowed students to have more choice.

High school is everything. In addition, high school English is not a composition class. While C1 and C2 are teaching a writing class, high school English teachers have to teach everything—writing, literature, speeches, and media. This means class time is used to teach about Shakespeare and Fitzgerald and the analysis of literature, how to give a speech, and how to be a digital citizen. When there is writing instruction, it is often at the learning to write level, not the writing to learn level. For example, the Minnesota CCSS (see Table 5.1 2010 Minnesota Academic Standards for English Language) outlines the components for writing papers, but doesn't seem to get at what many college instructors view as good writing—deep critical thought and questioning. Yes, if a student can establish claims and counterclaims, they may be prepared for college writing, but these standards can also lead into what C1 describes as patch writing. It also supports her claim that students from the suburbs (where HST1 and HST2 taught) were able to write cogent and correct papers that said nothing. Interestingly, the design of many of these rubrics means a student, who has all of the skills checked on the rubric, can write a great paper; however, it does not necessarily mean they are good writers.

**Table 5.1: 2010 Minnesota Academic Standards for English Language**

<p>1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.</p>	<p>11.7.1.1</p>	<p>Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence: (a) Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence. (b) Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases. (c) Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims. (d) Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing. (e) Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.</p>
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Test prep. In addition to the CCSS, high school teachers have to prepare students to take the ACT and SAT, and these scores are sometimes used to evaluate schools and teachers. The College Board recently revamped the ACT and SAT writing tests so that students are tasked with using sources instead of just personal experience:

[students] are asked to evaluate and analyze the given perspectives, state and develop [your] own perspective, and explain the relationship between [your] perspective and those given. (College Board)

Also, the new SAT has students write in the following manner:

Read a passage, explain how the author builds an argument to persuade an audience, and support your explanation with evidence from the passage. (College Board)

While the CCSS and the new ACT/SAT are steps in the right direction, they still might not prepare students for the critical reading and writing expected in college. Also, the new ACT and SAT have only been in use within the past year, so writing instructors and program evaluators have no idea how well they work in preparing students for college writing. In addition, while the College Board can determine what score best equals college readiness, if colleges admit students who don't meet the benchmark scores, or do so without support services and developmental writing classes, as described by WC, then part of the blame rests on the universities.

Course readings. Not only is curriculum affected by writing standards, but also by the readings used in class. Both high school teachers used canonical literature or "safe" non-fiction from mainstream media sources (*New York Times*, for example) because high school English is mostly a literature course. Both teachers have also used the same

literature for years. This might be out of tradition or preference, but also because of course and material approval guidelines. C1 and C2 have autonomy in their material selections, while HST1 and HST2 do not. Moreover, C1 and C2 also had more time in their professional day for reading and searching out new material and it is considered to be part of their job. High school teachers rarely have time to seek out and read new materials. High school English seems to be literature-focused, while FYC seems to be writing focused. The two high school instructors assigned research writing and argumentative writing, but these were isolated units and not integrated. Could their assignments be better integrated with the books? Sure, but with the course emphasis on canonical literature, it makes integration tougher. If so much time is spent learning about and reading *Hamlet* or *The Great Gatsby*, then students are not reading non-fiction to serve as mentor texts or models for their own non-fiction writing, and they are also not working on their writing. Additionally, course content and writing outcomes at the college level may not always align because they are contingent upon the institutions' diversity, delivery model, and student profiles. If all FYC teachers use aligned writing outcomes (such as the Writing Project Administrators), then the course content, or school's profile may not matter as much. This might also help schools continue with their Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) work—as long as student writing outcomes are aligned, the reading does not matter. This might also work at the high school level.

PLC and course approval. In addition, with the use of PLC models and course material approval actions, curriculum becomes more challenging. If high school teachers are expected to teach in a unified manner, and cannot use materials unless it has gone through an approval process, then they are unlikely to use those new assignments and

materials. Both college instructors were able to change materials as they desired, but this is not the case at the high school level. In addition, both college instructors were able to use controversial materials, but many of those writers/writings would be met with deep criticism by parents of high school students. However, controversial readings may not make better writing and they should be used for the sake of quality writing, not controversy. Finally, high school instructors are confined by material costs and purchasing. We have to provide the books and articles to our students whereas a college instructor can ask students to purchase the book or print the article themselves. There are some electronic options for students, and they should be accessed, but there are some studies showing hard copy reading is better than electronic reading (Rosenwald, 2015) and both college instructors required hard copies of readings.

Student responsibility. Of course, this only works for those students who actually do the assigned readings. With online sources such as Sparknotes (and Sparknotes video), Schmoop, Good Reads, 60secondRecap, and others, students do not even do the required reading. How can they be critical readers if they can barely read? While Atwell (2015) and others believe student reading engagement will increase if they choose their books, they still have the opportunity to read whatever they want on their own time and they choose not to. Also, some high-interest books students are willing to read are often banned by parent groups, and may not be written sophisticatedly.

