

WRITING INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE BOX: YOUTH EXPERIENCES IN A COMMUNITY WRITING WORKSHOP

Heather K. Olson Beal

Stephen F. Austin State University

Chrissy J. Cross

Stephen F. Austin State University

Lauren E. Burrow

Stephen F. Austin State University

Amber E. Wagnon

Stephen F. Austin State University

Abstract

The STAAR high-stakes writing assessment influences classroom instruction and assessment practices in secondary level writing classrooms across Texas. As such, the authors and researchers, who are also parents of school-aged children in Texas as well as teacher educators, have noticed a change in the approach to teaching writing in some Texas ELA classrooms. This adaptation to the STAAR high-stakes writing assessment inspired the authors to research how youth participants in a free community writing workshop responded to an alternative writing environment. This qualitative research study examined the types of writing the youth participants produced in the writing workshop, the difference between the curriculum and environment of the writing workshop and a traditional ELA writing class, and the experiences of the youth participants in the workshop. Findings from this research suggest important lessons for preservice teachers and for educator preparation programs--namely, that curricular and assessment practices which mirror the STAAR high-stakes writing assessment may not contribute to positive student writing experiences--and suggest that adopting a non-traditional approach to designing writing environments may allow secondary level students to increase their writing productivity and enjoyment of writing.

Keywords: STAAR writing assessments, non-traditional educational settings

As teacher educators at a public university in Texas, our program prepares future EC-12 and secondary level teachers. A core part of teacher certification in Texas is training teacher candidates in disciplinary literacy, or advanced literary instruction embedded within content-area courses. One three-credit course (out of 24 total credits) in our program is dedicated to reading and writing strategies. Thus, we engage all of our preservice teacher candidates—regardless of the content area in which they are seeking certification—to incorporate the New Literacies which frame literacy as multifaceted, multimodal, and as a social and critical pedagogy within all subject matter (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, Castek, & Henry, 2017). Our program also focuses on reflective practice, which means that regular and structured reflection on context, identity, research, and pedagogy is built into the preservice teacher curriculum (Beauchamp, 2015).

Throughout our program, but particularly in our disciplinary literacy course, our preservice teacher candidates share important lessons with us and with each other about their reading and writing experiences as EC-12 students. Some of these

lessons trouble us, both as parents of EC-12 students and as teacher educators. First, many report—in reflective essays and in class discussions—that they do not enjoy reading or writing, a reality which has been documented in research (Palacio, 2010). Sometimes, our preservice teachers (sophomores and juniors in college) admit that they have never read a book cover-to-cover. Second, they report that they had little to no experience at the secondary level with creative writing and, more recently, that they only learned and practiced writing during STAAR-writing-tested years. All of the writing they produced in middle and high school was expository and in preparation for STAAR test writing prompts. Third, their writing abilities are often very poor—both in terms of mechanics and more subjective things like voice and tone, etc.

In program meetings where we evaluate student data and work samples, we continued to circle back to the sharp differences between the writing skills and attitudes towards writing displayed by our preservice teacher candidates and the writing skills and attitudes displayed by middle school and high school students with whom we work during Barrio Writers, an annual free community writing workshop originally developed by Sarah Rafael García. These disparate experiences prompted us to conduct a qualitative research study to explore the ways in which the summer writing workshop diverged from traditional schooling practices. The broad research questions with which we began are as follows:

- 1) In what ways does the Barrio Writers curriculum and pedagogy differ from what participants experience in traditional Texas public school settings?
- 2) What kinds of writing do the youth participants produce in a non-traditional learning environment?
- 3) How do youth participants experience the Barrio Writers writing workshop?

Findings from this study suggest potential shifts in English Language Arts classroom practice to help secondary students produce more meaningful writing and to enjoy the writing process.

