

EXPLORING EIGHTH GRADE MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS' READING AND
WRITING EXPERIENCES AND THE IMPACT OF CULTURALLY RELEVANT
WRITING INSTRUCTION

A Record of Study

by

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Submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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August 2020

Major Subject: Curriculum and Instruction

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative dominant crossover mixed action research study was to understand eighth grade English I students' middle school reading and writing preferences, writing experiences, the impact of culturally relevant writing instruction, and the impact, if any, it had on increasing students' writing self-efficacy. A qualitative dominant crossover mixed approach was selected for this study as it involved collecting both qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data included: reflective journals, a writing interest form, learning logs, and writing artifacts collected throughout the writing unit. The quantitative data consisted of students rating their writing self-efficacy at the beginning and at the end of the writing unit and rating students' expository and narrative writing, using a STAAR rubric, at the beginning and end of the research study. The participants in this study consisted of 63 students who were enrolled in an eighth grade English I course at the research site and participated in the three-week writing unit.

An in-depth In Vivo data analysis and descriptive statistics were utilized to correlate the quantitative data with qualitative data. The In Vivo data analysis revealed four themes: (1) the lack of culturally relevant writing instruction, (2) culturally relevant writing instruction has the potential to ignite student interest and writing passion, (3) culturally relevant writing instruction challenges students to explore their cultural background and the background of others, and (4) the lack of time impeded students' ability to create writing products.

The descriptive statistics indicated a statistical difference for student writing self-efficacy for poetic, narrative, and expository writing. Students' self-efficacy scores increased for narrative and expository writing but decreased for poetic writing.

DEDICATION

This record of study is dedicated to my first teacher, my mother. She raised a young black boy into a strong and proud black man. She instilled in me a love for God, love for my people, and love for ALL regardless of race or socioeconomic status. Without her sacrifices, I would not have become the man that I am today. More importantly, this study is dedicated to all young black brothers who are growing up in the "hood", growing up without a father, growing up without resources or pathways to success, and growing up without hope. There is hope, but it starts with faith, believing in your self-when all those doubt you, and persevering despite the obstacles you face. Always remember, education opens the doors to infinite possibilities, so educate yourself, my brothers!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I could not have finished this program without his guidance, divine connections, and strength. I thank Dr. Nkechi Orabuchi Marshall Dupas, and Dr. Mary Lynn Crow for writing my letters of recommendation for the program. I am also thankful for Dr. Nkechi Orabuchi, who supported me and encouraged me throughout this process.

To Mark Samuel, my mentor and Alpha brother, I appreciate your support during this process. For the last 18 years, you have encouraged, supported, and helped propel me to success. Without your support, I am not sure that I would have made it this far. To my committee members, Dr. Trina Davis, Dr. Monica Neshyba, Dr. Gwendolyn Webb-Hasan, and Dr. Radhika Viruru, thank you for your commitment, time, and seeing my record of study to its completion.

Lastly, I would like to thank my former Chancellor and Vice Chancellor, Nikisha Edwards, and Robin Ford, for their support and encouragement throughout this process. When I experienced challenges with the IRB process their support never faltered and they made every effort to ensure I was successful in anything I wanted to accomplish.

CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES

Contributors

This work was supervised by a Record of Study committee consisting of Dr. Trina Davis [Chair], Dr. Mónica Vásquez Neshyba [Co-Chair], Dr. Radhika Viruru, and Dr. Gwendolyn Webb-Hasan [Committee Members] of the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture at Texas A&M University. All the research and development of this Record of Study was completed by the student independently.

Funding Sources

There are no outside funding contributions to acknowledge related to the research and compilation of this study and document thereof.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

“You write in order to change the world... if you alter, even by a millimeter, the way people look at reality, then you can change it.”

-James Baldwin

Leadership Context and Purpose of the Action

National Context

Graham and Perin (2007a) maintained that in the United States, students graduate from high school and cannot write at basic levels needed to be successful in college and the workforce. In 2011, The National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) writing exam was given and it measured the writing proficiency for students in grades 4th, 8th, and 12th (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). At the 8th grade level, the national mean scale score for writing proficiency was 150 with a maximum score of 300. The mean scale score for each student population was: 165 for Asian students, 158 for White students, 155 for Two or more races, 145 for American Indian/Alaskan Native, 141 for Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander students, 136 for Hispanic students, and 132 for African American students.

The mean scale score for Hispanic and African American students was 14 and 18 points less than the national mean scale score for writing. Table 1 shows the achievement levels of each student population on the NAEP writing assessment. Moving from left to right, Column 1 lists the achievement level, and Columns 2-8 list the percentage for each student population for each achievement level.

Table 1

8th grade Writing Achievement Levels on NAEP

Achievement Levels	Asian	White	Two or More Races	American Indian/Alaskan Native	Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	Hispanic	African American
Below basic	11%	13%	13%	22%	30%	31%	35%
At or Above Basic	89%	87%	87%	78%	70%	69%	65%
At or Above Proficient	44%	34%	30%	20%	22%	14%	11%
At Advanced	8%	4%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%

Note. Adapted from The Nation's Report Card: Writing 2011 by U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2012, p. 11.

The achievement levels of the student populations above indicate a pressing need to improve students' writing capacity. To understand students' underachievement in writing, in the United States, research on writing instruction must be reviewed.

According to Gilbert and Graham (2010), across the country in the elementary grades, little time is devoted to writing assignments that involve analysis and writing instruction in these grades consists of teaching students writing processes such as revising and editing. In general, in grades 3-5 there is an emphasis on learning to write (Graham, Gillespie, & Mckewon, 2013) and in middle and high school, students are composing short pieces of texts that do not challenge them to think through and make connections with issues or show breadth or depth of knowledge (Applebee & Langer, 2011). In the United States, the passage and implementation of the Common Core State

Standards (CCSS) in 41 states ushered in a greater emphasis on writing instruction across the nation (Graham, 2012). The shift in the expectations of what students are expected to know in grades K-12 in English also required that educators change the content and instructional approaches to facilitate writing instruction in these grade-levels.

The CCSS promote both college and career readiness and measure students' abilities to write in the following modes: opinion or preference, informative/explanatory, and narratives (Shanahan, 2015). Additionally, the shift of many states to implement the CCSS made the importance of writing and writing instruction an important part of learning for schools in the United States (Graham, Gillespie, & Mckewon, 2013). With this in mind, teachers in grades K-12 must balance both learning to write and writing to learn strategies, so that students develop the writing skills to write for a variety of purposes and audiences. The broad nature of the above-referenced standards provides room for teachers to craft instruction that is both engaging and culturally relevant- especially for students that are culturally and linguistically diverse.

Trends in writing instruction. Research scholars dedicated to improving students' writing capacity have discussed trends in writing instruction (Applebee & Langer, 2011; Graham & Perin, 2007a; Graham, Gillespie, & Mckewon, 2012; McCarthy & Ro, 2011) and others have examined best practices for facilitating writing instruction in the classroom (Graham, 2008; Graham & Perin, 2007b; Keys, 2000; Troia, 2014; Troia & Graham, 2003; Zumbrunn & Krause, 2012). For example, Graham and Perin (2007b) conducted a meta-analysis of writing instruction for adolescent students

and concluded that teachers must deliver both explicit and systematic approaches for writing instruction. The findings of their analysis revealed the following writing practices are beneficial for adolescent writers: teaching students' strategies for planning and revising and editing, collaborative student writing groups, teaching strategies for summarizing reading material, setting specific goals for writing, using technology to build student writing capacity and providing students writing models. The authors also suggested professional development designed to build teachers' ability to deliver effective writing instruction. In a similar vein, McCarthy and Ro (2011) conducted a study that examined 29 third and fourth grade teachers to understand both their approaches and influences on writing instruction. At the primary level, the authors noticed that these teachers are influenced by standards and testing accountability. This has resulted in teachers focusing on formulaic genre-based instruction (i.e., expository, narrative, persuasive) and producing texts like those assessed on high-stakes tests.

However, to develop effective and competent writers, teachers must move past "drill and kill" writing instruction so that students develop writing skills that are beneficial for college and the workforce. Troia (2014) maintained that there are many evidenced-based practices for facilitating writing instruction. These writing practices include (1) freewriting, (2) timed writing, (3) learning through writing and reflection, (4) process writing, (5) self-regulated writing strategies, (6) online spaces for producing text, (7) skills-based writing instruction, and (8) authentic and relevant writing tasks and motivation. Graham and Troia (2003) and Graham (2008) articulated viable solutions for developing competent writers. The authors maintained that educators must: dedicate

time for students to engage in interdisciplinary writing across content areas, find ways to increase student interest, enjoyment, and motivation in writing. The authors further posit that as a result of implementing these strategies, students become strategic writers.

Writing instruction in practice. In the science classroom, Keys (2000) explored the thinking process of 8th grade students' writing during the composition of a written laboratory report. She found that incorporating writing in the creation of laboratory reports challenges students to think critically about science learning and has the potential to impact the way students draw hypotheses and generate reasoning about scientific data. This study suggests that writing should not be relegated to the English classroom; teachers across content and disciplines should find meaningful ways to integrate writing into their classroom contexts.

Tatum and Gue (2012) explored the sociocultural benefits of writing with 12 African American male adolescents at a Summer Leadership Institute. The authors challenged students to construct poetry, short stories, plays, and novels rooted in four platforms which included: self-identity, being resilient, engaging others, and building capacity. In each of the writing products, the authors encouraged the students to find their "voice" and to write about subjects and topics "meaningful" to the students. By prioritizing the voices and meaningful experiences of students, the authors equipped students with the skills to use their writings "to tap into a [writing] power lying latent within them" (p. 141).

Mendez and Fink (2012) and Mackay, Ricks, and Young (2017) explored using mentor texts to increase student interest, engagement, and enjoyment. Mendez and Fink

examined how mentor texts are valuable tools for building the writing capacity of students. In her classroom, students examined Rene Saldana's *The Jumping Tree* (2001) and Sandra Cisneros' *Eleven* (1991) as models to encourage students to delve deep into their own lives to create stories. She postulated that students have funds of knowledge they bring to the classroom and it is essential for students to understand that "authentic writing comes from within, from experience, from wanting to make their experiences relevant to others, from wanting to express themselves in their very own words" (p. 28).

Engaging in this type of critical self-reflection transforms students into both competent and effective writers. Similarly, Mackay, Ricks, and Young (2017) agreed with the ideology of using mentor texts to build the writing capacity of K-3 students. The authors suggested selecting books from the Early Childhood Children's Book of the Year Award and the Theodore Seuss Geisel Award. These awards select books on content, style, and select texts that support the beginning reader. The authors asserted that mentor texts should initially "be read over and over again for the pleasure of reading. It is through reading that students begin to value a book enough to be willing to look to the author as a writing mentor" (p. 177).

Additionally, research scholars have explored integrating technology in the classroom to build student writing capacity. Illustrating this point, Sweeny (2011) discussed using an internet workshop, which consists of using online writing resources to build students' writing capacity based on a teacher-defined task or specified area. Internet workshop also involves the use of instant messages and text messages to

facilitate instruction or the creation of multi-modal texts, which involves the use of video, media, animation, or pictures to convey messages.

Curwood, Magnifico, and Lammers (2013) conducted an ethnographic study about how fan-based writing activities, writing, and motivation within online affinity spaces have the potential to improve students' writing capacity. They explored the following online spaces: Hunger Games, Neopets, and The Sims. In the Hunger Game affinity space, participants engaged in "writing fan fiction and making fan videos, and others may opt to design role-playing games and manage fansites. Affinity spaces allow for multiple and self-directed forms of participation" (p. 680). Cassie, the student managing the affinity space, engaged in writing news stories, transformative works, and contributing to the news feed. Sheena, a Neopets player, wrote about her experiences as a Neopian player and about her pet for the Neopian Times an online newspaper for players that have Neopets. Similarly, Eve, a 13-yr. old wrote for The Sims Writer's Hangout and created both forum posts and videos about her experiences within the Sims affinity space. The research of Sweeny and Curwood, Magnifico, and Lammers reveal that leveraging internet workshop and online affinity spaces have the potential to provide real-world contexts to develop students' writing proficiency.

Conversely, some researchers have focused their investigations on differentiating writing instruction, assessing student writing needs and progress, and employing writing strategies to ensure students are meeting the expectations of standardized testing. Shea (2015) expounded on strategies for facilitating differentiated writing instruction. She discussed: (1) using formative assessment to determine students' writing level, (2)

identifying students' writing needs, (3) targeted instruction based on the needs of students, (4) guided practice, and (5) continued assessments to monitor student growth. She emphasized the crucial need for differentiated writing instruction in classrooms “where the uniqueness of the author is accepted and respected-where a range of interests, motivation, and levels of writing competence are found” (p. 80). In her classroom, she recognized the “uniqueness” of each of her students and provided students with writing instruction that was “authentic”, based on student backgrounds, and provided students the opportunity to communicate “personal stories”.

On the other hand, Campbell and Filimon (2018) conducted an action research study about equipping linguistically diverse students with the knowledge and skills to meet proficiency on a state writing assessment. The authors explored the impact of strategy-focused writing instruction known as the Restate-Answer-Prove (RAP) strategy on argumentative writing skills of 7th grade middle school students. The strategies employed during classroom practice were read-alouds, close reading, and Cornell notetaking. From pre-test to post-test, linguistically diverse students improved in two domains: (1) providing evidence and elaboration and (2) conventions of standard English. However, the authors did not see significant growth in the final domain of Purpose, Focus, and Organization and suggested that extended use and time with self-regulated strategies have the potential to increase student writing capacity. When students' voices and choices are at the center of the products they create, students have the potential to develop a higher level of writing proficiency.

International Context

Similar to the United States, “underachievement in writing by a significant number of students is widely reported internationally” (Parr & Jesson, 2016, p. 2) indicating a crucial need for international educators to develop instructional strategies to develop both effective and competent writers. Building the writing capacity of students is a global issue. International scholars have focused studies on connecting writing instruction to the lives of students (Hughes, King, Perkins, & Fuke, 2011; Gardner, 2013; Knight, 2009; Lehman & DeLiddo, 2010) and developing teachers to facilitate effective writing instruction (Parr & Jesson, 2016; Simao, Malpique, Frison, & Marques, 2015; Spence & Kite, 2018). Reviewing the literature produced by international scholars will provide keen insight on instructional strategies that prioritize student backgrounds and interests as well as strategies for building the capacity of teachers to deliver authentic writing instruction.

Connection writing instruction to personal experiences. Knight (2009), Lehman and DeLiddo (2010), Hughes, King, Perkins, and Fuke (2011), and Gardner (2013) conducted research that explored connecting writing instruction to the personal experiences of students. In a South Australian secondary school, Knight sought to connect English to the lives of her culturally and linguistically diverse students. As a result, Knight created a thematic unit and titled it “Othering”. The author defined “Othering” as the ways people disconnect from one another. She facilitated a thematic unit on “Othering” to connect the curriculum to the lives of students and to help them explore their various identities, differences, stereotypes, and labels. Next, the author

selected both articles and biographies “to highlight the theme and to show how ‘Othering’ was experienced by a variety of people at different times and different contexts” (p. 115). Through the unit on “Othering”, student writing capacity was developed through journaling, which was beneficial for the researcher and the students “processing and reflecting” (p. 117). Additionally, the author gave students a choice on the summative task they completed at the end of the unit. Students choose between writing a narrative, reflection, editorial, artwork, poster, collage, or PowerPoint with a written reflection. Overall, the author found that the unit on “Othering” engaged students that were traditionally disengaged in English by aligning the content with “accessible” and “meaningful” tasks.

Likewise, Gardner (2013) conducted a similar study that explored writing through a sociocultural lens. He examined student identity and the discontinuity between primary students’ school and home literacy experiences in the United Kingdom. The participants in the research participated in two phases. The primary data collection strategies consisted of structured and semi-structured surveys. The first cohort consisted of 5-9-year-olds and the second cohort consisted of 7-9-year-olds. The students were given a questionnaire about their writing preferences, how they felt about writing, how they felt about receiving help from an adult, and the characteristics of good writing. Gardner found that 92% of the 5-9-year-olds and 93% 7-9-year-olds wrote at home and high percentages of students wrote stories, letters, and diaries. The author further inferred that “students in this study found literacy events at home more engaging and possibly more fulfilling than literacy in the classroom” (p. 79). Therefore, providing

students with writing tasks that value and acknowledge their home life and experiences has the potential to increase their writing motivation.

Lehman and DeLiddo (2010) reported on developing powerful writing instruction at, *Dhahiat Al-Rasheed*, an all-girls school in Jordan. For the researchers, powerful writing instruction involves helping teachers understand their narratives, to facilitate writing instruction that leverages students' experiences as a source of writing content. The authors participated as consultants in the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, a partnership with the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) and Teachers College at Columbia University. In Jordan classrooms, writing instruction consisted of "reciting memorized scenes and writing to short prompts off of articles" (p. 27). Consequently, many of the Jordanian students struggled in their writing and "complained that writing was by far the most frustrating aspect of learning English" (p. 29). The researchers spent time with Jordan teachers challenging them to write stories about their own lives.

The experience of teachers writing their narratives became the catalyst for helping them understand authentic writing instruction. Lehman and DeLiddo (2010) built teacher writing capacity by (1) unpacking technical language related to writing, (2) discussing the importance of model writing for students, (3) providing strong oral and visual models of writing, and (4) engaging in writing conferences. The authors found that "Some students wrote complete paragraphs and others relied on pictures to tell their story and used comfortable words. The things that struck all of us, however, was how engaged everyone seemed to be telling their own stories. Writers were gaining interest

and confidence...” (p. 34). Engaging teachers in the process of constructing their narrative served as a springboard for teachers to understand the importance of using student experiences to deliver authentic writing instruction.

In Toronto, Hughes, King, Perkins, and Fuke (2011) conducted two case studies with an 11th grade workplace English classroom. The specialized classroom was designed to develop students’ literacy and communication skills to prepare them for work and daily life. The second case study involved male and female students in a multi-grade alternative program for expelled students in Toronto. Students in the workplace English program read Rabagliati’s *Paul Has a Summer Job* and Tamaki and Tamaki’s *Skim*. The students read a variety of graphic novels through literature circles and independent reading. After students completed reading the literature, they reflected about “key moments of their stories, using succinct and dramatic vocabulary, dialogue, and gestural or nonverbal communication” to create their own graphic novels. Students were engaged by the process of “producing thoughtful and insightful commentaries on their lives” (p. 610). Incorporating the lives and experiences of students into classroom writing helped to transform student perspectives about writing and increased their writing motivation.

Teachers practices and beliefs regarding writing instruction. In addition to understanding how to incorporate students’ lives and experiences in writing instruction, it is equally important to understand teachers’ practices and beliefs about delivering this instruction. Teachers play an integral role in providing instructional experiences that are beneficial for developing students’ writing proficiency. Therefore, it is imperative to

review research regarding teachers' instructional practices, beliefs, and challenges to delivering writing instruction. For instance, in New Zealand, Parr and Jesson (2016) conducted a study to understand the writing instructional practices of New Zealand primary teachers and how the patterns of practice differ across grade levels. The authors distributed an online survey in urban and rural schools for grades 1-8. The instrument collected demographic data, teacher beliefs about writing instruction, confidence about teaching writing, and information on patterns of writing instruction in classroom discourse.

In reference to writing instruction in the classroom, the survey revealed that students spent time using writing to recall information, writing narratives, writing for non-fiction purposes, and writing across a variety of curriculum areas. The authors did note that in grades 7-8 there was a strong focus on worksheets and summaries. When the teachers in the study were asked about out school writing practices and cultural and linguistic diversity, teachers were less confident about their knowledge regarding students' home literacy practices and the importance of culturally relevant writing practices.

The results of the survey further revealed that teachers experienced several challenges regarding facilitating writing instruction. These challenges include: (1) the lack of preparation of preservice training, (2) lack of knowledge about facilitating small groups for writing instruction, and (3) lack of knowledge about employing instructional practices linked to formative assessment. Overall, the survey results reveal how the lack of pre-service training impacts teachers' beliefs regarding their ability to deliver effective

writing instruction. More importantly, teachers lack knowledge about their students and the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity impacts their ability to deliver writing instruction in a culturally relevant way.

In Brazil and Portugal, Simao, Malpique, Frison, and Marques (2015) used the Teacher Practices for and Perceptions about Writing Instruction (TPPWI) to assess interdisciplinary teacher practices and perceptions about writing instruction in their middle school classrooms. The researchers interviewed teachers at 22 schools in both countries. The results of the study revealed that both Brazilian and Portuguese teachers felt prepared to teach writing and recognized writing as an essential skill for the workforce and higher education. Despite these perceptions, these teachers did not devote adequate time to writing and “In fact, more than 60% of Portuguese and Brazilian teacher reported never using, or only using several times a year, teaching practices for that purpose, monitoring strategies for writing, teaching proofreading strategies, and asking the students to emulate good models of writing instruction” (p. 972). Teachers in this research study understood that writing was an essential skill for the workforce and higher education. However, they did not facilitate writing instruction in their classrooms consistently. The authors declared that more research is needed to explain why there was a disconnect between teachers’ beliefs about writing and the implementation of writing instruction in their classrooms.

In a similar vein, Spence and Kite (2018) explored teacher beliefs regarding writing instruction in Japanese elementary classrooms. The authors found that teachers believed in the repetition of basic skills, using student experiences as a tool for writing,

using innermost heart strategies to push students to reflect, and challenging students to express their opinions in writing. In the study, the teachers believed in the repetition of “recitation, re-reading, copying, memorisation, and tracing” (p. 62). In addition to repetition, the teachers believed in using student experiences and using strategies that appealed to the inner-most heart. Inner-most heart strategies “encouraged reflective writing and sensitivity to student personal development” (p. 63). This strategy included the use of diaries, students writing their impressions about a topic, and using their essence “in which the motivation and inspiration for writing come from within” (p. 64). The last writing belief held by the teachers was the importance of outward expression. This strategy entailed students writing to express their opinion about a self-selected topic. Engaging in this process, “involves writing for authentic purposes of interest to the students” (p. 65). This research shows that teachers must have a delicate balance between teaching students’ basic skills and also providing writing opportunities that prioritize student experience and challenges students to pull from “within” or tap into their “inner-most heart” to produce authentic writing.

The Problem

Students struggle with adhering to mechanics, developing ideas, and even understanding the structure of expository, narrative, or poetic writing. At the 7th grade level, in middle school, students are assessed on writing and reading on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR). Informal conversations with the 6th and 7th grade English teachers at High Achieving Middle School (HAMS) revealed that students that participated in the research study were recipients of “test prep” writing

instruction to prepare them to pass both the reading and writing sections of the STAAR. Their writing instruction involved practicing with a predetermined graphic organizer, STAAR-like writing prompts to mimic the state assessment, and “drill and kill” syntax instruction. Additionally, an informal scan of teacher pedagogical practices and conversations reveal that the students’ previous English teachers have not intentionally or consistently used culturally relevant writing practices to build students’ writing capacity.

Winn and Johnson (2011) maintained that “the reading, writing, and speaking that students are expected to do often do not reflect practical approaches to teaching literacy that are culturally relevant” (p. 16). This claim by the authors aligns with students’ concerns of not being able to “relate” with the writing tasks they were asked to complete in their English classrooms and on the STAAR assessment. Based on the diversity of the research participants and their perceptions about writing tasks, there is a need for a “relevant” or more “relatable” pedagogical approach for facilitating writing instruction in the English classroom. Although the research on culturally relevant pedagogy has the potential to increase learning outcomes (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings 1990, 1995a, 1995b), there is a lack of knowledge about facilitating culturally relevant writing instruction in the English classroom.

Relevant History of the Problem

The history of the problem is rooted in educational inequality. The discussion in this section briefly highlights some pivotal court cases that advocated for abolishing segregation in schools and the section that follows discusses the development of cultural

deprivation. Cultural Deprivation advanced an ideology that Blacks and ethnic minorities were intellectually inferior, because they did not subscribe to the cultural backgrounds, language patterns, and norms of mainstream society (Bereiter & Engelmann, 1966; Hess & Shipman, 1965; Klineberg, 1963). This study sought to use culturally relevant writing instruction as a tool to value and prioritize student voices and create a space for students to take on issues that reflect their own culture, social, and personal experiences (Winn & Johnson, 2011). The first part of the literature discusses the impact of (1) *Plessy v. Ferguson*, (2) *Mendez v. Westminster*, and (3) *Brown v. Board of Education* and ends with a discussion on cultural deprivation.

The supreme court ruling of *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896 established the law that Blacks and Whites could be allocated to separate facilities if they were equal. The passing of this law was instrumental in advancing an implied philosophy that Blacks were inferior to their white counterparts. Additionally, whites were perceived to be more civilized and on a higher evolutionary scale (Roche, 1954). After the passing of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, Blacks and other ethnic minorities sought equality in social, public, and educational spaces. *Mendez v. Westminster* was one of the first cases that challenged segregation in schools. In this court case, families of Mexican and Latin descent filed a lawsuit against the El Moderno school district of Orange County because 5,000 Mexican students were forced to attend separate Mexican schools. Judge Paul J. McCormick ruled in favor of the plaintiffs resulting in segregation statues being repealed in the California Education Code (Wollenberg, 1974).

In the 1950s, one of the most influential court cases, *Brown v. Board of Education* provided a step in the right direction for providing educational equality for Blacks and other ethnic minorities. *Brown v. Board of Education* provided two rulings. The first ruling was given on May 17, 1954, Brown I, established that de jure segregation in public education deprived minority children of equal educational opportunities. Meanwhile, the second ruling given on May 31, 1955, Brown 2, was issued requiring school districts to begin desegregating schools without a mandate or specified timetable (Russo, Harris III, & Sandidge, 1994). *Brown v. The Board of Education* rulings were the catalyst for opening the door to educational equality in American schools.

The ideology of cultural deprivation. The perceived educational inferiority of Blacks and other ethnic minorities became a pervasive idea, despite the push for educational equality in schools. In the 1960s, educational psychologists sought to understand why blacks and other ethnic minorities underperformed in school in comparison to their white counterparts. Several researchers (Bereiter & Engelmann, 1964; Hess & Shipman, 1965; Klineberg, 1963) advanced an ideology, in which, students that did not subscribe to the communication patterns, cultural background, and social status of white culture were perceived as culturally deprived. These scholars defined cultural deprivation as intellectual inferiority (Bereiter & Engelmann, 1964; Klineberg, 1963), and the lack of oral language development (Hess & Shipman, 1965). According to Bereiter and Engelmann (1964), because black students and other minority populations were intellectually inferior and lacked complex language skills, they could

not benefit from the opportunities that schools provide (p. 25). In contrast, there were other scholars (Lipton, 1962; Tulkin, 1972; Wax & Wax, 1964) that disagreed with the notion that culturally different students were deprived because their cultural background did not align with their white counterparts. The discussion that follows will highlight seminal research conducted by scholars that viewed students that were from diverse backgrounds as culturally deprived and intellectually inferior, as well as research that did not agree with this stance.

Klineberg (1963) discussed research studies that involved the use of intelligence tests to determine the intellectual differences between white and black students. In each one of the studies discussed, he reported that black students underperformed on IQ intelligence tests in comparison to their white counterparts. Similarly, Bereiter and Engelmann (1964) reported challenges and strategies for teaching disadvantaged preschool children. The authors argued for a preschool model that prepared students to leave preschool and successfully matriculate to the next education level. In addition to intelligence tests, the authors used college entrance exams and other “indefinite data” to maintain that Southern Negroes graduated from high school with basic knowledge in core subjects that were at the 7th or 8th grade level.

Another reason blacks and minority students were considered culturally deprived was because of their lack of oral language development. Hess and Shipman (1965) defined cultural deprivation as the lack of cognitive meaning in the mother-child communication system and the structure of their social class status. To determine how cultural deprivation impacted blacks, the authors conducted a study of black mothers that

consisted of college-educated and professional, skilled blue-color professionals, unskilled or semi-skilled professionals with only an elementary education, and unskilled or semi-skilled professionals with the father missing and on public assistance. The authors discovered that mothers from a lower class and social status did not employ complex language structures. When the mothers were asked hypothetical questions about how they would respond to their child if they broke the rules at school, lower-class mothers responded with more status-oriented instead of person-oriented statements. Status-oriented statements focused more on the role of the student in school, whereas person-oriented statements focused specifically on the action of the student in an educational setting.

The participants in the study also completed a Sigel Sort Task and justified each sort. This task was used to determine how the mothers grouped the stimuli and “the level of abstraction used in perceiving and ordering objects in the environment” (p. 878). The mothers grouped their sorts into four categories: descriptive part-whole, descriptive global, relationship-contextual, and categorial inferential. The results of the sorting task revealed that mothers in the lower social status displayed decreasing cognitive style dimensions and increasing non-verbal responses. However, mothers from the middle class gave protocols that were consistently longer in language productivity than did mothers from the other three groups (p. 874).

In the last task of the study, the authors examined the maternal teaching styles of the mothers in teaching their child to sort a small number of toys. They found that mothers in the middle class gave explicit instructions to their children for completing the

sorting activity. Contrarily, mothers from the lower class provided less clarity and precision by giving instructions to their children on completing the task. For Hess and Shipman, the difference in communication patterns between black mothers and their children helped them advance the ideology that black children were more culturally deprived in comparison to their white counterparts.

On the other hand, Litpton (1962) questioned the validity of the term cultural deprivation. He defined the term as:

“...children who are deprived, that is, who are lacking or wanting in, the cultural tools, backgrounds, and perceptions of our cultural orientation. This means that our definition of cultural background is called upon by our attitudes in terms of our judgment of what is good or bad, culturally speaking or what is not important culturally speaking” (p. 17)

Lipton suggested that when culturally deprived is used to describe children it is referencing their inability to subscribe to society’s conceptualization of culture. He viewed this definition of cultural deprivation as narrow and believed it “...must be reevaluated in terms of our concept of learning, acceptance of differences, and goals in education” (p. 18).

In a similar vein, Wax and Wax (1964) explored the problems of Indian education at Pine Ridge Indian reservation. In their research, the authors sought to explore cultural deprivation from the perspective of the administration. The administration believed Sioux Indian children were deprived because they lacked home experiences similar to school expectations, children came to school with an “empty

mind”, lacked literacy skills for reading, and educators did not value the students’ frame of reference and experiences. The authors noted that:

“Children from who come from lower class and impoverished ethnic groups are regarded as empty and culture-less rather than having a culture and social life of their own which educators must learn about to be competent in their jobs.

Children from lower class Negro homes are especially subject to this mishandling, since many ‘liberals’ refuse on political grounds to recognize that their families have a distinct subculture” (pp. 16-17)

The administration of the Indian reservation did not acknowledge the unique culture and experiences Sioux Indian brought to school. Since the Sioux Indians did not subscribe to what was perceived as the cultural norm, they were perceived to be culturally deprived.

Tulkin (1972) also criticized the validity of the term cultural deprivation. He maintained that this term is limited because it does not focus on how experiences affect developmental processes; it ignores cultural relativism and neglects political realities and how these realities have impacted those perceived as culturally deprived (p. 326). Tulkin stated that it was not enough to draw conclusions about social class and racial differences and presume that these were causes in intellectual deficits in minorities. Instead, he believed that it was imperative to explore the experiences of those children considered culturally deprived and leverage this data to understand how it affected their intellectual growth. Overall, Tulkin believed that those deemed culturally deprived should not be evaluated by middle-class standards (p. 327).

The author's final argument concerning the validity of cultural deprivation is how society or educational systems contribute to the perceived cultural deprivation of minority children. He stated "...the majority culture, by its tolerance for social, political, and economic inequality, actually contributes to the development in some subgroups, of the very characteristics which it considers depriving" (p. 331). While some research scholars (Bereiter & Engelmann, 1964; Hess & Shipman, 1965; Klineberg, 1963) advanced the ideology that blacks and other ethnic minorities were culturally deprived, other scholars contested using culturally deprived as a descriptor for those who were culturally different. Lipton (1962) suggested that students should not be labeled culturally deprived because they did not subscribe to society's perception of culture.

Wax and Wax (1964) found that Sioux Indians brought valuable cultural experiences to the classroom, but they were contrary to the society's norm. Lastly, Tulkin (1972) maintained that social class and racial differences could not be the sole justifications as to why minorities were culturally deprived. Overall, the research in this section discusses two different perspectives regarding the cultural background of diverse students. There were some scholars (Bereiter & Engelmann, 1964; Hess & Shipman, 1965; Klineberg, 1963) that advanced the notion that students that were culturally different were intellectually inferior, while other scholars (Lipton, 1962; Tulkin, 1972; Wax and Wax 1964) combated this stance and saw the rich potential in using students' cultural background and experiences as tools for academic learning.

Significance of the Problem

The diversity in today's schools require that teachers consider students' cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of references, and performance styles as tools for facilitating instruction (Gay, 2000). In an English context, the use of culturally relevant pedagogy is a valuable tool for ensuring that student voices are incorporated within the classroom curriculum. This qualitative dominant crossover mixed practitioner action research study will help inform district and campus administrators and campus-based English teachers understand (1) students' middle writing experiences, (2) students' reading and writing preferences, (3) the impact of culturally relevant writing instruction on students, and (4) the impact, if any, culturally relevant writing instruction has on increasing students' writing self-efficacy. The use of culturally relevant writing instruction has the potential to build student writing capacity, increase student writing self-efficacy, and provide authentic writing opportunities by connecting student experiences with academic expectations.

Research Questions

The reading, writing, and speaking students are expected to do in today's English classrooms do not always reflect culturally relevant instruction (Winn & Johnson, 2011, p. 17). The following questions will guide this research study:

RQ1: How do middle school English I students describe their previous middle school writing experiences?

RQ 2: What are the reading and writing preferences of middle school English I students?

RQ 3: What impact does culturally relevant writing instruction have on middle school English I students?

RQ 4: What impact does culturally relevant writing instruction have on increasing the writing self-efficacy of middle school students in an English I classroom?

These questions helped to explore students' writing experiences, the impact of culturally relevant writing instruction, and the ways, if any, culturally relevant writing instruction impacted students writing self-efficacy. A qualitative dominant crossover mixed practitioner action research approach was used to investigate the research questions. Data were collected using reflective journals, learning logs, writing interest forms, cultural questionnaire and instructional artifacts created throughout the culturally relevant writing unit.

Personal Context

Writing gave me an identity. Writing gave me power. Writing gave me freedom. As a young boy, I would often write poetry in my room. Before my mother was incarcerated, I never thought that I had anything to say. Nevertheless, when she suddenly and temporarily left my life; I began to write. I began to explore my adolescent identity through triumphs and failures. I began to express the disdain I had for my father and unyielding desire to reunite with my mother. I began to create new worlds with figurative rhetoric to escape the pain of living without her.

Now, I am an English teacher called to develop and shape young literary minds. Quite frankly, my students loathe writing. They feel this way because the writing they engage in at school is not always congruent with how they become literate outside of

school. They feel that the writing instruction they receive is disconnected, unrelatable, and not meaningful. Students come to our classrooms equipped with rich experiences and stories and teachers must provide strategic opportunities for students to leverage “pieces of their identity” to create authentic writing products.

Researcher’s Roles and Personal Histories

Education has always been deeply rooted in the expectations of my family. My mom was an educator and several members of my extended family worked in K-12 and post-secondary education. I am certified by the State of Texas to teach grades 4-8 and 8-12 in the following areas: English Language Arts, Gifted and Talented, and English as a Second Language. I also hold an EC-12 Principal’s certificate.

I began my career as an English I and Remedial Reading teacher in an urban district in Dallas, Texas. During this time, I worked at a high school that was majority Hispanic. I had a combination of Hispanic students new to the country and students that were born in Dallas. As a first-year teacher, I quickly learned that to be effective, I needed to find meaningful ways to integrate students’ experiences and backgrounds into my classroom instruction.

After two years of working at the high school level, I transitioned to work at the middle school level in the same district. During this time, I was a middle school teacher, and I completed a second Master’s in Educational Leadership at Dallas Baptist University. I taught middle school for three years before moving to Houston to be an Assistant Principal in an urban school district. Uncertain, if the principalship was my destiny, I decided to move back to Dallas to work as an administrator in a suburban

district. After working for the district for two years, I decided to take a break from education to focus on my doctoral studies. In 2017, I went back to work in a suburban district as an English I Pre-AP teacher. In 2019, I received a promotion as an Assistant Principal in a charter school district.

Journey to the Problem

“I hate writing” or “I can’t think of anything to write”. These are the comments I have heard for the last 13 years working with students from diverse cultures and backgrounds. For the most part, writing is the bane of existence for many of the students I serve. My journey to the problem began in 1998. At this time, I was an impressionable high school student in Dallas, Texas and I attended Lincoln Humanities and Communications Magnet High School.

The backdrop of my high school experiences consisted of prostitutes on debilitated corners offering their services for monetary gain, chicken shacks that smelled like grandma’s savory fried chicken, liquor stores that robbed my community of fathers and role models, and drug dealers looking to recruit individuals to sell drugs. Regardless of these challenges, my Radio/Television teacher, Dr. Louie White, taught me that I was valuable, and could be successful in any endeavor I pursued. In 2008, I obtained my first teaching job as an English I teacher at a tough urban high school in Dallas, TX. During my first year, I didn’t always connect instructional strategies and use a curriculum that was relevant to the lives and experiences of my students.

Often, I was met with a simple yet complex question: Why are we learning this? My initial response to students was an academic one. I would explain we are completing

an academic task, because it was preparing them to be successful in high school, to achieve success on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), and I always connected the academic tasks we completed to being successful in college and beyond. The more students asked the above-mentioned question, the more I began to reflect on its meaning. Soon, I realized that students were not questioning the validity of the assignment and its utility for helping them matriculate through high school. This question meant that students were not making curricular connections with their own background experiences, culture, and frames of reference. This question meant students felt disconnected from the content they were expected to master. This question meant that students were not “seeing” themselves in the curriculum and instruction.

