Status of Writing Instruction In Kentucky Public Schools

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Introduction

Senate Bill 1 (SB1), enacted in 2010 by the Kentucky General Assembly (Kentucky General Assembly, 2010), a bill to provide for substantial improvements in education in the Commonwealth, required numerous activities by Kentucky education agencies, including the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), The Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE), and the Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB). Among its numerous provisions was a requirement for EPSB to conduct a study of writing. In the words of the statute, EPSB was required to “Analyze current requirements at the pre-service level for writing instruction and determine how writing instruction for prospective teachers can be enhanced or improved.”

The statutory language as written does not prescribe a specific methodology to be undertaken by EPSB. As it is written, it is very broad, and could encompass many different methods and numerous studies. As we contemplated how to meet this requirement and performed a preliminary review of what is known about the subject, we came to the conclusion that not enough is known about the relative effectiveness of particular methods for teaching writing to make it possible to develop specific recommendations on the basis of the available research literature alone. We opted instead to empirically identify those teachers in the Commonwealth who were more successful at teaching writing, and investigate whether there were consistent patterns of educational background or classroom practices that might account for their success. If such patterns exist, then these would serve as the basis for recommendation to teacher preparation programs. Additionally, we decided to survey Kentucky-approved teacher preparation programs, to determine what current practices for training teachers in writing instruction were already in place.

Empirical evaluation of the success of teachers of writing has only recently become possible in Kentucky. The problems of evaluating teacher performance are well-known, and have become the subject of an extensive literature in the past decade, as “value-added” methodology has become increasingly popular as a solution to the conceptual and statistical problems of evaluating performance in an environment in which variables at different levels are often conflated (Hibpshman, 2004). The problem in Kentucky until recently has been that although Kentucky has enjoyed an excellent shared statewide data infrastructure for some time, the state did not have a consistent student identifier until recently, and class roster records were not available at any central source. Class rosters could be obtained on a district-by-district or school-by school basis, but the cost of converting the data into a usable dataset was prohibitive. Additionally, because there was no consistent student identifier, matching of student roster records to student assessment records was laborious and error-prone. Since 2007, however, Kentucky has had in place a statewide identifier for each student enrolled in the public schools, and since 2008, has had a statewide database of class roster information.

The present study capitalizes on these improvements in data availability and integrity. With these improvements, we are able to identify the students taught by each teacher in the Commonwealth, and we are able to merge these data with assessment scores from the accountability system. We can then apply regression models to the resulting dataset, to determine whether some teachers are more effective than others at teaching writing. Once these estimates have been created, we can investigate whether there are consistent differences between teachers at different levels of performance.

This paper reports on completion of the various studies conducted in order to meet the legislative requirement. In the first section of the paper, we discuss the field of writing instruction and research trends necessary to an understanding of the problems of developing recommendations for a statewide approach to the teaching of writing. In the second section we discuss the results of the empirical study performed with class roster and student assessment information. In the third section we discuss the results of the survey of writing teachers conducted using the results of the empirical study. In the fourth section we discuss the results of the survey of teacher training programs. In the final section we discuss the implications of these various studies, and make recommendations for improvement in teacher training program preparation of teachers to teach writing.

Section 1

Writing

Writing is a complex activity that occurs in a wide variety of settings, including academic environments, work environments, and social activities (Milian & Camps, 2005). There is reason to believe, based on recent research, that writing is increasingly important to employment, and consequently has significant implications for the life success of individuals and for the economic health of the community generally (College Board, 2003). Employers make hiring decisions in part based on the demonstrated writing skills of applicants, and complain that too many potential employees are unprepared to write at required levels (National Commission on Writing, 2004). Significant numbers of students entering college require remedial writing courses, and the National Assessment of Educational Progress has found consistently in recent years that the majority of test subjects do not write well enough to be classified as proficient (National Assessment of Education Progress, 1995 and 2003). Numerous authors have noted that poor writers are at a significant disadvantage in postsecondary education (Graham & Perin, 2007a).

Writing has been a focus of concern for educational research and programming for some time, especially since the 1980’s, when the grass-roots movement known as Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) first developed (Bazerman et al., 2005). Since that time there has been an increasing body of literature about writing. This body of literature has ranged from research on the most basic elements involved in the writing process, to large-scale research on the performance of particular writing programs and methodologies, to philosophical opinion pieces on the nature of writing and its importance in modern life. Studies in the area have identified a number of successful approaches to promoting good writing and have identified elements associated with success in writing, but have so far failed to generate a well-structured theory of how best to teach writing or even of how to define good writing (Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000; Nauman, Stirling & Borthwick, 2011). We argue here that this failure is a consequence of the great complexity of the writing task.

The complexity of the writing task was described by Kellogg in 2008 as

“ . . . parallel to becoming an expert in other complex cognitive domains. It appears to require more than two decades of maturation, instruction, and training.” (Kellogg, 2008)

Proposed elements associated with this very complex human activity vary from one commentator to another, as do the proposed developmental sequences for how children learn to write. Some authors have found that “mechanical” aspects of language (handwriting, spelling, and the like) are essential to students’ production of written texts, especially early on (Graham et al., 1997; Graham & Harris, 2000; Silva, Abchi & Borzone, 2010; Wagner et al., 2011). They suggest that as mechanical aspects of writing become automated, students have more resources available to focus on text quality. Similarly, a number of authors suggest that “working memory” is an essential resource for writing quality, and that as language fluency and fluency in mechanical aspects of writing develop, more memory resources become available for higher-level features of the writing process (McCutchen, 2011; Kellogg, 2008; Ransdell, Levy & Kellogg, 2002). Numerous authors have suggested the importance of “executive functions” in writing development, an hypothesized set of self-regulatory `mechanisms that develop with age and experience, and permit writers to exercise control over the various mechanisms necessary to the writing process (Hooper et al., 2011; Kellogg, 2008; Vanderberg & Swanson, 2007; Altemeier, Jones, Abbott & Berninger, 2006).

That learning to write follows a developmental sequence is widely accepted. A number of developmental sequences have been proposed, but probably the most popular is that proposed by Bereiter and Scardamalia in 1987 (Negro & Chanquoy, 2005; Silva, Sánchez, Abchi & Borzone. 2010; Yore, Hand, & Prain, 2000). This model proposes that beginning writers simply list what they know (“knowledge telling”), while more experienced writers engage in “knowledge transformation.” Regardless of what particular developmental approach is favored by particular authors, most agree that writing is closely associated with thinking, and see the development of writing skill as paralleled by increasingly sophisticated cognitive performance (Council of Writing Program Administrators, 2011; Kellogg, 2008; Boldt et al., 2011; Deane, 2011; Langer & Applebee, 1987).

There is a substantial literature on the effectiveness or lack of effectiveness of particular approaches to the teaching of writing. Studies have been conducted on a great variety of different specific approaches, such as the 6+1 trait model (Kozlow & Bellamy, 2004); Content Enhancement Routines (Bulgren et al. 2009); Grammar instruction (Jeager, 2011; Negro & Chanquoy, 2005; Hudson, 2001; Andrews, 2006); question-asking strategies (Ulusoy & Dedeoglu, 2011); direct instruction in producing complex syntactic structures (Hillocks, 1987); observation and emulation (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2002); fluency training (Van Gelderen and Oostdam, 2005); training in cognitive strategies (Olson & Land, 2007); process writing (Graham & Perin, 2007) and others. The best conclusion to be drawn from this extensive literature is that although there are some methods – particularly grammar instruction – that cannot be consistently shown to have much positive effect on students’ writing performance, there is a large number of possible methods that do (see for example the extensive review of various methods in Graham and Perin, 2007a).

The multiplicity of possible effective strategies for writing instruction has been used successfully by the National Writing Project (NWP), a network of teacher professional development programs that began in 1974 in California (St. John & Stokes, 2010) and has since become a nationwide effort. NWP has throughout its history not emphasized any single approach to writing instruction, and has evolved as new approaches have become available (Friedrich, 2011). NWP has demonstrated its effectiveness in a number of studies, most sponsored by NWP (National Writing Project 2004, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2010). The various studies reported in the NWP research reports usually used student achievement as a criterion, and demonstrated that participation by teachers in NWP activities generally resulted in better student performance on a number of measures. The important result of these studies, in our view, is that specific methods are less important in general to successful teaching of writing than is a focused and intentional effort to improve the quality of writing instruction. This is not to say that particular approaches may not work better in some environments than others, or that some methods may not be, *ceteris paribus*, generally superior to others.

As noted above, writing has assumed increasing importance in all areas of modern life, and persons with poor writing skills are likely to be disadvantaged in employment or educational efforts. An idea that has developed increasing importance in recent years as an explanation for how writing is expressed in the numerous areas of life where it is important is the concept of *genre*. Genre is not a well-formed concept, but it is of considerable importance in describing the many different types of texts that an individual might be required to produce in the course of working, learning, and engaging in social activities.

