TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF AND RESPONSE TO WRITING POLICY

IN THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS:

A FOCUS ON WRITING TASKS

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The Common Core State Standards (CCSS; CCSSO, 2010) are a promising response to the call for "a writing revolution" (National Commission on Writing, 2003). They aim to position students on the path to college and career readiness by foregrounding analytic text-based writing. While the standards are clear on the writing products students are expected to generate, however, they provide little guidance regarding the learning opportunities teachers should offer to reach those ends (Graham & Harris, 2015). As a result, districts and teachers are left to interpret how to implement the standards. In this two-study dissertation, I investigate how 4th- and 5th-grade teachers in one district respond to the CCSS, specifically with respect to the writing tasks they assign. In the first study, I elicited teachers' understanding and interpretation of the standards with a set of task sorts. Multidimensional scaling (MDS) of the data suggests that teachers have a sound understanding of the CCSS; however, many teachers are not inclined to assign tasks they identified as most aligned with the standards. In the second study, I employ a multi-case design to examine how six teachers interpret and implement the CCSS in their writing instruction. Specifically, I conducted qualitative analyses of interviews with teachers and the writing tasks they assigned. Results show that teachers struggle with what it means to integrate reading and

writing. Their struggle is complicated by the district's attempt to address the CCSS by endorsing two curricula – one focusing on reading skills (ELA), and one on writing skills and process (Writing Workshop). Teachers perceive the parallel curricula as contradicting the intent of the standards. They negotiated the conflicting messages in various ways, including adhering to one curriculum while rejecting the other, and assimilating one program into the other. Teachers' interpretation of the standards is reflected in their assigned writing tasks. Most tasks did not resemble the type of analytic text-based writing intended in the reform. A reformulation of the CCSS to clarify the relationship between reading and writing, and to signal instruction that might support the standards could help districts and teachers to implement the standards as intended.

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1.0   INTRODUCTION: ATTENDING TO THE NEGLECTED 'R'

Writing is a critical skill for academic and career success (National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges, 2003). It is necessary for developing thinking skills, for learning in content areas, and for creative and personal expression (Applebee & Langer, 2011; Bangert-Drowns, Hurley & Wilkinson, 2004; Graham & Harris, 2015; Graham, Harris, & Hebert, 2011; Hillocks, 1984; 2002). Yet, national assessments have indicated that at multiple levels, students' writing skills are poor. According to reports of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), for example, only about a third of students in grades 4, 8, and 12 write at a proficient level (NCES, 2011). While disturbing, the results are not surprising, given that writing instruction and students' opportunities to write are generally impoverished. One recent survey found that, in grades 3 and 4, teachers spend on average only 15 minutes per day teaching writing, and students spend only about 25 minutes per day writing (Brindle, Harris, Graham, & Hebert, 2015). Other studies show that elementary students often write in the context of providing brief answers to comprehension questions, completing worksheets, or notetaking, instead of generating extended analytic responses (Gilbert & Graham, 2010). Similar findings characterize writing instruction in middle school (Graham, Capizzi, Harris, Hebert, & Murphy, 2014; Ray, Graham, Houston, & Harris, 2015) and high school (Applebee & Langer, 2009; Gillespie, Graham, Kiuhara, & Hebert, 2014). In short, writing has indeed been the neglected 'R' in school curricula (National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges, 2003).

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One reason why writing has likely been neglected is that policy guiding English Language Arts (ELA) instruction has largely been silent on writing (Graham & Harris, 2015; Graham, Harris, & Santangelo, 2015). In large part, ELA policy in the form of standards and assessments has focused heavily on reading instruction (Graham & Perin, 2007; Strickland et al., 2001). There has been little direction or vision forwarded as to the educational goals related to writing that teachers and students ought to work toward. The standards that have been in place tend to treat writing as separate from reading, with separate standards, curriculum, and assessments (Strickland et al, 2001; Shanahan, 2015). Furthermore, they tend to be unwieldy and characterized by poor specificity (Isaacson, 2004; Shanahan, 2015; Troia et al., 2013). In the absence of a clear policy, a process-oriented approach to writing instruction (e.g., generating ideas, planning and organizing, drafting, etc.) and popular programs, such as Writing Workshop, have often stood in for official writing standards or a writing curriculum (Patthey-Chavez, Matsumura, & Valdés, 2004; Strickland et al., 2001).

More importantly, past standards have essentially neglected the thinking and evidence demands of writing. That is, past standards have stated that students need to learn to write in multiple genres, for different purposes and audience, and with attention to mechanical matters, such as spelling, punctuation, and grammar (Isaacson, 2004; Shanahan, 2015), but they minimally address the nature of students' thinking in writing. They rarely signal the cognitive rigor of questions students should engage with or indicate the importance of supporting ideas with evidence. In all, the persistent weaknesses in past policy have led the National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges (2003) to call for "every state [to] revisit its education standards to make sure they include a comprehension writing policy" (p. 3).

1.1   WRITING POLICY IN THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) represents "the first major reform effort in the United States to attempt to actualize the recommendation from [the National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges]" (Graham & Harris, 2015, p. 459). Left behind in No Child Left Behind and relegated to a minor role in previous reform efforts, writing in the era of the CCSS "is now central to the mission of schooling" (Graham & Harris, 2015, p. 459; Applebee, 2013; Graham et al., 2014). Admittedly, these standards are imperfect and would need to be updated, expanded, and viewed critically, particularly with respect to informing instructional decisions (Graham & Harris, 2015); nevertheless, they are recognized as providing a much-needed "set of benchmarks…for the writing skills and applications students are expected to master at each grade and across grades" (Graham et al., 2014, p. 1016; see Applebee, 2013, and Troia and Olinghouse (2013) for discussion of some of the weaknesses of the ELA CCSS).

On the whole, the CCSS set forth a vision of the type of writing instruction needed to help students acquire the skills for academic and future success (Graham et al., 2015). The CCSS for ELA specifies in ten succinct standards four applications of writing skills students are expected to master (NGAC/CCSSO, 2010; Graham & Harris, 2013). Specifically, students are expected to learn to write texts that argue, inform, and narrate, with considerable emphasis on the skills of writing analytically in response to text. Starting in the 4th grade, for example, the rigorous standards call for students to compose extended essays in which they draw on multiple texts to support their opinion (NGAC/CCSSO, 2010). The standards require students to reason and construct knowledge from texts, for example, through comparing themes and analyzing points of view, as well as to support their claims with text-based details.

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The extent to which instructional improvement can occur, however, depends on a multitude of factors, including how teachers understand the standards and their beliefs about how students learn (Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002; Spillane, 2004; Spillane, Reiser, & Gomez, 2006). In addition, given that teachers are necessarily embedded in an institutional context (e.g., their district or school) that has itself arrived at an interpretation of the policy, teachers must consider the messages they perceive from the local environment aimed at guiding their instruction (Coburn, 2004; Honig, 2006; Spillane, 1998a; 1998b), The result of teachers' negotiation of these multiple influences and interpretations shape in large part the learning opportunities they offer to students.

1.2   THE PRESENT RESEARCH

The purpose of the present research, which consists of two studies, is to examine teachers' response to writing policy in the Common Core State Standards (CSSS) in order to understand the ways teachers are interpreting it and using it to guide their writing instruction. The focus is on instruction in the 4th-and 5th-grades. These years are particularly pivotal to students' literacy development, as they signal the transition from a focus on learning to write, to writing as a key way to demonstrate learning and thinking (about texts and across content areas) (Chall & Jacobs, 1983). Moreover, research shows that during these years, the achievement gap widens and then consistently grows over time, if left unaddressed (Hirsch Jr., 2001). To help mitigate this negative trend, it is critical for students in these grades to have rich opportunities for developing strong writing skills, for such skills are essential for mastery of academic content in higher grades.

The central piece of the research concerns teachers' understanding of the underlying principles of the CCSS with respect to writing, and the writing tasks they assign to their students. To study why teachers might differ in their interpretation and subsequent instruction, I draw on the perspective that implementation of instructional policy hinges on not only teachers' understanding of the policy itself, but also their response to the messages from the local environment that are intended to guide instruction (Coburn, 2004; Spillane et al., 2002).

1.2.1   Overview of the studies

In the first study, I investigate the types of writing tasks that teachers understand as supporting students to meet the goals of the CCSS with respect to writing. I also examine the possible relationship between teachers' understanding of writing tasks that support the goals of the CCSS, and the tasks they plan to assign to students. Using an instrument developed specifically for the study, I elicited the underlying understanding about the CCSS that 25 4th- and 5th grade teachers held. The research questions I address are:

1. What are teachers' understanding of writing tasks that support the goals of the CCSS?

2. What might be the relationship between teachers' understanding of writing tasks that support the goals of the CCSS, and their interpretation of writing tasks to assign to students?

In the second study, I investigate the hypothesis that teachers' interpretation of what the CCSS means for the writing tasks they assign to students is in large part a result of a sensemaking process in which they negotiate their understanding of the standards with the messages they perceive from the district. Specifically, I address the following research questions through qualitative case studies (Yin, 2003) of six teachers in one district:

1. How do teachers negotiate the messages they perceive from the CCSS and the messages they perceive from their district – particularly about curriculum and assessments – in interpreting what the CCSS writing policy means for the writing tasks they assign to students?

2. What is the nature of the writing tasks teachers? To what extent do the writing tasks reflect the principles of the CCSS writing policy?

1.3   SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

Research in ELA on teachers' instructional response to standards-based reform has typically focused on reading policy and instruction (e.g., Coburn 2004; 2005b; Spillane & Jennings, 1997). Writing policy implementation needs to be specifically examined. The difference between reading and writing is not a nuance to be dismissed. Spillane (2004) has argued that "instruction is a multidimensional activity. It involves the teaching of specific academic content, using particular materials and teaching strategies, perhaps under different instructional grouping conditions, or through the deployment of different discourse activities… [A]ny discussion of relations between state policy and classroom instruction has to take the particular curricular area and the dimension of instruction into account" (p. 11).

The introduction of the Common Core State Standards (CSSS) signals an opportune time to study teachers' response to a significant shift in writing policy because it is an area that has not seen recent and meaningful reform (Graham & Harris, 2013). How teachers understand and take up the policy, and the impact it has on their writing instruction, can speak to the success of the CCSS initiative in providing much-needed guidance around the teaching and learning of

writing. In this regard, the studies contribute to understanding the early influence the writing policy might have on shaping teachers' conception of how to teach and on their actual instruction, as in the learning opportunities they provide to students in the form of writing tasks.

The present research may also lead to considerations for professional development targeted at improving writing instruction. That is, existing research suggests that it is common for teachers to adopt surface or superficial features of policy while missing the important shifts that reflect the underlying principles of the reform (Spillane et al., 2002). What this means with respect to various reading reforms has been documented (e.g., Cohen, 1990; Spillane & Zeuli, 1999); however, how this might play out with respect to writing reform remains to be investigated. Identifying the aspects of the CCSS policy for writing that teachers tend to have consensus around and those aspects that teachers tend to misunderstand or overlook might lead to more targeted professional learning interventions that explicitly address the ideas in the standards appear more nuanced or difficult to implement.

Finally, through the case of one particular context, the present research could provide some modest insight into how districts might interpret the policy guiding writing instruction. The messages teachers perceive the district as conveying through and about curricula and assessments, for example, could reflect how other local education agencies might be inclined to operationalize the standards for their teachers. To the extent that the perceived messages support implementation of the standards as intended, we might learn some potentially effective ways for districts to facilitate instructional improvement. Conversely, should the district messages be problematic, as in incoherent or insufficient in guiding how teachers should help students meet the standards, we might consider ways to provide supports at the local level to aid in the policy implementation process. Interpretation of policy at the district level that is vague, incomplete, or

inaccurate might also point to potential weaknesses in the formulation or articulation of the policy itself. That is, ambiguity in the use of language or incoherence among parts of the standards might inhibit districts from interpreting the policy as intended (Cohen & Ball, 1990; Cohen, Moffitt, & Goldin, 2007; Hill, 2001; 2006; Spillane et al., 2002). The present research could provide insight into whether and where such vulnerabilities might lie in the CCSS.

2.0   STUDY 1: TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETATION OF WRITING POLICY IN THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

Writing is a critical skill for academic and career success (National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges, 2003); yet it has long been the neglected 'R'. National assessments have indicated that at multiple levels, students' writing skills are poor (NCES, 2011). While disturbing, this fact is not too surprising, given that writing instruction and students' opportunities to write are generally impoverished (Applebee & Langer, 2009; Brindle, Graham, Harris, & Hebert, 2015; Gilbert & Graham, 2010; Graham, Capizzi, Harris, Hebert, & Murphy, 2014). In the elementary grades, writing has received particularly little attention (Shanahan, 2015). When asked to write, elementary students are often asked to produce reports or brief pieces relating straightforward facts (Shanahan, 2015).

Just relatively recently, concern with writing instruction in schools has captured the attention of research and policy arenas. With the publication of several major national surveys and report came recommended evidence-based practices for quality writing instruction (Gilbert & Graham, 2010; Graham & Perin, 2007; Graham et al, 2014; National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges, 2003). More importantly, such work recognizes that "a writing revolution" (p. 3) is necessary, that changing instruction requires a "writing agenda for the nation," which begins with a call for "every state [to] revisit its education standards to make sure they include a comprehension writing policy" (National Commission on Writing in

America's Schools and Colleges, 2003, p. 3). Such a "clear, unambiguous" policy should "aim to double the amount of time students spend writing; ensure that every school district has a writing plan; insist that writing be taught at all grade levels and in all subjects; and provide for teacher professional development" (p. 26).

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS; CCSSO, 2010) in many ways address the call for a writing revolution. Past policies guiding English Language Arts (ELA) instruction has largely been silent on writing (Graham & Harris, 2015; Graham, Harris, & Santangelo, 2015). For decades, writing instruction has been subordinate to reading instruction (Graham & Perin, 2007; Strickland, 2001). Furthermore, typical state standards related to writing tend to be unwieldy and poorly specified ((Isaacson, 2010; Shanahan, 2015; Troia et al., 2013). Essentially, they have been ineffective for providing teachers with a clear vision of quality writing instruction. In contrast, the writing standards in the Common Core reform are widely regarded as clear and specific, at least with respect to writing products and outcomes (Graham et al., 2015).

