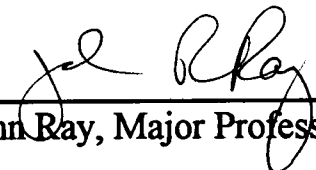
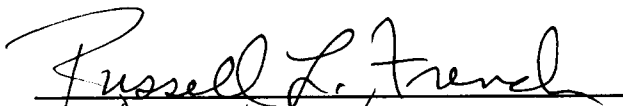
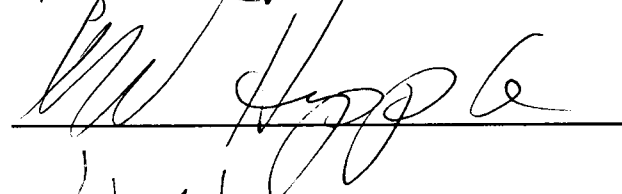
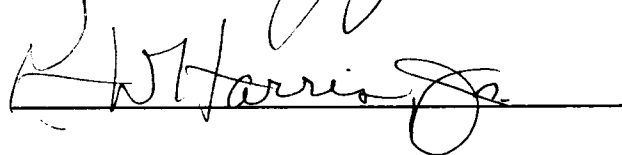


To the Graduate Council:


I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Patrick Lannom White entitled "An Examination of the Relationships Among the English Curriculum Guide, English Instruction, and Student Performance on the 1996 T-CAP Writing Assessment of the Middle Schools of Rutherford County." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education, with a major in Curriculum and Instruction.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
John Ray, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation  
and recommend its acceptance:

  
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Accepted for the Council:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Associate Vice Chancellor and  
Dean of The Graduate School

AN EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIPS  
AMONG THE ENGLISH CURRICULUM GUIDE, ENGLISH  
INSTRUCTION, AND STUDENT PERFORMANCE ON THE  
1996 T-CAP WRITING ASSESSMENT OF THE MIDDLE  
SCHOOLS OF RUTHERFORD COUNTY

A Dissertation  
Presented for the  
Doctor of Education  
Degree  
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Patrick Lannom White  
December 1996

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents

Ralph L. White

and

Graciela White

for their encouragement and support throughout the years.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A special note of appreciation is due to the many people who have contributed to the completion of this dissertation. Gratitude is expressed to the members of my committee for their invaluable assistance and recommendations: Dr. George Harris, Dr. Theodore Hipple, Dr. Russell French, and Dr. John Ray.

I greatly appreciate the support and help of my parents, Ralph and Graciela White and also my sister Lea White, who was always encouraging.

Most of all, I give thanks to the Lord, from whom all achievements are possible.

## **Abstract**

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationships of the curriculum objectives, English instruction, and student outcomes in composition of the middle school English curriculum of Rutherford County Schools in Tennessee. The methods and procedures were divided into three stages: (1) an analysis of the English curriculum guide; (2) an analysis of the English instruction; and (3) an analysis of student outcomes in response to the curriculum and its instruction.

In the first stage, the English curriculum guide was examined to identify the degree to which writing objectives existed for instruction. In the second stage, the English instruction was examined to identify its effectiveness in the teaching of writing. This was achieved through the use of a survey which measured the frequency of effective writing strategies used in the classroom. In the third stage, the level of student proficiency in composition was examined. This was achieved through the use of the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program Writing Test.

The findings of the study revealed the following: (1) the English curriculum guide contained a small number of writing objectives, unnecessary repetition, and ambiguity; (2) the majority of teachers did not frequently use journal writing, timed-writing exercises, or writing workshops in their instruction; and (3) 55.2%

of the students in the study exhibited deficient writing skills in the state assessment.

The conclusions of the study indicate that the lack of effectiveness of the English instruction and student outcomes may be due in part to limitations of the curriculum guides. Furthermore, teachers may not utilize in their instruction the elements found in the state assessment. Thus, a lack of alignment may exist among the curriculum objectives, instruction, and assessment.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### I. OVERVIEW

"The English language arts are concerned with communication, or with the receiving and expression of ideas" (Olsen, 1962, p. 302). Vital to the expression of ideas is the ability to write proficiently. Students need to write for many purposes, "both to convey facts and related ideas and to express their own creative imagination" (Strickland, 1960, p. 334). Because writing is such an important skill, English teachers are responsible for the teaching of proficient writing skills.

Over the last decade, the business sector and results of college entrance exams have indicated that many students leave our public schools with poor writing skills (Flowers, 1995). In response to these concerns, the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (T-CAP) Writing Test was developed. First piloted in 1991 and then implemented statewide in October of 1994, the findings of the assessment confirmed the growing concerns of the state--a majority of students lack proficient writing skills.

The 1994 T-CAP Writing Assessment tested only grades four, eight, and eleven. Of these 161,680 students, 88% scored in the deficient range. Of the 56,129 eighth graders tested, 86% were found

to demonstrate deficient writing skills (Staff, 1996). Rutherford County Schools were no exception, with 85% of their middle school students scoring in the deficient range.

The alarming results of the T-CAP Writing Test signaled to middle school English teachers in Rutherford County that their curriculum and instruction may lack the necessary focus on effective teaching of writing. Thus, a need existed to examine the middle school English curriculum of Rutherford County Schools. This examination included the relationships of the curriculum objectives, the English instruction, and student outcomes of the curriculum.

In examining the English instruction, a standard was needed to measure its effectiveness. However, this raises the issue of defining "effectiveness." During the 1970s through the late 1980s, much research was conducted to define teacher effectiveness and identify those behaviors that teachers should exhibit to bring forth successful student outcomes. The following is a description of common characteristics and behaviors found in effective teaching, according to the research. These are summarized in more detail in Chapter 2, "Review of Related Literature."

### **High Expectations**

Teacher expectations greatly determine how effectively students learn. These expectations are defined as "inferences that teachers make about the future academic achievement of students and about the types of classroom assignments that students need, given their abilities" (Good & Weinstein, 1986, p. 64). Teachers can

improve the effectiveness of learning by raising their expectations of students (Good & Weinstein, 1986).

### **Time On-Task**

Research on effective teaching indicates that students learn more effectively when time is spent on-task. "Low-achieving junior high school students have difficulty keeping their attention on one activity for an entire period" (Stallings, 1986, p. 21). Thus, effectiveness of learning can be increased when the teacher varies instruction and keeps the students on-task.

### **Individualized Instruction**

Effective teaching requires the teacher to spend extra time giving individualized instruction to students to ensure that all students learn the prescribed objectives. In Brophy and Evertson's study (1976), teachers who were found to be effective "made it their business to see that the students learned, regardless of how much time or effort this might involve" (p. 43).

### **Effective Classroom Management**

Classroom management is defined as "planning and conducting activities in an orderly fashion; keeping students actively engaged in lessons and seatwork activities; and minimizing disruptions and discipline problems" (Brophy & Evertson, 1976, p. 51). Teachers who have effective classroom management skills (i.e., the ability to reduce the frequency of disruptions and discipline problems) cause their students to learn more effectively (Brophy & Evertson, 1976).

These aforementioned criteria identified by the research are the most vital elements of overall effective teaching. Additional criteria exist for successful instruction, particularly in the instruction of writing. For English teachers to achieve positive results in student performance of writing, the following methods should be employed, according to the research:

### **Prewriting**

In the first stage of writing, students should plan the direction of the composition. This includes writing any possible ideas to use in the text. Methods to stimulate the mind for creativity include brainstorming, freewriting, listing, diagramming, and outlining (Elbow, 1973; Langan, 1993; Lindemann, 1987; Murray; 1979). The prewriting stage structures the organization of the composition.

### **Writing**

For an effective flow of ideas, the student should be taught the basics of paragraph writing. These include making a point, supporting with evidence, and organizing the evidence (Hairston, 1986). In addition, students can improve syntax and mechanics through the use of sentence combining (Lindemann, 1987) and cumulative sentences (Christensen, 1978).

### **Revision**

The teaching of revision is absolutely necessary for proficient writing (Connors & Glenn, 1992). Teachers can encourage the revision process by conducting writing workshops (Hairston, 1986; Lindemann, 1987). Revision requires multiple stages, each of which

addresses a different element to modify (e.g., content, organization, arrangement of sentences, mechanics, and spelling) (Hairston, 1986).

## **II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

A majority of students in Tennessee have been determined to lack proficient writing skills. Therefore, it is necessary to determine the effectiveness of the English curricula within our schools. This requires an examination of the relationships of the curriculum objectives, the English instruction, and student outcomes of the curriculum to identify the overall success of the program to teach proficient writing skills.

The study should provide a knowledge base to address the current problem of deficient writing skills demonstrated by students.

## **III. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationships of the English curriculum objectives, English instruction, and student outcomes in composition of the middle school English curriculum of Rutherford County Schools in Tennessee. The T-CAP Writing Assessment administered by the State Testing and Evaluation Center (STEC) in 1994 and 1996 was directed only at the eighth grade on the middle school level. However, the present study included an examination of the seventh and eighth grades.

The following study questions were addressed:

1. To what degree does the English curriculum guide possess writing objectives?
2. To what degree does the English instruction reflect the criteria for overall effective teaching?
3. To what degree does the English instruction reflect the criteria for effective writing instruction?
4. To what degree do students demonstrate proficient writing skills?

#### **IV. BACKGROUND**

Rutherford County Schools is located in Middle Tennessee, with its central office in Murfreesboro. Two middle schools are present in the system: Central Middle School and Smyrna Middle School. The following are characteristics describing the background of Central Middle School:

1. Setting: Suburban
2. Student Population: approximately 1475
3. Ethnicity of Students: 70% Caucasian, 26% African-American, 3% Asian, and 1% Other
4. Socioeconomic Status of Students: diverse (lower, middle, and upper-class)
5. Grade Structure: 5 through 8

6. Organization: Eight mini-schools exist within the school. Each consists of approximately 150 students. Each mini-school contains five content teachers (English, math, reading, life science, and U.S. History).
7. Average Teacher / Student Ratio: 30:1
8. Number of English Teachers: 8

The following are characteristics describing the background of Smyrna Middle School:

1. Setting: Suburban
2. Student Population: approximately 950
3. Ethnicity of Students: 91% Caucasian, 7% African-American, 1% Asian, 1% Other.
4. Socioeconomic Status of Students: lower middle-class
5. Grade Structure: 7 and 8
6. Organization: Six mini-schools exist within the school. Each consists of approximately 150 students. Each mini-school contains five content teachers (English, math, reading, life science, and U.S. History).
7. Average Teacher / Student Ratio: 32:1
8. Number of English Teachers: 12

## V. DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. Effectiveness is defined as the ability of the program to teach proficient writing skills to the student population.

2. Proficient writing skills are the scores of 4 or higher on a holistic writing scale of 1 through 6, as determined by the State Testing and Evaluation Center. The holistic scale is described in detail in Chapter 3 "Methods and Procedures."
3. Objectives are the intents of the daily instruction as set forth in the state curriculum guide and the plans of the classroom teacher.

## **VI. NEED FOR THE STUDY**

According to the Tennessee State Department of Education State Testing and Evaluation Center (1995) , "the ability to communicate effectively in written form is fundamental to one's success in life" (p. 5). Unfortunately, many students obtain a public school education without the ability to write effectively. "The state Board of Education looked at the number of high school college-bound seniors who had to take remedial writing classes, and they realized that we had a problem" (Staff, 1996).

Because the T-CAP Writing Test of 1994 revealed that only 12% of students tested in Tennessee public schools demonstrated proficient writing skills, a need became evident to determine the effectiveness of our English curricula and its subsequent instruction, using the criteria for effective teaching practice.

Since 85% of middle school students in Rutherford County Schools failed to demonstrate proficient writing skills, a case study of

their middle school English curriculum and its instruction was necessary to determine its effectiveness in the teaching or writing.

## **VII. DELIMITATIONS**

The study was limited to a determination of the effectiveness of the seventh and eighth grades of Central Middle School and Smyrna Middle School. The T-CAP Writing Assessment administered in October of 1994 was given to only eighth graders on the middle school level. However, the seventh grade was included in the present study because English instruction in seventh grade affects the assessment performance of eighth grade students.

Although Central Middle School contains grades five through eight, the fifth and sixth grades were not included in the study. This was due to the fact that these lower grades were only in their second year of existence in the school at the time of the study. The 1996 T-CAP writing scores were used as the means to determine the effectiveness of writing instruction, and the eighth graders who produced these scores did not receive instruction from these fifth and sixth grade programs. Therefore, the English curriculum and instruction of the fifth and sixth grades of Central Middle School had no effect on the results of the T-CAP Writing Assessment.

Although language arts instruction also includes the teaching of reading as a separate class, the study did not include an examination of the reading curriculum because the teaching of writing was

determined by the language arts teachers at Central Middle School to be the sole responsibility of the English teachers.

### **VIII. ASSUMPTIONS**

For the purposes of the study, the following assumptions were made:

1. Student outcomes are a direct result of instruction in the classroom.
2. The writing abilities of eighth grade students are affected by the English instruction received in the seventh grade.
3. Teacher responses to survey questions are given in an honest manner.
4. The T-CAP Writing Assessment is a valid means to measuring student proficiency in writing.

### **IX. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

Chapter 1 presented the introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, background, definition of terms, need for the study, delimitations, assumptions, and organization of the study.

Chapter 2 was devoted to the presentation of related literature.

Chapter 3 presented a detailed description of the research methods and procedures.

Chapter 4 contained the data collected during research, with analyses of the data.

Chapter 5 presented the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of the study.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

The present study focused upon an examination of the effectiveness of the middle school English curriculum of Rutherford County Schools. This necessitated a review of the related literature and research on effective teaching, most of which occurred from the 1970s through the late 1980s. Because the present study specifically examined the effectiveness of writing instruction, related literature concerning the teaching of writing was also reviewed. Moreover, literature on effectiveness of curriculum coherence was reviewed.

In this chapter, the following topics are identified and discussed: (1) effective teaching research; (2) writing instruction methodology; (3) theories in writing development; (3) studies in writing performance; and (4) curriculum coherence.

#### **I. EFFECTIVE TEACHING RESEARCH**

Teacher effectiveness is defined as "effectiveness in producing student learning gains" on standardized achievement tests (Brophy & Evertson, 1976, p. 11). Research has attempted to identify the attitudes and behaviors of teachers who have effective outcomes in student performance and thus provide means at which the teaching profession may attain success:

What is needed now are studies that systematically record what teachers do in the classroom and relate these behavioral data to measures of student outcomes. In this way, a data base can be built up specifying the relationships between teacher behavior and student outcomes and providing prescriptive implications for what teachers should do in certain situations (Brophy & Evertson, 1976, p. 9).

Brophy and Evertson (1976) designed their study to identify those teacher initiatives that led to positive student outcomes. They accomplished this by examining 165 teachers in the Austin Independent School District. Teachers chosen for the sample were experienced teachers with records of consistency in effectiveness (i.e., their students consistently scored high on standardized tests). The researchers collected data for two consecutive years by recording teacher-student interaction in the classroom. The findings allowed conclusions to be developed that described criteria for effective teaching. Many studies in effective teaching have used the same methods and procedures to identify prescriptive methods that teachers use to attain proficiency. The following is a description of those behaviors and characteristics determined by the research to lead to positive student outcomes.

### **High Expectations**

#### **Definition**

Research on effective teaching reveals that teacher expectations greatly determine how effectively students learn. These expectations

are defined as "inferences that teachers make about the future academic achievement of students and about the types of classroom assignments that students need, given their abilities" (Good & Weinstein, 1986, p. 64). Teachers who achieve higher student outcomes expect their students to master the content material; as a result, they devote more time to instruction and keep students engaged in learning (Davis & Thomas, 1989).

### Results of Low Expectations

Teachers with low expectations of students have been found to do the following:

1. Use less instructional time and provide fewer opportunities for practice and learning;
2. Interact with students less often;
3. Call on students less often to answer questions;
4. Allow for less wait time for students to answer questions;
5. Allow less time for students to correct mistakes before intervening;
6. Interact with students more privately (Good & Weinstein, 1986).

A further result is the "self-fulfilling prophecy" or "Pygmalion effect." This occurs when teachers communicate low expectations to students, who react with poor performance. The teacher, in turn, continues to maintain low expectations for those students (Rosenthal, 1974). Davis and Thomas (1989) conclude, "Such teacher behaviors and comments

toward low-expectancy students naturally depress student motivation and reduce teaching effectiveness" (p. 127).

### Means of Improving Expectations

Teachers can improve the effectiveness of learning by raising their expectations of students. Techniques for reaching this objective are as follows:

1. Attention should be given to students' ideas and interests;
2. Students should be given an opportunity to assess their own performance;
3. Diversify the methods of evaluation, thus giving students varied means to exhibit newly gained knowledge;
4. Focus on student success at differentiated tasks, giving students praise for even small levels of success (Good & Weinstein, 1986);
5. Interpret poor performance as a need for more instruction, more clarification, and more opportunities for learning (Good, 1983; Good & Weinstein, 1986).

### Summary

"Teachers need to believe in students' ability to learn, strive to find positive ways to encourage student learning, and be sensitive to low expectations that can inhibit student motivation and learning (Good & Weinstein, 1986, p. 82). Brophy and Evertson (1976) agree that high expectations are critical to effective teaching, but point out that the student's socioeconomic status (SES) should be considered in the conveying of expectations. "Successful teachers ... communicated

high expectations, but the successful teachers in high SES schools did so through a critical demandingness, while the successful teachers in low SES schools did so through patience and encouragement" (p. 102). In contrast, Davis and Thomas (1989) contend, "Teachers should look past linguistic deficiencies, student appearance, school location, average school SES level, and similar factors and refuse to adopt the self-fulfilling attitude that 'this kid can't learn'" (p. 128).

### **Positive Attitude**

Teachers in all settings often experience similar problems (e.g., large teacher-student ratio, a wide range of students' abilities, lack of appropriate materials, too little help, and lack of parental concern). According to Brophy and Evertson (1976), effective teachers have the same kinds of problems, but respond to them with behavior designed to overcome them. In contrast, ineffective teachers "rationalize their failures in ways that allowed them to avoid assuming personal responsibility" (p. 40). This characteristic of effective teaching does not in itself guarantee effectiveness, but the teacher with a positive attitude assumes responsibility for all problems in the classroom and takes control to overcome them.

### **Time On-Task**

Research on effective teaching indicates that students learn more effectively when time is spent on-task. "We are now convinced that the mediating link so necessary to consider is a student's active time on-task. If teacher questions, reinforcement, warmth, and clarity are to affect outcomes, they can only do so by engaging and then keeping

the student's attention (Berliner, 1976, p. 10). Davis and Thomas (1989) agree that time spent on-task is essential for effectiveness. "Science has confirmed beyond any reasonable doubt that academic achievement - time on task - is indeed the single most crucial factor contributing to student achievement" (p. 117). However, for students to achieve higher outcomes, *academic learning time* must occur. This is defined as "time engaged with materials or activities related to the outcome measure being used (often an achievement test), during which a student experiences a high success rate" (Davis & Thomas, 1989, p. 117).

As Stallings (1986) states, "low-achieving junior high school students have difficulty keeping their attention on one activity for an entire period" (p. 21). Thus, effectiveness in learning can be increased when the teacher varies instruction. In Stallings' Effective Use of Time Program, variety of instruction could be achieved by including some teacher explanation, some reading, some writing, and some discussion. The recommended percentage of time allocation for teacher behavior is as follows: fifteen percent of time spent on organization (e.g., making assignments), fifty percent of time spent for whole class instruction, and thirty-five percent of time spent on monitoring of student work (Stallings, 1986). Teachers are also encouraged to "...develop clear, firm, consistent expectations for what to do when the assignments are finished" (Stallings, 1986, p. 18). In the research by Stallings, the most critical factor correlated to

achievement was quantity of instruction. When more time was spent covering content material, higher achievement scores resulted.