Significant Stakeholders

The stakeholders invested in the problem are the district coordinators for English/Language Arts (ELA), instructional coaches, administrators, and teachers. Writing instruction was an area of growth for the district that I worked in at the time of the research study. As a result, district coordinators and instructional coaches have an investment in this research because district coordinators create professional development sessions for ELA teachers district-wide and instructional coaches are responsible for providing support for teachers at the campus level. Administrators leverage the district and campus-wide improvement plans to improve campus instruction. Administrators have an investment in this research because they will make critical decisions on how to improve writing instruction at their respective campuses. Additionally, teachers have the biggest investment in this research. Each day they are in the trenches developing

strategies to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. The results of this research will be of interest to teachers who identify as culturally relevant pedagogues or those teachers who are constantly searching for strategies to meet the needs of the diverse students they serve.

Important Terms

For this study, the following terms and acronyms will be used:

1. Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: can be defined as the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of references, and the performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning more relevant and effective (Gay, 2000).
2. Culturally Relevant Writing Pedagogy: can be defined as writing pedagogy that invites the voices of students and creates a space for them to take on issues that reflect their culture, social, and personal experiences (Winn & Johnson, 2011).
3. Culturally Responsive Teacher: a teacher that possesses a culturally diverse knowledge base, designs culturally relevant curricula, demonstrates cultural caring and building community, uses cross-cultural communication and ensures cultural congruity in instruction to meet the academic and social needs of students (Gay, 2002).
4. Culture: can be defined as a set of behaviors, symbolic identifiers, values, and other elements that distinguish one ethnic group from another (Banks, 1997).
5. Self-Efficacy: people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives (Bandura, 1994).

6. District of Innovation: Districts that meet academic performance under the state's accountability system are allowed to create innovative programs to meet the academic and social needs of students (TEC, 2015).
7. Academic Success: literacy, numeracy, technological, social, and political skills to be active participants in a democracy (Ladson-Billings, 1990).
8. Cultural Competency: using student culture as a vehicle for learning (Ladson-Billings, 1990).
9. Critical Consciousness: a broader sociopolitical consciousness, in which, an individual critiques cultural norms, values, and mores that maintain social inequalities (Ladson-Billings, 1990).
10. State Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR): State of Texas Assessment program implemented in 2012. Students are assessed in grades 3-10, reading in grades 3-10, writing in grades 4, 7, 9, 10; science in grades 5, 8, 9; social studies in grades 8, 10; and mathematics in grades 3-8, 9. (Texas Education Agency, 2018)
11. Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS): Standards that outline what students are supposed to learn in the state of Texas in each course for grades K-12 (Texas Education Agency, 2018).
12. Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS): TAKS was designed to measure the extent to which a student has learned and can apply the defined knowledge and skills at each texted grade level. Students were assessed in grades 3-10 and exit level, reading in grades 3-9, writing in grades 4-7, English language arts in grades 10

and exit level; science in grades 5,8,10, and exit level; and social studies in grades 8, 10, and exit level (Texas Education Agency, 2018).

13. Title I: A section of the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965, that “represents the largest federal program for K-12 education. It currently provides more than billion in annual financial assistance to state and local education agencies for the expansion and improvement of instructional programs to meet the special needs of low achieving students from schools with a high level of poverty” (Van der Klaauw, 2008, p. 1).

14. National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP): National assessment that measures what American students must know and can do in various subjects.

Assessments are conducted in mathematics, reading, science, writing, the arts, civics, economics, geography, U.S. History, and Technology and Engineering Literacy (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012).

Closing Thoughts on Chapter 1

Research scholars report that at both the elementary and high school levels little time is being devoted to writing assignments that involve analysis and students are composing short texts that do not challenge them to make connections and show depth and breadth of knowledge (Applebee & Langer, 2011; Gilbert & Graham, 2010; Graham, Gillespie, & Mckewon, 2012). To develop competent writers researchers suggest that students need exposure to mentor texts about their lives and experiences (Mendez & Fink, 2012; Mackay, Ricks, & Young; 2017), students need exposure to real-world contexts for writing (Tatum & Gue, 2012; Sweeny, 2011; Curwood, Magnifico, & Lammers, 2013) and students need exposure to connecting writing to their personal

experiences (Knight, 2009; Lehman & DeLiddo, 2010; Hughes, King, Perkins, & Fuke, 2011; Gardner, 2013). Scholars suggest that these strategies are more effective methods for teaching writing because they are relevant to the lives of students and employing these strategies has the potential to increase students' learning outcomes.

As a teacher, administrator, and teacher trainer, I have made it my mission to help teachers realize the importance of leveraging student culture and experiences as important tools in classroom instruction. The diversity of today's classrooms requires teachers to recognize students' cultures and validate the experiences they bring to the classroom. When teachers use these sources of knowledge to strategically plan instruction, they can potentially create engaging and meaningful learning experiences.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF SUPPORTING SCHOLARSHIP

“We believe that teachers, practices, curriculum, and space can coexist to create culturally relevant experiences that will lead students to achieve academic success, maintain cultural competence, and develop a critical consciousness.”

(Winn & Johnson, 2011, p. 19)

Introduction

Today’s schools are becoming increasingly diverse and teachers must recognize the culture, experiences, and frame of reference students bring to the classroom and use this knowledge to develop curriculum and instructional strategies to meet the needs of a growing diverse student population. The goal of this literature review is to use existing literature and draw on influential research to give credence to the importance of using culturally relevant writing instruction in the English classroom. This study may serve as a call to action for employing more culturally relevant instructional approaches to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. The chapter primarily focuses on the following areas related to the study: (a) relevant historical background, (b) alignment with action research traditions, (c) conceptual framework, and (d) significant research and practice studies. This section will examine the connection between these areas as a means for substantiating the importance of using more culturally relevant approaches to teaching writing in the English classroom.

Relevant Historical Background

History of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Over the last 39 years, scholars have used the terms “culturally congruent” (Mohatt & Erickson, 1981) “culturally responsive education” (Cazden & Leggett, 1981)

“culturally appropriate” (Gollnick & Chinn, 1986) “culturally compatible” (Macias, 1987) “culturally sensitive” (Boyer, 1993) and “culturally relevant teaching” (Ladson-Billings 1990, 1995a, 1995b) to describe pedagogy focused on leveraging student culture, language, and experiences as tools for creating student-centered instruction. In the early 80s, Mohatt and Erickson (1981) observed the interactional patterns between two teachers and Indian students in an Odawa school. They discovered that culturally patterned behavior between teacher and student was essential for facilitating instruction for Indian education. These behaviors included: (1) the overall tempo of teaching, (2) the overall directives of teaching, (3) structures used to stimulate speaking in the classroom. The findings of their research revealed, “...that culture is, indeed, an important factor in Indian children’s school experiences” (p. 106).

Similar to this, Au and Jordan (1981) incorporated the use of *talk story*, a Hawaiian pidgin language, to teach Hawaiian children to read. The researchers used the cognitive and linguistic abilities of the children to develop the Kamehameha Early Education Program (KEEP). The features of the reading comprehension program included (1) a socially relevant adult, (2) mutual participation, and (3) co-narration. The authors found that incorporating the use of *talk story*, a Hawaiian literacy practice, students were able to connect their home literacy practices with academic literacy skills. Despite Hawaiian children’s differences from other cultural minorities, the implications of this work reveal that ethnically and linguistically diverse students can be academically successful when teachers saturate environments with student culture. Meanwhile, Cazden and Leggett (1981) highlighted that culturally different students have

interactional and cognitive styles that should be considered, “so that appropriate teaching styles and learning environments can be provided that will maximize their educational achievement” (p. 70).

Additionally, Gollnick and Chinn (1986) discussed the importance of understanding students’ culture in delivering instruction that was culturally appropriate to meet the diverse needs of an increasingly diverse student population. The scholars maintained that understanding personal cultural background and experiences are pathways to delivering instruction in a culturally appropriate way. Macias (1987) conducted an ethnographic study about Papago Indian children to understand their experiences as they transitioned from home to their first preschool experiences. He sought to describe instances of discontinuity between home and school and teacher’s reaction to these instances. The author found discontinuities in the following areas: (1) verbal performance, (2) children’s autonomy, and (3) new cultural experiences. To decrease the effect of discontinuity in students’ school experiences, Papago teachers sought to enhance students’ education experiences through modeling and practical experience, not compromising individual autonomy, and integrate new experiences, “in ways that were culturally compatible and non-threatening” (Macias, 1987, p. 377). Facilitating instruction that was culturally compatible and non-threatening helped decrease the discontinuities students experienced between home and school and provided an educational environment that acknowledged students’ culture as a strength.

Boyer (1993) reported on the importance of facilitating culturally sensitive instruction. This pedagogical stance is focused on delivering instruction that helps

learners see themselves in the instructional and learning environment, supports students in assessing their value systems and connecting it to the learning setting, processing verbal and nonverbal instructional behaviors and connecting it to their world, empowering learners, and preserving the dignity of all learners, in that, they are appreciated and respected in the learning environment. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1990) began her journey to identify effective pedagogical strategies for meeting the academic and cultural needs of African American students. She began this journey, in part, because of the gaps in research that did not address the characteristics and practices of excellent teachers of African American students. As a result of her work, she coined the term *culturally relevant teaching*. According to Ladson-Billings (1995a; 1995b), culturally relevant teaching consists of three propositions: (1) academic success, (2) cultural competence, and (3) sociopolitical consciousness. Academic success is characterized by building students' social, political, technological, literacy, and numeracy skills to be successful in society. Culturally relevant teaching builds upon students' academic success by drawing upon ideas and issues important to students and using this knowledge to build students' academic capacity.

Culturally relevant teaching requires that teachers understand students' culture and find ways to make connections to academic learning. Sociopolitical consciousness involves building student capacity to critique norms, values, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequalities. Culturally relevant teaching requires that teachers build student capacity so that they analyze society with a critical lens with a specific focus on identifying and deconstructing social inequities. These propositions served as the

catalyst for understanding the knowledge and skills educators need to meet the needs of culturally diverse students.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in Practice

Gay (2002) continued to explore culturally relevant pedagogy by examining the skills needed to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. She postulated that culturally responsive teaching involved using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of diverse students to teach them. According to Gay (2000), culturally responsive teaching is demonstrated using the following strategies:

- Validation involves the use of employing teaching styles that focus on the strengths of students to make learning more efficient.
- Comprehensive involves teaching the whole student and includes social and emotional, cognitive, and subject matter.
- Multidimensional involves focusing on instructional content, learning context, classroom environment, student-teacher relationships, instructional strategies, and assessments of student performance.
- Empowerment involves encouraging students and motivating them to believe in their success through learning.
- Transformative involves using students' cultural background experiences and respect are utilized as well as incorporated into instructional lessons. This method demonstrates appreciation of students' accomplishments and helps motivate them further in instruction.

- Emancipatory involves guiding students into understanding that there are many definitions of “truth” and all are imperfect (pp. 29-35).

Similarly, Howard (2001) discussed the academic challenges experienced by African American students in U.S. schools. He cites several impediments to African American students’ success, which include academic underachievement, the increased number of African American students in remedial programs, and the cultural incongruity that often exists between African American students and their classroom teachers. To address these challenges, he examined the culturally relevant practices of four African American teachers. His case study revealed that teachers can leverage student culture to develop holistic teaching practices, culturally relevant communication practices, and use culture as a tool to develop the social-emotional capacity of African American students.

Henry (2017) wrote an analytical essay that examined the possibilities for culturally relevant pedagogy for African Canadian children. She reported on her research in the 1980s and 1990s that explored the culturally relevant practices of five K-5 teachers in a majority African Canadian school. Her research study focused on how the pedagogy of these teachers contrasted from the pedagogy taught in teacher education programs and how their instruction differed from teaching in Canadian schools at the time. These culturally relevant teachers used cultural knowledge, content, and ways of behaving and thinking in a manner that resonated with students’ backgrounds. These teachers leveraged the Patwa and Caribbean creole languages to code-switch in the classroom and a scaffolding tool for teaching student’s academic language. More importantly, the

teachers also displayed an agenda for preparing students for the wider society and wanted to ensure that students love themselves and their culture.

Comparably, Henry (2017) also discussed a study in which she compared and explored a group of teachers in an independent black school from 1996-1998 that espoused an African centered philosophy. The students at the school engaged with a curriculum and history that honored their African heritage and traditions. In her research, the scholar discovered that gender dynamics impeded African American girls' abilities to develop academically. As a result, the author developed a curriculum that celebrated the lives of the girls as well as events from their community and as a result of the instruction the girls in the classrooms grew academically. Overall, these scholars suggest culturally relevant pedagogy ensures that student's culture, languages, and heritages are valued.

In an analytical essay Milner (2017) explored the intersections of race and culturally relevant pedagogy in Mathematics and English Language Arts. He maintained that culture can be defined as the values, beliefs, customs, and language of a group of people. However, a salient feature of culture is race. He further articulates that race must be a consideration when employing culturally relevant pedagogy. Milner defines race as a construct that is defined physically, socially, legally, and historically. The outcomes of incorporating students' race is that students feel empowered, students view their culture in the curriculum, and students are challenged through a variety of learning contexts.

Since the inception of culturally relevant teaching by Ladson-Billings (1995), this pedagogical stance has been viewed as a tool for meeting the needs of culturally and

linguistically diverse students. However, critics have argued that pedagogy is needed that does more than identify and celebrate the cultural differences of students. Paris (2012) critiqued the notion of culturally relevant pedagogy. He maintained that we need explicit terminology that extends beyond being “relevant” and “responsive”. Instead, he claimed that we need culturally sustaining pedagogy that seeks to “perpetuate and foster-to sustain-linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic part of schooling” (p. 95). This pedagogy involves considering the past and present heritage and community practices of diverse youth and employing critical reflexivity to examine problematic and regressive practices and to raise and increase youths’ critical consciousness about their literacy practices (Paris & Alim, 2014).

Alignment with Action Research Traditions

This research study is aligned with action research traditions because it represents, “insider or local knowledge about a setting” (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007, p. 4). The researcher provided insider knowledge about HAMS and the lack of “relevant” or “relatable” pedagogical approaches for writing instruction in the English classroom. Action research is “concerned with defining a problem, collecting data, and taking action to solve the problem” (Tomal, 2010, p. 14). The problems identified in this study were: (1) increasing student writing proficiency, (2) the lack of culturally relevant writing strategies employed in the classroom, and (3) increasing student writing self-efficacy. The data collected in this study included reflective journals, learning logs, writing interest forms, and instructional writing products. The solution to the problem involved facilitating a culturally relevant writing unit focused on expository, narrative,

and poetic writing. Equally important, this research is aligned with action research traditions because of its “collaborative nature, its egalitarian approach to power and education in the research process” (Lingard, Albert, & Levison, 2008, p. 460). The researcher collaborated with students involved in the study by using student culture as a conduit for learning, providing student choice with literary texts, and facilitating writing instruction using culturally relevant approaches. The purpose of exploring culturally relevant writing strategies is to shift teacher’s paradigm about effective writing instruction and to bring about positive instructional change through action research. According to Anderson, Herr, and Nihlen (2007), action research is both political and empowering. This research study is political because it addresses teachers’ lack of knowledge about culturally relevant pedagogy and this research is empowering because the researcher is creating knowledge about culturally relevant strategies and challenging students to critically examine their backgrounds as a rich reservoir of writing content.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Critical Race Theory are the conceptual and theoretical frameworks used in this study to understand the role that culture has in learning interactions. Critical Race Theory was birthed out of Critical Legal Studies and was established to eradicate racial oppression in the United States (Tate, 1997). Culturally Relevant Pedagogy developed out of the need to understand the prior experiences, cultural backgrounds, and ethnic identities students bring to the classroom and how teachers can leverage this content to teach students (Gay, 2000). The sections

that follow will discuss both Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Critical Race Theory and explain how these conceptual and theoretical frameworks connect to the research study.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Ladson-Billings and various scholars (Au & Jordan, 1981; Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Cazden & Leggett, 1981; Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1995a; Mohatt & Erickson, 1981; Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2007; Schmeichel, 2012) have argued that students bring a wealth of background knowledge and rich social and cultural experiences to the classroom. How teachers leverage this knowledge in classroom practice is essential to increasing the academic success of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Gay (2000) found that students' "prior experiences, community settings, cultural backgrounds, and ethnic identities" are tools for providing rich classroom experiences and propelling students to academic success in the classroom (p. 21). Culturally relevant pedagogy establishes a framework to justify the importance of integrating culturally relevant instruction to improve students' academic success.

Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) conducted a review of literature from research scholars in the field and developed a conceptual framework about instructional behaviors that encapsulate culturally relevant teaching. The authors conceptualized culturally relevant teaching into five broad categories:

- Identity and Achievement involves leveraging the social and cultural capital students bring to school to explore identity development, cultural heritage, multiple perspectives, affirming diversity, and validation of home and community cultures.

- Equity and Excellence involves realizing the diverse backgrounds and cultural experiences students bring to the classroom, addressing students' dispositions, incorporating multicultural content, providing equal access and having high expectations.
- Developmental Appropriateness involves understanding where students are in their psychological development, knowing students learning styles, and understanding the varying psychological needs of different cultures.
- Teaching the Whole Child involves developing the skills of students within a cultural context, facilitating home and school collaboration, creating a supportive learning environment and empowering students.
- Student-Teacher Relationships involve developing a classroom atmosphere that encourages the development of caring and positive interaction and meaningful student-teacher relationships (pp. 8-15).

The list above represents the instructional behaviors associated with culturally relevant teaching. From this conceptual framework, this study aligned to the following culturally relevant teaching categories: Identity and Achievement and Equity and Excellence. This study challenged students to research their own cultural identity and leverage this knowledge to create original expository, narrative, and poetic products saturated in their own cultural and life experiences. Additionally, students read authentic literary texts about their own culture or select a literary text that embodied a cultural perspective different from their own. Another conceptual category embodied through this research is Equity and Excellence. The researcher realized the diverse backgrounds

students brought to the classroom and used this knowledge to facilitate culturally relevant instruction. Likewise, multi-cultural content was incorporated in the study based on the demographics of students in the classroom and high expectations were demonstrated by expecting students to write using a variety of writing modes.

Critical Race Theory

In addition to being aligned to Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, this research study is also situated within the critical perspective of Critical Race Theory. Tate (1997) described critical race theory (as cited in Matsuda, 1993) as the elimination of racial oppression as part of the larger goal of eradicating oppression in our society. DeCuir and Dixson (2004) maintained that Critical Race Theory developed from the failure of Critical Legal Studies to address the impact of race and racism in the United States. The authors cite Derrick Bell, Allen Freeman, and Richard Delgado as legal scholars who influenced the development of Critical Race Theory. The authors stated that the tenets of Critical Race Theory include: (a) counter storytelling, (b) the permanence of racism, (c) whiteness as property, (d) interest convergence, and (e) critique of liberalism. Counter storytelling is a tenet that involves critiquing and dispelling negative racial stereotypes and giving voice to marginalized people so that the privileged majority understands what life is like for other racial groups. The permanence of racism is a tenet that acknowledges the role that racism plays in mainstream society and identifies organizational structures that govern political, social, economic and educational domains. The organizational structures in these domains privilege whites over culturally and linguistically diverse people (pp. 26-29).

Other tenets of Critical Race Theory include whiteness as property, interest convergence, and critique of liberalism. Whiteness as property is a tenet that advances the notion that being white is a protected right. As a result, those who identify as white have the right to possess whiteness, use whiteness, and the right to enjoy the benefits that come with being white. Interest convergence is concerned with affording people of color, particularly, African Americans with rights that did not disturb or impede the normal life of whites. This involved giving rights to African Americans that converged around the self-interests of their white counterparts but did not make a significant difference in the lives of people of color (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, pp. 28-29).

Critique of liberalism is a tenet concerned with critiquing three liberal notions such as color blindness, the neutrality of the law, and incremental change. Color blindness and neutrality of the law were adopted to justify policies that were designed to ignore inequities. While these two ideas suggest equality, they have been used to restrict rights and opportunities for people based on race. Incremental change embraces changes for minorities that occur at a slow pace and emphasize equality instead of equity. Equality works from the assumption that everyone has equal opportunities, whereas equity recognizes the social, economic, and educational inequities that result from racism and racist practices (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, pp. 29-30). Even though critical theory was birthed out of Critical Legal Studies, DeCuir and Dixson (2004) maintain that Critical Race Theory has influenced other disciplines such as education.

Viewing Critical Race Theory from an education perspective, this research employs a Critical Race Curricular approach to teaching. Ledesma and Calderon (2014)

reported that critical race pedagogy practices have “the potential to empower students of color while dismantling notions of colorblindness, meritocracy, deficit thinking, linguisticism, and other forms of subordination” (p. 209). This is seen in this study through students exploring their cultural backgrounds, analyzing and annotating diverse literature that represents the cultural background of respective students, while exposing students to literature that represents cultural backgrounds different from their own. Also, this research used personal narratives and poetry to empower students to share their lived experiences and cultural identity and used expository texts to empower students to share their perspectives and stances about topics related to race and other topics that were “relevant” or “relatable” to their lives. The section that follows discusses the impact of The Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 and seminal research on the discontinuities between home and school and the ways it impacted students’ academic achievement.

Research and Practice Studies

Discontinuity between Home and School

The Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 was a significant piece of legislation aimed at equalizing educational opportunities for students of color, providing financial resources for educationally deprived students, and it was devised to ensure that students of color develop their full intellectual capacity (Alford, 1965). Research scholars devoted to educational equity conducted research to understand the discontinuities that existed between students of color home lives and their academic environment. The discontinuities unveiled were: the disconnect in the use of student language at home and school (Heath, 1981; Jordan 1985; Michaels, 1981), deculturalization of people

(Onwuachi, 1972), the disconnect in the relationships between teachers and students (Comer, 1976), the lack of knowledge about the cultural characteristics of students (Phuntsog, 1998), and the lack of culturally compatible education (Nel, 1993).

In a discussion of African people and western education, Onwuachi (1972) articulated how the disjuncture of home and school for African people led to deculturalization, the imprinting of white-middle class ideals, and the teaching of western spiritual and moral values. He further maintained that this discontinuity caused a cultural conflict for African people. He concluded, “If the educational process is to be functionally relevant for the African people it must be structured so as to maintain a dynamic pattern of continuity with the family and the cultural life patterns of the people” (p. 244). Onwuachi suggested that for the educational process for African people to be relevant it must involve both learning about Western values, while simultaneously connecting and aligning learning to the African family and culture.

Comer (1976) highlighted the importance of strong relationships at The Baldwin-King School Program, an inner-city school intervention program, designed to increase relationships between community-school staff, intrastaff, and staff-student relationships. He discovered that students at the school benefitted from positive relationships with teachers and their education was increased through “...inner motivation and through the development of psychic structures which facilitate impulse control, the ability to perceive, organize, retain, and recall information, and to formulate ideas” (p. 534). Comer further maintained that the lack of continuity between students’ home lives and schools contributed to students’ lack of academic achievement and behavioral issues.

However, when strong relationships between parents are formed and components of the culture were integrated into the schools, students experienced convergence between students' home lives and academic expectations.

Michaels (1981) discussed incongruent communication patterns between teachers and students as one source of discontinuity. She reported from a larger ethnographic study in a 1st grade classroom on the differences in communication practices of home and school. During "sharing time" in the classroom she noticed that White students used a more "topic-centered" approach to sharing narratives and black students used a "topic associating" approach. The 1st grade teacher in the study connected with white students through "a shared sense of topic and a sense of synchronization of questions and responses" (p. 440), but with black students, she experienced "asynchronous pacing of teacher/child exchanges, fragmentation of the topic, and misevaluation of intent on the part of both teacher and child" (p. 440). This disconnect between the teacher and the black students developed as a result of the "differences in ethnic and communicative background, leading to unintentional mismatches in conversational style" (p. 440).

In a similar vein, Heath (1981) conducted a comparative study examining the literacy practices of bedtime storytelling across different ethnic groups and classes. In her study, she used the following pseudonyms: (1) Maintown, which represented the middle class, (2) Roadville, which represented a white mill community, and (3) Trackton, which represented a black mill community. In Maintown homes, there was an intentional focus on using bedtime storytelling to provide explanations for learning, linking old and new knowledge through narrative tales, making meaning of their

environment, and the children in these homes served as an equal “respondent and negotiator of meaning from books” (p. 71). In Roadville homes, the role of storytelling was similar to Maintown, except Roadville adults did not take "meaning from books to ways of relating that knowledge to other aspects of the environment" (p. 71).

Contrary to the Maintown and Roadville families, Trackton adults did not tell bedtime stories as a literacy practice and there were very few opportunities for reading in these households. Trackton adults focused on nonverbal interaction with their children, used reason explanations instead of what-explanations, and participated in group literacy events. As a result, Heath (1981) explained that Trackton students attended school and were faced with unfamiliar questions, unable to label and identify items, and students struggled with structured reading questions about text. Heath (1981) posited that the reason for Tracktons’ student academic failure is rooted in the fact that “the mainstream type of literacy orientation is not the only type even among Western societies” (p. 73). The work of both Heath (1981) and Michaels (1981) indicate a persistent need for teachers to understand how language functions in students’ home lives and use this knowledge to deliver instruction that incorporates modeling language, provide opportunities for students to use language, and makes sure the language used in the classroom is closely connected to how language is used in students’ home lives.

Jordan (1985) agreed with the notion of integrating student culture into instructional practice. She was instrumental in developing the Kamehameha Elementary Education Program (KEEP). This program was developed to address the underachievement of Polynesian-Hawaiian students and to develop a sustainable

program compatible with the culture of these students. The early goal of KEEP focused on studying both the home and school lives of Hawaiian children and the cultural conflicts they experienced. The KEEP program leveraged observations of Hawaiian classrooms to create a program that was culturally compatible incorporated the ethnography of home and classroom and leveraged cultural knowledge to develop culturally relevant instructional practices. Jordan found that Hawaiian children were engaged in academic experiences that were in opposition to their culture. The development of the KEEP program enabled teachers in Hawaii to understand the skills and talents students brought to school and helped bridge the gap between students' home and school experiences.

In an analytical essay, Nel (1993) discussed the disjuncture between home and school for Native American students and connected this disjuncture as a reason for their school failure. She maintained that Native American students lacked knowledge about mainstream culture and school practices. Table 2 provides a list of discontinuities highlighted by Nel.

Table 2

Discontinuities for Native American Students

Value Conflicts	Explanation
Competition/Individualism/Acquisitiveness	Native American students need to learn the importance of competition in mainstream society and the importance of personal achievement.
Personal Praise	Native American students benefit from praise in private and acknowledgment for their parents and tribe.

Table 2 (continued).

Value Conflicts	Explanation
Generosity	Native Americans may employ generosity in inappropriate times. (i.e. class assignments, testing)
Concept of Time	Native American students see life as a natural progression and this belief may cause students to be late to class or not complete assignments promptly.
Non-Verbal Communication	Native American students will not take up their teacher's time if they feel their teacher is busy.
Verbal Communication	Native American students are least likely to interject when their teacher or peer is speaking.
Individual Freedom and Independence	Native American students are considered independent and autonomous individuals and may miss class to attend to family matters or participate in tribal functions.
Eye Contact/Humility/Respect	Native American students do not give eye contact as a sign of humility and respect.
Respect for Nature	Native American students have a deep respect for nature and all living things.

To eliminate discontinuity, Nel maintained that “Native American students, need to know how ‘mainstream’ Americans view the world. Gaining an understanding of mainstream behaviors, which often appear disrespectful or even cruel to them, may go a long way toward reducing aversion and alienation” (p. 170). Overall, Nel suggests that Native Americans must learn about mainstream society while maintaining their cultural

heritage. In doing so, Native Americans eliminate the discontinuities between their cultural experiences and the expectations of mainstream society.

In the late 90s, Phuntsog (1998) suggested that educators were not aware of the cultural characteristics of Tibetan children. To meet the increasing needs of Tibetan students, he suggested educators learn about Tibetan culture, so that they could leverage student culture as a tool for learning. He postulated that incorporating students' home culture "is believed to provide a strong foundation for developing a positive self-concept which may then enhance one's ability to succeed in school" (p. 38). Phuntsog further maintained that integrating Tibetan children's literature in the curriculum and incorporating culturally relevant instruction were strategies for providing meaningful learning experiences for Tibetan students.

Ogbu (1982) disagreed with cultural discontinuity as the primary reason for the failure of minority students. Instead, he posited that there were three types of discontinuities: (1) universal discontinuities experienced by all children, (2) primary discontinuities experienced as a transitional phenomenon by immigrants and non-western peoples being intruded into Western Type of schooling, and (3) secondary discontinuities. Universal discontinuities consist of the school being a place for the development of students to enter the workforce with a focus on "student-teacher relations, a grading system used to promote attributes of impersonality, specificity, universal standards, and achievement norms" (p. 292), whereas "a child's socialization at home promotes intimacy, diffuseness and particularism in interpersonal relationships,

particularistic standards and ascription in achievement and reward, as well as a certain degree of dependency" (p. 292).

Based on the features of the school and home espoused by Ogbu (1982), most students experience some form of universal discontinuity. The scholar further explains that "primary discontinuities develop before members of a given population come in contact with American or Western white middle-class or enter American public schools" (p. 293). He explained that this discontinuity is often associated with immigrant populations. Other contributing factors to primary discontinuities include the disconnect between the school curriculum and student culture and the lack of reinforcement of school learning in the home context. The final discontinuity is secondary discontinuity. This lack of continuity "develops as a response to a contact situation, especially a contact situation involving stratified domination" (p. 298). Ogbu goes on to characterize these populations as "castelike minorities" that have been integrated into society involuntarily, face a job status ceiling, and express their economic and social problems in the form of discrimination (p. 299). For Ogbu, all students experience some form of discontinuity between their home and school environments; thus, cultural discontinuity is not only experienced by minority populations but many populations whose cultural experiences are in opposition to the expectations of mainstream society. To increase educational continuity between home and school for students, scholars (Banks, 1995; McGee & Banks, 1995) maintained multicultural approaches to learning. The sections that follow discuss importance of multicultural education, benefits, and challenges.

Multicultural Education

Multicultural education is a pedagogical stance rooted in the belief that all students deserve equitable educational opportunities. This approach to educational equity involves (1) content integration, (2) knowledge construction, (3) equity pedagogy, (4) prejudice reduction, and (5) empowering the school culture and social structure (Banks, 1995). Schools that weave these dimensions into the fabric of their institutions forge meaningful connections with their students. Teachers that are culturally sensitive to their students and value multicultural education infuse diverse content into the curriculum and enact equity pedagogy which helps “students from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural groups attain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to function effectively within, and help create and perpetuate, a just, humane, and democratic society” (McGee-Banks & Banks, 1995, p. 152). Schools that value multicultural education are committed to providing equity in grouping and labeling practices, participation in sports, reducing disproportionality in academic achievement, reducing disproportionality in gifted and talented and special education programs, and increasing staff and administration interaction with students in culturally meaningful ways (Banks, 2015). Culturally relevant pedagogy is a tool to enact multicultural education, so it is necessary to discuss the benefits and challenges of multicultural education.

Benefits of Multicultural Education

Research scholars have posited that multicultural approaches to teaching have encouraged students to value their identity and the identity of others (Carjuzaa et al., 2010; Ford et al., 2000; Gay, 2004; Moreno, 2015), combat cultural racism (Powell,

2000), advance students' human rights (Rios & Markus, 2011), and challenges students to critique the connection between power, privilege, race, and inequality (Shaffer, 2017). In an analytical essay, Ford et al. (2000) reported on the importance of using multicultural literature with gifted black students. Through diverse literature, gifted black students "see themselves" within the curriculum. Multicultural literature has the power to immerse students into a culture of a different time or geographic space, so that students receive exposure to diverse cultures, learn to appreciate diversity, and empathize with others. Similarly, Moreno (2015) discussed the success she experienced at a low socio-economic elementary school. She facilitated a multicultural classroom in which she used diverse literature such as *The Persian Cinderella* and *A Young People's History of the United States*. In these texts, her classroom explored the differences between the Western portrayal of Cinderella in comparison to the Persian version. In *A Young People's History of the United States*, the class read selections from the chapter on Christopher Columbus' diary where he initially discussed the strength and beauty of the Arawak's Indian tribe but later discusses his intent to dominate the culture.

Integrating multicultural literature challenges students' thinking and encourages them to interrogate what they have learned and know about themselves and the world. In a similar vein, Shaffer (2017) researched the impact of using literature on sports as a culturally relevant strategy. She asserted that students bring funds of knowledge and past experiences with sports to the classroom. Since sports is an interest of convergence for both girls and boys and students of various backgrounds, the author noted it can be a tool for students to critique "power, privilege, race, and inequality in sports and sports

literature” (p. 129). To a great degree, this research supports the ideology that integrating diverse literature has the potential to help students see themselves within the curriculum and support students in learning about cultures different from their own.

According to Powell (2000), cultural racism is a pervasive ideology advancing the notion that the societal beliefs and customs of White culture (e.g. language, traditions, appearance) are superior to those of non-white culture. The author maintained that multicultural education is a viable tool for examining our cultural assumptions and how they are grounded in a racist and classist perspective. Viewing education through a multicultural lens enables schools to shift their curriculum from a Eurocentric approach to incorporate the diverse knowledge and experiences of different cultures, engage in honest discussions with students about the history of race in our society, and challenge educators to examine the negative impact of racism. In doing so, schools “overcome notions of White Supremacy and become more inclusive and accepting of our human diversity” (p. 13). All things considered, multicultural education supports students in learning about diverse cultures and examining their cultural assumptions.

Gay (2004) agreed with the claim of integrating multicultural education into the curriculum and maintained that doing so increases student achievement and prepares students to become productive citizens. Carijuzaa et al. (2010) discussed the importance of Montana’s Indian Education for All Act (IEFA) and the impact of this reform effort on Indian students. This act calls for the mandatory teaching of American Indian cultures and histories integrated with the standard curriculum. The goal of the IEFA is to dispel negative stereotypes, provide diverse content about Indian culture, and incorporate the

use of culturally relevant teaching strategies. In the state of Montana, IEFA has increased collaboration with Indian and non-Indians educators, reduced anti-Indian bias, and helped instill pride in the cultural identity of Indian students through a diverse curriculum. The work of both Gay and Carijuzaa reveal that multicultural education has the potential to increase student achievement, become better citizens and dispel negative stereotypes, and teach students about diversity.

Rios and Markus (2011) asserted that multicultural education is a means to ensure students have access to quality education, affirm cultural diversity, and promote human rights. According to the authors, multicultural education addresses the following human rights:

- Students have Psycho-Cultural Rights which involves the right to see themselves within the curriculum to make sense of the world from their perspectives and worldviews.
- Students have Social Cultural Rights which involves the right to receive an education free from prejudice and discrimination and students deserve opportunities to learn “about” and “from others” so that they develop a universal vision of reality that is multicultural.
- Students have Cultural-Democratic Rights which involves the right to learn about their human rights, learn how to defend themselves from abuse so that they are empowered as change agents and history makers (pp.16-27).

The authors provide a convincing argument that marries the principles of human rights and education. Multicultural education is one conduit for advancing students

education human rights in the classroom. The results are that schools will produce students that embrace diversity, reject prejudice and discrimination, and realize the importance of learning “about” and “from others”.

Challenges of Multicultural Education

While extant research supports the implementation of multicultural education, research scholars also discuss the challenges associated with this equity stance. Ogbu (1992) maintained that multicultural education programs are not based on the culture of students. He maintained that for multicultural education to be effective, it must involve a model that has researched the language and culture of a people in their authentic community. Another impediment to the implementation is that multicultural research does not discuss the role that students play in multicultural education. Ogbu maintained that research discusses changing teacher perceptions, attitudes, and improving practice, but lacks discussion about increasing student ownership and increasing student achievement.

Ogbu (1992) stated, “Multicultural education may indeed improve school learning for some minority children. However, for several reasons, it is not an adequate strategy to enhance the academic performance of those minorities who have traditionally not done well in school” (p. 6). If multicultural education is to be deemed to be an effective approach for diverse students, there must be concrete evidence about how this approach closes the achievement gap and increases the academic performance of students of color. Additionally, Ogbu (1993) explained Western traditionalists are fearful that multicultural education “will transform America in ways that will result in their own

disempowerment” (p. 28). Because of the growing diversity of today’s society and schools, the identity of America is being diversified. Diversity comes with a high price and those that subscribe to Eurocentric values, norms, and language refuse to share power and a unified American identity.

St. Denis (2011) explained how the implementation of multicultural education has the potential to silence the histories and cultures of other people. At the beginning of the article, the author recounts a curriculum conversation about the importance of integrating Aboriginal culture, language, and experience within the Canadian social studies curriculum. One response from a teacher in the discussion was that “Aboriginal people are not the only people” (p. 306). This statement has an implied connotation of resentment and resistance to hearing the voice and contributions of the native people of Canada. Implementing multicultural education has the potential to discount the cultural contributions of Aboriginal people and focus on artificial artifacts: such as tepees, feathers, beads, and buffalo. Therefore, providing a superficial and “tourist” (Smith, 2009) like experience with Aboriginal culture. Parrish and Linder-VanBerschot (2010) discussed understanding the cultural differences of students and using this knowledge to make instructional decisions, becoming self-aware about one's cultural preferences, accepting the responsibility to acculturate and respect student cultural backgrounds, understanding that research-based practices may be inappropriate or in need of adaptation.