Even if the new standards are clear, meaningful improvement in writing opportunities for students are not guaranteed to follow, since enactment of instructional policy depends in large part on what teachers perceive themselves to be responding to and what they interpret the policy to mean for their instruction (Coburn, 2001; Haug, 1999; Honig, 2006; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). In fact, to date, the limited number of studies on the implementation of writing standards and assessments, and their influence on instruction suggest that reform efforts have not been very successful at improving teachers' instruction (McCarthey, 2008). Teachers generally respond to changes in writing policy by making adjustments that amount to insignificant changes, such as emphasizing writing for specific audiences and purposes, (Hillock, 2002; Stecher, Barron, Chun, & Ross, 2000), focusing on different forms and genres (Strickland et al.,

2001), and engaging in explicit test preparation (McCarthey, 2008; Strickland et al., 2001). Teachers' constrained interpretations of past writing policies might be an artifact of the weakness of past standards. They might also reflect a misalignment between the standards and high-stakes assessments, which was particularly the case under NCLB. In the CCSS, however, there is a strong attempt to address these concerns (Graham et al., 2015), and so it important to assess the potential impact of this reform effort. To do so, however, it is first important to examine teachers' understanding of the CCSS writing policy.

2.1   WRITING POLICY IN THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

2.1.1   Writing in the CCSS

Launched in 2009, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) is an initiative led by governors and state commissioners of education from 48 states, two territories, and the District of Columbia (DC), who are members of the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGAC) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) (CCSSI, 2014). The purpose of the initiative is to set clear, consistent, and strong learning goals that will prepare students for high school graduation and success in college, career, and life. To date, 42 states and DC have voluntarily adopted the CCSS. Importantly, individual states and local communities still design their own curriculum and make decisions about how to implement the standards (CCSSI, 2014). That is, insofar as the standards are a set of shared goals and expectations, they establish what students should learn; however, they do not tell teachers what or how to teach (CCSSI, 2014).

The English Language Arts (ELA) standards are divided into four strands – Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language – although all these processes are meant to be integrated (Applebee, 2013). Reading and writing, in particularly, are conceived to be intertwined, as students are expected to write about what they read, and to read in order to inform their writing (Shanahan, 2015). Indeed, an important aspect of the writing standards is that they emphasize teaching students "how to use writing to enhance comprehension of text and facilitate learning of content materials" (Graham & Harris, 2013, p. 29). Overall, the CCSS promotes writing that "can do meaningful work in the world", such as "writing convincing arguments about issues that matter [or] writing clear and comprehensive informational texts" (Smith, Wilhelm, & Fredricksen, 2013, p. 45) and writing to promote learning (Graham & Harris, 2013). This stands in clear contrast to the formulaic writing and thinking that past standards and related assessments have perpetuated (Hillocks, 2002).

2.1.1.1 Three key shifts in English Language Arts standards. Altogether, the ELA standards signal three key shifts from previous standards that carry implications for writing instruction. First, students are to have regular exposure to complex texts and academic language (CCSSI, 2014). Students are not merely expected to read and write, but to do so with increasingly challenging texts that ultimately meet the demands of college and beyond. Such texts span literary (stories, drama, and poetry) and informational (literary nonfiction and historical, scientific, and technical texts) genres (CCSSI, 2014). Second, the CCSS promotes building knowledge systematically through content-rich nonfiction. This is aligned with the idea that students "must be immersed in information about the world around them if they are to develop the strong general knowledge and vocabulary they need to become successful readers and be prepared for college, career, and life" (CCSSI, 2014). In practice, this means balancing

informational and literary texts in an even 50-50 split, across all core literacy subjects (i.e., language arts, social studies, science).

The third and perhaps the most significant way in which the CCSS is distinguished from previous standards is their emphasis on close reading and providing evidence from text or multiple texts to support analysis (Shanahan, 2015). In decades past, writing in the elementary years has "focused much more heavily on having students write about what they know, not about what they read" (Shanahan, 2015, p. 468; Gilbert & Graham, 2010). In contrast, beginning in the 4th and 5th grades, the CCSS requires students to use evidence from texts to "present careful analyses, well-defended claims, and clear information" (CCSSI, 2014; Shanahan, 2015). To help achieve the standards related to evidence use, teachers should ask students questions that cannot simply be answered from students' prior knowledge and experience; rather, teachers should pose "a range of text-dependent questions, whose answers require inferences based on careful attention to the text" (CCSSI, 2014).

2.1.1.2 Writing tasks emphasized in the CCSS. In line with these major shifts, the CCSS signals the types of writing activities that should receive emphasis – summarizing text, analyzing texts and the ideas in texts, and synthesizing information from multiple texts (Shanahan, 2015). Moreover, the standards specify three genres of writing that students should focus on – opinion, informative/explanatory, and narrative. In particular, in 4th and 5th grade, students are expected to write extended "opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information" (NGAC/CCSSO, 2010) as well as informative and explanatory texts that "develop a topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples…" (NGAC/CCSSO, 2010). Although the standards still allow for students to develop narratives based on real or imagined experiences or events, given the significant emphasis on texts as the

basis of writing and the focus on providing supporting evidence, writing that is directly related to supported opinion and informative writing are clearly core to the CCSS.

2.1.2   Writing in the CCSS-aligned assessment

Research on standards-based reform suggests that, without the leverage of high-stakes assessment, adoption and implementation of standards in instruction would be inconsistent, even rare (e.g., Baker, 2005; Hamilton, 2003; Hamilton, Stecher, & Klein, 2002; Koretz & Hamilton, 2006; Stecher, 2002; Supovitz, 2009). Excluding the efforts of a handful of states (e.g., Kentucky, Maryland, Vermont) that experimented with statewide performance-based writing assessments in the 1990s, writing has essentially been neglected on large-scale assessments. The new generation of assessments aligned with the CCSS, however, appears to cohere with the standards and follow through in assessing writing.

The assessment developed by the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) consists of a Performance-Based Assessment (PBA) that requires students to "read texts and write several pieces to demonstrate they can read and understand sufficiently complex texts independently; write effectively when using and analyzing sources; and build and communicate knowledge by integrating, comparing, and synthesizing ideas" (PARCC, 2014). Specifically, the PBA for 4th and 5th grades consists of three extended writing tasks – a literary analysis task, narrative task, and research simulation task (PARCC, 2014). The first task requires students to compose an analytic essay upon closely reading one or two texts. For the narrative task, students may be asked to produce a story or description of an event or object. Finally, the research simulation task is designed to allow students to "exercise the skills of observation,

deduction, and proper use and evaluation of evidence" through synthesizing information on a topic presented through several texts in different media (PARCC, 2014).

Recent research suggests that the PARCC assessment aligns closely with the CCSS in holding students and teachers accountable for a set of cognitively demanding skills and knowledge (Doorey & Polikoff, 2016; Herman & Linn, 2014). In line with the key shifts signaled in the CCSS, writing analytically in response to complex texts and marshaling evidence from texts to support one's analysis are core to the PARCC assessment. The CCSS and the assessments together, then, seem to promote a coherent writing policy that has potential to improve instruction.

2.2   THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

2.2.1   Teacher as sensemaker

The theoretical perspective informing the study is the cognitive perspective of policy implementation, particularly its focus on the individual as the sensemaking agent. This perspective contrasts with conventional accounts of policy implementation, wherein policy messages are regarded as static ideas "that are transmitted unaltered into local actors' minds to be accepted, rejected, or modified to fit local needs and conditions" (Spillane et al., 2002, p. 392). Work based in this perspective is premised on the assumption that implementers clearly and wholly understand a policy's intended message (Spillane Reiser, & Gomez, 2006). Failure of implementation efforts, therefore, was often attributed to resistance or lack of skill or capacity on the part of the implementers (McLaughlin, 1987; 2006; Spillane et al., 2006).

The cognitive perspective on policy implementation complicates the matter by questioning what the implementer perceives him/herself to be responding to. It recognizes that the agents must "first notice, then frame, interpret, and construct meaning for policy messages" (Spillane et al., 2002, p. 392). In this way, "implementation hinges on whether and in what ways local implementing agents' understanding of policy demands impacts the extent to which they reinforce or alter their practice" (Spillane et al., 2006, p. 47; Spillane, 2004; Spillane et al., 2002). In essence, this means that policy depends on the teachers' understanding of the principles underlying the reform (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Honig, 2006; Spillane et al., 2006), since that understanding shapes their interpretation of how they should teach. This account of policy implementation draws on lessons learned about "policy depends in reality on the "street-level bureaucrat" (Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977).

The cognitive perspective of policy implementation recognizes that an individual teacher's knowledge, beliefs, and experiences greatly shape his/her understanding of what policy means (Spillane et al., 2002; Spillane, Gomez & Mesler, 2009). In other words, these aspects help the implementing agent construct meaning from (i.e., "make sense of") the incoming stimuli (Spillane et al., 2002). This process typically results in the same message being interpreted in very different ways, with such differences often predictive of the level of implementation of reform practices (Cohen & Ball, 1990; Cohen & Barnes, 1993; Haug, 1999; Spillane, 1996; 1998a). Research has also found that through this process, policy messages often supplement rather than replace teachers' existing knowledge and practice, resulting in interpretations of policy and practices that may not be congruent with the intent of the policymakers (Cohen & Ball, 1990; Spillane et al., 2002). Specifically, in trying to draw analogies between what is familiar and new, teachers may misunderstand innovative reform ideas an practices as variations

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of what they already believe in and do. As such, teachers may perceive themselves as enacting reform-oriented practices when they are actually not (Cohen, 1990; Hill, 2001; Spillane, 2000; Spillane & Callahan, 2000; Spillane & Zeuli 1999). Finally, the cognitive perspective of policy implementation suggests, and empirical research shows, that teachers, particularly those with less expertise in the content of the reform, often attend to the surface aspects and miss the deeper principles of the reform (Cohen, 1990; Haug, 1999; Spillane et al., 2002).

Much of the literature implicitly treats teachers' *understanding* of policy and their *interpretation* of what the policy means for their practice as one and the same. Some recent research hints at disentangling the two, suggesting that, having constructed an *understanding* of the policy messages, teachers engage further in sensemaking that impacts their instructional response (i.e., *interpretation*). In the context of a study on teachers' sensemaking of a policy on reading instruction, for example, Coburn (2001; 2004) noted that "once teachers constructed an understanding of what a given message was about, they either engaged with the idea or approach, or they dismissed it" (Coburn, 2001, p. 154).

Like their sensemaking of the policy itself, teachers' interpretation of, or planned instructional response to, the policy messages also appears to be a function of teachers' beliefs and worldviews related to teaching, learning, and their students. In Coburn's (2004) study, for example, some teachers decided that certain standards were not appropriate for the grade level they were teaching, were too difficult for their students, were infeasible, given constraints on time, resources, or other commodities, or did not fit with their existing structures (e.g., for organizing time, the students, or the activity structures in the classroom) (Coburn, 2001). Similarly, in a study of instructional reform in science, teachers seemed to understand the messages of the reform, but "elect[ed] to disregard the proposed changes in terms of their own

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practice" (Smith & Southerland, 2007, p. 415). One teacher in particular "clearly understood and could articulate the goals of reform; she simply chose not to embrace them" (p. 416).

The distinction between teachers' *understanding* of the policy message and their *interpretation* of what the policy means for their practice is likely not trivial. Haug (1999) recognizes that if teachers have not been clearly informed about policy changes, they would need to be educated about the expectations. Alternatively, if teachers understood the message clearly but chose to interpret it otherwise, given their workload or other factors, different interventions would be needed. Ultimately then, teachers' understanding and interpretation of the intentions of new policy are both important to consider.

2.2.2 Theoretical framework for examining writing tasks

The present study focuses on assigned writing tasks. Assigned tasks are a particularly important aspect of instruction because they are an important vehicle through which teachers translate academic standards and curriculum content into practice (Doyle, 1983; Doyle & Carter, 1984). According to Doyle (1983), an academic task has three elements: a goal or product; a set of resources available to students while engaged in the work; and a set of operations (i.e., cognitive processes) that can be applied to reach the goal or generate the product. Together, these elements reflect teachers' understanding of the cognitive processes and subject-matter content that students need to learn. As such, tasks are crucial to students' learning and experience of a given curriculum domain (Doyle, 1983; Doyle & Carter, 1984; Newmann, Bryk, & Nagaoka, 2001).

Writing tasks in specific are important because research shows that opportunity to engage in cognitively challenging tasks is associated with the development of thinking, reading, and writing skills (Applebee, 1984; Fulwiler & Young, 1982; Langer & Applebee, 1987; Newkirk &

Atwell, 1986). With respect to how writing contributes to thinking, Applebee (1984) writes that "the more a writer must manipulate new material in the process of writing about it, the better that writer will come to understand that material" (p. 586). Empirical research indeed shows that more rigorous forms of writing, those requiring reformulation and extension of concepts, better enable students to integrate elements of the text under study into their knowledge of the topic, whereas notetaking or restricted writing (i.e., short answers) tasks result in isolated, fragmentary understanding (Marshall, 1987; Langer & Applebee, 1987; Newell, 1984).

The quality of writing tasks also impacts students' reading skills. For instance, Graham and Hebert (2010)'s meta-analysis indicates that students' comprehension of various types of texts improves when they write about what they read, particularly in the form of personal response or analysis and interpretation of text; summarizing, taking notes, and answering questions about text result in a smaller effect. Moreover, the cognitive demand of the assignments teachers give to elementary students appears to significantly predict differences in students' reading comprehension skills as assessed on standardized tests (Matsumura 2003; Matsumura, Garnier, Pascal, & Valdés, 2002; Matsumura et al., 2008a). Other studies reached similar conclusions for other grade levels (Carbonaro & Gamoran, 2002; Newmann et al., 2001).

Finally, the quality of writing tasks influences the development of students' writing skills. That is, there appears to be a positive relationship between more challenging assignments and higher content quality in students' writing (Boscolo & Carotti, 2003; Matsumura, Patthey-Chavez, Valdés, & Garnier, 2002). One recent study shows the cognitive demand of text-based writing assignments predicts several features of students' writing performance, including their ability to reason analytically about text, use evidence to support their claims, and organize their writing, "even after controlling for other dimensions of literacy instruction" (Matsumura,

Correnti, & Wang, 2015, p. 417), including the amount of instructional time spent on reading and writing comprehension.