When teachers allow classtime to be spent off-task, lower student achievement is the result. Factors that are negatively related to achievement include the following:

1. Teacher non-interaction with students;
  2. More teacher time spent getting organized than teaching;
  3. Students offered choices of activities;
  4. Time lost to outside interruptions;
  5. Student time spent on socializing;
  6. Students engaged in seatwork for lengthy periods of time
- (Stallings, 1986).

### **Individualized Instruction**

Effective teaching requires the teacher to spend extra time giving individualized instruction to students to ensure that all students learn the objectives. In Brophy and Evertson's study (1976), teachers who were found to be effective "made it their business to see that the students learned, regardless of how much time or effort this might involve" (p. 43). For slow students, this entailed reteaching and extra practice through personal instruction from the teacher. Rosenshine (1993) identified six functions that teachers can use to achieve effectiveness when teaching slower students new material:

1. Daily review and checking of homework;
2. Presentation;
3. Guided practice;

4. Corrective work and feedback;
5. Independent practice (seatwork);
6. Weekly and monthly reviews (pp. 435-436).

### **Effective Classroom Management**

#### Definition

Classroom management is defined as "planning and conducting activities in an orderly fashion; keeping students actively engaged in lessons and seatwork activities; and minimizing disruptions and discipline problems" (Brophy & Evertson, p. 51). Davis and Thomas (1989) agree that classroom management is "a set of teacher behaviors and activities directed at engaging students in appropriate behavior and minimizing disruptions" (p. 85).

#### Effects

Teachers who have effective classroom management skills (i.e., the ability to reduce the frequency of disruptions and discipline problems) cause their students to learn more effectively (Brophy & Evertson, 1976; Jones & Jones 1986; Sanford, Emmer, & Clements, 1983). "Teachers who have few discipline problems therefore have most of their time available for teaching and are more likely to teach successfully..." (Brophy & Evertson, 1976, p. 54).

#### Criteria

Effective classroom managers have been found to use the following:

1. Smooth flow of lessons with few disruptions;
2. Establishment of automatic mechanisms to provide students

with help during seatwork; for example:

- A. Students designated as peer tutors for others in need of individual assistance;
  - B. Teacher movement around the room to monitor and adjust student work;
  - C. Established times for students to approach the teacher for help;
3. Specific instructions for students to follow after completed work; this will enable students to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate behavior while other students continue their work;
  4. Continual monitoring of student behavior; effective teachers monitor students by moving about the room frequently. This prevents disruptions before they are likely to occur;
  5. Brief transitional periods; when students are between activities, discipline problems are more likely to occur. Therefore, the effective teacher makes these periods as brief as possible;
  6. Brief and general classroom rules that apply to varied situations; effective teachers explain the reasons behind the rules at the beginning of the school year, while allowing students to provide democratic input in the discussion of the rules (Brophy & Evertson, 1976).

## Means to Improve Classroom Management

The following are steps that research has identified as effective for improving management skills:

1. Prevent inappropriate behavior from occurring.
2. When behavior problems occur, address them promptly and unobtrusively before they intensify (Emmer, 1987).

### **Diagnosis and Evaluation**

Effective teachers of students with low socioeconomic status have been discovered to distrust standardized tests as a means to evaluate learning. According to these teachers, students of low SES do not have the reading abilities and test-taking skills needed to perform well on standardized tests. Therefore, these teachers use informal evaluation conducted through observation and monitoring of seatwork (Brophy & Evertson, 1976).

In contrast, effective teachers of students with high SES were discovered to approve of standardized testing. "This attitude probably was appropriate, considering that both the curricula and the tests connected with them were developed with middle-class children in mind, and seemed to work reasonably well with these children" (Brophy & Evertson, 1976, p. 72). As a result, these effective teachers stressed teaching the curriculum and valued testing as an important component of the teaching process.

Effective teachers of most subject areas were discovered to use observation as a means of evaluation more than formal testing. Many teachers took notes on student performance to identify frequency of

errors and kinds of errors each child made. These notes were used to identify patterns in student errors; thus, the effective teacher used these to plan remedial exercises for learning improvement (Brophy & Evertson, 1976).

### **Practice and Feedback**

Effective teachers conduct group instruction by modeling initial demonstrations, followed by student attempts to practice the skill with the monitoring of the teacher. The teacher must circulate around the room to monitor and adjust student progress. It is imperative that he/she gives each student individual feedback on the immediate performance (Brophy & Evertson, 1976).

### **Pacing**

Another characteristic of effective teaching is maintaining a brisk pace (Brophy, 1979; Davis & Thomas, 1989). Instruction that is moved at a good pace enhances student interest and engagement and allows the teacher to cover more content information (Davis & Thomas, 1989). In a study by Barr (1980), the pace of instruction was determined to account for eighty percent of differences in student achievement in basal reading.

Effective teachers can achieve a level of briskness in the pace of instruction by using the following:

1. Beginning and ending class quickly;
2. Using start and stop cues to stay within time targets;
3. Having reviews, activities, assignment materials, and supplies ready when students arrive;

4. Using routines in handling administrative tasks (e.g., roll taking, announcements);
5. Introducing new objectives quickly;
6. Maintaining smooth and rapid transitions;
7. Encouraging students to work at a reasonably brisk pace  
(Davis & Thomas, 1989).

The pace of instruction can also be affected by the socioeconomic status of the children. Teachers of students with high SES should pace lessons briskly. Research reveals that students of high SES respond to new lessons quickly and demonstrate competitiveness in answering questions. In contrast, teachers of students of low SES should teach thoroughly to the point of overlearning, rather than move too fast and cause confusion (Brophy & Evertson, 1976).

Another factor to consider in maintaining pace is the varying abilities of the students. With students of higher ability, a brisker pace with less review and more time devoted to new material can be used. In contrast, students of lower ability require a slower pace, which entails more review, more explanation of new material, more guided practice, and more independent practice (Rosenshine, 1986).

#### **Use of Praise and Criticism**

Students show learning gains when teachers have effectively used praise to reinforce learning. The praise should be specific; the teacher should state in detail the exact behavior that is praiseworthy (Brophy & Evertson, 1976).

### Factors Affecting Praise

The SES of the students affects the need for praise. Students of high SES show higher learning gains when a demanding criticalness is used by the teacher. In contrast, students of low SES demonstrate higher learning gains when praise is used, rather than criticism (Brophy & Evertson, 1976).

### Criticism

In Anderson, Evertson, and Brophy's study (1982) to increase the effectiveness of first-grade reading instruction, the following steps were identified for effective use of criticism:

1. Corrective feedback should be given for incorrect responses with focus on the academic content, rather than on the student.
2. For behavior problems, criticism should be focused on the specific behavior with added suggestions for an acceptable alternative behavior.

### **Class Size**

Research indicates that the student-teacher ratio can affect achievement. A class with fewer students can result in higher student outcomes (Smith & Glass, 1980; Stallings et al., 1977; Walberg, 1985). According to Crawford (1983), smaller class size enables the teacher to cover more curricular objectives, provide more individualized instruction, and increase the difficulty of seatwork.

### **Impediments to Effective Teaching Research**

Berliner (1976) reports that research on teacher effectiveness must be regarded with caution due to problems in instrumentation and

methodology. "When we have finished examining this potpourri of problems, issues, and concerns, we will be ready to begin the scientific study of teaching" (p. 12).

### Instrumentation Problems

"There are serious instrumentation problems connected with both the independent and dependent variables commonly used in research on teacher effectiveness" (Berliner, 1976, p. 5). An example of a dependent variable is the use of standardized tests, which is suspect because such tests do not necessarily reflect what is taught in the classroom. In addition, standardized tests are not always appropriate for bilingual students or low socioeconomic students.

Another dependent variable problem is multivariate outcomes. The uniqueness of the learner is often ignored by effective teaching research. The interests, likes, and dislikes of students can affect outcomes on testing and performance. Furthermore, the students' attitudes toward the teacher and the atmosphere of the classroom can be significant variables. "If researchers in this area do not consider what is learned and what is felt about learning, simultaneously, they will continue to fractionate school learning into pieces that do not resemble the students' view of reality" (Berliner, 1976, p. 6).

An example of an independent variable is stability of teacher behavior. Effective teaching studies attempt to identify teacher behaviors which produce effective student outcomes. When observers enter a classroom to code behavior, the teacher may not reflect his/her typical behavior. Therefore, the actual behaviors relevant to the

students' performance may go undetected. A possible solution to this problem is an increase in the occurrence of observations. "Five one-hour observations of teacher behavior - unusually high for most studies of teaching - may simply not provide all the information an investigator may want" (Berliner, 1976, p. 8).

### Methodological Problems

The background of the students can have a significant effect on levels of achievement. Students of low socioeconomic status and minority students may show little gain in learning, regardless of the efforts of the teacher. In contrast, students of high socioeconomic status may show significant gains in learning, even with the efforts of a poor teacher. Berliner (1976) concludes that "... the problem exists and must be thought about as people naively discuss teacher effectiveness without qualifying what they say by noting the students' background characteristics, particularly socioeconomic status and intelligence" (p. 9).

Further complicating the reliability of the effects of teacher impact is the influence that student background can have on student performance in various subject matter. The influence of the home on reading, social studies, and language arts has been proven to be significant, whereas little influence on the home has been found toward physics, chemistry, French, Spanish, geometry, and trigonometry (Berliner, 1976). Thus, the effects of student outcomes may be dependent upon the influences of the home. "If teaching behavior in natural settings is to be studied in a correlational manner,

it should be studied in those areas of the curriculum where we are most likely to be able to attribute an effect to teachers, after the influences of test unreliability and home background have been removed" (Berliner, 1976, p. 9).

Another methodological problem facing effective teaching research is the use of normative standards which are used to compare student scores on standardized tests. When a sample of teachers' scores are used for the normative standard, these teachers are usually volunteers who are "self-confident, relatively open teachers almost all of whom may be superior to a nonvolunteer sample ... " (Berliner, 1976, p.10). This sets a higher standard than a non-voluntary sample would produce. A possible solution to this problem is to impose criterion-referenced achievement standards for all teachers (Berliner, 1976).

Studies in teacher effectiveness tend to ignore individual differences in students. The prescriptive behaviors found to improve student outcomes may be beneficial for some, but not all, students. "By not focusing on the individual aptitudes, styles, personality, and traits of students, the effects of teachers (and curricula) are masked, thus making it almost impossible to establish empirical relations between teaching behavior and student outcome" (Berliner, 1976, p. 10).

Kennedy and Bush (1976) contend that studies in teacher effectiveness are compromised by problems of definition and operationalism. For example, research has discovered that teachers

can improve student learning through clarity in instruction (Kennedy & Bush, 1976). Unfortunately, the problem lies in providing an operational definition of *clarity*. Researchers can overcome this barrier by identifying the specific behaviors which illustrate the definition:

First, a tentative mapping of the domain ... is necessary. One way of getting such a mapping might be to ask a large number of students to think of their most 'clear' teacher and list some specific behaviors that make that particular teacher 'clear'. Similarly, the same operation can be carried out for the most 'unclear' teacher. Subsequent to obtaining these behaviors, experienced educators can analyze and categorize the results into sets containing well defined, easily observable behaviors (Kennedy & Bush, 1976, p. 16).

## II. WRITING INSTRUCTION METHODOLOGY

A review of the research on writing instruction methodology revealed a variety of strategies that teachers may effectively use in the classroom. Most researchers agreed that no one method of writing instruction is effective for all, but heuristic strategies can offer teachers a basis for guiding students toward effective writing. The most common method incorporates various forms of *prewriting*, *writing*, and *rewriting* (Conners & Glenn, 1992; Hairston, 1986; Langan; 1993; Lindemann, 1987). The following is a description of

recommendations by the researchers on the implementation of these stages.

### **Prewriting**

Prewriting should be required of students, rather than given as an option. Here, students submit evidence of this stage (Connors & Glenn, 1992). Lindemann (1987) adds, "As a rule, the more time students spend on a variety of prewriting techniques, the more successful the paper will be" (p. 75). Prewriting techniques include the following:

#### **Brainstorming**

The student generates ideas and details by asking specific questions about the subject (e.g., what? when? why? how? where? who?) (Langan, 1993). However, guidance is needed to ensure that students generate pertinent information. This can be achieved by the teacher's writing on the board as many useful ideas as students can generate. If students participate in the activity individually, their drafts should be submitted with the completed composition (Lindemann, 1987). Additional questions that teachers can require students to address in brainstorming include the following: "What details seem most forceful? In what ways could the details be grouped? What patterns have emerged in the list? What dimensions of the subject seem to attract the writer's interest? What details must be left out if the first draft is to have unity?" (Lindemann, 1987, p. 78).

## Freewriting

According to Elbow (1981), freewriting is the "...easiest way to get words on paper and the best all-around practice in writing that I know" (p. 13). In this exercise, the student writes without stopping for ten minutes with little concern for spelling, punctuation, erasing mistakes, or finding exact words (Langan, 1993). The goal is the process, not the product (Elbow, 1981).

The idea is to simply write for ten minutes (later on, perhaps fifteen or twenty). Don't stop for anything. Never stop to look back, to cross something out, or to wonder how to spell something. If you can't think of a word or spelling, just use a squiggle or else write, "I can't think of it." If you get stuck, it's fine to write "I can't think of what to say" as many times as you want (Elbow, 1973, p. 3).

Strategies for implementing freewriting in the classroom are as follows:

1. Students write freely for a designated amount of time;
2. Working in pairs, the students discuss the freewriting by answering questions (e.g., What appeared on the page that was unexpected? What idea do you want to develop in the next freewriting?);
3. Students complete a second round of freewriting;
4. Questions are readdressed. The process is repeated six or seven times (Murray, 1979).

The classroom is not the only appropriate setting for freewriting. Elbow (1981) recommends that writers use freewriting whenever the need may exert itself. This may precede a formal writing assignment, or it may be used simply for the purpose of releasing thoughts and feelings. After the exercise, the writer can better understand his/her thoughts by reading the freewriting piece aloud or allowing someone else to read it (if he/she feels comfortable with sharing the writing). The writer may choose to keep the freewriting samples for future use or throw them away. In either case, Elbow (1981) concludes that freewriting is an outlet for releasing emotions to clear the writer's mind.

An additional benefit of freewriting is its production of honest writing, free from pretension (Macrorie, 1980). Lindemann (1987) adds that freewriting helps students "overcome their fear of the blank page and their stifling preoccupation with correctness" (p. 79). She warns teachers not to grade freewriting, as they will become "...no longer free" (p.79).

### Making a List

The student writes as many items as possible about the topic without sorting details or prioritizing. The aim is to generate details and accumulate as much raw material for writing as possible (Langan, 1993).

### Diagramming

This technique is also known as *mapping* or *clustering*. The student uses lines, boxes, arrows, and circles to show relationships

among key words and ideas. This method is especially helpful for students who learn visually (Langan, 1993).

### Preparing an Outline

This technique complements the previous methods of prewriting. The student arranges the items that will illustrate the main points of the composition by placing them in the exact order that will produce optimum effect (Langan, 1993). This tool is also useful in the revision stage by allowing students to discover organizational problems (Lindemann, 1987).

### Journal Writing

Stafford (1985) advocates the use of a journal as a prewriting activity. This allows students to record their thoughts and ideas as a foundation for class discussion and writing assignments. Another use of journal writing is to help students write less apprehensively and thus improve their attitudes toward the writing process (Johnstone, 1994).

When students record their thoughts and feelings in a journal, they experience emotional growth and move toward self-actualization (Rohman, 1965). For this to occur, students should be encouraged to write expressively. As Johnstone (1994) states,

"Expressive writing, it is thought, frees the writer to articulate emotions and encourages the exploration of personal experience; connecting abstract concepts to concrete personal experience improves the writer's understanding of those concepts (p. 18).

An additional benefit of journal writing is an increase in cognitive understanding of learned concepts. This can be achieved when students write for the purpose of thinking through problems or summarizing their learning of course material. Evaluation of such writing need not be evaluated (this allows teachers to assign journal writing often). Thus, the keeping of a journal is an effective learning tool for all classes, and its use is recommended for writing across the curriculum (Johnstone, 1994).

### **Writing**

The writing stage should not be standardized because each student has his/her own drafting habits and behaviors. Students should be asked to pay attention to their drafting styles and keep an inventory. This will give the teacher a reference point to consult when the student has drafting problems (Connors & Glenn, 1992).

#### Use of Titles

A common problem that students encounter in the writing stage is getting started. The teacher can help students initiate the process by requiring them to select a title for their work. As Hairston (1986) states, "A title is, after all, an announcement and a prediction; it raises your readers' expectations and points them in a specific direction. If you keep that title in mind as you write, it will remind you of what you have promised to do and help you to stay on your topic" (p. 42).

#### Sentence Construction

Lindemann (1987) recommends the use of sentence combining as a means of teaching effective writing skills. This is a process in

which students are given two or more sentences and are required to combine them into one sentence, using modifiers, phrases, and clauses. The benefits for the writer are as follows:

1. Increased syntactic fluency;
2. Better understanding of punctuation (e.g., using commas to separate adverbial clauses);
3. Improved understanding of sentence construction without beginning with grammatical terms;
4. Understanding of mechanics and conventions of standard English in the context of writing (as opposed to isolating the concepts);
5. Experience in rewriting sentences to emphasize different ideas;
6. Achievement of sentence variety (Lindemann, 1987).

Strong (1981) further explains the usefulness of sentence combining: "In addition to playing with transformations and making their choices, ...writers also seem to spend considerable time hearing the way sentences fit together" (p. 15).

Another means to teach sentence construction is through the use of cumulative sentences (Christensen, 1978). The teacher gives the students a short sentence with only a subject and verb. Students are required to expand the sentence by adding modifiers, phrases, and clauses of their own. This segment of the exercise should last three to five minutes. The length of the resulting sentence may be too long to hold a central idea; thus, students are then required to edit the sentence

for effectiveness. This technique can be further applied to developing paragraphs and entire compositions (Lindemann, 1987).

### Developing paragraphs

In the writing of paragraphs, Langan (1993) offers instructors four distinct steps for their students to follow:

1. **Make a Point.** The student decides the overall point of the paragraph and describes this in the first sentence, known as the topic sentence. Hairston (1986) states, "Working out such a sentence helps many writers to get started thinking about their topic and planning how they are going to develop it" (p. 43).
2. **Support with Evidence.** The student proves to the reader that his/her argument is sound by supporting the topic sentence with specific evidence, which has the added function of stimulating the reader's attention. The writer should include enough details to fully support the main point.
3. **Organize and Connect the Specific Evidence.** The student can connect the details through the use of time order, emphatic order, and transitions. Time order is a listing of the details as they occur in time. Key words to be used with this technique include "*first, next, after, and later*" (Langan, 1993, p. 73). Emphatic order is an arrangement of details with the most interesting descriptions mentioned last in the composition. Transitions are "...signal words that help the readers follow the direction of the writer's thought. They show the relationship between ideas, connecting one thought with the next"

(Langan, 1993, p. 75). Key words and phrases to be used with this technique include "*therefore, consequently, thus, as a result, for example, for instance, and last of all*" (Langan, 1993, p. 75).

4. Write clear, error-free sentences. The student writes according to the accepted conventions of written English. The most important of these are avoiding sentence fragments and run-on sentences (Langan, 1993).

For the development of paragraphs, Marius(1985) suggests that students write a list of proposed topic sentences for each paragraph. The topic sentence is usually the first in the paragraph; however, it is sometimes listed after a broad, general statement. After choosing the best possible sentence, students will thus be reminded to support that sentence with the subsequent supporting sentences.

Each supporting sentence should be built upon the previous one. "Always look to see if your sentences in a paragraph pick up on an idea mentioned in a previous sentence and develop that idea" (Marius, 1985, p. 56). An effective method to test a paragraph for unity is to remove a sentence and determine whether this disrupts the overall meaning. If the answer is negative, the paragraph lacks unity and needs modification.