Five paragraph essay. One cannot overlook the stronghold of the five-paragraph essay. None of the three college writing instructors taught five paragraph essays, and one high school instructor thought the format should be retired. Yet, it is one framework for writing. Some students, when they're working on new writing skills such as integrating

sources or evaluating audience, need to cling to something safe, and the five paragraph essay (FPE) is a familiar framework. C1 tries to guide students to a beginning-middle-end format, but a FPE has a beginning, middle, and end. It also has a thesis statement and creates organization. A FPE does not lend itself to beauty, creativity, and insights, but it does allow students to develop an idea and use research. But the FPE also goes back to my earlier claims about departmental conflicts. Sometimes when teachers propose lengthening essays or writing different essays, they are met with “I’m not grading that,” but if they assign something different then they have to meet with administrators who chastise them for not using common summative assessments. And no matter what teachers assign, students will need to be successful on the AP/ACT/SAT tests where it is entirely possible, and encouraged, to write a FPE.

Rubrics and grades. Finally, if curriculum is defined by assignments, assessments, and evaluations, then the rubric becomes an important component and may perhaps be a source of the FYC/HS writing gap. High school teachers have to enter a numerical grade into a grade book, typically a program called Infinite Campus. Because of the current constraints of the grade book, teachers cannot simply enter a letter grade; they have to enter points. HST1 and HST2 both gave me rubrics and both rubrics broke down each element into points; neither of the college rubrics did this. The college rubrics were much more holistic and holistic and the college instructors were able to give a student a B on a paper and were not confined to giving an 86/100. I know one complaint people have of writing is that it is subjective and variable, and it is to an extent. Higher order skills are more subjective or difficult to assign an exact grade to, while more mechanical skills like punctuation and citations are easier to assign an exact grade to. However, I also

know that my colleagues and I would be quite comfortable and confident with assigning students just a letter grade. Many departments feel they are in consensus as to what a B paper is, but the difference between an 84 and an 87 is much less certain. Unfortunately teachers are expected to assign a quantitative score to a qualitative assignment in order to fit a grade book. In addition, students (and parents) are points- driven and the student who receives an 87 believes she wrote a better paper than the student with an 84. Also, teachers have heard many students who claim “but I did everything on the rubric I should have an A.” Often times doing everything on the rubric is patch writing, or building a Lego model using the directions, not figuring it out on one’s own. Many students have also used a quote for the sake of using a quote; they have no idea what it means or what it means for their claim. On the other hand, teachers can tell a parent (and an administrator) that a student did not use any citations in body paragraph three and that is why they lost five points. In addition, building administrators are sometimes critical of teachers’ rubrics. Some may question the language or the criteria, for example. Building administrators are absolutely correct in questioning the language, and criteria, and part of their job is to understand how their teachers are assessing students, but those phrases and criteria are developed from the department’s experience (and an administrator may or may not have knowledge of high school writing). The higher order skills of college writing are subjective and a quantifiable score is difficult to give; therefore, a point-driven and quantifiable rubric is part of the gap between high school and college writing. If one believes writing is in part subjective, then how can an objective and quantifiable score be given?

Standard rubrics. On the other hand, there's always room for improvement, and high school writing rubrics need to be improved. Hamline University uses a standard rubric for all courses and all writing assignments. The content area skills are a separate rubric, but all writing skills, regardless of content area, are assessed using the same rubric. If high schools had school-wide rubrics, then all stakeholders would know the requirements for good writing. In addition, it would hold other departments to the same standards of writing, so that the English department would not be solely responsible. This would also allow students to transfer writing skills to other departments and for other departments to teach writing in their content area.

Effect of others on grades. Of course, all of this is contingent upon the notion that teachers have control over grades and that grades are final. This is not always the case. For example, HST1 and HST2 work in schools that allow students to do revisions in order to earn a higher grade after the final grade. In most instances, these revisions merely focus on citation and grammar mistakes, not organization or support or development or analysis, or what WC believes are higher order writing skills. While this blame can be placed on teachers, this is also on the students who want a quick fix and parents who want quantifiable proof of poor writing. This practice is sound, but students rarely want to do revisions in order to become a better writer; it is almost always about getting more points. In addition, with PLC and other related grading practices, students are allowed to redo assignments until proficient. That means, teachers have a handful of students who re-write papers multiple times. While writing is a process and writers go through extensive drafts, this is beyond the assignment process. If a student takes multiple tries to write a proficient paper, beyond the class writing process time, are they

able to write at a college level? Perhaps this practice contributes to the writing skills gap between high school and college. One may think this is only for struggling students who are not going to four-year colleges, but this is not true. In fact, many college-bound students at HST1's school use this policy as a time management and stress-relieving tool—they have a lot of assignments (and outside of school requirements), so they write a poor quality paper because they can just do it again. Then the special education teachers ask for grade adjustments, and then students with 504 plans ask for modifications, then parents complain or become so aggressive that teachers just pass the student. Plus as a teacher of seniors, like HST1, what happens when a student is not going to graduate because of a paper grade? The teacher is told to give a passing grade. This means a student passes, and does fairly well, in English 12 without being able to write a paper. And this does not even touch on the papers written by parents.