Ukpokodu (2003) discussed the challenges of preparing white preservice teachers to implement multicultural education. He explained that these teachers embrace the

success of the country but refuse to acknowledge the part of American history that has “marginalized, disenfranchised, and economically oppressed” (p. 21) minorities. Other areas of contention for white preservice teachers are “questioning beliefs, values, knowledge, and social positions” (p. 22) and engaging in diverse field experiences. Smith (2009) concurred with teacher preparation as one challenge to multicultural education. He discussed the lack of teacher knowledge of students’ backgrounds, teacher prep programs fail to sensitize new teachers to their prejudices and values, and white preservice teachers lacked skills to teach effectively. Additionally, new teachers need help understanding the “ethnic, racial, and cultural expressions of diverse students in their classrooms” (p. 46). This involves transforming the beliefs of teachers regarding multicultural education, building the cultural competence of teachers, and guiding teachers through the process of critical reflection. Alismail (2016) reviewed 47 practice studies and research on preparing teachers for multicultural education. She discovered that teachers do not have enough knowledge of diverse cultures and experiences to teach culturally diverse students.

Portes and Salas (2007) explained five challenges for implementing multicultural education. The challenges to multicultural education include: (1) lack of analysis that addresses the social, academic, and linguistic factors that deter students in high poverty/low performing schools, (2) advocates of multicultural education are uninformed about aiding students in second language learning, (3) effective preparation for administrators and teachers for ethnically diverse students, (4) diverse pedagogical strategies, (5) dismantling institutionalized policies and practices. If multicultural

education is to be effective there must be a transformation in educator preparation, pedagogy, and the educational systems that structure our schools. In the sections that follow

Culturally Relevant Teachers, Classroom, and Schools

Culturally Relevant Teachers

According to Grant and Gillette (2006), culturally responsive teaching is an essential characteristic needed to effectively teach all children regardless of “academic ability, ethnicity, socio-economic status, family structure, sexual orientation, and ability to speak English” (p. 292). Researchers have sought to identify and explain the characteristics needed to facilitate instruction that is culturally relevant for students. Gay (2002) maintained that culturally relevant teachers possess a (1) a culturally diverse knowledge base, (2) design culturally relevant curricula, (3) demonstrate cultural caring and build a learning community, (4) build effective cross-cultural communication, and (5) deliver instruction that is appropriate to students’ learning styles. Gay’s culturally relevant teaching framework will guide the discussion of the teacher characteristics needed to provide relevant and meaningful instruction.

Culturally Diverse Knowledge Base

To teach students from diverse backgrounds, teachers must possess a culturally diverse knowledge base. This knowledge consists of understanding the cultural characteristics and contributions of ethnic groups and learning detailed information about students’ cultures (Gay, 2002). According to Villegas and Lucas (2007), to teach

content to students in meaningful ways teachers must understand students' lives.

Teachers can build knowledge about students by understanding students':

- Family make-up
- Immigration history
- Favorite activities and strengths
- Values about school
- Prior knowledge and background experiences with academic content
- Home lives
- Aspirations for the future

Once teachers develop knowledge about students, they can meet students where they are and provide instruction that is both relevant and meaningful. Mayfield and Garrison-Wade (2015) reported on Melody Middle School. This organization was successful in closing the achievement gap for minority students. One of the ways teachers at the school developed their culturally relevant knowledge about students was through parent engagement. Parents were integrated into the culture of the school by observing teachers and providing instructional feedback, serving as hall monitors in the classroom, and parents participated in parent advisory groups based on their racial identification. In these homogeneous groups, teachers learned about the educational challenges of specific student populations and leverage this cultural knowledge to inform teaching and learning.

Designing Culturally Relevant Curriculum

The curriculum students learn in school is important for their academic development. Culturally and linguistically diverse students benefit from a curriculum that incorporates their culture. Culturally relevant curriculum involves formal curriculum aligned to the standards, a symbolic curriculum that conveys important information about the values and actions of ethnic groups, and a societal curriculum that involves the knowledge, ideas, and impressions that are portrayed by mainstream society (Gay, 2002). For example, Lee (2010) provided a conceptual review of research on culturally relevant pedagogy strategies that were beneficial for English language learners and immigrants. She reported (as cited in Souryasack & Lee, 2007) about the experiences of Laotian middle school students and building their writing capacity. These students were struggling with writing because they did not see themselves in the curriculum. When students were engaged with a teacher that connected writing tasks to their culture and experiences their writing skills increased (pp. 460-461).

Another example of enacting a culturally relevant curriculum is seen in the work of Sampson and Garrison-Wade (2010). In a mixed methods research study, these research scholars explored African American students' preference for culturally relevant and non-culturally relevant lessons in a history classroom. The primary students involved in the study were African American and Latino students. The scholars implemented three non-culturally relevant lessons that involved a lesson on Ellis Island, a test review, and US History quiz. The instructional delivery of these lessons and assessments included lecture, inquiry-based, and experiential strategies to support students in learning the

content. On the other hand, the culturally relevant lesson plans involved lessons on the N-word, the Declaration of Independence, and students engaged in a culturally relevant field trip. The culturally relevant lessons were infused with the following culturally relevant strategies:

- Culturally artifacts
- Home to school connections
- Collaborative groups
- Images
- Culturally responsive vernacular
- Technology
- Art
- History
- Rap
- Poetry

Sampson and Garrison-Wade (2010) found that both African American and Latino students indicated a preference for the culturally relevant lessons more than the non-culturally relevant lessons. African American students indicated that the lesson on the N-word was culturally relevant and both African American and Latino students cited that their culturally relevant field trips to a Tortilla factory and African American Museum were the most relevant to their culture. One of the reoccurring themes that emerged from the research was that students felt empowered and their thinking was

broadened by the implementation of culturally relevant lessons that were aligned to their cultural background.

Similarly, Winn and Johnson (2011) conducted a qualitative study and explored the ways, in which, teachers incorporate current events to build students persuasive writing capacity. The teachers in the study incorporated an article into the classroom about police brutality that aligned with students' lives and experiences. The teachers used the Oscar Grant police brutality case in Oakland, California to engage students in the writing process and students wrote an essay examining if police officers should be held to certain standards in comparison to civilians. The authors found that "using socially and politically relevant issues allows students to access personal issues and engage with multiple texts" (p. 33).

Demonstrate Cultural Caring and Building a Learning Community

Culturally diverse students need a classroom environment conducive to learning (Gay, 2002). To produce this educative space, teachers must build classroom environments that involve caring and building a learning environment, in which, the classes function as a united learning community. Cultural caring begins with empathy. Rychly and Graves (2012) characterize empathetic teachers as individuals that do not tolerate underachievement and hold culturally diverse students to the same high expectations as any other student. Teachers that demonstrate cultural caring consider the perspectives of their students and use this knowledge to intentionally craft instruction. Tanner (2013) discussed strategies for building an equitable biology classroom conducive to learning. The author articulated the importance of integrating culturally

relevant examples that build upon student knowledge. For example, integrating examples may include “well-known stories like that of Henrietta Lacks and her connection to cell biology and smaller stories like that of Cynthia Lucero and her connection to osmosis” (p. 327) to help students to view biology through a culturally diverse lens.

Build Effective Cross-Cultural Communication

Understanding the ways culturally diverse students communicate is crucial for meeting their needs in the classroom. Teachers must understand how students: participate in classroom discourse and understand students’ communal communication styles (Gay, 2002). Kim and Pulido (2015) discussed how one teacher used elements of the black church in her communication exchanges with black students by referring to students as “Sister X” or “Brother X”, the teacher employed call and response communication practices, and used African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in her conversations with students. Delpit maintained that engaging in these practices helps the teacher connect with her students and mark herself as an insider (as cited in Kim & Pulido, 2015).

Jocson (2009) reported on how one teacher, in a Filipino Heritage Studies course, used *Kuwento*, which means story, to explore the history and stories of the Filipino students. In the Filipino Heritage studies classroom, the teacher used *Kuwento* to explore: (1) Philippine History and Culture, (2) eras and consequences of the Philippine diaspora, (3) and contemporary issues faced by Filipino/an Americans. The *Kuwento* process consisted of the teacher (individual speaker), discussing subject matter that

occurred in both the past and present, using a lecture format, and presented orally. Employing this approach allowed the teacher to provide rich and detailed narratives about Filipino heritage. Jocson reported that his approach to communication in the classroom allowed the teacher to incite empathy for the subject matter and challenged students to understand how Filipino people fought against foreign forces for their independence and freedom.

Cultural Congruity in Classroom Instruction

Gay (2002) maintained that cultural congruity in classroom instruction is the act of matching instructional strategies to the learning styles of diverse students (p. 112). These strategies include topic chaining communication style, cooperative learning, peer coaching, motion and movement, music, variability in tasks and formats, novelty, and dramatic elements. For example, Berry (2003) explored using the cultural style of African American students in a mathematics classroom. The author expressed that the learning preferences and cultural style of African American students can be the catalyst for developing instructional practices to meet their learning needs. Berry viewed cultural style through Boykin's (1986) framework, which includes:

- The use of spirituality which is the conviction that nonmaterial forces influence people's everyday lives.
- The use of harmony that addresses the notion that people are interrelated with other elements; humankind and nature are harmoniously conjoined.
- The use of movement that emphasizes the interweaving of pattern, rhythm, pulsation, music, and dance.

- The use of verve is the propensity for relatively high levels of stimulation and to action that is energetic and lively.
- The use of affect which focuses on emotions, feelings, and nurturing.
- The use of communalism which is the awareness that social bonds and responsibilities transcend individual privileges.
- The use of expressive individualism is the cultivation of a distinct personality and a proclivity for a spontaneous genuine personal experience. There is a preference for novelty, freedom, and personal distinctiveness; the development of improvisation in music and styles of clothes showing distinctiveness.
- The use of a social time perspective in which time is treated as passing through a social space rather than a material one; there is a tendency to approximate space, time, and numbers rather than stick to accuracy.
- The use of the oral tradition which is the preference for oral modes of communication in which both speaking and listening are treated as performances; there is a tendency toward proficiency in nonverbal communication (pp. 245-246).

Understanding the cultural style of African American students can be beneficial in equipping educators with the knowledge to provide congruent instruction. Even though the work of Berry (2003) addresses the cultural style of African American students the underlying theme is that all ethnically diverse students bring various cultural styles to the classroom. Learning is a socially mediated process and related to students' cultural experiences. Teachers must acquire knowledge about students' cultures and leverage this knowledge to facilitate culturally congruent instruction (Irvine, 2010).

Kim and Pulido (2015) explored the use of Hip-Hop music in a black high school and Latino/a organization. The authors reported how Florence Ballard, an English teacher, used call and response approaches to instruction and politically conscious Hip-Hop artists (i.e. Common, Lupe Fiasco, T.I.) to make connections for students in the English classroom. In contrast, the authors also discussed how Adelente, a community organization, serving Black and Latino/a student's uses Hip-Hop concerts, spoken word events, and facilitated community forums about Hip-Hop to engage students. This research shows that Hip-Hop music has the potential to be a culturally congruent strategy for engaging Black and Latino/a students and other students of color because it has the potential to "address the realities of students of color or engage others to develop a critical consciousness" (p. 29).

Culturally Relevant Classrooms

According to Montgomery (2001), Culturally relevant classrooms acknowledge culturally diverse students and the salient need for these students to make relevant connections: among themselves, the subject matter, and the instructional tasks they are asked to complete. To help students make these vital connections teachers must analyze their views regarding diversity and critique their instructional practice. Montgomery explained that culturally relevant classrooms may involve the use of the following strategies:

- Culturally relevant instruction methods that consist of employing methods that fit the classroom setting, subject, and student. By employing diverse instructional strategies

(i.e. reciprocal questioning and think-aloud) teachers increase the likelihood that students will be successful.

- The implementation of interdisciplinary units which consist of helping students make connections across content areas through literature and helping students make connections between previous academic tasks and current studies.
- The implementation of instructional scaffolding in which teachers create instructional tasks that students can complete independently and with instructional support and design instructional tasks that pushes the learner to take control of learning as they complete instructional tasks.
- Establishing a classroom environment that respects individuals and their cultures which consists of creating a book corner that appeals to all children, creating culturally relevant bulletin boards that represent diverse student work, positive representations of diverse people, presenting the history or noteworthy accomplishments of diverse figures, cross-cultural literature discussions, and provide opportunities for students to share reports on their heritage and cultural traditions.
- Foster an interactive learning environment that involves the use of cooperative learning groups, guided and informal group discussions, and the internet are strategies for engaging students in an interactive way.
- Implementing the use of on-going culturally relevant assessments that asses student abilities, interests, attitudes, and social skills which include: daily observation of students' learning behaviors in classroom situations, portfolio assessment, teacher-made tests aligned to the instruction program, student self-assessment, teacher self-evaluation.

- Collaborate with professionals and families to serve common students, communicate regularly with families (i.e. newsletter), provide parents the opportunity to plan and participate in cultural celebrations, provide opportunities for parent volunteers, invite culturally diverse speakers to the classroom and attend culturally relevant events in the community of the students served (pp. 5-8).

This is not an exhaustive list of characteristics that encapsulate culturally relevant classrooms. However, the strategies discussed above can be essential in “helping all children find purpose, pride, and success in their daily efforts to learn” (p. 9).

Culturally Relevant Schools

Durden (2008) discussed the importance of adopting school reform models that consider students that are culturally and linguistically diverse. She suggested that building a culturally relevant school is centered upon teaching and learning. Her discussion was focused on two reform models: Success for All and Direct Instruction. Success for All is rooted in the belief that students benefit from cooperative learning activities. The reform model consists of a scripted curriculum and prescribed instructional strategies in writing, reading, mathematics with options for science and social studies. The Direct Instruction Model is rooted in the belief that students from deprived backgrounds benefit from a teacher-directed scripted program. The author further discusses that schools that serve culturally and linguistically diverse students must view reform models through a culturally relevant lens to ensure that the models will meet the needs of the students served. For schools to be culturally responsive, Durden maintained that schools must consider how school reform models: (1) provide

opportunities for students to learn in their native language, participate in cooperative learning groups, and provide stimuli for the creative arts, (2) uphold an ideology that all students can be successful and apply a pedagogy that is rigorous and challenging, (3) bridge home-school discourses and experiences, and (4) provide a curriculum that allows for multiple perspectives and affirms the contributions of diverse student populations.

Mayfield and Garrison-Wade (2015) discussed building culturally relevant schools from a holistic perspective. The authors articulated that building a culturally relevant school begins with the school leadership engaging in intentional conversations on race and what that means for teaching and learning on campus, building cultural competence of administrators, and establishing leadership cadres for students based on their racial identification. The authors also discussed the importance of on-going professional development to build teacher capacity. Teachers disaggregated data according to race and developed cultural competency about the students they served. They expressed shared beliefs about their individual and collective efficacy to impact the lives of students and discussed race and culture, so that they could leverage their understandings to improve the school. The authors found that when culturally relevant practices are implemented school-wide, they can “mitigate historically derived socio-economic and educational disparities by empowering, rather than repressing the voices of all stakeholders” (p. 15).

Culturally Relevant Literacy Instruction

Literacy is defined as “the ability and willingness to use reading and writing to construct meaning from printed text, in ways that meet the requirement in a particular

social context” (as cited in Callins, 2004, p. 3). Culturally relevant literacy instruction “bridges the gap between the school and the world of the student and is consistent with the values of the students’ own culture” (Callins, 2004, p. 4). Literacy instruction that is culturally situated places emphasis on using reading and writing strategies that are relevant to the culture, background experiences, and frames of reference of students. Scholars have discussed relevant literacy instruction that includes integrating culturally relevant texts (Winn & Johnson, 2011), situating writing instruction within student background and experiences (Cox et al. 2009, Graham 2008, Khan 2009), using culturally relevant text talk (Conrad et al. 2004), and performance poetry (Lopez, 2011). The sections that follow will discuss in detail extant literature and practice studies regarding elements of culturally relevant literacy instruction.

Culturally relevant texts. Researcher scholars (Au, 2001; Au & Gourd, 2013; Conrad et al., 2004; Ferger, 2006; Hefflin, 2002; Johnson & Eubanks, 2015; Mendez, 2006; Murphy & Murphy, 2016; Rozansky, 2010; Winn & Johnson, 2011) have found that one method for implementing culturally relevant literacy instruction is through integrating texts that connect to student’s cultural background and experiences. Au (2001) postulated that culturally relevant instruction, “may create new literacies in classroom literacies that connect to students’ home backgrounds” (p. 1). These new literacies consist of integrating culturally relevant literature in the classroom. Integrating texts that connect with students’ lives “may help them gain insight about themselves and their families and discover the value of their own experiences” (p. 7). These texts can also be used to expose students to the histories and experiences of other cultures and

learn lessons that transcend culture, race, or ethnicity. For example, Hefflin (2002) reported on working collaboratively with a classroom teacher to craft a lesson plan on *Cornrows* (Yarborough, 1979) an African American children's book. To facilitate culturally relevant literacy instruction, Hefflin created a culturally relevant framework that included choosing literature based on students': cultural knowledge and cultural patterns (culturally conscious), background (personal), home (social), and community interaction patterns (communal connection). This relevant manner of viewing instruction allowed Hefflin and her colleague to view instruction from the lens of the students.

The components of the lesson planned included: (1) a prereading activity, (2) read aloud, (3) journal writing, (4) group discussion, and (5) follow-up activity. Hefflin (2002) discovered that this approach to planning and teaching increased student engagement, provided more elaborative verbal and written responses, and rich discussions about African American culture and heritage transpired in the classroom. Rozansky (2010) also provided an example of integrating culturally relevant texts in the classroom. She conducted a case study that explored an 8th grade reading teachers' understanding and implementation of CRP in the classroom. The scholar reported that the teacher incorporated students' prior experiences and connected instructional content to the lives of students. This was seen through the teacher providing students the opportunity to discuss personal tragedies such as a student's cousin that was shot by a police officer and the teacher connected instructional resources to students by selecting articles that connected to students lives. These articles consisted of topics about

unfairness, lack of opportunity or other types of oppression that connected to students' experiences (p. 7).

At the same time, Murphy and Murphy (2016) agreed with using reading as a conduit for building student writing proficiency. The authors conducted a mixed methods study to explore the impact of culturally relevant approaches to writing instruction with Latino students in a pre-collegiate English program. The authors used culturally relevant texts written by Latino authors to build students' writing capacity in (1) descriptive, (2) narration, (3) exemplification, and (4) persuasive writing. Texts were chosen based on the author being of Latino heritage, relevance to the lives of the students, and the text needed to be 1,000 to 1,800 words. Students read the text associated with each genre of writing and created an original piece of writing using the text read as a model. The authors discovered that student enthusiasm increased, the texts served as a writing model to support students in writing, and students felt the texts were relevant to their lives and experiences.

Culturally relevant writing. Scholars (Cox et al. 2009, Graham 2008, Khan 2009) describe effective writing instruction as an authentic, engaging, meaningful, and real world. Winn and Johnson (2011) posited that culturally relevant writing instruction challenges students to write for authentic audiences, leverages the ideas, voices, and perspectives of students, and challenges students to engage critically with the world. Situating writing instruction within the context of student experiences provides students with an opportunity to have their voices heard. Hefflin (2002) and Ferger (2006) maintained that culturally relevant literature is a catalyst for writing instruction. The

authors used journal writing to help students make rich connections between their personal experiences and text. As a result of this practice, the authors found that student self-efficacy and engagement increased as well as the production of elaborate written responses. Through the utilization of relevant writing topics or tasks, teachers can build upon what students know to engage them in the writing process.

Johnson and Eubanks (2015) used a case study methodology to explore how developing relevant lesson plans with preservice teachers has the potential to prepare students to become competent writers. The authors discussed a lesson plan analyzing *The Star-Spangled Banner* and *Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing*. Then, students analyzed contemporary texts *Modest Mouse's Float On*, Janelle Monae's *Queen*, and *Beyonce's Run the World*. Next, students pulled anthems from their personal experiences to analyze. The final step involved students, choosing one of the anthems analyzed and explaining why the anthem chosen embodies the anthem for their life. The authors found that when teachers locate experiences within writing instruction it compels students to make meaning of the world. Similarly, Irizarry (2009) found that one teachers' literacy instruction for African American and Latino students involved the use of rap music. Students were able to use their language preferences such as African American Vernacular, and Spanish language to craft raps about their identities and dreams for the future. He suggested that using popular culture music and communication practices congruent with the lives of students increased students' writing capacity.

In addition to using reading as a bridge to writing activities, culturally relevant literacy instruction is negotiated between teachers and students and is beneficial for

differentiation for students with emotional and behavioral disorders. To illustrate this point, Lewis et al. (2017) postulated that teachers do not adequately prepare students with emotional and behavioral disorders with the skills to produce cohesive essays. The authors maintained that culturally relevant writing instruction is an effective tool for building the writing capacity of students with emotional and behavioral disorders. For the authors, culturally relevant writing instructions involves (a) students selecting writing topics, (b) connect writing instruction to their lives, (c) teacher models each stage of the writing process, (d) students write in the language most comfortable, (e) students self-evaluate their writing, (f) edit and revise the cultural frame used for writing to ensure their intended message is conveyed, and (g) share their writing with the class audience. The authors found that culturally relevant writing instruction has the potential to develop writing self-efficacy, self-advocacy, and self-determination. Shealey and Callins (2007) maintained that students have unique and diverse experiences that are connected to their culture and racial identities, thus agreeing with the idea that culturally relevant literacy instruction is a valuable tool to support students with disabilities.

Adkins (2012) maintained that culturally relevant literacy instruction involves altering the curriculum, so that it connects to students' lives, includes student voices, fosters collaboration, and provides authentic opportunities for students to be assessed and receive feedback. To illustrate this point, Mendez (2006) discussed an integrated curriculum approach to building literacy across four subjects based on Chicano themes. The classes were Estudiantina (traditional Mexican music group), Latin American Theatre, Drama, Spanish 4, and Chicano Studies and were organized around five themes:

(1) identity, (2) culture, (3) women, (4) change, and (5) justice. The themes were integrated with the core curriculum through incorporating English language literature in each subject area, beginning with content in the subject and transitioning to core curriculum, and through teaching strategies such as (1) anticipatory guides, (2) What I Know, Want to Know, Learned (KWL) charts, (3) cooperative learning, (4) reciprocal teaching, (5) directed-thinking-reading activities, (6) drama, and (7) literature circles. Students engaged in persuasive, reflective, descriptive, evaluative, cause and effect, and comparison and contrast essays. The author found that when students' cultural background is at the center of writing students writing capacity and academic success has the potential to improve.

Conrad et al. (2004) discussed implementing Text Talk as a culturally relevant strategy to improve 2nd grade students' comprehension and oral language skills. Text Talks involves "a line of carefully planned scaffolded questions and vocabulary activities" (p. 188) which help students grasp difficult concepts in texts. The Text Talk process involved using *More Than Anything Else* (Bradbury, 1995) a fictionalized story about the life of Booker T. Washington. The teachers (1) used a KWL chart to build background knowledge, (2) provided discussion questions that connected students' personal experiences with the text, (3) provided specific stopping points throughout the reading for literal and inferential questions, (4) shared/discussed illustrations after the reading. The authors discovered that Text Talk is a tool for helping students make personal connections with texts.

Lopez (2011) conducted participatory action research with a 12th grade English classroom and explored the impact of using culturally relevant pedagogy and critical literacy to engage students at a secondary multicultural school in Ontario, Canada. To facilitate inclusive and socially aware instruction the teacher relied on the work of Camanigan (2008) that focused on integrating performance poetry in the classroom. Students in the class read and critiqued poems for poetic devices, recorded responses in journals, shared responses in small groups, and then shared responses with the whole class. Once students deconstructed poems read in class, students created their poems based on their personal experiences. Lopez found that using culturally relevant teaching practices were beneficial for students to interrogate their own cultural experiences and the experiences of others.

Closing Thoughts on Chapter 2

The literature in this chapter provides the underpinnings and articulates the importance of using culturally relevant pedagogy in the classroom to meet the needs of diverse students. More specifically, the research in this chapter suggests that: (1) teachers do not always recognize and understand how to leverage student culture, experiences, and students' frame of reference in classroom practice, (2) using culturally relevant approaches to learning has the potential to increase learning outcomes, (3) culturally relevant pedagogy is a tool to enact multicultural education, and (4) when teachers learn and implement culturally relevant strategies it helps them transform curriculum, classrooms, and schools.

The research described in this chapter suggests that culturally relevant pedagogy has the potential to connect students' home lives with academic learning. Overall, employing culturally relevant pedagogy in the classroom ensures that students' culture and experiences are validated.

CHAPTER III

SOLUTION AND METHOD

“Culturally relevant writing pedagogy invites the voices of the students and creates a space for them to take on issues that reflect their cultural, social, and personal experiences.”

(Winn & Johnson, 2011, p. 22)

Proposed Solution

The proposed solution involved facilitating a 3-week culturally relevant writing unit. According to Winn and Johnson (2011), culturally relevant writing instruction “provides opportunities for students’ voices, perspectives, and experiences to become text” (p. 44). To facilitate culturally relevant writing instruction the authors devised four steps. These steps include:

- Creating a playlist which requires that teachers connect writing activities to the national, state, and local standards that students are expected to master and connect writing activities to the lives and experiences of students.
- Managing content involves using literature, media, and examples to inform student writing.
- Sync involves providing feedback about student writing and employing writing strategies that meet students where they are by drawing on students’ funds of knowledge and building curriculum around student expertise.
- Share your music involves modeling writing for students and providing spaces for students to share their writing (pp. 44-45).

This research study employed these steps to craft and facilitate a culturally relevant writing unit. The unit explored students’ reading/writing preferences, students’ writing

experiences, and the impact of culturally relevant instruction on students and the impact, if any, instruction had on increasing their writing self-efficacy for poetic, narrative, and expository writing.

Create a Playlist

Winn and Johnson (2011) used a musical playlist as a metaphor to describe the process for planning and facilitating culturally relevant writing instruction. The authors posited that the first step in teaching writing in a culturally relevant manner is to create a writing “playlist”. This process involves considering “the subject matter, curriculum, and genre” (p. 45). For example, in Winn and Johnson’s text, the authors discussed a case study about a teacher that facilitated a persuasive writing unit for 10th grade students. The teacher aligned the unit to the Georgia Performance Standards for 10th grade Literature and Composition.

At the 10th grade level in Georgia, students were expected to know how to write a persuasive essay by the end of the year. In order to facilitate culturally relevant writing instruction, the teacher connected the writing activities to the state standards that students were expected to master. In this study, the first step in developing the unit involved identifying the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) students were expected to master. At the 9th grade level, students are expected to be proficient at writing expository and narrative essays as well as poetry. The next section discusses the curriculum, subject matter, and genres taught in the unit and the process employed to craft the “playlist”.

Curriculum. Understanding the content that students are expected to master at the 9th grade level is vital to implementing writing instruction in a culturally relevant manner. Step one involves identifying the TEKS students are required to master at the 9th grade level and identifying culturally relevant content. Table 3 shows the TEKS aligned with the culturally relevant writing unit.

Table 3

Writing Unit TEKS

TEKS	Explanation
14A	Students are expected to write an engaging story with a well-developed conflict and resolution, interesting and believable characters, and a range of literary strategies (e.g. dialogue, suspense) and devices to enhance the plot.
14B	Students are expected to write a poem using a variety of poetic techniques (e.g., structural elements, figurative language) and a variety of poetic forms (e.g., sonnets, ballads)
15Ai-v	<p>15A Students are expected to write an analytical essay of sufficient length that includes:</p> <p>15AI Effective introductory and concluding paragraphs and a variety of sentence structures</p> <p>15AII Rhetorical devices and transitions between paragraphs</p> <p>15AIII A controlling idea or thesis</p> <p>15AIV An organizing structure appropriate to the purpose, audience, and context</p> <p>15AV Relevant information and valid inferences</p>

For each standard, an Unpacking the TEKS (See Appendix C) template was completed. This instructional tool is used to break down the standard to understand the knowledge and skills that students must learn in a lesson. The following was identified for each standard: (1) content strand, (2) knowledge/skill, (3) standard, (4) standard content vocabulary, (5) verbs, (6) subject matter, (7) genre, (8) objective, (9) product, and (10) STAAR question stem/sample question. The next critical step in creating a “playlist” is using a writing interest form. This form was used to capture students’ reading/writing preferences and the activities students engage in after school. Assessing students’ interests at the beginning of the unit helped students to share their experiences, resources, and ideas related to their lives (Winn and Johnson, 2011). This data was used to select poetry, narratives, and expository texts that connected to students' lives and experiences.

Subject matter and genre. After identifying student learning expectations and surveying students for their reading/writing preferences, the next step involved identifying the subject matter and content to be taught. The subject matter for the unit was writing and at the 9th grade level, expository writing is a primary focus. This research study explored expository writing, which is tested at the 9th grade level, but also examined the impact of culturally relevant writing instruction on poetic and narrative writing, respectively. Narrative and poetic writing were included in the study, because at the 9th grade level these modes of writing are often omitted from classroom instruction, despite being identified as required skills that students need to master as outlined by the TEKS.

Managing Content

Once the “playlist” is created, the second step is to manage the content or “provide students literature, media, and examples that can inform their writing” (p. 45). At the beginning of the writing unit, students completed a Writing Interest Form (Winn & Johnson, 2011) and a Culturally Relevant Questionnaire (See Appendix C) as a homework assignment. They were given the option to complete the questionnaire independently or interview a member of their immediate family (i.e., mother or father) or extended family (i.e., grandfather, grandmother, uncle, or aunt) that was familiar with their cultural background. The writing interest form and cultural questionnaire were content resources students leveraged as they crafted their culturally relevant writing pieces each week of the unit.

Week one. Before the lesson, a list of terms was generated by the researcher based on the cultures represented in the classroom. On the first day of the unit, as students entered the classroom, they received an index card with a term that connected to a specific culture. The purpose of this activity was to establish a purpose for understanding the importance of students’ cultural backgrounds and to expose students to an aspect of a culture different from their own. The researcher purposefully assigned students index cards that contrasted with student’s cultural background. Students received one of the following terms: (1) Bible, (2) jollof rice, (3) bride prize, (4) African National Congress, (5) Hijab/Burqa, (6) Merengue, (7) Nihilism, (8) Nguyen Dynasty, (9) Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, (10) American Flag, (11) Aeta, (12) Maple Leaf, (13) familia, (14) spirituals, (15) Ute tribe, or (16) Swahili. Individually, students used their

phones to conduct a google search for the cultural term that they were assigned. Students shared their term aloud with the class by identifying their term and explaining the significance and connecting the term to a specific culture. Once students shared their responses, students defined culture from their vantage point. The purpose of this activity was to build students background knowledge about the different aspects of culture and encourage students to conceptualize what culture means to them.

To assess student proficiency in poetic writing, students created an initial poem before they received the culturally relevant writing instruction to determine their level of writing proficiency before the instruction. After creating their initial poem, students completed Reflective Journal 1. Students reflected about their previous writing experiences and rated their writing self-efficacy for creating poetry on a scale from 1-10. Students chose from 10 options of poetry to read and analyze. The poetry options were selected by the researcher based on the lives, experiences, and cultural backgrounds of the students enrolled in the English I course. It was imperative to select texts that represented students' cultural backgrounds because the texts served as a writing model as students created their own culturally relevant texts about their own lives and experiences (Murphy & Murphy, 2016). Table 4 shows the author, title of the text, and the year of publication for each poetry text selected.

Table 4

Poetry Text Options

Author	Title of Text
Gabriel El- Registan and Sergey Mikhalkov	<i>The Hymn of the Soviet Union</i> (1938)
Joy Harjo	<i>Remember</i> (1983)
Pat Mora	<i>Immigrants</i> (1984)
George Lyon	<i>Where I'm From</i> (1999)
Naomi Shihab Nye	<i>Different Ways to Pray</i> (1995)
Gwendolyn Brooks	<i>Kojo-I AM BLACK</i> (2005)
Jose Rizal	<i>Our Mother Tongue</i> (1867)
Moniza Alvi	<i>Presents from My Aunts in Pakistan</i> (2004)
Walt Whitman	<i>America</i> (1855)
Truong Tran	<i>Scars</i> (1999)

Once students made their selection, they worked collaboratively in groups of 2-4 students that chose the same poem. If a student chose a poem that was not selected by any student in their class period, they joined a group, so that they were not working in isolation. In their groups, students used visual annotations (See Appendix C) to read and annotate the text. During the annotation process, students focused on the following concepts: (1) vocabulary, (2) figurative language, (3) author's craft, (4) conflict, (5) theme, and (6) imagery. When students finished annotating with the visual symbols, students (a) analyzed the symbolic meaning of the title, (b) paraphrased a section of the text, (c) identified the tone of the author and provided a justification for their answer, (d)

identified shifts in the author's tone or message, and (e) explained the theme of the text (TP-CAST).

Each student selected a poem that represented a diverse culture or connected to their cultural background. After the completion of the TP-CAST (See Appendix C) analysis, students created their poems. Students created their poems to demonstrate their own ability to create poetic text using their voice, experiences, and cultural background. Students leveraged the cultural background questionnaire and writing interest form as content resources to inform the creation of their original poetry. Students were provided the option to use a scaffolded writing template based on George Lyon's poem *Where I'm From* (See Appendix D) as a writing model to craft their original poem or students developed their own format for creating their poetry product.

Week two. As students matriculated to the second week of the unit, it was critical for students to further understand that their cultural, social, and personal experiences make them unique. To help students reflect on the nature of their narrative, they completed an exercise, in which, the researcher likened their narratives to a jolly rancher. Each student in the class was given a (1) watermelon, (2) cherry, (3) blue raspberry, or (4) green apple jolly rancher. The researcher explained to students that the jolly rancher bag is filled with different flavors, much like the cultural and ethnic composition of the class. Then, the researcher asked the students a rhetorical question: What is your flavor? Students were reminded that each of their narratives has a distinct "flavor" or core characteristics that make them unique. The purpose of connecting students' narratives metaphorically to the flavor of a jolly rancher was to help ignite

reflection about their stories as they wrote for week two of the culturally relevant writing unit.

Students created a preliminary personal narrative about a self-selected topic to determine their writing proficiency in this genre. To assess writing proficiency, students' writing pieces were evaluated using the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) rubric (See Appendix E). It was essential for students to create an initial narrative writing piece to understand their writing proficiency before students received the culturally relevant writing instruction. Next, students selected a narrative text to read and annotate that represented their cultural background or they chose a narrative text that explored the cultural background different from their own. The narrative options were chosen by the researcher based on the lives, experiences, and cultural backgrounds of students enrolled in the English I class. Table 5 shows the author, title of the text, and the year of publication for each narrative text selected.

Table 5

Narrative Text Options

Author	Title of Text
Brent Staples	<i>Black Men and Public Space</i> (1986)
Sandra Cisneros	<i>Only Daughter</i> (2000)
Piri Thomas	<i>Amigo Brothers Story</i> (1978)
Amy Tan	<i>Joy Luck Club</i> (1989)
Farah Ahmedi	<i>Escape From Afghanistan</i> (1994)
Alice Walker	<i>Everyday Use</i> (1973)

Table 5 (continued).

Author	Title of Text
Paul Fleischman	<i>SeedFolks</i> “Amir” and “Sae Young” (1997)
Paul Langan	<i>The Gun</i> (2002)
Phillip Higgs	<i>Unplanned Legacy</i> (2002)

Once students made their selection, they worked collaboratively in groups of 2-4 students that selected the same narrative text. In groups, students read the text and used visual annotations to annotate the text. Students focused on the following concepts as they annotated: (1) vocabulary, (2) figurative language, (3) plot, (4) conflict, (5) theme, and (6) author’s craft. After students completed their visual annotations, students began working on their narrative. Students leveraged the narrative text they read and annotated, completed the cultural background questionnaire, and writing interest form as content resources for creating their narrative product.

Additionally, students completed a plot diagram organizer (See Appendix D) to serve as a prewriting strategy to plan the rough draft of their narrative essay. While students were working, students were encouraged to reflect on the following reflective questions:

1. What is your story?
2. How will you leverage your cultural lens and language?
3. How will you address the historical and cultural norms of your culture?

These reflective questions served as a guide for students to think critically about their personal stories, reflect on how they will leverage their perspectives, and language in

their text, and to reflect on how they would use their historical and cultural norms. Students were not required to address all the questions in their narrative text. The reflective questions served as a reminder for students to draw upon their own culture, background experiences, and frame of references to create an authentic text.

Week three. Students began the final week of the culturally relevant unit by watching a TEDx speech by Priya Rajput entitled, *Diversity*. Students watched the video media and shared their gleanings with their partner. After watching the video, students were assigned the following reflective question:

1. Why is diversity important?

The purpose of the question was to challenge students to reflect on the importance of their diverse cultures and experiences. Students created a preliminary expository text to determine their writing proficiency. Afterward, students chose to read and annotate an expository option that represented their cultural background, or they chose an option that explored the cultural background different from their own. Students chose from 10 expository options to read and analyze. The expository options consisted of both text and video media and some options consisted of video media only. Expository options were chosen by the researcher based on the lives, experiences, and cultural backgrounds of students enrolled in the English I class. Table 6 shows the Author/TV studio, Title of Text/Video Media for each expository option selected.