Background: Writing Environment in Texas Public Schools

In order to understand the writing environments which our summer Barrio Writers participants experience(d) in Texas public schools, we briefly review two relevant strands of research about secondary-level writing in public schools: (a) the impact of high-stakes testing on writing instruction and assessment in Texas secondary schools and (b) the difference between learning to write and writing to learn (Sorcinelli & Elbow, 1997).

First, high-stakes testing has far-reaching effects on school climate, curriculum, and assessment practices. In Texas, while newly adopted TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) (Texas Education Agency, 2018) indicate that writing should take place “on a daily basis with opportunities for cross-curricular content and student choice,” the state-mandated STAAR testing emphasis often forces teachers and schools to teach to the test (Anagnostopoulos, 2003; Neill, 2003; Jones, Jones, & Hargrove, 2003). In Applebee and Langer’s (2011) study, when high school teachers were asked about the importance of standardized tests, “state exams [were] rated as important or very important by 65.6%, followed by district exams (47.7%), SATs and ACTs (45.7%), and Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate exams (30.4%)” (p. 17). Hillocks (2002) finds that while states like Oregon use assessments which include work samples and portfolios, this “emphasis on thinking, problem solving and reasoning” is not seen in Texas legislation that dictates test material. Furthermore, Hillock’s research suggests that, in Texas, teachers and administrators overwhelmingly see the “testing program as successful in improving writing,” thus suggesting that the test becomes the standard by which teachers judge “the boundaries of knowledge about composition and stipulates what should be taught” (p. 86). Indeed, in our local area, writing is only taught and practiced during STAAR-tested years. Applebee and Langer (2011) also found that teachers prepared their students for high-stakes exams by utilizing the “types of question that appear on the exam, and using sample questions from old exams or commercial practice materials that present similar items” and through “frequent use of rubrics or scoring systems similar to those that will be used on the exam” (p. 18). This means that students are often limited to writing that correlates with the high-stakes testing they will encounter at the end of the school year.

Second, research suggests that these kinds of restrictive environments are more closely aligned with learning to write rather than writing to learn (Sorcinelli & Elbow, 1997). Learning to write is a form of high-stakes writing that is most often associated with an academic activity. This type of writing is evaluated or graded by someone in a position of power over the author (the student) and can therefore create anxiety for both teachers and students (Sorcinelli & Elbow, 1997).

Mosley (2011) found that “high school students write mainly to conform . . . they want to know exactly how many words they need to write . . . and whether or not they are allowed to say ‘I’ in their piece” (p. 59). Applebee and Langer (2011) also noted that:

on average, only three percent of lesson time was devoted to longer writing requiring the student to produce a paragraph of coherent text. Personal and creative uses of writing had little place in the high school curriculum, occupying less than one half of one percent of lesson time (p. 30).

Apple and Langer (2011) contend that today’s students are not presented “with opportunities to use composing as a way to think through the issues, to show the depth or breadth of their knowledge, or to go beyond what they know in making connections and raising new issues” (p. 16). In these writing situations, the goal is utilizing a uniform process to create a specified product, which is what students will be asked to produce for a test like STAAR. For students, high-stakes learning to write means that they are placed in writing situations that are artificial and restrictive.

However, writing does not have to be a high-stakes undertaking; instead, it can be an activity for exploring and experimenting with ideas, feelings, and language. This type of writing is known as writing to learn. When employing writing to learn, “the goal is not so much to produce excellent pieces of writing as to increase how much students think about, understand, and learn” various topics (Sorcinelli & Elbow, 1997, p. 192). Writing to learn, a process-based pedagogy, employs strategies such as collaboration, time for self-evaluation, and production of multiple drafts. Process-based writing pedagogy is founded on the principle that “knowing how to compose (process) results in better-prepared writers than simply knowing what to compose (product), because research has indicated that good writers exhibit effective composing processes” (Blyler, 1987, p. 51). The process approach to writing includes two foundational principles: (1) student ownership through reflection and evaluation and (2) collaboratively working with peers (Blyler, 1987, Graham & Sandmel, 2011). Writing to learn, a highly social and active pedagogy, emphasizes working collaboratively, with peers and instructors, to evaluate and revise written work. This is the type of writing youth participants were encouraged to pursue while in Barrio Writers.