Each paragraph should be "...a fairly short block of prose" that contains manageable units (Marius, 1985, p. 49). The purpose of each is to give the reader a mental resting point in order to digest the writer's meaning.

## Overcoming Writer's Block

Students who encounter writer's block, or periods of time when creativity seems difficult, should be allowed incubation time (Hairston, 1986). This allows the subconscious to process information and generate ideas.

After a period of time - it could be hours or days - the subconscious seems to finish the process of sorting, organizing, and making connections, and seems to find the solution or starting point it has been looking for. When it does, the conscious mind can take over again and use its faculties to get on with the work (Hairston, 1986, p. 44).

Lindemann (1987) explains how pauses in the writing process are beneficial. She reports that students interrupt themselves for an average of three to thirty seconds, in which they enable themselves to scan the text for minor alterations or write notes about major changes to be made later. An added function of pausing is to allow time to plan the next thought or idea.

Another technique that instructors can teach students in overcoming stumbling blocks is to write *anything* about the topic on the paper. "If you can't think of anything good, lower your standards and put down something terrible" (Hairston, 1986, p. 47). Of course, in the rewriting stage, the student can revise the writing. An advantage of this approach is "...a sense of accomplishment from seeing the paper grow" (Hairston, 1986, p.48).

## Rewriting

Rewriting, or revision, is more than proofreading for mechanical errors and is vital for effective writing. "All our knowledge about how students most effectively learn to write suggests that revision should be an important component of any writing assignment" (Conners & Glenn, 1992, p. 115). Lindemann (1987) concurs, "...rewriting remains crucial to the composing process, not an afterthought" (p. 172). In the process of revision, students must decide whether the text is suitable to the writer and whether it will make sense to the reader (Lindemann, 1987).

### Focus in Revision

In a study by Sommers (1979), the researcher attempted to identify how student writers varied from experienced writers in the process of revision. After documenting their differences, she concluded that students approached the process with a "thesaurus philosophy of writing," in which the students "...consider the thesaurus a harvest of lexical substitutions and believe that most problems in their essays can be solved by rewording" (p. 381). Using this approach, the students limited their revision to correcting repetition while ignoring restructuring the whole for better communication. In contrast, the experienced writers were more concerned about refining their argument and addressing the reader's understanding. They used several cycles of revision, in which each cycle possessed a different objective. For example, one cycle alone was devoted for editing mechanical mistakes. As Sommers states,

During the first revision cycle, [experienced writers'] attention is primarily directed towards narrowing the topic and delimiting their ideas. At this point, they are not as concerned as they are later about vocabulary and style. The experienced writers explained that they get closer to the meaning by not limiting themselves too early in lexical concerns (p. 386).

### Techniques for Teaching Rewriting

Means to teach revision include the following:

1. Ask students to include multiple drafts when they submit papers;
2. Conduct workshop classes and intervene with students in the revision process (Connors & Glenn, 1992).

### Workshops

To encourage the rewriting process, writing workshops should be used (Hairston, 1986; Lindemann, 1987). The benefits of workshops are as follows:

1. Students can be guided through the three stages of writing;
2. Students are encouraged to share solutions to their writing problems;
3. Workshops provide an opportunity for students to discuss compositions with an audience other than the teacher;
4. Through cooperative work, students gain an understanding that effective writing does not always conform to teacher-imposed standards;
5. The teacher is able to confer with students during the writing

process (Lindemann, 1987).

Means to organize a writing workshop are as follows:

1. Divide the class into groups of two or three students, allowing them to choose their groups. This makes the students more comfortable in sharing their writing;
2. Give the students a clearly defined task (e.g., examine the structure of a single paragraph and revise it together);
3. Encourage discussion. Begin with the writer explaining the strategy of his/her composition. Readers should note strengths and weaknesses, followed by suggestions on how to improve the writing.
4. Monitor the groups to ensure productive work; phrase recommendations constructively (Lindemann, 1987).

Hairston (1986) offers additional rewriting techniques to be used during workshops. He warns that although no one procedure works for all writers, students can benefit from some general strategies: "...writers have different ways of approaching and solving their problems, and someone else's system or strategies may not work for [everyone]. Nevertheless, I believe there are some ...strategies that help them revise efficiently and get maximum results for the amount of time they invest" (p. 159). Linear stages of revision to teach during workshops include the following:

Stage 1. The student should read through the composition mainly for content, organization, and focus while ignoring mistakes in usage or spelling.

Stage 2. The student should look for ways to make the composition more readable and coherent. This includes adding examples, eliminating repetition, and sentence rearranging.

Stage 3. The student should focus on precision of word choice. Modification of verbs and adjectives may be necessary.

Corrections should be made for misspelled words or faulty usage (Hairston, 1986).

In the stage requiring a rearrangement of sentences, Lindemann (1987) advocates the use of sentence combining for this purpose. "Moving through a draft, a few sentences at a time, students can embed one sentence into another, review punctuation, condense piled up prepositional phrases into single modifiers, add adverbs and adjectives, ...weed out unnecessary passive constructions, reorder phrases, and undangle modifiers" (p. 182). Like Hairston, Lindemann (1987) offers a sequence of stages specifically for revision. In each stage, the student should read for a different purpose, outlined as follows:

1. Read for rhetorical purpose and evaluate the relationships established between writer, reader, and subject;
2. Test the overall organization of the discourse, examining its message;
3. Examine paragraph structure;
4. Examine sentence construction and diction;
5. Clean up the surface features, tending to punctuation, mechanics, and spelling. Effective techniques for this purpose

include reading the composition backwards, beginning with the last word or as an alternative, reading the paper aloud to identify awkward sentences.

Although Hairston's and Lindemann's stages vary to some degree, both agree that students should revise repeatedly, with the editing of mechanics and spelling occurring last.

### **III. THEORIES OF WRITING DEVELOPMENT**

Conners and Glenn (1992) state, "Knowledge of the composing process and of the various theories that have been evolved to explain its different aspects is fundamental information for writing teachers..." (p.111). Imperative to effective teaching of writing is an understanding that many methodological processes exist. Selzer (1984) warns writing teachers to offer

...specific planning, invention, and revision tactics during every composing experience - without acknowledging that not every writing task requires the same composing tactics...if teachers will acknowledge a number of overall effective composing styles - as well as operations for performing each composing activity - they will be more likely to produce flexible and resourceful writers (pp. 276-277).

The following is a description of the various theories of writing development:

## **Stage Model Theory**

### Description

The stage model theory divides the writing process into three distinct, linear stages: prewriting, writing, and rewriting. These stages are also known as planning, drafting, and revision (Connors & Glenn, 1992). Prewriting as a theory provides students a model of how good writing develops. As Rohman (1965) states,

A failure to make a proper distinction between 'thinking' and writing has led to a fundamental misconception which undermines so many of our best efforts in teaching writing: if we train students how to recognize an example of good prose (the rhetoric of the finished word), we have given them a basis on which to build their own writing abilities. All we have done, in fact, is to give them standards to judge the goodness or badness of their finished effort... . Unless we can somehow introduce students to the dynamics of creation, we too often simply discourage their hopes of ever writing well at all (pp. 106-107).

### Implementation

The first step in using the stage model of writing is to introduce the model very early in the course. Next, students should be asked to reflect and report on how the stages of prewriting, writing, and rewriting occur in their own writing experiences. The teacher should shape some parts of the course structure around these stages (Connors & Glenn, 1992).

### Criticism of the Stage Model

The stage model of writing, first stressed by Rohman (1965), was widely accepted by teachers, and according to Conners and Glenn (1992), "...through the 1960s and the early 1970s it was taught as *the* model of composing" (p. 113). However, critics of the model contend that its inherent weakness is its restrictive adherence to the linear approach, when the writing process is actually a cyclical process. According to Sommers (1979),

If composing were only such a linear activity, then we should be able to construct a behavioral checklist in which we predict that at a given point a writer should be in the thinking stage of the process, then he/she will gather information, then he/she will write, then he/she will rewrite. With our present state of knowledge, however, we lack a finite set of criteria by which we could judge where one stage of the process begins and the other ends, and it seems neither useful nor accurate to describe composing only as a linear sequence of stages (p. 47).

### **Recursive and Cognitive-Process Theories**

#### Description

Conners and Glenn (1992) define the recursive process of writing as "one with complex recurring sub-processes" (p. 115). Lindemann (1987) states, "The composing process is not a linear sequence of separable stages; prewriting, writing, and rewriting are concurrent activities, repeated over and over again" (p. 174). In contrast to the stage model theory, the writer experiences the various stages of

planning, writing, and revision in a cyclical process. "Writers...stroll up, down, and around a sand dune of composing on which a step forward to revision might leave them two steps back engaged in planning again" (Emig, 1971, p. 84). In Emig's research, in which she observed eight twelfth graders undertake the writing process, the students were asked to verbalize their thoughts as they wrote on various topics, impromptu and planned. Emig kept a written record of the students' writing processes. The results indicated that students have differing mental procedures for writing, a notion that confirms a basic premise of cognitive psychology: "that to understand observable behavior, one must comprehend the mental structures which determine the manifested actions" (Conners & Glenn, 1992, pp. 116-117).

Flower and Hayes (1984) conducted similar research to identify how the mind works during the writing process. Over a two year period, they asked students to think aloud while writing. The researchers tape recorded the verbalizations of the writers, including false starts, fragmentary thoughts, and stray ideas. This offered a "...unique window of the mind and a wealth of unsorted information" (Flower, Hayes, & Swarts, 1984, p. 53). The results were later transcribed and patterns were identified. The researchers then constructed a cognitive process model to explain the workings of the mind during the act of writing.

The model consists of three components: the task environment, the writer's long-term memory, and the writing processes. The entire

model is recursive; thus, the writer may move from one component to the other at any time in the writing process. A description of the model is as follows:

1. The task environment includes "...everything outside the writer's skin that influences the writing" (Flower, 1980, p. 12). Examples are the assignment, the writer's motivation, and the text as it is developed.
2. The writer's long-term memory includes his/her knowledge of the subject, the audience, and previous writing strategies and experiences.
3. The writing processes include planning (generating information, organizing ideas, setting goals), translating ideas into language, and reviewing (evaluating and revising) (Flower, Hayes, & Swarts, 1984).

The significant difference that separates this cognitive-process model from the traditional stage model is its explanation of individual differences.

Flower and Hayes' model can account for the intriguing complexity of a writer's mind engaged in proposing. ...This embedding of one component or sub-component into another distinguishes [their model] from the tidy sequence of stage theory and accounts for the recursive patterns of cognition which Emig observed in her watershed study of the composing process (Conners & Glenn, 1992, p. 131).

Flower and Hayes (1980) concluded that "One way to improve people's writing is to improve the planning process they go through as they write (p. 44).

### Implementation

In applying the recursive or cognitive method in the instruction of writing, the teacher should demonstrate his/her own writing process. Zoellner (1969) advises teachers to simply demonstrate writing by composing aloud on the blackboard and discussing the writing process with the class for fifteen to twenty minutes. Conners and Glenn (1992) offer additional steps:

1. Brainstorm with the students, taking notes on the blackboard.
2. Begin composing, talking through the process and crossing out any mistakes during revision.
3. Take questions, comments, and suggestions from students.

Another technique is to show students a copy of a written piece by the teacher. "To begin, give each student a copy of your draft (which should be a manageable length - two pages maximum). Let your draft reveal your composing process by including your invention methods, your false starts, and your crossed out and revised phrases. Talk about the problems you faced and your success in solving them, and encourage your students to comment on and offer revisions of your writing (Conners & Glenn, 1992, p. 117).

In modeling the writing process for students, the teacher helps them enter the "zone of proximal development," in which students

succeed at imitating the behavior of their instructor. Though they may not be able to perform at the level of the teacher, the student internalizes the learning and can eventually develop toward that level (Vygotsky, 1978).

When students begin writing, teachers should be aware that beginning writers face many obstacles and often do not know which to address first. These problems include spelling, syntax, punctuation, paragraph structure, audience address, order of presentation, example choice, and argument structure. Using the recursive or cognitive model approach, the teacher should encourage students to "...reduce their cognitive loads, to selectively ignore some issues at some points in composing" (Connors & Glenn, 1992, p. 133). Methods to prioritize the tasks involved in writing are as follows:

1. Concentrate on the paramount concerns at hand;
2. Write initially without regard to spelling or grammar. These can be addressed at a later point;
3. Create a network of goals. This should occur before and during writing and include an outline of "...what to say... and deciding on the ways to generate information and to translate these ideas into acceptably written English" (Connors & Glenn, 1992, p. 133).

Another method to teach the cognitive process is to conduct individual conferences with the students and ask open-ended questions which force students to analyze their own writing processes. Here, he/she should be asked to describe how they arrived at details in

the composition. The teacher may suggest that a return to invention (prewriting) may be necessary during the writing and revision stages (Conners & Glenn, 1992). Peterson (1995) suggests that during conferences, the teacher read aloud the student's composition to its author. This method gives the writer "...an idea of how the work sounds in the voice and thoughts of a reader" (Peterson, 1995, p. 22). The teacher should direct questions to the student to force him/her to analyze the writing. Examples include the following:

1. What is the intended thesis?
2. What are the supporting details?
3. What changes have been made since the earlier drafts?
4. What does the writer like best about the work?
5. What questions does the writer have?

The purpose of the writing conference is to give the student direction, encouragement, and motivation. The teacher can achieve this by making any possible positive remarks about each composition (Peterson, 1995).

Writing on personal reflection is an excellent means to have students analyze their writing processes (Conners & Glenn, 1992; Emig, 1971). This prompts students to engage in planning, exploring, and revising (Emig, 1971). Another method to expose students to the various writing styles and processes is to invite guest speakers who are skilled and/or professional writers. As Conners and Glenn (1992) report,

Most college communities are teeming with talented writers -

historians, biologists, poets, journalists, and music theorists - to match any interest. These face-to-face conversations often help students appreciate the labor which engages all writers and the diversity of processes they employ (p. 120).

### **Cognitive Developmental Theory**

#### Description

The cognitive developmental theory of writing attempts to explain *how* students write, rather than how they *should* write. According to the theory, young writers lack the intellectual development to achieve abstract thought. Andrea Lundsford (1979) asserts that beginning writers "...have not attained the level of cognitive development which would allow them to form abstractions" (p. 38). Based on this premise, Flower and Hayes (1979) concluded that such children cannot write with an awareness of audience perspective, a function they labeled "writer-based prose" (p. 19). Thus, a prescriptive model of instruction in which the teacher models writing is ineffective because the students are not at the cognitive stage of the teacher (Connors & Glenn, 1992).

#### Implementation

In order to stimulate the abstract thought process, Lundsford (1979) suggests that teachers conduct active workshops in which students write inductively, rather than listening to lecture where concepts are memorized. To stimulate analytical and synthesizing processes, she recommends sentence combining, essay writing, and workshop discussions. Rose (1983) asserts that mechanical drills of

grammar and rule memorizations are ineffective. Thus, young writers need "...opportunities so they can alter those conceptions for themselves...be ambitious and to err" (p. 128). Connors and Glenn (1992) conclude, "Cognitive researchers have hammered away at the uselessness of mechanical drills of correctness, even though this practice still dominates much of composition instruction" (p. 127).

To help students write with a sense of audience, cognitive theorists recommend the following:

1. Students should read their written work aloud to the class.  
According to Bartholomae (1980), this activity helps students correct their own mistakes.
2. Reflective questions should be asked (e.g., Who is the intended audience? What tone will best affect the audience?)
3. Assign writing tasks with practical purposes and conceivable audiences (Connors & Glenn, 1992).

#### **IV. STUDIES IN WRITING PERFORMANCE**

In the review of literature, the researcher found no studies measuring the overall effectiveness of English curricula in producing efficient writing; however, some formal studies of related areas were located and examined. These studies have in common an analysis of student writing performance in response to specific variables. Although the first two studies discussed are not recent (the Bateman and Zidonis research of 1966 and the Copeland research of 1968), the

findings and conclusions of these studies provide significant insight into the problem of improving students' writing skills.

### **The Bateman and Zidonis Study**

In this study Bateman and Zidonis (1966) measured the difference between two teaching approaches of English by identifying their effects on writing. The samples for the two groups were selected from the ninth grade of the University School of Ohio State University. The students were randomly assigned to two classes. The control group studied the "regular curriculum," in which no rules of transformational grammar were taught. The experimental group received generative (or transformational) instruction of grammar. This entailed an intensive study of the rules of grammar and of well-formed sentences.

Over a two year period, both groups were given a pre-test at the beginning of each school year that measured the effectiveness of their writing skills, followed by a post-test at the end of each school year for the same purpose. The researchers reported that the students who received the transformational grammar instruction (the experimental group) showed higher gains of writing improvement. Their sentences were more structurally complex than those of the control group. Moreover, the experimental group displayed fewer errors in their compositions than those of the control group. The researchers concluded that a knowledge of generative grammar would reduce the occurrence of errors in writing (Bateman & Zidonis, 1966).

## **The Copeland Study**

In a similar study by Copeland (1968), the researcher sought to determine whether a ninth-grade class studying grammar inductively would (1) display as high or higher degree of language achievement as a conventionally taught class and (2) show a measurable transfer of the learned grammatical principles to their writing skills (p. 3). The researcher tested the hypothesis that the inductive method would yield equal or superior results as the conventional method and that the experimental class would show a significant degree of transfer to their writing skills.

In order to test the hypothesis, Copeland organized three groups: an experimental class and two control classes. All classes consisted of an equal number of ninth graders, with approximately an equal number of males and females in each class. At the beginning of the study, intelligence scores and reading scores were used to ensure that all subjects had equal abilities. A writing sample was taken from each subject as a pre-test measure.

In the experimental class, the students learned grammar inductively. No textbook was used; the students compiled a notebook, "which they considered their self-authored grammar text" (Copeland, 1968, p. 9). Using the inductive method of learning, the students (1) recorded in their notebooks principles of grammar which they learned in the classroom, (2) created sentences to illustrate the concepts, (3) wrote self-generated conclusions about grammar, and (4) included writing samples in the notebook.

In the two control classes, the students followed the state-adopted textbook very closely. The teachers of these classes used direct teaching methods, in which lecture and discussion were followed by student exercises in the textbook. Compositions were graded and returned but not usually rewritten by the students.

In order to measure the student achievement in grammar, all students completed the *Barrett-Ryan Schrammel English Achievement Test, Form EM*. In order to measure the transfer of grammar principles to writing, all students submitted a writing sample as a pre-test measure and another sample as a post-test measure. The compositions were assessed with a rating system of three letter grades. For each composition, a grade was given for mechanics, sentence structure, and content. In addition, each sample was assessed for the number of subordinate clauses, use of figurative language, and expanded verb phrases. An analysis of covariance was used in determining the significance of effects.

The findings of the study revealed that the experimental class showed no significant differences from the control classes in identifying the parts of speech, punctuation, or spelling on the achievement test. However, the experimental class showed significance differences in identifying sentence parts, in vocabulary, and in pronunciation, as measured by the achievement test.

In their writing skills, the experimental class showed no significant difference in the frequency of mechanical errors.

However, they showed significant gains in the number of subordinate clauses, use of figurative language, and expanded verb phrases.

Copeland concluded that the use of inductive learning of grammar offered equal or superior outcomes as the traditional methods. However, she admits that results of the study should be interpreted tentatively because it is "unrealistic to presume that a student could in the span of six or seven months demonstrate extensive permanent gains in such complex skills as those tested in this study no matter what variable is produced" (Copeland, 1968, p. 66).

For the study's implications, Copeland calls for further research to address the following:

1. To identify more specifically the grade level where the compositional behavior of children could most readily be affected;
2. Develop more economical methods of presenting grammar, either generative or traditional;
3. Determine the change in pupil attitude toward the study of grammar as it becomes more useful to him in his writing;
4. Clarify the inductive method of language study (p. 67).