Despite the preponderance of evidence linking rigorous writing tasks and many aspects of student learning, research suggests that the quality of writing tasks in schools is generally poor. Students rarely engage in analytic thinking in writing and are seldom asked to generate extended responses. Specifically, only about 4% of observed class time in elementary schools is spent on extended writing tasks. Moreover, opportunities for students to write in response to texts are rare (Gilbert & Graham, 2010). Even when students read quality texts, they are mostly asked to recall basic facts (Matsumura et al., 2006; 2015; Newmann et al., 2001). Yet, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for ELA specifically emphasize text-based writing, recognizing it as a key way for students to deepen comprehension and develop high-level thinking skills (Graham, & Hebert, 2011). Hence, studying the types and quality of writing tasks that teachers assign presents a valuable lens into teachers' instruction as well as their understanding of the goals of the CCSS and the reform at large.

Finally, assigned tasks are also a worthwhile focus because of their potential use as a target of professional development. As concrete artifacts of instruction, tasks can be readily collected and reflected upon. Teachers can be supported in interventions to examine the features of tasks they currently assign in direct comparison with the tasks promoted in the CCSS. This process may help highlight substantive differences and prompt teachers to confront and resolve the conflict between their view of effective practice and the intent of the standards.

2.3   THE PRESENT STUDY

The present study investigates teachers' understanding and interpretation of the writing policy in the CCSS. Few studies to date have examined this question. More importantly, the study recognizes that eliciting teachers' assumptions and views of policy is difficult because individuals might use or react to terms that signal reform, but miss the actual intent (Hill, 2001). To mitigate this problem, I designed a series of task sorting activities that allow me to derive, from teachers' ratings of detailed descriptions of writing tasks, the features of writing tasks that teachers attend to and that they deem to be salient in the CCSS. This data collection method helps increase confidence in capturing teachers' subjective response to policy because, given the set of stimuli to rate, it is less obvious what the desirable responses might be, so teachers might be less inclined to make selections based on what they believe they are expected to make.

The present study examines what 25 4th-and 5th-grade English Language Arts (ELA) teachers understand as writing tasks that support the goals of the current reform and what they interpret the CCSS to mean for the tasks to assign to students. To clarify, this study focuses on the sense teachers have made of the policy messages, not the sensemaking process. The research questions guiding this study are as follows:

1. What are teachers' understanding of writing tasks that support the goals of the CCSS?

2. What might be the relationship between teachers' understanding of writing tasks that support the goals of the CCSS, and their interpretation of writing tasks to assign to students?

2.4   METHODS

2.4.1   District context

The present study takes place in a large urban district in a mid-Atlantic state. Within its 54 schools and academies (34 elementary, 16 high schools, and 4 alternate education), the district serves 25,000 students from kindergarten to 12th grade. Approximately 60% of the students are Hispanic, 30% are African-American, and 9% are of Caucasian, Middle Eastern, or Asian descent. More than 90% of the students received free or reduced-priced lunch. About 15% of students receive special education services, and about 13% are identified as English Language Learners (ELL).

2.4.1.1 Model curriculum and assessments. Teachers are provided the state's model curriculum for English Language Arts (ELA), which organizes standards into five units of study. For each unit, intended for six weeks of instruction, the model curriculum specifies the targeted student learning objectives (SLO) and corresponding Common Core State Standards (CCSS) to be addressed. The texts, strategies, and instructional activities are not prescribed, but recommended readings are provided. In each grade, three of the ELA curriculum units follow the state's model curriculum. In addition, teachers implement two CCSS-aligned curriculum units developed by the University of Pittsburgh's Institute for Learning (IFL). The IFL provides research-based professional development and materials that advance teaching and learning.

In the 4th grade, three of the five units focus on reading a range of both literary and informational texts. An additional unit focuses on informational text, and one specifically on personal narratives. With respect to writing, at the end of two of the units, students are expected

to write informative/explanatory texts. The other units require students to generate a supported opinion piece, a text-based narrative, and a personal narrative. The curriculum content for the 5th grade is similar. In four of the units, students read a variety of fiction and nonfiction texts. One additional unit is devoted to informational texts specifically. Narrative writing is featured in the 5th grade. Three of the units culminate in a piece of text-based narrative writing, (e.g., rewrite part of a story from an alternate point of view) and the other two require students to write informative/explanatory texts.

While teachers are required to follow the model curriculum and administer the culminating tasks, they have the autonomy to design and select all other instructional tasks, including writing tasks, for students. Moreover, there is no prescribed rubric in the district for assessing student work. Essentially then, teachers are in charge of determining the writing opportunities available to students as well as the expectations and criteria for good writing. Because of this flexibility, instruction during the 90-minute ELA/Literacy block is known to vary greatly from teacher to teacher, even within a grade level at the same school.

In addition to the ELA/Literacy block, the district instituted a 45-minute Writing Workshop period. The Writing Workshop follows Lucy Calkins' approach in requiring teachers to teach general skills in teacher-directed mini-lessons followed by time for students to work on their writing. For each grade, the district sets out four types of compositions that students should produce and the learning objectives related to each. In 4th grade, students work on a piece of realistic fiction, persuasive essay, researched informational text, and literary essay. Fifth-grade students focus on a personal essay, researched informational text, memoir, and argumentative essay. Writing Workshop endorses regular use of mentor texts to support students' development

of the craft of writing in various genres and forms. Students are not, however, typically asked to write in response to such texts or explicitly refer to these texts in their writing.

In terms of assessments, until 2014, the district administered the state standardized test developed under NCLB. In spring 2015, students took the first official PARCC assessment. As for district-level ELA assessments, at the end of each curriculum unit, students complete a state-designed unit assessment. Each assessment measures students' proficiency of the targeted skills (i.e., the selected standards) of the unit. The assessment consists of a reading passage followed by several multiple-choice questions, some short-answer questions, and a writing prompt that asks students to generate a multi-paragraph response.

2.4.2 Participants

2.4.2.1 Demographics. In total, 25 teachers participated in the study. Among these, 23 teachers are female (92%), and 2 are male (8%). With respect to race, 14 participants are White (56%), 6 are Hispanic (24%), 4 are Black (16%), and 1 identifies as biracial (4%). Fifteen teachers received their Master's degree (60%); 10 received their Bachelor's degree (40%). All but one teacher holds a regular teaching certification (96%).

The participants taught in 13 different schools in the district. Thirteen teachers taught 5th grade (52%), 11 taught 4th grade (44%), and one taught both grades (4%). Furthermore, sixteen of the teachers taught regular classes (64%), while 7 taught self-contained classes for English Language Learners (ELL) (28%), and 2 taught designated special education classes (8%). Seven teachers taught only ELA (28%); 16 teachers taught ELA and Writing Workshop (64%). The remaining two teachers taught Writing Workshop as well as social studies or science (8%). The teachers averaged 9.6 years of experience (range = 1-24) (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Participants (n=25)

		n	%
Sex	Female	23	92%
	Male	2	8%
Race	White	14	56%
	Hispanic	6	24%
	Black	4	16%
	Biracial	1	4%
Highest Degree Held	Master	15	60%
	Bachelor	10	40%
Teaching Certification	Regular	24	96%
	Alternative	1	4%
Years Teaching Experience	Average	9.6	-
	Range	1-24	-
Grade(s) Taught	4th	13	52%
	5th	11	44%
	4th & 5th	1	4%
Class Taught	Regular	16	64%
	ELL	7	28%
	Special Education	2	8%
Subject Taught	ELA & Writing Workshop (& SS/Science)	16	64%
	ELA Only	7	28%
	Writing Workshop & SS/Science	2	8%

2.4.2.2 Knowledge of and commitment to the CCSS and the PARCC assessment. As part of

the data collection, teachers responded to a survey item requiring a self-report of their knowledge

of and support for the CCSS and the PARCC assessment. On average, the teachers reported

having 'strong' knowledge of the CCSS with respect to ELA generally and writing specifically

(M=4.12 and M=4.16 respectively, on a scale of 1-"Very weak" to 5-"Very strong"). In fact,

100% of the teachers are at least 'adequately familiar' with the ELA CCSS in general and the

writing standards in specific. Teachers also indicated that they were 'strongly' committed to

teaching to these standards (M=4.32); however, they were able to teach to the standards only to

an 'adequate' extent (M=3.52).

Teachers' responses with respect to the CCSS-aligned standardized assessment were, on

average, weaker. Teachers reported having only 'adequate' knowledge of the PARCC

assessment generally and the PBA component in specific (M=3.08 and M=2.96). Moreover,

whereas 80% of the teachers claimed to have 'Very strong' or 'Strong' knowledge of the CCSS,

only less than 30% could claim this for their knowledge of the PARCC assessment. Teachers did

have a 'strong' intent to teach to the test (M=4.24) and believed they were 'adequately' able to

prepare students for the writing component (M=3.20) (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 Self-Reported Knowledge of and Support for the CCSS and PARCC Assessment

	Mean (n=25)	Range	Std. Dev.
Knowledge of ELA CCSS	4.12	3-5	0.73
Knowledge of CCSS writing standards	4.16	3-5	0.75
Intent to teach to CCSS writing standards	4.32	3-5	0.75
How well teachers are actually able to teach to CCSS writing standards	3.52	2-5	0.77
Knowledge of PARCC	3.08	2-5	0.91
Knowledge of PARCC PBA	2.96	2-5	0.89
Intent to teach to PARCC PBA	4.24	3-5	0.83
How well teachers are actually able to prepare students for PARCC PBA	3.20	2-4	0.76

Note: Ratings are based on a 5-point scale: 1=Very weak; 2=Weak; 3=Adequate; 4=Strong; 5=Very strong

2.4.3 Instrument

2.4.3.1 Purpose and rationale for the Writing Tasks Set. To elicit teachers' understanding and interpretation of policy, particularly with respect to its goals for writing instruction, I designed an instrument named the Writing Tasks Set (WTS) (Appendix A). This instrument consists of the descriptions of 22 writing tasks that teachers sort or rate with respect to various criteria.

Activities involving sorting and rating stimuli have been used in various areas of education research, primarily to understand teachers' subjective conceptions of different constructs. Such constructs include teachers' beliefs about discipline practices, classroom practices, and about children in general (Clark, Maguire, & Glass, 1972; Rimm-Kaufman, Storm, Sawyer, Pianta, & LaParo, 2006), beliefs about inquiry-based learning (Harwood, Hansen, & Lotter, 2006), beliefs related to literacy development (Levitt & Red Owl, 2013; Lim, 2010), perceptions of disabilities as it pertains to special education (Garvar-Pinhas & Schmelkin, 1989; Morrison, Leiber, & Morrison, 1986; Vitale, Williams, Kocsis, Medland, & Kosinki, 1983), and aspects related to the teaching of science (Gardner & Jones, 2011; Hauslein, Good, & Cummins, 1992). Moreover, a few studies have used academic tasks as stimuli to examine teachers' knowledge of cognitive demand (Arbaugh, 2000; Arbaugh & Brown, 2005; Benko, 2012; Stein, Smith, Arbaugh, Brown, & Mossgrove, 2004; Stein, Smith, Henningsen, & Silver, 2009). The results of sorting activities may reveal descriptive categories of stimuli, as perceived by teachers. That is, stimuli grouped together are typically considered to be similar on some (latent) trait, and they are distinguished on those traits from the stimuli placed in other groups. Or, the results of sorting activities may convey the directionality or intensity of teachers' judgment related to the construct of interest. This means that, like responses based on a Likert scale, the groups that result from a sort can capture the extent to which a teacher prefers one over the others. In the

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present study, teachers are to sort tasks not only on the basis of their perceived similarity to each other in a categorical sense but also with respect to an external referent or target. That is, teachers are to judge how well each task aligns with goals of the CCSS, or how well it approximates the tasks they implement in their instruction.

To date, very few studies, if any at all, have elicited implementing agents' understanding of policy using a task sort methodology, wherein individuals examine and rate a set of stimuli consisting of extended descriptions of artifacts, the results of which are interpreted as representing their grasp of the underlying principles of the policy. In existing research on policy implementation, teachers' knowledge, understanding, and interpretation of policy messages are most often elicited through interviews (e.g., Coburn, 2004; 2005b) and questions on surveys (e.g., Supovitz, Fink, & Newman, 2014); however, there are notable issues with capturing teachers' understanding of policy with these methods. Specifically, it is easy to respond to or use the language of reform – a surface feature – without having a deep understanding of the principles of reform (Hill, 2001; 2006; Spillane & Zeuli, 1999). In the present case, this means that, if asked directly on a survey item, teachers might likely agree that the CCSS emphasizes analytic text-based writing; however, teachers' actual notion of what constitutes analytic writing or what they understand to be a writing task that requires use of textual evidence might not be clear. With WTS, teachers might group certain tasks into a category that they name "analytical text-based writing"; however, the tasks might actually require little more than a basic summary of the text, which would reveal teachers' misconception of what constitutes analytic writing.

Rating stimuli is also particularly appropriate in the present study because, unlike much of the existing research, which focuses on teachers' response to reform writ large and does not lend itself to judgments of instructional moves or artifacts, here, the focus is on writing tasks,

which is an aspect of reform and instruction particularly amenable to representation via artifacts. Furthermore, teachers often make decisions about tasks to assign upon considering an array of tasks from textbooks, curriculum guides, websites, and colleagues' or one's own archives. In this regard, selecting tasks for use (or for adapting) approaches an authentic practice for teachers.

2.4.3.2 Development of the Writing Tasks Set. The development of the tasks that make up the WTS is guided by Doyle's (1983; Doyle & Carter, 1984) conception of tasks as comprising three main elements. To this end, the tasks intentionally varied with respect to the cognitive process required, operationalized as the cognitive demand of the task, as rated with the Instructional Quality Assessment tool (IQA; Matsumura et al., 2002a; 2002b; 2006; 2008a) and the focal text element. Moreover, the tasks varied with respect to the resources required to undertake the task, operationalized as the genre and number of text(s) the task is based on. Finally, the tasks in the WTS varied with respect to the task goal or product, operationalized as the mode of writing[1], the response format, and use of text required by the task. In all then, seven task features were considered (See Appendix B for codes). Many of these features reflect aspects of writing that the CCSS explicitly attend to, including higher-order analytic writing, the use of nonfiction and multiple texts, and emphasis on opinion writing that draws on text evidence.