Writing curriculum, while designed by teachers, is more complicated than a teacher deciding to have students write a research paper or a high school teacher not being as knowledgeable as FYC instructors. While teachers should take ownership of not always creating assignments in alignment with FYC, blame cannot solely be placed on teachers. We also need to look at the effects of parents and the high school system.

#### How Do the Expectations Placed on High School Writers Compare to the Expectations Placed on College Writers?

Context and schedule. If writers adapt their writings to meet the needs of their audience and context, then the same can be said for the teaching of writing. High school and college are different and should be. One glaring difference is the schedule. There is simply more time, or at least more flexible time, for students and teachers at college.

Students at both levels have intense workloads, and instructors at both levels have a lot of work to do, but it is different. I am not claiming FYC instructors work less, not at all, but their work looks different—just like a high school teacher’s work looks different from an elementary teacher’s. One difference is teaching load. A high school teacher teaches more students for more hours in a day. An FYC might have more professional demands placed on them because of publishing expectations and keeping up on research and reading, but they do teach fewer students for fewer hours. All five instructors complained about the increased level of administrative work—the work that has little influence on student learning. With that, the schedule may also be a large contributor to the writing skills gap. This flexible schedule can allow FYC instructors time for the one-to-one coaching and conferencing that high school instructors cannot do. For example, FYC instructors can release students when work is done, or send them to different areas to work in groups, or arrange for writing conferences instead of class time, or decide to hold class on an online platform. High school teachers cannot do this easily. In addition high school classes meet according to the high school schedule. For example, some class times are shortened due to assemblies and testing schedules. Some class times are shortened because of varying daily schedules. For example, HST1’s school, public school, has two days a week that are shortened because of homeroom and CORE time. HST2, Catholic and alternative, also had shortened days for religious practice (at the private school) and mandatory counseling (for the charter school). Then there are students who are gone en masse for school activities: choir trips, Biology field trips, DECA/BPA National Conferences, sports competitions, etc. High school teachers are expected to make adjustments and help students. While individual college students might



miss class for sports and other commitments, FYC instructors are not the ones who have to adjust their lesson plans.

Student demographics. Also, the make-up of students is different in high school and FYC and affects expectations. For example, high school teachers teach to a variety of student abilities and motivations. In high school English class, including honors and AP, there might be students on IEP and 504 plans; there might be ELL students, homeless students, and students who are simply smarter than others. It seems there would be less intellectual diversity in AP classes, but with AP's push towards inclusivity, AP classes today are comprised of culturally, linguistically, and academically diverse students. In addition, as an AP teacher, HST1 often has students tell him they hate to read and write, yet are in AP English because of parental expectations and personal bragging rights. Of course students should be encouraged to challenge themselves, but some might need to forget about earning an A or they might be better served in a different course level. One cannot overlook the inclusion of all students—special education and ELL. Not all students have the academic skills to do college preparatory assignments, yet they need to be provided an opportunity to earn a high school diploma. Sometimes high school English is not expected to be college preparatory, it is expected to be high school.

ELL students create an interesting caveat in the classroom. In many cases, students and parents can opt out of ELL classes; therefore, there are students who cannot read and write in English who are trying to get through high school English assignments. In addition, depending on the ELL course sequence, some ELL students might not have to take English 11 or English 12. For example, in HST1's high school ELL students only have to take English 9 and 10 after they test out of ELL. This means they will have a

high school diploma without ever writing a research paper or position paper. ELL students go to college, and not just community college. As presented by my WC participant, small liberal arts schools, with their need to fill seats, will accept students who are not prepared for college writing and are being told they are not prepared for writing. Many colleges will also provide non-credit bearing writing class that students have to pay for, to try and ameliorate this skills gap.

Student development and maturity. I am often asked, as a 12<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, if there is really that much of a difference between the students who left me in June and those who show up in FYC in September. And my answer is always yes. All teachers recognize that juniors are different from sophomores even though three months separate them, so why would this not be the case for college students? And one cannot negate the effect of starting over (University of Wisconsin-Platteville, 2016). Most high school students have been together for years and they have reputations to uphold. When they show up to FYC they have the chance to start over with motivation and relationships. In addition, some students are late bloomers who excel in college but did not do much in high school. Some students just find a way to “get it together” out of necessity, scholarship retention for example, or just maturity.

High school teachers need to read and write. Of course, expectations are different from teacher to teacher. HST1 believes there needs to be a stronger expectation of writing from students and teachers. He believes students should write more in all subjects, but that teachers should write more, too. How can teachers teach writing if they don't do it themselves? Yet, unlike FYC instructors, there is not an opportunity or expectation that teachers write, and this is detrimental. However, with increasing class

sizes, administration expectations, and increased grading from new grading practices, along with the family obligations all adults have, there is not much time to write and teachers do not have the energy to seek out publishing. The same could be said for reading. Perhaps one reason teachers keep teaching staid literature is because they don't have the time, or expectation, to read professionally as part of their job. Of course there are exceptions to every rule, and some high school teachers read and write extensively, but this is not the general practice, unfortunately. If FYC colleagues are expected to stay current in literature, then high school teachers should also; therefore, a solution to the problem of the grading skills gap is to place an emphasis on professional development on the teaching of writing.