### **The Cutshaw Study**

In a study by Cutshaw (1985), the researcher sought to identify the overall effects of specifying audience on writing performance. The purpose of the study was to determine the effects of variables of audience assignment on the proficiency of writing. The researcher

selected three groups of college freshmen and assigned each group a different audience to address for a specific composition. The compositions were then holistically scored and compared to determine which method of audience assignment was most effective.

In the first group of students (Group A), the assignment had no specific mention of audience or purpose. The second group of students (Group B) were given a specific audience and purpose to address in the composition. The third group of students (Group C) were given complete freedom to choose their audience and purpose for the writing assignment.

The samples consisted of 121 students. Each group contained an equal number of high, average, and low ability students, according to their scores on the American College Testing (ACT) assessment. The holistic scoring used on the compositions was a rating scale of one through four, with a score of four as the highest. The composition scorers were four college instructors with an average each of twenty-four years of experience in composition instruction.

The findings of the study revealed that Group A had a mean score on the holistic scale of 2.13. Group B had the highest mean score of the three groups: 2.43. Group C had a mean score of 2.20. Because these statistics were significantly different, the researcher concluded that assigning students a specific audience and purpose yields the most effective writing among students. The researcher also recommended that composition teachers structure their courses "...so

that students are given writing assignments which provide transitional stages for developing audience analysis"

(Cutshaw, 1985, p. 35.). Techniques for achieving this purpose are as follows:

Week 1. Give writing assignments with teacher as audience.

Weeks 2-3. Explain audience analysis. Assign group exercises.

Weeks 4-7. Continue group exercises. Give writing assignments with peers as audience. Begin workshops.

Weeks 8-12. Give writing assignments which provide audience and purpose other than peers. Continue workshops.

Weeks 13-15. Give assignments which allow students to choose their own audience and purpose. Continue workshops (Cutshaw, 1985, p. 36).

Cutshaw concluded that "...teachers should give students a variety of assignments using audience and purpose to help students become mature writers capable of making their own decisions about subject, audience, purpose, and tone" (p. 45).

### **The Stafford Study**

In a study by Stafford (1985), the researcher attempted to identify the effects of journal writing on literary composition skills. Journal writing was used as a prewriting exercise in the study, and its effects on the proficiency of writing themes about literature were identified.

For the subjects, Stafford selected forty college freshmen from two composition courses at The University of Tennessee. The students were required to write in their journals three times per week. The

journal entries consisted of three categories: summary of events of plot, a critical analysis of elements and themes, and personal comments on reading assignments.

Stafford attempted to determine whether the content of the journal exercises were transferred to compositions written about literature. In order to determine the effects of journal writing, Stafford examined a composition written by each student at the beginning of the quarter and a composition written at the end of the quarter. She sought evidence that the students used prewriting material from the journal entries in their papers. The next procedural step consisted of recording the evidence found in the journals and the compositions.

Questions to identify the evidence were as follows:

1. Are the students using the journals to describe plot summary?
2. Are they recording themes and bringing up elements that they will use in later papers?
3. Are there any verbatim expressions between the journal entry and the paper?
4. Are there significant details common to journal and paper?
5. Is the journal used to outline and develop a rough draft or plan for a student's purposes?
6. Are the students making personal responses that allow them to identify the material (Stafford, 1985, p. 23)?

In addition, the student's assessment of the journal writing as a

prewriting technique was presented. This was accomplished by having each student complete a questionnaire, which asked questions answered by yes/no responses.

In the study's findings, Stafford reported that in the first paper written at the beginning of the quarter, 72.5% of the students used the journal for "ideas, style, or organization of their papers" (p. 27). In the paper written at the end of the quarter, 62.5% used the journal for these purposes.

In the first paper, 97.1% of the students used the journal for thematic or critical insight (i.e., for discussion of themes or elements about literature). Fifty percent used the journal for transferring to the composition personal comments about the literature.

In the last paper, 92% of the students used the journal for thematic or critical insight. Sixty percent used the journal for transferring to the composition personal comments about the literature.

In the findings on the student questionnaire, the majority of responses showed that "students enjoyed and learned from using the prewriting journal" (Stafford, 1985, p. 56). Specifically, 79% responded that they enjoyed writing in the journal. Ninety-five percent responded that journal writing was an asset to their literature class, and 88% responded that the journal was useful to their writing skills.

In her conclusions and recommendations, Stafford stated that the journals helped students better understand literature and literary

themes. She suggested that writing instructors begin a composition course by teaching the students the purpose and need for journal writing, which is to improve writing skills. Furthermore, she recommended that teachers require students to write in their journals about reading assignments before they are discussed in class. This will promote "in-depth discussion that often produces a clearer understanding of the literature for writing purposes" (Stafford, 1985, p. 63).

Although the study by Stafford had serious limitations (e.g., no control group, no description of the characteristics and background of the students, and no pre-test or post-test), its contribution toward writing instruction theory is relevant. The use of journal writing has been an important component of many composition classes. Stafford has proven that it can yield positive results.

### **The Dorsey Study**

In a similar study on journal writing, Dorsey (1985) examined the effects of journal writing by seventh graders on their syntactic maturity and attitudes toward writing. Four research questions were addressed:

1. What effect does a program in journal writing have upon seventh grade students' syntactic maturity in writing?
2. What differences exist between the syntactic maturity and fluency in writing of boys and girls who write in journals?
3. What is the difference between the attitude of students who are involved in a journal writing program toward

writing compared to the attitude of students who are not involved in a journal writing program toward writing?

4. Do boys differ from girls in their perception of writing and in their process of writing (Dorsey, 1985, pp. 5-6)?

The subjects for the study were divided into an experimental group, consisting of 27 students, and a control group, consisting of 46 students. The students attended a middle school with a total population of 768. All subjects used in the study were of average ability. This characteristic was identified through the use of scores on standardized tests, state basic skills, and competency tests. The experimental group was subjected to six weeks of journal writing, in which each student wrote in a journal for ten minutes three times per week. The control group performed no journal writing but received the same methods of instruction in language arts that the experimental group received.

In order to answer the four research questions, Dorsey took pretest and posttest writing samples from each student. These provided the data to determine the effects of journal writing on syntactic maturity, which is a measure of average frequency of complex sentences. In addition, the students completed pretest and posttest attitudinal surveys. The instrument used was the Emig-King Writing Attitude Scale. This provided the data to determine the effects of journal writing on the affective domain of students.

In response to the research questions, the findings of Dorsey's study were as follows:

1. No significant differences were found on the syntactic maturity of student writing due to journal writing.
2. Within a journal writing program, no significant differences were found between the syntactic maturity and fluency of boys and girls.
3. No significant differences were found in the total attitude scores between the experimental group and the control group. Although the surveys revealed that a majority of the students possessed a negative attitude toward writing, positive comments found in student journals revealed otherwise.
4. Girls were found to be slightly more positive in their attitude toward writing than boys. However, no significant differences were found in the processes of writing between girls and boys.

Because the evidence of the study revealed that journal writing does not affect syntactic maturity of sentences, the researcher concluded that such a measure of student performance provided a "rather limited view of student's writing" (Dorsey, 1985, p. 113). She also acknowledged that six weeks may not have been enough time for the intervention to provide effect. The researcher also concluded that "...students need adequate time for prewriting and thinking about their choice of topics before actual composing. Ten minutes three times per week does not appear to be adequate to allow for the development of syntactic maturity and fluency in writing" (Dorsey, 1985, p. 116).

Based upon the findings and conclusions, recommendations by the researcher included the following:

1. Journal writing should be considered as an instructional tool in the language arts curriculum for the teaching of writing.
2. A writing curriculum should be developed for middle-school students that provides students opportunities to write in many modes and for many purposes.
3. A writing curriculum should be developed for middle-school students that emphasizes the affective domain and the positive aspects of writing (Dorsey, 1985, p. 119).

### **The Ewing Study**

In a study by Ewing (1992), the researcher examined student writing performance under two assessment conditions. The purpose was to determine whether students who received two different kinds of writing instruction were affected by assessment conditions that varied from the instructional conditions.

Two groups received different methods of instruction: writing-process instruction or traditional-writing instruction. Ewing (1992) defines writing-process as an activity in which students are taught to "...prewrite, draft, confer with peers and teachers, revise, edit, and publish" (p. 106). Traditional-writing instruction is simply "non-process instruction" (p. 107).

Two timed-writing assessments were administered--30 minutes and 45 minutes. All compositions in the assessments were scored on a six-point holistic scale. In the longer assessment, an option of

prewriting was given to the students. In addition, the students completed a 14-item questionnaire after the 45 minute assessment. The purpose was to measure attitudes of students toward writing.

The subjects consisted of 349 eighth-grade students from four middle schools in Indiana. The language arts classes which used writing-process instruction consisted of 183 students, while the traditional-writing instruction classes consisted of 166 students.

In the 30 minute assessment, the *Indiana Basic Competency Skills Test* was used. The 45 minute assessment used the same test, with only a different prompt and directions (the students were encouraged to engage in prewriting in this assessment).

In scoring the compositions of both assessments, all samples were typed into a word processor to prevent the quality of handwriting from affecting the score. Papers were scored according to two variables: the total number of words and overall quality on a holistic scale. Prewriting samples were scored separately from the composition samples. These were assessed according to two variables: total number of words and type of prewriting (e.g., listing, clustering, questioning, cubing, freewriting, formal outline, rough draft, statement of thesis or position, or other).

The questionnaire completed after the 45 minute assessment used a Likert scale to measure student attitudes about writing in general and writing under timed conditions.

"Means and standard deviations were calculated for each item

by group, and t-tests were used to determine differences between groups. Correlations were also used to identify potential relationships among survey items and between survey items and other variables" (Ewing, 1992, p. 53).

The findings of the study revealed the following:

1. The writing-process students received higher holistic scores on writing samples in both 30 minute and 45 minute time conditions than did traditional-writing students;
2. The writing-process students produced longer writing samples than traditional-writing students in the 30 minute condition, but not in the 45 minute condition.;
3. Neither writing-process nor traditional-writing students produced longer or higher quality writing samples in the 45 minute condition than they did in the 30 minute condition;
4. Writing-process students produced more freewriting and different types of prewriting than did traditional-writing students in the 45 minute condition; and
5. Writing-process students and traditional-writing students expressed different attitudes about writing on 8 of the 14 survey items (Ewing, 1992, pp. 107-108).

In her conclusions, Ewing (1992) stated that students who are instructed in writing process are not placed at a disadvantage in a timed-writing assessment. Furthermore, she concluded that the timed condition of a writing assessment may not yield the most valid results. The cause of this limitation is the fact that "...students are asked to

generate something that looks like writing in response to a contrived situation and artificial audience. It's an exercise --a proxy, but it is not real writing" (Ewing, 1992, p. 109).

The recommendations of the study were addressed to the following audiences: (1) teachers; (2) test developers; and (3) researchers. The following recommendations were made specifically for teachers:

1. Get information about the assessment.
2. Understand the purpose of the writing assessment and convey that understanding to students, parents, and the community at large.
3. Provide additional documentation of student achievement in writing.
4. Do not adopt tasks and formats from standardized writing assessments as models for instruction.
5. Learn more about large-scale methods for assessing writing.
6. Become active and proactive individually and through professional organizations (pp. 111-113).

Recommendations for test developers were as follows:

1. Acknowledge the potential impact that testing--especially high-stakes testing--has on curriculum and instruction.
2. Involve classroom teachers in development of writing assessment.
3. Recognize that what is known about learning is constantly

growing and that assessment must change to keep pace with new knowledge.

4. Develop tests that are worth teaching to or at least do not fly in the face of accepted practice or common sense.
5. Find ways to include process skills in assessment situations.
6. Provide background information about assessment that is accessible to teachers, parents, and the general public (pp. 113-115).

Finally, Ewing recommends that researchers work in collaborations with test developers, state departments of education, and school districts to find solutions, based on empirical research, for the improvement of writing assessment (pp. 115-116).

### **The Flowers Study**

In a landmark study by Flowers (1995), the researcher determined the relationship between student scores on the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (T-CAP) language mechanics section (a portion of a standardized test) and scores on the T-CAP Writing Test. Her study was conducted because the majority of fourth graders in Tennessee scored in the average or higher stanines on the mechanics section of T-CAP, but only eight percent of the fourth graders scored in the proficient range on the writing assessment test.

In her study, Flowers compared the scores of the Spring 1994 third grade T-CAP Achievement Test Language Mechanics section to the scores of the October 1994 T-CAP Writing Test. The sample of students were the same for both tests, as the third graders in the spring

of 1994 were the fourth graders of the fall of 1994. A random sample consisting of 23,113 students from twenty-two school systems were selected for the study. The sample included males and females, all races, regular schools, and magnet schools.

The findings of the study indicated that as scores increased on the total language section of the achievement test, scores increased on the writing test as well. Flowers determined that a correlation of .52 existed between the total language scores of the achievement test and the scores of the writing test. She stated that the correlation "...reveals that the two assessments do measure similar attributes, yet they each provide information that the other does not" (Flowers, 1995, p. 39).

In her conclusion, Flowers states that effective writing must be taught in conjunction with the study of grammar.

You can't sacrifice one for the other and expect to have proficient writing. If students aren't taught the art of writing, they will not be able to write. ...With a renewed emphasis on writing, not only in the English classroom but also across the curriculum, we should see an improvement in the writing scores of Tennessee students within the next few years (Flowers, 1995, pp. 41-43).

### **The French et al. Study**

In response to poor student performance on writing assessment and varied performance on standardized testing within Tennessee, a study conducted by The University of Tennessee and the State Testing and Evaluation Center attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What can be done to improve student performance on writing

assessment?

2. Why is there high variability in schools' value-added assessment scores from subject area to subject area and/or year to year?

A research team was assembled to address these questions. The team included personnel from the Institute for Assessment and Evaluation (IAE), the University of Tennessee's Value-Added Research and Assessment Center, and State Testing and Evaluation Center (French, Ray, Hodge, Hargis, Hatch, Smith, Boser, Tindell, Bunch, Chngas, & Sanders, 1995).

### Methodology

In order to collect data to answer the study questions, surveys and interviews were administered to teachers, building principals, and LEA testing coordinators. A non-random sample of schools were selected according to predetermined criteria. This resulted in 84 schools representing 46 different districts participating in the study. Within this sample, 15 schools were selected for case studies. All schools housed 3rd through 8th grades and represented all types of schools (urban, suburban, rural, small, large) in all three regions of Tennessee (East, Middle, and West).

### Instruments

All surveys and interviews contained three sections which pertained to the following:

1. demographic information
2. writing assessment

3. gain scores on the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (T-CAP).

### Surveys

Because writing instruction is a "multi-year process and performance on the writing assessment is a product of several years of instruction," the grades preceding the 4th and 8th were targeted for implementation of the surveys (French et al., 1995, p. 6). (The 1994 writing assessment was administered only to grades 4 and 8 in the K-8 level.) Thus, the grades which were examined for effect of writing instruction were 3, 4, 7, and 8.

### Interviews

For each school selected as a case study, the principal and four teachers with responsibilities in writing instruction were interviewed. For those schools not selected as a case study, the following grades were targeted for interviews:

"In schools containing *either* 4th or 8th grades, two 3rd and two 4th grade or two 7th and two 8th grade teachers were interviewed. In schools containing *both* 4th and 8th grades, one teacher in each of the 3rd, 4th, 7th, and 8th grades was interviewed. The testing coordinator in each case study school's LEA was interviewed" (French et al., 1995, p. 6).

After data were collected from the surveys and interviews, patterns of events and behaviors across schools were identified. In addition, comparisons were made between schools in the study with

the highest and lowest scores on the 4th and 8th grade writing assessments.

### Findings

Data gathered from all surveys and interviews were divided by the researchers into two distinct issues: (1) factors influencing writing assessment results and (2) factors related to T-CAP performance and value-added gain score variability.

### Factors Influencing Writing Assessment Results

1. Although a majority of principals, teachers, and testing coordinators identified staff development as essential to improving writing instruction, several reasons were given for impeding the appropriate staff development activities. These included the following:

- (a) Testing coordinators reported having little time for giving leadership to test-related activities. Seventy percent indicated that only 5% percent of their time was allocated for such activities.
- (b) Only 11% of the school systems assign a designated person responsibility for coordinating curriculum and instruction in a specific content area, such as language arts.
- (c) Only 9% of the principals reported that their schools conducted inservice sessions, workshops, or faculty meetings which address the writing assessment.
- (d) Only 58% of the teachers of all grades reported participating in staff development related to the writing assessment.

2. The Tennessee Language Arts Curriculum Framework revealed only a small number of writing objectives.
3. A lack of alignment of curriculum and instruction with the writing assessment was discovered. Examples include the following:
  - (a) Although a majority of the teachers agreed with the attributes scored on the writing assessment, only two of the attributes (addressing the topic, maintaining focus and logic) were given extensive instruction by 80% or more of the teachers.
  - (b) Sense of audience, one of the elements scored, was reported as high in instructional priority by only 19% of the teachers.
  - (c) Upper grades (7th and 8th) teachers reported more emphasis on technical aspects of writing than the lower grades (3rd and 4th), who reported more emphasis on creative writing.
  - (d) A majority of teachers reported that timed writing activities were not used in their instruction. (The writing assessment is a timed writing task.)
4. A lack of coherence in the curriculum and instruction was found to exist within schools and within the school district. Examples include the following:
  - (a) Teachers revealed a variety of philosophies and values toward writing instruction and assessment.
  - (b) Teachers at the grade levels preceding the writing assessment (3rd and 7th) revealed a lack of knowledge about the assessment.
  - (c) Only 44% of teachers reported that students receive feedback on writing in classes other than language arts.

- (d) The number and types of writing activities varied widely between classrooms and across grade levels and schools.
5. Respondents reported that a lack of emphasis on writing instruction was due to the high teacher/pupil ratio per class. However, the data revealed that the highest scoring schools in the writing assessment had higher teacher/pupil ratios than the lowest scoring schools.
  6. Respondents reported a concern that feedback from the State Testing and Evaluation Center was inadequate: more information was needed about students' weaknesses in writing.
  7. Only 43% of teachers reported confidence in the validity of the scoring criteria for the writing assessment. In addition, some teachers who had participated in the pilot assessment prior to 1994 questioned the reliability of the scores of the 1994 assessment.
  8. Higher scoring schools favored direct writing instruction (which gives writing skills higher priority than attitudes toward writing). Lower scoring schools favored indirect writing instruction (which gives attitudes toward writing higher priority than writing skills).
  9. Emphasis on process writing over product writing may have influenced the scores on the writing assessment.

The following findings were obtained by comparing the results of surveys and interviews of schools in the top quartile of the sample with those of the bottom quartile of the sample:

10. Higher scoring schools possessed the following characteristics: principals in their positions longer than principals of lower scoring schools, lower teacher turnover, lower percentages of teachers with

fewer than three years of experience, more teachers per grade level, consistent parental support, slightly higher attendance rates, lower percentages of minority students, lower percentages of students receiving free or reduced lunches, more teacher awareness of writing assessment, and more participation of teachers in the pilot assessments prior to 1994.

11. Higher scoring schools demonstrated the following instructional factors when compared with lower scoring schools: less ability grouping, larger teacher/pupil ratios in language arts classes (7th and 8th grades), more frequent teacher participation in staff development related to the writing assessment, greater teacher familiarity with the scoring standards of the writing assessment, more student use of computers for writing tasks, more variety of writing activities, more instructional emphasis on revision, and more teacher concern about the validity of the scoring of the writing assessment.

12. Teachers of lower scoring schools revealed lower expectations for student achievement in writing.

13. A school's ranking on the writing assessment was not always consistent with its ranking on the T-CAP standardized test or value-added gains (French et al., 1995).