To assemble the WTS, I sought to create/select tasks that vary in combinations of the features noted above (e.g., a low-level, Venn diagram compare-and-contrast task that draws extensively on prior knowledge, a high-level opinion essay requiring comparison and contrast of

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[1] Mode of writing is based on Applebee (1981)'s categories of the function of writing. Applebee delineates main categories: Writing without composing (or Mechanical uses of writing), which comprises of multiple-choice questions, fill-in-the-blank exercises, short answer questions, or copying text; imaginative (i.e., creative) writing, personal writing, and informational writing. Informational writing includes several distinct subcategories, some of which I distinguish among in the present study. These subcategories are summary writing, explanatory writing, analytical writing, and opinion/persuasive writing.

characters' actions) (see Appendix B). I drew from an existing corpus of over 200 writing tasks collected from 4th- to 6th-grade teachers from prior research (Correnti, Matsumura, Hamilton, & Wang, 2012; 2013; Matsumura et al., 2015). These tasks have previously been rated with the IQA (Matsumura et al., 2002a; 2002b; 2006; 2008a). Intentionally included too are performance-based assessment tasks modeled after those from the PARCC assessment (PARCC, 2014).

The WTS consists of 22 tasks because this allows for tasks with many different (though not exhaustive) combinations of important task features (e.g., task format, type of cognitive process involved). Any more than 22 tasks, however, would likely have rendered the activity burdensome for teachers, particularly since they rate the set twice. Furthermore, literature on multidimensional scaling (MDS), the planned data analysis procedure, suggests that researchers use at least eight stimuli, or at least four times the number of anticipated dimensions (Jacoby, 2012). With 22 tasks, the WTS exceeds this criterion.

2.4.4 Data collection

2.4.4.1 Survey with Writing Tasks Set rating activities. Participating teachers completed an online survey (Appendix C). The survey captures teachers' self-report of two main research topics: 1) their understanding of the CCSS reform, and influences on their understanding, and 2) their interpretation of what the CCSS means for their instruction, and influences that shaped their interpretation. The survey consists of 16 questions, including 6 substantive questions (all selected-response), which include the response sets featuring the WTS, and 10 brief questions about teachers' demographics and teaching experience.

The WTS is the main tool in the survey. First, teachers are asked to sort the tasks however they like (i.e., free sort) into 2-10 categories and to provide a label for each category.

This activity orients (i.e., familiarizes) teachers in a neutral way to the tasks prior to having them rate tasks based on their understanding and interpretation of the CCSS). It also provides some insight into the dimensions teachers attend to when considering writing tasks in general, without the specific frame of the CCSS.

Then, teachers' *interpretation* of the CCSS is elicited. They rate each task according to the extent to which they are likely to assign it to students (1=not likely at all to 7=extremely likely). To elicit teachers' *understanding* of the CCSS, teachers are presented the same set of tasks again. This time, they rate each task based on the extent to which each supports students to meet the goals of the CCSS (1=not at all to 7=to the utmost extent). The rating related to teachers' *interpretation* deliberately precedes the rating pertaining to teachers' *understanding*. This is to avoid priming teachers to claim that they assign tasks aligned with the CCSS (which may not be the case), thus guarding against what may be perceived as desirable responses. Note that for both rating activities, teachers are encouraged to make distinctions, but are not required to distribute the ratings in any particular way. Teachers are also not directed as to the features of the task to attend to in making their judgments.

An additional survey item asks teachers to indicate how they believe the CCSS intends to affect the writing tasks they assign. For example, should they assign fewer/more/same number of writing tasks based on text? Or less/more/same amount of analytic writing? A final question requires teachers to indicate sources (e.g., PD, curriculum units) that help them make sense of the standards, and that influence their instruction.

2.4.5   Data analysis

The primary analytic technique is multidimensional scaling (MDS). Specifically, MDS was performed on teachers' ratings of the WTS. Below, after an overview of MDS procedures, I detail the analyses conducted to address each research question.

2.4.5.1 Overview of multidimensional scaling. Multidimensional scaling (MDS) is a class of exploratory data reduction techniques that has been used in psychological domains primarily to elicit dimensions affecting perception or behavior that may not be readily apparent (Borg, Groenen, & Mair, 2013; Jaworska & Chupetlovska-Anastasova, 2009; Kruskal & Wish, 1978; Young, 2013). It is particularly useful for modeling respondents' perceptions in survey research (Jacoby, 2012). MDS recognizes that respondents may not perceive or interpret the stimuli in the same way. MDS provides "empirical evidence about respondents' perceptual structures and the evaluative criteria they actually employ when thinking about the stimuli in question" (Jacoby, 2012, p. 2). As such, MDS is appropriate for analyzing the data for the present study.

MDS uses proximities as inputs, whereby a proximity is "a number which indicates how similar or how different two objects are, or are perceived to be, or any measure of this kind" (Kruskal & Wish, 1978, p. 7). Commonly, the proximities are presented in a similarity matrix, which encodes information about how frequently objects are paired with one another. MDS can handle nominal or ordinal data (using nonmetric MDS). In fact, it can produce interval-level measurement of respondent characteristics and the criteria used to rate the stimuli using only ordinal-level data (Jacoby, 2012). Furthermore, it can model nonlinear relationships. MDS does not require multivariate normality, nor does it require a specific sample size with respect to raters or number of stimuli (Jaworska & Chupetlovska-Anastasova, 2009; Kruskal & Wish, 1978).

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Typically, MDS is performed with computer programs (Borg et al., 2013). To conduct the analysis, a program constructs a matrix of (Euclidean or other) distances between the variables or objects (Giles, 2002). MDS is premised on the assumption that the distances (on the model side) correspond to the proximities (on the data side) (Borg et al., 2013; Giles, 2002; Kruskal & Wish, 1978). Through an iterative process, the best representation of data in the smallest number of dimensions is arrived at (Borg et al., 2013; Giles, 2002). In nonmetric MDS, the solution is reached when the configuration of points in *m* dimensions is such that as the dissimilarity between two stimuli increase, the distances between the points representing these two stimuli never decrease (Jacoby, 2012). Practically, researchers typically look to obtain a two- or three-dimensional solution. A scree plot and examination of eigenvalues can help determine how many dimensions are optimal (Giguère, 2006).

The goal of the iterative computational process is to minimize stress, an index of the fit of the solution (Borg et al., 2013; Giles, 2002). No definitive rule exists regarding how much stress is acceptable; a general guideline is that stress ≤0.10 is excellent, and anything ≥0.15 is unacceptable (Kruskal & Wish, 1978). Others have suggested that the normalized raw stress of less than 0.20 is acceptable (IBM Corp., 2012). The fit of the model can also be assessed with Tucker's coefficient of congruence (acceptable when greater than .90) or with the squared correlation index (R^2), which indicates "the proportion of variance of the input data accounted for by the MDS procedure" (Jaworska & Chupetlovska-Anastasova, 2009, p. 4). According to Meyer et al., (2005), $R^2 \geq 0.60$ is acceptable. Finally, because the principal assumption of MDS is that the input proximities correspond to the output distances, the Shepard diagram, wherein each pair of proximity-distance is plotted can be generated and examined (Giles, 2002; Jaworska & Chupetlovska-Anastasova, 2009).

MDS is "primarily concerned with representation" (Coxon & Davies, 1982, p. 3; Young, 2013). Indeed, the principal output – and the main affordance of MDS in comparison with other similar procedures – is a spatial representation that resembles points on a map, wherein each point of the configuration corresponds to an object. Such representation reflects the underlying structure and relationships of the data in that the greater the dissimilarity between two objects in terms of their proximity value, the further apart they should be on the spatial map (Borg et al., 2013; Kruskal & Wish, 1978; Takane, 2006). This also means that clusters of points might indicate objects that are similar to each other and distinct from objects in other clusters. Notably, the results can be depicted and interpreted by-person, by-variable, or both simultaneously. For example, in the present study, teachers grouped closely together in the final solution can be considered similar; artifacts grouped together are likely similar; and teachers in close proximity of certain tasks suggest that they have a strong preference for those tasks (i.e., believe those tasks best embody the goals of the CCSS or best represent tasks they assign to students).

Finally, while it is possible to interpret the axes of the visual map as dimensions underlying subjects' judgments of stimuli, it may not always be desirable to do so. Rather, it may be more productive to consider whether the MDS configuration can be partitioned into substantive meaningful regions" (Borg et al., 2013, p. 71; Bartholomew, Steele, Galbraith, & Moustaki, 2008). Borg and colleagues (2013) suggest partitioning with content and substantive theory in mind and allowing incorrect placements of some points in wrong regions because "simple overall patterns with some errors are better than perfect partitions with overly complicated partitions" (p. 72). To aid in the identification of these regions, cluster analysis could be performed (Borg et al., 2013).

2.4.5.2 Analyses for research question 1: What are teachers' understanding of writing tasks that support the goals of the CCSS? First, to establish a "baseline" of how teachers regard the tasks in the WTS, I used the results of teachers' free sort to create an upper-triangular similarity matrix wherein the columns and the rows are the tasks of the WTS. Each cell contains the number of times teachers placed any pair of tasks in the same category. This matrix was then subject to non-metric MDS using the PROXSCAL scaling algorithm available in SPSS 23 (IBM Corp., 2015). Then, I performed the same MDS procedure on teacher's ratings of how well each task from the WTS supports students to meet the learning goals of the CCSS. For both analyses, an ordinal proximity transformation allowing tied observations to be untied was applied, and a simplex initial configuration was used. Initially, models with 1 to 6 dimensions were run. I examined goodness of fit measures (i.e., stress and Tucker's coefficient of congruence) and the scree plot to determine the number of dimensions in the optimal solution. Subsequently, the PROXSCAL was rerun with the optimal number of dimension specified, in this case, three[2].

The main output for each analysis is the single common stimulus configuration[3]. The plot features a point for each task in the stimulus space defined by the given number of dimensions in the solution. The positioning of the points suggests the clusters of tasks that teachers regarded as similar given their sorting or rating of the tasks. To determine the clusters, agglomerative hierarchical clustering (AHC) was performed on the common space coordinates using SPSS 23 (IBM Corp., 2015). AHC is a bottom-up clustering approach wherein each object is initially

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[2] For teachers' ratings of the tasks, an identity model was run, under the assumption that all sources have the same configuration (i.e., all teachers have similar perceptions of the underlying dimensions of tasks and the tasks themselves). An individual differences model (ID MDS; also weighted MDS) was also performed; however, results suggested that individual teachers did not regard the tasks significantly differently from one another. Since no systematic individual differences exist, we may analyze the data from all the respondents simultaneously and derive a single common stimulus configuration (Takane, 2006).

[3] SPSS 23 does not offer three-dimensional representations as an output. The configuration was plotted with XLSTAT 3-D Plot (Addinsoft, 2015), using the coordinates generated from the PROXSCAL procedure.

considered a cluster. Then with each iteration, the clusters seek to merge with the closest cluster until all the objects are in one big cluster. In the current analysis, proximity by squared Euclidean distance and Ward's linkage options were selected. The scree plot of distance coefficient for each step of the agglomeration was evaluated for the optimal number of clusters. Subsequently, the membership of each task was noted. The categories that teachers free-sorted the tasks into, as well as the task features that were considered in the development of the WTS, helped inform the interpretation (i.e., the naming) of the cluster. Finally, the clusters of tasks for the two analyses (i.e., PROXSCAL for free sort and for teachers' rating of tasks per the goals of the CCSS) were compared and interpreted. For teachers' rating of tasks with respect to the goals of the CCSS, the types of tasks grouped with or in proximity to the PARCC assessment-like items embedded in the WTS were of particularly interest.

Finally, to determine teachers' ideal point, as in the (hypothetical) writing task that each particular teacher regards as most supportive of the goals of the CCSS, teachers' ratings of each task of the WTS were subject to the nonmetric MDS external unfolding procedure (PREFSCAL), available in SPSS 23 (IBM Corp., 2015). Unfolding is a common model for scaling preferential choice, and the model is nonmetric since data are ordinal (Borg & Groenen, 2005). In unfolding, data are conceived as "proximities between the elements of two sets, individuals, and choice objects" (Borg & Groenen, 2005, p. 293). Here, the input data was a single rectangular proximity matrix where in each column was one of the tasks from the WTS and each row corresponded to a teacher. Each cell contained the rating a teacher gave to a task. Unfolding assumes that "different individuals perceive various objects of choice in the same way but differ with respect to what they consider an ideal combination of the objects' attributes" (Borg & Groenen, 2005, p. 293). External unfolding was applied because internal unfolding is generally problematic (Jacoby,

2012), prone to degenerate solutions. Moreover, instead of deriving the stimulus and ideal point configurations simultaneously, as in internal unfolding (Takane, 2006), the teachers' ideal points needed to be mapped onto the stimulus configuration derived from the PROXSCAL procedure above. The solution from the unfolding procedure was examined visually for possible degeneracy. Teachers' membership in the clusters already formed by the AHC analysis were determined by examining the Euclidean distance between their ideal point and the centroid of each cluster. The teacher is placed in the cluster whose centroid is the closest to the ideal point.

2.4.5.3 Analyses for research question 2: What might be the relationship between teachers' understanding of writing tasks that support the goals of the CCSS, and their interpretation of writing tasks to assign to students? The unfolding analysis (PREFSCAL) was repeated to answer research question 2. This time, however, the data consisted of teachers' ratings regarding the tasks they are likely to assign. These ratings were unfolded onto the same common space configuration as above (i.e., determined by teachers' ratings of the extent to which tasks supported the goals of the CCSS). Teacher's ideal point, as in the (hypothetical) task they are most likely to assign, was used to determine their cluster membership.

Correlations provided initial insight into the relationship between teachers' understanding of what the CCSS envisions as quality writing tasks, and the tasks they plan to assign. That is, the average ratings teachers gave to the tasks in the WTS to indicate their understanding of the CCSS were correlated with the average ratings they gave to the tasks to represent their likelihood of assigning the tasks. Ultimately, the research question was addressed through simultaneously plotting teachers' two ideal points (i.e., the hypothetical task they deem most supportive of the CCSS and the hypothetical task they are most likely to assign) in the common space and comparing the ideal points visually.