Grading expectations. In addition, the expectations for high school students are different. One current practice in high school is the emphasis on re-doing assignments, not being graded on participation, and not being penalized for late work. This does not align to the expectations in college, at least according to my three college instructors. As stated earlier, students are often allowed to re-do assignments with no penalty. This does not align with the FYC syllabi examined. While an FYC might work individually with a student to redo an assignment, this is not a formal expectation like it is in high school. Also, C1 and C2 had clear penalties for late work, and this is not the case in high school. Many teachers can only grade according to the academic standards for that assignment. For example, HST1, public school, can only grade on a student's use of topic sentences and citations, and cannot deduct points for a paper that is days, weeks, and even months late. While the work of Dufour (2014) and others provide research for why this is acceptable practice, if it does not align with college expectations, then high schools are

not preparing students for college. Also, C1 and C2 were able to lower grades after a certain number of absences; this is not the case with many high schools as teachers are required to grade on academic ability only, not study skills. Interestingly, WC was saddened by how few students are prepared for college work because of a lack of study and life skills. Perhaps the grading expectations are hindering students' ability to be successful in college.

While much has been said about grade inflation, dumbing down of curriculum, lowering of expectations by teachers, and even the low intelligence of teachers, research suggests that we should look closely at the expectations of all stakeholders.

#### How Do the Classroom Teacher Experiences in High School Writing Classes Compare to the Classroom Instructor Experiences in College Writing Classes?

Teachers enjoy their work. One positive element from this research is that all five instructors studied loved their work. They may be discouraged and overwhelmed by the administrative tasks, or the paper load, the lack of respect, or even the apathy of students, but they have all experienced the magic and joy of teaching. All of the teachers experienced conflict with co-workers and administrators, all of the teachers experienced a lack of self-confidence in the classroom, and all of them experienced students who found success despite adversity.

Lack of pedagogical knowledge. Interestingly, C1 and C2 both expressed concern for the lack of teaching knowledge in their classroom. While they felt prepared and knowledgeable in their content area, they felt ill-equipped to actually teach. C1 has had to self-teach through books and conversations and trial and error. C2 came from a high

school teaching background, but she knows many of her colleagues do not have the pedagogical knowledge necessary to teach something as important as academic writing.

Student apathy. Unfortunately, all five instructors experience teaching writing to students who don't care. HST1 and HST2 are charged with teaching students who don't want to work through the drafting process and who can't meet deadlines. HST1, as an AP teacher in a public school, often teaches the most talented students in the school; however, they are often the most challenging students in the school. They question their instructors, question the grading, question the assignments, and question the importance of grading. Many of those students plan on STEM or business careers and do not see the value of writing. In addition, HST2 teaches students who can't care about writing. They are in a specialized alternative school because their personal lives are chaotic and unhealthy and they have to care about staying safe and healthy, not writing research papers. Similarly, C1 and C2 have both expressed concern for lazy students, or defiant students, or even the arrogant students who play the game of academic writing without caring or connecting.

Class size. As stated earlier, the experience of teaching FYC and high school writing is different because of class size and make up. High school writing teachers experience more students with more diverse skills across the board. If an average high school class size is 30+ students, and an FYC class is around 22, there are approximately ten more students a high school teacher is responsible for, but multiply this by more classes, and by pages of writing. In addition, high school teachers experience more diverse needs. Every kind of student will sit through English 12, but FYC at a particular institution will be more homogenous as students, for the most part, had to demonstrate a

certain level of skill just to gain admittance to the university. They might also have taken a placement test to determine which level of FYC they should enroll in. In addition, many of the discipline cases and special education cases in high school do not enroll in FYC at a four-year university, though WC expressed concern about admissions policies.

Technology. One cannot ignore the experience of technology in the classroom. HST2 teaches at a school where every student has a laptop. While the power of these laptops is extraordinary, they can also a powerful nuisance and hindrance to learning (Schleicher, 2015). For example, students are less apt to take notes when they can just take a picture of the screen and look at it later on their laptops. It is easier for students to engage in off-task behavior and to cheat on assignments. HST1 and HST2 both complained about how students do not have to actually read the book, or write the paper as websites exist to do those tasks for students. In addition, HST1 is evaluated on his use of technology in the classroom, but the use of technology does not necessarily make for a good teacher. Additionally, the proper use of technology, as outlined by HST1's district, is not merely conducting research or writing a paper. Teachers are pushed to use technology in other ways that are not reading and writing, and are not necessarily leading to college preparedness, especially when the teacher is creating a lesson to use the technology, not using the technology to deepen a lesson.