There seems to be no single good definition of genre, but the concept is used widely in much of current writing about writing. It is also a concept of importance in a variety of other fields such as linguistics and the arts (Chen, 2008). As a concept in the field of writing instruction, genre refers to the fact that there are many different types of writing tasks, each with its own set of rules, purposes, and modes of discourse. Although writing genres are often described as recurrent and typified solutions to the problems of particularized situations (Spinuzzi, 2010; Deane, 2011), it is undeniably true that they evolve as circumstances change in the settings where they occur. It would be impossible to construct an exhaustive taxonomy of all the genres in use in education and industry, but some authors have done interesting and useful work investigating the genres used in particular circumstances (see for example the excellent study by Devitt in 1991 of the genre of accounting reports, and the Gardner and Nesi (2008) taxonomy of university writing genres).

Although quite a bit of research has been conducted on how genres are learned (Klein & Kirkpatrick, 2010; Karlsson, 2009; Beers, 2011; Purcell-Gates, Duke & Marinteau, 2007; Reiff & Bawarshi, 2011; Spinuzzi, 2010; Tardy, 2006; Tower, 2003), there seems to be very little specific research on the effect of learning one genre on a student’s capacity to learn others. What research is available demonstrates at least that transfer of learning from one genre to another may not be automatic (Reiff & Bawarshi, 2011; Spinuzzi, 2010) although some authors note that previous writing achievement is a good predictor of future achievement (Klein and Kirkpatrick, 2010). The issue of transferability is of particular importance as we consider how best to teach writing in the P-12 system, because if writing competence in one genre is not strongly predictive of ability to learn others, our ability to accurately measure the writing performance of individual students – and *a fortiori* the performance of teachers, schools, and districts that instruct them – may be more limited than we would like. Additionally, we could not then be sure that writing instruction which prepares students for success in postsecondary education would be especially helpful to those students who do not go to college, but must be prepared to function effectively in employment.

The emphasis on preparation for success in college is clear when we consider the development of both national and Kentucky approaches to writing assessment (National Assessment Governing Board, 2010; Kentucky Department of Education 2008b). The frameworks for both tests – one at the national level and one at the state level – specifically target writing skills of importance in postsecondary education. Even then, because both tests emphasize particular genres (persuasive and informational writing), they certainly do not span the possible range of writing tasks necessary even in college. Some studies have shown that assessment methodologies affect how teachers teach (McCarthey, 2008; Baker et al. , 2010; Koretz, 2010). To the extent that our assessment practices focus on a single or a few genres of writing, it is likely that those genres will be emphasized much more in the P-12 system than will others.

The idea that there might be a general writing ability which, when well-trained, would allow persons to perform successfully in a number of different settings, is intuitively appealing. Certainly some of the research reviewed here indicates that there are prerequisites to good writing: the research on the relationship between mechanical aspects of writing, and on the role of working memory and self-regulatory mechanisms in writing, suggests that before an individual can become an effective writer in any genre, s(he) must first master (automatize) the prerequisites. But substantial research seems to imply that no effort to teach A particular genre can hope to adequately prepare students for all of the writing tasks they might encounter in school or work. This implies that writing must be taught in the various circumstances and academic disciplines in which students find themselves, and this is the impetus behind the WAC movement (Bazerman et al., 2005). It is important to remember, however, that different settings differ considerably in the amount of writing necessary to their purposes (Bridgemen & Carlson, 1984), and that there may be a tradeoff between the amount of time devoted to writing instruction and time available for content instruction (Epstein, 1999).

What seems clear from the above review of the literature on writing instruction is that writing instruction should not be confined to what Bazerman et al. call “academic English.” All or nearly all teachers should be involved to some extent in the teaching of writing, and should have some background in writing instruction. This implies at least that preservice programs should assure that prospective teachers are exposed to ideas about the teaching of writing and their responsibility for the writing performance of their students.

Section 2

Empirical Analysis of English/Language Arts Teacher Effectiveness

Methodology

Data

Data for this study come from a variety of sources. We obtained the class rosters from the Kentucky Department of Education for the school years 2008-2010[[1]](#footnote-1), and the CATS student assessment data for the years 2007-2010. These data include the statewide student identifier for students enrolled in P-12 schools, and in the case of the roster data, an identifier for the teacher of each class, which is identical to an identifier in the KDE PSD-MUNIS data system[[2]](#footnote-2). Student identifiers were matched between the class roster and CATS data, and the class titles were extracted for all classes in the dataset. Class titles were then selected if they met the following criteria:

1. They were classes in the English language arts area (Language arts, writing, English, etc.);
2. They were not clearly spelling, reading or grammar classes;
3. They were not theater, speech, or other types of content not likely to be associated with writing.

Our rationale for selected only classes in the Language Arts area was that although we understand and support the idea of teaching writing across the curriculum, we could not be sure from the data supplied to us whether this methodology had been adequately or fully implemented in any of the schools, and had no way of attributing the effect on writing performance of each of several different teachers who had enrolled individual students in their various classes. We could be sure, however, that teachers in the language arts area had some responsibility for teaching writing, and ultimately would be held accountable for the performance of their students. Additionally, since this study hopes to identify teachers at different levels of success in teaching writing, and was not intended to hold any teacher or school accountable for writing instruction, we felt that it was reasonable to focus on teachers in the language arts area.

The resulting dataset included 3476 unique teachers and 184,264 unique students.

Teacher id’s from these classes were then matched with KDE’s PSD-MUNIS data, as represented in the database of the Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB). We extracted the teacher’s sex, number of years of experience, and ethnicity from the PSD-MUNIS data. We then matched the teacher id’s against the EPSB certification data system, obtaining the teacher’s bachelor degree institution.

Data about schools and districts were obtained from the KDE school report card data, which provides information about school performance, enrollment, and other school wide or district wide summary data.

### The analysis model is given as follows:

Yijkt =  xi t-1 + **X**i + 3 **T**j + **S**k + ε

Where

Yijk = Achievement of student i taught by teacher j in school k at time t

xi t-1 = Previous year achievement for student i

**X**i = A vector of student attributes

**T**j = A vector of teacher attributes

**S**k = A vector of school attributes

ε = An error term

A problem with the analysis of this dataset is that writing is measured only three times, in 5th, 8th, and 12th grades (Kentucky Department of Education, 2008a). For that reason we have no previous year’s achievement score. What we do have for the 5th and 8th grades is a previous-year score in a closely related academic area, reading. Our analysis therefore uses the previous year reading score as a proxy for language arts-related academic achievement for the 5th and 8th grades.

For 12th grade subjects, there is no KCCT reading score, but these subjects have 11th grade EPAS scores for reading and English. For 12th grade subjects we therefore used the 11th grade EPAS reading and English sores as a proxy for academic achievement in the prior year.

Results

Data were analyzed using the Stata xtreg procedure, which allows us to estimate both the effect of student and school variables and the fixed effects of individual teachers. Data were analyzed separately for students enrolled in the 5th, 8th, and 12th grades. All data for the three years for which data were available were combined into a single dataset.

The results for the three grades are given in tables 1-3. Note that we have many more observations for the 8th grade than we do for the 5th or 12th grades. This is due to two features of the dataset:

1. In the fifth grade, for many schools, language arts courses at the fifth grade level are not reported individually in the class roster data. Many schools still have, for elementary students, a single “self-contained” classroom. We elected not to evaluate these classes at this time, but plan to evaluate them at a later time.
2. In the 12th grade, EPAS data were not available for earlier years.

Note that for all three grade levels, student characteristics (gender, ethnicity, disability status, and gifted status) generally were significantly related to writing scores, although the results for ethnicity were somewhat inconsistent across grade levels. This might be due to the fact that in elementary schools, mechanical aspects of writing performance are more likely to be important.

In all three tables, the effect of teacher was found to be significant after other factors had been accounted-for, representing 27% of the variance at the fifth grade, 35% of the variance at the 8th grade, and 36% at the twelfth grade level.