Table 6

Expository Text Options

Author/TV Studio	Title of Text/Video Media
Soledad O'Brian	<i>Latino in America</i>
Good Morning America/ PBS	<i>Two Men Interviewed/Police Chief News Conference</i>
Allison Graham	<i>How Social Media Makes Us Unsocial</i>
Debbie Sterling	<i>Inspiring the Next Generation of Engineers</i>
Joseph Weber	<i>House to Vote on School Gun Violence Bill</i>
Jon Pareles and Zachary Woolfe	<i>Kendrick Lamar Music Pulitzer Prize</i>
Rumeana Jahangir	<i>How does Black Hair Reflect Black History</i>
Rozina Sabur	<i>Ramadan 2018: How Muslims celebrate the revelation of the Koran</i>
Marilyn Price-Mitchell	<i>The Psychology of Youth Sports</i>
Monsy Alvarado	<i>As Trump crackdown continues, more Immigrants are choosing to self-deport</i>

Once students made their selection, they worked collaboratively in groups of 2-4 students that selected the same expository text or video media. In groups, students read and annotated their selected text or watched their video media and answered guiding questions (See Appendix D). If students read an expository text, students used the following visual annotation symbols: (1) hook, (2) thesis, (3) supporting details, (4) topic sentence, (5) figurative language, (6) conclusion, and (7) vocabulary. Next, students began working on their expository text. As students began the writing process, they were reminded that their expository writing should be connected to their lives, experiences, or

cultural background and students were also reminded that they could use their cultural questionnaire as a resource to craft their expository essay.

Before students wrote their expository essay, students created their own writing prompt (See Appendix D) and completed a Longhorn Box (See Appendix D) to plan the rough draft of their expository text. Before students created their prompt, they selected a topic that was derived from their expository text, cultural questionnaire, or a topic that connected to their cultural background. As they created their prompt, they selected a quote that connected with their topic, created a critical thought question, and created a writing prompt for the topic they selected. The process of creating the expository text was aligned to the sample expository writing prompt students are expected to master on the English I STAAR assessment. The Longhorn Box is a pre-writing strategy students used to craft their expository essays. Students used this tool to write their hook, thesis, body paragraphs, and conclusion for their expository essay. After students finished with the prewriting strategy, students crafted their final draft on 26-lined paper.

Sync

The third and most crucial step in culturally relevant writing instruction is syncing. Winn and Johnson (2011) described this as connecting teachers' ideas with students' ideas to fuel their writing (p. 45). This includes providing feedback and employing instructional strategies that meet students at their instructional level. During each week of the instructional unit, students received both teacher and peer feedback. Students provided feedback to their peers using the writing feedback form (Winn & Johnson, 2011). In pairs, students used the writing feedback form to give feedback to

their corresponding partner. Students gave feedback on the ideas of the text, organization, sentence fluency, word choice, and voice. After students received feedback from their peers, the students received three reflective questions to consider before they completed their final draft:

1. How will you address your cultural, social, and personal experiences in your text?
2. How will you leverage your cultural lens and language to craft your text?
3. How will you address the historical and contemporary norms of your culture to craft your text?

Students did not need to address all the reflective questions in their writing. Instead, these questions served as a checklist to ensure that students used either their experiences, culture, or interests in the creation of their product. Once students completed the writing feedback form and considered the reflective questions, students created the final draft of their product. Meanwhile, at the end of each instructional week, students completed a learning log for each genre of writing covered. Students reflected on the impact of instruction and rated their writing self-efficacy on a scale of 1-10 for each genre covered.

Share your Music

Continuing with this metaphor of writing as a form of music, the final step in facilitating culturally relevant writing instruction involved the teacher sharing original pieces of writing and providing opportunities for students to share the original writing products they created. Thus, Winn and Johnson (2011) coined this process “sharing your

music” and maintained that it is necessary because “performing writing, for example, creates community and instills ownership and pride in one’s work” (p. 46). At the end of each instructional week, students created a final draft of their text and presented their product orally to their writing feedback partners. Classroom time limits did not allow every student to share their writing product. As a result, students nominated 3-4 students to share their products for the entire class. After the class presentations, students’ expository and narrative products were evaluated by the researcher using the STAAR assessment writing rubric (See Appendix E). Since poetry is not assessed at the state level, there was not a state rubric to assess student poetry products.

Outline of the Proposed Solution

I. Students completed Reflective Journal 1 and described their middle school writing experiences and rated their ability to write expository, poetic, and narrative writing with a justification.

II. Students completed culturally relevant interviews of family members about their cultural background.

III. Week One

A. Students completed a free verse poem about a self-selected topic before they received the culturally relevant instruction.

B. Students selected a poem based on their cultural background or selected a poem to explore a different culture.

C. Students assigned in pairs to annotate and analyze the poem using TP-CAST.

D. Students created an original poem using George Lyon's poem *Where I'm From* as a guide (students leveraged the cultural questionnaire and pulled content from their own culture).

E. Students exchanged the rough draft of their poem with one peer and completed the student feedback form for their partner.

F. Students received feedback from the instructor and leveraged feedback from their partners to improve their writing.

G. Students completed the final draft and presented their poems to the class. Classroom time limits did not allow every student to share their writing product. As a result, students nominated 3-4 students to share their products for the entire class. After students completed their presentation, students completed Learning Log 1.

IV. Week Two

A. Students completed a personal narrative on the following prompt: Describe a time that you misjudged someone based on their appearance or someone misjudged you. The students completed the writing prompt before they received the culturally relevant writing instruction.

B. Students selected a personal narrative to read based on their cultural background or selected a personal narrative to explore a different culture.

C. Students assigned in pairs to annotate the personal narrative using visual annotations.

D. Students created an original personal narrative about a self-selected topic using the Plot graphic organizer.

E. After students completed their narrative, they exchanged their rough draft of their narrative with their peer and completed the student feedback form for their partner.

F. Students received feedback from the instructor and leveraged the feedback from their peers to improve their writing.

G. Students completed their final draft and presented their narrative to the class.

Classroom time limits did not allow every student to share their writing product. As a result, students nominated 3-4 students to share their products for the entire class. After the class presentations, students' narrative products were evaluated by the researcher using the STAAR assessment writing rubric. After students completed their presentation, students completed Learning Log 2.

V. Week Three

A. Students completed an expository writing piece on the following prompt: What a tangled web we weave first we lie, then we deceive. Explain the importance of integrity. The students completed the writing prompt before they received the culturally relevant writing instruction.

B. Students selected an expository text to read based on their cultural background or selected an expository text to explore a different culture.

C. Students assigned in pairs to annotate the expository text using visual annotations

D. Students created a draft of their expository writing using the Longhorn Box graphic organizer (students leveraged the cultural questionnaire and pulled content from their own culture).

E. Students exchanged their rough draft of their expository text with their peers and completed the student feedback form for their partner.

F. Students received feedback from the instructor and leveraged feedback from their peers to improve their writing.

G. Students completed their final draft and presented their expository text to the class. Classroom time limits did not allow every student to share their writing product. As a result, students nominated 3-4 students to share their products for the entire class. After the class presentations, students' expository products were evaluated by the researcher using the STAAR assessment writing rubric. After students completed their presentation, students completed Learning Log 3.

Justification of Proposed Solution

Researchers have discussed several terms for the type of writing instruction that should occur in the classroom. Khan (2009) discussed how she used a controversial law about a school mandated "moment of silence" and current events from the local news to create "authentic" writing experiences resulting in "engagement and investment in student writing" (p. 17). Cox et al. (2009) explained the importance of teaching workplace and community writing in the classroom to provide a "real world" context, to help students connect academic learning with the expectations of work in the "real world". Meanwhile, Graham (2008) described strategies for building the writing capacity of students. He discussed writing instruction that speaks to students' "interests" and is "meaningful". These descriptions of writing instruction are connected to culturally relevant writing instruction because they provide opportunities for students to use

“experiential knowledge and apply it to writing activities in the classroom” (p. 21-22). Winn and Johnson (2011) posited that culturally relevant writing instruction challenges students to write for authentic audiences, leverages the ideas, voices, and perspectives of students, and challenges students to engage critically with the world. The authors further stated that “culturally relevant pedagogy legitimizes students’ voices, knowledge, and experiences as official content of the classroom” (p. 22). The next section will discuss the study context and research participants involved in the research and provide data that indicates a need to improve writing pedagogy to increase the writing capacity of students.

Study Context and Participants

Study context. The context of the research study was High Achieving Middle School (HAMS) which opened during the 2015-2016 academic school year with the 6th grade. During the 2016-2017 school year, the campus added the 7th grade and received their first writing data for students enrolled in this grade. On the 2017 reading STAAR assessment, 95% of students performed at the approaching grade-level, 80% of students performed at grade level, and 49% performed at the master’s level. On the writing portion of the assessment, 97% of students performed at the approaching level, 76% performed at grade-level, and 35% of students performed at the master’s level. While 97% of students met the approaching level in writing, only 76% of students met grade-level expectations and 35% of students performed at the master’s level in writing. Since the campus is a Collegiate Middle School campus, students matriculating to the 8th grade take the English I STAAR assessment, which includes both the reading and

writing. This data reveals that students in the 8th grade will need effective writing instruction to build their writing proficiency to meet and surpass grade-level expectations of the Collegiate Academy model. Students that attend this middle school are expected to begin high school and college courses their freshman year in high school, so students must excel on the English I STAAR assessment as it is a springboard for preparing students to be successful in their high school and college courses the following year.

Participants. This research study focused on the middle school writing experiences of 8th grade students enrolled in an English I class. The rationale for selecting these students was based on the achievement gaps for student writing proficiency at the 7th, 9th, and 10th grade level. The research participants consisted of 63 students that were selected from students enrolled in the researcher’s English I course. The students entered the study with prior writing experiences and perceptions about their writing self-efficacy in the English classroom. The race of the participants included: 60.4% African American, 25% Hispanic, 6.5% White, 4.3% Two or more races, 3.2% Asian.

Proposed Research Paradigm

This research study aligned with two primary paradigms: interpretive research and a qualitative dominant crossover mixed research. Morehouse (2011) defined interpretive inquiry “...as quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method research that sees humans as agents who act with others in a social and cultural context (p. 22). The primary research paradigm used was qualitative, but quantitative data was used to

correlate to the qualitative data. The agents in this study are 8th grade participants enrolled in an English I course and they acted socially as participants in the writing unit and acted culturally as they used their cultural lens to explore their own backgrounds to create culturally relevant texts. This study relied on the following philosophical stances connected to interpretive research: (1) humans construct their reality by interpreting their perspectives on it, (2) tacit understandings and tangible accounts of experience, (3) the inquirer and what is to be inquired interact to influence the outcome of the inquiry, and (4) values influence how we go about understanding and inquiring about the world and the conclusions we accept as knowledge (p. 23). Next, the philosophical stances will be discussed in connection with the research study and how the stances were enacted.

In this research study students constructed their reality by interpreting the perspectives of their middle school writing experiences and the impact, if any, culturally relevant writing instruction had on increasing their writing self-efficacy. Their perspectives about the culturally relevant writing instruction were vital to the study to help ascertain how their middle school writing experiences differed from the culturally relevant writing unit. Understanding students' experiences of writing instruction provided keen insight into their tangible accounts of their previous middle school writing experiences and how those experiences shaped their thoughts and perspectives about writing.

This study is further connected to interpretative research because the researcher was the "inquirer" and the phenomenon to be "inquired" was the impact of culturally relevant writing instruction. The researcher facilitated culturally relevant instruction, in

an effort, to increase students' writing self-efficacy and potentially impact how students view writing. The researcher values culturally situated instruction and believes culturally relevant instruction that incorporates the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of diverse students (Gay, 2000) has the potential to increase students' learning abilities. In addition to interpretative research, this study is also aligned to qualitative dominant crossover mixed research approach. The next paragraphs discuss how this research paradigm connects with this study.

Qualitative dominant crossover mixed research integrates both qualitative and quantitative data in a research study (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). In this type of research approach, qualitative research is the dominant research paradigm that provides rich opportunities to understand the ways people make meaning of their lives, experiences, and structures of the world (Atieno, 2009). The qualitative data collected throughout the study involved both open-ended and closed-ended items and included: a writing interest form, reflective journals, learning logs, and student artifacts.

The quantitative data included (1) students' rating of their writing self-efficacy on a scale from 1-10 at the beginning, throughout, and at the end of the study, (2) rating of student expository and narrative writing products at the beginning and at the end of the study, and (3) percentages of students that selected specific reading and writing preferences. The quantitative data were used to "associate qualitative data with quantitized data" (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013, p. 187) to correlate the qualitative open-ended and closed-ended responses to quantitative data that were collected in reference to students' self-efficacy ratings, students' ratings of their expository and narrative writing,

and students' reading and writing preferences. The merger of quantitative data alongside qualitative data enhanced the representation and legitimation to the exploration of culturally relevant writing instruction, provided clarity to the voice of the participants, and provided richer interpretations (Frels & Onwebuzie, 2013).

Data Collection Methods

The data collection for this research study was based on several primary resources. The resources include reflective journals (See Appendix A), learning logs (See Appendix B), a writing interest form (Winn & Johnson, 2011), cultural questionnaire (See Appendix C), and student artifacts. Each of these sources provided pertinent evidence to understanding students writing experiences, writing preferences, and the impact of culturally relevant instruction on students and their writing self-efficacy.

Cultural Questionnaire

The first source of evidence was the cultural questionnaire. The cultural questionnaire used in the research study was adapted from San Jose University from a course titled: Leisure, Culture, and Identity. In this course, the cultural questionnaire was used to learn about students' cultural backgrounds. The researcher used the questionnaire because it was beneficial in helping students reflect on their cultural backgrounds and experiences. Before the beginning of the culturally relevant writing unit, students answered the cultural questions independently or interviewed a member of their immediate family (i.e., mother or father) or an individual in their extended family (i.e., grandfather, grandmother, uncle, or aunt) that was familiar with their cultural

background. It was important for students to complete the cultural questionnaire, to learn about their cultural background and experiences. Throughout the unit, students were provided the option to use the cultural questionnaire as a resource for creating their culturally relevant writing pieces.

Writing Interest Form

The writing interest form (Winn & Johnson, 2011) was used to gather information about students' reading/writing preferences, the last text students read, activities students participated in and outside of school, and students ranked their writing preferences for writing narrative, expository, and poetic writing on a scale from 1-3. The data collected from the writing interest form was used to select culturally relevant poetry, expository, and narrative texts students engaged with during the unit.

Reflective Journals

Students completed reflective journals at the beginning and the end of the research study. The purpose of the journals at the beginning of the research was to understand middle students writing experiences and students' writing self-efficacy. Students were asked the following questions: (1) Describe your middle school writing instruction experiences before entering English I? and (2) On a scale from 1-10, rate your confidence in your ability to write narrative essays, poetry, and expository essays? Students were required to answer the questions in 7-10 sentences. When students answered the question about their writing confidence, students provided a rating from 1-10 and justification to support their ratings. It was important to assess student writing confidence at the beginning of the study to determine student self-efficacy before the

researcher facilitated the culturally relevant writing unit. Additionally, at the end of the research study students completed Reflective Journal 2 and answered the following questions: (1) In what ways, did the writing instruction for the poetry, narrative, and expository lessons increase your ability to create these products? and (2) On a scale from 1-10, rate your confidence in your ability to write narrative essays, poetry, and expository essays?

Students described how they felt about the culturally relevant writing instruction and recorded how their writing self-efficacy for poetic, expository, and narrative writing was impacted, if applicable, based on the writing instruction received. Students were required to answer the questions in 7-10 sentences. When students answered the question about their writing confidence, students provided a rating from 1-10 and a justification to support their ratings. It was imperative to assess student writing confidence at the end of the writing unit to determine the impact of culturally relevant writing instruction on increasing student self-efficacy.

Learning Logs

Each week, one writing genre was taught using culturally relevant writing instruction. The culturally relevant writing instruction consisted of students selecting a culturally relevant text to read and annotate. The first week the focus was poetic writing, the second week the focus was narrative writing, and the final week the focus was expository writing. At the end of each instructional week, students completed a learning log and answered questions created by the researcher about how the instruction impacted

their ability to create the specific genre and rated their writing self-efficacy for the writing genre taught on a scale from 1-10.

Justification of Use of Instruments in Context

This research study included the use of both qualitative and quantitative strategies to collect data. Data instruments were created based on the research questions. The questions for the reflective journals and learning logs were created based on the research questions. The cultural questionnaire was developed for students to explore their cultural background and the open-ended questions included in the questionnaire provided students with an opportunity to provide descriptive data. The learning log and reflective journals were designed to explore students' writing experiences and the impact of culturally relevant writing instruction on student writing self-efficacy.

Cultural Questionnaire

The cultural questionnaire was used to gather information about students' cultural backgrounds. This tool was used to help students define culture from their lens and examine different components of their cultural background. Student responses provided rich descriptions about student's cultural background and students leveraged the content as a resource for creating culturally relevant writing products.

Writing Interest Form

The writing interest form was used to gather information about students' reading preferences, the last text students read, and their preferences for reading in the class. Students also used the form to identify activities they participate in after school, and ranked their preferences for writing poetic, narrative, and expository writing on a scale

from 1-3. The open-ended questions provided rich details about student's preferences and the ranking of the writing preferences provided numerical data so that the percentage of students that preferred each writing genre could be determined. The writing interest form was an essential component of the research study as it provided critical data that supported the researcher in selecting culturally relevant texts and understand students' writing preferences for poetic, narrative, and expository forms of writing.

Reflective Journals

At the beginning of the research study, students completed a reflective journal and discussed their previous middle writing experiences and they ranked their writing self-efficacy for poetic, narrative, and expository writing. The response about students' writing experiences provided descriptive data and students ranking their writing self-efficacy scores helped understand students' writing self-efficacy before they experienced the culturally relevant writing instruction.

Learning Logs

After each instructional week, students completed a learning log about their learning experience. Students answered open-ended questions about the benefit of the instruction received. Their responses provided rich descriptive detail about their experiences and they also ranked their writing-self-efficacy for the writing genre covered during the instructional week. The ranking of the self-efficacy provided numerical data to categorize students with low and high writing self-efficacy scores.

Data Analysis Strategy

Qualitative Data Analysis

Creswell's (2014) six-step framework guided the data analysis. Step one involved organizing and preparing the data for analysis. This process entailed sorting and arranging data collected from the research into manila folders. Each student was given a manila folder and included the following data: (1) writing interest form, (2) reflective journals, and (3) learning logs, and (4) student writing products, (5) student feedback forms. To protect student identity, each student was assigned a number and this number was recorded on the folder and the documents inside the folder. The second step involved reading and looking at all the data and writing initial thoughts and gleanings. Creswell maintained that “hand coding is a laborious process” (p. 195). As a result, step three involved hand coding qualitative data using In Vivo Coding analysis, a qualitative analysis tool used to code and analyze the reflective journals and learning logs. This process involved, “segmenting sentences (or paragraphs) or images into categories and labeling those categories with a term, often a term based on the actual language of the participant” (p. 198).

Step four involved using the coding process to code for open and selective codes. The results of this coding processes assisted with the creation of themes used as headings in the results section. Next, a thematic analysis was conducted to analyze the themes that emerged from the reflective journals and learning logs. These themes were supported by direct quotes from the participants' responses. Step five involved presenting the themes and descriptions in a narrative passage. This involved a discussion

about “the chronology of events, a detailed discussion of several themes, and interconnecting themes” (p. 200). The final step involved interpreting the results of the study.

Quantitative Data Analysis

At the beginning of the research study, students ranked their writing self-efficacy on a scale from 1-10 for poetic, narrative, and expository writing. After receiving the culturally relevant writing instruction, students ranked their writing self-efficacy to determine the impact of culturally relevant writing instruction. Descriptive statistics were used to provide an understanding of the data and to identify “the means, standard deviation, and range of scores” (Creswell, 2014, p. 163) for students writing self-efficacy. In the results section, this data was presented in a table and “conclusions were drawn from the results for the research questions” (p. 163). Table 7 provides a research timeline and includes the week, date, and activity for each day of the instructional unit.

Table 7

Research Timeline

Week	Date	Activity
Week 1	April 16, 2018	Students completed Reflective Journal 1.
Week 1	April 16-19, 2018	Students created a poem before the unit. Students read, annotated, and analyzed text, created a poem rough draft, provided peer feedback, created a final draft and presented it to the class.

Table 7 (continued).

Week	Date	Activity
Week 2	April 23-27, 2018	Students created a narrative text before the unit. Students read, annotated, and analyzed text, created a narrative text rough draft, provided peer feedback, and created a final draft and presented it to the class.
Week 3	April 30, 2018	Students created an expository text before the culturally relevant writing instruction.
Week 3	April 30, 2018-May 4, 2018	Students read or watched video media, created on original expository prompt, completed the longhorn box drafting process, provided peer feedback, and created a final draft to present it to the class.
Week 3	May 7, 2018	Students completed Reflective Journal 2.

Reliability

Qualitative Reliability

This mixed method study used both qualitative and quantitative methods. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) described qualitative reliability as “the replicability of research findings and whether or not they would be repeated if another study, using the same or similar methods, was undertaken” (p. 270). The authors further maintained that in qualitative research the idea of reliability is often avoided because concepts, such as

confirmability and trustworthiness have better “resonance with the goals and values of qualitative research” (p. 271). To ensure trustworthiness and confirmability, this research study used triangulation which provided "internal checks on the quality of the data and its interpretation" and "rich descriptions of the research process" (p. 272).

Quantitative Reliability

Creswell and Clark (2011) define quantitative reliability as “scores received from participants are consistent and stable over time” (p. 211). This research study discussed in detail the methods for collecting quantitative data to measure the impact of culturally relevant writing instruction on student self-efficacy. Similarly, data from this study were analyzed through descriptive statistics and this study explicitly identified and defined the premises of culturally relevant writing instruction leading to enhance reliability (Zohrabi, 2013).

Validity

Creswell (2014) maintained that validity is one strength of qualitative research. Validity is the process in which the “researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures” (p. 201). This research study employed the use of three primary validity strategies: triangulation, thick descriptions, and clarifying the bias of the researcher. These validity strategies were used to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the research study.

Triangulation

According to Maxwell (2005), triangulation involves “collecting information from a diverse group of individuals and settings using a variety of methods” (p. 112).

This research study involved the use of both qualitative and quantitative strategies for assessing the impact of culturally relevant pedagogy on students' writing self-efficacy. Students completed Reflective Journal 1 at the beginning of the research. In Reflective Journal 1, students reflected on their writing experiences and assessed their writing self-efficacy for poetic, expository, and narrative writing. For each week of the 3-week writing unit, students completed a learning log and reflected about instruction and rated their writing self-efficacy for each writing genre covered, after they received the culturally relevant writing instruction. Triangulation was used to compare both qualitative and quantitative data regarding students' self-efficacy and the impact of culturally relevant writing instruction (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Using these sources of data and perspectives from participants adds validity to a research study (Creswell, 2014).

Thick Descriptions

Detailed descriptions were provided of the research setting to convey the findings. Creswell (2014) contended that "when qualitative researchers provide detailed descriptions of the setting for example or offer many perspectives about a theme, the results become more realistic" (p. 202). Thick descriptions of the research setting, the data collection strategies, results, and implications offered diverse perspectives regarding the themes of the research.

Clarifying the Bias of the Researcher

In the past, I have worked as an administrator, teacher trainer, and teacher. My diverse experiences as an educator have allowed me to observe and experience the

success that comes with employing culturally relevant pedagogy in the English classroom. I believe it is imperative to use instructional strategies and deliver diverse content that speaks to the norms, values, experiences of students. There is often a lack of culturally relevant instruction and curriculum content that students receive. I have made it my mission, as a teacher, to ensure students receive content and strategies aligned to their cultural lens. Therefore, my interpretation of the findings is shaped by my personal and professional backgrounds, culture, experiences, and socioeconomic status (Creswell, 2014).

Closing Thoughts on Chapter 3

In my classroom, I likened the diverse cultural, social, and personal experiences of my students to a bag of jolly ranchers. Teachers must realize the various “flavors” students bring to the classroom and leverage this knowledge to create rich and meaningful learning experiences for students. This research study was guided by Winn and Johnson’s (2011) process for facilitating culturally relevant writing instruction. The authors espoused theory on writing instruction was implemented to determine the impact of this instructional approach on increasing students’ writing capacity and writing self-efficacy.

The presentation of the results begins with an analysis of the themes that emerged from the writing interest form, reflective journals, and learning logs. The writing interest form provided insightful information about students’ reading and writing preferences. The reflective journals provided rich descriptions about students writing experiences with student ratings and explanations for their writing self-efficacy. Also,

the learning logs provided details about students' experiences with the culturally relevant writing instruction and the impact of this pedagogical approach on increasing their writing self-efficacy.

CHAPTER IV
ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Introducing the Analysis

This chapter contains the results of a qualitative dominate mixed crossover practitioner action research study conducted to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How do middle school English I students describe their previous middle school writing experiences?

RQ 2: What are the reading and writing preferences of middle school English I students?

RQ 3: What impact does culturally relevant writing instruction have on middle school English I students?

RQ 4: What impact does culturally relevant writing instruction have on increasing the writing self-efficacy of middle school students in an English I classroom?

This chapter also includes a discussion that the analysis conducted was consistent with qualitative dominant crossover mixed practitioner action research and how the analysis ties back to the research questions. The process used to analyze the responses of the 63 participants is described in detail in this chapter. The quantitative data analysis involved entering student self-efficacy data in SPSS and conducting a descriptive statistics analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to provide an understanding of the data and to identify “the means, standard deviation, and range of scores” (Creswell, 2014, p. 163) for students writing self-efficacy. In Vivo Coding was the qualitative analysis method used and it is the process of analyzing short words or phrases from

actual language in a qualitative data record (Saldana, 2016, p. 105). The qualitative data records used included the reflective journals and learning logs from the culturally relevant writing unit. In this research study, three levels of analysis were used and included: (a) first cycle coding, (b) selective coding, and (c) thematic analysis. All the participants' responses were coded manually using In Vivo Coding. To protect the confidentiality of participants they were given a number during the coding process. Additionally, pseudonyms (See Appendix G) were created for participants whose responses were included in this chapter. The researcher coded reflective journals and learning logs for each of the participants in the study and analyzed the responses for codes and themes. The researcher conducted first cycle coding by identifying words or short phrases in the reflective journals and learning logs from the participants language. The words and phrases were selected based on qualitative data that seemed to call for bolding, underlining, italicizing, highlighting or vocal emphasis and the researcher selected words, phrases, or variations used often by the participants in their responses that seemed to merit an In Vivo Code (Saldana, 2016, p. 105).

Next, second cycle coding involved organizing the initial codes into new categories in the form of extended phrases or sentences to explain what a unit of data was about or what it meant (Saldana, 2016, p. 198). The final phase of the analysis involved selecting extended phrases or sentences from participant responses to emphasize key themes that emerged and providing a thematic analysis. The constant comparison method was employed throughout the data analysis process as each interpretation and finding was compared with existing findings as it emerged from the

data analysis (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, & Liao, 2004). This process helped the researcher to remain consistent in emphasizing key points. The sections that follow are organized into three parts: (1) the data is presented based on each research question, (2) the results of the research are presented, and (3) the results of the interaction between the research and the context are presented.

Presenting the Data

Research Question 1

Research question 1 examined middle school English I students previous middle school writing experiences. During the data analysis process, three primary categories emerged. Students discussed the (1) classroom environment, (2) pedagogy, and (3) the content and skills taught during their middle school experiences. The sections that follow will discuss these categories and the sub-categories that emerged from the data analysis.

Classroom Environment

Students discussed the classroom environment of their middle school writing experiences at the beginning of the research study. The classroom environment is an umbrella term used in this research study to describe the classroom in which students received middle school writing instruction. Students described the environment as (1) enjoyable, peaceful, positive, and (2) some participants discussed their middle school writing environment as calm, collective, and relaxing. Fifteen open codes (See Appendix F) were assigned to the umbrella term of classroom environment. Twenty-one percent of participants mentioned at least one of the descriptors for classroom environment.

Three participants captured the essence of what participants shared when discussing the enjoyable aspect of their middle school writing experiences. “Cynthia” eagerly shares how the environment of her middle school writing experience made her feel. For example, “Cynthia” stated, “My middle school writing experience was enjoyable. I enjoyed writing and learning how to write correctly. It was fun to learn the new ways of writing and getting a 3 or 4 on my writing.” Both “Robert” and “Harriet” agreed with this claim. “Robert” spoke to the “enjoyable” essence of his middle school writing environment. He did not provide concrete reasons as to why his middle school writing experiences were enjoyable and peaceful. He stated, “The environments were very peaceful and enjoyable”. Similarly, Harriet discussed her middle school experiences as “calm, collecting, and relaxing” but she did not provide a justification for her feelings. Overall, several of the participants emphasized that their middle school writing experiences were “enjoyable” but did not discuss in detail why they felt this way. Since the research study occurred at the end of the academic year, students were released from school and the research did not have the opportunity to engaged in member checking. A few participants articulated that it was enjoyable because they enjoyed “learning about new ways to write”. The next section discusses pedagogy as another sub-category that emerged during the coding process.

Pedagogy

In this research study, pedagogy is an umbrella term used to describe the “...interactions between teachers and students and the learning environment and learning tasks” (Murphy, 2003). During the data analysis process, two sub-categories developed.

Students described effective pedagogy strategies such as annotation, games, graphic organizers, venn diagrams, peer editing, tutorial videos, group work, multiple-choice packets, STAAR worksheets. On the other hand, students described ineffective pedagogy as basic, not effective, lackluster, not detailed, poor writing instruction, or the lack of writing instruction, when discussing ineffective pedagogy. Twenty open codes (See Appendix F) were assigned to the category of effective pedagogy strategies and 17 open codes (See Appendix F) were assigned to the category of ineffective pedagogy strategies. Fifty-one percent of participants listed at least one of the descriptors for effective pedagogy. In contrast, thirty-seven percent of participants listed at least one of the descriptors for ineffective pedagogy. The sections that follow discuss the effective and ineffective writing pedagogy strategies employed during students' middle school experiences.

Effective pedagogy. Throughout participant responses, they discussed effective pedagogy strategies and activities used to build their writing capacity. “Madison” discussed using graphic organizers such as the bubble method and longhorn box as strategies for guiding her through the writing process of creating original writing pieces. She asserted:

“We were taught simple strategies like the bubble method and the longhorn box. The bubble method was when you drew a circle that had several other circles branching out of it. Your topic/thesis was written in the circle in the middle and the branching out circles were used for your body paragraphs and conclusion. The longhorn box was when you divide your paper into six boxes. The first box

was used for your introduction paragraph, the second for the topic sentence of your second body paragraph, the third for your first body paragraph, the fourth for the topic sentence of the second body paragraph, the fifth for your second body paragraph, and the sixth for the conclusion.”

In a similar vein, “Jackson” supported the claim of participants that depicted their middle school writing experiences as “interactive”, aligned to their “learning style”, and incorporated literature as a springboard for writing. He explains that writing topics were based on the STAAR assessments and the teacher used “poster projects” or “games” to teach them persuasive writing. To illustrate this point, he commented:

“Before entering English I my writing instruction experiences were more interactive, clear, and enjoyable. We mostly did activities based on your learning style so you understand more and it got through to you. Sometimes the writing would be around books such as *The Mice and Men*. Other essays were on topics picked collaboratively from the entire class, those topics were based around past STAAR topics such as ‘Android vs iPhone which is better’. These activities were based around the learning style that you had. If you needed to learn persuasive writing, you would take notes, then do activities based around it, such as a game, or poster project. Since they were based around learning styles they were easy to understand than just work work work .”

While “Jackson” does comment on having a focus on the STAAR assessment he does mention the use of pedagogy strategies such as writing about books like *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck, “activities based on learning style”, “interactive”

approaches to learning, as well as a “poster project” and even “games”. He does not provide specifics on how the strategies were employed, but he is able to discuss the strategies used to help him learn about writing. Similar to “Jackson”, “Miriam” discussed learning different skills to support acing a test. For her, testing strategies involved watching tutorial videos and working in groups. She explained, “We used different skills to assist us in acing a test. These skills include watching tutorial videos about a topic or even taking a practice test to present our skills. We would even sometimes work in groups.” Like “Jackson”, “Miriam” discussed pedagogy strategies such as “watching tutorial videos” and “working in groups” as positive supports to support her in learning writing.

Ineffective pedagogy. Many of the participants discussed the ineffective pedagogy strategies they experienced. “Gabby” and “Ashley” identified one of the strategies that participants shared when discussing ineffective pedagogy. “Gabby” discussed that her middle school writing experiences involved using worksheets as a strategy for learning about writing and she highlighted that this strategy did not support her in building her writing capacity. For example, she stated, “It was not very learning it was more of worksheets. I felt like I was not learning I was just doing the same work over and over again.” Additionally, “Ashely” supported this claim as well with her response, she reported, “The subject [writing] involved many multiple-choice packets. When answering multiple-choice questions, we would often make predictions, number the paragraphs...” Both of the participants captured the essence of what many of

participants shared as they discussed the heavy emphasis on using worksheets to learning writing during their previous middle school experiences.

In addition to using worksheets to teach students writing, participants also discussed the lack of specific instruction and explicit writing activities used to develop their writing capacity. “Sandra” supported this claim by highlighting her middle writing experiences as “vague”. She further noted that she was not taught writing skills and she was expected to know how to write. “Sandra” asserted:

“My middle school writing instruction has been very vague. In general, we sort of expected to know how to write well. We were not taught different writing skills and the ones that we were taught did not work for me.”

A related comment made by participants is that their middle school teachers did not use specific techniques or strategies to facilitate writing instruction. “Maria” elegantly communicates this claim and suggested that the lack of practice with writing prompts and the lack of feedback were essential components of writing instruction that were absent from her middle school experiences. “Maria” wrote:

“Overall, I feel as if my writing instruction throughout middle school could have been way better. Whether it have been learning using different strategies and techniques, or just improving the quality of teaching as a whole. I also feel like practicing writing various types or prompts would have helped expand my knowledge over what is expected on these writing exams. I had always felt like I was lacking something. Whether it was coming in touch with the prompt and paper, or just not being able to perfect my style of writing. Which could have

been fixed over the years with one on one writing lessons. Unfortunately, that was not the case for me, and I was never really offered advice on how to improve my writings either.”

On the other hand, “Danny” captured the assertion that many of the participants felt that their middle writing experiences were “lackluster” and explained that the teacher gave them tools but did not teach him how to use them. “Danny” maintained:

“In middle school, I have had poor writing instruction leading up to English I. Both years, our ELA teachers have focused more on the E than the LA. Only Mrs. Simpson [pseudonym] has done much about writing, and even then, it was lackluster. She gave us tools but didn't teach us how to employ them. I always had a knack for writing, but I felt limited to an extent in both the 6th and 7th grade. Looking back, I also realize how our writing was able to decline so much so fast; it was our instruction.”

“Matt” further reinforced participants’ claim of being given writing tools, but not being taught how to use them. He captured the sentiments of many of the participants that felt that the instruction they received was not focused on teaching them “how” to create writing. Instead, many of the participants implied that the instruction they received was focused on transferring knowledge and they were never challenged to develop their writing style or to find their writing voice. “Matt” explained:

Prior to English I, writing was never an activity I was very fond of. I received very basic instruction through most of middle school up until this year. Writing was never discussed on the same intellectual and philosophical level as it is this

year in English I. Figurative language was hardly touched on, and I don't recall ever being encouraged to use such language to strengthen our papers. We were taught basic writing strategies and expected to mimic the template we were given: Argument, Support, Argument, Support and so on with little deviation. There was very limited emphasis on creating, and rather on nothing more than knowledge transfer. We were never encouraged to find our own writing style, writing "voice" perhaps."

Meanwhile, "Jorge" and "James" highlighted the lack of real-world writing tasks. These participants captured the essence of what participants shared when discussing the type of writing tasks assigned during their middle school writing experiences. "Jorge" commented, "The writing prompts included less real-world issues more 'kid topics'." Meanwhile, "James" wrote the following response:

"My middle school writing experiences before entering English I was kind of bland and genuine if I wanted to be completely honest. To me, the writing prompts that we would write weren't to my interest. It's hard for me to write something that I am not interested in because most of my thoughts won't come to me when that happens, hence the reason why my essays won't be the best of my ability. The writing prompts about "What is a good friend", "Write about how decisions affect someone's life" and more prompts along those lines are hard for me to write and have a clear essay on it because the subjects are boring to me. The things I like to write about are prompts that are more personal or give you a more intelligent way of explaining something. The prompts have to be

controversial or expandable upon a person's mind in order for me to write a viable, well written essay about the matter."

He talked about engaging in writing tasks that were not aligned to his "interests" and he found it difficult to write about the tasks he was given because of the lack of alignment. "James" further reported that the writing tasks he was assigned were "boring" and that he found it difficult to generate thoughts about the writing prompts given. On the contrary, he commented that he wanted to write about more "personal" topics, and he talked about wanting to engage in writing tasks that were more "controversial."

This section captured both effective and ineffective pedagogy students experienced during their middle school writing experiences. For participants, effective pedagogy consisted of writing instruction that was "interactive" and aligned to their "learning style", incorporating the use of graphic organizers, using literature as a springboard for writing and using "video tutorials", "posters", "projects", and "games" to build their writing capacity. On the other hand, participants also highlighted the ineffective pedagogy strategies they experienced. Ineffective strategies included the lack of feedback, lack of writing practice, "assigning writing" instead of teaching explicit skills, and the lack of real-world writing tasks. The section that follows discusses content and skills as the final sub-category that emerged during the data analysis.

Content and Skills

Content and Skills is another sub-category and umbrella term used in this research study to describe "what" students were taught and the "skills" that were developed in their middle school writing classrooms. Students listed the content and

skills taught such as conjunctions, figurative language, writing genres, types of texts, expository and narrative essays, sentence structures, punctuation, author's purpose, point of view, vocabulary, revising and editing, and grammar. Fifteen open codes (See Appendix F) were assigned to the umbrella term of content and skills taught. Forty-three percent of participants mentioned at least one of these descriptors when describing the content and skills taught during their middle school writing experiences.