Plagiarism. Along with technology comes the fear of plagiarism. While students have always found ways to cheat on a test or paper, the prevalence of technology has made it more pervasive. C1 and C2 were concerned about plagiarism, both the purposeful and the accidental. Some students plagiarize knowingly by using another student's work, or purposely failing to cite sources, but other students accidentally

plagiarize because they don't know how to integrate research. In addition, the ease of technology also more readily allows for patch writing—using a quote for the sake of using a quote instead of using the bit of information purposefully. Another expectation that is worth mentioning with the influx of technology is plagiarism and other forms of cheating on papers. For example, an MIT professor determined that computer-graded standardized writing tests can be entirely made up and not even make sense to a human reader (Weiss, 2014). In addition, teachers at HST1's public high school and HST2's former private school have reverted back to handwritten in-class essays for many assignments because students can search for quotes without doing the reading and engage in all sorts of file sharing (screen shots, Google docs, airdrop, etc.). Another form of plagiarism reaching high schools is a plagiarism spinner that allows students to copy/paste their paper then replaces words with synonyms in order to avoid detection by plagiarism programs such as turnitin.com. Some examples of plagiarism spinners are plagiarisma.net and article-spinner.com. This means teachers might be assigning aligned writing tasks, but students aren't actually writing them. How can they improve as writers if they do not write? It seems it is not the instruction or assessment that is faulty, but the ethos of students is.

Teaching is hard, writing is hard, and combined make for a near impossible task. Hopefully by better understanding the curriculum, experiences, and expectations of writing instructors in high school and college we can help ease the transition of students and improve writing instruction.

## Limitations

Sample. One major limit of this study is the sample size and type. The five participants may be representative of the strata of writing instructors, but they in no way reflect all teachers and assignments. For example, one of my participants was a colleague at my school. While one of the goals for this study is to help my own teaching and to quell the discontent in my department, having a personal colleague might not serve as a broad generalization of writing curriculum. In addition, I know our students are prepared for FYC because they tell us they are, but I'm still not sure this is true for high school students in general. My other high school participant taught for many years at a private high school and is now teaching at an alternative school. I chose him because he could provide perspectives on both of those schools, but they still don't represent the experience of most students. Both high school teachers taught in suburban schools, which mean all inner city teachers, were left out, as well as rural schools. In addition, my participants neither reflected the growing population of on-line instruction, nor did they represent home-school instruction.

FYC participants. My participant limitations are also reflected by more FYC participants. Both FYC participants are adjuncts at private, urban universities; the WC participant, while not an adjunct, works for a private, urban university. As adjuncts, they represent a typical FYC instructor, and both have taught at a variety of institutions; however, they do not represent state colleges or schools out state. In addition, the largest state school in the state was not represented, though they were contacted. For the purpose of this dissertation, geographic proximity was a limiting factor, thus out state universities were impossible. Of course, many students attend schools out of state and I



was not able to study those instructors for this dissertations. Many students also attend Ivy League and highly selective universities; those universities were also not included. In addition, I did contact other high school instructors—one was not able to participate, two did not show up at our agreed-upon meeting time, and one never responded to finalize meeting plans and complete the consent letter. In addition, all FYC instructors represent four-year universities, not community and technical college. And finally, these instructors in no way represent the work that is going on through out the country. Minnesota is ranked highly in education, but I do not have a good sense of what writing instruction looks like in all parts of the country.

Future research possibilities. While I was able to triangulate my research through instructors, one limiting factor that could challenge the validity of my research is the lack of student representation. I was not able to gather student data because of HSR/IRB restrictions. If this research were to be expanded, student data would need to be collected in the form of writing samples or interviews. It would be beneficial to better understand their feelings towards FYC and if they felt prepared. My research could also be extended by working with the out-state university instructors as well as urban and rural high school instructors. Of course, it would also be interesting to work with writing instructors from all over the country. However, I'd like to see more research on regular students and regular writing classes, as there is much research on at-risk populations.

Document analysis. I collected teaching documents and analyzed them according to a rubric from the National Archives; however, I was only able to analyze what the instructors were willing to share with me. The FYC instructors were leery about sharing their instructional documents with me because of copyright and intellectual property

concerns. The two high school instructors were comfortable sharing with me because they were personal contacts, but again they only shared what they could access or what they were willing to share. While all documents provided were for major writing assignments, I do not know about other types of writing done in class. In addition, as stated earlier, I was not able to study students; therefore, I was not able to look at student writing samples. It would have been beneficial to see papers written by FYC students and graded by FYC instructors and engage in norming practices with the high school instructors. Additionally, none of the instructors said much about students with educational modifications (IEP/504) or ELL students. These students are unable to do regular high school work with out modification and intervention, and they are most likely not able to do college level work.

In addition, I focused on FYC instruction, but many of the complaints regarding student writing comes from instructors in other content areas. If this study were to be expanded, then studying the writing curriculum, experiences, and expectations of other introductory and general education courses would be beneficial. The same could be said for other high school content areas.

While there are many limitations on the scope of this research, it does provide a starting point. By keeping it local, area high school teachers can have a better idea what area FYC courses will be like for students. While American high schools are very different throughout the country, they are also similar. The same could probably be said for American universities.