To test the validity of the models, we ran the same data using the xtreg procedure, but estimating fixed effects for schools (not reported here). These models produced similar results, with fixed effects for schools accounting for somewhat less of the variance was true of the teacher effect models. The amount of variance explained by the school models was not very much less than that explained by the teacher models. Thus, while we seem to be able to account for teacher-specific effects in addition to that explained by schools, we are not able to completely separate the effect of teachers and schools with these models.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 1**  **xtreg results for 5th grade subjects** | | | | | | | | |
| Fixed-effects (within) regression | | | Number of obs = 30493 | | | | | |
| Group variable: teacher\_id | | | Number of groups = 871 | | | | | |
| R-sq: within = 0.3147 | | | Obs per group: min = 1 | | | | | |
| between = 0.5276 | | | avg = 35.0 | | | | | |
| overall = 0.3397 | | | max = 261 | | | | | |
|  | | | | | | | | |
| F(10,29612) = 1359.69 | | | | | | | | |
| corr(u\_i, Xb) = 0.1207 | | | Prob > F = 0.0000 | | | | | |
|  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  |
| centered\_writing | Coef. | Std. Err. | t | P>|t| | | [95% Conf. Interval] | | |
|  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  |
| centered\_reading | .3544118 | .0049501 | 71.60 | 0.000 | | .3447094 | | .3641142 |
| Female | .3297274 | .00858 | 38.43 | 0.000 | | .3129102 | | .3465446 |
| black\_student | -.0053492 | .0178594 | -0.30 | 0.765 | | -.0403544 | | .029656 |
| asian\_student | .1069173 | .041876 | 2.55 | 0.011 | | .0248385 | | .188996 |
| hispanic\_student | .0159363 | .0274134 | 0.58 | 0.561 | | -.0377953 | | .0696678 |
| other\_ethnic | .0161583 | .0290369 | 0.56 | 0.578 | | -.0407552 | | .0730719 |
| disabled\_student | -.2534281 | .0140277 | -18.07 | 0.000 | | -.280923 | | -.2259332 |
| gifted\_cognitive | .3689028 | .0136294 | 27.07 | 0.000 | | .3421886 | | .3956171 |
| gifted\_noncognitive | .2644891 | .0195972 | 13.50 | 0.000 | | .2260777 | | .3029005 |
| frp\_student | -.1554941 | .0097118 | -16.01 | 0.000 | | -.1745297 | | -.1364585 |
| \_cons | -.1077268 | .0084659 | -12.72 | 0.000 | | -.1243204 | | -.0911333 |
|  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  |
| sigma\_u | .43767686 |  |  |  | |  | |  |
| sigma\_e | .72792566 |  |  |  | |  | |  |
| rho | .26552712 | (fraction of variance due to u\_i) | | | |  | |  |
|  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  |
| F test that all u\_i=0: |  | F(870, 29612) = | | 8.34 | | Prob > F = 0.0000 | | |
| **Table 2**  **xtreg results for 8th grade subjects** | | | | | | | | |
| Fixed-effects (within) regression | | | Number of obs = 56524 | | | | | |
| Group variable: teacher\_id | | | Number of groups = 854 | | | | | |
| R-sq: within = 0.3486 | | | Obs per group: min = 1 | | | | | |
| between = 0.5621 | | | avg = 66.2 | | | | | |
| overall = 0.3895 | | | max = 418 | | | | | |
|  | | | | | | | | |
| F(10,55660) = 2978.95 | | | | | | | | |
| corr(u\_i, Xb) = 0.1452 | | | Prob > F = 0.0000 | | | | | |
|  |  |  |  | |  | |  |  |
|  | Coef. | Std. Err. | t | | P>|t| | | [95% Conf. Interval] | |
|  |  |  |  | |  | |  |  |
| centered\_reading | .3745712 | .003703 | 101.15 | | 0.000 | | .3673133 | .381829 |
| Female | .3363717 | .0063224 | 53.20 | | 0.000 | | .3239798 | .3487637 |
| black\_student | -.0509335 | .0118814 | -4.29 | | 0.000 | | -.074221 | -.027646 |
| asian\_student | .2526274 | .0319185 | 7.91 | | 0.000 | | .190067 | .3151878 |
| hispanic\_student | .0075664 | .0208123 | 0.36 | | 0.716 | | -.0332258 | .0483586 |
| other\_ethnic | .01901 | .0225472 | 0.84 | | 0.399 | | -.0251827 | .0632027 |
| disabled\_student | -.3471105 | .0111788 | -31.05 | | 0.000 | | -.3690211 | -.3252 |
| gifted\_cognitive | .418251 | .0098141 | 42.62 | | 0.000 | | .3990156 | .437487 |
| gifted\_noncognitive | .2109994 | .0132715 | 15.90 | | 0.000 | | .1849873 | .2370116 |
| frp\_student | -.1401615 | .0069 | -20.31 | | 0.000 | | -.1536856 | -.1266375 |
| \_cons | -.1202228 | .0060094 | -20.01 | | 0.000 | | -.1320012 | -.1084445 |
|  |  |  |  | |  | |  |  |
| sigma\_u | .53168105 |  |  | |  | |  |  |
| sigma\_e | .72567305 |  |  | |  | |  |  |
| rho | .34930135 | (fraction of variance due to u\_i) | | | | |  |  |
|  |  |  |  | |  | |  |  |
| F test that all u\_i=0: |  | F(853, 55660) =10.24 | | |  | | Prob > F = 0.0000 | |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 3**  **xtreg results for 12th grade subjects** | | | | | | |
| Fixed-effects (within) regression | | | Number of obs = 25657 | | | |
| Group variable: teacher\_id | | | Number of groups = 847 | | | |
| R-sq: within = 0.2835 | | | Obs per group: min = 1 | | | |
| between = 0.6120 | | | avg = 30.3 | | | |
| overall = 0.3580 | | | Max = 210 | | | |
|  | | | | | | |
| F(11,24799) = 891.98 | | | | | | |
| corr(u\_i, Xb) = 0.1781 | | | Prob > F = 0.0000 | | | |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| centered\_writing | Coef. | Std. Err. | t | P>|t| | [95% Conf. Interval] | |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Centered\_en | .3431422 | .0080616 | 42.56 | 0.000 | .3273409 | .3589435 |
| Centered\_rd | .0946282 | .0076031 | 12.45 | 0.000 | .0797257 | .1095307 |
| Female | .33354 | .0093025 | 35.85 | 0.000 | .3153065 | .3517735 |
| black\_student | .0233507 | .0228942 | 1.02 | 0.308 | -.0215233 | .0682248 |
| asian\_student | .2099302 | .0598375 | 3.51 | 0.000 | .0926452 | .3272153 |
| hispanic\_student | .1058414 | .0426514 | 2.48 | 0.013 | .0222421 | .1894407 |
| other\_ethnic | .0378875 | .0488353 | 0.78 | 0.438 | -.0578326 | .1336076 |
| disabled\_student | -.3345963 | .0204567 | -16.36 | 0.000 | -.3746927 | -.2945 |
| gifted\_cognitive | .0790411 | .0153178 | 5.16 | 0.000 | .0490172 | .1090649 |
| gifted\_noncognitive | .1420128 | .0195264 | 7.27 | 0.000 | .1037399 | .1802857 |
| frp\_student | -.0440071 | .0102577 | -4.29 | 0.000 | -.0641127 | -.0239015 |
| \_cons | -.0774715 | .00824 | -9.40 | 0.000 | -.0936224 | -.0613205 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| sigma\_u | .53799402 |  |  |  |  |  |
| sigma\_e | .71736815 |  |  |  |  |  |
| rho | .35997252 | (fraction of variance due to u\_i) | | |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| F test that all u\_i=0: |  | F(846, 24799) = | | 7.04 | Prob > F = 0.0000 | |

From the analysis, it is apparent that we can identify the effect of individual teachers on the writing scores of their students. The xtreg procedure permits us to create a fixed-effect score for each teacher. These scores were used in the next stage of the study.

Section 3

Teacher Surveys

Method

To determine how writing instruction is actually being conducted in Kentucky, and to determine teacher attitudes about writing instruction, we created a survey, which was administered to the teachers identified in the empirical part of the study. A description of the survey can be found in Appendix A.

In constructing the survey, we were concerned with three things:

1. Descriptive information about the teachers and the settings in which they work;
2. Teacher attitudes about the conditions of practice in their work places;
3. Teacher practices.

The list of practices was constructed based on our review of the literature on “recommended practices” (Bazerman et al. 2005; Belden Russonello & Stewart 2007; Cotton 2001; Graham 2008; Graham and Perrin 2007a, 2007b). These are practices that were mentioned more than once by the authors of the various studies, or had been mentioned as having research support.

In order to conduct the study, we obtained the email addresses of the teachers in the empirical study sample from the EPSB database. Each teacher was classified according to his or her score in the empirical study into one of five levels, with level 1 indicating teachers with the lowest fixed effect scores and level 5 indicating those with the highest fixed effect scores. Surveys were administered using Zoomerang, an online survey system used by EPSB. Each of the 2254 teachers for whom an email address was available was sent an email giving the link to the survey and instructions (see Appendix A) for completing the survey. The survey was allowed to continue open for one month from February 18th to March 18th 2012, with a reminder email sent two weeks after the first emails had been sent.

Of the total number of emails sent, 124 were returned as invalid. Of the remaining 2130 teachers, 461 completed the survey for a response rate of about 22%. This is lower than we would have wished, but fairly typical for a survey administered in this manner. We believe the number of responses is sufficient to reach meaningful conclusions about the status of writing instruction in Kentucky.