“Shelia” discussed being taught what many participants called the “basics of writing” during their middle school writing experiences. Participants used the phrase “basic” writing instruction to encapsulate the skills they learned such as formatting a thesis, transitions, body paragraphs and writing a conclusion. “Shelia” stated, “Before English I writing I was learning the basics of writing. The format of the thesis, transitions, body paragraphs, and the conclusion. 7th grade year we practiced writing essays and we did peer evaluations.” In addition to learning basic writing skills, “Karla” and “Chantal” called attention to the content that was taught during the participants’ middle school writing experiences. “Karla” stated, “The strategies used were not really specific. We had strategies on editing, revising, vocabulary, context clues, structuring sentences.” “Chantal” articulated the skills she learned and concludes her response by highlighting skills that were taught. For example, she wrote:

“The content of the middle school classes were easier to understand like conjunctions, figurative language, genres, author’s purpose, etc. There were many strategies that helped me throughout my middle school years such as, annotation, predictions, underlining key words and info, and underlining

paragraph numbers to answer my questions. We would have ‘Complete the sentence’ warmups and that was easy because I was able to write how I like.”

Additionally, “Tasha” discussed learning about transitions, improving writing to appeal to readers, and learning about 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person. She explained:

“My middle school writing instructions before English I was to make sure that I knew all of the transition words, and how I could make my paper better than what I want it to be. The goals for me to develop a paper that gives the reader wanting more, making sure that I know the differences between 1st person, 3rd person, and 3rd person omniscient, etc. These learning instructions has taught me a lot about writing different forms of essays and thinking of how I can make my essay more appealing to the eye.”

As participants shared their middle school writing experiences, they highlighted the classroom environment, pedagogy, and the content and skills taught in the classroom. In their description of the classroom environment, students described the environment as “enjoyable” and “calm” but did not provide an explanation as to why they felt this way. Additionally, students discussed the various types of pedagogy used to teach writing skills. Participants used descriptors such as “lackluster”, “poor writing instruction”, and “basic” to encapsulate the ineffective pedagogy strategies employed. Participants also discussed graphic organizers such as the “bubble method” and “longhorn box” as effective strategies for building their writing capacity. Other participants talked about the use of “STAAR practice prompts”, “video tutorials”, “worksheets”, “posters”, and “games” and engaging in “group activities” as well. This section ended with a discussion

on the content and skills taught which included: “conjunctions, figurative language, writing genres, types of texts, expository and narrative essays, sentence structures, punctuation, author's purpose, point of view, vocabulary, revising and editing, and grammar.” The next section discusses research question 2 and the data that was revealed throughout the research study. This section provides tables that present participants responses as it pertains to their reading and writing preferences.

Research Question 2

Research question 2 examined the reading and writing preferences of middle school English I students. Student responses were taken from the Writing Interest Form students completed before the culturally relevant writing unit. Table 8 indicates the reading preferences and percentages of the participants that preferred specific types of texts. Most of the participants indicated that “Stuff on the Internet” was their primary method for reading texts and cited fictional texts as their genre preference for reading. For participants, “Stuff on the Internet” included eBooks, blogs, online articles, video games manuals, websites for cooking, and Instagram.

Table 8

Reading Preferences of English I Students

Reading Preferences	Percent
Essays	0.05%
Newspapers	0.07%
Magazines	20%
Poetry	33%
Narratives	35%
Plays	48%
Novels	62%
Short Story	66%
Stuff on the Internet	72%

In addition to listing their reading preferences, students also provided the last book they enjoyed reading and provided an explanation as to why they chose the book. Table 9 provides a list of the most recent books students stated they read and enjoyed. Column 1 lists the title of the book. Column 2 lists the author of the book. Column 3 lists the genre of the text. Participant responses also indicated that they preferred texts that were about “relatable situations”, “realistic”, or about “life lessons” or texts that enabled students to learn about “historical events”.

Table 9

Recently Read Books of English I Students

Book Title	Author	Genre
<i>Ghost of War</i>	Steve Watkins	Mystery and Suspense
<i>Othello</i>	Julius Lester	Fiction
<i>Milk Honey</i>	Rupi Kaur	Poetry
<i>Gregor the Overlander</i>	Suzanne Collins	Fiction
<i>A Rumor of War</i>	Phillip Caputo	Non-Fiction
<i>Insurgent</i>	Veronica Roth	Fiction
<i>A Raisin in the Sun</i>	Lorraine Hansberry	Drama
<i>Charlie and the Chocolate Factory</i>	Roald Dahl	Fiction
<i>39 Series</i>	Rick Riordan	Fiction

Table 9 (continued).

Book Title	Author	Genre
<i>Book of Mark</i>	Mark	Historical Narrative
<i>Every Last Word</i>	Tamara Young	Fiction
<i>Tower of God</i>	Slave in Utero	Fiction
<i>Star Wars</i>	George Lucas	Fiction
<i>Since you have been Gone</i>	Morgan Matson	Fiction
<i>Nevermore</i>	Kelley Creagh	Fiction
<i>13 Reasons Why</i>	Jay Asher	Fiction
<i>Wonder</i>	R.J. Palacio	Fiction
<i>Salt to the Sea</i>	Ruta Sepetys	Fiction
<i>The Red Pyramid</i>	Rick Riordan	Fiction
<i>The Bro Code</i>	Barney Stinson and Matt Kuhn	Fiction
<i>The Mortal Coil</i>	Emily Suvada	Fiction
<i>Boy Nobody</i>	Hector Malot	Fiction
<i>Maze Runner</i>	James Dashner	Fiction
<i>A Series of Unfortunate Events</i>	Lemony Snicket and Brett Helquist	Fiction
<i>Wolves of the Beyond</i>	Kathryn Lasky	Fiction
<i>Treasure Hunters</i>	Kendall Talbot	Fiction
<i>Zodiac Legacy</i>	Stan Lee	Fiction
<i>The Zodiac Legacy Book-Dragon's Return</i>	Stan Lee	Fiction
<i>FaithFul and Fallen</i>	John Gwynne	Fiction
<i>Early Summer</i>	Anna Sevier	Fiction
<i>Shimmer</i>	Alyson Noel	Fiction

Finally, students identified their writing preferences. Table 10 indicates students writing preferences. Students ranked their writing preference on a scale from 1-3. The table presents the top numerical percentages of the types of writing students preferred from the genres covered during the culturally relevant writing unit. It is also important to note that participants selected narrative writing as their preferred mode of writing.

Table 10

Writing Preferences of English I Students

Writing Genre	Poetry	Expository	Narrative
Percentage of Students	34.7%	36.2%	59.4%

The next section examines research question 3 which explored the impact of culturally relevant writing instruction. The section will discuss in detail the categories that emerged, and the specific ways students were impacted by the culturally relevant writing instruction.

Research Question 3

Research question 3 examined the impact of culturally relevant writing instruction on middle school English I students. Students brought attention to the various ways the culturally relevant instruction impacted them. Two primary categories came into view during the data analysis. Students discussed both the benefits and impediments of the writing instruction. The sections that follow will expound more on these two categories and the sub-categories that emerged during the data analysis. The section concludes by presenting the themes that emerged from the study as a result of the In Vivo Coding analysis.

Benefits of the Culturally Relevant Writing Instruction

At the end of the research study, students responded to the ways, if any, the culturally relevant instruction impacted them. Benefits of culturally relevant writing instruction is an umbrella term used in this research study to describe the benefits students cited regarding the culturally relevant writing unit (described in Ch. 3). The following sub-categories emerged during the data analysis. Students discussed the culturally relevant writing instruction was effective for the following reasons: (1) instructional resources supported students in completing writing tasks, (2) students experienced freedom in writing, (3) the writing instruction increased students' ownership, and (4) the writing instruction supported participants in exploring their culture and the culture of others. Thirty-one open codes (See Appendix F) were assigned to the umbrella term of benefits of culturally relevant writing instruction. Seventy-three percent of participants mentioned at least one of the descriptors for the benefits of culturally relevant writing instruction category.

Instructional resources. The participants discussed the benefits of the writing instructional supports (See Appendix D) used to structure their writing, the importance of receiving constructive criticism (See Appendix E) from peers and the teacher that aided them in creating their original writing products. "Cathy" described the importance of the writing supports and feedback received from peers during the writing instruction. This sentiment was expressed by many of the participants as they highlighted the importance of these factors in developing their writing capacity. She pointed out:

“This writing unit was very interesting and enjoyable. This is because we explored three different types of writing, allowing us to learn more and know where we stand in each type of writing. As someone who has not done many poems and narratives, it was amusing to see the reactions of classmates, to receive criticism and feedback. Honestly, this must be one of my favorite writing units, as it dealt with things that have not been explored in other writing units much. The instruction made me feel slightly confident, as it provided me with an outline to follow. Additionally, the thought that classmates assisted us as well, was also a leading factor in my confidence and relief about this writing unit.”

“Angelica” further supported the claim that peer evaluations were instrumental in increasing students’ writing capacity. She also cited that writing exemplars and articles were beneficial in supporting students in creating original expository writing products.

“Angelica” stated:

“The writing unit was helpful. What benefited the most were the peer evaluations. Getting feedback was great as it made my essays stronger. It also helped me with the flow of ideas. The articles provided examples as to what our writing should look like. Answering the questions to the articles benefitted as it was an example to what questions could be answered.”

“Arianna” captured the essence of what participants shared when they talked about the writing templates and how the templates supported them in building ideas and writing in detail. “Arianna” asserted:

“With the first two writing assignments templates were provided. The templates helped to construct the writing to where it made sense. It helped build ideas and also made it easier to write and add more detail. It provided support as well as which built a writing that made sense.”

Freedom in writing. Several participants emphasized the sense of writing freedom they experienced during the writing unit. “April” discussed the freedom that the writing unit provided for her and how it challenged her to think “outside the box”, so to speak. “April” wrote:

“This writing unit was very helpful. Not only did the unit give the students the freedom to be creative writers, but it taught us how to think outside of the box. The instruction made me feel like I have grown to be a better writer because it gave me helpful tips on how to write well.”

“Jackson” expressed the same sentiment about the idea that the writing unit provided him the opportunity to “freely express” himself. He noted, “The writing unit was fine, there was nothing wrong with it and I liked the ability to freely express myself however I wanted.” More importantly, “Madison” called attention to the writing freedom she experienced during the culturally relevant writing unit. She commented on the importance of not being “confined by certain rules” and not creating “generic” writing products. “Madison” indicated:

“The writing unit was extremely helpful. The instruction made me feel relaxed. I was not stressed or worried. I did not feel confined to certain rules. I was free to write what was on my mind and the words just flowed out of me. The

instructions made me feel that it was my writing, not just me following some instructions to create a generic piece of writing. I can proudly say that all of the products created through this assignment are my masterpieces.”

In a similar way, “Sandra” highlighted the creative freedom she felt during the writing unit. She stated, “The writing unit was helpful. The instructional process of work helped prep me to write. It gave creative freedom, as well as allowing the students to use a variety of writing styles.” Culturally relevant writing instruction gave students autonomy over their writing style and content in the products they created. The data suggests that participants appreciated not being confined by the “rules” of writing or producing products that are “formulaic” or “generic” in nature. Instead, the data suggests that students felt freedom in writing because they had autonomy over the content and writing style of their writing products and they felt connected to the writing they created. In this way, they are not writing for the sake of writing, but are creating products that are representative of their life and experiences.

Choice in writing. Participants expounded on the fact that they felt a sense of choice when creating the products for the writing unit. “James” talked about the importance of having the choice of selecting topics he was passionate about and having the autonomy to choose content for his texts. He characterized “good” writing as writing, in which, the author has the choice of the content presented in their work. “James” explained:

“Me and my peers were able to write about something that we were passionate about other than a forced prompt that we didn't know how to explain in a great

way. The instruction made me feel like I was free. I was able to CREATE the contents that I wanted to be in my story and that is the real meaning of ‘good’ writing. The author should be passionate about what they are writing and should have a clear view of what they are generating. So for the students to actually decided on what they want on their story is really good for a unit such as this.”

Another participant agreed with how the culturally relevant unit provided choice in creating writing projects. “Donte” discussed “directing” his own writing path as a justification as to why the writing unit instruction was beneficial. He asserted:

“I think the writing unit was good. The instruction made me feel comfortable. I felt comfortable because the instruction was very straightforward and simple. The instruction was not complicated, and we were allowed to go our own direction with our writing.”

“Ashley” passionately expressed the significance of choosing topics that she found interesting and about the importance of using her writing to communicate her beliefs and opinions. She maintained:

“I love writing about topics I find interesting. I succeeded in doing so with this unit. I learned the keys of writing an expository essay. Writing practice in school is helpful for me and I enjoy doing it. I am able to express my beliefs and opinions through writing.”

Exploration of culture. In addition to providing student choice in writing, several participants talked about how the writing unit challenged them to learn about their culture and understand what it means to them. “Cynthia” vehemently captures this

claim and spoke specifically about how the writing unit challenged her to “dig deep” into her culture to learn about her ancestors and to learn about diverse cultures. She stated:

“I think the past writing unit was very informational. I say this because it has gotten me to dig deep into my culture and the past of my ancestors' way of life. Digging into my culture has made things a little more clear to me as to why certain cultures do certain things. The instruction for that unit was great.”

Most of the participants discussed how the writing unit challenged them to think about their culture and understand what culture means to them. An example of this is seen in the response of “Mary” and she discussed how the writing instruction impacted her as it pertains to reflecting on and understanding her own culture. “The writing unit made me think about my culture and what it means to me. Thanks to this unit, my visions and sight in the realm of writing have greatly expanded.” Other participants articulated how the writing unit helped learn about themselves and ultimately helped them understand who they are and how they see the world. “Danny” captures this claim. He articulated:

“I found this writing unit as a journey through myself. I found it insightful in seeing who I am and how I feel and how I perceive the world. Thereby I enjoyed this writing unit. I also liked how there was less need for instruction as we progressed, as I enjoyed My freedom.”

“Sherry” also echoes the same sentiments about how the culturally relevant writing help her learn about herself. Illustratively, she stated. “The writing assignments also revealed

a part of me. I learned that I know very little from where I come from but I know myself.”

To a large extent, the participants’ responses suggested that the writing instruction ushered students into a journey of exploration. They explored both their individual and cultural identity. Students also learned about diverse cultures as well. Participants were able to leverage their knowledge they gleaned from their internal explorations to create the writing products layered in their lives and experiences.

Impediments of Writing Instruction

Impediments of writing instruction is an umbrella term used to identify elements of the instruction students felt were ineffective or did not work for them. Additionally, sub-categories connected to impediments of writing instruction consisted of (1) lack of time, (2) writing about painful events, (3) stress and frustration, and (4) the writing unit was described as boring and unnecessary. Thirteen open codes (See Appendix F) were assigned to the category of impediments of writing instruction. Eighteen percent of participants mentioned at least one of the descriptors of ineffective writing instruction. The sections that follow will discuss the impediments students experienced in more detail and provide vignettes from the participants about the impediments they experienced in writing instruction.

Several participants reported that time impeded the writing instruction. “Juan” and “Karla” discussed the lack of adequate instructional time, multiple assignments, and “feeling rushed” as impediments they experienced during the writing instruction. “Juan” felt that there were a lot of assignments for the writing unit, but there was “not a lot of

time” provided to complete the assignments. “Karla” discussed feeling rushed when completing some instructional tasks. “Juan” stated, “The writing unit was overall ‘okay’. I felt like there was a lot of writing assignments and not a lot of time to work on what we needed to improve our writing.” Building off this point, “Karla” wrote, “The writing unit was pretty much fine, the only thing is that somethings felt rushed.”

Another impediment discussed by participants is the fact they were required to pull from their personal experiences. For some students, certain parts of their experiences and lives were painful. As an example, “Shanice” talked about the reluctance of writing about her father. She felt “forced” and described the topic of her father as a “sore topic” because she does not like talking about him. “Shanice” stated:

“I honestly did not like the writing unit. It wasn’t very helpful because if I write its something I want to write about. Closing The instruction made me a limited writer sizing me down to things I don’t want to talk about.”

Meanwhile, other participants spoke to the stress and frustration associated with the writing tasks and articulated that they felt the writing unit was boring and unnecessary. “Nkechi” discussed feeling stressed and frustrated because she was unclear on how to begin the process of crafting her essays. These feelings developed into panic almost causing the student to give up on the assignments. She noted, “This unit made me feel tired and stressed out because I wasn’t sure how to write the essay. The instructions didn’t really help as much either so it made me frustrated. I started panicking because I did not want to do so I nearly gave up.” Comparably, “Robert” felt that the writing unit and the instruction associated with the unit was “boring” and “unnecessary”. The

participant maintained that the instructions were beneficial, however, they took a lot of time to remember. Additionally, “Robert” did not see the importance of covering writing he felt he had previously learned, during the academic year. He commented:

“The instructions were all effective and the writing unit was just boring to me.

Most of the instructions took a lot of time to remember what they were. When I finally remembered what they were I thought they were significant. They were significant but I feel like for some of them I did not really need to have the instructions. Each of the instructions helped with the structure of the essay and only really one told us how to really write the essay in the most effective way. To me the whole writing unit was unnecessary to me. It just seemed like a waste of time to do something that I had already previously learned.”

As participants shared the impact of the culturally relevant writing instruction, they articulated the role that the instructional resources had on supporting their ability to create writing products. They communicated the importance of “choice” and “freedom” they experienced as a result of the writing unit. More importantly, they discussed how the writing instruction helped them “dig deep” into their culture and learn more about themselves. On the other hand, some participants talked about the stress and lack of time associated with completing the writing tasks. A few participants spoke to writing about topics connected to their culture and experiences as painful. The next section provides the results from the thematic analysis and discusses the four themes that emerged from the In Vivo Coding analysis.

Thematic Analysis Coding Results

Four primary themes emerged from the In Vivo Coding analysis. The researcher used In Vivo Coding analysis to understand the relationship between the open and selective codes which aided in the development of themes. The themes that resulted from the In Vivo Coding analysis included: (1) lack of culturally relevant writing instruction, (2) culturally relevant writing instruction has the potential to ignite student interest and writing passion, (3) culturally relevant writing instruction challenges students to explore their cultural background, (4) lack of time impeded students ability to create writing products. The sections that follow provide a detailed discussion about each theme.

Lack of Culturally Relevant Writing Instruction

Students' responses from Reflective Journal 1 reveal that they were not recipients of relevant or relatable writing instruction. Winn and Johnson (2011) posited that culturally relevant writing instruction challenges students to write for authentic audiences, leverages their voices and perspectives, and challenges students to engage critically with the world. In Reflective Journal 1, students did not articulate that their middle school writing experiences enabled them to develop their writing voice and express their perspective. More importantly, students did not discuss how their middle school writing experiences challenged them to engage critically with the world. In their responses, participants often used the term "basic" to describe their middle school writing experiences. For participants, "basic" writing instruction involved writing for predetermined prompts, using district-wide STAAR testing strategies such as the

Longhorn box and covering ELAR content such as revising and editing, writing genres, grammar, mechanics, sentence structures, vocabulary, and content aligned to the English discipline. “Matt” and “Edward” notably described the core of what participants shared when they discussed their middle school writing experiences. “Matt” stated:

“We were taught basic writing strategies and expected to mimic the template we were given: Argument, Support, Argument, Support and so on with little deviation. There was very limited emphasis on creating, and rather on nothing more than knowledge transfer. We were never encouraged to find our own writing style, writing “voice” perhaps.”

Edwards spoke similarly to the lack of culturally relevant writing instruction, during his middle school writing experiences. He explained:

“We just did small steps leading to a final draft. First, we would put information in either a bubble map or longhorn box. Then, we would write multiple drafts to make it as good as possible. Then, we would write our final draft on a STAAR writing sheet.”

These responses embody the descriptions of many of the participants’ middle school writing experiences. Some participants reported that they were not taught “how” to write. “Sandra” captured this claim, “My middle school writing instruction has been very vague. In general, we sort of expected to know how to write well. We were not taught different writing skills and the ones that we were taught did not work for me.”

Significantly, it emerged that participants’ descriptions of their middle school writing experiences were in opposition to culturally relevant writing instruction (Winn

and Johnson, 2011). Participants reported that their middle school writing experiences were not always relevant to their lives and did not match their interests. Many students repeatedly discussed their preparation for the STAAR assessment, and they suggested that they were often “assigned” writing tasks but were not taught “how” to write.

Student Choice, Interest, and Passion

The results reveal how culturally relevant writing instruction encourages student choice, helps align writing tasks to student interests, and ignites student passion. Several of the participants explained that the writing unit was effective because they were given a choice in the topics that they wrote about, the writing tasks were aligned to their interests and backgrounds, and students were passionate about the topics that were the epicenter of their writing products. For many of the participants, pulling from something personal or a topic they were passionate about increased their ability to create their writing products. Participants discussed in detail how creating their prompt for the expository writing piece supported them in writing an effective expository essay. Participants were required to create an expository prompt similar to the writing tasks on the STAAR assessment. Students were required to select an article of their choice from a bank of expository articles or visual media.

Students selected a quote that connected to their topic, created a critical thought question, which served as a stimulus before they wrote, and concluded the process by creating a writing task that connected to the quote and critical thought question. Participants commented on how they enjoyed the autonomy of creating their expository writing prompt that connected to something from their personal experience. “Michael”

discussed how he enjoyed creating his expository prompt on a topic that he understood. He posited that if he had not created his own prompt his expository essay would not have been as good as the essay he created.

“The part of the instruction that I really enjoyed having was making my own prompt. It helped me able to write something I clearly understand. Meaning, if I did not get to create my own prompt my story would not be better than the one I just made.”

Other participants discussed that they enjoyed writing about their interests throughout the unit. “Max” elegantly explains how he chose an article about the psychology of sports. He grew up playing sports and aspired to major in psychology in college. Therefore, the article connected to his current interests and future aspirations.

“I am able to be creative about what I want to write about. Based off what I have read from the article. When you write your writing must come from experience of what the topic is about. The article about sports psychology is something I can relate to. I can relate to this article because I have grown up playing sports and I want to major in Psychology.”

Also, participants discussed the significance of choosing personal topics that they were passionate about when they created their original poems and narrative pieces. “James” explained that the essence of true writing is being able to leverage personal experiences and how he was more passionate about writing about personal topics. He commented:

“I feel like my confidence for writing anything has increased significantly. In writing, I feel as if I can just be in my own world and just glide my pencil against

the lined paper to create a masterpiece I cherish. When writing the narrative and the poem I like the fact that we could write about something that is personal or something we are passionate for. That is the true essence of writing.”

In general, the participants spoke to the effectiveness of choosing topics aligned with their interests and passions. For many of the participants, their ability to be creative with their writing was aligned to the fact that students chose the texts they read and the content they wrote about in their writing products. Given this, many participants explained that the products they created for the writing unit were “masterpieces” and were among the best writing pieces they created all year.

Exploration of Cultural Backgrounds

The results suggest that culturally relevant writing instruction has the potential to challenge students to explore their cultural background and the backgrounds of others. Throughout the learning logs and reflective journals, participants articulated the impact of culturally relevant instruction on their original writing products. One recurring comment made by participants was that they were inspired by the exploration of their culture and as a result were able to “pour their hearts” into their writing. Since participants were inspired by the topic and content, they were able to create products that conveyed their identity. “Nkechi” captured the essence of what participants shared about being inspired by their cultural background.

“Culture is something that I am inspired by so when I saw that this poem was about culture, I was quite excited. When I am inspired by something, I pour my heart onto it so people can see my work and who I am.”

Most of the participants maintained that they never thought about using culture as a resource for creating writing products. The culture questionnaire served as a research tool for participants to explore their family backgrounds and participants leveraged the content from their personal experiences and cultural questionnaire in the creation of their poems and other writing products created throughout the unit. “Abigail” supports this claim. She wrote, “I am able to connect personal experiences and cultural differences into new pieces of literature. Talking to family members, and comparing different cultures opens up a new source of writing material.” Comparably, participants also discussed how the cultural questionnaire helped them to explore their family history, traditions, and identities. “Lourdes” stated:

“The poetry writing instruction opened my eyes up to my family’s history. I was able to look back on my family’s past experiences and traditions making up an original poetry product. I asked questions that go deep into their life such as coming to a new country and their religious viewpoints. The instructions allowed me to reflect on what my family is made up, not scientifically, but instead our identities. At first I did not like that we were doing poems as a portfolio assignment but then I started to enjoy doing it since it let me showcase things I never tell anyone.”

In addition to using the cultural questionnaire and personal experiences, participants also explained that exploring and analyzing culture through poems supported them in creating a poem infused with their cultural blueprint. The “mentor” poem that students analyzed before creating their poem helped students understand the culture, beliefs, and

perspectives of the author, so that they could create their original poem. “Jorge” captured the sentiments that most participants explained, when they discussed the importance of analyze mentor poems. He articulated:

“Being able to analyze other poems made it easier for me to be able to write one. Learning how some poems are formatted, and how people manage to implement their culture and feelings into their writing. It helped me not just think about my culture and feelings more in depth, but also able to see other cultures, and learn about their beliefs and perspective. That made it able for me to write out of my own perspective and understand other’s writing.”

Another benefit that participants cited about analyzing the poems is that it helped them explore their own cultural identities. By exploring the different cultures of the texts, participants reflected about the unique features of their own cultural identity and about the diversity of the world. Participants realized that everyone has a unique cultural background and experiences and these characteristics are what make poems unique.

“Dennis” explained the essence of this claim. He stated:

“When we analyzed poems, we gain a new understanding and started thinking in place of the poet. Exploring the different culture made me realize unique things about my individual culture, and the diversity of the world. Each culture can be expressed in different ways through poetry, everyone has a different background and experiences different things, making every poem extraordinary.”

In comparison, participants often discussed the freedom they experienced creating the narratives for the writing unit. Participants spoke to writing narratives about their

memories and experiences and how writing a narrative about their story helped students reflect on their own life story and incorporate it into writing. To illustrate this idea,

“Janice” stated:

“The instructions contributed to my writing by giving me the freedom to write my story. Since my story is about my memories, experiences, or as you would say, a narrative on your life. When I say narrative, I mean that how I conduct my everyday life. The instructions made me think about my story, my life.”

For many of the participants, they never viewed culture as a viable resource for writing content. They learned from the writing unit that their culture, experiences, and background are valuable resources for creating original writing products. The cultural questionnaire served as the catalyst for the content students incorporated in their original poems and narratives. This tool helped participants explore the origins of their family history and ancestry while aiding students in grappling with their own cultural identity. Moreover, analyzing the work of authors to understand their culture and experiences supported students in creating their products. The mentor texts students read before creating their writing products aided students in understanding how authors presented their perspectives, culture, and backgrounds in literary texts.

Lack of Time and Frustration

The results reveal that some students felt the culturally relevant writing unit was frustrating because of the lack of time. Several of the participants commented on the lack of time given to create the writing products for each week in the unit. Participants were given approximately seven days to complete each writing product. This included five

instructional days as well as Saturday and Sunday. When participants discussed the lack of time, they often discussed being frustrated with completing the writing assignments. Several participants often stated to the researcher that they felt they rushed and did not have enough time to complete the writing assignments and make the necessary changes to improve their writing. “Juan” accurately captures the thoughts of several participants in regard to a lack of time. He stated. “I felt like there was a lot of assignments and not a lot of time to work on what need to improve our writing.” One primary inference is that the source of students’ frustration was identifying a topic to write about and feeling rushed because of the writing assignments they were required to complete each week. Even though the instruction provided students an opportunity to leverage their own life, experiences, and cultural background participants still needed support pinpointing a topic to explore through the writing products they created.

Research Question 4

Research question 4 examined the impact of culturally relevant writing instruction on increasing the writing self-efficacy of middle school students in an English I classroom. The 63 participants in the research study ranked their writing self-efficacy on a scale from 1-10 at the beginning of the research study and the end of each week for poetic, narrative, and expository writing. Table 11 and Table 12 provide the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation for students' self-efficacy before and after the culturally relevant writing instruction. After the culturally relevant writing unit, the descriptive statistics revealed that students’ mean self-efficacy score for poetry was 6.51 ($SD = 1.983$), for the narrative, it was 6.95 ($SD = 1.486$), and for expository it was

6.78 ($SD = 1.373$). Overall, the mean self-efficacy scores increased for poetry 1.34 and narrative 0.46. However, the self-efficacy scores decreased for expository by 0.06. It is also important to note that the minimum self-efficacy score increased from 3 to 4 and the maximum self-efficacy score increased from 9 to 10.

Table 11

Self-Efficacy Scores Before CRWI

Genre	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Poetry	1	10	5.17	2.524
Narrative	1	10	6.49	1.813
Expository	3	9	6.84	1.483

Note. CRWI= Culturally Relevant Writing Instruction

Table 12

Self-Efficacy Scores After CRWI

Genre	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Poetry	1	10	6.51	1.983
Narrative	1	9	6.95	1.486
Expository	4	10	6.78	1.373

Note. CRWI= Culturally Relevant Writing Instruction

Tables 13 and 14 provide the frequency and percentage of the self-efficacy ratings selected by the participants and the percentage of the participants that selected each rating at the beginning and the end of the culturally relevant writing unit. The post-self-efficacy ratings indicate a decrease in the mean percentage for students' self-efficacy for poetic writing but increased in the mean percentage for students' self-efficacy for narrative and expository writing.

Table 13

Frequency and Percentage of Self-Efficacy Scores Before CRWI

Self-Efficacy Rating	Poetry		Narrative		Expository	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1	6	9.5	1	1.6	-	-
2	6	9.5	1	1.6	-	-
3	4	6.3	3	4.8	1	1.6
4	10	15.9	4	6.3	3	4.8
5	9	14.3	5	7.9	11	17.5
6	5	7.9	13	20.6	8	12.7
7	12	19.0	17	27.0	12	19.0
8	5	7.9	13	20.6	23	36.5
9	3	4.8	5	7.9	5	7.9
10	3	4.8	1	1.6	-	-

Note. CRWI= Culturally Relevant Writing Instruction

Table 14

Frequency and Percentage of Self-Efficacy Scores After CRWI

Self-Efficacy Rating	Poetry		Narrative		Expository	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1	2	3.2	1	1.6	-	-
2	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	2	3.2	-	-	-	-
4	3	4.8	2	3.2	3	4.8
5	12	19.0	8	12.7	8	12.7
6	14	22.2	6	9.5	13	20.6
7	7	11.1	22	34.9	25	39.7
8	12	19.0	17	27	6	9.5
9	9	14.3	7	11	6	9.5
10	2	3.2	-	-	2	3.2

Note. CRWI= Culturally Relevant Writing Instruction

Table 15 provides the ratings for narrative and expository writing that occurred at the beginning of the research study and at the end. Students completed pre-writing pieces before the research study began for poetic, narrative, and expository writing. Students' writings were scored according to the STAAR Writing Rubric for narrative and expository writing. Before the culturally relevant writing unit, students' mean score

for narrative and expository writing was 1.63 ($SD = .485$) and 1.79 ($SD = .446$). After the culturally relevant writing unit, the descriptive statistics revealed that students' mean score for narrative and expository writing was 2.19 ($SD = .692$) and 2.03 ($SD = .538$). Additionally, student's narrative and expository writing products were rated based on the STAAR rubric. The descriptive statistics reveal that students' rubric ratings for narrative and expository writing increased from the beginning to the end of the study. The next section discusses the interaction between the research and the context.

Table 15

STAAR Rubric Ratings Before and After CRWI

Genre	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Before Narrative	1	2	1.63	.485
Before Expository	1	3	1.79	.446
After Narrative	1	4	2.19	.692
After Expository	1	4	2.03	.538

Note. CRWI= Culturally Relevant Writing Instruction

Interaction between Research and the Context

Impact of Context on Results

This study fit the research context for three primary reasons: (1) there is a strong emphasis on building students writing capacity in English 1, (2) students are assessed on Expository writing on the STAAR EOC, and (3) students struggle with writing tasks in the classroom and on state assessment and need more relevant ways of building their writing capacity. During the research study, two operational issues arose. One of the

issues was time. The research study began after the English I STAAR assessment. The reasoning behind this decision was to ensure that students were mentally prepared to take the STAAR assessment. The day after the assessment, the culturally relevant instruction was rolled out to the students. At the beginning of May, another week of instruction was lost due to the Math, Science, and Social Studies STAAR exams. Students often commented that they wished they had more time to complete the assignments and they commented that the workload associated with each genre was a lot to complete in one week.

Another operational issue that arose was the lack of time for member checking. Because of the interruptions of the STAAR assessment, the writing unit lasted until the last week of the school year. As a result, there was not enough time to facilitate member checking with participants, so that the findings of the research could be shared with them to determine accuracy.

Reaction and Participation

Most of the participants had a positive reaction to the research study. Initially, the research study began with 95 participants. Three students moved at the end of the year before the unit was over, so their data was omitted from the study. Twenty-nine participants did not complete all the instructional requirements for the study, so their data was not included, reducing the participation number to 63. Students did not complete requirements because they were absent or did not complete assignments during a corresponding week and did not go back to finish. Meanwhile, there were a few students that lost assignments from their writing unit folder.

Several students cited the challenges of obtaining information to complete the cultural questionnaire. Some students confided in the researcher that their parents did not have information about their cultural background because they were disconnected from their family or their grandparents were deceased, so they completed the questionnaire to the best of their ability. One of the participants talked about the reluctance of their parents to discuss their family culture and history. The participants' parents grew up in South Africa during apartheid and refused to relive the painful memories of growing up South African during this period. As a result, the participant completed the cultural questionnaire to the best of their ability, but their answers lacked the background and cultural perspective of their family. In contrast, there was another student that spoke to the learning that occurred throughout the unit. As the student engaged in discussions about race and culture with other students, the student remarked on how their parents had "sheltered" them and they learned a lot about the diverse backgrounds of their peers. The participant appeared to be appreciative of the experience and expressed how their mind was more open to the diversity that exists in our society.

Resistance to the Study

Most of the participants were open to participating in the research study. The researcher was met with the consistent question of "Why are we doing this?" from students that felt the writing unit was unnecessary or thought that it was boring. However, there was one participant who called the researcher a racist during the culturally relevant writing unit. The participant did not understand why it was necessary to learn about different cultures and suggested that everyone was all the same. The

student sent an email to the researcher and principal and asked the researcher to justify as to why it was important to learn about diverse cultures in the English classroom. The researcher directed the student and parent to Teacher Administrative Code for the State of Texas. The researcher provided an excerpt from Chapter 149 Subchapter AA Rule 149.1001 (TAC, 2014) and indicted the standards that were aligned to the culturally relevant writing unit. Table 15 provides the State of Texas teaching standards that were aligned to the culturally relevant writing unit. Column 1 provides the standard. Column 2 provides the instructional expectations for teachers.

Table 16

Standards of Instruction for Teachers

Standard	Teacher Expectations
Instructional Planning and Delivery	Teachers design lessons to meet the needs of diverse learners, adapting methods when appropriate.
Knowledge of Students and Student Learning	Teachers acquire, analyze, and use background information (familial, cultural, educational, linguistic, and developmental characteristics) to engage students in learning
Content Knowledge and Expertise	Teachers demonstrate content-specific pedagogy that meets the needs of diverse learners, utilizing engaging instructional materials to connect prior content knowledge to new learning.

In the email exchange, the researcher highlighted the words diverse learners, background information, familial, cultural, and diverse learners in the email communication and justified how the culturally relevant writing unit aligned to the Texas Administrative Code of teaching standards.

Impact of Research on Context

The research was conducted towards the end of the 2017-2018 academic school year. The researcher did not have the opportunity to share the results with the participants. In general, the students met the research study with a variety of reactions. Most of the students were engaged by the writing unit. These students met the writing unit with intrigue and embraced the challenge of sitting in the author's seat to create writing that was reflective of their lives, experiences, and cultural background. Many of these students explained that they never thought of themselves as being a "writer" until this unit. Coupled with this fact, students also stated that they felt the products they created for this unit were some of the best that they created all year.

Other students met the writing unit with curiosity and doubt. These students were students who struggled with writing throughout the year and perceived the unit as cumbersome and were afraid to experience failure because of the expectations of the unit. Some of the students in this category shifted their perspective on writing to a positive one as a result of the experience and others did not shift their lens about writing and still viewed it as an arduous task despite the relevance of the texts and writing assignments used during the unit. The final category of students are the participants that loathe writing. They perceived the unit as a waste of time and did not understand the benefit of using a culturally relevant lens to create writing products. These students often expressed in their journals and learning logs their dislike of writing and the writing unit. Overall, most of the participants explained that they felt the writing unit was beneficial in increasing their self-efficacy and writing skills.

Summary

This chapter contains the results of the analysis and connects the analysis back to the research questions. The 63 participants in the study participated in a 3-week writing unit to understand their middle school writing experiences, understand their reading and writing preferences, the impact of culturally relevant writing instruction on the students and the ability of the instruction to increase students' writing self-efficacy. Participants completed reflective journals at the beginning and at the end of the writing unit to capture their middle school experiences and reading and writing preferences. Additionally, participants also completed a learning log at the end of each instructional week to capture the impact of the culturally relevant writing instruction and measure their self-efficacy.

There were four levels of analysis: open coding, selective coding, thematic analysis, and descriptive statistics. 124 codes emerged from open coding. Constant comparison method was exercised to discover 11 selective codes, emerging into 5 categories from the open codes. An additional constant comparison analysis was employed to discover the relationships between open and selective codes, leading to the development of four themes. The four themes resulting from this study summarized the benefits and challenges of incorporating culturally relevant writing instruction in the classroom. The themes included (a) exploration of cultural background, (b) incorporating student choice, interest, and passion in writing (c) lack of culturally relevant writing instruction, and (d) lack of time and frustration.