#### Factors Influencing T-CAP Performance and Value-Added Gain Scores

1. Many respondents attributed variability and low T-CAP scores to student, family, and community factors as opposed to factors of school, curriculum, and instruction.

2. A few testing coordinators and principals reported a concern that Tennessee Value-Added Assessment Scores (TVAAS) were constrained by a ceiling effect.
3. Nearly half of the respondents reported a belief that influences such as student, family, and/or school/community sources were not adequately factored into TVAAS.
4. A significant number of comments by respondents revealed inadequate understanding of TVAAS.
5. More than one-third of testing coordinators attributed TVAAS scores to recent changes in schools or communities.
6. More than 85% of principals reported efforts by their LEAs and schools to prepare for T-CAP.
7. Principals reported a wide variety of activities utilizing parental involvement. However, few of these activities were used for improving T-CAP scores.
8. Respondents reported a lack of cohesive philosophy toward assessment and test preparation strategies.
9. Several testing coordinators reported a belief that principal leadership is crucial to student success on T-CAP.
10. A variety of instructional activities for high achievers were reported. However, these seemed to be simply additional assignments rather than systematic, differentiated instruction.
11. Teacher and principal expectations for student achievement were often low, especially in lower performing schools (French et al., 1995).

## Conclusions

The following were conclusions listed by the researchers for three categories: (1) influences on assessment results; (2) writing assessment and writing instruction; and (3) TVAAS and gain score variability.

### Influences On Assessment Results

1. A lack of curricular coherence exists within many schools.
2. Student performance varies from school to school due to a combination of student/family characteristics, school characteristics, and instructional factors.
3. Expectations of student performance in higher scoring schools are higher than those in lower scoring schools.
4. Instructional leadership of the principal is vital for improving student achievement.
5. Methods to align instruction with assessment are either not understood or given low priority in some school systems (French et al., 1995).

### Writing Assessment and Instruction

1. Staff development activities in writing instruction and assessment are needed for teachers.
2. More feedback is needed about student performance on the writing assessment.
3. Concern exists about the consistency of the scoring of the writing assessment.

4. The State Department of Education and LEAs should address the need for alignment among the writing curriculum, writing instruction, and writing assessment.
5. Schools which demonstrated little concern for the writing assessment prior to 1994 have exhibited a newfound interest in writing improvement.
6. Teachers need assistance in providing adequate writing instruction and feedback in large classes (French et al., 1995).

#### TVAAS and Gain Score Variability

1. Educators were unable to provide reliable explanations for gain score variability.
2. Educators doubt the ability of the TVAAS model to factor in student, family, and community variables.
3. Information about the validity of the TVAAS model is not reaching classroom teachers (French et al., 1995).

#### Recommendations

The researchers offered the following recommendations to four distinct groups: (1) schools/school systems; (2) State Department of Education; (3) State Testing and Evaluation Center; and (4) the Tennessee Value-Added Research and Assessment Center.

#### Recommendations to Schools/School Systems

1. Strengthen the coherence in writing curriculum and instruction.
2. Strengthen the alignment of writing curriculum and instruction with the writing assessment.
3. Strengthen writing instruction.

4. Examine the issue of educator expectations, their impact on instruction and assessment results, and their relationship to parental involvement in the schools.
5. Develop specific detailed plans and timelines for improving student learning and test performance in subject areas in which test scores are low (French et al., 1995).

#### Recommendations to the State Department of Education

1. Work in conjunction with LEAs to provide teachers with staff development in writing instruction.
2. Work with the State Testing and Evaluation Center to provide more teacher orientation to the writing assessment.
3. Increase the quality of feedback on student performance on the writing assessment.
4. Ensure that the contractor trains the scorers for accuracy and consistency in grading student samples.
5. Revise the Language Arts Curriculum Framework to provide alignment of writing instruction and writing assessment.
6. Work with the STEC, LEAs, and knowledgeable university faculty to increase teacher and administrator knowledge about student assessment (French et al., 1995).

#### Recommendations to the State Testing and Evaluation Center

1. Work with the State Department of Education and LEAs to ensure that all teachers are oriented to the writing assessment.
2. Work with the State Department, LEAs, and universities to

increase teacher and administrator knowledge of assessment and evaluation (French et al., 1995).

Recommendations to the Tennessee Value-Added Research and Evaluation Center

1. Provide simple explanations of the validity of the TVAAS model to school-level educators.
2. Study issues of concern to schools in conjunction with other agencies (e.g., State Department of Education, universities, LEA representatives) (French et al., 1995).

#### **IV. COHESIVE CURRICULUM**

Because research has revealed that an effective curriculum is one with cohesiveness (French et al., 1995), a review of literature on the unified, or cohesive, curriculum is warranted. A key ingredient to such a curriculum is an adherence to an accepted philosophy (Doll, 1978; Ornstein & Hunkins, 1993; Tyler, 1949).

##### **The Role of Philosophy**

The philosophy of the curriculum serves as a foundation upon which the objectives, methods of instruction, and evaluation are designed (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1993). According to Tyler (1949), the objectives should be "...highly consistent so that the student is not torn by contradictory patterns of human behavior" (p. 33). Thus, the philosophy serves as a "first screen" in formulating the objectives. Tyler further states,

For a statement of philosophy to serve most helpfully as a set of standards or a screen in selecting objectives, it needs to be stated clearly, and for the main points the implications for educational objectives may need to be spelled out (p. 37).

Thus, all classrooms of a subject area within the cohesive curriculum should adopt the same objectives for the same guided purpose.

Because objectives guide instruction, the curriculum philosophy will also guide activities within the classroom. Ornstein and Hunkins (1993) state that such a philosophy gives the curriculum planners a basis upon which to select the methods and materials of instruction. "It provides them with a framework for broad issues and tasks...and in general what experiences and activities they wish to stress in schools and classrooms" (p. 35).

For success of a cohesive curriculum, those responsible for instruction must be willing to modify their own points of view for the purpose of adhering to the overall philosophy. The conflict which may result from differing beliefs and values can disrupt the flow of the curriculum and its effectiveness. "Teachers and administrators who are clearly divided in philosophy can seldom work together in close proximity for long periods of time" (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1993, p. 36).

### **Philosophy and the Writing Curriculum**

According to Ediger (1991), diverse philosophies exist in the teaching of writing. These include (1) writing to solve problems; (2) writing to achieve specific objectives; and (3) writing from the

democratic approach. Ediger offers strategies for using each philosophy as a basis for writing instruction.

### Writing to Solve Problems

The problem-solving philosophy emphasizes relating the composing process to the real world. The objectives of this curriculum are not predetermined, as the outcomes of the writing activities are largely determined by the choices and actions of the students.

The teacher allows students either individually or within groups to select a problem to solve. A hypothesis is developed in written form; data is gathered using a variety of reference sources; and the hypothesis is tested and modified as needed. This philosophy of writing requires students to become active learners who gain valuable subject knowledge while engaging in the writing process. Furthermore, the writing curriculum is integrated with societal problems in order to find solutions (Ediger, 1991).

### Writing to Achieve Specific Objectives

Teaching writing to attain predetermined objectives requires all instructional activities to be congruent with the stated objectives. The teacher may use a variety of activities, provided that each is directed toward the accepted objectives. Examples include business and friendly letters, outlines, plays, poems, and stories. Evaluation determines the level of success that students have demonstrated in reaching the desired objectives. Alignment of objectives, instructional

methods, and the evaluation tools are necessary for validity of the evaluation (Ediger, 1991).

A curriculum which teaches writing to achieve specific objectives emphasizes the following:

1. Students achieve highly structure ends, predetermined prior to instruction;
2. Students are tested frequently to determine whether each objective is reached;
3. Teachers are held accountable for the attainment of each objective;
4. The curriculum is broken down into components so that highly precise objectives can be identified (Ediger, 1991, p. 6).

#### Writing from the Democratic Approach

Allowing student choice is the basis for the philosophy of this curriculum. The teacher serves as a guide in planning *learning centers* to be utilized in the writing experience. Each center has a task card that lists learning opportunities. Students are then given the freedom to select the experience which requires a writing assignment. The task card may require problem-solving techniques or stress attainment of predetermined objectives. For fulfillment of accountability, the student may sign a contract for the completion of the activities with an accepted due date (Ediger, 1991).

Allowing students to exercise democratic choice in writing allows the following:

1. Students become the focal point in determining the sequence

of activities;

2. Students become selectors of their writing experiences (Ediger, 1991).

### **Conclusion**

A cohesive curriculum requires a predetermined philosophy to guide the selection of objectives and learner activities within the classroom. The literature offers varied philosophies for cohesion of the writing curriculum. Although no identifiable research proves one philosophy to be more effective than the others, most scholars agree that a successful writing curriculum is one in which all teachers work toward an accepted goal. If teachers work independently of the philosophy, or if none exists, the result is a fragmented writing curriculum which may yield unexpected (and possibly undesirable) student outcomes.

## **VI. SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW**

The review of related literature revealed significant findings relevant to the present study. The first of these is the criteria for effective teaching practices. These include communication of high expectations, a positive attitude, time spent on-task, individualized instruction, effective classroom management, modeling of learning skills, pacing instruction according to the abilities of the students, and use of praise to reinforce learning. In the teaching of English, the aforementioned criteria can effect positive learning gains; however,

effective writing instruction also requires teaching the stages of prewriting, writing, and revision.

The reviewed studies in writing performance provided a foundation by which the present study could examine the effectiveness of writing instruction. The research most related to the present study recommended the use of journal writing as a prewriting technique and the assignment of a specific audience and purpose for students to address in their writing.

Finally, the most closely related study (French et al., 1995) discovered that low student performance on the Tennessee Writing Assessment of 1994 had several contributing factors. These included a lack of appropriate staff development for teachers, a small number of writing objectives in the Language Arts Curriculum Framework, and a lack of coherence between the curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

The present study utilized the recommendations of the reviewed literature in the development of its methods and procedures.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

#### **I. OVERVIEW OF STUDY DESIGN**

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationships of the curriculum objectives, English instruction, and student outcomes in composition of the middle school English curriculum of Rutherford County Schools in Tennessee. Because the T-CAP Writing Assessment of 1994 revealed that 85% of eighth graders in the middle schools of Rutherford County Schools lacked proficient writing skills, a need existed to examine the effectiveness of the English curriculum and its subsequent instruction in the teaching of writing. This led the investigator to address the following study questions:

1. To what degree does the English curriculum guide possess writing objectives?
2. To what degree does the English instruction reflect the criteria for overall effective teaching?
3. To what degree does the English instruction reflect the criteria for effective writing instruction?
4. To what degree do students demonstrate proficient writing skills?

All data from the schools were collected from the 1995-96 school year. In order to determine the findings of the study questions, three

stages of the study were conducted: (1) a document analysis of the English curriculum guide; (2) an analysis of the English instruction; and (3) an analysis of student outcomes.

The methods and procedures for answering each study question were as follows:

## **II. ANALYSIS OF THE ENGLISH CURRICULUM GUIDE**

### **Description**

Because the English teachers are required by the state and their local schools to design instruction according to their English curriculum guide, a document analysis of the middle school English curriculum guide was conducted. This included two separate guides, one each from the seventh and eighth grades. The purpose was to determine the degree to which writing objectives exist.

The analysis entailed an identification of the categories of English objectives (e.g., mechanics, language usage, sentence and paragraph structure, spelling and word identification techniques, comprehension, literary skills, reference study, and writing), and an examination of the frequency and percentage of writing objectives found within the guides.

### **Method of Reporting Data**

The investigator formulated a table which reports the categorical composition of the English curriculum guides. For each category of objectives, the total number of objectives within that category is

reported. In addition, the percentage of the guide comprised of each category is reported. The table can be found in Chapter 4, "Research Findings and Analyses." The English curriculum guides can be found in their entirety in the Appendix A.

### **III. ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH INSTRUCTION**

#### **Description**

An examination of the writing instruction in the classrooms was conducted. The purpose was to determine the effectiveness of the writing instruction, using the criteria found in effective teaching research and effective writing methodology.

The data source for these criteria was a survey given to the middle school English teachers of Rutherford County Schools. The two middle schools within the system, Central Middle School and Smyrna Middle School, have a total of twenty English teachers. Twelve teachers were from Smyrna Middle School: eight teachers were from Central Middle School. The teachers were requested to complete the survey in March of 1996 and return the form to their school principals, who secured these for the investigator. All surveys were completed anonymously, as names were neither asked nor identified.

#### **The Instrument**

The instrument used by the investigator was a survey consisting of twenty-three items, which used a Likert scale to measure responses.

Possible answers ranged from Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, and Never. The purpose of these responses was to measure the frequency of occurrence of specific criteria found within the teacher's instructional methods and processes. Each item addressed a different criterion that should exist in overall effective instruction and the instruction of writing, according to the research.

### Rationale for Survey Items

The items for the survey were based upon the findings of numerous studies. The following is a description of each survey item, followed by a rationale for its inclusion in the research.

Items one through ten were based upon the findings of effective teaching research. These criteria have been determined to exist in overall effectiveness of instruction of all content areas.

Items eleven through twenty-three were based upon the findings of research in writing instruction methodology. These criteria have been determined to exist in the effective instruction of writing.

A detailed description of the body of research is found in Chapter 2, "Review of Related Literature." The survey in its entirety is presented in Appendix B.

### Survey Items

1. "I expect all my students to master content objectives presented in the class."

According to effective teaching research, teachers who direct effective student outcomes expect their students to master the content material (Davis & Thomas, 1989).

2. "I feel confident in overcoming academic problems in the classroom."

When confronted with problems in the classroom (e.g., large teacher/student ratio, a wide range of student abilities, and lack of materials), effective teachers respond with behavior designed to overcome them. In contrast, ineffective teachers "rationalize their failures in ways that allowed them to avoid assuming personal responsibilities" (Brophy & Evertson, 1976, P. 40).

3. "My students spend the full class period engaged in academic activities."

Research on effective teaching indicates that students learn more effectively when time is spent on-task (Berliner, 1976; Davis & Thomas, 1989; Stallings, 1986).

4. "In providing instruction, I monitor student practice and provide feedback."

Rosenshine (1993) discovered that effective teachers guide student practice and provide corrective feedback to reinforce student learning.

5. "In my classroom, I maintain a smooth flow of activities with few disruptions."

Effective teachers have smooth flow of lessons with few disruptions. This maintains effective classroom management (Brophy & Evertson, 1976).

6. "I use informal observation to assess student learning."

Research has determined that informal observation is a significant

means to effectively assess student learning (Brophy & Evertson, 1976).

7. "I model the learning skills that I want my students to learn."  
Effective teachers conduct group instruction by modeling initial demonstrations (Brophy & Evertson, 1976).
8. "I require my students to practice learning skills under my supervision."  
Students have been determined to show significant learning gains when they are given opportunities to practice learning skills with the supervision of the teacher (Brophy & Evertson, 1976).
9. "I pace instruction according to the varying abilities of my students within a class."  
Rosenshine (1986) contends that effective teachers must maintain the pace of instruction according to the varying abilities of the students.
10. "I use praise to reinforce learning."  
Students learn effectively when teachers use praise to reinforce learning (Brophy & Evertson, 1976).
11. "I give my students opportunities to write every week."  
The Tennessee State Department of Education State Testing and Evaluation Center (1995) recommends that teachers give students opportunities to write because this is the single most crucial factor in teaching effective writing skills.
12. "I give my students feedback on their writing skills."  
Students benefit from teacher feedback on their writing. The

result is an increase in the proficiency of their writing skills (Peterson, 1995).

13. "My students participate in timed-writing exercises."

Students writing skills are assessed by the T-CAP Writing Assessment, which gives students thirty-five minutes to produce a composition. Therefore, students should be exposed to writing under such conditions.

14. "I teach my students the concepts of prewriting, writing, and revision."

The stage model of writing consists of prewriting, writing, and revision. Proficiency of writing is achieved with the successful practice of these stages (Conners & Glenn, 1992; Hairston, 1986; Langan, 1993).

15. "I require my students to engage in prewriting activities, such as brainstorming, freewriting, clustering, or outlining."

Prewriting should be required of students, rather than given as an option (Conners & Glenn, 1992). Prewriting techniques include brainstorming, freewriting, clustering, and outlining (Elbow, 1973; Langan, 1993; Lindemann, 1987).

16. "My students participate in journal writing."

Dorsey (1985) asserts that journal writing should be considered as an instructional tool in the language arts curriculum for the teaching of writing.

17. "I require my students to develop a topic sentence in each paragraph."

According to Langan (1993), students should be required to develop a topic sentence in each paragraph.

18. "I teach my students to develop supporting sentences in each paragraph."

For proficient writing, students should include supporting sentences in each paragraph (Langan, 1993).

19. "I require my students to write clear, error-free sentences according to the accepted conventions of standard English."

In the writing segment of the stage model, the student should be required to write in the accepted conventions of written English (Langan, 1993).

20. "I teach my students to revise their writing."

Conners and Glenn (1992) state, "All our knowledge about how students learn most effectively to write suggests that revision should be an important component of any writing assignment" (p. 115).

21. "I conduct writing workshops, in which I guide my students through the process of revision."

An effective means to teach revision is to intervene with the students in the revision process. This can be achieved through writing workshops (Conners & Glenn, 1992; Hairston, 1986; Lindemann; 1987).

22. "I teach my students to revise their writing for criteria such as content, organization, focus, coherency, and precision of word choice."

In the revision stage, students should read through the composition for content, organization, focus, coherency, and precision of word choice (Hairston, 1986).

23. "When I assign a composition, I give my students a specific audience and purpose to address."

Cutshaw (1985) concludes that assigning students a specific audience and purpose improves the effectiveness of writing.

### **Method of Reporting Data**

After the English teachers completed the survey, the investigator formulated a table which reports the overall data. For each survey item, the frequency of each response (Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, and Never) is given. In addition, the percentage of each response given by all the teachers is included in the table. Because the data were determined to be only descriptive in nature and because the survey was not used to show comparisons between groups, no statistical treatment was necessary for the analysis of data.

The table which reports the survey data can be found in Chapter 4, "Research Findings and Analyses."

### **Pilot Study**

In order to determine the clarity of the instrument and to determine the length of time necessary for its completeness, the investigator conducted a pilot study of the survey in February of 1996 at Maryville Middle School in Maryville, Tennessee and Bearden Middle School in Knoxville, Tennessee. These schools were chosen because they share common background characteristics with the

middle schools of Rutherford County Schools (e.g., total student population, grade structure, ethnic composition of students, and diverse socioeconomic status).

The following are characteristics describing the background of Maryville Middle School:

1. Setting: Suburban
2. Student Population: 940
3. Ethnicity of Students: 85% Caucasian, 12% African-American, 3% Asian or Other
4. Socioeconomic Status of Students: mostly upper middle-class
5. Grade Structure: 6 through 8
6. Organization: Each content area is organized into departments.
7. Average Teacher/Student Ratio: 25:1
8. Number of English Teachers: 12

The following are characteristics describing the background of Bearden Middle School:

1. Setting: Urban
2. Student Population: 1240
3. Ethnicity of Students: 79% Caucasian, 17% African-American, 4% Asian and Other.
4. Socioeconomic Status of Students: diverse (lower to upper class)
5. Grade Structure: 6 through 8
6. Organization: The sixth grade is organized into three teams.

The seventh and eighth grades are organized into departments.

7. Average Teacher/Student Ratio: 26:1

8. Number of English Teachers: 9

In the implementation of the pilot study, the investigator requested the teachers to answer the following questions after completing the survey:

1. Approximately how long did it take to complete the form?
2. Were the directions clear?
3. Were the questions clear? If not, identify those that need clarification.

A total of twenty English teachers from both schools completed the survey. In response to question #1, the average time needed for completion was 5.4 minutes. In response to question #2, all teachers responded that the directions were clear. In response to question #3, no questions were in need of clarification.