Results

Tables 4 – 18f give the results of the teacher survey for all teachers. The distribution of first certification year in Table 4 shows that the great majority (about 73%) of respondents received their first professional certification since 1990. This is consistent with the general trend for all teachers in Kentucky. The distribution of institution of preparation in Table 5 is consistent with the relative size of the various programs. A few small programs had no respondents. This is expected given the low response rate and the small size of the programs. Note that about one-sixth (17%) of the respondents were trained in an out of state program.

The teacher experience results in Tables 6 and 7 are consistent with the experience levels of Kentucky teachers generally. Note that there were no first-year teachers (persons with 0 years of experience) reported in the sample, even though there were beginning teachers included in the empirical study. This is because the latest data in the empirical study were for school year 2010-2011, and the survey was conducted in 2011-2012, when a teacher who was new in 2011 would have had one year of experience. Note that the number of years teaching writing is somewhat less than for total experience, an expected result given that some teachers change content areas or acquire new credentials over the course of their careers. The difference is however not very great, indicating that most teachers in the sample have taught writing throughout their careers. Table 8 indicates that somewhat more teachers taught either elementary or high school than middle school, and just a small proportion taught mixed levels.

Tables 9-13, Table 15, and Table 17 give teacher responses to satisfaction questions. In table 9 we note that less than half (about 46%) of respondents indicated that they were satisfied or highly satisfied with the their preparation program, and a smaller percentage ( about 26%) were dissatisfied or highly dissatisfied. We crosstabulated year of first certification with satisfaction with preparation program, and found no effect.

Table 10 shows that about 61% were satisfied or highly satisfied with professional development programs in writing, and only about 17% were dissatisfied or highly dissatisfied. Table 13 shows that about one-fourth of respondents had attended at least one National Writing Project activity, and Table 11, which is based only on persons who actually attended one or more NWP activities, indicates that about 80% of respondents were satisfied or highly satisfied with these activities, with about 61% indicating that they were highly satisfied. Table 9 indicates that about 46% of respondents were satisfied or highly satisfied with other writing-related experiences, while only about 10% were dissatisfied or highly dissatisfied. In table 15, slightly less than half of respondents were satisfied or highly satisfied with the writing program where they work, while about 26% were dissatisfied or highly dissatisfied. In Table 17, about 63% of respondents indicated that they were satisfied or highly satisfied with administrative support for the writing program at their schools, while about 20% were dissatisfied or highly dissatisfied.

Table 14 gives the percentage (48%) of respondents who had at least one course in writing instruction during their preparation program. We crosstabulated this variable with year of first certification, and found no effect.

Table 16 shows that most (about 83%) respondents were confident or highly confident of their ability to teacher writing, while only a small percentage (about 7%) were not confident.

Tables 18a-18f give responses to the various practices teachers use in their writing classes. More than half of the respondents indicated that they used most of the practices frequently or very often. Practices that were not used frequently or very often by the majority of respondents included:

Share own writing with students

Use a writing workshop

Collaborate with content –area teachers

Use class critiques

Respondents were given an opportunity to make comments related to several of the areas covered by the survey. These comments were classified by their themes. Tables 19-25 give the tabulation by theme of the comments.

As shown in table 19, nearly 60% of respondents indicated that their preparation program included no training in writing instruction, or that the training was irrelevant or of poor quality.

As Table 20 shows that the most common comment, by about a third of the respondents, was a favorable statement about a particular professional development program. A fourth of the respondents noted that writing PD was either of poor or mixed quality. Writing PD programs that were mentioned as especially helpful included:

Writing Cluster Leader programs

Kentucky Writing Project/National Writing Project

Melissa Forney Workshops

Laying the Foundation

AP seminars

Bureau of Educational Research

Training by Donald Graves

Training by Lucy Calkins

Atherton and Abell

Donna Vincent

Ramp up

Table 21 gives responses about the National Writing Project. Of note here is that a greater proportion (37%) of the respondents made a generally positive comment about NWP activities than actually attended NWP activities (25%).

Table 22 gives information about other learning experiences of respondents. More than 80% of the respondents made a positive comment about one or more specific experiences that had been helpful. These included:

SPAT/Proficient Paragraph method

National Board Certification process

NCTE conferences

Professional Learning Communities

Kentucky Arts grant

Writing seminars

LDC content-leader meetings

AP workshops

EKU Writing Project

National Writing Project

KEA

Readwritelearn.org

Dr. Whitaker

KTIP mentor teacher

Gates Literacy Learning Design Collaborative

Colleagues/coaches/curriculum specialists

Green River Educational Cooperative

Independent consultants

Embedded PD

Holocaust Writing Project

District training

Self-study

KVEC Teacher Leader Program

Abell and Atherton

Nancy Atwell

Writing collaboratives

Springboard curriculum

Laying the Foundation

Ramp Up

The most commonly mentioned activities included activities associated with the National Writing Project, and AP training.

Table 23 gives tabulation of comments about the greatest strength of the writing program at the respondent’s school. Respondents most often made a comment about the quality of collegiality in their school, with a great variety of other strengths noted.

Table 24 gives tabulation of comments about the greatest weakness of the writing program at the respondent’s school. The most frequent comments related to lack of cooperation by content-area teachers (about 20%); inadequate time to teach writing (about 13%); uncertainty about state or district standards (about 12%); and program inconsistencies (about 10%).

Table 25 tabulates responses to “what would make you a better teacher of writing?” About 28% of the respondents mentioned more or better professional development and about 21% mentioned better state guidelines for writing instruction.

We tabulated the results for teachers at each performance level against each of the relevant questions on the survey, to see whether there were differences in responses depending on teacher effectiveness.[[3]](#footnote-3) χ2 Statistics were computed for each table, and some differences were found:

More effective teachers were more likely to have attended one or more NWP activities

More effective teachers were more likely to be satisfied with school administration support for the school’s writing program

More effective teachers used the following practices with greater frequency:

Collaboration with content-area teachers

Responding intermittently throughout the writing process

Use of peer reviews

Allowing students to read, listen to, and create texts in a variety of genres

Use of graphic organizers

Table 4

Decade of first certification

All Teachers in Sample

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Decade | Count | Percent |
| 1961-1970 | 6 | 1.3453% |
| 1971-1980 | 39 | 8.7444% |
| 1981-1990 | 74 | 16.5919% |
| 1991-2000 | 157 | 35.2018% |
| 2000-2010 | 168 | 37.6682% |
| >2010 | 2 | 0.4484% |

Table 5

Preparation Program

All Teachers in Sample

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Institution** | **Number** | **Percent** |
| Alice Lloyd College | 3 | 0.65% |
| Asbury University | 1 | 0.22% |
| Bellarmine University | 4 | 0.87% |
| Berea College | 8 | 1.74% |
| Boyce College | 0 |  |
| Brescia University | 6 | 1.31% |
| Campbellsville University | 12 | 2.61% |
| Centre College | 2 | 0.44% |
| Eastern Kentucky University | 52 | 11.33% |
| Georgetown College | 4 | 0.87% |
| JCPS ACES | 1 | 0.22% |
| Kentucky Christian University | 0 |  |
| Kentucky State University | 1 | 0.22% |
| Kentucky Wesleyan College | 3 | 0.65% |
| Lincoln Memorial University | 3 | 0.65% |
| Lindsey Wilson College | 6 | 1.31% |
| Mid-Continent University | 0 |  |
| Midway College | 3 | 0.65% |
| Morehead State University | 35 | 7.63% |
| Murray State University | 39 | 8.50% |
| Northern Kentucky University | 24 | 5.23% |
| Spalding University | 7 | 1.53% |
| St. Catharine College | 0 |  |
| Thomas More College | 2 | 0.44% |
| Transylvania University | 4 | 0.87% |
| Union College | 9 | 1.96% |
| University of Kentucky | 37 | 8.06% |
| University of Louisville | 24 | 5.23% |
| University of Pikeville | 4 | 0.87% |
| University of the Cumberlands | 17 | 3.70% |
| Western Kentucky University | 70 | 15.25% |
| Out of State | 77 | 16.78% |
| Out of Country | 1 | 0.22% |

Table 6

Total Years Teaching

All teachers in sample

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| -Years | Count | Percent |
|  |  |  |
| 1-5 | 55 | 11.96% |
| 6-10 | 111 | 24.13% |
| 11-15 | 114 | 24.78% |
| 16-20 | 76 | 16.52% |
| 21-25 | 51 | 11.09% |
| 26-30 | 34 | 7.39% |
| >30 | 19 | 4.13% |

Table 7

Years teaching Writing

All Teachers in Sample

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Interval | Count | Percent |
|  |  |  |
| 1-5 | 83 | 18.36% |
| 6-10 | 129 | 28.54% |
| 11-15 | 106 | 23.45% |
| 16-20 | 64 | 14.16% |
| 21-25 | 39 | 8.63% |
| 26=30 | 14 | 3.10% |
| >30 | 12 | 2.65% |