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2.4.5.4 Validity and reliability. Several steps were taken to bolster the validity and reliability claims. First, having teachers conduct a free sort helps to establish a baseline for how teachers think about tasks. Differences between their free sort and subsequent rating of tasks with respect to the goals of the CCSS provide some signal that teachers were in fact responding with the specific prompt in mind, and that the results of the MDS analyses were therefore likely to represent the intended construct.

Second, following Gardner & Jones (2011), to help establish the validity of the interpretations of MDS results, particularly the meaning of the task clusters, two graduate student researchers in addition to the author interpreted the MDS outputs in two iterations. In the first, each researcher examined the common space configuration independently, and given the results of the clusters analysis, characterized (i.e., labeled) the clusters. The second time, all researchers convened and discussed the interpretations until a consensus was reached.

Moreover, because the features that characterize each task in the WTS are used to help interpret the clusters, the tasks themselves were double-coded. That is, two researchers independently coded each tasks for the seven features. The codes were compared and discrepancies were discussed until agreements were reached.

Finally, the interpretations of the MDS results were validated through triangulation with survey data, when appropriate, Moreover, to check on the validity of teachers' cluster membership, I compared the means of teachers' ratings of each task cluster. The mean should be the largest for their preferred cluster, though not necessarily statistically different from the means for the other clusters.

2.5   RESULTS

In this section, I address the two research questions in turn. For research question 1, qualitative results of the free sort and multidimensional scaling (MDS) results based on the WTS ratings show that teachers distinguished six clusters (i.e., types) of tasks. The majority of teachers understood the CCSS to be endorsing extended informative writing that calls upon students to synthesize multiple texts, as well as opinion writing. This aligns with the intent of the CCSS to cognitively demanding text-based writing tasks. On the other hand, about a third of the teachers regarded creative write-like tasks as most supportive of the goals of the CCSS. This type of writing is not a focus of the CCSS.

For research question 2, MDS results pertaining to teachers' interpretation of the CCSS as well as results from survey response sets suggest that about half of the teachers were likely to assign the cognitively demanding tasks described above. In addition, about 40% of the teachers planned to assign tasks characterized by brief (e.g., paragraph-type) responses in various modes of writing, to a range of texts. Correlation analysis suggests that, on the whole, teachers' planned practice aligned with their understanding of the writing policy (whatever that might be); teachers were likely to assign tasks that they regarded as highly supportive of the goals of the CCSS and unlikely to assign the ones that they perceived as not endorsed by the standards. There is variation among individual teachers, however. That is, while some teachers essentially assigned the tasks they believed supported the goals of the CCSS, other teachers did not. Factors related to district policy and expectations, student accountability, and student ability likely accounted for the difference between teachers' understanding of the CCSS and their interpretation of what the standards mean for their practice.

2.5.1   Research question 1: What are teachers' understanding of writing tasks that support the goals of the CCSS?

2.5.1.1 Teachers' baseline understanding of tasks based on the free sort. The free sorting of tasks in the WTS, which is not conditioned on teachers' understanding of the CCSS provide some initial insight into how teachers think about writing tasks generally, including the features they attend to. Of the 25 teachers in the sample, 22 completed the free sort (i.e., provided usable responses). Collectively, teachers identified 26 possible categories of tasks (see Table 2.3). On average, each teacher sorted the tasks into 6 of the 26 categories (Range=2-10), although not all teachers assigned each and every task to a group.

All teachers sorted the tasks into categories that span more than one dimension. Specifically, all teachers identified some of the tasks as requiring "opinion writing." This suggests that teachers are keenly aware of opinion writing as a way of responding to text, although whether this is due to the emphasis in the CCSS or not is not discernible. Certainly no other category was mentioned by at least half of the teachers. Instead of sorting all the tasks into respective modes of writing, however, teachers turned to other dimensions. In particular, the text genre (e.g., informational text, short story) and the text element of focus (e.g., characters and setting, main idea, figurative language) appeared to be the dimensions that teachers collectively attended to the most (see Table 2.3). This suggests that teachers are at least implicitly aware of multiple dimensions of tasks and might be inclined to consider multiple task features simultaneously in selecting or designing them for classroom use.

Table 2.3 Categories Emerging from Free Sort

Dimension	Categories	% of Teachers	Examples Category Names in Teachers' Words
Mode of writing	Opinion writing	100%	"opinion writing," "opinion pieces"
	Narrative writing	9%	"narrative writing," "personal narrative"
	Summary writing	2%	"tasks that focus on summarizing"
Text genre	Nonfiction/informational	41%	"articles-focused writing tasks," "informational writing," "writing based on informational text"
	Fiction	32%	"narrative writing," "writing based on fiction text"
	Poetry	27%	"poetry response"
	Short story	23%	"short story response"
	Content area text	9%	"science and nonfiction social studies"
Focal Text Element	Characters and narrative elements	41%	"tasks that focus on characterization," "tasks that focus on narrative elements"
	Text features/structure	32%	"text features," "tasks that analyze text structure"
	Author's craft/style	27%	"analyzing figurative language"
	Main ideas	14%	"main idea and key details"
	Theme	5%	"culture and diversity"
Use of Text	Emphasis on evidence use	32%	"evidence-based writing"
	Text-free	18%	"tasks that are not connected to a reading passage"
	More than one text	5%	"tasks based on two or more videos/articles" "tasks that require supporting evidence",
Response form	Graphic organizer	23%	"tasks that use graphic organizer to respond"
	Essay/open-ended response	14%	"essay writing"
	Selected response	9%	"response questions"
	Short answer	9%	"short answer questions"
	Short (1 paragraph) response	5%	"tasks that are short writing pieces"
Cognitive Process	Analysis	23%	"literary analysis," "tasks that analyze text"
	Basic comprehension	18%	"comprehension tasks," "tasks that focus on stating what the text says explicitly"
	Compare and contrast	18%	"compare and contrast"
	Research	14%	"research"
	Test-taking	5%	"critical thinking and test-taking skills"

Note: Column 3 (% of Teachers) refers to the percentage of teachers (n=22) that sorted tasks into the category.

Results of MDS of teachers' free sort support the findings above. The goodness of fit indices from the initial PROXSCAL run indicated a three-dimension solution as optimal. The final three-dimension model has a stress value of .162, which is just above the accepted value of .15 (Kruskal & Wish, 1978). Tucker's coefficient of congruence (.987) is more than the recommended value of .90, suggesting a good solution. Figure 2.1 depicts the resulting 3-dimensional common space configuration. Note that here and in all other applications of MDS, I heed the advice to not force meaning onto the dimensions, and instead, looked for meaningful clusters (Bartholomew et al, 2008; Borg et al., 2013).

As shown in the common space configuration (Figure 2.1) and the results of the cluster analysis (Table 2.4), teachers perceived six clusters of tasks. It was evident that teachers attended mostly to text genre and mode of writing. For instance, the tasks in Cluster 1 elicit a supported opinion from students. The five tasks in Cluster 2 demand that students produce informative writing based on informational text. Meanwhile, the tasks in Cluster 3 are all based on a short story. Cluster 4 tasks invite students to respond to poetry or descriptive language. Cluster 5 tasks lead students to respond to multiple fiction texts. Finally, like Cluster 2, Cluster 6 tasks engage students in producing informative writing, but these two tasks require students to consult multiple texts. The clusters are interesting in light of the fact that teachers were not conditioned to think about the CCSS during the free sort. That is, the identification of opinion-related writing and informative writing reflects two of the three main types of writing students are to produce. On the other hand, the fine distinction among fictional genre (i.e., short story, poetry, and novels) indicates an emphasis on reading (versus writing) and a preoccupation specifically with literary fiction that have characterized past decades of ELA instruction. To see how teachers' understand tasks aligned with the CCSS, I turn to the analysis of teachers' ratings.
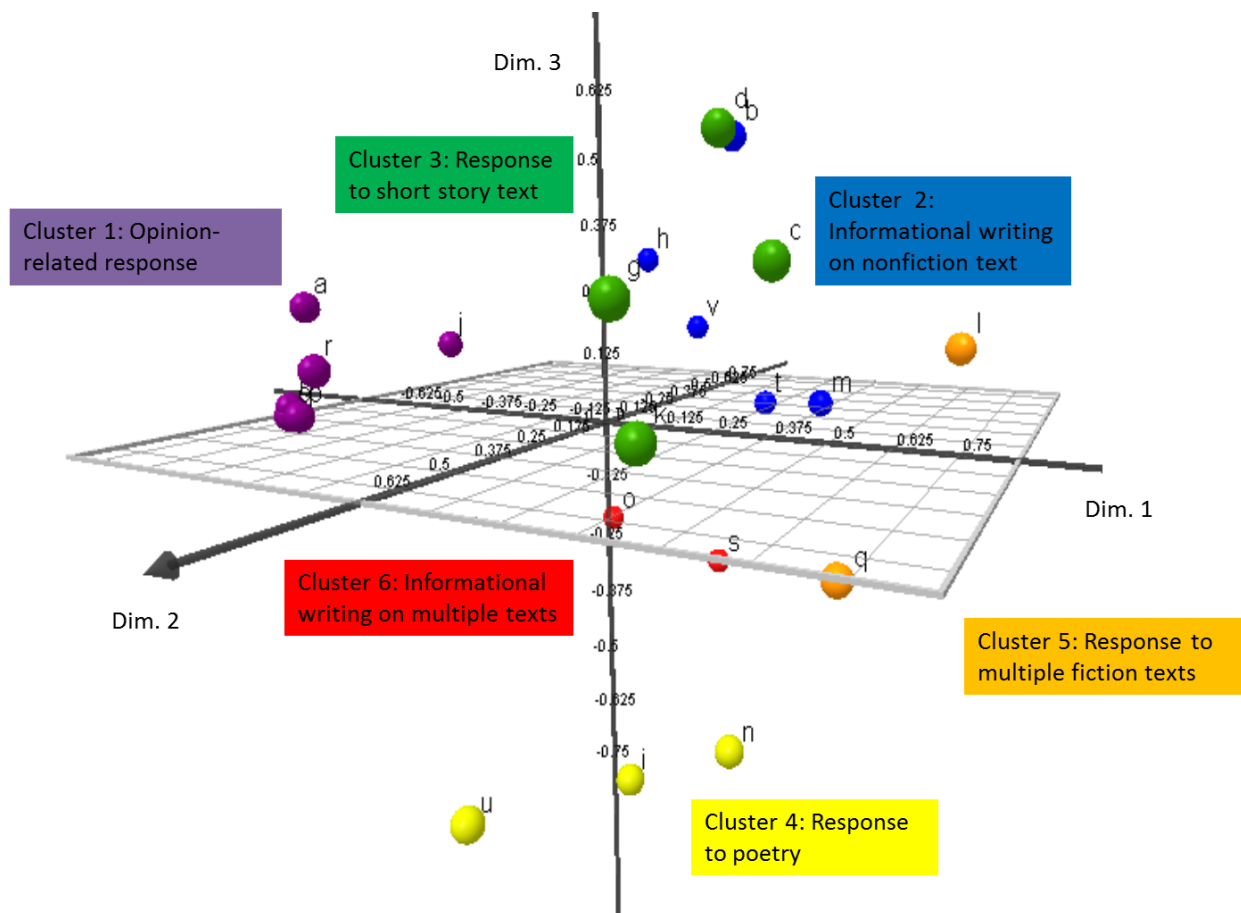
Figure 2.1 Common Space Configuration and Task Clusters Based on Teachers' Free Sort

Table 2.4 Cluster Membership of Tasks, Based on Free Sort

Cluster	Description	N	Tasks
1	Opinion-related response	6	a, e, f, j, p, r
2	Informative writing on nonfiction/informational text	5	b, h, m, t, v
3	Response to short story text	4	c, d, g*, k
4	Response to poetry / descriptive language	3	i, n, u
5	Response to multiple fiction texts	2	l, q*
6	Informative writing on multiple texts	2	o, s*

Notes: * denotes a task that was adapted from a PARCC performance-based writing assessment item. G is a narrative writing task; Q is an analytic writing task; and S is a research simulation task

2.5.1.2 Teachers' understanding of tasks that support the goals of the CCSS. In total, 24[4] teachers rated the tasks in the WTS for the extent to which each task supports the goals of the CCSS. Results show variance among teachers. On average, the ratings for a given task spanned 4 responses points. Thirteen of the tasks actually received the highest and lowest ratings possible, suggesting a lack of clarity around tasks that meet the goals of the standards.

MDS and cluster analysis based on the resulting coordinates of the tasks show how teachers distinguished the tasks. The goodness of fit indices from the initial PROXSCAL run indicated a three-dimension solution as optimal. The final three-dimension model has a stress of .101 and Tucker's coefficient of congruence of 0.995), which are both excellent. Figure 2.2 depicts the resulting 3-dimensional common space configuration.