#### **IV. ANALYSIS OF STUDENT OUTCOMES**

##### **Description**

An examination of student outcomes in response to the curriculum and its instruction was conducted. The purpose was to determine the degree of proficiency of students' writing skills.

##### **Means of Assessment**

The means of measuring students' writing skills was the T-CAP Writing Assessment, which was administered by the Tennessee State

Department of Education State Testing and Evaluation Center. The test was given across the state in February of 1996 to grades four, eight, and eleven. The scores were made available in May of 1996. For the purposes of the present study, only the results of the eighth grade students in Rutherford County middle schools were used.

### **Description of Test**

"The T-CAP Writing Assessment is identified in the State Board Master Plan as the assessment tool for measuring student progress towards the development of proficient writing abilities" (Flowers, 1995, p. 5). The test was developed by the State Testing and Evaluation Center in collaboration with the Department of Education. A statewide writing advisory committee consisting of classroom teachers and administrators also provided recommendations for its development. The administration of the test consisted of the following steps:

1. Students were given thirty-five minutes to write a composition on a specific prompt.
2. The prompt assigned to eighth graders was an expository topic. The exact directions for the prompt were as follows:  
"Suppose you could get into a time machine and go into the past or into the future. Write an essay about a specific time you would like to visit in this time machine. Be sure to explain why you would like to visit this specific time."
3. Each composition was graded by two readers, each of whom assigned a holistic score of one through six. An average of the

two scores was assigned. If the two readers disagreed by more than one point, a chief reader made a determination of the final score.

### **Holistic Scoring**

A six-point holistic scoring scale was used. The proficient range consisted of scores six, five, and four. The deficient range consisted of scores three, two, and one. When each composition was assessed, the reader identified the overall effectiveness of the student's writing. All elements of good writing were considered. These included spelling, capitalization, punctuation, appropriate grade-level vocabulary, grammar, organization, addressing the topic, use of evidence, and sentence variety (Flowers, 1995; STEC, 1995).

The writing samples were scored by Psychological Corporation in San Antonio, Texas, an affiliate of Harcourt Brace. All readers were college-degreed and were given training in the holistic scoring process (Staff, 1996).

To ensure consistency of scoring, anchor papers were used. These were a random sample of papers selected for initial scoring. "Using the set scoring criteria, papers are then selected which best exemplify each of the scoring points. Each individual paper is evaluated in comparison to the scoring criteria and the anchor papers" (STEC, 1995, p. 6).

The T-CAP Writing Test Holistic Scale can be found in its entirety in Appendix C.

### **Method of Reporting Data**

In July of 1996 the investigator collected the results of the T-CAP Writing Assessment from the Testing Coordinator of Rutherford County Schools. A table was formulated to report the overall results. This included the frequency and percentage of each score (one through six) that was determined to exist for all eighth grade students in the middle schools of Rutherford County Schools.

The table which reports the data can be found in Chapter 4, "Research Findings and Analyses."

After the overall data was gathered for the present study, an analysis of the data was completed by the investigator. The presentation and analysis of the data can be found in Chapter 4. Summary, conclusions, and recommendations formulated from the research project can be found in Chapter 5.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSES

An examination of the middle school English curriculum of Rutherford County Schools was undertaken during the 1995-96 school year. The two middle schools within the system, Central Middle School and Smyrna Middle School, were the sources of all collected data. The following study questions were investigated:

1. To what degree does the English curriculum guide possess writing objectives?
2. To what degree does the English instruction reflect the criteria for overall effective teaching?
3. To what degree does the English instruction reflect the criteria for effective writing instruction?
4. To what degree do students demonstrate proficient writing skills?

The findings of the study are reported under three major headings: (1) analysis of the English curriculum guide; (2) analysis of English instruction; and (3) analysis of student outcomes.

#### I. ANALYSIS OF THE ENGLISH CURRICULUM GUIDE

In order to identify the degree to which writing objectives exist in the English curriculum guide, the *Tennessee Comprehensive*

*Curriculum Guide, Grades K-8* was examined. The focus of examination entailed two separate analyses: the seventh grade language arts section and the eighth grade language arts section.

### **Seventh Grade Language Arts Section**

The curriculum guide for the seventh grade English teachers was comprised of eight categories: Mechanics, Language Usage, Sentence and Paragraph Structure, Spelling and Word Identification Techniques, Comprehension, Literary Skills, Reference Study, and Writing. The investigator examined the objectives within each category to determine the degree to which writing objectives exist in the overall curriculum guide. Table 4:1 reports the total number of objectives in each category and the percentage of the guide comprised of each category. The curriculum guide in its entirety is presented in Appendix A.

The categories with their specific objectives are as follows:

#### **Mechanics**

1. Assess cursive writing for legibility.
2. Identify correct capitalization of proper nouns, the first word in a direct quotation, greetings and closings of letters, and appropriate words in outlines.
3. Identify correct use of ending punctuation marks, including correct location of ending punctuation with quotation marks.
4. Identify correct use of commas in dates, addresses, words in a series, in letters, to separate quoted words of a speaker from the remainder of the sentence, in compound sentences, and after

**TABLE 4:1 CATEGORICAL COMPOSITION OF  
7TH GRADE CURRICULUM GUIDE**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Total No. of Objectives</b>	<b>Percentage of Guide</b>
Mechanics	5	6.9%
Language Usage	8	11.1%
Sentence and Paragraph Structure	17	23.6%
Spelling and Word Ident. Techniques	11	15.3%
Comprehension	4	5.6%
Literary Skills	7	9.7%
Reference Study	11	15.3%
Writing	9	12.5%

introductory phrases.

5. Use semicolon and colon correctly.

### Language Usage

1. Within the context of phrase(s), sentence(s), or short paragraph(s), identify correct use of the following:
  - (a) subject-predicate agreement
  - (b) agreement of pronoun and antecedent
  - (c) comparative and superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs
  - (d) case usage of pronouns
  - (e) types of pronouns (possessive, reflexive, interrogative, relative, demonstrative, and indefinite)
  - (f) principal parts of regular and irregular verbs
  - (g) verb tense (present, past, and future)
  - (h) conjunctions
  - (i) prepositions and prepositional phrases
  - (j) negative words
2. Distinguish among common/proper nouns, concrete/abstract nouns, and collective nouns.
3. Use possessive forms of nouns.
4. Use appositives correctly.
5. Distinguish between transitive and intransitive verbs.
6. Recognize and use direct and indirect objects.
7. Recognize and use predicate nominatives and predicate adjectives.
8. Combine sentences using adjectives, adverbs, and conjunctions.

### Sentence and Paragraph Structure

1. Differentiate between complete and incomplete sentences.
2. Recognize and identify simple, compound, and complex sentences.
3. Identify simple and compound subjects and predicates.
4. Identify run-on sentences.
5. Identify correct use of negative words.
6. Use possessive forms of nouns.
7. Distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information in paragraphs.
8. Sequence sentences in a paragraph.
9. Identify parts of business and friendly letters and envelopes.
10. Write friendly letters, business letters, and address envelopes.
11. Use note-taking skills.
12. Identify correct outline form.
13. Write reports.
14. Proofread and revise writing, making a clean, final copy.
15. Use expanded vocabulary to enhance oral communication.
16. Prepare and deliver oral presentations.
17. Combine sentences using adjectives, adverbs, and conjunctions.

### Spelling and Word Identification Techniques

1. Use sound/symbol relationships to spell words.
2. Recognize correctly spelled affixed and base words.
3. Recognize correct spelling of contractions.
4. Recognize correct spelling of possessives (nouns/pronouns).
5. Identify correctly spelled homophones within the context of

sentences or phrases.

6. Recognize correct spelling of plurals of nouns.
7. Recognize basic site words.
8. Distinguish compound words from polysyllabic words.
9. Divide polysyllabic words into syllables.
10. Use context as a clue to the meaning of unfamiliar words.
11. Use the dictionary as a spelling aid.

### Comprehension

1. Make comparisons and contrasts.
2. Identify inconsistencies in logic.
3. Read selected material to
  - (a) identify the (stated) main idea
  - (b) identify story details
  - (c) sequence events
  - (d) draw conclusions
  - (e) make inferences based on statements of evidence.
  - (f) make predictions
  - (g) identify cause and effect relationships
  - (h) distinguish fact from opinion
  - (i) identify author's choice of form or purpose
  - (j) identify foreshadowing
  - (k) recognize first and third person narratives
4. Make critical evaluations

### Literary Skills

1. Use analogies to describe relationships or situations.
2. Distinguish and interpret figurative language.
3. Distinguish types of sensory language.
4. Identify the theme or central message.
5. Identify forms of literature such as fables, tall tales, novels, short stories, essays, drama, and poetry.
6. Describe plot development in a literary selection.
7. Recognize first and third person narratives.

### Reference Study

1. Apply dictionary skills.
2. Use the card catalog to locate materials.
3. Locate information in an encyclopedia.
4. Use various reference materials, including a thesaurus.
5. Use parts of a book to locate information.
6. Locate information in telephone directories.
7. Use radio and television schedules.
8. Follow written or graphic (map) directions.
9. Use the dictionary as a spelling aid.
10. Use note-taking skills.
11. Identify parts of business letters and envelopes.

### Writing

1. Produce logical, clear, concise, and supported essays.
2. Use analogies to describe relationships or situations.
3. Present a set of reasons intended to persuade.

4. Write for different audiences and purposes (to define, explain, inform, or entertain).
5. Business and friendly letters and envelopes.
6. Reports.
7. Comparisons and contrasts.
8. Critical evaluations.
9. Make a neat, final draft after proofreading and revising.

### **Analysis of Findings**

After examining the seventh grade language arts curriculum guide, the investigator discovered the following:

1. The total number of objectives listed within the guide is 72.
2. Only 9 writing objectives exist within the guide.
3. Thus, writing objectives account for 12.5% of the entire seventh grade curriculum guide.

### **Eighth Grade Language Arts Section**

The curriculum guide for the eighth grade English teachers was also found to consist of eight categories: Mechanics, Language Usage, Sentence and Paragraph Structure, Spelling and Word Identification Techniques, Comprehension, Literary Skills, Reference Study, and Writing. Table 4:2 reports the total number of objectives in each category and the percentage to which each category comprises the curriculum guide. The document is presented in its entirety in Appendix A. The categories with their specific objectives are as follows:

**TABLE 4:2 CATEGORICAL COMPOSITION OF  
8TH GRADE CURRICULUM GUIDE**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Total No. of Objectives</b>	<b>Percentage of Guide</b>
Mechanics	3	5.4%
Language Usage	4	7.1%
Sentence and Paragraph Structure	13	23.2%
Spelling and Word Ident. Techniques	11	19.6%
Comprehension	4	7.1%
Literary Skills	8	14.3%
Reference Study	5	8.9%
Writing	8	14.3%

### Mechanics

1. Produce legible cursive handwriting.
2. Identify correct capitalization in dates, addresses, letter parts, proper nouns, proper adjectives, titles, outlines, and quotations.
3. Identify correct use of standard punctuation.

### Language Usage

1. Within the context of phrase(s), sentence(s), or short paragraph(s), identify correct use of the following:
  - (a) agreement (between subject/verb and pronoun/antecedent)
  - (b) comparative and superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs
  - (c) case usage of pronouns
  - (d) types of pronouns (possessive, reflexive, interrogative, demonstrative, and indefinite)
  - (e) noun forms (singular, plural, possessive)
  - (f) principal parts of verbs (regular, irregular, troublesome)
  - (g) verb tense
  - (h) prepositional phrases as modifiers
  - (i) negative words
  - (j) conjunctions
  - (k) interjections
2. Identify and use participles and participial phrases.
3. Identify and use gerunds and gerund phrases.
4. Identify and use infinitives and infinitive phrases.

### Sentence and Paragraph Structure

1. Recognize errors in sentence structure (fragment, run-on, etc.).
2. Combine sentences, avoiding run-ons and comma splices, to form a correctly structured new sentence.
3. Select the correct sequence of sentences to form a paragraph.
4. Analyze sentence structure (simple, compound, complex).
5. Identify correct use of negative words.
6. Identify simple and compound subjects and predicates (natural and inverted order, interrogatives, intervening phrases).
7. Identify parts of friendly letters, business letters, and addressed envelopes.
8. Demonstrate effective oral communication skills.
9. Write and evaluate paragraphs with respect to unity, arrangement of details, and effective use of language.
10. Proofread and revise writing, making a clean, final copy.
11. Identify correct outline form.
12. Prepare and write reports.
13. Write creatively.

### Spelling and Word Identification Techniques

1. Use sound/symbol relationships to spell words.
2. Recognize correctly spelled affixed and base words.
3. Recognize correct spelling of contractions.
4. Identify correct forms of possessives (nouns/pronouns).
5. Identify correctly spelled homophones within the context of sentences or phrases.

6. Recognize correct spelling of plurals and nouns.
7. Define and spell common compound words.
8. Recognize multiple meanings of words.
9. Recognize basic sight words.
10. Divide polysyllabic words into syllables.
11. Use context as a clue to determine word meanings.

### Comprehension

1. Elaborate on an idea.
2. Recognize and define propaganda techniques.
3. Recognize logical fallacies (faulty reasoning, generalization, and rationalization).
4. Read selected material to
  - (a) identify the main idea or theme (stated or implied).
  - (b) identify story details.
  - (c) sequence events.
  - (d) draw conclusions.
  - (e) make inferences.
  - (f) identify cause and effect.
  - (g) distinguish fact from opinion.
  - (h) identify author's purpose.
  - (i) make critical evaluations.
  - (j) identify first and third person narratives.
  - (k) identify foreshadowing.

### Literary Skills

1. Elaborate on an idea.
2. Recognize logical fallacies (faulty reasoning, generalization, rationalization, etc.)
3. Identify first and third person narratives.
4. Distinguish and interpret examples of figurative language.
5. Identify forms of literature such as fables, tall tales, novels short stories, essays, drama, and poetry.
6. Recognize sensory language.
7. Describe plot development in a selection.
8. Summarize a selection.

### Reference Study

1. Locate information from various sources.
2. Use parts of a book to locate information.
3. Demonstrate following written or graphic (map) directions.
4. Apply dictionary skills.
5. Identify parts of friendly or business letters and addressed envelopes.

### Writing

1. Produce logical, clear concise and supported essays.
2. Write for different purposes and audiences:
3. Reports
4. Creative writing
5. Summaries of selections read.
6. First and third person narratives.

7. Defense of opinions.
8. Make a neat, final draft after proofreading and revising.

### **Analysis of Findings**

After analyzing the eighth grade language arts curriculum guide, the investigator discovered the following:

1. The total number of objectives listed within the guide is 56. Thus, eighth grade English teachers are responsible for 16 fewer objectives than seventh grade English teachers.
2. Only 8 writing objectives exist within the guide.
3. Thus, writing objectives account for 14.3% of the entire eighth grade curriculum guide.

### **Additional Findings**

While examining the seventh and eighth grade curriculum guides, the investigator discovered additional significant findings. Repetition of objectives was found to exist (1) within the seventh grade guide; (2) within the eighth grade guide; and (3) between the two grade levels.

#### Repetition within the Seventh Grade Guide

Although the seventh grade curriculum guide contains 72 objectives, 6 of these are listed more than once. Thus, 8.3% of the guide is repetition. Examples include the following:

1. *Identify* parts of business letters and envelopes. This objective is listed twice (under two categories: Sentence and Paragraph Structure and Reference Study).
2. *Write* friendly letters, business letters, and address

- envelopes. This objective is listed twice (under Sentence and Paragraph Structure and Writing).
3. Use note-taking skills. This objective is listed twice (under Sentence and Paragraph Structure and Reference Study).
  4. Write reports. This objective is listed twice (under Sentence and Paragraph Structure and Writing).
  5. Proofread and revise writing, making a clean final copy. This objective is listed twice (under Sentence and Paragraph Structure and Writing).
  6. Use the dictionary as a spelling aid. This objective is listed 3 times (once under Spelling and Word Identification Techniques and twice under Reference Study).

#### Repetition within the Eighth Grade Guide

Although the eighth grade curriculum guide contains 56 objectives, 5 of these are listed more than once. Thus, 8.9% of the guide is repetition. Examples include the following:

1. Identify parts of friendly letters, business letters, and addressed envelopes. This objective is listed twice (under two categories: Spelling and Paragraph Structure and Reference Study).
2. Proofread and revise writing, making a clean, final copy. This objective is listed twice (under Sentence and Paragraph Structure and Writing).
3. Prepare and write reports. This objective is listed twice (under Sentence and Paragraph Structure and Writing).

4. Write creatively. This objective is listed twice (under Sentence and Paragraph Structure and Writing).
5. Elaborate on an idea. This objective is listed twice (under Comprehension and Literary Skills).

#### Repetition between the Grade Levels

Of the 56 objectives listed within the eighth grade curriculum guide, 35 of these are also listed within the seventh grade curriculum guide. Thus, 62.5% of the objectives required for eighth grade instruction is repetition of those required for seventh grade instruction. The specific examples of the repeated objectives between the grade levels are as follows:

1. Identify correct capitalization in letter parts and proper nouns.
2. Within the context of phrase(s), sentence(s) or short paragraph(s), identify correct use of the following:
  - (a) agreement (between subject/verb and pronoun/antecedent)
  - (b) comparative and superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs
  - (c) case usage of pronouns
  - (d) types of pronouns (possessive, reflexive, interrogative, demonstrative, and indefinite)
  - (e) possessive noun forms
  - (f) principal parts of verbs (regular and irregular)
  - (g) verb tense
  - (h) prepositional phrases
  - (i) negative words
  - (j) conjunctions

3. Recognize errors in sentence structure (run-ons).
4. Select the correct sequence of sentences to form a paragraph.
5. Analyze sentence structure (simple, compound, complex).
6. Identify correct use of negative words.
7. Identify simple and compound subjects and predicates.
8. Identify parts of friendly letters, business letters, and addressed envelopes.
9. Proofread and revise writing, making a clean final copy.
10. Identify correct outline form.
11. Prepare and write reports.
12. Use sound/symbol relationships to spell words.
13. Recognize correctly spelled affixed and base words.
14. Recognize correct spelling of contractions.
15. Identify correct forms of possessives (nouns/pronouns)
16. Identify correctly spelled homophones within the context of sentences or phrases.
17. Recognize correct spelling of plurals of nouns.
18. Recognize basic sight words.
19. Divide polysyllabic words into syllables.
20. Use context as a clue to determine word meanings.
21. Recognize logical fallacies.
22. Read selected material to
  - (a) identify the main idea or theme (stated or implied).
  - (b) identify story details.
  - (c) sequence events.

- (d) draw conclusions.
  - (e) make inferences.
  - (f) identify cause and effect.
  - (g) distinguish fact from opinion.
  - (h) identify author's purpose.
  - (i) make critical evaluations.
  - (j) identify first and third person narratives.
  - (k) identify foreshadowing.
23. Identify first and third person narratives.
  24. Distinguish and interpret examples of figurative language.
  25. Identify forms of literature such as fables, tall tales, novels, short stories, essays, drama and poetry.
  26. Recognize sensory language.
  27. Describe plot development in a selection.
  28. Use parts of a book to locate information.
  29. Demonstrate following written or graphic (map) directions.
  30. Apply dictionary skills.
  31. Identify parts of friendly or business letters and addressed envelopes.
  32. Produce logical, clear, concise, and supported essays.
  33. Write for different purposes and audiences.
  34. Reports.
  35. Make a neat, final draft after proofreading and revising.

### Lack of Clarity of Objectives

The examination of the English curriculum guide revealed an additional category of findings-- unclear or ambiguous objectives. These were found to exist in both the seventh and eighth grade sections.

### Ambiguity in the Seventh Grade Guide

Of the 72 objectives in the seventh grade guide, 6 of these lack the necessary elaboration for clarity. Thus, 8.3% of the guide is ambiguous. The specific objectives which lack clarity are as follows:

1. Write reports.
2. Use various reference materials, including a thesaurus.
3. Business and friendly letters and envelopes.
4. Reports.
5. Comparisons and contrasts.
6. Critical Evaluations.