Table 8

School Level

All Teachers in Sample

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| teaching level | frequency | Percent |
| Missing | 3 |  |
| Elementary | 166 | 36.24% |
| Middle School | 117 | 25.55% |
| High School | 159 | 34.72% |
| Mixed Levels | 16 | 3.49% |

Table 9

Preparation Program Satisfaction

All Teachers in Sample

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| prep program satisfaction | frequency | | Percent |
| Missing | 16 |  | |
| 1 | 28 | 6.2921% | |
| 2 | 88 | 19.7753% | |
| 3 | 124 | 27.8652% | |
| 4 | 162 | 36.4045% | |
| 5 | 43 | 9.6629% | |

Table 10

Professional Development Satisfaction

All Teachers in Sample

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| pd satisfaction | frequency | Percent |
| Missing | 15 |  |
| 1 | 13 | 2.91% |
| 2 | 64 | 14.35% |
| 3 | 98 | 21.97% |
| 4 | 206 | 46.19% |
| 5 | 65 | 14.57% |

Table 11

National Writing Project Satisfaction

Teachers who had participated in at least one NWP activity

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| NWP satisfaction | frequency | Percent |
| Missing | 3 |  |
| 1 | 1 | 0.93% |
| 2 | 6 | 5.56% |
| 3 | 15 | 13.89% |
| 4 | 20 | 18.52% |
| 5 | 66 | 61.11% |

Table 12

Other Training Experience Satisfaction

All Teachers in Sample

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| other experience satisfaction | frequency | Percent |
| Missing | 190 |  |
| 1 | 16 | 5.90% |
| 2 | 11 | 4.06% |
| 3 | 125 | 46.13% |
| 4 | 60 | 22.14% |
| 5 | 59 | 21.77% |

Table 13

Percentage attending NWP Activity

All Teachers in Sample

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| NWP attendance | frequency | Percent |
| Missing | 13 |  |
| Attended | 111 | 24.78% |
| Did Not Attend | 337 | 75.22% |

Table 14

Percent Having a College Course in Writing Instruction

All Teachers in Sample

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| college course | frequency | Percent |
|  | 17 |  |
| 1 | 231 | 52.03% |
| 2 | 213 | 47.97% |

Table 15

Satisfaction with Writing Program at Work

All Teachers in Sample

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| work satisfaction | frequency | Percent |
|  | 18 |  |
| 1 | 24 | 5.42% |
| 2 | 110 | 24.83% |
| 3 | 70 | 15.80% |
| 4 | 184 | 41.53% |
| 5 | 55 | 12.42% |

Table 16

Confidence as a Writing Teacher

All Teachers in Sample

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| confidence | frequency | Percent |
|  | 21 |  |
| 1 | 2 | 0.45% |
| 2 | 28 | 6.36% |
| 3 | 37 | 8.41% |
| 4 | 193 | 43.86% |
| 5 | 180 | 40.91% |

Table 17

Satisfaction with School Administration

All Teachers in Sample

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| school admin  Satisfaction | frequency | Percent |
|  | 23 |  |
| 1 | 18 | 4.11% |
| 2 | 70 | 15.98% |
| 3 | 73 | 16.67% |
| 4 | 152 | 34.70% |
| 5 | 125 | 28.54% |

Table 18a

Teacher practices

All Teachers in Sample

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Share own writing with students | Use a writing workshop | Use writer’s notebooks/portfolios | Provide diverse reading materials | Collaborate with content –area teachers |
| 0 | 3.31% | 8.02% | 3.79% | 0.95% | 8.96% |
| 1 | 11.35% | 19.34% | 10.43% | 3.78% | 18.40% |
| 2 | 40.43% | 34.20% | 21.09% | 17.49% | 29.48% |
| 3 | 34.28% | 26.89% | 31.52% | 40.66% | 23.82% |
| 4 | 10.64% | 11.56% | 33.18% | 37.12% | 19.34% |

Table 18b

Teacher practices

All Teachers in Sample

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Share rubrics across subjects and grade levels | Provide class time for revision | Teacher and peer response integral to writing effort | Respond intermittently | Student-teacher conferences |
| 0 | 8.19% | 1.67% | 2.62% | 1.43% | 2.13% |
| 1 | 16.14% | 4.30% | 5.48% | 3.80% | 4.96% |
| 2 | 25.06% | 13.60% | 19.29% | 18.29% | 21.99% |
| 3 | 29.64% | 40.81% | 39.05% | 45.13% | 39.95% |
| 4 | 20.96% | 39.62% | 33.57% | 31.35% | 30.97% |

Table 18c

Teacher practices

All Teachers in Sample

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Use peer review | Use response forms | Use class critiques | Use self-assessments | Use collaboration techniques |
| 0 | 4.30% | 6.90% | 10.02% | 3.81% | 3.34% |
| 1 | 8.59% | 10.24% | 16.95% | 12.62% | 12.41% |
| 2 | 26.25% | 31.43% | 29.12% | 30.24% | 29.12% |
| 3 | 39.14% | 34.76% | 31.26% | 35.48% | 39.86% |
| 4 | 21.72% | 16.67% | 12.65% | 17.86% | 15.27% |

Table 18d

Teacher practices

All Teachers in Sample

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Use mini-lessons | Direct instruction and modeling | Read, listen to, create in a variety of genres | Writing in support of reading | Selections/different perspectives |
| 0 | 1.67% | 0.95% | 0.95% | 1.67% | 1.66% |
| 1 | 4.76% | 2.38% | 3.82% | 7.14% | 4.27% |
| 2 | 20.48% | 12.11% | 19.33% | 26.90% | 24.41% |
| 3 | 40.95% | 43.23% | 43.91% | 38.81% | 40.76% |
| 4 | 32.14% | 41.33% | 31.98% | 25.48% | 28.91% |

Table 18e

Teacher practices

All Teachers in Sample

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Students generate focus questions | Students take a stand on issues | Use technological writing tools | Teach basic writing skills | Teach sentence construction |
| 0 | 4.08% | 1.91% | 1.66% | 2.38% | 1.20% |
| 1 | 12.47% | 4.31% | 7.84% | 3.33% | 3.83% |
| 2 | 30.70% | 26.32% | 24.47% | 15.20% | 18.90% |
| 3 | 36.93% | 43.06% | 37.53% | 41.57% | 46.89% |
| 4 | 15.83% | 24.40% | 28.50% | 37.53% | 29.19% |

Table 18f

Teacher practices

All Teachers in Sample

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Write for multiple purposes | Models of specific types of writing | Use graphic organizers | Strategies for planning, writing, and editing | Teach students to summarize texts |
| 0 | 0.95% | 0.96% | 0.96% | 1.91% | 1.67% |
| 1 | 1.19% | 2.15% | 2.16% | 3.34% | 2.63% |
| 2 | 14.56% | 11.00% | 13.19% | 11.46% | 16.71% |
| 3 | 45.58% | 43.54% | 39.57% | 44.39% | 46.78% |
| 4 | 37.71% | 42.34% | 44.12% | 38.90% | 32.22% |

Table 19

Comments regarding preservice training

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Number of comments | Percent |
| No practical training | 16 | 22.86% |
| No training in writing instruction was offered | 13 | 18.57% |
| Doubtful or poor quality training | 12 | 17.14% |
| Training was adequate | 12 | 17.14% |
| Unclassifiable | 7 | 10.00% |
| Original certificate obviated or deemphasized writing training | 5 | 7.14% |
| Focus on reading limits training in writing | 5 | 7.14% |

Table 20

Comments regarding professional development

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Number of comments | Percent |
| favorable comment about a specific program | 19 | 33.93% |
| pd in general is inadequate or of poor quality | 7 | 12.50% |
| pd quality varies | 7 | 12.50% |
| lack time/funding/opportunity to take pd | 5 | 8.93% |
| Writing is emphasized less than other subjects | 4 | 7.14% |
| PD should be provided before changes take effect | 3 | 5.36% |
| general need for more pd on writing | 3 | 5.36% |
| Unclassifiable | 3 | 5.36% |
| too much focus on accountability system | 1 | 1.79% |
| no consistent focus on methodology | 1 | 1.79% |
| need training in a particular writing concept | 1 | 1.79% |
| need more information about state requirements | 1 | 1.79% |
| administrators do not value writing pd | 1 | 1.79% |

Table 21

Comments regarding National Writing Project activities

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Number of comments | Percent |
| did not attend | 29 | 41.43% |
| generally positive comment | 26 | 37.14% |
| lack time/funding/opportunity to participate | 5 | 7.14% |
| don't know what the NWP is | 3 | 4.29% |
| Unclassifiable | 3 | 4.29% |
| Attended | 3 | 4.29% |
| not helpful | 1 | 1.43% |