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[4] One teacher (#16) assigned the same rating to all tasks and was excluded from further analysis.
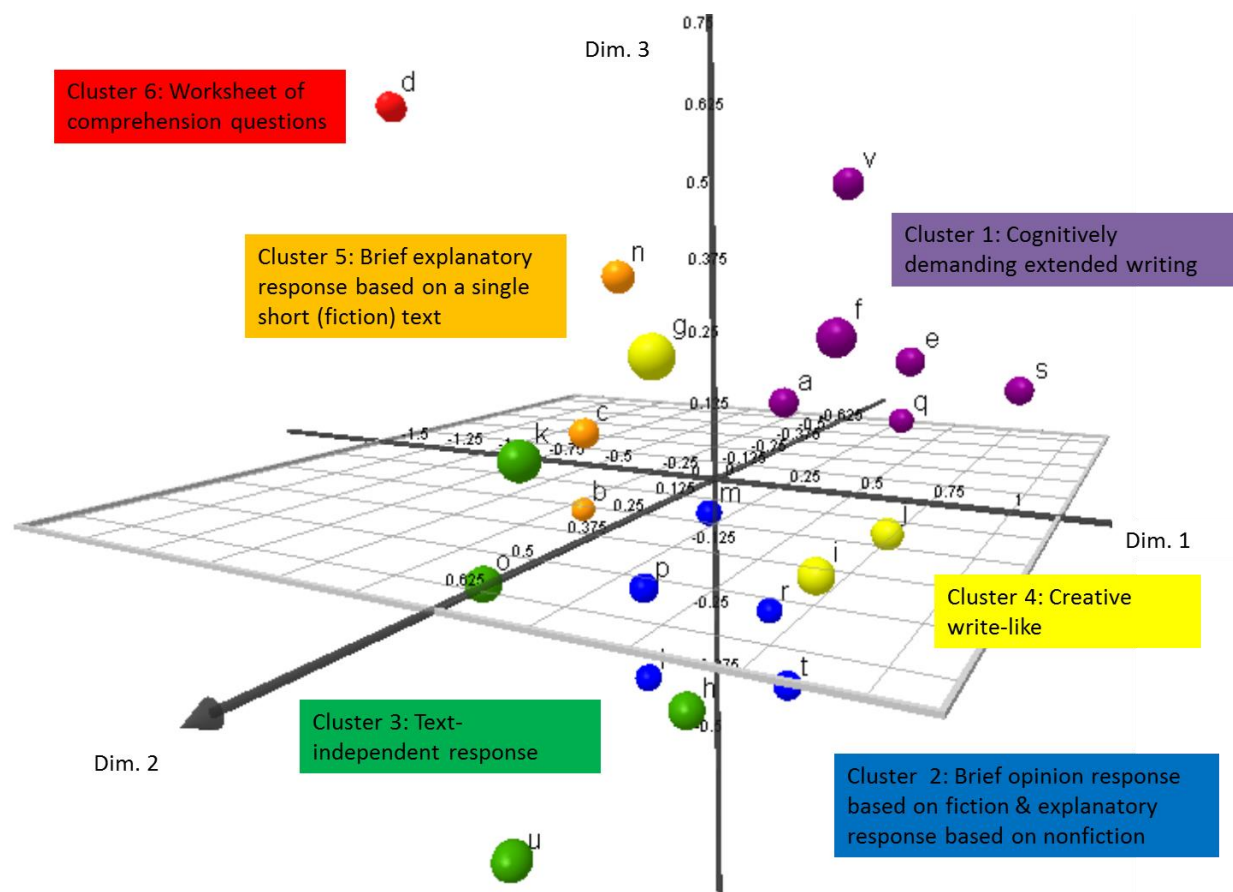
Figure 2.2 Common Space Configuration and Task Clusters Based on Teachers' Rating of the Extent to Which
Tasks Support the Goals of the CCSS

Cluster analysis indicated the optimal number of clusters to be 6. The membership of each task is presented in Table 2.5. Collectively, teachers seemed to distinguish the following groups of tasks with the these characteristics:

- Cluster 1 (Extended writing on multiple texts & Opinion writing on social issue): The tasks in this cluster are of two types, both cognitively demanding: 1) extended writing on multiple texts, as exemplified by Tasks Q, S, and V, which require analysis, synthesis, or research; and 2) extended opinion writing on real-world social issue, as exemplified by Tasks E and F. Tasks in this cluster tend to be based on nonfiction

texts, tend to engage students with the theme or message of the text, and require specific supporting references to the text.

- Cluster 2 (Brief opinion response based on fiction & Brief explanatory response based on nonfiction): The tasks in this cluster demand a brief (paragraph) response. They either require students to provide an opinion on a fiction text or an explanation of an aspect of a nonfiction text. As for the cognitive demand, the tasks seem to extend beyond basic comprehension; however, they do not quite hold students accountable for analyzing the text; rather, the prompts tend to be based in students' opinions and not subject to rebuttal. Such tasks elicit general references to the text.

- Cluster 3 (Text-independent response): The tasks appear to require students to compose text-free responses, meaning that the writing does not stem from reading and understanding a text, and as such, do not require text support in the response.

- Cluster 4 (Creative write-like): Tasks G and I clearly require students to write like the text(s) they studied. In some ways, these tasks require a response that is tangential to the text. That is, a text might be used, but the task can conceivably be accomplished without deeply understanding the text.

- Cluster 5 (Brief explanatory response based on a single short text): This cluster requires a brief response of a paragraph (or shorter) and are based on a single short (fiction) text and are explanatory in nature.

- Cluster 6 (Worksheet of comprehension questions): This cluster is defined by an outlier task (Task D), which requires students to complete a worksheet of comprehension-based selected response and short-answer questions on the plot and characters in a short story.

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Table 2.5 Cluster Membership of Tasks and Teachers, Based on Rating of Extent to Which

Tasks Support the Goals of the CCSS

Cluster	Description	N	Tasks	N	Teachers
1	Extended informative writing synthesizing multiple texts & Opinion writing on social issue (Cognitively demanding)	6	a, e, f, q*, s*, v	12	1, 5 6, 7, 8, 12, 17, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25
2	Brief opinion response based on fiction & explanatory response based on nonfiction	5	l, m, p, r, t	3	13, 19, 23
3	Text-independent response	4	h, k, o, u	0	n/a
4	Creative write-like	3	g*, i, j	8	2, 3, 4, 9, 11, 14, 15, 18
5	Brief explanatory response based on a single short (fiction) text	3	b, c, n	0	n/a
6	Worksheet of comprehension questions	1	d	1	10

Notes: * denotes a task that was adapted from a PARCC performance-based writing assessment item. G is a narrative writing task; Q is an analytic writing task; and S is a research simulation task

Compared with the clusters from the free sort, these clusters, based on teachers' understanding of the CCSS, are more complex. They appear to reflect consideration of multiple dimensions of the task, rather than simply the genre of the text that the task is based on or the type of writing required. In fact, the interaction between the two seems important. For example, brief opinion response based on fiction text is regarded as similar to explanatory response based on nonfiction text (Cluster 2); meanwhile, brief explanatory response based on a fiction text (Cluster 5) is considered different. Moreover, teachers appeared to be aware of the function or use of text. This is supported by the presence of Clusters 3 and 4 among clusters that emphasize text-based writing, and the fact that teachers distinguished between these two clusters (i.e., tasks requiring essentially no reference to the text and tasks that use the text as a model for writing).

In addition, whereas the clusters formed by the free sort relied on rather surface features of tasks (i.e., the text genre and type of writing), the clusters based on teachers' understanding of the CCSS appear to take into account the cognitive demand of the task. For example, Tasks A, E,

F, J, P, and R were all initially grouped as tasks eliciting an opinion response. This time, however, the more rigorous of these tasks – those that result in extended essays and that require analysis – are separated from the tasks that require only a paragraph response and that simply require students to explain their personal choice (i.e., J, P, and R). Likewise Tasks L and Q were initially considered similar in that they required students to read multiple fiction texts; however, upon considering the message of the CCSS, teachers decided that Q (a literary analysis task) was more similar to other extended writing tasks requiring knowledge construction, whereas L required less cognitive effort. Finally, the fact that a worksheet comprised of solely comprehension questions is singled out as being extremely different from all other tasks further supports that teachers were attending to the cognitive demand.

2.5.1.3 Unfolding analysis and clustering of teachers. Multidimensional unfolding analysis reveals how individual teachers are positioned with respect to the clusters (i.e., how individual teachers' understanding of tasks that support the CCSS differ), The PREFSCAL solution has a Kruskal's stress value of .151, which is at the suggested cut off. The dispersion accounted for index is .977, and 82% of the variance is accounted for. The coefficient of variation for the transformed proximities (.415) has a similar value to the coefficient of variation for the original proximities (.266), suggesting a non-degenerate solution. Finally, DeSarbo's intermixedness indices .068, indicating a well-intermixed solution, and Shepard's rough nondegeneracy index is 69%, suggesting that there are sufficiently different distances in the solution.

As expected, teachers' ideal points clustered around different groups of tasks (Figure 2.3[5]). This suggests that certain teachers (i.e., those clustered together) have shared views of the

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[5] The figure has been simplified. Instead of showing all tasks, the centroid of each cluster is represented.

type of tasks supportive of the CCSS, but that several distinct perspectives (i.e., prototypes of teachers) exist[6]. Specifically, Figure 2.3 shows that most of the teachers are in a space corresponding to Clusters 1 and 4. In fact, the location of teachers' ideal points suggest that 50% of teachers believe Cluster 1 best exemplify the tasks that support the goals of the CCSS. Meanwhile, 33% of teachers consider Cluster 4 most representative of the policy (Table 2.5). Cluster 1 indeed can be seen as most representative of the intended shifts in the standards, namely toward an emphasis on producing an informative synthesis of multiple texts, particularly nonfiction ones, and writing in which students support a point of view with specific text evidence (e.g., Tasks F and Q), or synthesize of knowledge (e.g., Tasks S and V). Cluster 4 tasks, on the other hand, are also based on the reading of text; however, they do not explicitly require references. Arguably they could be completed convincingly without deep engagement with the text. For Task J, for example, students who do not deeply comprehend the text selection from the Declaration of Independence could still answer the question, "What does 'pursuit of happiness' mean to you?" Moreover, Tasks G and I in this cluster are distinguished from the tasks in Cluster 1 in that they are more creative writing-like tasks. Cluster 4 appears to be less reflective of the major shifts of this iteration of the CCSS writing standards; however, it bears noting that Task G, which is modeled after the performance-based narrative writing tasks featured on the PARCC assessment, is included in Cluster 4; similarly, the other two PARCC-inspired tasks (i.e., Q and S) are in Cluster 1, the cluster deemed by half of the teachers to be most supportive of the CCSS.

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[6] While the number and distribution of teachers per cluster do not permit strict interpretation of the results of Chi-square tests, the cluster membership does not appear not to be significantly related (at $p<.05$) to known teacher-related factors such as the grade taught (i.e., 4th or 5th), the class type (i.e., regular or ELL/special education), whether the teacher taught a disciplinary subject (i.e., social studies or science), and whether or not they participated in the larger research project in which the present study was embedded. Furthermore, the cluster membership does not seem to be a function of teacher' self-reported knowledge of or commitment to the CCSS.

Dim. 3

25

17

15

5

Cluster 6: Worksheet of comprehension questions

C6

10

7

14

12

22

21

Cluster 1: Cognitively demanding extended writing

LEGEND

Teacher's Ideal Point

Cluster Centroid

Cluster 5: Brief explanatory response based on a single short (fiction) text

C5

18

20

8

19 C4

Dim. 1

C3

C2

23 9

Cluster 4: Creative write-like

Dim. 2

Cluster 3: Text-independent response

13

Cluster 2: Brief opinion response based on fiction & explanatory response based on nonfiction

11

Figure 2.3 Simplified Joint Plot Showing Centroids of Task Clusters and Ideal Points Based on

Teachers' Ratings of the Extent to Which Each Task Supports the Goals of the CCSS

2.5.1.4 Validity check. To check on the MDS findings, specifically the cluster memberships, means comparisons were performed on the raw ratings. On average, teachers in a given cluster collectively rated the tasks associated with their cluster the highest. The differences in the ratings among the groups of teachers are not statistically significant (at $p=05$), however, except when Cluster 4 (Creative write-like) is involved. Teachers in Cluster 4 rated those tasks (M=6.38)

significantly higher than the teachers in Cluster 1 ($M=4.83$, $p=.001$), Cluster 3 ($M=4.67$, $p=.013$), and Cluster 6 ($M=3.00$, $p=.001$). Comparisons of means at the individual level were also performed. These confirmed the cluster memberships of all but three teachers[7]. This makes sense, given that the MDS solution accounted for about 82% of the variance.

Teachers' collective and individual responses on the survey item asking how they believe the CCSS is intended to affect the features of writing tasks they assign helps to further triangulate some of these findings. It should be noted, however, that the survey results are not expected to reproduce the results of the MDS because simply combining task features (i.e., nonfiction text, opinion writing) does not necessarily result in comparable clusters of tasks. Moreover, teachers are known to use the language of reform or endorse explicit reform features without fully understanding them in application (Spillane et al., 2002). In fact, these are the key reasons for eliciting teachers' responses with the WTS over traditional survey questions.

Given the caveats above, on the whole, the survey results suggest that a majority of teachers regarded the CCSS as attempting to influence the text(s) the tasks are based on, the mode of writing, and the use of text support, but not content of the task (i.e., the text element of focus). This reflects the differentiation among the tasks; that is, as reported above, the clusters appeared to be based on the required use of text, and an interaction between the type of writing and the text genre. More specifically, the survey results show that teachers believed the CCSS were encouraging them to assign more non-fiction texts (76%) and more writing tasks based on multiple texts (72%), which is in line with Cluster 1 being the dominant cluster. There was also great consensus around the mode of writing. That is, teachers thought the standards were calling

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[7] . Specifically, teachers 5 and 24 are designated as Cluster 1 teachers, but perhaps should be Cluster 4 teachers. Based on the raw ratings, Teacher 7 appears to favor Cluster 6 slightly over Cluster 1; however, Cluster 6 is based on the rating of only 1 task, so this difference is likely inconclusive.

for them to assign more informative/explanatory writing (68%), more analytic writing (72%), and more opinion/argumentative writing (72%). The case of narrative writing is less clear. Given the cluster preferences, we might expect that teachers explicitly identify the CCSS as endorsing more narrative or creative writing. Instead, the majority of teachers (56%) perceived the CCSS as calling for neither more nor less writing of this type. One possibility is that teachers already require significant narrative or creative writing (which is quite common for elementary classrooms), and so they did not perceive the CCSS as further elevating that mode of writing. Finally, while no one particular change was unanimous, the closest was the emphasis on the use of text support in student writing (80%). In light of this, the fact that no teachers preferred Cluster 3 (Text-Independent Tasks) makes sense. Altogether, these results suggest that two of the key shifts intended in the CCSS (i.e., more emphasis on nonfiction texts and use of text evidence) and the types of writing explicitly endorsed in the standards (i.e., opinion and informative/explanatory writing) are evident to a clear majority of teachers. (See Table 2.6.)