Study Context: Barrio Writers Writing Workshop

The Barrio Writers summer writing workshop is free and open to youth ages 13-21. The program focuses on recruiting youth from historically underrepresented populations but does not turn anyone away. In the year during which this study took place, we had 21 participants (ages 13-18) from four school districts in one rural East Texas county. Participants included 7 African Americans, 11 whites, 1 Latino, and 2 no race specified; 12 participants identified as female and 9 identified as male. Purposeful opportunistic sampling (Patton, 1990) included all the individuals who participated in the Barrio Writers workshop and consented to being part of the research group.

The week-long workshop, held at a public university campus in Texas, is staffed by three teacher education faculty members and one staff member. Each workshop day centers around a theme and includes daily freewriting periods, group readings and discussions, and a sharing/constructive feedback session. The workshop also includes a field trip to a local arts venue, a performance by a local guest artist/writer, and a visit from a college admissions officer. At the end of the workshop week, the youth participants hold a public reading for their family and community members during which they read a creative writing piece(s) they completed during the workshop. Each student has a piece published in an annual *Barrio Writers* anthology that includes creative writing across all chapters in Texas and California.

Research Design

Qualitative research methodology (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, Allen, 1993) best fit the researchers’ open-ended research questions and the naturalistic setting of the research. As Merriam (1994) stated, “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 5). A heuristic case study (Merriam, 1994) approach was determined to be the best research design, since the goal of heuristic case study is to produce a narrative for the reader to understand a particular phenomenon—in this case, the week-long Barrio Writers writing workshop. The four authors, who

played the dual roles of researcher and writing advisers, acted as participant observers (Spradley, 1980). The researchers obtained IRB approval from the university to ensure ethical treatment of human subjects.

Data sources included daily researchers' observation and reflective journaling completed by the faculty members as participant researchers during and after the workshop; faculty member participation in a self-study focus group a week after the workshop to debrief and deconstruct our experiences; artifacts from the workshop participants (including author bios and completed writing pieces); participant pre- and post-surveys; faculty analysis of the workshop syllabus and teaching strategies; and reflective responses from participants at the end of the workshop. These data sources were gathered and compiled during and after the workshop in order to capture the Barrio Writers phenomenon. These data sources were chosen according to the guidelines for naturalistic research described by Erlandson et al. (1993), who stated, "There are basically four general sources that the researcher utilized in naturalistic research: interviews, observations, documents, and artifacts (p. 85)."

After the workshop, all of the data was independently analyzed using the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) with modified grounded theory and open coding to identify emergent themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Each researcher compiled a document which listed their primary codes and themes arising from the data along with the source of evidences for those codes and themes. All four researchers then compared their individual analyses and collaboratively discussed common categories and themes using Kincheloe's bricolage as the format for the analysis and to determine findings (Kincheloe, 2001; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Triangulation among data sources, persistent observation, thick description, reflexive journaling, peer debriefing, and independent analysis ensured theoretical saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) in order to produce trustworthy findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Findings and Discussion

Several important themes emerged from the triangulated independent data analysis process regarding the kinds of writing the youth participants produced and their perceptions of the writing environment. One finding emerging from the independent researcher observations, writing adviser focus groups, reflexive journals and participant surveys suggests that the Barrio Writers curriculum differs significantly from participants' traditional secondary school experiences. In contrast with the state-mandated TEKS and STAAR testing framework, the Barrio Writers curriculum is student-centered, flexible, culturally responsive, and linked to current issues—local, state, national, and global—that are relevant to participants' lives. Writing advisers collaboratively selected writing pieces for collective readings and discussions that centered around a theme for each workshop day. The daily themes for the workshop during the study were as follows: Deconstructing Oppression; Using All Language in Writing; Identity: Who Are You?; Language/Codeswitching; Your Voice is your Weapon. This environment is reflective of the writing to learn perspective, as it was an open environment that offered participants an opportunity to participate in "exploratory writing about a question or topic," but not a specific prompt or assignment (Sorcinelli & Elbow, 1997, p. 194).