Table 22

Comments regarding other training experiences

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Number of comments | Percent |
| favorable or neutral comment about a specific program | 77 | 81.91% |
| None | 6 | 6.38% |
| not enough information on standards | 4 | 4.26% |
| unfavorable comment about a specific program | 3 | 3.19% |
| available pd opportunities are of poor quality or irrelevant | 2 | 2.13% |
| Unclassifiable | 2 | 2.13% |

Table 23

Comments about strengths of school writing program

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Number of comments | Percent |
| staff buy-in/collaboration/collegiality | 57 | 16.86% |
| specific methodology/curriculum | 47 | 13.91% |
| writing across the curriculum | 36 | 10.65% |
| negative comment | 29 | 8.58% |
| vertical alignment | 26 | 7.69% |
| English department | 21 | 6.21% |
| Unclassifiable | 19 | 5.62% |
| coach/staff developer/consultant/ | 19 | 5.62% |
| writing plan | 16 | 4.73% |
| standards-based | 9 | 2.66% |
| that we even have one | 8 | 2.37% |
| students do a lot of writing | 7 | 2.07% |
| creativity/flexibility | 6 | 1.78% |
| experienced teachers | 5 | 1.48% |
| individualization/small class size | 5 | 1.48% |
| assessment focus | 4 | 1.18% |
| available time | 3 | 0.89% |
| availability of materials | 3 | 0.89% |
| administrative support | 3 | 0.89% |
| availability of writing examplars | 2 | 0.59% |
| district-wide program | 2 | 0.59% |
| teacher independence | 2 | 0.59% |
| grammar instruction | 2 | 0.59% |
| no program | 2 | 0.59% |
| Training | 1 | 0.30% |
| Consistency | 1 | 0.30% |
| writing and reading are taught separately | 1 | 0.30% |
| emphasis on student choice/ownership | 1 | 0.30% |
| portfolios/student folders | 1 | 0.30% |

Table 24

Comments regarding weakness of school writing program

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Number of comments | Percent |
| lack of participation by content teachers | 76 | 19.74% |
| lack of time | 48 | 12.47% |
| problems associated with changes in state or local board standards | 46 | 11.95% |
| inconsistency among teachers/incoherent program | 39 | 10.13% |
| lack of vertical alignment | 31 | 8.05% |
| lack of pd opportunity/need for more training | 25 | 6.49% |
| poor student motivation/skills/abilities | 21 | 5.45% |
| Unclassifiable | 16 | 4.16% |
| lack of administrative support/weak or inconsistent administrative oversight | 14 | 3.64% |
| grammar/spelling/language mechanics | 12 | 3.12% |
| resource limitations | 10 | 2.60% |
| administrative headaches/scoring | 8 | 2.08% |
| weakness in one or more specific genres/overemphasis on particular genres | 7 | 1.82% |
| we have no weaknesses | 5 | 1.30% |
| we have no program | 5 | 1.30% |
| combined reading and writing | 4 | 1.04% |
| too much focus on writing | 2 | 0.52% |
| we are forced to teach to the test | 2 | 0.52% |
| students don't write enough | 2 | 0.52% |
| unfulfillable expectations | 2 | 0.52% |
| narrow curriculum focus | 1 | 0.26% |
| no portfolio | 1 | 0.26% |
| no resource teacher/coach | 1 | 0.26% |
| lack of rigor | 1 | 0.26% |
| our prorgam is new | 1 | 0.26% |
| Differentiation | 1 | 0.26% |
| poor teacher skills | 1 | 0.26% |
| no remediation component | 1 | 0.26% |
| poor parental involvement | 1 | 0.26% |
| curriculum alignment | 1 | 0.26% |

Table 25

“What would make you a better teacher of writing?”

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Number of comments | Percent |
| more/improved pd | 88 | 27.59% |
| better state guidelines | 68 | 21.32% |
| exemplars | 26 | 8.15% |
| unclassifiable | 19 | 5.96% |
| greater consistency | 2 | 5.88% |
| information on dealing with student limitations | 12 | 3.76% |
| information on motivating students | 11 | 3.45% |
| none needed | 9 | 2.82% |
| more time | 8 | 2.51% |
| release time for administrative tasks (scoring, collaborating, etc) | 7 | 2.19% |
| textbooks/other resources | 6 | 1.88% |
| new/better writing program | 6 | 1.88% |
| improved collaboration with other staff | 6 | 1.88% |
| training on scoring/grading | 5 | 1.57% |
| improved administrator support | 4 | 1.25% |
| improve writing across the curriculum | 4 | 1.25% |
| training in basic skills (grammar, spelling, vocabulary, etc.) | 4 | 1.25% |
| more NWP training | 4 | 1.25% |
| greater student accountability | 4 | 1.25% |
| technology training | 4 | 1.25% |
| greater rigor | 1 | 0.31% |
| improve vertical alignment | 2 | 0.63% |
| visits to other classrooms | 3 | 0.94% |
| collaborative/consulting/coaching teacher positions | 3 | 0.94% |
| smaller classes/individualized instruction | 3 | 0.94% |
| improved alignment | 3 | 0.94% |
| spend less time teaching other content | 2 | 0.63% |
| writer's workshop | 1 | 0.31% |
| understanding of different genres | 1 | 0.31% |
| assistive technology training | 1 | 0.31% |
| classroom visits by successful writers | 1 | 0.31% |
| differentiation training | 1 | 0.31% |

Section 4

Institutional Survey

A description of the institutional survey is given in Appendix B. Deans of teacher preparation programs were contacted by telephone in March and April 2012. In most cases the dean served as the informant, unless (s)he felt that some other person on the institutional faculty was better-qualified to respond to the survey. In the few cases where we were unable to reach the dean, we contacted the dean’s administrative assistant, who referred us to a knowledgeable faculty member. We were able to complete surveys for 25 of the 29 approved teacher training programs.

The results of the institutional survey are necessarily qualitative, due to the nature of the information elicited. The overall impression we formed from the survey results is that institutions generally are aware of the issue of writing, and are making efforts to improve the quality of training their candidates receive. These efforts are usually a part of a focus on literacy – reading, writing, and oral communication. Four institutions require one or more courses in writing instruction for at least some candidates, but most incorporate writing training in either “reading and writing” methods courses, or in literacy methods courses. Seven mentioned specifically a focus on literacy or writing across the content areas. Only one institution requires one or more courses in writing instruction for all candidates at all three levels. Two programs do not specifically address the issue at all.

Several of the institutions confuse the issues of candidates as *writers* vs candidates as *teachers of writing*. Several mentioned specific mechanisms in place in their institutions, either in general education requirements or in the teacher preparation program, intended to assure that candidates meet some minimum standard of writing performance. Some mentioned specific assessment and remedial procedures in place to assure adequate writing skill of their candidates. It seems reasonable to believe that before a teacher can be an effective teacher of writing she must first be an adequate writer, but it also seems reasonable to believe that some specific capability must be acquired as a *writing teacher*, beyond whatever is required to be an adequate writer.

A few of the respondents mentioned particular approaches to writing instruction taught by their institutions, most often Process Writing, but most did not endorse any particular approach. A few mentioned their involvement with the Kentucky Writing Project, and seemed to believe that this constitutes a theoretical approach. This seems to indicate some confusion about just what is a theoretical approach to writing instruction, since KWP, and the National Writing Project of which it is a part are eclectic, and do not favor any particular model.

Several of the respondents mentioned the Kentucky Core standards as a focus of their programs, and a few specifically mentioned steps they have taken as a result of SB1 implementation.

Results of the institutional survey by institution are give in Table 26.