Participants explained how the culturally relevant writing unit helped them explore their cultural background, provided them choice, and engaged their interests and passion. Additionally, students discussed the lack of relatable or relevant approaches to writing used during their middle school experiences. Finally, a few of the participants expressed their frustration with the lack of time and their reluctance to use painful experiences from their life as a source of writing content for their writing products. The descriptive analyses were used to determine the mean self-efficacy scores for students at the beginning and end of the research study. More importantly, a frequency analysis revealed both an increase in student's self-efficacy scores for narrative and expository writing, but a decrease for poetic writing.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

“Writing is a natural fit for pairing culturally relevant pedagogy in order to create meaningful learning opportunities for all students. Though teachers must be strategic and deliberate in ways in which they consider content, curriculum, and culturally relevant pedagogy right alongside writing instruction and assessment, doing so can have a positive effect on the educational outcomes in our classrooms.”

(Winn & Johnson, 2011, p. 87)

Summary of Findings from Chapter 4

This chapter will summarize the record of study, provide a discussion on the major findings and their connection to extant literature and theories, provide a discussion on the personal lessons learned, recommendations for further study, and closing thoughts. The purpose of this qualitative dominant crossover mixed practitioner action research study was to (1) understand how middle school English I students described their previous middle school writing experiences, (2) understand their reading and writing preferences, (3) understand the impact of culturally relevant writing instruction, and (4) understand the ways, if any, culturally relevant writing instruction had on increasing students’ writing self-efficacy.

The research questions were addressed through an in-depth In Vivo data analysis and descriptive statistics. Participants’ depiction of their middle school experiences included a description of the classroom environment, pedagogy, and the content and skills taught during their middle school experiences. The data revealed that students preferred fictional texts, and more than half of the participants cited narrative writing as their preferred mode of writing. The themes that emerged from the In Vivo analysis

revealed that: (1) students lacked culturally relevant writing instruction in middle school, (2) culturally relevant writing instruction has the potential to provide student choice, and ignite student passion and interest, (3) culturally relevant writing instruction helped students explore their cultural backgrounds and the backgrounds of others, and (4) participants lacked the adequate time to complete writing products during the writing unit and this led to frustration. Meanwhile, the data revealed students' self-efficacy increased for narrative and expository writing but decreased for poetic writing. In the next sections, the following research questions will be discussed:

RQ1: How do middle school English I students describe their previous middle school writing experiences?

RQ 2: What are the reading and writing preferences of middle school English I students?

RQ 3: What impact does culturally relevant writing instruction have on middle school English I students?

RQ 4: What impact does culturally relevant writing instruction have on increasing the writing self-efficacy of middle school students in an English I classroom?

Discussion of Results for Research Question 1

Previous Middle School Writing Experiences

Research question 1 explored how middle school English I students described their previous middle school writing experiences. The results related to this research question were not surprising and the responses collected from students' reflective journals captured the essence of their middle writing experiences. One of the primary

perceptions about students' middle school writing experiences was that the instructional environment was described as "enjoyable" or "calming". While students did not provide an explicit reason for their gleanings, one conclusion is that for many of the students the teacher contributed to the aura of the instructional environment which attributed to the "calming" and "enjoyable" nature of the classroom. The students did not clearly explain why they described their middle school experiences as "enjoyable" or "calming". The research study occurred during the last month of the school year and time was an impediment. After the researcher collected the data, there was not enough time to engage in member checking to ask clarifying questions regarding these descriptions.

Students' Descriptions of Pedagogy

Students descriptions captured the essence of the pedagogy and the content and skills taught during their middle school experiences. One primary observation about students' pedagogy descriptions is that students described the completion of formulaic writing assignments and strategies they were expected to employ in the context of writing. Students discussed formulaic approaches to writing such as writing to STAAR-like writing prompts and using graphic organizers to draft writing products and practicing with passages to learn about revising and editing.

Formulaic writing. One of the formulaic writing strategies students discussed was the use of an advanced graphic organizer used for planning student writing called the Longhorn Box. In the district where HAMS is located, this strategy was commonly used as a drafting strategy, when students were planning their writing for expository or persuasive essays on state-mandated tests. While the strategy was used in this study and

it is effective, students associated the use of this strategy as a tool to prepare them to pass the writing section of mandated STAAR assessments. Participants also articulated that this formulaic approach to writing was also paired with writing tasks that resembled STAAR-like writing prompts that students addressed on the STAAR assessment. This point aligns with writing instruction scholars (Applebee & Langer, 2011; Au & Gourd, 2013; McCarthy & Ro, 2011) contend is happening in classrooms in the United States. Applebee and Langer (2011) reported that writing instruction in middle schools is dominated by teacher-directed tasks, students completing formulaic writing assignments connected to high stakes testing, and students producing writing materials based on information that the teacher was seeking (p. 26). The results of the research imply that there is a correlation between students' experiences and research on preparing students for high-stakes testing.

Au and Gourd (2013) agreed with the impact that high stakes assessments have on writing instruction in the English classroom. The scholars reported that in some states writing instruction and the types of writing students are expected to create are aligned to the expectations of high-stakes tests. Participants' responses reveal that their teachers were not spending time teaching students how to write (Graham, Gillespie, & Mckeown, 2013; Graham et al., 2014). Teachers were not focusing on developing students' writing skills. Instead, several of the participants discussed completing worksheets and completing assignments on revising and editing, learning about writing genres, grammar, mechanics, sentence structures, and vocabulary to build their writing capacity.

Assigning writing. Also, students discussed being “assigned” writing instead of being equipped with the skills to create writing products. These results are in opposition to effective writing instruction experiences scholars (Cox et al., 2009; Graham, 2008; Khan 2009) contend students need to build their writing capacity. Nearly all the participants discussed the absence of real-world writing assignments or writing assignments that challenged them to write about topics connected to their lives and experiences. Participants never mentioned the use of their culture, backgrounds, or lived experiences as content for the writing products. Based on these results, it was clear that students were not being exposed to writing tasks that were real-world or relevant to their own lives.

Students’ descriptions of their middle schools’ experiences reveal that they were not recipients of culturally relevant approaches to writing. Students voices, perspectives, and lives were not included in classroom discourse and students did not engage in writing instruction that linked academic content with their ideas and experiences (Winn & Johnson, 2011). Overall, the results connected to research question 1 suggest that students were recipients of writing instruction that focused on formulaic writing and “assigning writing” instead of teaching students “how” to write. More importantly, students did not engage with writing tasks that were relevant to their lives or connected to their perspectives and experiences. The next section discusses the results of research question 2. In this section, the reading and writing preferences of students in the research study are discussed and the results are connected to extant research.

Discussion of Results for Research Question 2

Students' Reading Preferences

Research question 2 explored how middle school English I students described their reading and writing preferences. This data was collected from the Writing Interest Form students completed at the beginning of the research study. 72% of the participants in the study preferred reading online materials. Hughes-Hassell & Rodge (2007) explored the leisure reading habits of urban adolescents. The authors found that students in the study preferred reading on the internet and suggested that the definition of reading must change to include websites, e-books, e-mail, discussion boards, chat rooms, instant messaging, and listservs. Other research scholars (Seok & DaCosta, 2017; Shimray, Keerti, & Ramaiah, 2015) have maintained that the advancement of technology has increased student's propensity to choose online texts and readings over printed texts.

To illustrate this point, Shimray, Keerti, and Ramaiah (2015) reported on students' mobile reading habits and how students have shifted from print to more online texts. In addition to this, the authors discussed the advantages and disadvantages associated with these reading formats. The authors posited that reading on the internet is a popular practice for young people because they are constantly spending their time reading electronic resources as well as scanning and surfing the internet (p. 366). Reading online is a preference because the development of digital mass media has low cost, has ease of access, and has up to date-content (p. 366). Seok and DaCosta (2017) explored the gender differences, propensity, and preferences for digital and printed text. The authors maintain that the advancement of technology and the convenience of

smartphones has provided a variety of options for content to reach students. In addition to providing students access to a variety of texts, the researchers explain that online reading has a positive impact on learning outcomes.

Students' Preferences for Fictional and Culturally Relevant Texts

In addition to students' preference for reading on-line, students also preferred reading fictional texts. When students discussed their reading genre preferences, many of the participants listed a fictional text as the last text they read and enjoyed. Several of the texts that were read in class during the 2017-2018 academic year were consistently cited by students. The texts were: *Othello* (1995), *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959), and *The Pigman* (1968). Researchers such as Hopper (2005) discussed the findings of a research study of 707 students aged 11-15 in Southwest England. The scholars focused on the findings that highlighted students' reading habits and reading choices. One of the findings is that students were prioritizing fiction over other types of texts.

Researchers such as Jenkinson (as cited in Hopper, 2005) found that children select fiction because they are growing up and having trouble growing up. This statement suggests that students select fictional texts that mirror the adolescent struggle children endure as they are developing into a young adult. Many of the participants selected fictional texts such as *The Zodiac Legacy* (2015), *Insurgent* (2012), and *The Sword of Summer* (2015) as these texts all deal with teenage issues, teenagers developing powers, and the challenges they face embracing the responsibility of their powers and how they must use them to serve a greater purpose. The findings of the research suggest that students choose fictional texts about teenagers with magical powers because it

represents their challenges of growing up and trying to find their place in school and life. Marsh, Butler, and Umanath (2012) posited that fiction is a viable tool in the classroom, because it can help students visualize course content, stimulate discussion, and promote student interest and engagement. The authors further maintained that fictional texts have a narrative structure that is familiar to young children. This point about narrative structure is significant because it connects to students narrative writing preferences. The findings imply that students are intrigued by fictional texts that tell interesting stories. Several of the literature students cited as a reading preference connected to course content or the protagonists in the texts were relevant to the lives of the students.

Gallo and Ness (2013) conducted a study that explored elementary students' text preferences. The authors found that the students preferred reading fictional texts over non-fiction texts. The authors reported that this was a learned behavior, where exposure and familiarity influenced students' text preference. During the 2018-2019 academic year, students were exposed to fictional novel study on a continuous basis, while using expository and other types of texts as supplementary texts to teach skills. The researcher exposed students to fictional texts increase their exposure and familiarity with the text and preference for reading this genre. Parsons et al. (2018) agreed with this claim and discovered that upper elementary students preferred fiction over non-fiction texts because of the prevalence of this genre in the elementary classroom. One gleaning is that students preferred fiction texts because of the absence of this genre in the English classroom at the research site. Students had not been exposed to fictional novel studies before entering the researcher's classroom. Additionally, in the state of Texas, in some

schools, it can be a common practice to only focus on genres that are tested on the STAAR assessment. At the research site, focusing on genres only assessed on the STAAR assessment has been a practice in the past. The results suggest that students preferred fictional text because of an over-emphasis of focusing on genres tested on the STAAR assessment.

The research results not only revealed student's preference for fictional texts, but also the salient need to incorporate culturally relevant texts as a springboard for culturally relevant writing instruction. Research scholars (Au, 2001; Au & Gourd, 2013; Conrad et al., 2004; Ferger, 2006; Hefflin, 2002; Johnson & Eubanks, 2015; Mendez, 2006; Mendez & Fink, 2012; Murphy & Murphy, 2016; Rozansky, 2010; Winn & Johnson, 2011) suggest that integrating culturally relevant texts that are connected to students lives and experiences is an important component of literacy instruction. Many of the participants spoke to the importance of the culturally relevant texts and how the relevant texts that they read served as a mentor and model text (Mackay, Ricks, & Young, 2017) for their own writing. Exposing students to texts that are relevant to their lives and experiences helps students understand that they have a writing voice that is worthy of being heard and experiences that audiences want to engage with and learn from. Ultimately, culturally relevant texts help students realize that they have their own stories and it is imperative that students pinpoint key moments from their own stories to create culturally relevant texts (Hughes, King, Perkins, & Fuke, 2011).

Writing Preferences

Participants also preferred narrative writing more than expository and poetic writing. 59.4% of students selected narrative writing as the writing mode that they preferred the most. The primary genre students are assessed on the STAAR is expository. As a result, many English teachers do not teach writing genres such as narrative and poetic writing. Based on the commentary students made throughout the study, the results suggest that students prioritized narrative writing because it gave them a sense of ownership in the writing product they created. Lavelle, Smith, and O’Ryan (2002) explored the writing approaches of high school secondary students. The authors articulated that narrative writing is used to “self-express or entertain” (p. 10). Students in the research did not have much experience with narrative writing. The results suggest that students wanted more opportunities to express themselves and tell their individual stories. Similarly, Radcliffe (2012) explored using narrative writing as a springboard for expository and persuasive writing. The author challenged students to write their narrative to someone about an event that happened in the past. As the students transitioned from a narrative to an expository essay, and finally persuasive essay students moved from a personal connection to their text to a more formal approach to writing. Radcliffe includes a quote from one of the participants in her research that emphasizes the importance of narrative writing. The participant maintains that narrative writing is unique because they had an opportunity to share a piece of themselves.

Jeong (2017) learned that novice English as a Foreign Language students were more comfortable writing narrative essays than expository essays. The results suggest

that students possessed a high self-efficacy as it pertains to narrative writing and were more comfortable with narrative than expository or poetic writing. Students were invested in the personal narrative, because it gave them an opportunity to share their personal stories. As the researcher emphasized the importance of telling their own stories, students begin to realize that they had something to say as it pertains to their own lives and experiences. The results imply that the participants valued personal narrative because it allowed them to transform their personal experiences into written text. The next section discusses the results of research question 3. In this section, the impact of culturally relevant writing instruction is discussed, and the results are connected to extant research.

Discussion of Results for Research Question 3

Impact of Culturally Relevant Writing Instruction

Research question 3 explored the impact culturally writing instruction had on participants in the research study. One of the primary impacts is that students discussed how the writing instruction provided them a choice in the content presented in the writing and ignited students' interest and writing passion. The results of the student's responses were unexpected and intriguing. Many of the participants explained how the writing prioritized their interests and they talked about how they enjoyed having autonomy over the content they selected for their writing products. Many of the participants also spoke about the concept of passion. Participants suggested and explicitly stated that they were passionate about the topics that they wrote about for their poetic, narrative, and expository writing pieces. Culturally relevant writing instruction

prioritizes the writing choices of students, provides them the opportunity to write about topics aligned to their interests and backgrounds, and this pedagogy ignites writing passion in students. This study's results emphasized that the participants felt that the writing instruction allowed them to have a choice over the topics they selected for their writing products. Nearly all the participants articulated that the writing unit was effective because they had the opportunity to choose the texts, topics, and content for the writing products they created.

Increased Autonomy Over Writing

The results related to research question 3 reveal that in the past students did not have autonomy over their writing. Participants did not choose the topics and content for the writing products they produced during their previous middle school writing experiences. Scholars (Behizadeh, 2014; Gadd & Parr, 2017; Knight, 2009) have maintained that student choice is an important aspect in writing and providing student choice supports students in engaging with the task and increases the authenticity of the writing task that students create. The ideology surrounding the importance of student choice in writing is seen in the work of Knight (2009). Knight conducted a research study that allowed students to explore their cultural identity through journal writing. At the end of the writing unit, students chose a summative task that highlighted the learning that occurred throughout the writing unit. She found that students choosing their summative task enabled them to engage with the task, show creativity, and elicit deep thinking and ownership.

In addition to this, Behizadeh (2014) suggests that students' choice in writing is important and increases the authenticity of the writing product. In her study, students chose their topics and they explained that exercising student choice empowered them to select topics they enjoyed and were knowledgeable about. Gadd and Parr (2017) found that allowing students to have a choice in creating writing increased student ownership. The results of this study indicate that providing students the choice in the content and topics for their culturally relevant writing increased students' sense of ownership and investment in the writing products they created. Students moved from "writing for writing sake" to taking ownership of the writing topics and content included in their writing products. One of the biggest takeaways is that for the first-time many students became "owners" of their writing process and products. The results imply that culturally relevant writing instruction ignited student ownership as many participants for the first time sat in the author's seat and took control over the topics and content, they presented in their writing products.

Writing Connected to Students' Interests

Besides providing student choice in writing, the results of this research study imply that culturally relevant writing instruction enabled participants to create writing products that were converged around their interests. The results of the research indicate students' interest as it pertains to writing was never explicitly discussed in class. In their responses about their middle school writing experiences, students did not discuss writing instruction or instructional tasks that prioritized their voice, perspective, and background as sources of writing content. Throughout the research study, students often commented

that they never considered their own lives as a source of writing content. The results also revealed that the topics students wrote about for their products were meaningful for them. Participants discussed painful experiences with family, being addicted to medication, abuse, and articulated the beauty of their cultural background through language, the discussion of cultural artifacts, and familial references. Scholars have maintained that engaging students in tasks that are relevant to their lives and experiences increases student motivation (Lipstein & Renninger, 2007), supports students in creating meaningful products (Beaton, 2010), and aligning writing to students interests is a differentiated form of writing instruction and has the potential to increase student writing capacity (Shea, 2015).

For example, Lipstein and Renninger (2007) found that student interest dictates the ways students approach writing. The author's research is connected to the study because students were more motivated to create the writing products because they were writing about topics that aligned with their interests. Similarly, Beaton (2010) found that engaging students in writing instruction that was aligned to their interests allowed students to produce writing products that were more meaningful to them. The students in her classroom wrote about controversial topics that were not considered academic topics, but they were related to students' experiences. Her work suggests that writing instruction aligned to students' experiences honors students' voices and they produce work that is meaningful and reflective of their lives and experiences. Shea (2015) concluded that aligning writing instruction to the interests of students is a form of differentiated writing instruction and has the potential to increase student writing capacity. The results of this

study suggest that aligning writing to students' interest is a powerful tool for helping students produce meaningful writing.

Culturally Relevant Writing Instruction Ignites Students' Passion

Another impact of culturally relevant writing instruction is that it has the potential to ignite students' passion for writing. Many of the participants explained that the writing topics they wrote about were aligned to their interests, experiences, and cultural background and these factors ignited their passion for writing. Fredricks, Alfeld, and Eccles (2010) conducted a longitudinal study and examined how passion was manifest in 25 gifted high school and college students that were identified as gifted and talented in elementary school and 41 high school students that were categorized as talented in middle school. The authors explained that passion can be developed if instruction is aligned to the needs and interests of students. The results of the study imply that students' passion developed because they were allowed opportunities to write about topics that were aligned with their interests.

Gorecki (2014) also agreed with aligning writing instruction to the lives and experiences of students. The scholar facilitated a writing instruction using Aboriginal literature that focused on identity, culture, and struggle. Students were provided the opportunity to write their poems and narratives that embodied the themes discussed in the literature. Gorecki suggests that students are more likely to write with passion, when their lives and experiences are at the center of the writing task. The results of this study imply that students write with passion because they were given the opportunity to use their voice to address issues that were relevant to their own lives and experiences.

Johnston (2011) maintained that students will develop a passion for writing if the teacher and the environment are passionate. Throughout the research study, the researcher displayed passion through reading models of writing for students, reminding students about the value and responsibility for them to share their experiences and cultural background with others. More importantly, the researcher explained to students that they all had a voice that was worthy of being listened to and encourage students to find that voice in their poetic, narrative, and expository writing products. Overall, the researcher “Walked the talk. Read and read daily. Read like a writer and wrote like a reader” (pp. 53-54). Allowing students to see this process supported students in becoming passionate about the writing products students created based on their experiences.

Exploration of Cultural Backgrounds

One of the most noticeable observations about the results is that students explained that culturally relevant writing instruction enabled them to explore their cultural backgrounds, learn about themselves, and learn about the backgrounds of others. When the findings of the research study are compared to seminal research on culturally relevant pedagogy, they seem to support each other (Cazden & Leggett, 1981; Macias, 1987; Mohatt & Erickson, 1981; Ladson-Billings 1990, 1995a, 1995b). Gay (2000, 2002) maintained that culturally responsive teaching involves using the cultural background and experiences of students and incorporating these factors into the classroom to support student learning. This research study provided students the writing space to explore their cultural background in original poems and personal narratives

about their culture and lives. Students' cultural background provided both the content and inspiration for the writing product that students created.

In a similar vein, Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) provided a conceptual overview of principles that guide the implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy. This research is aligned to the following principles espoused by the authors: *Identity and Achievement* and *Equity and Excellence*. This research aligned to *Identity and Achievement* because students' identities were considered in constructing the culturally relevant writing unit. Students prioritized their cultural background and experiences as official content for their writing products. The *Equity and Excellence* principle was employed through selecting multicultural literature as a springboard for writing instruction and displaying high expectations for students using their experiences and using an academic writing mode to share their stories and perspectives. Participants leveraged their culture in the development of the writing products and cited that they learned artifacts about their culture or family that they never knew. Meanwhile, many of the participants explained that they never thought of using their lives, experiences, and cultural background as content for their writing.

Spence and Kite (2018) discussed the use of inner-most heart strategies to produce authentic writing. Inner-most heart writing involves students tapping into personal topics to create writing products. This research study is connected to the work of Spence and Kite because for each of the writing products students created, they were required to pull from their personal experiences and backgrounds to produce text. Students explored their culture using language or vernacular associated with their

culture, references to historical figures, or experiences aligned to family or their interaction with people in the larger society. More importantly, in this study, the students addressed issues connected to their cultural background, their individual identity, examined their experiences in the context of their family and their experiences with larger society. Ultimately, this writing unit created a space for students to take on issues that reflect their cultural, social, and personal experiences (Winn & Johnson, 2011).

Throughout the study, students that spoke more than one language asked permission to use their first language or dialect in their writing. They reported never being able to write in other languages in their English class and they were astounded when they incorporated both their native language and academic English simultaneously. The results suggest that before the writing unit teachers did not find ways to incorporate student's native language and vernaculars into writing tasks and activities. The next section discusses the results of research question 4 which investigated the impact of culturally relevant writing instruction on increasing student writing self-efficacy.

Discussion of Results for Research Question 4

Impact of Instruction on Increasing Writing Self-efficacy

Research question 4 explored the impact of culturally relevant writing instruction on increasing student writing self-efficacy. Many of the participants spoke to the fact that they believed the writing unit was beneficial for their writing development. Students' mean score for writing self-efficacy increased for poetic and narrative writing. Firstly, poetic writing self-efficacy increased from 5.17 to 6.51. Secondly, narrative writing self-efficacy increased from 6.49 to 6.95. Thirdly, expository writing self-

efficacy decreased from 6.84 to 6.78. The results of this research imply that culturally relevant writing instruction has the potential to increase student writing self-efficacy. This claim is aligned to research on increasing student self-efficacy in writing. To increase student self-efficacy this research employed two primary strategies: vicarious experiences and positive social persuasions to increase student writing capacity. Pajares, Johnson, and Usher (2007) defined vicarious experiences as learning experiences that involve modeling, students observing writing, and incorporating student exemplars as mentor texts (p. 106).

Pajares, Johnson, and Usher (2007) defined social persuasions as a verbal judgment that others can provide (p. 107). These social persuasions can be either positive or negative. The authors expressed that the social persuasions that are positive can “empower and encourage” (p. 107) the development of students’ self-efficacy. In this study, social persuasions consisted of the feedback received from the students and the researcher. The results suggest that the vicarious experiences students experienced through models, explicit instruction, and the positive social persuasions from the feedback received during the feedback process were key factors in increasing student writing self-efficacy. The researcher provided models for culturally relevant writing for each genre covered and students applied their learning in their original products. Throughout the research study, the researcher provided mentor texts that students read before they wrote their original writing products. The researcher modeled writing for each of the writing genres covered and students observed exemplar writing from the researcher and students in the classroom. The strategies of modeling and observational

are aligned to the work of Schunk (2003), in that, the researcher provided a model for writing for each genre covered and students observed the strategies employed by the research, so that they could implement with their own original products. Similarly, Schunk and Zimmerman (2007) conducted a study about reading and writing self-efficacy and found that exposure to multiple models of an instructional task is one of the ways teachers can employ to build students writing self-efficacy. In this research study, students were exposed to modeling through literature and annotation and the researcher provided original culturally relevant examples for each writing genre covered.

Impact of Student and Teacher Feedback on Writing Self-efficacy

The results of the research also suggest that student and teacher feedback were positive supports in increasing student writing self-efficacy. Throughout the research, study students were given teacher and student feedback for each writing genre covered in the writing unit. Participants commented on the effectiveness of the feedback received from their peers and the teacher throughout the study. As students reflected on the impact of the writing unit a large majority of the students commented on how the feedback, they received throughout the unit helped developed their writing capacity. Ruegg (2018) explored the impact of teacher and student feedback on increasing the writing self-efficacy of students. The researcher discovered that both sources of feedback were beneficial to increasing student writing self-efficacy, however, teacher feedback increased the writing self-efficacy of students more than their peers.

Troia, Shankland, and Wolbers (2012) cited that scaffolded support has the potential to increase student self-efficacy when completing challenging tasks. Scaffold

strategies and instructional supports were employed throughout the research study to support students in creating culturally relevant products. Participants cited the importance of the cultural questionnaire, the template for TPCAST, and the detailed expectations for creating the writing pieces as important instructional supports that aided them in creating the writing pieces for each genre covered. Each of these resources served as scaffolded support to help students progress to the product. The results of the research study indicate that culturally relevant pedagogy has the potential to increase students' writing capacity. However, there were several lessons learned throughout the research study that if employed correctly can influence the effectiveness of culturally relevant writing instruction on student writing capacity. The next section discusses the personal lessons learned by the researcher throughout the research study.

Discussion of Personal Lessons Learned

There were many lessons learned throughout the research study. Three primary lessons emerged from the research study: (1) culturally relevant writing instruction should be strategically planned throughout the year, (2) students may be reluctant to pull from their personal experiences or tap into their cultural background to create writing pieces, (3) students do not see themselves as writers, and (4) shifting students' self-efficacy is an arduous and lofty task. In the sections that follow, the personal lessons learned during the research study will be discussed in detail.

Strategically Planned Throughout the Year

Many of the participants discussed time as an impediment throughout the research study. Despite having five classroom instructional days to complete their poetic,

narrative, and expository products, participants felt that they did not have enough time to read and analyze mentor texts as well as create original writing products. The culturally relevant writing unit would have been more effective if the unit was distributed across the academic year focusing on one writing genre at a time. In this way, students could have received more exposure to the culturally relevant writing process during the Fall and Spring semesters for each genre covered during the writing unit. An additional benefit of this approach to writing instruction is that students are only required to develop proficiency in one writing genre at a time. Participants were given a week to learn about each writing genre and produce a writing product based on the genre taught. By teaching one genre at a time, this allows students to develop the writing skills for one genre before developing proficiency in another writing genre.

Reluctant to Pull from Personal Experiences or Cultural Background

Participants discussed the challenge of using their personal experiences as content for their writing. For some students, they did not want to relive painful experiences or explore what they perceive as negative aspects of their cultural background. Some participants struggled to leverage their personal experiences in their writings because of the pain associated with the experiences. Other students articulated the challenge of writing about painful experiences they have otherwise kept secret. As a result, students were reluctant to create writing products because they refused to talk about topics that they perceived as painful. Meanwhile, some participants struggled to draw content from their cultural background. They explained that their grandparents were dead, or their parents did not have knowledge of their cultural background.

Similarly, one student whose parents were from South Africa refused to discuss growing up in South Africa during apartheid.

Students do not See Themselves as Writers

Students do not see themselves as writers. Students do not believe that they have a writing voice. Students do not believe they have perspectives that should be valued and respected. Students do not believe that they can sit in the author's seat and create a written text. Before the unit, participants never considered that their experiences and cultural background were worthy of exploration. The culturally relevant writing unit was the beginning step in helping students believe these statements. Culturally relevant writing instruction has the potential to validate students' voices and perspectives and empower students so that they see themselves as writers. For many of the students, their self-efficacy increased for the first time because the content for their writing products originated from their personal experiences and cultural background. This enabled students to experience writing freedom and have autonomy over the topics they wrote about and the freedom to express themselves.

Shifting Students' Self-efficacy is Challenging

In a discussion of their middle school writing experiences, participants highlighted the lack of explicit writing instruction. They described their experiences as being *assigned* writing instead of teaching them *how* to write and they discussed writing instruction focused on preparing them for the STAAR assessment. For many of the students that matriculated to the English I course, they had previously developed a low-self-efficacy because of their elementary and middle school writing experiences. The

commentary of the participants suggests that the writing unit was beneficial in helping students view themselves as writers, helping students explore and learn about their cultural background, and the writing unit helped students appreciate diversity and learn about the culture of others. Despite these benefits, some students did not perceive the unit as helpful. To increase and develop positive writing self-efficacy students need multiple successful experiences with writing so that they develop confidence and view themselves as a writer. In general, culturally relevant writing instruction has the potential over time to increase student self-efficacy and develop the writing capacity of students.

Implications for Practice

Connection to Context

The implications for this record of study suggest that culturally relevant writing instruction has the potential to support students in exploring their cultural background and the background of others, it has the potential to increase students' writing self-efficacy, and it has the potential to ignite choice, interest, and writing passion within students. Throughout the research study, participants commented that they never considered their experiences and cultural backgrounds as reservoirs of writing content. Employing the use of culturally relevant writing instruction helped students realize that their experiences and cultural backgrounds were worthy of sharing with others, while simultaneously appreciating the diverse experiences and cultural backgrounds of others.

Additionally, the data implied that culturally relevant writing instruction has the potential to increase students' writing self-efficacy. Participants engaged in a 3-week writing unit, however, culturally relevant writing instruction must be embedded into the

fabric of instruction, during each academic semester. Students must have continuous exposure, in which they are provided with explicit writing instruction that teaches them “how” to write as well as engage with “relatable” or “relevant” writing tasks. Balancing both teaching students *how* to write with *assigning* relevant writing tasks has the potential to increase student motivation and inevitably their writing self-efficacy.

Another implication for culturally relevant writing instruction is that it has the potential to ignite students' passion for writing. Many of the participants articulated that because the writing assignments were aligned to their interests, experiences, and cultural backgrounds they were passionate about the content for each of the writing pieces they created. Several students indicated that the writing instruction provided them with the inspiration to “pour their heart” on paper. When students described the benefit of the research study many students explained that because they chose the content for their essays and the topics were aligned to their interests their passion was ignited and they were able to create, in their opinion, some of their best work.

Connection to the Field of Study

The diversity in today’s schools requires that teachers use diverse pedagogy strategies to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. In the U.S. and abroad, research scholars have cited writing as a major educational problem. Several scholars reported that students' lack of preparedness for college-level writing and the workforce (Graham & Perin, 2007a) and other scholars cited students' underachievement in writing (Parc & Jesson, 2015). At the elementary level, there is a strong emphasis on learning to write (Graham, Gillespie, & Mckewon, 2012) and at the middle and high

school level there is a focus for students to create short texts, but the writing instruction does not challenge students to make connections with issues or show depth and breadth of knowledge (Applebee & Langer, 2011). To increase the writing capacity of students, particularly students of color, there is a need for more culturally relevant approaches to writing. Culturally relevant writing instruction challenges students to do the following: write for authentic audiences, leverage the ideas, voices, and perspectives of students, and challenges students to engage critically with the world (Winn & Johnson, 2011).

This research study connects to the field of culturally relevant pedagogy and supports the salient need for more culturally relevant approaches to facilitating writing instruction. The results of the study suggest that students are not being exposed to culturally relevant approaches to writing instruction (Applebee & Langer, 2011). Also, the results suggest that culturally relevant writing instruction has the potential to increase student writing self-efficacy (Lusk, 2017) and provides students opportunities to explore their cultures and the cultures of others (Winn & Johnson, 2011). For the students that participated in the study, they discussed the lack of culturally relevant approaches to writing instruction and an instructional emphasis on preparing them for the state mandated STAAR assessment. The participants also articulated that the culturally relevant writing instruction engaged them with writing tasks that aligned to their interest (Adkins, 2012; Shea, 2015; Tatum & Gue, 2012; Troia, 2014; Lopez, 2011), and ignited a passion about the writing products they were creating. The next section provides a brief discussion on recommendations for future research.

Recommendations

The literature suggests that culturally relevant approaches to writing instruction has the potential to increase student writing capacity, provide student choice in writing, ignite passion, and help students explore their own cultures and learn about the cultures of others. This record of study supports these claims, but there is more research needed on planning for and implementing culturally relevant writing instruction in the classroom. Recommendations for further study related to this topic are as follows:

1. “Nkechi” spoke to the fact that culturally relevant instruction supported her in exploring her culture. More importantly, the writing unit “inspired” her and compelled her to “pour out her heart”. Additional research is needed to explore how culturally relevant instruction can be a differentiated writing strategy (Shea, 2015) to inspire struggling writers and help them tap into their inner-most heart (Spence & Kite, 2018) to write texts.
2. Many of the participants discussed being “passionate” about the topics they selected for their writing products. Research maintains that students develop passion when instruction is aligned to their interests and needs (Fredricks, Alfeld, & Eccles, 2010). Additional research is needed to explore the impact, if any, culturally relevant writing instruction has on increasing the writing passion of students with low writing self-efficacy.
3. Culturally relevant writing instruction supports students in exploring their multi-layered identities (Knight, 2009; Tatum & Gue, 2012). “Lourdes” explained that the writing unit supported her in exploring her personal identity and family

history. Additional research is needed on exploring how culturally relevant writing instruction supports students in discovering their identities as: students, writers, members of society, and members in their family.

4. The Texas Success Initiative is a post-secondary readiness assessment used to grant students admission to community colleges, 4-year colleges, and universities in the state of Texas. A longitudinal research study is needed for grades 9th -12th to examine if culturally relevant writing instruction prepares students for college-level writing tasks.
5. One of the themes that emerged from the results is that students bring emotional baggage from their lives and experiences. “Shanice” talked about her father being a “sore topic” and refused to discuss him in any of her writings. Her comments suggested that she was in pain and that there was something that she wanted to express, but she did not know “how”. Culturally relevant writing creates a space for students to take on issues that reflect their personal experiences (Winn & Johnson, 2011). Additional research is needed on how to leverage culturally relevant writing as a tool for writing therapy to support students in expressive and reflective writing (Wright & Chung, 2001) about painful or traumatic experiences.

Closing Thoughts

The diversity in today's schools requires that teachers use more culturally relevant approaches to instruction to meet the needs of the diverse students they serve. In the English classroom, at the secondary level, teachers are not equipping students with the skills they need to be successful in college and beyond. One method for developing students' writing capacity and teaching writing skills is to use more culturally relevant approaches to writing instruction. Students do not believe that they have enough experience in writing content to sit in the author's seat. However, Winn and Johnson (2011) maintained that students have a writing voice, experiences, and cultural backgrounds and students should realize that these personal artifacts are worthy of sharing with others.

Teachers must be committed to learning about their students and using this knowledge to create more culturally relevant writing tasks. The students, as a result of this study, realize that they bring a wealth of knowledge to the English classroom and have the writing content they need to create pieces of texts that bring to life their own experiences, lives, and cultural background. To a large extent, students discussed that the culturally relevant writing supported them in finding their writing "voice" and giving them writing "freedom". Culturally relevant writing instruction has the potential to validate the voices of students often not heard. It is important that educators release these voices, so that students not only change themselves and their perspectives about writing but change the world with the texts and stories they create.

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APPENDIX A

Journal Reflection #1

1. Describe your middle school writing instruction experiences before entering English I? (*your response should be 7-10 sentences*)

2. On a scale from 1-10, rate your **confidence** in your ability to write a narrative essay, poetry, expository essay? Why? (*your response should be 7-10 sentences*)

Narrative_____

Explanation:

Poetry_____

Explanation:

Expository_____

Explanation:

Journal Reflection #2

1. In what ways, did the writing instruction for the poetry, narrative, and expository lessons increase your ability to create these products? (*your response should be 7-10 sentences*)

2. Reflect on the writing instruction lessons. On a scale from 1-10, rate your **confidence** in your ability to write (i.e. narrative essay, poetry, expository essay)? Why? (*your responses should be 7-10 sentences*)

Narrative_____

Explanation:

Poetry_____

Explanation:

Expository_____

Explanation:

APPENDIX B

Learning Log #1

1. Reflect on the poetry writing instruction. In what ways, if any, did the writing instruction contribute to your ability to create the original poetry product. (*your response should be 7-10 sentences*)
2. Reflect on the poetry writing instruction. On a scale from 1-10, rate your **confidence** in your ability to write poetry? Why? (*your response should be 7-10 sentences*)

Rating:

Explanation:

Learning Log #2

1. Reflect on the narrative writing instruction. In what ways, if any, did the writing instruction contribute to your ability to create the original narrative product. (*your response should be 7-10 sentences*)
2. Reflect on the narrative writing instruction. On a scale from 1-10, rate your **confidence** in your ability to write a narrative? Why? (*your response should be 7-10 sentences*)

Rating:

Explanation:

Learning Log #3

1. Reflect on the expository writing instruction. In what ways, if any, did the writing instruction contribute to your ability to create the original expository product. (*your response should be 7-10 sentences*)
2. Reflect on the expository writing instruction. On a scale from 1-10, rate your **confidence** in your ability to write the expository product? Why? (*your response should be 7-10 sentences*)
3. What did you think of the writing unit? How did the instruction make you feel?

APPENDIX C

CULTURAL QUESTIONNAIRE

INSTRUCTIONS: Answer the questions that follow that deal with your culture, social, and personal experiences. It may be beneficial to consult someone in your immediate family (i.e. mother or father) or extended family (i.e. grandmother, grandfather, uncle, aunt, cousin) if you have difficulties answering any of the questions. Work carefully! Make sure you respond to each question in **5-7 sentences**.

1. What is your definition of “culture?”
2. How do you define “family?”
3. Who holds the most “status” in your family? Why?
4. How do you define success?
5. Do you consider your parents to be successful?
6. How important is education in your family?
7. Is punctuality important to you? Why or why not?
8. What is the most important meal of the day?
9. Do you eat foods that are indigenous to your culture? Why or why not? If you answered yes, name some of the foods that you eat. If you answered no, what types of foods do you eat?
10. Did you ever live with your grandparents or extended family?
11. Do you actively participate in organized religion?
12. How important is religion in your family? Why?
13. If religion is important in your family, do you plan to pass this on to your children? Why or why not?
14. Are the roles of men and women specifically defined in your family? If so, what are they?
15. Do you have any eating habits/rituals that are specific to your culture?
16. Define and describe the most important (or most celebrated) holiday of your culture.
17. If you are from a culture that speaks English as a second language, do you speak your native language? If not, why? If so, will you teach your native language to any children you have?