## Implications and Suggestions

Implications for high schools. This research project has many implications for high school writing instruction. First of all, by better understanding the curriculum, experiences, and explanations of high school writing and FYC, we can begin to prepare students for college. According to Smith (2016), 1-in 4 college students take a remedial class in reading, writing, or math. While much has been said about first generation, poor, and minority students, 45% of students taking remedial classes come from families making \$48,000 or more. This means families are spending \$12,000 more per year for content their student should have learned in high school. Smith (2016) does not place sole blame on high schools because colleges and universities also need to reform the ways they treat remedial students. In fact, 74% of students seeking remediation never graduate (Smith 2016). In addition, Table 5.2: Remedial Education Rates of Minnesota Students, shows remedial education rates for Minnesota students (University of Minnesota, 2016):

**Table 5.2: Remedial Education Rates of Minnesota Students**

Developmental Courses Taken by 2008 Minnesota Public High School Graduates Within Two Years of High School Graduation
- 53% of the class of 2007 enrolled in a Minnesota public higher education institution
-40% took one or more developmental courses during that period. Of those students, only 2% of remedial students were enrolled at the University of Minnesota and 22% were enrolled at public four-year universities
-17% took a remedial writing course

While there is a need and a concern for students who are not prepared to write at the college level, much of that focus should be at the community and technical college level, as well as for-profit schools. Statistics for Minnesota not-for profit private schools mirrors that of the University of Minnesota—about 2% of students enroll in remedial courses (Minnesota SLEDS, 2016).

Implications for FYC. However, much can still be done to improve writing instruction at the college level. First, there needs to be better communication between Minnesota high schools and Minnesota universities. Minnesota colleges need to work with local high schools to share what skills will be required of students, as high school teachers want to prepare students for FYC. This communication could be through advisory boards, collaborative and cooperative teachings, and even academic programs offered through the universities. This could also be an extended partnership through the Minnesota Writing Project and MCTE. Second, writing instruction pedagogy needs to be improved at all levels. There needs to be a focus on the teaching of writing for preparing teachers just like there is an emphasis on reading instruction. Currently writing instruction is absent from many teacher prep programs, or is minimally taught. It also needs to be seen as valuable and important, as reading is. Also, much of the writing pedagogy available focuses on lower grades or at-risk writers and there is little available for regular education high school English teachers. With this, graduate programs, or certificates, in English and Composition studies need to be available to high school English teachers. While the University of Minnesota does offer a certificate in writing and literacy, it does not focus primarily on the teaching of writing or provides deep content area work; it is also not through the English or Writing Studies department

(University of Minnesota, 2016). In addition, the Minnesota Higher Learning Commission recently set forth a requirement that all high school English teachers teaching AP/CIS/IB classes need to have 18 credits in English. This is great, but currently St. Thomas University is the only school offering this program and it costs approximately \$30,000—for a certificate, not a graduate degree and for a required teaching component (St. Thomas University, 2016). If Minnesota would like this requirement, and it's a good thing, then it needs to be economically viable.

Implications for professional development. Formal academic programs are not the only way writing instruction can be improved; it can also be improved through professional development. When a Minnesota high school teacher renews her license, she never has to take a content area class. The Minnesota Department of Education (2016) requires licensed Minnesota teachers to show development in mental health, ELL populations, reading strategies, differentiation, and modifications, but they never have to show content area development. Initial licenses require a content area test, and this is good, but renewed licenses never need additional content area knowledge. If local colleges are willing to work with school districts to provide PD credits in literacy and differentiation, they should be willing to offer literature and writing credits. In addition, local PD needs to allow English teachers to work with writing and literature. For example, my district requires almost a week of in-house professional development, but none of it focused on writing or what we actually teach students. Instead of using the time to norm papers, revamp rubrics, read new books to teach, or to learn about the new ACT and SAT writing tests, we took sessions on engagement, organization, diversity, and technology. We did take sessions on reading strategies, but these focused on our

struggling readers. We also did not work with other departments on developing writing curriculum.

Implications for other stake holders. Finally, if we are really looking to prepare students for college work, we have to take a deeper look at the role of other components and stakeholders. For example, parents need to allow English teachers to grade papers and not complain or criticize the teachers, and students need to not cheat and plagiarize. Additionally, a focus on analytical insight process can also help prevent the criticism and cheating. Special Ed teachers, counselors, and other administrators need to allow grades to be up to the classroom teacher. In addition, many schools have moved toward allowing students to redo and make up work infinitely with no penalty. While standards-based grading has its place in a classroom and can provide more meaningful feedback, merely meeting an academic standard does not ensure college readiness. So much of college is about independence and study skills, yet we are not allowing students to grow in this area. Both FYC instructors detailed grading and attendance policies that deducted points for attendance, late work, and even plagiarism. I have also looked at syllabi from students at other colleges and even the military, and all detail grading policies for absences, cheating, and missed deadlines. In addition, by allowing students to re-write papers over and over until mastery, we are masking their true abilities to write. If a student needs three times and one on one work with the teacher in order to write a three page paper, are they ready to write at college?