Table 2.6 How Teachers Believe the CCSS Intend to Affect Their Writing Instruction (n=25)

Assign FEWER texts to read	16%	16%	**68%**	Assign MORE texts to read
Assign LESS fiction	**56%**	36%	8%	Assign MORE fiction
Assign LESS nonfiction	4%	20%	**76%**	Assign MORE nonfiction
Assign SHORTER texts	32%	**40%**	28%	Assign LENGTHIER texts
Assign FEWER writing tasks based on text	0%	40%	**60%**	Assign MORE writing tasks based on text
Assign FEWER writing tasks based on more than one text	0%	28%	**72%**	Assign MORE writing tasks based on more than one text
Assign FEWER close-ended or short-response questions	36%	**44%**	20%	Assign MORE close-ended or short-response questions
Assign LESS paragraph-response writing	0%	40%	**60%**	Assign MORE paragraph-response writing
Assign LESS extended writing (i.e., multiple paragraphs)	12%	**56%**	32%	Assign MORE extended writing (i.e., multiple paragraphs)
Assign FEWER tasks focused on plot or main ideas & details	20%	**48%**	32%	Assign MORE tasks focused on plot or main ideas & details
Assign FEWER tasks focused on theme or big idea	8%	**52%**	40%	Assign MORE tasks focused on theme or big idea
Assign FEWER tasks focused on language use or text features	8%	**52%**	40%	Assign MORE tasks focused on language use or text features
Assign LESS narrative, personal, or creative writing	32%	**56%**	16%	Assign MORE narrative, personal, or creative writing
Assign LESS informative/explanatory writing	8%	24%	**68%**	Assign MORE informative/explanatory writing
Assign LESS analytic writing	0%	28%	**72%**	Assign MORE analytic writing
Assign LESS supported opinion or argumentative writing	0%	28%	**72%**	Assign MORE supported opinion or argumentative writing
Focus LESS on use of text support in evaluating student writing	0%	20%	**80%**	Focus MORE on use of text support in evaluating student writing

Note: The middle column indicates no change as a result of the CCSS. The most frequently selected response for each prompt is bolded.

2.5.1.5 Influences on teachers' understanding of writing tasks that support the CCSS. On average, teachers indicated that their understanding of the types of writing tasks that support students to achieve the CCSS is substantially informed by about six different external (i.e., not counting personal beliefs and experiences) sources. Among these, nearly all teachers (92%) accessed the standards themselves and found them to be informative. For a majority of teachers, curriculum documents and materials distributed to teachers (84%), professional development opportunities through the district or school (84%), and the PARCC website (64%) helped them understand the thrust of the CCSS with respect to the types of writing endorsed. About half of the teachers (56%) also indicated that instructional coaches or leaders contributed significantly to their understanding. In contrast, for the majority of teachers, interactions with colleagues and administrators did not contribute substantially to their understanding of the standards (Table 2.7).

Table 2.7 Sources that Contribute Substantially to Teachers' Understanding and Interpretation of the CCSS with Respect to Writing Tasks

	Percent of teachers (n=25) indicating source contributes substantially to their…	
Source	Understanding of types of writing tasks endorsed in the CCSS	Interpretation of what CCSS means with respect to writing tasks to assign
Common Core State Standards	92%	79%
Curriculum documents and materials	84%	72%
District or school-level PD	84%	63%
PARCC website	64%	52%
Instructional coaches or leaders	56%	32%
Previous administration of PARCC assessment	40%	40%
Scheduled grade-level or ELA team meetings	40%	24%
General websites for educators	40%	20%
Informal meetings or conversations with colleagues	40%	16%
School administrators (i.e., principal)	28%	20%
District administrators	20%	20%
Professional affiliation (e.g., NCTE, AFT, NEA)	4%	4%

2.5.2 Research question 2: What might be the relationship between teachers' understanding of writing tasks that support the goals of the CCSS, and their interpretation of writing tasks to assign to students?

2.5.2.1 Teachers' planned tasks. In total, 23[8] teachers rated the tasks in the WTS for how likely they are to assign each task. Results show variance among teachers. That is, 6 of the 22 tasks received the highest and lowest ratings possible. On average though, teachers collectively did not discriminate among the tasks to a great extent, with only a 1.80 scale point separating the highest- and lowest-rated tasks. Specifically, teachers judged Tasks D ('Worksheet on Short Story') and O ('Open Questions Based on Interviews') as the ones they are least likely to assign; meanwhile, they were most likely to assign Task F ('Opinion Essay on an Article'). Note that of the three tasks modeled after the performance writing tasks on the PARCC assessment, G (narrative extension) was rated the highest. Collectively, teachers were also "Somewhat" to "Very" likely to assign Task S (synthesis paragraphs based on multiple nonfiction texts). On the other hand, Task Q (analytic essay on multiple fiction texts) was rated below the mean.

Multidimensional unfolding uncovered teachers' preferences. The PREFSCAL solution has a normalized stress of .035, and Kruskal's stress, at .187, is just above the suggested .15 cut off. The dispersion accounted for index is .965, and 71% of the variance is accounted for. The coefficient of variation for the transformed proximities (.397) has a similar value to the coefficient of variation for the original proximities (.262), suggesting a non-degenerate solution. Finally, DeSarbo's intermixedness indices (.029) and Shepard's rough nondegeneracy index (67%) suggests that there are sufficiently different distances.

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[8] Two teachers (#12, 16) assigned the same rating to all tasks and were excluded from further analysis.

As expected, clusters of teachers shared similar views on the types of tasks they are likely to assign, but several distinct perspectives exist[9]. Figure 2.4 shows a group of teachers in the space occupied by tasks in Cluster 2 and a group of teachers in the space of Cluster 1 tasks, indicating that the majority of teachers are most likely to assign the corresponding tasks. In fact, 48% of teachers prefer Cluster 1 tasks (Table 2.8). Recall that Cluster 1 is primarily concerned with extended informative writing synthesizing multiple texts, as well as opinion writing on social issues, arguably the most cognitively demanding type of writing among the clusters. On the other hand, 39% of teachers prefer Cluster 2 tasks, which are characterized by brief (e.g., paragraph-type) responses to a variety of texts. Of significance is that the tasks are all explicitly text-based and require references to the text.

2.5.2.2 Validity check. ANOVA results corroborate the MDS findings. Collectively, teachers in a given cluster rated the tasks associated with their cluster the highest (i.e., they were most likely to assign that cluster of tasks). One exception is that teachers that appeared to prefer Cluster 3 (Text-independent response) in fact rated the Cluster 5 tasks (Creative write-like) higher ($M=5.75$ vs. $M=6.67$). None of the differences is statistically significant, however. Comparisons of means at the individual level confirmed the cluster memberships of 17 teachers (74%). Recall that the MDS solution accounted for 71% of the variance.

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[9] Again, Chi-square tests are not definitive because of the number and distribution of teachers per cluster; however, their results suggest that the cluster membership is not significantly related (at $p<.05$) to known teacher-related factors or to their self-reported knowledge of or support for the CCSS.
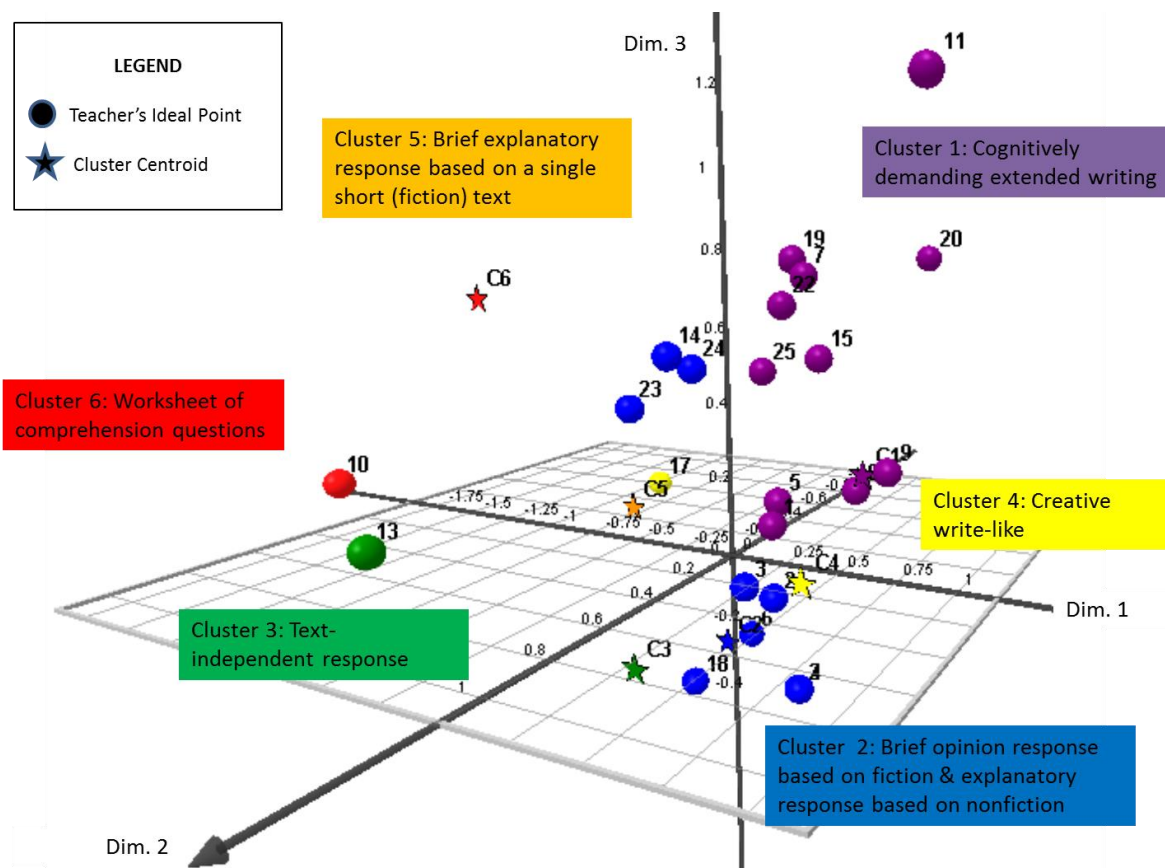
Figure 2.4 Simplified Joint Plot Showing Centroids of Task Clusters and Ideal Points Based on

Teachers' Ratings of Their Likelihood to Assign Each Task

2.5.2.3 Influences on teachers' interpretation of writing tasks to assign. On average, teachers' interpretation of the writing tasks to assign students was informed by four external sources, essentially the same as those that influenced their understanding of the tasks that support the standards. For example, for 79% of the teachers, the CCSS themselves led directly to insights about task design and selection. Curriculum documents (72%) and professional development opportunities (63%) and the PARCC assessment website (52%) also topped the list of sources that substantially informed teachers' decisions around the writing tasks to assign (see Table 2.7).

2.5.2.4 Correlation of rating data. As Figure 2.5 shows, there is a high, positive, and significant correlation between the average ratings teachers gave for each of the 22 tasks with respect to their understanding of the CCSS, and their ratings with respect to the tasks they are likely to assign to students ($r=.721$, $p<.001$). This suggests that, on the whole, teachers' planned practice aligns with their understanding of the writing policy (whatever that might be); teachers are likely to assign tasks that they regard as highly supportive of the goals of the CCSS and unlikely to assign the ones that they perceive as not endorsed by the standards.
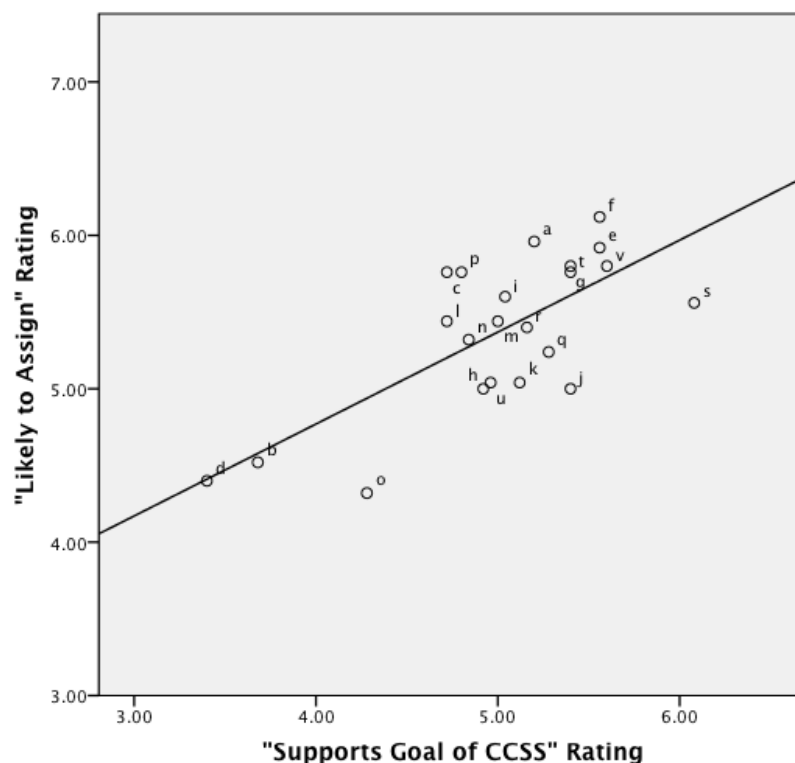
Figure 2.5 Correlation Between Teachers' Average Ratings of Tasks ($r=.721$, $p<.001$)

The matter is more nuanced, however. Individual teachers' ratings correlate differently. While some teachers showed a high, positive, and significant correlation, the ratings of other teachers correlated poorly, suggesting that not all teachers are likely to plan instruction that is

aligned with their understanding of what the CCSS intends. A variety of factors might influence their decision to assign certain tasks, despite believing that they support the goals of the CCSS to a limited extent. Or conversely, teachers might withhold certain writing opportunities to students even though they understand these tasks to be endorsed by the standards.

Looking closer at Figure 2.5 and recalling the clusters of tasks (Table 2.5), we observe that the relationship between the pairs of task ratings might not be random. That is, tasks belonging to certain clusters appear to correlate less well. For example, all tasks in Cluster 5 (H, K, O, and U) fall below the best-fit line, meaning that collectively, teachers are less inclined to assign these tasks than as might be expected, given the ratings they received based on teachers' understanding of the CCSS for writing. On the other hand, teachers appear more likely to assign many of the tasks in Cluster 2 (i.e., L, M, P, T). One possible implication of these observations is that teachers might favor tasks for their students that are of a different kind than the tasks they believe best align with the CCSS; in other words, their cluster memberships might differ. A comparison of the results of the MDS analyses already conducted provides further insight into the relationship between teachers' understanding and interpretation of writing tasks commensurate with the Common Core State Standards. Furthermore, the joint plot afforded by MDS provides a helpful visual of the relationship.