Each workshop day (which lasted for three hours) followed a similar pattern. The workshop began with a 15-20 minute free-writing period, followed by a group reading and discussion period of 45-60 minutes, and then another 60-minute reading and writing period. Sorcinelli and Elbow (1997) argue that low stakes writing which occurs through freewriting can increase writers' fluency and confidence, as it provides them with an opportunity to take risks without judgement. The remainder of the available minutes was allotted for visits from guest speakers, snack breaks, and housekeeping issues. The participants spent approximately 60 minutes each day engaged in some form of writing. In the independent analysis of the Barrio Writers schedule, artifacts, researcher observations, and reflective journals, all of the researchers, who have had significant experience teaching in K-12 public school settings, noticed that the learning environment was much different from a traditional school environment. This finding was also supported by the Barrio Writer participants survey responses.

An important component of the Barrio Writers curriculum is its focus on writers of color and LGBTQIA writers who are often excluded from traditional English Language Arts classrooms. During our study, some of the authors whose work we read included the following: Malcolm X, Tupac (a rapper), Jamila Lyiscott (a social justice education scholar), and

several pieces from writers from other Barrio Writers chapters in Texas and California. When asked to identify aspects of the writing workshop that contributed the most to their learning, participants named particular texts we had read--such as “The Rose that Grew from Concrete” by Tupac—as well as two pieces we read by participants in our own local Barrio Writers chapters: “Gatsby by Ms. Alicia” (a writing adviser), and “the poem by Phoenix” (a participant from a previous year who wrote about being lonely and about grappling to come to terms with his identity). One participant said she liked that we read “our own writings and . . . former [Barrio Writers workshop] writers.”

A second finding is a divergence between the writing expectations imposed in traditional public-school classrooms and those imposed by the Barrio Writers summer workshop. In traditional school classrooms, STAAR writing tests, which are administered at grades 4 and 7 and in English I, II, and III, require students to write two compositions addressing specific purposes for writing. Students are provided one 26-line box on a page to write each composition, depending on the writing size of the child, on average this is approximately 250 words, if every line is used. While students may use all 26 lines to respond to each prompt, they cannot write more than 26 lines. Students are not allowed to add lines inside the box or to write outside the box. The high school tests are also timed: five hours to complete both the reading and writing portions of the exam. STAAR writing selections include literary nonfiction, expository, and persuasive writing. Furthermore, the focus of writing instruction is on STAAR preparation, which means that it includes only expository and persuasive writing in response to teacher- or test-selected readings and writing prompts.

In Barrio Writers, the expectations for student writing are simple: students need to write. Writing advisers did not impose any restrictions on participants’ writing, a contrast from the learning to write framework fostered by the STAAR-test learning environment. There are no minimum or maximum word limits, no required genres or formats, and no emphasis on grammar, spelling, or syntax. Participants were able to choose their own topics. Writing advisers did not censor student language or topic choice. The goal was simply for participants to use writing as a tool to express themselves and to advocate for themselves and for other youth and to produce at least one creative writing piece to share with the community and for publication. This aligns with Sorcinelli and Elbow’s (1997) belief that when utilizing a writing to learn approach, teachers should “urge students not to struggle too much to try to get the thoughts exactly right or the writing good,” but instead teachers should make it clear that the writing is for exploring and processing” (p. 1945).