Implications for universities. Finally, the universities also need to make changes in FYC. First, they need to be in alignment with other college FYC programs. While this alignment work is being done at many universities through the use of the Writing

Program Administrators, it is neither comprehensive nor complete. If high school teachers need to prepare students for FYC, we need to know what they're preparing them for. While each university is different, and should be, FYC courses should not be drastically different from university to university. As a high school teacher, I should not have to look at my seniors and I say, "All of you will take college writing in some capacity." I should know the exact skills they will need. In addition, other areas besides English need to be responsible for teaching writing at all levels. If the Biology department expresses concern for students' inability to write, then they need to take ownership of teaching their students to write like biologists. And this needs to trickle down to their high school counterparts. High school biology departments should also be teaching students to write, or at the very least uphold what the English department expects. Finally, universities need to value the work of FYC instructors. They should not be relegated to basements and transient faculty. If student retention is reflected in their FYC success, then time and money need to reflect this importance.

Writing is a process and it's hard work. The teaching of writing is even harder. Our students deserve the best materials, the best teachers, and the best instructional practices. We also need to better understand the curriculum, experiences, and expectations of all instructors and stakeholders. We also need to have more compassion for the work we all do, and perhaps the words of HST1 can best express our work:

*We work hard. We try. We really do try, at least around here. We care about giving students enough skills and experience to do, you know, the next level. They're not going to be ready, all of them, but we're going to have them more ready than if they didn't have us working with them. Please don't hate us. They're kids that have gotten*

*through, well I hope nobody blames me for that because I tried. It didn't work, but I tried."*



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## APPENDIX A: U.S. National Archives Written Document Analysis

<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/document.html>

## Written Document Analysis Worksheet

1.	<p>TYPE OF DOCUMENT (Check one):</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Map</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Advertisement</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Letter</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Telegram</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Congressional record</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Patent</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Press release</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Census report</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Memorandum</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Report</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Other</td> </tr> </table>	<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper	<input type="checkbox"/> Map	<input type="checkbox"/> Advertisement	<input type="checkbox"/> Letter	<input type="checkbox"/> Telegram	<input type="checkbox"/> Congressional record	<input type="checkbox"/> Patent	<input type="checkbox"/> Press release	<input type="checkbox"/> Census report	<input type="checkbox"/> Memorandum	<input type="checkbox"/> Report	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper	<input type="checkbox"/> Map	<input type="checkbox"/> Advertisement											
<input type="checkbox"/> Letter	<input type="checkbox"/> Telegram	<input type="checkbox"/> Congressional record											
<input type="checkbox"/> Patent	<input type="checkbox"/> Press release	<input type="checkbox"/> Census report											
<input type="checkbox"/> Memorandum	<input type="checkbox"/> Report	<input type="checkbox"/> Other											
2.	<p>UNIQUE PHYSICAL QUALITIES OF THE DOCUMENT (Check one or more):</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Interesting letterhead</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Notations</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Handwritten</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> "RECEIVED" stamp</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Typed</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Other</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Seals</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	<input type="checkbox"/> Interesting letterhead	<input type="checkbox"/> Notations	<input type="checkbox"/> Handwritten	<input type="checkbox"/> "RECEIVED" stamp	<input type="checkbox"/> Typed	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Seals					
<input type="checkbox"/> Interesting letterhead	<input type="checkbox"/> Notations												
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<input type="checkbox"/> Typed	<input type="checkbox"/> Other												
<input type="checkbox"/> Seals													
3	<p>DATE(S) OF DOCUMENT:</p> <hr/>												
4	<p>AUTHOR (OR CREATOR) OF THE DOCUMENT:</p> <hr/> <p>POSITION (TITLE):</p> <hr/>												
5	<p>FOR WHAT AUDIENCE WAS THE DOCUMENT WRITTEN?</p> <hr/>												
6	<p>DOCUMENT INFORMATION (There are many possible ways to answer A-E.)</p> <p>A. List three things the author said that you think are important:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <p>B. Why do you think this document was written?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>C. What evidence in the document helps you know why it was written? Quote from the document.</p> <hr/>												

D. List two things the document tells you about life in the United States at the time it was written:

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E. Write a question to the author that is left unanswered by the document:

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## APPENDIX B: Modified Written Document Analysis