18. How are displays of affection viewed in your culture?
19. What is considered most disrespectful in your culture?
20. What is considered most respectful in your culture?
21. What would you say is, from your perspective, the most commonly held misconception about people of your culture?
22. Have you ever experienced racism? In what form?
23. What can be done about racism and prejudice, in your opinion?
24. Do young people today have a sense of culture?
25. Have you ever felt excluded based on your Culture or Gender?
26. Do you remember excluding others based on Culture or Gender?

Lesson Plans

Class: English I

Unit: Culturally Relevant Writing Instruction: Poetry-WEEK 1

Teacher: Adam Whitaker

Objective: Students will be able to write a poem using a variety of poetic techniques (e.g., structural elements, figurative language) and a variety of poetic forms (e.g., sonnets, ballads)

TEKS:

14 (B)

Anticipatory Set

Monday-When students entered the classroom, students will be assigned one of the following terms: (1) Bible, (2) jollof rice, (3) bride prize, (4) African National Congress, (5) Hijab/Burqa, (6) Merengue, (7) Nihilism, (8) Nguyen Dynasty, (9) Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, (10) American Flag, (11) Aeta, (12) Maple Leaf, (13) familia, (14) spirituals, (15) Ute tribe, or (16) Swahili. In groups of two, students will define the term they were assigned and explain what culture means. After students are finished, they will share their results with the classroom. Next students will begin to think about their own cultural background and answer the following question.

Question: Where are you from? Discuss your family background, culture, and customs/traditions, where applicable. (10-15 sentences)

Tuesday-Students will discuss their parent or family member response from the cultural interview they completed as homework. As their Do Now, students will discuss their responses with their group members and discuss the similarities and differences.

Wednesday-Students will begin instruction by reading their rough draft of *Where I'm From*. After students finish reading their poems, they will assess their own poems by indicating one thing they believe they did well and one area of growth and write the feedback on a sticky note. One feedback will be labeled "Strengths" the other will be labeled "Opportunity for Growth".

Thursday-Students will begin by reading their feedback from the previous day and planning on how to apply the feedback received.

Friday- The teacher will give students 5-10 minutes to prepare for their presentation. The teacher will remind students that they should be creative in presenting their poetry products.

Teaching: Input

Monday-Once students complete their quick write, the teacher will select 3-4 students to share their responses for the whole class. Once students finish, the teacher will explain that they will be reading *Where I'm From* by George Lyon and writing a poetic piece about their respective cultures, background, and experiences. The teacher will ask students the following reflective question.

How does our culture, background, and experiences shape your identity? The teacher will have students engage in a turn and talk select 2-3 students to share their responses for the entire class.

Tuesday-The teacher will explain to students that they will be completing a poem about where they are from. This poem will include cultural information about students, it will include background information, and reflect their lived experiences. Students will leverage the cultural information sheet and poem instruction sheet to complete the poem. The teacher will elaborate on the *Where I'm From* poem assignment and provide students an exemplar. The teacher will explain to students that they are going to complete a poem about their cultural background and experiences. The teacher will have students read the instructions from the *Where I'm From* poem template. Then, the teacher will explain to students that they will reference information from their cultural interviews of their parents/family members to guide the construction of their *Where I'm From* poem.

Wednesday-Next, students will be assigned a feedback partner. In groups of two, students will give each other feedback using the student feedback form. The teacher will explain to students that writing feedback is important for their growth and development. The teacher will explain that students are being assigned to feedback groups so that they can receive important feedback on their poems and use the feedback to improve their poetic product. The teacher will select two students that will model the feedback process.

Thursday-The teacher will explain to students that they should be using the feedback form to improve their original poem.

Friday- Not applicable presentation day.

Teaching: Modeling

Monday-The teacher will explain to students that they will complete a literary analysis of George Lyon's poem *Where I'm From* using the TPCAST strategy. Additionally, the teacher will explain to students that they will use visual annotations to monitor their comprehension and use the TPCAST strategy to analyze the text. The teacher will model the TPCAST analysis and annotation process.

Tuesday-The teacher will complete a model poem using the Lyon template for students. The teacher will walk students through the process using whole-class instruction or the teacher can review the model created and allow students to work individually or in groups.

Wednesday-The teacher will have two students model the feedback process for the whole class and students will have the opportunity to complete the process once they have watched the model.

Thursday-Once students have internalized the feedback, students will revise their product, where necessary. After students complete their rough draft they will begin working on their final draft in class. The teacher will provide a teacher-created example as well as share final drafts of students with the class.

Friday- Not applicable presentation day.

Teaching: Checking for Understanding

Monday- The teacher will navigate around the room ensuring that students are completing the TPCASTT analysis of the poem. The teacher will clarify the analysis steps and asking students scaffolded questions to ensure they understand the analysis process and comprehend the poem.

Tuesday-As students write the teacher will navigate around the room ensuring that students are using the poem instruction sheet, and *Where I'm From* poem template to create their original poetic product. The teacher will also post the exemplar on the board for students at the beginning of the class. The teacher will observe students as they work and constantly refer to the exemplar, poem instruction sheet, and poem template.

Wednesday- The teacher will walk around the room ensuring that students are working on feedback forms and give feedback on the process, where applicable. The teacher will constantly reiterate to students that they will be using the feedback to improve their final product.

Thursday-The teacher will navigate around the room ensuring that students are following the poem template and ensuring that students are incorporating the experiences and cultural background into their original poem.

Friday- Not applicable presentation day.

Closure

Monday-To determine that students are matriculating towards the lesson objective the teacher will leverage student responses from their visual annotations and answers to TPCAST literary analysis to determine student's comprehension and analysis of the poem they read (TPCASTT analysis-Exit Ticket)

Tuesday-To determine that students are matriculating towards the lesson objective the teacher will review students' progress on completing the *Where I'm From* template. Students should complete at least 50% of the template before they leave the class. The remainder of the template can be completed for homework. (50% complete of *Where I'm From* template-Exit Ticket)

Wednesday-To determine that students are matriculating towards the lesson objective the teacher will review students' progress and ensure that students have completed the feedback form. (Feedback Form-Exit Ticket)

Thursday-To determine that students are matriculating towards the lesson objective the teacher will review students' drafts of their poems to ensure that they have the appropriate elements for the poem. (Final Draft of Poem-Exit Ticket)

Friday- To determine students are matriculating towards the lesson objective the teacher will collect students' final draft. Students that are not finished will be given the opportunity to complete their poem over the weekend and turn it in on the following Monday. (Final Draft of Poem-Exit Ticket)

Independent Practice

Monday-For homework, students will interview their parents about their cultural origins and background and complete the cultural questionnaire. Students will leverage this information to create a poem similar to *Where I'm From*.

Tuesday-For homework, students will complete the *Where I'm From* template for their original poem.

Wednesday-For homework, students will complete the feedback form.

Thursday-For homework, students will complete the final draft of their original poem.

Friday-For homework, students will complete the final draft of their original poem. (where applicable)

Materials: Student Writing Feedback Form, TP-CAST Poems, Visual Annotations, Poetry Writing Assignment Sheet, *Where I'm From* writing template, *Where I'm From* by George Lyon, Teacher Exemplar

Literature: *The Hymn of the Soviet Union* (1938), *Remember* (1983), *Immigrants* (1984), *Where I'm From* (1999), *Different Ways to Pray* (1995), *Kojo-I AM BLACK* (2005), *Our Mother Tongue* (1867), *Presents from My Aunts in Pakistan* (2004), *America* (1855), *Scars* (1999)

Duration: Monday: 45 mins, Tuesday: 45 mins, Wednesday: 45 mins, Thursday: 45 mins, Friday: 45 mins

Class: English I

Unit: Culturally Relevant Writing Instruction: Personal Narrative-WEEK 2

Teacher: Adam Whitaker

Objective: Students will be able to write an engaging story with a well-developed conflict and resolution, interesting and believable characters, and a range of literary strategies (e.g. dialogue, suspense) and devices to enhance the plot.

TEKS:

14 (A)

Anticipatory Set

Monday- The teacher will explain to students that they will be writing a personal narrative. Students will define what a personal narrative is on a half sheet of paper and share their responses with their table partner. The teacher will select students to share their responses with the whole class. Additionally, to help students reflect on the nature of their individual narrative, the teacher will facilitate an exercise, in which, students individual narratives are likened to a jolly rancher. Each student in the class will be given a (1) watermelon, (2) cherry, (3) blue raspberry, or (4) green apple jolly rancher. The teacher will explain to students that the jolly rancher bag is filled with different flavors, much like the cultural and ethnic composition of the class. The teacher will ask the students a rhetorical question: What is your flavor? The teacher will instruct students to turn and talk about the question and the teacher will select students to share out with the entire class. The teacher will remind students that each of their personal narratives has a distinct “flavor” or core characteristics that make them unique.

Tuesday-In groups, students will discuss the following questions: (1) What is your story?, (2) How will leverage your cultural lens and language?, and (3) How will you address the historical and cultural norms of your culture? The teacher will give students an opportunity to share their responses with their table partner and then the teacher will select students to share out to the whole class.

Wednesday- N/A

Thursday-N/A

Friday- The teacher will give students 5-10 minutes to prepare for their presentation. The teacher will remind students that they should be creative with presenting their personal narrative products.

Teaching: Input

Monday-Once students complete their quick write, the teacher will explain that students will select a personal narrative that students will read and employ the visual annotations. The teacher will explain to students that they will annotate for the following concepts: vocabulary, figurative language, plot, conflict, theme, and author's craft.

Tuesday-The teacher will explain to students that they will be creating their own personal narrative. The teacher will pass out the Personal Narrative assignment sheet and explain the expectations students will be required to complete for the assignment.

Wednesday- The teacher will explain to students that they will continue the process of working on their personal narrative. The teacher will direct students to the personal narrative assignment sheet.

Thursday-The teacher will explain to students that they will be working in partners to give each other feedback on their personal narratives.

Friday- Not applicable presentation day.

Teaching: Modeling

Monday- The teacher will model the annotation process and identify one visual annotation to model for students. After the teacher has modeled the annotation process, the example will be posted in the classroom as a reference.

Tuesday-The teacher will present a model of a personal narrative exemplar (teacher created) as an example of a culturally relevant narrative. The teacher will explain how the text connects to their life story, experiences, and cultural background. Additionally, the teacher will direct students to the assignment sheet to ensure they are including the technical aspects of the assignment as it relates to vocabulary, figurative language, etc.

Wednesday-The teacher will post a teacher-created personal narrative as an exemplar for students to reference as they are completing their own personal narrative.

Thursday-The teacher will divide students into pairs and each student will complete a feedback form for their corresponding partner. The teacher will have two students model the process.

Friday- Not applicable presentation day.

Teaching: Checking for Understanding

Monday- The teacher will navigate around the room ensuring that students are annotating the text for the specified visual annotations. The teacher will give reminders about what students should be annotated in the text they have selected. The teacher will also remind students that they should be thinking about how the author infused their lives, experiences, and culture in the text they are reading.

Tuesday-As students write the teacher will navigate around the room ensuring that students are using the personal narrative instruction sheet and a personal narrative graphic organizer to plan out their writing product. The teacher will remind students that they can use a linear and nonlinear approach to crafting their narrative. The teacher will review these terms. Also, the teacher will navigate around the directing students to the cultural questionnaire as a source of content for their product.

Wednesday- As students write, the teacher will navigate around the room ensuring that students are using the personal narrative instruction sheet and a personal narrative graphic organizer to plan out their writing product. The teacher will remind students that they can use a linear and nonlinear approach to crafting their narrative. The teacher will review these terms. Also, the teacher will navigate around the directing students to the cultural questionnaire as a source of content for their product.

Thursday-The teacher will navigate around the room ensuring that students are following the feedback process. The teacher will ask probing questions about the feedback process to ensure that students understand the expectation. Additionally, the teacher will share examples of the completed feedback form, so that students know how the task should be completed.

Friday- Not applicable presentation day.

Closure

Monday-To determine that students are matriculating towards the lesson objective the teacher will ensure that students have completed 50% of the text with visual annotations for the text they are reading. The teacher will walk around the room to assess student progress. (Exit Ticket-50% of annotations complete/text read)

Tuesday-To determine that students are matriculating towards the lesson objective the teacher will review students' progress on completing the personal narrative graphic organizer and rough draft of their personal narrative. (30% complete-personal narrative graphic organizer-Exit Ticket)

Wednesday- To determine that students are matriculating towards the lesson objective the teacher will review students' progress on completing the personal narrative graphic organizer and rough draft of their personal narrative. (70% complete-personal narrative graphic organizer-Exit Ticket)

Thursday-To determine students are matriculating towards the lesson objective the teacher will review students draft of their personal narrative and feedback form to ensure that they have the appropriate elements for their personal narrative. (Completed Feedback Form/Personal Narrative-Exit Ticket)

Friday- To determine students are matriculating towards the lesson objective the teacher will collect students' final draft. Students that are not finished will be given the opportunity to complete their personal narrative over the weekend and turn in on the following Monday. (Final Draft of Personal Narrative-Exit Ticket)

Independent Practice

Monday-For homework, students will finish reading and annotating the personal narrative they selected.

Tuesday-For homework, students will work on their personal narrative graphic organizer and the rough draft of their personal narrative.

Wednesday-For homework, students will complete the final draft of their personal narrative.

Thursday-For homework, students will make corrections and adjust personal narrative based on the feedback received.

Friday-For homework, students will complete the final draft of their personal narrative. (where applicable)

Materials: Student Writing Feedback Form, Narrative Writing Assignment Sheet, Linear Plot Graphic Organizer, Visual Annotations, 26-Lined Paper, Teacher Exemplar

Literature: *Black Men in Public Spaces* (1986), *Only Daughter* (2000), *Amigo Brothers* (1978), *Joy Luck Club* (1989), *Escape from Afghanistan* (1994), *Everyday Use* (1973), *SeedFolks* “Amir” and “Sae Young” (1997), *The Gun* (2002), *Unplanned Legacy* (2002)

Duration: Monday: 45 mins, Tuesday: 45 mins, Wednesday: 45 mins, Thursday: 45 mins, Friday: 45 mins

Class: English I

Unit: Culturally Relevant Writing Instruction: Expository-WEEK 3

Teacher: Adam Whitaker

Objective: Students will be able to write an analytical essay that includes: a controlling idea or thesis, organizing structure, introductory and concluding paragraphs, rhetorical devices, and transitions, and relevant information and valid inferences.

TEKS: 15A, 15AI, 15AII, 15AIII, 15AIV, 15AV

Anticipatory Set

Monday-The teacher will explain to students that they will be watching a TEDx speech by Priya Rajput entitled, *Diversity*. Students will watch the video media and share their gleanings with a partner. After watching the video, students will respond to the following question:

1. Why is diversity important?

Students will share their responses with their table partner and the teacher will select students to share their responses with the whole class.

The teacher will explain to students that they will be writing an expository essay.

Tuesday-N/A

Wednesday- N/A

Thursday-N/A

Friday- The teacher will give students 5-10 minutes to prepare for their presentation. The teacher will remind students that they should be creative with presenting their personal narrative products.

Teaching: Input

Monday- The teacher will explain that students will select an expository text option that they will read or annotate. Also, the teacher will explain that they have the option of choosing a multimodal text. The teacher will explain to students that they will annotate for the following concepts: hook, thesis, supporting details, topic sentence, figurative language, conclusion, and vocabulary. Students that selected the multimodal text will engage in a visual analysis with guiding questions.

Tuesday-The teacher will explain to students that they will continue working on reading and annotating their expository text or watching their multimodal text and completing the visual analysis with guiding questions.

Wednesday- The teacher will explain to students that they are going to create their own expository prompt. The teacher will explain to students that they will pull the content from their own lives, experiences, and culture. Students will also select their quotes, think statements, and create their own writing tasks associated with the topic that they want to write about.

Thursday-The teacher will explain to students that they will be working in partners to give each other feedback on their expository essays.

Friday- Not applicable presentation day.

Teaching: Modeling

Monday- The teacher will model the annotation process and identify one visual annotation to model for students. After the teacher has modeled the annotation process, the example will be posted in the classroom as a reference. Additionally, the teacher will review the process for completing the visual analysis with guiding questions for students that selected the multimodal text.

Tuesday- The teacher will model the annotation process and identify one visual annotation to model for students. After the teacher has modeled the annotation process, the example will be posted in the classroom as a reference. Additionally, the teacher will review the process for completing the visual analysis with guiding questions for students that selected the multimodal text.

Wednesday-The teacher will model the process of creating the expository quote, think statement, and writing task associated with a topic. The teacher will leave the writing exemplar on the front board for students to reference.

Thursday-The teacher will divide students into pairs and each student will complete a feedback form their corresponding partner. The teacher will have two students model the process.

Friday- Not applicable presentation day.

Teaching: Checking for Understanding

Monday-The teacher will navigate around the room ensuring that students are annotating the text or multimodal text for the specified visual annotations. The teacher will give reminders about what students should be annotated in the text they are reading or watching. The teacher will also remind students that they should be thinking about the author and how they infused their lives, experiences, and culture in the text they are reading.

Tuesday- The teacher will navigate around the room ensuring that students are annotating the text or multimodal text for the specified visual annotations. The teacher will give reminders about what students should be annotated in the text they are reading or watching. The teacher will also remind students that they should be thinking about the author and how the infused their lives, experiences, and culture in the text they are reading.

Wednesday- The teacher will navigate around the room to ensure that students are creating their expository writing tasks. The teacher will remind students that the topic they are writing about should be connected to their lives, experiences, and cultural background.

Thursday-The teacher will navigate around the room ensuring that students are following the feedback process. The teacher will ask probing questions about the feedback process to ensure that students understand the expectation. Additionally, the teacher will share examples of the completed feedback form, so that students know how the task should be completed.

Friday- Not applicable presentation day.

Closure

Monday-To determine that students are matriculating towards the lesson objective the teacher will ensure that students have completed 50% of the text with visual annotations for the text they are reading or watching. The teacher will walk around the room to assess student progress. (Exit Ticket-50% of annotations complete/text read or watched)

Tuesday-To determine that students are matriculating towards the lesson objective the teacher will review students' progress on completing the visual annotations/visual analysis for multi-modal texts. (Exit Ticket-80% of annotations complete/text read or watched)

Wednesday- To determine that students are matriculating towards the lesson objective the teacher will review students' progress on completing the expository writing prompt (100% complete with expository writing prompt-Exit Ticket)

Thursday-To determine students are matriculating towards the lesson objective the teacher will review students draft of their expository essay and feedback form to ensure that they have the appropriate elements for the expository essay. (Completed Feedback Form/Expository essay-Exit Ticket)

Friday- To determine students are matriculating towards the lesson objective the teacher will collect students' final draft. Students that are not finished will be given the opportunity to complete their expository essay over the weekend and turn in on the following Monday. (Final Draft of Expository essay-Exit Ticket)

Independent Practice

Monday-For homework, students will finish reading, annotating, or viewing the expository or multimodal text they have selected.

Tuesday- For homework, students will finish reading, annotating, or viewing the expository or multimodal text they have selected.

Wednesday-For homework, students will complete the draft of their expository essay using the longhorn box. (students will write their expository essay based on the writing prompt they created)

Thursday-For homework, students will make corrections and adjust expository essays based on the feedback received. Students will complete final draft of the expository essay for homework.

Friday-For homework, students will complete the final draft of their expository essay.
(where applicable)

Materials: Student Writing Feedback Form, Expository Writing Assignment Sheet, STAAR Expository Prompt/Graphic Organizer, Visual Annotations, 26-Lined Paper, Longhorn Box, Teacher Exemplar

Expository/Multi-Modal Texts: *Latino in America, Two Men Interviewed/Police Chief News Conference, Inspiring the Next Generation of Engineers, House to Vote on School Gun Violence Bill, Kendrick Lamar Music Pulitzer Prize, How does Black Hair Reflect Black History, Ramadan 2018: How Muslims celebrate the revelation of the Koran, The Psychology of Youth Sports, As Trump Crackdown continues, more Immigrants are choosing to Self-deport*

Duration: Monday: 45 mins, Tuesday: 45 mins, Wednesday: 45 mins, Thursday: 45 mins, Friday: 45 mins

UNPACKING TEKS: POETRY

<p>Curriculum Expectations: Strand: Writing/Literary Texts Knowledge/Skill: Students write literary texts to express their ideas and feelings about real or imagined people, events, ideas.</p>
<p>Standard: 14B Students are expected to write a poem using a variety of poetic techniques (e.g., structural elements, figurative language) and a variety of poetic forms (e.g., sonnets, ballads)</p>
<p>Standard Content Vocabulary: poetic techniques, structural elements, figurative language, poetic forms, sonnets, ballads</p>
<p>Verb(s): write</p>
<p>Objective: Students will be able to write a poem using a variety of poetic techniques (e.g., structural elements, figurative language) and a variety of poetic forms (e.g., sonnets, ballads)</p>
<p>Product: Free Verse poem</p>
<p>Question Stem: This standard is not assessed on the state test, so there are no questions stems available for this standard.</p>

UNPACKING TEKS: NARRATIVE WRITING

<p>Curriculum Expectations: Strand: Writing/Literary Texts Knowledge/Skill: Students write literary texts to express their ideas and feelings about real or imagined people, events, ideas.</p>
<p>Standard: 14A Students are expected to write an engaging story with a well-developed conflict and resolution, interesting and believable characters, and a range of literary strategies (e.g. dialogue, suspense) and devices to enhance the plot.</p>
<p>Standard Content Vocabulary: story, conflict, resolution, characters, literary strategies, dialogue, suspense.</p>
<p>Verb(s): write</p>
<p>Objective: Students will be able to write an engaging story with a well-developed conflict and resolution, interesting and believable characters, and a range of literary strategies (e.g. dialogue, suspense) and devices to enhance the plot.</p>
<p>Product: Personal Narrative</p>
<p>Question Stem/Sample Question: This standard is no longer assessed at the state level. Below is a released prompt from the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) test from, when the standard was assessed.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Write about a time you made your self-heard.</p> <p>The information in the box below will help you remember what you should think about when you write your composition.</p> <p>REMEMBER—YOU SHOULD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> write about the assigned topic<input type="checkbox"/> make your writing thoughtful and interesting<input type="checkbox"/> make sure that each sentence you write contributes to your composition as a whole<input type="checkbox"/> make sure that your ideas are clear and easy for the reader to follow<input type="checkbox"/> write about your ideas in-depth so that the reader is able to develop a good understanding of what you are saying<input type="checkbox"/> proofread your writing to correct errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure <p><i>(Released exit-level TAKS-2010)</i></p>

UNPACKING TEKS: EXPOSITORY WRITING

Curriculum Expectations:

Strand: Writing/Expository and Procedural Texts

Knowledge/Skill: Students write expository and procedural work-related texts to communicate ideas and information to specific audiences for specific purposes.

Standard(s): 15A Students are expected to write an analytical essay of sufficient length that includes:

15AI-Effective introductory and concluding paragraphs and a variety of sentence structures

15AII-Rhetorical devices and transitions between paragraphs

15AIII-A controlling idea or thesis

15AIV-An organizing structure appropriate to the purpose, audience, and context

15AV-Relevant information and valid inferences

Standard Content Vocabulary: introductory and concluding paragraphs, analytical essay, sentence structures, rhetorical devices, transitions, controlling idea/thesis, purpose, audience, context

Verb(s): write

Objective: Students will write an expository essay that connects to their values/standards, culture, and experiences.

Product: Expository Essay

Question Stem/Sample Question:

Read the information in the box below.

The national publication USA Weekend began sponsoring Make a Difference Day in 1992 in partnership with the HandsOn Network. On the fourth Saturday in October, everyone is encouraged to gather with friends and neighbors to help fill a need in their community. Millions of Americans participate every year.

Working together can be one of the most effective ways to improve the quality of people's lives. Think carefully about this statement.

Write an essay explaining one way that people can work together to make a difference.

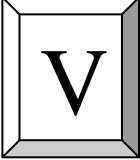

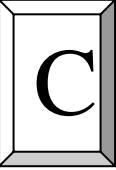


Be sure to —

- clearly state your thesis
- organize and develop your ideas effectively
- choose your words carefully
- edit your writing for grammar, mechanics, and spelling



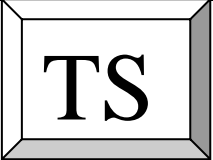


(Released STAAR English I-2017)


Visual Annotations

Instructions: Use the Visual Images below to annotate a fictional or expository text. Read the descriptions below on how to use the visual images.

<i>Visual Images</i>	<i>How to use?</i>
	Use this visual image, when you encounter unknown vocabulary words in a text. Next, use the context clues to determine the meaning of the unknown words.
	Use this visual image, when you encounter the theme of a text. The theme is the underlying message or morale that the author is trying to convey.
	Use this visual image, when you notice a conflict in a text. Conflict is a struggle between two opposing forces. There are four types of conflict: Internal Conflict: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Man vs. Himself External Conflict: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Man vs. Man ● Man vs. Nature ● Man vs. Society
	“Good Reader’s” always have mental questions developing as they are engaging with a text. Use this visual image to ask questions about the literary text, or about author’s purpose.
	Figurative language is a part of author’s writing craft. Use this visual image, to record any figurative language you encounter and explain the meaning of the figurative language. Figurative language Devices: Simile: a comparison between two objects using like, as, or than. Metaphor: a direct comparison <u>WITHOUT</u> using like, as, or than. A metaphor represents something as if it were something else.

	<p><u>Personification:</u> an object or idea given human characteristics.</p> <p><u>Hyperbole:</u> extreme exaggeration</p>
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<i>Visual Images</i>	How to use?
	<p>A <u>symbol</u> is a person, place, or object that stands for something beyond itself. Use this visual image to identify symbols in a literary text.</p>
	<p>A <u>thesis</u> is a statement that summarizes the claim of an expository text. Use this visual image to identify the thesis of an expository text.</p>
	<p>A <u>topic sentence</u> is a sentence that captures the meaning of a paragraph. Use this visual image to identify the topic sentence of a paragraph in an expository text.</p>
	<p><u>Supporting details</u> are words or phrases or statements that support topic sentences in a paragraph. Use this visual image to identify the supporting details of a paragraph in an expository text.</p>
	<p><u>Text structure</u> refers to how an expository text is organized. Use this visual image to identify the text structure of an expository text. (i.e. description, sequence, cause and effect, compare and contrast, and problem and solution).</p>

	<p><i>Author's Craft</i> are the tools that an author uses to create a text. Use this visual image, when you are identifying elements of author's craft employed in a text.</p>
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Option #1

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the poem below and use visual annotations to guide your comprehension of the text. **Use the following visual annotations as you read the text:** (2) Vocabulary, (1) Theme, (1) Conflict, (2) Figurative Language, (1) Imagery, (2) Symbol, (1) Question. **After you finish annotating the text, complete the TP-CAST analysis on the back.**

The Hymn of the Soviet Union

- (1) Unbreakable Union of freeborn Republics,
- (2) Great Russia has welded forever to stand.
- (3) Created in struggle by will of the people,
- (4) United and mighty, our Soviet land!

- (5) Sing to the Motherland, home of the free,
- (6) Bulwark of peoples in brotherhood strong.
- (7) O Party of Lenin, the strength of the people,
- (8) To Communism's triumph lead us on!

- (9) Through **tempests** the sunrays of freedom have cheered us,
- (10) Along the new path where great Lenin did lead.
- (11) To a righteous cause he raised up the peoples,
- (12) Inspired them to labor and valorous deed.
- [Or, the old way:
Be true to the people, thus Stalin has reared us,
Inspire us to labor and valorous deed!]

- (13) Sing to the Motherland, home of the free,
- (14) Bulwark of peoples in brotherhood strong.
- (15) O Party of Lenin, the strength of the people,
- (16) To **Communism's** triumph lead us on!

- (17) In the vict'ry of Communism's deathless ideal,
- (18) We see the future of our dear land.
- (19) And to her fluttering scarlet banner, Selflessly true we always shall stand!

Poetry Analysis Using TP-CAST

INSTRUCTIONS: Once you have finished reading the text, use this graphic organizer to analyze the poem. All questions should be answered in complete sentences. Refer to your annotations of the poem to guide your analysis of the text.

T	In your own words, explain the meaning of the title before you read the text? Why do you think the author choose this title?
P	What is the best paraphrase of the sentence below? “Great Russia has welded forever to stand. Created in struggle by will of the people, United and mighty, our Soviet land!”
C	What words help the reader understand the meaning of <u>tempests</u> , as used in line 9 ? What impact does this phrase have on the reader?
A	What can you infer about the speaker’s <i>tone</i> ? I can infer _____ _____. When the speaker states, _____ this reveals
S	While reading the text, do you notice any shifts in the text? In the text, I noticed a <i>shift</i> when the author states, _____ _____ This change <i>influences the theme</i> because _____ _____ _____
T	The <i>primary theme</i> the author is conveying _____ _____ The author wants the reader to learn _____. This message is important because _____ _____ _____

Option #2

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the poem below and use visual annotations to guide your comprehension of the text. **Use the following visual annotations as you read the text:** (2) Vocabulary, (1) Theme, (1) Conflict, (2) Figurative Language, (1) Imagery, (2) Symbol, (1) Question. **After you finish annotating the text, complete the TP-CAST analysis on the back.**

Remember by Joy Harjo

- (1) Remember the sky that you were born under, know each of the star's stories.
- (2) Remember the moon, know who she is.
- (3) Remember the sun's birth at dawn, that is the strongest point of time. Remember sundown and the giving away to night.
- (4) Remember your birth, how your mother struggled to give you form and breath.
- (5) You are evidence of her life, and her mother's, and hers.
- (6) Remember your father. He is your life, also.
- (7) Remember the earth whose skin you are: red earth, black earth, yellow earth, white earth brown earth, we are earth.
- (8) Remember the plants, trees, animal life who all have their tribes, their families, their histories, too. Talk to them, listen to them. They are **alive** poems.
- (9) Remember the wind. Remember her voice. She knows the origin of this universe. Remember you are all people and all people are you.
- (10) Remember you are this universe and this universe is you.
- (11) Remember all is in motion, is growing, is you. Remember **language** comes from this.
- (12) Remember the dance language is, that life is. Remember.

Poetry Analysis Using TP-CAST

INSTRUCTIONS: Once you have finished reading the text, use this graphic organizer to analyze the poem. All questions should be answered in complete sentences. Refer to your annotations of the poem to guide your analysis of the text.

T	In your own words, explain the meaning of the title before you read the text? Why do you think the author choose this title?
P	What is the best paraphrase of the sentence below? “Remember the earth whose skin you are: red earth, black earth, yellow earth, white earth brown earth, we are earth.”
C	Which words in line 8 help the reader understand the meaning of the phrase, “Remember the plants, trees, animal life who all have their tribes, their families, their histories, too.” What impact does this phrase have on the reader?
A	What can you infer about the speaker’s <i>tone</i> ? I can infer _____ _____. When the speaker states, _____ this reveals
S	While reading the text, do you notice any shifts in the text? In the text, I noticed a <i>shift</i> when the author states, _____ This change <i>influences the theme</i> because _____ _____ _____ _____
T	The <i>primary theme</i> the author is conveying _____ The authors wants the reader to learn _____. This message is important _____ _____

Option #3

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the poem below and use visual annotations to guide your comprehension of the text. **Use the following visual annotations as you read the text:** (2) Vocabulary, (1) Theme, (1) Conflict, (2) Figurative Language, (1) Imagery, (2) Symbol, (1) Question. **After you finish annotating the text, complete the TP-CAST analysis on the back.**

Immigrants by Pat Mora

- (1) **wrap** their babies in the American flag,
- (2) feed them mashed hot dogs and apple pie,
- (3) name them Bill and Daisy,
- (4) buy them blonde dolls that blink blue eyes or a football and tiny cleats
- (5) before the baby can even walk,
- (6) speak to them in thick English,
- (7) hallo, babee, hallo,
- (8) **whisper** in Spanish or Polish
- (9) when the babies sleep, whisper in a dark parent bed, that dark parent fear,
- (10) Will they like our boy, our girl, our fine American boy, our fine American girl?

Poetry Analysis Using TP-CAST

INSTRUCTIONS: Once you have finished reading the text, use this graphic organizer to analyze the poem. All questions should be answered in complete sentences. Refer to your annotations of the poem to guide your analysis of the text.

T	In your own words, explain the meaning of the title before you read the text? Why do you think the author choose this title?
P	What is the best paraphrase of the sentence below? “wrap their babies in the American flag”
C	What is the meaning of the rhetorical question in line 10 , “Will they like our boy, our girl, our fine American boy, our fine American girl?” What impact does the rhetorical question have on the reader?
A	What can you infer about the speaker’s <i>tone</i> ?
	I can infer_____. When the speaker states,_____this reveals_____
S	While reading the text, do you notice any shifts in the text?
	In the text, I noticed a <i>shift</i> when the author states,_____ This change <i>influences the theme</i> because_____

T	The <i>primary theme</i> the author is conveying_____
	The author wants the reader to learn_____. This message is important because_____

Option #4

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the poem below and use visual annotations to guide your comprehension of the text. **Use the following visual annotations as you read the text:** (2) Vocabulary, (1) Theme, (1) Conflict, (2) Figurative Language, (1) Imagery, (2) Symbol, (1) Question. **After you finish annotating the text, complete the TP-CAST analysis on the back.**

Where I'm From by George Lyon

- (1) I am from clothespins,
- (2) from Clorox and carbon-tetrachloride.
- (3) I am from the dirt under the back porch.
- (4) Black, glistening,
- (5) it tasted like beets
- (6) I am from the forsythia bush
the Dutch elm
- (7) whose long-gone limbs I remember
as if they were my own.
- (8) I'm from fudge and eyeglasses,
from Imogene and Alafair.
- (9) I'm from the know-it-alls
and the pass-it-ons, from Perk up! and Pipe down!
- (10) I'm from He restoreth my soul
with a cottonball lamb
and ten verses I can say myself.
- (11) I'm from Artemus and Billie's Branch,
fried corn and strong coffee.
- (12) From the finger my grandfather lost
to the **auger**, the eye my father shut to keep his sight.
- 13) Under my bed was a dress box
spilling old pictures, a **sift** of lost faces
to drift beneath my dreams. I am from those moments--
snapped before I budded --leaf-fall from the family tree.

Poetry Analysis Using TP-CAST

INSTRUCTIONS: Once you have finished reading the text, use this graphic organizer to analyze the poem. All questions should be answered in complete sentences. Refer to your annotations of the poem to guide your analysis of the text.

T	In your own words, explain the meaning of the title before you read the text? Why do you think the author choose this title?
P	<p>What is the best paraphrase of the sentence below?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“Under my bed was a dress box spilling old pictures, a sift of lost faces to drift beneath my dreams. I am from those moments--snapped before I budded -- leaf-fall from the family tree.”</p>
C	What is the meaning of the phrase in line 10 , “I’m from He restoreth my soul with a cottonball lamb and ten verses I can say myself.” What impact does this phrase have on the reader?
A	<p>What can you infer about the speaker’s <i>tone</i>?</p> <p>I can infer _____.</p> <p>_____ . When the speaker states, _____ this reveals _____</p>
S	<p>While reading the text, do you notice any shifts in the text?</p> <p>In the text, I noticed a <i>shift</i> when the author states, _____</p> <p>This change <i>influences the theme</i> because _____</p> <p>_____</p>
T	<p>The <i>primary theme</i> the author is conveying _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>The authors wants the reader to learn _____ . This message is important because _____</p>

Option #5

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the poem below and use visual annotations to guide your comprehension of the text. **Use the following visual annotations as you read the text:** (2) Vocabulary, (1) Theme, (1) Conflict, (2) Figurative Language, (1) Imagery, (2) Symbol, (1) Question. **After you finish annotating the text, complete the TP-CAST analysis on the back.**

Different ways to Pray by Naomi Shihab Nye

- (1) There was the method of kneeling,
- (2) a fine method, if you lived in a country
- (3) where stones were smooth.
- (4) The women dreamed **wistfully** of bleached courtyards,
- (5) hidden corners where knee fit rock.
- (6) Their prayers were weathered rib bones,
- (7) small calcium words uttered in sequence,
- (8) as if this shedding of syllables could somehow fuse them to the sky.
- (9) There were the men who had been shepherds so long they walked like sheep.
- (10) Under the olive trees, they raised their arms—Hear us! We have pain on earth!
- (11) We have so much pain there is no place to store it!
- (12) But the olives bobbed peacefully in fragrant buckets of vinegar and thyme.
- (13) At night the men ate heartily, flat bread and white cheese,
- (14) and were happy in spite of the pain, because there was also happiness.
- (15) Some prized the pilgrimage, wrapping themselves in new white linen to ride buses across miles of vacant sand.
- (16) When they arrived at Mecca they would circle the holy places, on foot, many times, they would bend to kiss the earth and return, their lean faces housing mystery.
- (17) While for certain cousins and grandmothers, the pilgrimage occurred daily, lugging water from the spring or balancing the baskets of grapes. These were the ones present at births, humming quietly to perspiring mothers.
- (18) The ones stitching **intricate** needlework into children's dresses, forgetting how easily children soil clothes.
- (19) There were those who didn't care about praying.
- (20) The young ones. The ones who had been to America.
- (21) They told the old ones, you are wasting your time.
Time?—The old ones prayed for the young ones.
- (22) They prayed for Allah to mend their brains, for the twig, the round moon, to speak suddenly in a comma
- (23) And occasionally there would be one who did none of this, the old man Fowzi, for example, Fowzi the fool, who beat everyone at dominoes, insisted he spoke with God as he spoke with goats, and was famous for his laugh.