Table 26

Institutional Survey Responses

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **IHE** | **Respondent** | **Does elementary preparation require one or more courses in writing instruction?** | **Does Middle School preparation require one or more courses in writing instruction?** | **Does High School preparation require one or more courses in writing instruction?** | **Is one or more courses in writing instruction required for only some, but not all, content areas?** | **Number of credit hours of writing instruction for an elementary candidate** | **Number of credit hours of writing instruction for a Middle School candidate** | **Number of credit hours of writing instruction for a High School candidate** | **Does the program favor a particular approach to writing instruction?** | **What else should I ask?** |
| Bellarmine | Ann Bucalos | 3 courses - focus on teaching writing - teaching of reading and writing, children's literature, LA methods | dual certification regular and special ed. Same courses as elementary. + methods course | All content areas take reading in the content area which includes writing | Only English secondary ed get a course in English language arts methods. | 9 | 9 | 3; 6 for English majors | No | MAT program includes modules - literacy module only at the elementary level. MAT at MS and HS level have a 4 hour literacy module (reading in content area) |
| EKU | Ginni Fair | 3 hour LA methods course | 3 hours LA methods course; content area literacy course; a little slice of the foundations of literacy | English language arts teachers | ELA teachers at HS level only | 3 (note that this is literacy, not specifically writing) | 3 + literacy course (note that this is literacy, not specifically writing) | 3 + only for ELA teachers | Workshop model and core content standards |  |
| Cumberland | Garnet Chrisman | Two courses in reading and writing; every course has a writing component | Two courses in reading and writing; every course has a writing component | % courses required of ELA teachers only | Yes | 6 | 6 | 0 or 15 | Depends on the instructor | Emphasize the Common Core |
| Alice Lloyd | Sherry Long | Part of reading foundations | Part of reading foundations | Part of reading foundations | At all levels, content area includes writing | 6 hours reading and writing | 6 hours reading and writing | 6 hours reading and writing | No |  |
| Kentucky Christian | Karen Ford | Yes | Yes | Creative writing class (ELA teachers only) | secondary English - creative writing and grammar course | 6 hours; otherwise in reading methods courses | 6 hours; otherwise in reading methods courses | 6 hours; otherwise in reading methods courses; ELA teachers have a creative writing coutse | No | KY Christian’s 6 hours are really an emphasis on the writing classes in the college liberal arts core; they, like others, confuse the “teacher as writer” with the “teacher as teacher of writing.” |
| Kentucky Wesleyan | Martha O’Bryan | Foundations of reading and language arts | Foundations of reading and language arts | With sb1, a literacy element is included in subject area and literacy methods course | English majors take teaching reading in the secondary school | 6 | 6 | varies | Depends on instructor | Candidates must do an on-demand writing task as part of program admissions |
| Lindsey Wilson | Linda Young | educ 3223 language arts methods;engl2703 grammar; all students have 2 comp courses in core; assessed at program entry at midpoint and when they begin student teaching | Take 2 comp courses and are assessed; 3 writing intensive courses educ3123 ;educ3413; educ3523 reading and writing in the content areas; educ4263 classroom management | Same as middle school | English LA only - engl3503 advanced writing; engl3733 writing and culture; engl2703 modern eng grammar; engl3423 teaching of writing; can choose additional courses | incorporated | incorporated | incorporated | No |  |
| Boyce College | Al Hickey | 2 writing English 101 and English 102; do writing assessment all the way; ed200 - introduction to teacher ed; eportfolio has several items and an autobiographical sketch; interview | NA | NA | NA | 9 (incorporated as in 1) | NA | NA | No | College has a writing center. If a candidate was referred to the writing center, must have a clearance before they can proceed. (Boyce confuses teacher as writer with teacher as teacher of writing) |
| Morehead | Dr. James Knoll | Yes - a course in writing instruction and embedded in other courses | Yes - a course in writing instruction and embedded in other courses | No | In secondary English - 6 hours | 3 | 3 | 6 hours only in English only | No | Making an effort to integrate across the curriculum |
| Transylvania University | Angela Hurley | Yes -literacy course | Yes -literacy course | Yes -literacy course | No | 4 | 4 | 4 | Process writing | gen ed - all students must have 2 other writing intensive courses outside of the majors; Great emphasis in gen ed and within ed program. (I think this is an emphasis on the candidate’s skills as a writer) |
| Murray | Renee Campoy | Part of reading and writing | Language arts course; people who specialize in LA get another course | Only English majors have a separate writing course | Yes – HS | 6 | 6 | 6 (ELA only) | Purchase Area Writing Project | Writing lab in library; student teaching course is writing intensive; each program has a beginning and middle writing intensive class; English department has a wholistic writing scoring team; you can buy their service; education program scores teacher candidates' philosophy essays |
| WKU | Sherry Powers | Not a specific writing course - but embedded in reading literacy 320 &420 | Middle and secondary literacy 421 | Middle and secondary literacy 421 | LA majors must take lit 421 | 3 | 3 | 3 | Work with English department; teach about writing process; program eclectic | Literacy 199 (response to sb1) has a strong writing component |
| NKU | Sean Faulkner | Methods course in reading and language arts | Everyone takes a reading and writing in the content area; LA middle grades required to take a traditional grammar course | No unless English, when they have a reading course and the typical writing courses for English teachers | Methods courses for MS and HS language arts; 2 English methods courses; one course focuses more on writing than the other | 6 | 3 | 6 (ELA only) | No | English 291 (gen ed) is required - advanced college writing |
| Campbellsvile | Brenda Priddy | Reading and LA methods courses; but writing is interwoven into all methods courses | Reading and LA methods courses; but writing is interwoven into all methods courses | Through methods course in content area | No | 6 | 6 | Minimum of 3 | No | Part of teacher leader MAT program - literacy strategies course open to students at all levels - ELE MS HS |
| Georgetown | Yolanda Carter | Specific writing course and a literacy course | LA would take methods courses; otherwise would take a writing-intensive middle school methods course | LA would take methods courses; otherwise would take a writing-intensive middle school methods course | No | Writing course 3, literacy course 5; both have a field component | Depends on whether "an extension up or an extension down"; would have an additional methods class | English LA most courses writing intensive - probably about 30 | No | gen ed requires that students have 2 writing intensive courses in core |
| Midway | Charles Roberts | No | No | No | Required course for ELA | 0 | 0 | 0 | APA style |  |
| UK | Parker Fawson | Not a requirement but a LA methods course provides writing | Yes | Yes only English ed | Yes | 0 | 3 | 3 if ELA | Faculty member works with KWP |  |
| Mid Continent | Paul Thompson | Yes - 2 only in gen ed program; integrated throughout methods courses | NA | NA | NA | 6 | NA | NA | No | Added a second literacy course a year or two ago |
| KSU | Beverly Downing | Yes - eng285 | NA | Not beyond general studies | English/la - several courses - 214 persuasive writing; 285 writing for teaching professionals; reading abd writing clinical practicum 483; electives | 3 | NZ | ( + electives (ELA only) |  |  |
| U of L | Ann Larson | 2 literacy courses; a writing course in gen ed both written and oral communication | Course on reading and writing across the curriculum for all candidates; methods courses include a writing component; there are elective courses as well edtp420 edpt 620 | Course on reading and writing across the curriculum for all candidates; methods courses include a writing component; there are elective courses as well edtp420 edpt 620 | Additional course - must take another course in content area | 6 | 3 | 3 | KWP; KY writing portfolio; common core standards; KCIS | Try to incorporate assessments into components; use university-validated rubric; KTIP tasks and standards are embedded in methods courses |
| St Catherine | Jan Lantz | Not per se - woven into the courses; writing emphasized in methods course | NA | NA | NA | 0 | NA | NA | No | As a department have been discussing the issues of reading and writing; met last week with LA staff on the subject; on June 15th will have a pd with Washington Co HS and language arts staff |
| Berea | Bobby Ann Starnes | Core only; eds150 intro to ed; ed346 and 347 (literacy); 440 combined literacy and social studies | Same except for ed440 | Everybody takes ed150 | Same for everybody | 9 (literacy courses) | 9 (literacy courses) | 3 | No |  |
| Pikeville | Shirley Nelson | Yes; one course -writingng and grammar in the elementary school | Yes | Teaching English in the HS | Yes; English LA at HS level | 3 | 3 | 3 (ELA only) | Process writing | Have a reading and literacy course in the content areas for all candidates |
| Union | Jason Reeves | Yes; content literacy course has a writing component | Yes; content literacy course has a writing component | Yes; content literacy course has a writing component | Yes; methods course for la | 3 | 3 | 3 | Depends on instructor |  |
| Asbury | Verna Lowe | Literacy bundle - teaching reading course, language arts course - grammar and composition course - children's lit - assessment course - plus 1 hour 301 methods clinical course | If English will have had a teaching writing MS course - a reading and writing across the curriculum course for all candidates | Same as MS, but in English have 2 more writing courses | No | 11 | 6 | 3/11 | Aligned with KDE standards | Interested in how students perceive their training; non English candidates have resistance; reading and writing course for alternative MAT candidates; couple of literacy courses in teacher leader program; all grad programs include a literacy course; principal program has a course on KY academic standards; literacy specialist program; do a curriculum alignment every three years |

Section 5

Discussion

The emphasis in much of contemporary education is on reading and mathematics, which are necessary prerequisites to success in all other disciplines. This is appropriate, but we argue here that once a minimum competency has been achieved in these two subjects, writing should be viewed as a critical academic skill for all children in the public schools. Writing is a essential to success in postsecondary education and employment, and the development of writing skill is associated with thinking. To the extent that writing instruction is enhanced, children are more likely to succeed in other areas. It is clear that writing instruction cannot be limited to instruction in academic English, and it is also clear that it is not sufficient to expect all essential forms of writing to be taught in language arts or English classes. All teachers should be involved at least to some extent in the teaching of writing.

It is clear from both our survey of language arts teachers and from our survey of teacher preparation programs that some additional work is needed to improve writing instruction in Kentucky public schools. Although we found that particular practices were more likely to be used by teachers who were judged more effective by the empirical study, these results must be viewed with some caution. This is a one-time cross-sectional study using self-reports of teacher practices, which may not be as reliable as we would wish. Additionally, because the models using school effects were not very different from those using teacher effects, it may be that a substantial part of the effects measured by the empirical study were due as much to schools as individual; teachers.