1.	<p>TYPE OF DOCUMENT (Check one):</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Syllabus</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Lesson plan</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Written feedback from student</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Rubric</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Framework</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> TBD</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Assignment</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Lesson materials</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> TBD</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Writing sample</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Written feedback from instructor</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> TBD</td> </tr> </table>	<input type="checkbox"/> Syllabus	<input type="checkbox"/> Lesson plan	<input type="checkbox"/> Written feedback from student	<input type="checkbox"/> Rubric	<input type="checkbox"/> Framework	<input type="checkbox"/> TBD	<input type="checkbox"/> Assignment	<input type="checkbox"/> Lesson materials	<input type="checkbox"/> TBD	<input type="checkbox"/> Writing sample	<input type="checkbox"/> Written feedback from instructor	<input type="checkbox"/> TBD
<input type="checkbox"/> Syllabus	<input type="checkbox"/> Lesson plan	<input type="checkbox"/> Written feedback from student											
<input type="checkbox"/> Rubric	<input type="checkbox"/> Framework	<input type="checkbox"/> TBD											
<input type="checkbox"/> Assignment	<input type="checkbox"/> Lesson materials	<input type="checkbox"/> TBD											
<input type="checkbox"/> Writing sample	<input type="checkbox"/> Written feedback from instructor	<input type="checkbox"/> TBD											
2.	<p>UNIQUE PHYSICAL QUALITIES OF THE DOCUMENT (Check one or more):</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Letterhead</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Notations</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> electronic</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> TBD</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> paper</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> TBD</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> length</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	<input type="checkbox"/> Letterhead	<input type="checkbox"/> Notations	<input type="checkbox"/> electronic	<input type="checkbox"/> TBD	<input type="checkbox"/> paper	<input type="checkbox"/> TBD	<input type="checkbox"/> length					
<input type="checkbox"/> Letterhead	<input type="checkbox"/> Notations												
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3.	DATE(S) OF DOCUMENT:												
4.	<p>AUTHOR (OR CREATOR) OF THE DOCUMENT:</p> <hr/> <p>POSITION (TITLE):</p> <hr/>												
5.	FOR WHAT AUDIENCE WAS THE DOCUMENT WRITTEN? <hr/>												
6.	<p>DOCUMENT INFORMATION (There are many possible ways to answer A-E.)</p> <p>A. List three things the author said that you think are important:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <p>B. Why do you think this document was written?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>C. What evidence in the document helps you know why it was written? Quote from the document.</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>D. List two things the document tells you about writing curriculum:</p> <hr/> <hr/>												

## APPENDIX C: Interview Questions

- A. Who are you as a writing instructor?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- B. Tell me about the writing curriculum you use?

### Curriculum

1. How were the materials selected?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Where do the goals/objectives come from?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What are your large goals as a writing instructor?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What were the goals for this lesson?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. How did you determine the student assignment? (i.e. research paper)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. How did you determine the student task? (i.e. using direct quotes in a research paper)

Expectations

1. What are your beliefs about writing instruction?
2. What are your expectations of students?
3. What do you hope they accomplish?
4. How are you as a high school teacher preparing students for college writing?
5. How can high school writing teachers better prepare and for college writing?

Experiences

1. What challenges do you experience as a writing teacher?
2. What are your successes as a writing teacher?
3. What do you enjoy as a writing teacher?
4. What do you see as your role in the writing classroom?

## APPENDIX D: Consent Letter

January 2015

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to invite you to participate in an interview and document analysis for my doctoral research. I am currently a doctoral student at Hamline University. To complete my dissertation I am studying the curriculums, experiences, and expectations of high school writing teachers, first year composition instructors, and university writing center directors/instructors. As a current high school or college writing instructor, I am interested in performing a document analysis of your teaching materials, and interviewing you about your teaching practice.

The participation of teachers in my study will involve sharing your classroom documents with me (syllabus, assignment directions, evaluation rubrics, etc.), and interviewing you regarding your teaching of writing. The documents can be shared with me electronically or through paper copies. The interview will last approximately one hour.

There is little to no risk if you choose to participate. If you agree to participate in this research, your confidentiality will be strictly protected by the researcher throughout the study as well as after its completion. You will be asked to choose a pseudonym that will be used to identify you and your school in the document analysis and interview. Your teaching documents may be included in the dissertation. I will create a written transcript of the interview and may include this transcript in my dissertation. If you do not give a preferred pseudonym, I will automatically assign one. Participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time, for any reason. Should you decide to withdraw, I will destroy all data pertaining to you (i.e., audio files, written transcripts and computer files). All files will be transcribed by me and securely stored in my home. The files will be destroyed two years after the completion of my dissertation.

This research is public scholarship and will eventually be in Hamline's **Bush Library Digital Commons**, a searchable electronic repository. Additionally, the information obtained from this project may be published or used in other scholarly ways. This project has been approved by the Human Subjects Committee of the School of Education at Hamline University and the district where I am currently employed.

Feel free to contact me with any questions. I am sincerely grateful for your consideration in participating in this important research. Please return the attached form indicating your agreement to participate in this study. Additionally, the attached form indicates the confidentiality that will be utilized throughout the study and the publication or presentation of the results.

With Grateful Regards,

## APPENDIX E: Informed Consent Signature Sheet - Participant Copy

I [ \_\_\_\_\_ ] agree to participate in practice doctoral research regarding the curriculums, expectations, and experiences of high school and college writing instructors.

I understand that I shall not receive any compensation for participating in this study. I also understand that participation in this study is voluntary and I am free to withdraw from the research process at any time, for any reason.

Month/day/year

\_\_\_\_\_