The year we conducted this research study, all 21 Barrio Writers participants completed at least one writing piece (i.e., poem, narrative, nonfiction essay, or short story). Eleven participants completed one piece; nine participants completed 2-3 pieces, and one participant completed nine pieces. The writing pieces they submitted to the writing advisers ranged in length from 149 words to 2,447 words. Taken collectively, the participants averaged 630 written words, which is double the amount of words minimally required by the STAAR writing assessment. This does not count writing they produced independently and did not submit to the writing advisers. The table below shows the types of writing that the participants produced. The researchers independently examined each writing artifact and identified the genre of the artifact. The independent analyses were then compared, and the results of that triangulation are summarized in Table 1. Not one participant—when given complete freedom over their writing—chose to write expository or persuasive writing, which is the sole focus of their writing expectations at school.

Table 1
Types of Writing Produced

Poetry	Expository Essay	Persuasive Writing	Narrative Nonfiction	Short Story
28	0	0	7	8

In addition to identifying the types of writing the youth participants voluntarily produced, we also analyzed the student writing pieces for emergent themes. Again, individual analyses of student artifacts and triangulation were used to identify the themes present within the student writing artifacts. Fourteen of the twenty-one participants wrote pieces about the following themes, many of which echoed the themes of the writing pieces we collectively read during the workshop:

self-empowerment, self-love, self-discovery, conquering personal struggles, and overcoming fear. The participants' choice of themes and topics suggests a desire to write to learn about themselves, their socio-emotional identities, and their methods of coping with their environments and communities. This is a drastic contrast to the strict parameters of the STAAR ELA writing assessment, which only allows students to write expository or persuasive pieces, as well as many traditional ELA classroom curricula which similarly focus on expository or persuasive writing because that is what is tested on the STAAR writing assessments.

Another finding is that Barrio Writers participants were able to identify and elaborate upon several aspects of the Barrio Writers writing experiences that diverged from their traditional schooling experiences. First, when the participants were asked to identify in a post-experience survey what contributed the most to their productive writing during the Barrio Writers workshop, most named the egalitarian, open learning environment. The Barrio Writers learning space is intentionally focused on creating an environment with a diminished power hierarchy between youth participants and writing advisers. Many traditional classroom rules are deliberately set aside to promote a more relaxed environment, such as allowing freedom of movement, allowing youth participants to listen to music while writing, and not requiring them to do things like raise their hands before speaking. One participant said that Barrio Writers was “way more laid back than a usual school environment.” One participant said, “We got to call them (writing advisers) by their first names. They didn’t get upset at outbursts and [we] didn’t have to raise our hands.”

Several participants in the post-experience survey identified freedom of expression as significant to their learning during the Barrio Writers workshop. One said, “We were free to express ourselves without censorship” and another said, “Barrio Writers is very different. There are no wrong answers and no judgment.” This open learning environment may also be attributed to the process-based writing pedagogy that we employed in Barrio Writers, as such an approach “stresses that it is *essential*, not optional or merely desirable, that at least the instructor and often other members of the class respond to and provide feedback on each stage of the process” (Barnhisel, Stoddard, & Gorman, 2012, p.464). The Barrio Writers writing advisers worked to “create a supportive and nonthreatening writing environment,” as required for a process-based writing. This environment was memorable for the participants.

A second difference identified by participants in the post-experience survey, researchers' observations, reflexive journals and focus groups is the sense of community in Barrio Writers—which is a central tenet of the program and the literal meaning behind the word “barrio” (community). In just one short week, participants and writing advisers developed a community of peers. We discussed, collaborated, experienced, encouraged, critiqued, and performed with each other. All participants in the workshop were expected to participate and were called upon to participate actively. In post-workshop surveys, many participants referenced genuine relationships with co-participants and with writing advisers as important. For instance, one participant noted that the thing that contributed most to their productive writing was “being able to talk to people that have the same passion.” Another mentioned that we were “positive” and “opening up to each other” as being contributing factors. Five participants identified the “writing advisers” as being key to the learning experience for them. This connection between the writing advisers and the Barrio Writers participants was also documented in the observations of the researchers, and again in the reflexive journals and focus groups.