We would be hesitant to suggest that the particular practices associated with more effective teachers should be emphasized; rather, we would suggest that an implications to be drawn from the results is that effective teachers of writing (or perhaps the writing programs of the schools where they are employed) might use different practices than less effective teachers (or schools). What specific practices might be most useful will require additional study.

What does seem clear from the results of the teacher survey is that writing across the curriculum is an important issue, and that improvement in this area needs to occur in numerous places across the state. The most common complaint of our teacher respondents was that content-area teachers did not take responsibility for assisting in writing instruction, and whether the significant effects of practices were for teachers or schools, collaboration with content-area teachers was one of the practices that distinguished between effective and less effective teachers.

The institutional survey revealed a pattern of uneven development of writing instructional training among the 25 institutions surveyed. A few have excellent programs that emphasize training in writing instruction for all teacher candidates at all levels; most emphasize writing instruction only for some levels or some teachers; and a few seem to have no well-developed program. In most cases training in writing instruction is incorporated either into language arts methods courses or literacy courses; it is unknown what proportion of the time in these courses is devoted to writing, or what the content of writing-related instruction might be. An additional problem is that some institutions seem to not clearly distinguish between teacher candidates’ skills as writers and their skills as teachers of writing.

One result about the effective teachers does bear consideration: more effective teachers of writing were more likely to have participated in programs of the National Writing Project. NWP activities were highly rated by both the teacher respondents and the institutional respondents, and it seems clear that participation in these activities may be the single most attractive mechanism for improving the quality of writing instruction, both for teacher candidates and for teachers already in the classroom. The number of training slots in NWP activities in Kentucky is quite limited (Woods 2012), and some thought needs to be given to how to make these programs more available. Certainly, more preparation programs could ally themselves with NWP organizations than is now the case.

A major concern of EPSB is that recommendations for improvements in teacher training programs should not significantly burden preparation programs by establishing requirements that would be difficult to fit into an existing 120 credit hour undergraduate program. This implies that improvements in writing instruction training must involve a change in emphasis where appropriate rather than the establishment of additional curricular elements.

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Appendix A

Teacher Survey

1. Instructions

The Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board is conducting a study of writing instruction in the public schools in Kentucky. On the basis of the titles of your courses as reported in the state’s Infinite Campus data system, you have been identified as a teacher of one or more courses in the English Language Arts area. We would be grateful if you would take some time to complete a brief survey that will assist us in this study. You will not be identified as an individual to anyone, and the results of your responses will be used only in combination with the results of others who respond to the survey.

To participate in the survey, follow this link: <http://www.some.link>

Thank you for your willingness to participate.

1. The survey

1. Descriptive information

In what year did you receive your first regular certification (count a provisional internship certificate as regular) \_\_\_\_\_

At what college did you receive your initial teacher training? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Including this year, how many years have you been a classroom teacher? \_\_\_\_\_\_

How many years have you taught writing? \_\_\_\_\_

At what level do you principally teach?

⭘ Elementary

⭘ Middle School

⭘ High School

⭘ Mixed levels

2. Training experiences

Please rate your satisfaction regarding the information you may have received about teaching writing from the following:

Preservice education

⭘ 1 – Very dissatisfied

⭘ 2 – Somewhat dissatisfied

⭘ 3 – Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

⭘ 4 – Somewhat satisfied

⭘ 5 – Very satisfied

Professional development programs

⭘ 1 – Very dissatisfied

⭘ 2 – Somewhat dissatisfied

⭘ 3 – Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

⭘ 4 – Somewhat satisfied

⭘ 5 – Very satisfied

National Writing Project-sponsored events

⭘ 1 – Very dissatisfied

⭘ 2 – Somewhat dissatisfied

⭘ 3 – Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

⭘ 4 – Somewhat satisfied

⭘ 5 – Very satisfied

Other experience (specify) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

⭘ 1 – Very dissatisfied

⭘ 2 – Somewhat dissatisfied

⭘ 3 – Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

⭘ 4 – Somewhat satisfied

⭘ 5 – Very satisfied

Have you participated in a summer institute sponsored by the National Writing Project or other NWP program, conference, or workshop?

⭘ Yes

⭘ No

Did you have one or more courses on the teaching of writing in your preservice program?

⭘ Yes

⭘ No

3. Teaching environment

How satisfied are you with the writing program where you work?

⭘ 1 – Very dissatisfied

⭘ 2 – Somewhat dissatisfied

⭘ 3 – Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

⭘ 4 – Somewhat satisfied

⭘ 5 – Very satisfied

What is the greatest strength of the writing program at you school?

What is the greatest weakness of the writing program at you school?

In a few words, describe further training or assistance that would help you be a better teacher of writing:

How satisfied are you with the amount of time spent on the writing program at your school?

⭘ 1 – Very dissatisfied

⭘ 2 – Somewhat dissatisfied

⭘ 3 – Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

⭘ 4 – Somewhat satisfied

⭘ 5 – Very satisfied

What opportunities do students have to write in the non-language arts disciplines in your school?

⭘ 1 – none

⭘ 2 – few

⭘ 3 – some

⭘ 4 – regular

⭘ 5 – many

In a few words, describe your approach to the teaching of writing:

How confident are you about your capacity to teach writing?

⭘ 1 – Very unsure

⭘ 2 – Somewhat unsure

⭘ 3 – Neither unsure nor confident

⭘ 4 – Somewhat confident

⭘ 5 – Very confident

How satisfied are you with your school administration’s support for writing instruction?

⭘ 1 – Very dissatisfied

⭘ 2 – Somewhat dissatisfied

⭘ 3 – Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

⭘ 4 – Somewhat satisfied

⭘ 5 – Very satisfied

4. Teacher practices

Rank the following practices according to how frequently you use them, with:

0 = Not at all

1 = Infrequently

2 = Sometimes

3 = Frequently

4 = Very Often

🞎 Share your own writing with students

🞎 Use a writing workshop

🞎 Use writer’s notebooks/portfolios

🞎 Provide diverse reading materials modeling the importance of craft and idea

🞎 Collaborate on assignments with content area teachers

🞎 Share writing rubrics across grade levels and subject areas

🞎 Provide class time for revision after response to the original draft

🞎 Make teacher and peer response an integral part of writing instruction

🞎 Respond intermittently throughout the writing process

🞎 Use student-teacher conferences

🞎 Use peer reviews

🞎 Use response forms

🞎Use class critiques

🞎 Use self assessments

🞎 Use collaboration techniques

🞎 Use mini—lessons so students can observe, discuss, and simulate the targeted writing craft lessons or skills

🞎 Provide direct instruction and modeling in literacy processes and strategies.

🞎 Allow students to read, listen to, and create texts in a variety of genres

🞎 Provide daily opportunities for writing done in support of reading

🞎 Encourage students to read, listen to and discuss a variety of selections that present different perspectives on the same theme, issue, question, or problem.

🞎 Help students to generate focus questions based on a theme studied in class and provide opportunities for them to discuss and write about the focus questions.

🞎 Ask students to take a stand on issues and articulate their position in a written or oral presentation

🞎 Use technological writing tools (e.g. word processing, online resources)

🞎 Teach basic writing skills (e.g., spelling, grammar, handwriting)

🞎 Teach sentence construction

🞎 Teach students to write for multiple purposes

🞎 Provide students with models of specific types of writing

🞎 Use graphic organizers

🞎 Teach students strategies for planning, revising, and editing their compositions

🞎 Teach students how to summarize texts

Appendix B

Institutional Survey

Institution \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. If your teacher education program trains teachers to teach at the elementary level, does the elementary preparation require one or more courses in writing instruction?

⭘ Yes

⭘ No

1. If your teacher education program trains teachers to teach at the middle school level, does the middle school preparation program require one or more courses in writing instruction?

⭘ Yes

⭘ No

1. If your teacher education program trains teachers to teach at the high school level, does the high school preparation program require one or more courses in writing instruction?

⭘ Yes

⭘ No

1. Is one or more courses in writing instruction required for only some, but not all, content areas?

⭘ Yes

⭘ No

1. How many credit hours in the teaching of writing are typically completed by an elementary candidate in your program?
2. How many hours in the teaching of writing are typically completed by a middle school candidate in your program?
3. How many hours in the teaching of writing are typically completed by a high school candidate in your program?
4. Does you program favor a particular approach to the teaching of writing? If so, describe it in a few words:
5. Who at your program has primary responsibility for training teacher candidates in writing instruction?

1. Class rosters for the 20072008 school year contain data for only a subset of schools and districts. The class rosters came from the Infinite Campus system, which had not been distributed at that point to all districts. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “PSD” is an acronym for the Professional Staff Data system collected yearly by KDE from the statewide MUNIS system, which is a distributed business management database common to all schools in Kentucky. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This analysis produced a very large number of tables, which are not presented here. They are available on request. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)