### Ambiguity in the Eighth Grade Guide

Of the 56 objectives in the seventh grade guide, 5 of these lack the necessary elaboration for clarity. Thus, 8.9% of the guide is ambiguous. The specific objectives which lack clarity are as follows:

1. Demonstrate effective oral communication skills.
2. Locate information from various sources.
3. Reports.
4. Summaries of selections read.
5. First and third person narratives.

## II. ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH INSTRUCTION

### Survey Results

In order to identify the degree of effectiveness of the English instruction, a 23-item survey was completed by all 21 English teachers of Central Middle School and Smyrna Middle School in March of 1996. The survey results are presented together for both schools for the following reasons:

1. Both schools exhibited similar patterns of responses on the survey, thus indicating similar strengths and weaknesses in the English instruction.
2. Both schools had equivalent results on the 1996 T-CAP Writing Assessment. Therefore, the effectiveness of instruction of both schools is explored as a whole to identify contributing causes of the writing scores.

For each item on the survey, the teachers answered one of the following responses on the Likert scale: Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, or Never. The purpose was to measure the frequency of effective teaching methods in their English instruction. Table 4:3 lists the total responses for the survey. The item numbers (1 through 23) are listed on the left. After each of these, the Likert scale is listed with the frequency of responses for each item, followed by the percentage of teachers who elicited that response.

The following is a presentation of the individual items with the

**TABLE 4:3 TEACHER RESPONSES TO SURVEY**

Item Numbers	Always		Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
	Freq.	Pct.	Freq.	Pct.	Freq.	Pct.	Freq.	Pct.	Freq.	Pct.
1	14	66.7	6	28.6	1	4.8	0	0.0	0	0.0
2	10	47.7	11	52.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
3	11	52.3	10	47.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
4	18	85.7	3	14.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
5	7	33.3	13	61.9	1	4.8	0	0.0	0	0.0
6	5	23.8	11	52.3	3	14.3	1	4.8	0	0.0
7	17	81.0	4	19.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
8	19	90.5	2	9.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
9	12	57.1	6	28.6	3	14.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
10	13	61.9	8	38.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
11	9	42.9	9	42.9	1	4.8	2	9.5	0	0.0
12	13	61.9	6	28.6	2	9.5	0	0.0	0	0.0
13	1	4.8	6	28.6	6	28.6	4	19.0	4	19.0
14	13	61.9	4	19.0	3	14.3	0	0.0	1	4.8
15	9	42.9	10	47.7	1	4.8	0	0.0	1	4.8
16	5	23.8	5	23.8	7	33.3	3	14.3	1	4.8
17	14	66.7	5	23.8	1	4.8	0	0.0	1	4.8
18	14	66.7	5	23.8	1	4.8	0	0.0	1	4.8
19	13	61.9	4	19.0	4	19.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
20	13	61.9	5	23.8	2	9.5	0	0.0	1	4.8
21	3	14.3	4	19.0	7	33.3	5	23.8	2	9.5
22	10	47.7	5	23.8	5	23.8	0	0.0	1	4.8
23	8	38.1	8	38.1	5	23.8	0	0.0	0	0.0

teacher responses. For each survey item, the frequency of responses is given with the percentage in parentheses:

1. "I expect all my students to master content objectives presented in the class."  
  
Always: 14 (66.7 %)  
Often: 6 (28.6 %)  
Sometimes: 1 (4.8 %)  
Rarely: 0 (0.0 %)  
Never: 0 (0.0 %)
  
2. " I feel confident in overcoming academic problems in the classroom."  
  
Always: 10 (47.7 %)  
Often: 11 (52.3 %)  
Sometimes: 0 (0.0 %)  
Rarely: 0 (0.0 %)  
Never: 0 (0.0 %)
  
3. "My students spend the full class period engaged in academic activities."  
  
Always: 11 (52.3 %)  
Often: 10 (47.7 %)  
Sometimes: 0 (0.0 %)  
Rarely: 0 (0.0 %)  
Never: 0 (0.0 %)
  
4. "In providing instruction, I monitor student practice and provide feedback."  
  
Always: 18 (85.7 %)  
Often: 3 (14.3 %)  
Sometimes: 0 (0.0 %)  
Rarely: 0 (0.0 %)  
Never: 0 (0.0 %)
  
5. "In my classroom, I maintain a smooth flow of activities with few disruptions."

Always: 7 (33.3 %)  
Often: 13 (61.9 %)  
Sometimes: 1 (4.8 %)  
Rarely: 0 (0.0 %)  
Never: 0 (0.0 %)

6. "I use informal observation to assess student learning."

Always: 5 (23.8 %)  
Often: 11 (52.3 %)  
Sometimes: 3 (14.3 %)  
Rarely: 1 (4.8 %)  
Never: 0 (0.0 %)

(N.B: One teacher from Smyrna Middle School did not respond to this question.)

7. "I model the learning skills that I want my students to learn."

Always: 17 (81.0 %)  
Often: 4 (19.0 %)  
Sometimes: 0 (0.0 %)  
Rarely: 0 (0.0 %)  
Never: 0 (0.0 %)

8. "I require my students to practice learning skills under my supervision."

Always: 19 (90.5 %)  
Often: 2 (9.5 %)  
Sometimes: 0 (0.0 %)  
Rarely: 0 (0.0 %)  
Never: 0 (0.0 %)

9. "I pace instruction according to the varying abilities of my students within a class."

Always: 12 (57.1 %)  
Often: 6 (28.6 %)

Sometimes: 3 (14.3 %)  
Rarely: 0 (0.0 %)  
Never: 0 (0.0 %)

10. "I use praise to reinforce learning."

Always: 13 (61.9 %)  
Often: 8 (38.1 %)  
Sometimes: 0 (0.0 %)  
Rarely: 0 (0.0 %)  
Never: 0 (0.0 %)

11. "I give my students opportunities to write every week."

Always: 9 (42.9 %)  
Often: 9 (42.9 %)  
Sometimes: 1 (4.8 %)  
Rarely: 2 (9.5 %)  
Never: 0 (0.0 %)

12. "I give my students feedback on their writing performance."

Always: 13 (61.9 %)  
Often: 6 (28.6 %)  
Sometimes: 2 (9.5 %)  
Rarely: 0 (0.0 %)  
Never: 0 (0.0 %)

13. "My students participate in timed-writing exercises."

Always: 1 (4.8 %)  
Often: 6 (28.6 %)  
Sometimes: 6 (28.6 %)  
Rarely: 4 (19.0 %)  
Never: 4 (19.0 %)

14. "I teach my students the concepts of prewriting, writing, and revision."

Always: 13 (61.9 %)  
Often: 4 (19.0 %)  
Sometimes: 3 (14.3 %)  
Rarely: 0 (0.0 %)  
Never: 1 (4.8 %)

15. "I require my students to engage in prewriting activities, such as brainstorming, freewriting, clustering, or outlining."

Always: 9 (42.9 %)  
Often: 10 (47.7 %)  
Sometimes: 1 (4.8 %)  
Rarely: 0 (0.0 %)  
Never: 1 (4.8 %)

16. "My students participate in journal writing."

Always: 5 (23.8 %)  
Often: 5 (23.8 %)  
Sometimes: 7 (33.3 %)  
Rarely: 3 (14.3 %)  
Never: 1 (4.8 %)

17. "I require my students to develop a topic sentence in each paragraph."

Always: 14 (66.7 %)  
Often: 5 (23.8 %)  
Sometimes: 1 (4.8 %)  
Rarely: 0 (0.0 %)  
Never: 1 (4.8 %)

18. "I teach my students to develop supporting sentences in each paragraph."

Always: 14 (66.7 %)  
Often: 5 (23.8 %)  
Sometimes: 1 (4.8 %)  
Rarely: 0 (0.0 %)

Never: 1 (4.8 %)

19. "I require my students to write clear, error-free sentences according to the accepted conventions of standard English."

Always: 13 (61.9 %)

Often: 4 (19.0 %)

Sometimes: 4 (19.0 %)

Rarely: 0 (0.0 %)

Never: 0 (0.0 %)

20. "I teach my students to revise their writing."

Always: 13 (61.9 %)

Often: 5 (23.8 %)

Sometimes: 2 (9.5 %)

Rarely: 0 (0.0 %)

Never: 1 (4.8 %)

21. "I conduct writing workshops, in which I guide my students through the process of revision."

Always: 3 (14.3 %)

Often: 4 (19.0 %)

Sometimes: 7 (33.3 %)

Rarely: 5 (23.8 %)

Never: 2 (9.5 %)

22. "I teach my students to revise their writing for criteria such as content, organization, focus, coherency, and precision of word choice."

Always: 10 (47.7 %)

Often: 5 (23.8 %)

Sometimes: 5 (23.8 %)

Rarely: 0 (0.0 %)

Never: 1 (4.8 %)

23. "When I assign a composition, I give my students a specific audience and purpose to address."

Always:	8 (38.1 %)
Often:	8 (38.1 %)
Sometimes:	5 (23.8 %)
Rarely:	0 (0.0 %)
Never:	0 (0.0 %)

### **Analysis of Findings**

The survey was comprised of two sections: items one through ten were developed from criteria from effective teaching research (which measured overall effectiveness of teaching). Items eleven through twenty-three measured specifically effectiveness of writing instruction.

The teachers' responses for items one through ten were high (i.e., the majority of responses were "Always" or "Often"). The percentage of teachers who responded with "Always" or "Often" for items one through ten were as follows:

- Item 1: 95.3%
- Item 2: 100%
- Item 3: 100%
- Item 4: 100%
- Item 5: 95.2%
- Item 6: 76.1%
- Item 7: 100%
- Item 8: 100%
- Item 9: 85.7%
- Item 10: 100%

For items eleven through twenty-three, responses were not as consistently high. The percentage of teachers who responded with "Always" or "Often" for these items (which measured effectiveness of writing instruction) were as follows:

Item 11: 85.8%

Item 12: 90.5%

Item 13: 33.4%

Item 14: 80.9%

Item 15: 90.6%

Item 16: 47.6%

Item 17: 90.5%

Item 18: 90.5%

Item 19: 80.9%

Item 20: 85.7%

Item 21: 33.3%

Item 22: 71.5%

Item 23: 76.2%

The findings of analysis reveal that the majority of teachers responded with "Always" or "Often" for all items, except three: items thirteen, sixteen, and twenty-one. Item thirteen measured the frequency of timed-writing exercises. Item sixteen measured the frequency of journal writing. Item twenty-one measured the frequency of writing workshops (in which students are guided through the process of revision).

### **Additional Note**

The above presentation of the survey results was the combined responses from Central Middle School and Smyrna Middle School. The purpose of presenting the combined results is to avoid redundancy, as both schools exhibited similar patterns of responses. The majority of teachers from Central Middle School responded with "Always" or "Often" to all items except numbers thirteen and twenty-one. Similarly, the majority of teachers from Smyrna Middle School responded with "Always" or "Often" to all items except numbers thirteen, sixteen, and twenty-one.

## **III. ANALYSIS OF STUDENT OUTCOMES**

### **Results of 1996 T-CAP Writing Assessment**

To identify the degree to which students demonstrate proficient writing skills (i.e., student outcomes of the English curriculum), the scores to the 1996 T-CAP Writing Assessment were used. A six-point holistic scoring scale was used. The proficient range consisted of scores six, five, or four. The deficient range consisted of scores three, two, or one. The results for Central Middle School and Smyrna Middle School were similar; thus, the combined results are presented. Table 4:4 presents the possible scores (one through six) for the test, the total number (frequency) of students who scored within each range, and the percentage of students who scored within each range. The source of the data was the Tennessee State Department of

**TABLE 4:4 1996 T-CAP WRITING SCORES FOR  
RUTHERFORD COUNTY MIDDLE SCHOOLS**

<b>Writing Scores</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
6.0 - Outstanding	6	.63
5.0 - Strong	75	7.92
4.0 - Competent	345	36.43
3.0 - Limited	425	44.89
2.0 - Flawed	88	9.29
1.0 - Deficient	8	.84
<b>Total</b>	<b>947</b>	<b>100</b>

Education State Testing and Evaluation Center, which prepared and administered the writing assessment.

### **Analysis of Findings**

The total number of middle school students in Rutherford County Schools who scored in the proficient range (i.e., with a score of four or higher) was 426. This accounts for 44.98% of all students in the English curriculum who completed the assessment.

The total number of students who scored in the deficient range (i.e., with a score of three or lower) was 521. This accounts for 55.02% of all students in the English curriculum who completed the assessment. Thus, the majority of middle school students in Rutherford County Schools demonstrated deficient writing skills.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **I. SUMMARY**

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationships of the curriculum objectives, English instruction, and student outcomes in composition of the middle school English curriculum of Rutherford County Schools in Tennessee.

The two middle schools within the school system, Central Middle School and Smyrna Middle School, were the focus of the study during the 1995-96 school year. The investigator examined the following study questions:

1. To what degree does the English curriculum guide possess writing objectives?
2. To what degree does the English instruction reflect the criteria for overall effective teaching?
3. To what degree does the English instruction reflect the criteria for effective writing instruction?
4. To what degree do students demonstrate proficient writing skills?

#### **Procedures**

In order to determine the findings of the study questions, three stages of the investigation were conducted: (1) a document analysis of

the English curriculum guide; (2) an analysis of the English instruction; and (3) an analysis of student outcomes.

#### Analysis of the English Curriculum Guide

In the first stage, the *Tennessee Comprehensive Curriculum Guide, Grades K-8* was analyzed to identify the degree to which writing objectives are required for instruction in the English classroom. Two parts of the curriculum guide were analyzed separately: the Seventh Grade Language Arts Section and the Eighth Grade Language Arts Section. The document in its entirety is found in Appendix A.

#### Analysis of English Instruction

In the second stage, the English instruction was examined to identify the degree of effectiveness in the teaching of writing. This was achieved through the use of a survey consisting of twenty-three items, which used a Likert scale to measure the frequency of effective teaching behaviors and strategies used in the classroom. Possible answers ranged from Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, or Never.

The items for the survey were based upon the findings of numerous studies. Items one through ten were based upon the findings of Effective Teaching Research. These criteria have been determined to exist in overall effective instruction of all content areas.

Items eleven through twenty-three were based upon the findings of research in the effective instruction of writing. A detailed description of the research is found in Chapter 2, "Review of Related Literature."

All twenty-one English teachers from both Central Middle School and Smyrna Middle School completed the survey in March of 1996. The survey in its entirety is found in Appendix B.

### Analysis of Student Outcomes

In the third stage of the study, student outcomes in response to the curriculum and instruction were analyzed. This was achieved through the use of scores on the 1996 T-CAP Writing Assessment, a test administered by the Tennessee State Department of Education State Testing and Evaluation Center. The test was administered in February of 1996 to students in grades four, eight, and eleven across the state. However, for the purposes of the study, only the scores for the eighth graders in Rutherford County Schools were used.

The test was a timed-writing activity in which students were given thirty-five minutes to complete a composition on a specified prompt. Each composition was graded holistically with a score of one through six. When each composition was assessed, the reader identified the overall effectiveness of the student's writing. A score of four or higher was required for proficiency of writing.

The summary scores for the middle schools in Rutherford County were obtained for the study in July of 1996. These summary scores were then used to determine the overall effectiveness of the English curriculum and instruction to teach proficient writing skills.

### **Summary of Findings**

The following are the significant findings based upon analyses of the data pertaining to the three stages of the study:

### Analysis of the English Curriculum Guide

1. In the seventh grade English curriculum guide, 12.5% of the objectives are devoted toward writing (nine out of seventy-two).

2. In the eighth grade English curriculum guide, 14.3% of the objectives are devoted toward writing (eight out of fifty-six).

3. Analysis of the seventh grade guide further revealed that 8.3% of the objectives are listed more than once.

4. Analysis of the eighth grade guide further revealed that 8.9% of the objectives are listed more than once.

5. In the eighth grade guide, 62.5% of the objectives are also found in the seventh grade guide.

6. In the seventh grade guide, 8.3% of the objectives are ambiguous.

7. In the eighth grade guide, 8.9% of the objectives are ambiguous.

### Analysis of English Instruction

The majority of teachers responded that they "Always" or "Often" demonstrate the following in their English instruction:

1. Expectation of all students to master content objectives;
2. Confidence in overcoming academic problems in the classroom;
3. Student time in the classroom engaged in academic activities;
4. Monitoring of student practice followed by teacher feedback;
5. A smooth flow of activities with few disruptions;
6. Use of informal observation to assess student learning;
7. Modeling of learning skills for student learning;

8. Requiring student practice of learning skills under teacher supervision;
9. Pacing of instruction according to the varying abilities of the students within a class;
10. Use of praise to reinforce learning;
11. Giving students opportunities to write every week;
12. Giving students feedback on their writing performance;
13. Teaching the concepts of prewriting, writing, and revision;
14. Requiring students to engage in prewriting activities such as brainstorming, freewriting, clustering, or outlining;
15. Requiring students to develop a topic sentence in each paragraph;
16. Teaching students to develop supporting sentences in each paragraph;
17. Requiring students to write clear, error-free sentences according to the accepted conventions of standard English;
18. Teaching students to revise their writing;
19. Teaching students to revise for criteria such as content, organization, focus, coherency, and precision of word choice;
20. Giving students a specific audience and purpose to address in their writing.

The majority of teachers responded that they "Sometimes," "Rarely," or "Never" demonstrate the following in their English instruction:

1. Use of timed-writing activities;
2. Use of journal writing;

3. Use of writing workshops, in which the teacher guides the students through the process of revision.

#### Analysis of Student Outcomes

1. The total number of middle school students who scored in the proficient range on the 1996 T-CAP Writing Assessment was 426. This accounts for 44.98% of all students in the English curriculum who completed the test.

2. The total number of students who scored in the deficient range was 521. This accounts for 55.02% of all students who completed the test.

## **II. CONCLUSIONS**

The following conclusions are based upon the findings of the study.

1. Because the T-CAP Writing Assessment takes into account all elements of proficient writing (Flowers, 1995; STEC 1995), the weakness of writing instruction and deficient student writing skills may be affected in part by the limitations of the English curriculum guides. The document analysis of the guides provides evidence of this conclusion due to the infrequency, unnecessary repetition, and ambiguity of writing objectives--findings which are supported by the previous study of The University of Tennessee Knoxville Institute for Assessment and Evaluation (1995).

2. The evidence of this study indicates that the majority of the English teachers reported that they frequently employ the criteria for effective teaching practices. Further evidence revealed that a majority of the teachers reported that they infrequently use timed-writing activities, journal writing, and writing workshops in their instruction. Therefore, the lack of effectiveness of instruction may be attributed to the infrequent use of these components. (Although journal writing was not proven to yield improved writing skills in the Dorsey study [1985], its use is recommended as an effective prewriting strategy [Johnstone, 1994; Stafford, 1985]).

3. A contributing factor to the ineffectiveness of writing instruction and deficient student outcomes in writing may be that teachers are not taking into account the elements found in the T-CAP Writing Assessment. Supporting this conclusion is the finding that teachers infrequently use timed-writing activities, which is an element found in the state assessment. These findings are also supported by the previous study of The University of Tennessee Knoxville Institute for Assessment and Evaluation (1995).

### **III. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations are made based upon the results of this study.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

1. Because this study focused solely on the English curricular objectives, instruction, and student outcomes in the middle schools of Rutherford County, further research is needed to examine these components in other schools and school systems. Knowledge gained from such studies could provide considerable insight in the teaching of writing across the state.

2. Because this study examined only the frequency of effective teaching practices in the English classrooms, further research in qualitative analysis of the English instruction in these schools is needed.