Participants also noted in the post-experience survey that they enjoyed and benefited from the group discussions and collaborative writing experiences that are part of the Barrio Writers curriculum. One participant responded, “I enjoyed doing collaborative writing with everyone else” while another echoed: “Working together as a group assignment. I love meeting new people at Barrio Writers.” Another noted that collaborative writing was new to them and said, “I’m used to working alone by myself, but it is fun to work together as a group.” These findings suggest that community building activities, overlapping with the relaxed, “unstructured” environment that encouraged dialogue and discussion and sharing of ideas and writing, created a safe space in which to live and to work. A process-based pedagogy can enable student ownership through reflection, evaluation, and collaboration (Blyler, 1987; Graham & Sandmel, 2011). The collaboration between peers and writing advisers that occurred over just a week of Barrio Writers seemed to enable the writers to feel less restricted and experience unique interactions with their peers. Data analysis suggests that through these interactions, a community was created that connected participants to work with others in new ways that were impactful and positive.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Practice

Findings from this research study suggest a number of valuable practical applications for classroom practice—not just in English Language Arts classrooms, but across the secondary level curriculum. First, expanding student choice in the curriculum is key. Findings from this study suggest that ELA teachers need to provide a wider range of genre options for students to write about in addition to expository, literary, and persuasive. Applications of this finding include other content areas as well which could benefit from expanding the state-mandated expectations and requirements to include more variety and student choice. Second, there is a real need to provide instruction and assessment that are authentic and that could take place within real contexts, both within and outside the traditional school walls. For our Barrio Writers participants, the Barrio Writers experience is writing for a real purpose (i.e., self-expression and for eventual publication in an annual anthology) and for real audiences (i.e., the concluding literary reading and future readers of the published book). Barrio Writers is a welcome departure from the writing they do in school, which is inauthentic, for a purpose that is not meaningful to them (i.e., receiving a state test score), and for an audience they will never see and with whom they will never interact (i.e., the STAAR test graders). Third, findings from this study suggest that there is a lot of opportunity to expand collaborative writing work, a strategy which our participants had never experienced. Traditional schooling promotes independent work and may not equip students with how to work successfully as a team—perhaps especially in writing. Fourth, findings from this study highlight the importance of listening to student voice. Teachers should look to students’ culture and current social issues to frame learning activities across the curriculum in order to meet the needs of diverse student populations. Teachers should seek ways to expand opportunities for students to talk to each other and to their teachers through writing, uncensored and without the worry about receiving a grade or suggestions for improvement.

As teacher educators who are preparing the rising generation of Texas teachers, we empathize with Texas teachers who face enormous pressure from the state legislature and their district administrators to ensure their students’ success on high-stakes tests. Additionally, we are troubled by studies, like Kiuvara, Graham, and Hawken’s (2009), which found that 71% of teachers surveyed said they “received minimal to no preparation to teach writing during college (preservice preparation)”; 44% of inservice teachers reported minimal additional on-the-job professional development. As teacher educators who want to prepare our teacher candidates to be effective writing teachers and to encourage writing across the curriculum in their future classrooms, findings from this study suggest several important steps educator preparation programs can take. First, teacher educators can be intentional about the texts we select for our courses. As we strive to do in Barrio Writers, teacher educators can choose texts written by youth, by women, and by writers of color to both inspire their preservice teachers and to further prepare them to successfully work with diverse student populations. Second, teacher educators can consider modeling the kinds of practices identified by youth participants as being significant to their growth as writers and as learners. For us, in our teacher education courses, that means that we start our classes with what some of us call a “power write”—an approximately 5 minute period where students free-write about the topic of the day or about an assigned text. We try to choose creative writing pieces written by youth, when possible, that link to our curricular topics (i.e., a piece of writing where a youth author talks about the impact of language on their identity or how a teacher or the school environment affects them). In our professional experience, these kinds of texts capture our preservice teachers’ attention more effectively than textbook chapters and articles. Third, we encourage our preservice teachers to critically analyze state standards and research-based best practices in writing instruction and identify where they converge and diverge. We also encourage and provide them opportunities to practice advocating for or against local, state, and federal policies and laws that will impact their future students by contacting legislators and responding to public feedback opportunities on matters relevant to public education in general and to ELAR teaching in particular.