Poetry Analysis Using TP-CAST

INSTRUCTIONS: Once you have finished reading the text, use this graphic organizer to analyze the poem. All questions should be answered in complete sentences. Refer to your annotations of the poem to guide your analysis of the text.

T	In your own words, explain the meaning of the title before you read the text? Why do you think the author choose this title?
P	What is the best paraphrase of the sentence below? When they arrived at Mecca they would circle the holy places, on foot, many times, they would bend to kiss the earth and return, their lean faces housing mystery.”
C	What is the meaning of the word wistfully as used in line 4 ? What impact does this word have on the reader?
A	What can you infer about the speaker’s tone ? I can infer _____ _____ . When the speaker states, _____ this reveals _____
S	While reading the text, do you notice any shifts in the text? In the text, I noticed a shift when the author states, _____ This change influences the theme because _____ _____ _____ _____
T	The primary theme the author is conveying _____ _____ The author wants the reader to learn _____ . This message is important because _____ . _____

Option #6

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the poem below and use visual annotations to guide your comprehension of the text. **Use the following visual annotations as you read the text:** (2) Vocabulary, (1) Theme, (1) Conflict, (2) Figurative Language, (1) Imagery, (2) Symbol, (1) Question. **After you finish annotating the text, complete the TP-CAST analysis on the back.**

Kojo-I AM BLACK by Gwendolyn Brooks

- (1) According to my Teachers,
I am now an African-American.
- (2) They call me out of my name.
- (3) **BLACK** is an open umbrella.
I am Black and A Black forever.
- (4) I am one of The Blacks.
- (5) We are Here, we are There.
- (6) We occur in Brazil, in Nigeria, Ghana,
in Botswana, Tanzania, in Kenya,
in Russia, Australia, in Haiti, Soweto,
in Grenada, in Cuba, in Panama, Libya
in England and Italy, France.
- (7) We are **graces** in any places.
I am Black and A Black
forever.
- (8) I am other than Hyphenation.
- (9) I say, proudly, MY PEOPLE!
I say, proudly, OUR PEOPLE!
- (10) Our People do not **disdain** to eat yams or melons or grits
or to put peanut butter in stew.
- (11) I am Kojo. In West Afrika Kojo
means Unconquerable. My parents
named me the seventh day from my birth
In Black spirit, Black faith, Black communion.
I am Kojo. I am A Black.
And I Capitalize my name.
- (12) Do not call me out of my name.

Poetry Analysis Using TP-CAST

INSTRUCTIONS: Once you have finished reading the text, use this graphic organizer to analyze the poem. All questions should be answered in complete sentences. Refer to your annotations of the poem to guide your analysis of the text.

T	In your own words, explain the meaning of the title before you read the text? Why do you think the author choose this title?
P	What is the best paraphrase of the sentence below? "I am other than Hyphenation."
C	What is the meaning of the phrase "BLACK is an open umbrella. I am Black and A Black forever" as used in line 3 ? What impact does this phrase have on the reader?
A	What can you infer about the speaker's <i>tone</i> ?
	I can infer _____ _____. When the speaker states, _____ this reveals _____
S	While reading the text, do you notice any shifts in the text?
	In the text, I noticed a <i>shift</i> when the author states, _____ _____ _____. This change <i>influences the theme</i> because _____ _____ _____
T	The <i>primary theme</i> the author is conveying _____ The author wants the reader to learn _____. This message is important because _____ _____

Option #7

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the poem below and use visual annotations to guide your comprehension of the text. **Use the following visual annotations as you read the text:** (2) Vocabulary, (1) Theme, (1) Conflict, (2) Figurative Language, (1) Imagery, (2) Symbol, (1) Question. **After you finish annotating the text, complete the TP-CAST analysis on the back.**

Our Mother Tongue by Jose Rizal

- (1) Truly a people dearly love
- (2) The tongue to them by Heaven sent,
- (3) They'll surely yearn for liberty
- (4) Like a bird above in the **firmament**.
- (5) Because by its language one can judge
- (6) A town, a barrio, and kingdom;
- (7) And like any other created thing
- (8) Every human being loves his freedom.
- (9) One who doesn't love his native tongue,
- (10) Is worse than putrid fish and beast;
- (11) AND like a truly precious thing
- (12) It therefore deserves to be cherished.
- (13) The Tagalog language's akin to Latin,
- (14) To English, Spanish, angelical tongue;
- (15) For God who knows how to look after us
- (16) This language He **bestowed** us upon.
- (17) As others, our language is the same
- (18) With alphabet and letters of its own,
- (19) It was lost because a storm did destroy
- (20) On the lake the bangka 1 in years bygone.

Poetry Analysis Using TP-CAST

INSTRUCTIONS: Once you have finished reading the text, use this graphic organizer to analyze the poem. All questions should be answered in complete sentences. Refer to your annotations of the poem to guide your analysis of the text.

T	In your own words, explain the meaning of the title before you read the text? Why do you think the author choose this title?
P	<p>What is the best paraphrase of the sentence below? “Because by its language one can judge. A town, a barrio, and kingdom; And like any other created thing. Every human being loves his freedom.”</p> <hr/>
C	What is the meaning of the phrase “One who doesn’t love his native tongue, Is worse than putrid fish and beast;” as used in line 9-10 ? What impact does this phrase have on the reader?
A	<p>What can you infer about the speaker’s <i>tone</i>?</p> <p>I can infer _____ _____ . When the speaker states, _____ this reveals _____</p>
S	<p>While reading the text, do you notice any shifts in the text?</p> <p>In the text, I noticed a <i>shift</i> when the author states, _____ This change <i>influences the theme</i> because _____ _____ _____ _____</p>
T	<p>The <i>primary theme</i> the author is conveying _____ _____ The author wants the reader to learn _____. This message is important because _____ _____</p>

Option #8

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the poem below and use visual annotations to guide your comprehension of the text. **Use the following visual annotations as you read the text:** (2) Vocabulary, (1) Theme, Conflict, (2) Figurative Language, (1) Imagery, (2) Symbol, (1) Question. **After you finish annotating the text, complete the TP-CAST analysis on the back.**

Presents from My Aunts in Pakistan by Moniza Alvi

- (1) They sent me a salwar kameez peacock-blue, and another glistening like an orange split open, **embossed** slippers, gold and black points curling.
- (2) Candy-striped glass bangles snapped, drew blood. Like at school, fashions changed in Pakistan –the salwar bottoms were broad and stiff, then narrow.
- (3) My aunts chose an apple-green sari, silver-bordered for my teens.
- (4) I tried each satin-silken top-was alien in the sitting-room. I could never be as lovely as those clothes –I longed for denim and corduroy.
- (5) My costume clung to me and I was **afame**, I couldn't rise up out of its fire, half-English, unlike Aunt Jamila.
- (6) I wanted my parents' camel-skin lamp –switching it on in my bedroom, to consider the cruelty and the transformation from camel to shade, marvel at the colours like stained glass.
- (7) My mother cherished her jewelry –Indian gold, dangling, filigree, But it was stolen from our car. The presents were radiant in my wardrobe.
- (8) My aunts requested cardigans from Marks and Spencers. My salwar kameez didn't impress the schoolfriend who sat on my bed, asked to see my weekend clothes.
- (9) But often I admired the mirror-work, tried to glimpse myself in the miniature glass circles, recall the story how the three of us sailed to England. Prickly heat had me screaming on the way.
- (10) I ended up in a cot. In my English grandmother's dining-room, found myself alone, playing with a tin-boat.
- (11) I pictured my birthplace from fifties' photographs. When I was older there was conflict, a fractured land throbbing through newsprint. Sometimes I saw Lahore-my aunts in shaded rooms,

screened from male visitors, sorting presents, wrapping them in tissue.

(12) Or there were beggars, sweeper-girls and I was there-of no fixed nationality, staring through fretwork at the Shalimar Gardens.

Poetry Analysis Using TP-CAST

INSTRUCTIONS: Once you have finished reading the text, use this graphic organizer to analyze the poem. All questions should be answered in complete sentences. Refer to your annotations of the poem to guide your analysis of the text.

T	In your own words, explain the meaning of the title before you read the text? Why do you think the author choose this title?
P	<p>What is the best paraphrase of the sentence below?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“I wanted my parents’ camel-skin lamp –switching it on in my bedroom, to consider the cruelty and the transformation from camel to shade, marvel at the colours like stained glass.”</p>
C	What is the meaning of the word aflake as used in line 3 ? What impact does this phrase have on the reader?
A	<p>What can you infer about the speaker’s <i>tone</i>?</p> <p>I can infer _____.</p> <p>_____ . When the speaker states, _____ th is reveals</p>
S	<p>While reading the text, do you notice any shifts in the text?</p> <p>In the text, I noticed a <i>shift</i> when the author states, _____</p> <p>This change <i>influences the theme</i> because _____</p>
T	<p>The <i>primary theme</i> the author is conveying _____</p> <p>The author wants the reader to learn _____. This message is important because _____.</p>

Option #9

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the poem below and use visual annotations to guide your comprehension of the text. **Use the following visual annotations as you read the text:** (2) Vocabulary, (1) Theme, (1) Conflict, (2) Figurative Language, (1) Imagery, (2) Symbol, (1) Question. **After you finish annotating the text, complete the TP-CAST analysis on the back.**

America by Walt Whitman

- (1) Centre of equal daughters, equal sons,
- (2) All, all alike endear'd, grown, ungrown, young or old,
- (3) Strong, ample, fair, enduring, capable, rich,
- (4) **Perennial** with the Earth, with Freedom, Law and Love,
- (5) A grand, sane, towering, seated Mother,
- (6) Chair'd in the **adamant** of Time.

Poetry Analysis Using TP-CAST

INSTRUCTIONS: Once you have finished reading the text, use this graphic organizer to analyze the poem. All questions should be answered in complete sentences. Refer to your annotations of the poem to guide your analysis of the text.

T	In your own words, explain the meaning of the title before you read the text? Why do you think the author choose this title?
P	<p>What is the best paraphrase of the sentence below? “Perennial with the Earth, with Freedom, Law and Love.”</p> <hr/>
C	What is the meaning of the phrase, “A grand, sane, towering, seated Mother”, as used in line 5 ? What impact does this phrase have on the reader?
A	<p>What can you infer about the speaker’s <i>tone</i>?</p> <p>I can infer _____ _____. When the speaker states, _____ this reveals _____</p>
S	<p>While reading the text, do you notice any shifts in the text?</p> <p>In the text, I noticed a <i>shift</i> when the author states, _____ _____ _____</p> <p>This change <i>influences the theme</i> because _____ _____</p>
T	<p>The <i>primary theme</i> the author is conveying _____ _____</p> <p>The author wants the reader to learn _____ This message is important because _____ _____</p>

Option #10

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the poem below and use visual annotations to guide your comprehension of the text. **Use the following visual annotations as you read the text:** (2) Vocabulary, (1) Theme, (1) Conflict, (2) Figurative Language, (1) Imagery, (2) Symbol, (1) Question. **After you finish annotating the text, complete the TP-CAST analysis on the back.**

Scars by Truong Tran

(1) my father's body is a map
a **record** of his journey

(2) he carries a bullet
lodged in his left thigh
(3) there is a hollow where it entered
a **protruding** bump where it sleeps
the doctors say it will never awaken

(4) it is the one souvenir he insists on keeping
mother has her own opinions
bố của con điên—your father is crazy

(5) as a child
i wanted a scar just like my father's
bold and appalling a mushroom explosion

(6) that said i too was at war
instead i settled for a grain of rice
(7) a scar so small look closely there
here between the eyes
a bit to the right
there on the bridge of my nose

(8) father says i was too young to remember
it happened while i was sleeping
(9) leaking roof the pounding rain
drop after drop after drop

Poetry Analysis Using TP-CAST

INSTRUCTIONS: Once you have finished reading the text, use this graphic organizer to analyze the poem. All questions should be answered in complete sentences. Refer to your annotations of the poem to guide your analysis of the text.

T	In your own words, explain the meaning of the title before you read the text? Why do you think the author choose this title?
P	<p>What is the best paraphrase of the sentence below?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“my father’s body is a map a record of his journey.”</p>
C	What words help the reader understand the meaning of protruding , as used in line 3 ? What impact does this phrase have on the reader?
A	<p>What can you infer about the speaker’s <i>tone</i>?</p> <p>I can infer _____ _____. When the speaker states, _____ this reveal</p>
S	<p>While reading the text, do you notice any shifts in the text?</p> <p>In the text, I noticed a <i>shift</i> when the author states, _____ _____ _____</p> <p>This change <i>influences the theme</i> because _____ _____ _____</p>
T	<p>The <i>primary theme</i> the author is conveying _____</p> <p>The author wants the reader to learn _____. This message is important because _____</p>

APPENDIX D

POETRY: WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1

INSTRUCTIONS: Use the information below to create an original piece of poetry based on your culture, social, and personal experiences. The poem you will create will be a **free verse poem**. *A free verse poem is a poem that does not have a specific pattern of meter, rhyme, line length, or stanza arrangement.* As you create your poem, it may be beneficial to use the poem you analyzed, your cultural questionnaire, or *content from your own social and personal experiences (language, life situations, media, school activities)* to guide the creation of your poem. Additionally, use the template attached to this handout and include the following:

Figurative Language /Poetic Techniques (Choose 4 figurative language/poetic techniques to incorporate in your poem)

Simile (1)

Metaphor (1)

Personification (1)

Oxymoron (1)

Paradox (1)

Onomatopoeia (1)

Hyperbole (1)

Alliteration (1)

Allusion (1)

Imagery (1)

Idiom (1)

Repetition (1)

** Choose either a simile or metaphor **DO NOT** choose both*

Choose either a paradox or oxymoron **DO NOT choose both*

REMINDERS:

- Use **two vocabulary words**, in the correct context, we have learned this year

- Use **4 of the previously mentioned poetic techniques**

- Present your poem in a **creative format, type your poem, or write your poem** (*creative format should not exceed an 11x17 piece of paper, construction paper, or card stock*)
- Create a poem free of **grammar** and **spelling errors**
- Make sure your poem is **organized** and **follows the portfolio assignment instructions**
- Incorporate content from your own culture, social, and personal experiences (language, life situations, media, school activities) to guide the creation of the poem.
- Consider using your **cultural questionnaire** responses as a springboard for your writing
- Use the *Where I'm From* template or create your own (*must receive instructor approval*)
- Your poem should be between **16-20 lines**

Reflective Questions to consider as you craft your poem:

1. How will you address your cultural, social, and personal experiences in your text?
2. How will you leverage your cultural lens and language to craft your poem?
3. How will you address the historical and contemporary norms of your culture to craft your poem?

Themes (adapted from the cultural questionnaire) Choose from one of the themes or create your own

- Family
- Success
- Education
- Religion
- Customs/Traditions/Rituals
- Cultural Misconceptions
- Language
- Love for culture/identity
- Hair/Dress

Where I'm From Template

I am from Poem (*Use this template to draft your poem and then write a final draft to share on blank paper.*)

I am from _____ (specific ordinary item), from _____ (product name) and _____.

I am from the _____ (home description... adjective, adjective, sensory detail).

I am from the _____ (plant, flower, natural item), the _____ (plant, flower, natural detail)

I am from _____ (family tradition) and _____ (family trait), from _____ (name of

family member) and _____ (another family name) and _____ (family name).

I am from the _____ (description of family tendency) and _____ (another one).

From _____ (something you were told as a child) and _____ (another).

I am from (representation of religion, or lack of it). Further description.

I'm from _____ (place of birth and family ancestry), _____ (two food items representing your family).

From the _____ (specific family story about a specific person and detail), the _____ (another detail, and the _____ (another detail about another family member).

I am from _____ (location of family pictures, mementos, archives and several more lines indicating their worth).

Personal Narrative: WRITING ASSIGNMENT #2

INSTRUCTIONS: Use the information below to create an original personal narrative based on your culture, social, and personal experiences. The narrative you will create will be a **personal narrative**. *A personal narrative is a personal account that offers details, analysis, and opinion from a particular happening or event experienced by the writer.* As you create your personal narrative, it may be beneficial to use the fictional or narrative text you read, your cultural questionnaire, or *content from your own social and personal experiences (language, life situations, media, school activities)* to guide the creation of your personal narrative.

REMINDERS:

During Reading:

- Use the following visual annotations as you read: (2) Vocabulary, (1) Figurative Language, (5) Plot, (2) Conflict, (3) Author's Craft

After Reading:

- Use the Freytag Plot Diagram organizer to create your personal narrative
- Use a figurative language, dialogue, problem, or descriptive hook to begin your personal narrative
- “Show” **DO NOT** “Tell” in your writing
- Choose either **non-linear, in media res, or linear plot development**
- Make sure you use **dialogue** and **figurative language**
- Use **two vocabulary words**, in the correct context, we have learned this year
- Create a narrative free of **grammar** and **spelling errors**
- Make sure your poem is **organized** and **follows the portfolio assignment instructions**
- Incorporate content from your own culture, social, and personal experiences (language, life situations, media, school activities) to guide the creation of the poem.
- Consider using your **cultural questionnaire** responses as a springboard for your writing
- Your narrative should be no more than 26 lines (*26-line template will be used for the final*)
- Choose your own theme for your text

Reflective Questions to consider as you craft your personal narrative:

1. How will you address your cultural, social, and personal experiences in your text?
2. How will you leverage your cultural lens and language to craft your personal narrative?
3. How will you address the historical and contemporary norms of your culture to craft your personal narrative?

Personal Narrative Drafting

On the opposite side of this handout, use the **Freytag Plot Diagram** to complete the rough draft of your personal narrative. Use the information below as a guide to craft your essay.

Rough Draft Information:

- Choose either **non-linear**, **in media res**, or **linear plot development** (*circle the one you will use*)
- Use a **figurative language**, **dialogue**, **problem**, or **descriptive hook** to begin your personal narrative (*circle the one you will use, and create it in the box below*)

Type	Powerful Leads
Figurative Language Hook Uses figurative language to engage the reader.	The squirrel was fast as lightning as he shimmied up the tree.
Dialogue Hook Uses dialogue from a character or narrator to engage the reader.	“If I make this choice, I am not sure I can ever go back.”
Problem Hook Information about a problem piques the reader curiosity.	Alone on a dark road, I nervously searched my soggy pockets to discover only one dollar.
Descriptive Hook Gives insight to the setting and character.	Bobbie’s car smelled of fresh espresso, baby magic, and sheer joy.

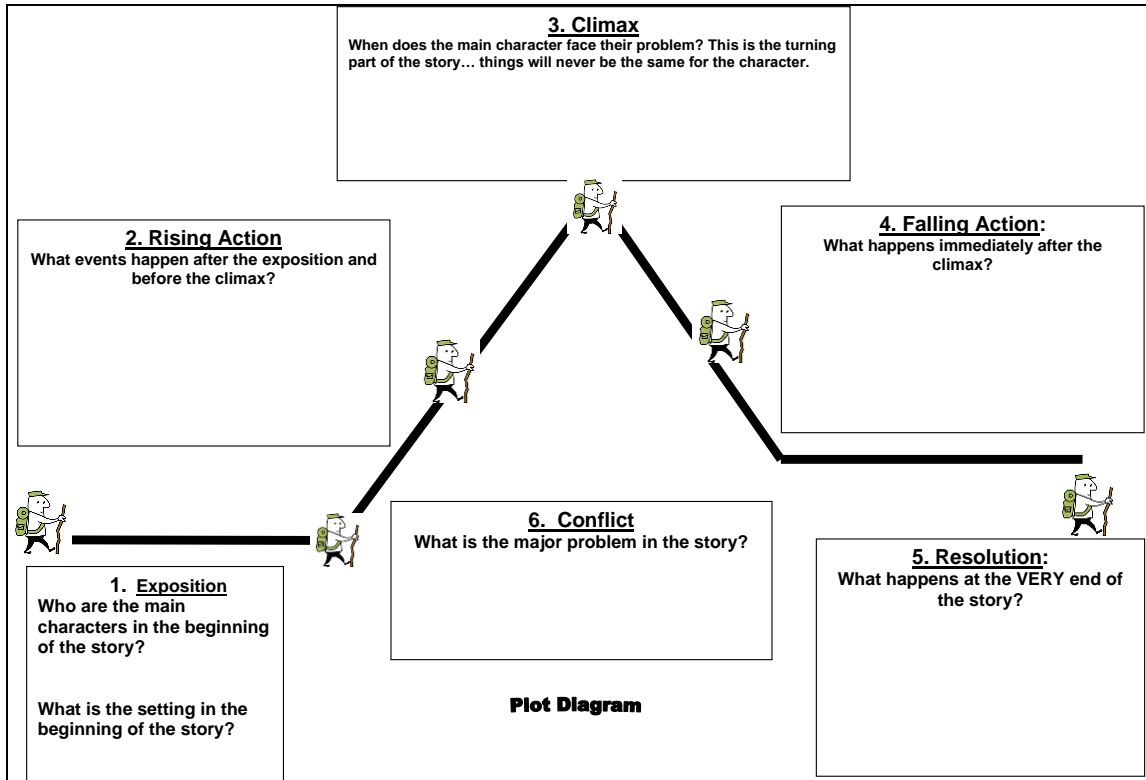
-Write your **hook** in the space below (*3-5 sentences*):

Reflective Questions to consider as you craft your narrative:

1. What is your story?
2. How will you leverage your cultural lens and language to craft your personal narrative?
3. How will you address the historical and contemporary norms of your culture to craft your personal narrative?

Figure D1

Plot Diagram



Note. Planning tool students used to plan their narrative essays.

Expository Essay: WRITING ASSIGNMENT #3

INSTRUCTIONS: Use the information below to create an expository essay based on your culture, social, and personal experiences. As you create your expository essay, it may be beneficial to use the expository text you read, your cultural questionnaire, or *content from your own social and personal experiences (language, life situations, media, school activities) to guide the creation of your expository essay.*

REMINDERS:

During Reading:

- Use the following visual annotations as you read: (2) vocabulary, (1) thesis, (3) topic sentence, (4) supporting details, (1) text structure, (3) author's craft
- Answer the following questions, if you are watching a visual media/multimodal text. Make sure you respond in complete sentences (5-7 sentences)

Visual Media Guiding Questions

Why was this made?

Who is the target audience (and how do you know)?

Who might benefit from this message? Who might be harmed by it?

Why might this message matter to me?

What is this about (and what makes you think that)?

What ideas, values, information, and/or points of view are overt? Implied?

What is left out of this message that might be important to know?

How credible is this (and what makes you think that)?

(questions adapted from National Association for Media Literacy Education)

After Reading:

- Use the Longhorn Box to complete the rough draft of your expository essay
- Use a rhetorical question, personal connection, metaphorical, or philosophical lead to engage your audience
- Make sure your expository essay has a **thesis** and **strong organizational pattern**
- Make sure your expository essay uses **effective transitions**
- Make sure your expository essay shows your **command of the English language**
- Use **two vocabulary words**, in the correct context, we have learned this year
- Incorporate content from your own culture, social, and personal experiences (language, life situations, media, school activities) to guide the creation of the poem.
- Consider using your **cultural questionnaire** responses as a springboard for your writing
- Your expository essay should be no more than 26 lines (*26-line template will be used for the final*)

Reflective Questions to consider as you craft your expository text:

1. How will you address your cultural, social, and personal experiences in your text?
2. How will you leverage your cultural lens and language to craft your expository text?
3. How will you address the historical and contemporary norms of your culture to craft your expository text?

**Written Composition: Expository
English I Prompt**

Step 1:

You are going to create your own expository prompt based on your own cultural, social, and personal experiences. In the box below select a broad quote that aligns with the topic that you are going to write about. Consider completing the following steps in reverse order (3,2,1).

Quote:

Step 2:

Create a critical thought question. Think carefully about the following question/statement.

Step 3:

Create your own prompt.

Be sure to –

- clearly state your thesis
- organize and develop your ideas effectively
- choose your words carefully
- edit your writing for grammar, mechanics, and spelling

**Written Composition: Expository
English I Prompt-Exemplar**

Step 1:

You are going to create your own expository prompt based on your own cultural, social, and personal experiences. *In the box below select a broad quote that aligns with the topic that you are going to write about. Consider completing the following steps in reverse order (3,2,1).*

Quote: “Music moves society more than most people realize. In my opinion, it’s a soft manipulator of influence and change.”- Kim Harrison

Step 2:

Create a critical thought question. Think carefully about the following question.

In what ways, does music impact society?

Step 3:

Create your own prompt.

Write an essay explaining how music can influence our society.

Be sure to –

- clearly state your thesis
- organize and develop your ideas effectively
- choose your words carefully
- edit your writing for grammar, mechanics, and spelling

Figure D2

Longhorn Box Side 1

INSTRUCTIONS: Use the graphic organizer on the back side of this handout to write the rough draft of your expository essay. Additionally, read the tips below to aid you in completing your essay. Consider using 2-3 of the vocabulary words we have learned strategically in your writing.	
TIP 1	Begin your paper with an opening sentence or hook about your topic that catches the reader's attention. You are going to use a personal connection lead to begin your expository essay. Make sure that your introduction contains your thesis/controlling idea . A thesis is your position+ supporting reasons . POSITION + SUPPORTING REASON= THESIS
TIP 2	After you write your introduction, you need to write your 1st supporting paragraph with commentary/evidence to support your thesis . Your supporting paragraph should begin with a topic sentence and then you should use commentary/evidence to support your 1st supporting reason .
TIP 3	After you write your 1st supporting paragraph , you need to write your 2nd supporting paragraph with commentary/evidence to support your thesis . Your supporting paragraph should begin with a topic sentence and then you should use commentary/evidence to support your 2nd supporting reason .
TIP 4	The last step is to write your conclusion . Provide the reader an overview of the main ideas you discussed , but also be sure to highlight the progression of your thought process, offer solutions, and next steps .

Note. Front side of the graphic organizer that provides students instructions on completing an expository essay.

APPENDIX E

STAAR Writing Rubric

Personal Narrative – Student Friendly Rubric					
		Score Point 4 <i>Accomplished</i> 98/95/92	Score Point 3 <i>Satisfactory</i> 88/85/82	Score Point 2 <i>Basic</i> 78/75/72	Score Point 1 <i>Very Limited</i> 68/65/62
Organization \ Progression	Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Narrative (structure) is organized and appropriate for the purpose and demands of writing prompt (to entertain.) Paper is well planned. Skillfully shares experience by effectively using narrative craft/techniques so that the reader becomes a part of the experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Narrative (structure) is mostly organized and appropriate for the purpose and demands of writing prompt (to entertain.) Paper is generally planned. Shares experience by using narrative craft/techniques so that the reader is engaged. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Narrative (structure) is struggling to be organized and not always appropriate for the purpose and demands of writing prompt (to entertain.) Paper is somewhat planned. Shares some sense of the experience with the reader by using narrative craft/techniques. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Narrative (structure) is not organized and not appropriate for the purpose and demands of writing prompt (to entertain.) Paper is not planned. The experience is not conveyed to the reader due to lack of narrative craft/techniques.
	Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All details support the narrative. Narrow focus on a personal experience enhances writing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most details support the narrative. Generally maintains narrow focus on a personal experience throughout paper. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some details do not support the narrative. Difficulty maintaining focus on a specific personal experience throughout paper. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many of the details do not add to the narrative. Lack of focus on a specific personal experience.
	Progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meaningful transitions. Strong sentence-to-sentence connections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meaningful transitions for the most part. Sentence-to-sentence connections are sufficient to support the flow of the narrative. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weak transitions. Sentence-to-sentence connections are weak and do not support the flow of the narrative. Wordiness or repetition sometimes disrupts the flow of the narrative. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lacking transitions. Sentence-to-sentence connections are not evident and makes the narrative hard to follow or unclear. Wordiness or repetition causes serious disruptions in

					the flow of the narrative.
Development of Ideas		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes specific details that add to the narrative. The writer establishes a thoughtful and engaging realistic situation for the reader. Gives a good sense of why the experience was important to the writer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the most part, personal details add to the narrative. The writer establishes a realistic situation for the reader. Gives some sense of why the experience was important to the writer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal details or details are not specific enough. Narrative reflects little or no thoughtfulness. Gives little sense of why the experience is important to the writer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Details are weak, inappropriate, unclear or do not support the narrative. Narrative is confusing due to unclear details. Writer fails to establish a realistic situation.
Use of Language/Conventions	Word Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The writer chooses vivid words and phrases that make the narrative come alive and tell its importance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The writer generally chooses specific words and phrases that make the narrative clear. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The writer chooses basic words that limit the narrative from being clear. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The writer chooses words that get in the way of the narrative from being clear.
	Sentence Fluency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The writer uses a variety of sentences and every sentence is important to the message. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most of the writer's sentences are varied and are important to the message, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The story has some simple, short sentences, fragments or run-ons that limit the narrative from making sense. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The narrative has too many simple, short sentences, fragments or run-ons so that the narrative does not make sense.
	Conventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The writer consistently uses correct spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, and verb tense to strengthen the narrative. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The writer adequately uses correct spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, and verb tense to strengthen the narrative. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The writer only partially uses correct spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, and verb tense disrupting the flow of the narrative. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The writer has many spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar and verb tense mistakes disrupting the flow of the narrative and interferes with meaning.

STAAR Writing Rubric

Expository Writing – Student Friendly Rubric					
		Score Point 4 <i>Accomplished</i> 98/95/92	Score Point 3 <i>Satisfactory</i> 88/85/82	Score Point 2 <i>Basic</i> 78/75/72	Score Point 1 <i>Very Limited</i> 68/65/62
Organization \ Progression	Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction and conclusion support the central idea. • Organizes information in a structure appropriate for expository writing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction & conclusion, for the most part, support the central idea. • Organizes information, for the most part, in a structure appropriate for expository writing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction and conclusion, somewhat, support the central idea. • Organizes information, somewhat, in a structure appropriate for expository writing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction & conclusion are minimal and don't support central idea. • Information is organized inappropriately or is not evident for expository writing.
	Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer has a clear central idea. • All ideas strongly relate to the central idea and keep the paper focused, specific to the prompt (stays on topic.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer has a clear central idea. • Most ideas strongly relate to the central idea and generally keep the paper focused, specific to the prompt (stays on topic.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer has a weak or unclear central idea. • Most ideas generally relate to the topic specified in the prompt but adding irrelevant information interferes with the focus of the essay. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The central idea is missing, unclear, or does not make sense. • Even though most ideas generally relate to the topic, the essay is hard to follow because it has extra information and/or shifts from one idea to another (fails to keep focused.)
	Progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningful transitions. • Strong sentence-to- sentence connections. • Paper is controlled and flows smoothly. • Ideas are organized logically. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient meaningful transitions. • Sentence-to- sentence connections are sufficient to support the flow of the essay. • Ideas are generally logical and controlled. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wordiness or repetition disrupts the flow of the essay. • Weak transitions. • Sentence-to- sentence connections are weak and do not support the flow of the essay. • Ideas are not always logical and controlled. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wordiness or repetition causes serious disruptions in the flow of the essay. • Ideas are random. • Lacking transitions. • Serious disruptions in flow of essay.

Development of Ideas		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples and details are very clear, well chosen. • Details support the central idea and add depth to the essay. • Essay is thoughtful and engaging. • Thorough understanding of the writing task. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples and details are satisfactory. • Details support the central idea and add some depth to the essay. • Essay has original ideas and reflects some thoughtfulness. • Good understanding of the writing task. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples and details aren't always appropriate. • Details don't really support the central idea and are surface-level. • Essay reflects little or no thoughtfulness. • Writer's response to the prompt follows a specified pattern (formulaic.) • Limited understanding of the writing task. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples and details are weak, inappropriate, unclear, or incomplete in the essay. • Response to the prompt is unclear or weakly linked. • The writer doesn't understand expository writing.
		Use of Language / Conventions			
	Word Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word choice is clear and concise. • Effective word choice enhances the essay. • Maintains a tone appropriate to expository writing. • Keen awareness of expository purpose (to explain.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word choice is mostly clear and specific. • Generally effective word choice assists the essay. • Reflects an awareness of the tone appropriate to expository writing. • General awareness of expository purpose (to explain.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word choice may be general or imprecise. • Word choice limits the essay. • Tone is not appropriate to expository writing. • Reflects a basic awareness of the expository purpose (to explain.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word choice may be vague and confusing. • Word choice takes away from the essay. • Tone is not established. • Reflects little or no awareness of the expository purpose (to explain.)
	Sentence Fluency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentences are purposeful, varied, and well controlled, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentences are varied and adequately controlled, for the most part. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentences are awkward and somewhat controlled. (Does every sentence have a purpose? Are my sentences in the best place, right order? Does my writing seem choppy?) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentences are simplistic, awkward, or uncontrolled, significantly limiting the effectiveness of the essay.
	Conventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writer shows consistent command of grammar. • Minor punctuation or spelling mistakes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writer shows occasional grammar mistakes. • Occasional punctuation or spelling mistakes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writer makes many mistakes the 4th grade students should not be making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writer makes many grammar, punctuation, or spelling mistakes which makes the writing difficult to read and understand.

APPENDIX F

In Vivo Codes

Category: Environment (15)

“comfortable”, “bland”, “calming”, “relaxing”, “calm, collective, relaxing”, “more calm less pressure”, “very peaceful”, “enjoyable”, “clear and enjoyable”, “kind of bland”, “mostly positive”, “very fun”, “relaxing”, “enjoyable”, “enjoyed writing and learning”

Category: Effective Pedagogy (20)

“longhorn box”, “peer evaluations”, “peer edited”, “increase my vocabulary use”, “constructive criticism”, “different maps to help us plan our writing”, “thinking bubbles”, “interactive activities”, “based on learning style”, “game, poster, or project”, “reading passage”, “chapter books”, “tutorial videos”, “work in groups”, “taught different types of stories”, “color coded highlighting”, “read twice, mark the text, and say where I got my information from”, “sentence types, punctuation, grammar”, “foldable, journals, and notes to learn and study”, “we had strategies on editing, revising”

Category: Ineffective Pedagogy (17)

“experience was weak and could have been improved”, “writing prompts were often given with the format our writings should be submitted”, “basic strategies”, “simple strategies”, “less real-world”, “more kid topics”, “lot of practice work”, “past STAAR topics”, “practice test”, “weren’t to my interest”, “subjects are boring”, “we were not taught different writing skills”, “we sort of were expected to writing well”, “very little writing classes or education in writing”, “not a very learning it was more worksheets”, “review notes from elementary”, “we were never encouraged to find our own writing”

Category: Benefits of Culturally Relevant Writing Instruction (31)

“Free to write what was on my mind”, “I can proudly say that all of the products created through the assignment are my masterpieces”, “The feedback form also helped me understand that I should go a little more in depth before providing my examples that support my hook and thesis”, “The instructions were straight to the point and there seemed to be no confusion”, “freedom part of the project”, “I liked the ability to express myself”, “made my think about my culture and what it means to me”, “very creative”, “me and my peers were able to write about something we are passionate about”, “The author should be passionate about what they are writing”, “receive criticism and feedback”, “the thought that classmates assisted us as well, was also a leading factor in my confidence”, “the instructions made it easier for me because it gave me specific

things to do”, “taught us how to think outside the box”, “I was able to learn more about my culture”, “I could express things that I personally never talk about or things that need to be discussed”, “clear and easy to follow”, “opened my eyes to my weakness in writing”, “instructions/process helped me to write”, “helped expand ideas”, “I learned about myself”, “I learned that know very little from where I came from but I know myself”, “The instruction made me feel more confident”, “with the first two writing assignments templates were provided. The template helped construct the writing to where it made sense”, “articles provided examples”, “it has gotten me to dig deep into my culture and the past of my ancestor’s way of life”, “I love writing about topics that I find interesting. I succeeded in doing so with this unit”, “I am able to express my beliefs and opinions though writing”, “journey through myself”, “I found it insightful in seeing who I am and how I feel and how I perceive the world”

Category: Impediments of Writing Instruction (13)

“it felt rushed”, “line limit” “I did not get to put everything I wanted into it”, “The instructions made me a limited writer sining me down to things I don’t want to talk about”, “feel tired and stress”, “The instructions didn’t really help as much either so it made me frustrated”, “I felt like there was a lot of assignments and not a lot of time to work on what need to improve our writing”, “the whole writing unit was boring and unnecessary”, “waste of time”, “first a little annoyed because I felt like I did not need help”, “just boring to me”, “The last writing unit forced me to write about my dad and that’s kind of a sore topic”, “The instructions made me a limited writer limiting me down to things I don’t want to talk about”, “slightly disappointing-writing has not severely shifted”

APPENDIX G

Table G1

Participant Pseudonyms

Pseudonym	Gender	Ethnicity
Juan	M	Hispanic
Matt	M	White
Janice	F	African American
Dennis	M	Asian
Jorge	M	Hispanic
Lourdes	F	Hispanic
Abigail	F	White
Nkechi	F	African
James	M	African American
Cathy	F	Asian
Michael	M	African American
Sandra	F	African
Edward	M	African American
Robert	M	African
Shanice	F	African American
Karla	F	African American
Sherry	F	African American

Table G1 (continued).

Pseudonym	Gender	Ethnicity
Danny	M	White
Mary	F	African American
Cynthia	F	African American
Ashley	F	African American
Donte	M	African American
Madison	F	African American
Jackson	M	African American
April	F	Asian
Arianna	F	African American
Angelica	F	Hispanic
Tasha	F	African American
Chantal	F	African American
Shelia	F	Two or More Races
Maria	F	Two or More Races
Gabby	F	Hispanic
Miriam	F	African American
Harriet	F	African
Max	M	African American