3. Further research is needed to examine the coherence in the writing curriculum and instruction in the middle schools of Rutherford County. Such research could identify the extent to which teachers in different grades and different classrooms within each grade approach the teaching of writing. Such a knowledge base could identify whether a coherent philosophy or competing philosophies exist toward the teaching of writing.

4. Because this study did not examine the level of instructional leadership in the English curriculum, further research is needed to identify the existence and impact of such leadership on the curriculum and its instruction.

### **Recommendations to the Schools**

1. Modify the English curriculum guides to increase the frequency and quality of writing objectives. If improved student

writing performance is desired, then increased focus upon composition is needed. Since the curriculum guides reveal a degree of redundancy (especially in the eighth grade), it is possible to replace the repeated objectives with additional writing objectives.

2. Increase the use of journal writing, timed-writing exercises, and writing workshops. These experiences would give students daily opportunities to write, practice in writing under the same conditions as the state assessment, and teacher guidance in the process of revision.

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## **APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX A**  
**ENGLISH CURRICULUM GUIDES**

**Rutherford County Schools**  
**Language Arts Curriculum Guide**

**Seventh Grade**

**MECHANICS:**

The student will identify correct capitalization and punctuation.

1. Assess cursive writing for legibility.
2. Identify correct capitalization of proper nouns, the first word in a direct quotation, greetings and closings of letters, and appropriate words in outlines.
3. Identify correct use of ending punctuation marks, including correct location of ending punctuation with quotation marks.
4. Identify correct use of commas in dates, addresses, words in a series, in letters, to separate quoted words of a speaker from the remainder of the sentence, in compound sentences, and after introductory phrases.
5. Use semicolon and colon correctly.

**LANGUAGE USAGE:**

The student will identify standard usage of the parts of speech.

1. Within the context of phrase(s), sentence(s), or short paragraph(s), identify correct use of the following:
  - (a) subject-predicate agreement
  - (b) agreement of pronoun and antecedent
  - (c) comparative and superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs
  - (d) case usage of pronouns
  - (e) types of pronouns (possessive, reflexive, interrogative, relative, demonstrative, and indefinite)
  - (f) principal parts of regular and irregular verbs
  - (g) verb tense (present, past, and future)
  - (h) conjunctions
  - (i) prepositions and prepositional phrases
  - (j) negative words
2. Distinguish among common/proper nouns, concrete/abstract nouns, and collective nouns.

3. Use possessive forms of nouns.
4. Use appositives correctly.
5. Distinguish between transitive and intransitive verbs.
6. Recognize and use direct and indirect objects.
7. Recognize and use predicate nominatives and predicate adjectives.
8. Combine sentences using adjectives, adverbs, and conjunctions.

### **SENTENCE AND PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE:**

The student will identify and apply elements of sentence and paragraph structure.

1. Differentiate between complete and incomplete sentences.
2. Recognize and identify simple, compound, and complex sentences.
3. Identify simple and compound subjects and predicates.
4. Identify run-on sentences.
5. Identify correct use of negative words.
6. Use possessive forms of nouns.
7. Distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information in paragraphs.
8. Sequence sentences in a paragraph.
9. Identify parts of business and friendly letters and envelopes.
10. Write friendly letters, business letters, and address envelopes.
11. Use note-taking skills.
12. Identify correct outline form.
13. Write reports.
14. Proofread and revise writing, making a clean, final copy.
15. Use expanded vocabulary to enhance oral communication.
16. Prepare and deliver oral presentations.
17. Combine sentences using adjectives, adverbs, and conjunctions.

### **SPELLING AND WORD IDENTIFICATION TECHNIQUES**

The student will correctly use word identification and spelling techniques.

1. Use sound/symbol relationships to spell words.
2. Recognize correctly spelled affixed and base words.
3. Recognize correct spelling of contractions.
4. Recognize correct spelling of possessives (nouns/pronouns).
5. Identify correctly spelled homophones within the context of sentences or phrases.

6. Recognize correct spelling of plurals of nouns.
7. Recognize basic site words.
8. Distinguish compound words from polysyllabic words.
9. Divide polysyllabic words into syllables.
10. Use context as a clue to the meaning of unfamiliar words.
11. Use the dictionary as a spelling aid.

### **COMPREHENSION:**

The student will answer questions about a reading selection (literature, science, social studies, and other printed materials).

1. Make comparisons and contrasts.
2. Identify inconsistencies in logic.
3. Read selected material to
  - (a) identify the (stated) main idea
  - (b) identify story details
  - (c) sequence events
  - (d) draw conclusions
  - (e) make inferences based on statements of evidence.
  - (f) make predictions
  - (g) identify cause and effect relationships
  - (h) distinguish fact from opinion
  - (i) identify author's choice of form or purpose
  - (j) identify foreshadowing
  - (k) recognize first and third person narratives
4. Make critical evaluations

### **LITERARY SKILLS:**

The student will identify basic literary forms and read to apply literary skills.

1. Use analogies to describe relationships or situations.
2. Distinguish and interpret figurative language.
3. Distinguish types of sensory language.
4. Identify the theme or central message.
5. Identify forms of literature such as fables, tall tales, novels, short stories, essays, drama, and poetry.
6. Describe plot development in a literary selection.
7. Recognize first and third person narratives.

**REFERENCE STUDY:**

The student will locate and apply information using reference, study, and life skills.

1. Apply dictionary skills.
2. Use the card catalog to locate materials.
3. Locate information in an encyclopedia.
4. Use various reference materials, including a thesaurus.
5. Use parts of a book to locate information.
6. Locate information in telephone directories.
7. Use radio and television schedules.
8. Follow written or graphic (map) directions.
9. Use the dictionary as a spelling aid.
10. Use note-taking skills.
11. Identify parts of business letters and envelopes.

**WRITING:**

The student will demonstrate the ability to use writing skills.

1. Produce logical, clear, concise, and supported essays.
2. Use analogies to describe relationships or situations.
3. Present a set of reasons intended to persuade.
4. Write for different audiences and purposes (to define, explain, inform, or entertain).
5. Business and friendly letters and envelopes.
6. Reports.
7. Comparisons and contrasts.
8. Critical evaluations.
9. Make a neat, final draft after proofreading and revising.

## **Eighth Grade**

### **MECHANICS:**

The student will identify correct capitalization and punctuation.

1. Produce legible cursive handwriting.
2. Identify correct capitalization in dates, addresses, letter parts, proper nouns, proper adjectives, titles, outlines, and quotations.
3. Identify correct use of standard punctuation.

### **LANGUAGE USAGE:**

The student will identify standard usage of the parts of speech.

1. Within the context of phrase(s), sentence(s), or short paragraph(s), identify correct use of the following:
  - (a) agreement (between subject/verb and pronoun/antecedent)
  - (b) comparative and superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs
  - (c) case usage of pronouns
  - (d) types of pronouns (possessive, reflexive, interrogative, demonstrative, and indefinite)
  - (e) noun forms (singular, plural, possessive)
  - (f) principal parts of verbs (regular, irregular, troublesome)
  - (g) verb tense
  - (h) prepositional phrases as modifiers
  - (i) negative words
  - (j) conjunctions
  - (k) interjections
2. Identify and use participles and participial phrases.
3. Identify and use gerunds and gerund phrases.
4. Identify and use infinitives and infinitive phrases.

### **SENTENCE AND PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE:**

The student will identify and apply elements of sentence and paragraph structure.

1. Recognize errors in sentence structure (fragment, run-on, etc.).
2. Combine sentences, avoiding run-ons and comma splices, to form a correctly structured new sentence.
3. Select the correct sequence of sentences to form a paragraph.

4. Analyze sentence structure (simple, compound, complex).
5. Identify correct use of negative words.
6. Identify simple and compound subjects and predicates (natural and inverted order, interrogatives, intervening phrases).
7. Identify parts of friendly letters, business letters, and addressed envelopes.
8. Demonstrate effective oral communication skills.
9. Write and evaluate paragraphs with respect to unity, arrangement of details, and effective use of language.
10. Proofread and revise writing, making a clean, final copy.
11. Identify correct outline form.
12. Prepare and write reports.
13. Write creatively.

### **SPELLING AND WORD IDENTIFICATION TECHNIQUES:**

The student will correctly use word identification and spelling techniques.

1. Use sound/symbol relationships to spell words.
2. Recognize correctly spelled affixed and base words.
3. Recognize correct spelling of contractions.
4. Identify correct forms of possessives (nouns/pronouns).
5. Identify correctly spelled homophones within the context of sentences or phrases.
6. Recognize correct spelling of plurals and nouns.
7. Define and spell common compound words.
8. Recognize multiple meanings of words.
9. Recognize basic sight words.
10. Divide polysyllabic words into syllables.
11. Use context as a clue to determine word meanings.

### **COMPREHENSION:**

The student will answer questions about a reading selection (literature, science, social studies, and other printed materials).

1. Elaborate on an idea.
2. Recognize and define propaganda techniques.
3. Recognize logical fallacies (faulty reasoning, generalization, and rationalization).
4. Read selected material to

- (a) identify the main idea or theme (stated or implied).
- (b) identify story details.
- (c) sequence events.
- (d) draw conclusions.
- (e) make inferences.
- (f) identify cause and effect.
- (g) distinguish fact from opinion.
- (h) identify author's purpose.
- (i) make critical evaluations.
- (j) identify first and third person narratives.
- (k) identify foreshadowing.

### **LITERARY SKILLS:**

The student will identify basic literary forms and read to apply literary skills.

1. Elaborate on an idea.
2. Recognize logical fallacies (faulty reasoning, generalization, rationalization, etc.)
3. Identify first and third person narratives.
4. Distinguish and interpret examples of figurative language.
5. Identify forms of literature such as fables, tall tales, novels short stories, essays, drama, and poetry.
6. Recognize sensory language.
7. Describe plot development in a selection.
8. Summarize a selection.

### **REFERENCE STUDY:**

The student will locate and apply information using reference, study, and life skills.

1. Locate information from various sources.
2. Use parts of a book to locate information.
3. Demonstrate following written or graphic (map) directions.
4. Apply dictionary skills.
5. Identify parts of friendly or business letters and addressed envelopes.

**WRITING:**

The student will demonstrate the ability to use writing skills.

1. Produce logical, clear concise and supported essays.
2. Write for different purposes and audiences:
3. Reports
4. Creative writing
5. Summaries of selections read.
6. First and third person narratives.
7. Defense of opinions.
8. Make a neat, final draft after proofreading and revising.

**APPENDIX B**  
**SURVEY ON TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS IN**  
**WRITING INSTRUCTION**

## **SURVEY ON TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS IN WRITING INSTRUCTION**

**DIRECTIONS:** Please answer the following questions by circling the following numbers for each response:

(5) Always (4) Often (3) Sometimes (2) Rarely (1) Never

1. I expect all my students to master content objectives presented in the class.

(5) Always (4) Often (3) Sometimes (2) Rarely (1) Never

2. I feel confident in overcoming academic problems in the classroom.

(5) Always (4) Often (3) Sometimes (2) Rarely (1) Never

3. My students spend the full class period engaged in academic activities.

(5) Always (4) Often (3) Sometimes (2) Rarely (1) Never

4. In providing instruction, I monitor student practice and provide feedback.

(5) Always (4) Often (3) Sometimes (2) Rarely (1) Never

5. In my classroom, I maintain a smooth flow of activities with few disruptions.

(5) Always (4) Often (3) Sometimes (2) Rarely (1) Never

6. I use informal observation to assess student learning.

(5) Always (4) Often (3) Sometimes (2) Rarely (1) Never

7. I model the learning skills that I want my students to learn.

(5) Always (4) Often (3) Sometimes (2) Rarely (1) Never

8. I require my students to practice learning skills under my supervision.
- (5) Always (4) Often (3) Sometimes (2) Rarely (1) Never
9. I pace instruction according to the varying abilities of my students within a class.
- (5) Always (4) Often (3) Sometimes (2) Rarely (1) Never
10. I use praise to reinforce learning.
- (5) Always (4) Often (3) Sometimes (2) Rarely (1) Never
11. I give my students opportunities to write every week.
- (5) Always (4) Often (3) Sometimes (2) Rarely (1) Never
12. I give my students feedback on their writing performance.
- (5) Always (4) Often (3) Sometimes (2) Rarely (1) Never
13. My students participate in timed-writing exercises.
- (5) Always (4) Often (3) Sometimes (2) Rarely (1) Never
14. I teach my students the concepts of prewriting, writing, and revision.
- (5) Always (4) Often (3) Sometimes (2) Rarely (1) Never
15. I require my students to engage in prewriting activities, such as brain-storming, freewriting, clustering, or outlining.
- (5) Always (4) Often (3) Sometimes (2) Rarely (1) Never
16. My students participate in journal writing.
- (5) Always (4) Often (3) Sometimes (2) Rarely (1) Never

17. I require my students to develop a topic sentence in each paragraph.
- (5) Always (4) Often (3) Sometimes (2) Rarely (1) Never
18. I teach my students to develop supporting sentences in each paragraph.
- (5) Always (4) Often (3) Sometimes (2) Rarely (1) Never
19. I require my students to write clear, error free sentences according to the accepted conventions of standard English.
- (5) Always (4) Often (3) Sometimes (2) Rarely (1) Never
20. I teach my students to revise their writing.
- (5) Always (4) Often (3) Sometimes (2) Rarely (1) Never
21. I conduct writing workshops, in which I guide my students through the process of revision.
- (5) Always (4) Often (3) Sometimes (2) Rarely (1) Never
22. I teach my students to revise their writing for criteria such as content, organization, focus, coherency, and precision of word choice.
- (5) Always (4) Often (3) Sometimes (2) Rarely (1) Never
23. When I assign a composition, I give my students a specific audience and purpose to address.
- (5) Always (4) Often (3) Sometimes (2) Rarely (1) Never

**APPENDIX C**  
**T-CAP WRITING ASSESSMENT**  
**HOLISTIC SCALE**

## **T-CAP WRITING ASSESSMENT HOLISTIC SCALE**

The assessment tool used by the Tennessee State Department of Education State Testing and Evaluation Center to evaluate student writing samples is a six-point holistic scale. The six possible scores are as follows:

- 6 -- Outstanding
- 5 -- Strong
- 4 -- Competent
- 3 -- Limited
- 2 -- Flawed
- 1 -- Deficient

For a writing sample to be scored as proficient, a score must be a 4 or higher. The following is the Tennessee Holistic Scoring Criteria, in its entirety, as determined by the State Testing and Evaluation Center.

### **SCORE OF 6**

A 6 paper is **OUTSTANDING**. It demonstrates a high degree of proficiency in response to the assignment but may have a few minor errors.

An essay in this category:

- is well organized and coherently developed
- clearly explains or illustrates key ideas

- demonstrates syntactic variety
- clearly displays facility in the use of language
- is generally free from errors in mechanics, usage, and sentence structure

### **SCORE OF 5**

A 5 paper is STRONG. It demonstrates clear proficiency in response to the assignment and may have minor errors.

An essay in this category:

- is generally well organized and coherently developed
- explains or illustrates key ideas
- demonstrates some syntactic variety
- displays facility in the use of language
- is generally free from errors in mechanics, usage, and sentence structure

### **SCORE OF 4**

A 4 paper is COMPETENT. It demonstrates proficiency in response to the assignment.

An essay in this category:

- is adequately organized and developed
- explains or illustrates some of the key ideas
- demonstrates adequate facility in the use of language
- may display some errors in mechanics, usage, or sentence structure

### **SCORE OF 3**

A 3 paper is LIMITED. It demonstrates some degree of proficiency in response to the assignment but is clearly flawed.

An essay in this category reveals one or more of the following weaknesses:

- inadequate organization or development
- inadequate explanation or illustration of key ideas
- limited or inappropriate word choice
- a pattern or accumulation of errors in mechanics, usage, or sentence structure

### **SCORE OF 2**

A 2 paper is FLAWED. It demonstrates limited proficiency in response to the assignment.

An essay in this category reveals one or more of the following weaknesses:

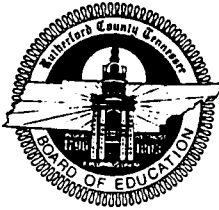
- weak organization or very little development
- little or no relevant detail
- serious errors in mechanics, usage, sentence structure, or word choice

### **SCORE OF 1**

A 1 paper is DEFICIENT. It demonstrates fundamental deficiencies in writing skills.

An essay in this category contains serious and persistent writing errors or is incoherent or is undeveloped.

**APPENDIX D**  
**LETTERS OF APPROVAL**



ROY L. RAGSDALE, Ph.D., Superintendent  
FRED HOBBS, Chairman

**RUTHERFORD COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION**

502 Memorial Boulevard • Murfreesboro, TN 37129  
Telephone (615) 893-5812 • Fax (615) 898-7940

E. A. BOWMAN • TOM DELBRIDGE • BILL HARRISON • JIM MCKEE • NANNIE RUCKER • CHRIS WYRE

December 18, 1995

To Whom It May Concern:

I have been informed of the study "An Examination of the Effectiveness of the Middle School English Curriculum in Rutherford County Schools." I realize that the study includes an examination of the English curriculum guide, a questionnaire administered to English teachers to determine effectiveness of instruction, and an examination of students scores on the state writing assessment test administered in February of 1996. I hereby authorize Patrick L. White to proceed forth in the study.

Sincerely,

Roy L. Ragsdale  
Superintendent of Schools

jm

Dedicated to Youth...Committed to Excellence...United to Serve



# Central Middle School

701 East Main Street, Murfreesboro, Tennessee 37130

1-615-893-8262 \* Fax 1-615-898-7964

December 16, 1995

To Whom It May Concern:

As the principal of Central Middle School, I have been informed of the study "An Examination of the Effectiveness of the Middle School English Curriculum in Rutherford County Schools" and do hereby authorize Patrick L. White to proceed forth in the study. I understand the participation of human subjects in the study. I understand that data collection will require the participation of human subjects in the use of a questionnaire to examine the effectiveness of English instruction.

Sincerely,

*William H. Vaughn*

William H. Vaughn, Principal

*William H. Vaughn, Principal*  
*Julia Maddux, Assist. Principal & William P. Murphy, Assist. Prin.*

Phone 459-8934

SMYRNA

DONALD L. JERNIGAN  
Principal

.....MIDDLE.....

SCHOOL

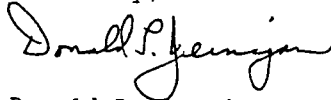
Post Office Box 967  
SMYRNA, TENNESSEE 37167

January 5, 1996

To Whom It May Concern:

I have been informed of the study, "An Examination of the Effectiveness of the Middle School English Curriculum in Rutherford County Schools." I realize that the study includes an examination of the English curriculum guide, English instruction (with the use of a questionnaire given to the teachers), and student outcomes in response to the curriculum. As principal of Smyrna Middle School, I authorize Patrick L. White to proceed forth in the study.

Sincerely,



Donald L. Jernigan, Principal

## VITA

Patrick Lannom White was born in Hattiesburg, Mississippi on April 21, 1967. He attended elementary school in Murfreesboro, Tennessee and graduated from Oakland High School in May of 1985. He attended Middle Tennessee State University, where he received the Bachelor of Science in English in May of 1990.

In the fall of 1990, he accepted a teaching position with the Marion County School System. In the fall of 1991, he began teaching English at Central Middle School in Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

In August of 1992 he received his Master of Education degree from Middle Tennessee State University. In August of 1993, he received his Specialist of Education degree. In June of 1994, he began his enrollment in the doctoral program at The University of Tennessee.

During his residency as a doctoral student, he was a graduate assistant to Dr. Everett Meyer, serving as an intern supervisor in Lenoir City High School, Lenoir City Middle School, Alcoa High School, Maryville High School, Maryville Middle School, and Bearden High School.

He is a member of the National Council of the Teachers of English, Phi Kappa Phi, and Phi Delta Kappa. He continues teaching English at Central Middle School, where he serves as chairman of the English Writing Committee and co-sponsor of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.