Findings from this research echo other extant research, which suggests that the emphasis on high-stakes testing creates a stressful and restrictive learning environment in conflict with a writing to learn framework. Despite this unfortunate reality, we are encouraged by our experiences in the Barrio Writers summer writing workshop and by this study’s findings and strive to equip our preservice teacher candidates with practical ways to transform their future classrooms to create empowering, community spaces where students can enjoy writing and learn to use writing to express themselves and to advocate for themselves and other youth.

References

- Anagnostopoulos, D. (2003). The new accountability, student failure, and teachers' work in urban high schools. *Educational Policy, 17*(3), 291-316.
- Applebee, A., & Langer, J. (2011). "EJ" Extra: A snapshot of writing instruction in middle schools and high schools. *The English Journal, 100*(6), 14-27.
- Barnhisel, G., Stoddard, E., & Gorman, J. (2012). Incorporating process-based writing pedagogy into first-year learning communities: Strategies and outcomes. *The Journal of General Education, 61*(4), 461-487.
- Beauchamp, C. (2015). Reflection in teacher education: Issues emerging from a review of current literature. *Reflective Practice, 16*(1), 123-141.
- Blyler, N. R. (1987). Process-based pedagogy in professional writing. *Journal of Business Communication, 24*(1), 51-60.
- Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (2000). *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Erlandson, D. A., Harris, E. L., Skipper, B. L., & Allen, S. D. (1993). *Doing naturalistic inquiry: A guide to methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Rutgers, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Graham, S., & Sandmel, K. (2011). The process writing approach: A meta-analysis. *The Journal of Educational Research, 104*(6), 396-407.
- Hillocks, G. (2002). *The testing trap: How state writing assessments control learning*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Jones, M. G., Jones, B. D., & Hargrove, T. Y. (2003). *The unintended consequences of high-stakes testing*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Kincheloe, J. L. (2001). Describing the bricolage: Conceptualizing a new rigor in qualitative research. *Qualitative inquiry, 7*(6), 679-692.
- Kiuhara, S. A., Graham, S., & Hawken, L. S. (2009). Teaching writing to high school students: A national survey. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 101*(1), 136-160.
- Leu, D. J., Kinzer, C. K., Coiro, J., Castek, J., & Henry, L. A. (2017). New Literacies: A dual-level theory of the changing nature of literacy, instruction, and assessment. *Journal of Education, 197*(2), 1-18.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalist inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Merriam, S. B. (1994). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education. Revised and expanded from "Case study research in education."* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers
- Mosley, M. (2011). The truth about high school English. In P. Sullivan & H. Tinberg (Eds.), *What is college level writing?* (pp. 58-68). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Neill, M. (2003). Leaving children behind: How *No Child Left Behind* will fail our children. *Phi Delta Kappan, 85*(3): 225-228.
- Palacio, K. (2010). *Re-centering students' attitudes about writing: A qualitative study of the effects of a high school writing center*. Master's thesis. Nova Southeastern University. Retrieved from NSU Works, Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences. (2) http://nsuworks.nova.edu/writing_etd/2.
- Patton, M.Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sorcinelli, M., & Elbow, P. (1997). Writing to learn: Strategies for assigning and responding to writing across the disciplines (Jossey-Bass higher and adult education series). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Spradley, J. P. (1980). *Participant observation*. New York: Wadsworth Thomson Learning.
- Texas Education Agency. (2018). Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills: English. Retrieved from <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter110/ch110c.html#110.38>