2.5.2.5 Unfolding analysis and clustering of teachers. Table 2.8 summarizes the cluster membership of teachers, as determined by the PREFSCAL procedures for addressing the previous research questions. It shows that the relationship between teachers' understanding of the writing tasks that best support the CCSS, and their interpretation of what the CCSS mean for the tasks they assign to their students may not be straightforward and uniform across teachers. Specifically, it appears that 9 out of 23 teachers (39%) were most likely to assign the tasks that

they believed best reflected the thrust of the writing policy in the CCSS (labeled "Same" in Table 2.8, last column). Teachers in Cluster 1 appeared most constant in this regard. For another 9 teachers (39%), their understanding was evident in the cluster of tasks they were second-most likely to assign (labeled as "Similar"), keeping in mind that all teachers tended to offer a range of writing opportunities to students. Finally, for 5 of the teachers (22%), their understanding of the CCSS for writing is not reflected in the cluster of tasks they are most likely to or second-most likely to assign ("Different").

More interestingly, for 8 of the 14 teachers (57%) whose cluster memberships were not the "Same," Cluster 2 tasks gained prominence (Teachers #2, 3, 4, 6, 14, 18, 21, 24). This means that despite regarding the tasks in Clusters 1 (extended opinion pieces) or 4 (creative write-like) as most representative of the type of writing endorsed by the standards, these 8 teachers (35%) were most likely to assign tasks from Cluster 2. Both of these shifts are notable and signal considerable compromise. Whereas Cluster 1 tasks reflect the underlying message of the CCSS through their emphasis on the use of multiple rigorous (nonfiction) texts and are cognitively demanding in requiring analysis or synthesis, Cluster 2 tasks tend to be less so. They generally require brief responses to a single (fiction) text, with the type of writing ranging from summary to opinion. Moreover, whereas Clusters 1 and 4 both include tasks modeled after the PARCC performance-based assessment tasks (Tasks G, Q, and S), Cluster 2 does not. The expectation that teachers would prioritize writing opportunities that directly reflects the tasks students would encounter on the standardized assessment then, appears to not be fulfilled.

Table 2.8 Comparison of Cluster Membership of Teachers

| Teacher | Cluster Membership | | | |
	Understanding of CCSS	Likely to Assign – Preferred	Likely to Assign – 2nd Preferred	Comparison
T1	1	1	4*	Same
T2	4	2	4*	Similar
T3	4	2	4*	Similar
T4	4	2	4*	Similar
T5	1	1	2*	Same
T6	1	2	5	Different
T7	1	1	4	Same
T8	1	1	4	Same
T9	4	1	4	Similar
T10	6	6	5	Same
T11	4	1	4*	Similar
T13	2	3	2	Similar
T14	4	2	1*	Different
T15	4	1	4	Similar
T17	1	4	2	Different
T18	4	2	5	Different
T19	2	1	2	Similar
T20	1	1	4	Same
T21	1	2	4*	Different
T22	1	1	4	Same
T23	2	2	5*	Same
T24	1	2	1*	Similar
T25	1	1	2*	Same

[*] indicates that the second preferred cluster is "very close" to the first preferred cluster. This means the difference in distance between the teacher's ideal point and the centroid of the second preferred cluster versus the teacher's ideal point and the first preferred cluster is no more than .200. This number is used as a guide since it is 10% of the largest distance between any teacher's ideal point and any centroid (i.e., Teacher 11 and Cluster 6's centroid).

Figure 2.6 provides a visual of teachers' two ideal points in the common space – one based their understanding of the writing tasks that support the goals of the CCSS, and one based on the writing tasks they are likely to assign. To declutter the figure, only the 16 teachers whose cluster memberships are not identical are depicted. For some teachers, the difference in cluster membership is subtle. For example, teachers 2 and 14 moved closer to the centroid of a different

cluster, but remained in roughly the same space. Meanwhile, for other teachers, such as Teachers 6, 17, and 21, the difference is more pronounced. The tasks they are likely to assign are very different in nature from the tasks they understood as being supportive of the CCSS, which in most cases, are accurately identified as the tasks in Cluster 1. What factors or forces might in fact influence teachers to plan tasks that are out of sync with their understanding of the standards remains to be addressed.
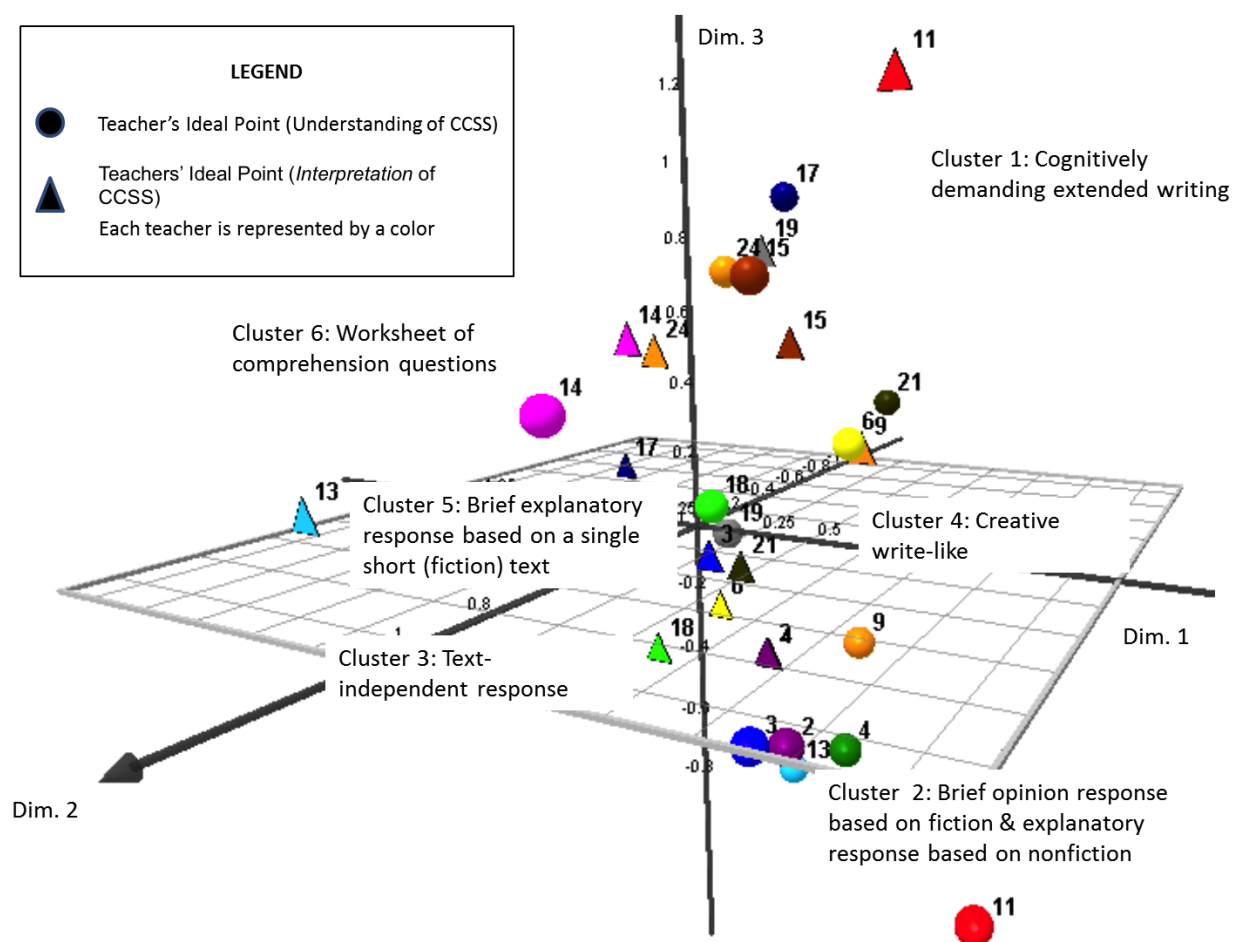
Figure 2.6 Ideal Points for Teachers with Different Cluster Memberships (n=14)

2.5.2.6 Factors influencing teachers' decisions about writing tasks to assign. Given that teachers had expressed a strong intent to teach to the CCSS, we might have expected that the tasks they plan to assign would align with their understanding of the standards. The results of the correlation analyses and MDS suggest that this is not quite the case. While this study did not seek to explain what might account for differences, one survey item provides a glimpse into the possible intervening factors affecting teachers' decisions about the writing tasks to assign. These factors appear to be of two types. First, there are factors related to district policy and expectations. For example, 83% of the teachers reported that the curriculum content endorsed by the district influenced the tasks they assigned to students, and 78% thought the same about curriculum pacing in particular. Moreover, policy around student accountability (e.g., meeting district benchmarks) played a role for 61% of the teachers. Second, factors related to students also played into teachers' decisions about the types of writing opportunities to bring forth. That is, 78% of the teachers felt that student ability or needs was a constraining factor, and half of the teachers (50%) felt that student attitude/work ethic influenced the tasks they felt would be effective in their classroom.

2.6 DISCUSSION

2.6.1 Contribution to research on the implementation of the CCSS

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) signals the arrival of long-awaited policy to guide and strengthen the teaching of writing with the long-term goal of preparing students for college and career success. The intent of the standards overall and their key shifts from past standards –

namely the emphasis on selecting rigorous texts, exposing students to informational texts, and using text evidence to support claims – are explicitly articulated in the primary documents. With respect to writing specifically, the standards are judged by most scholars to be clear, succinct, and substantive (Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). They set out not only what students ought to do, as in the typical process-oriented approach to writing standards that characterize past standards, but the major types of writing students should be able to produce (i.e., opinion pieces, informative/explanatory texts, and narratives). By most accounts then, there is potential for the new policy to improve the teaching and learning of writing. Nevertheless, as teachers are the 'street-level bureaucrats' (Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977) who ultimately translate the standards into learning opportunities for students, most notably in the form of writing tasks (Doyle, 1983), it is important to examine how teachers understand the standards, as in what they perceive themselves to be responding to, and how the standards impact their instructional decisions related to writing.

The results of the MDS analyses, (as well as teachers' responses to survey items about individual task features) suggest a rather sound understanding of the major shifts and emphasis intended in the CCSS with respect to writing. That is, in assessing the extent to which tasks support students to reach the goals of the CCSS, teachers appeared to distinguish six types of tasks. Teachers almost unanimously considered tasks that feature selected response or very brief, constrained response questions to be antithetical to the writing policy in the CCSS. Similarly, no teacher identified text-free responses as core to the standards. Based on these findings, teachers have an accurate understanding of the CCSS. Moreover, half of the teachers decided that the cluster representing tasks that require extended informative writing based on a synthesis of multiple texts or supported opinion essays on real-world social issues (Cluster 1) best supported

students to meet the standards. Cluster 1 indeed reflects two of the intended shifts of the CCSS –

exposing students to more content-rich nonfiction and engaging them in close reading. As well, it

captures supported opinion writing as the main type of writing to emphasize.

Furthermore, teachers' responses to the survey suggested that their understanding of the

thrust of the CCSS was likely informed by the curriculum documents and materials provided to

them. That is, a third of the teachers considered the CCSS to be endorsing writing for which

students must produce some creative (narrative) work based on the content and/or style of a

given text (Cluster 4). While the CCSS does require that students produce narratives, the

standards do not explicitly require that the narratives be based on a reading. Yet, teachers

distinguished tasks that require a text-independent personal narrative as less aligned with the

CCSS than a task that required a narrative extension of a text. Incidentally, the district

benchmark writing assessments include text-based narrative writing, which likely guided

teachers to infer that the CCSS required such writing. This would align with previous findings

that the district plays a pivotal role in how teachers understand policy (Ball & Cohen, 1996;

Spillane, 1996; 2000).

Collectively, teachers' interpretation of what the CCSS means for the tasks they assign to

students correlates well with their understanding of the tasks that best support students to reach

the standards. There are notable individual differences, however. Specifically, just over a third of

the teachers are most likely to assign the type of tasks they regarded as embodying the emphases

of the standards. For most of these teachers, this means the cognitively demanding multi-text

extended opinion essay. A similar number of teachers were inclined to assign tasks that agreed

with their understanding of tasks endorsed by the CCSS, but ultimately preferred a different type.

Concretely, most of these teachers believed that creative extension-type of tasks met the goals of

the CCSS, but they were more likely to assign students to write a range of paragraph responses to a variety of texts, or a few preferred the extended opinion essays. Finally, five other teachers were most likely to assign tasks that did not reflect their understanding of the CCSS at all. In these cases, the tasks teachers planned to assign are arguably lower in cognitive demand. Certainly, the paragraph-response type of writing is not among the performance-based tasks required on the PARCC assessment.

Further investigation is needed to uncover the factors that contribute to the gap between what teachers understand as tasks that best support students to meet the standards and the types of tasks they are likely to assign. Cursory survey results suggest that teacher's perception of student ability and attitude play an important role in the learning opportunities teachers bring forth. This might explain why teachers are more inclined to assign less cognitively demanding tasks, as in those requiring short, particularly summary-type responses. This interpretation also makes sense in light of teachers indicating that they have "very strong" intent to teach to the standards, but are only "adequately" able to do so. If so, it could be that the brief, less challenging writing tasks reflect teachers' attempt to "translate the standards to curriculum and instruction" (Applebee, 2013, p. 6) for their particular group of students. If this is the case, an implication that follows is that we might make it a priority to help teachers see how rigorous standards-aligned tasks might be accessible to all students, given proper supports and scaffolding. And we might provide teachers more professional development around sequencing tasks with a purposeful developmental trajectory in mind for writing. More generally, instead of focusing professional development efforts on helping teachers understand the thrust of the CCSS, or crafting additional policy instruments to push the standards, we might need to delve more into contextual factors that might hinder enactment of intended practices.

In all, research on policy implementation with a focus on teachers' sensemaking has rarely examined both what teacher "understand themselves to be responding to" (Spillane et al., 2006, p. 49) and what they interpret the policy to mean for their practice for a specific set of policy (i.e., standards). Yet, these two processes are distinct and both consequential to how policy plays out in practice. As such, the present study attempted to disentangle teachers' understanding of writing tasks aligned with the CCSS and what they interpret that to mean for the tasks they plan to assign. The results suggest that a relatively accurate understanding of the CCSS with respect to writing might underlie instances of surface-level or incomplete implementation (Spillane et al., 2002), but rarely does a sound interpretation manifest from inaccurate understanding; hence, understanding of policy might be necessary, but insufficient for shaping teachers' instructional response. This means that just studying instruction alone and inferring teachers' grasp of reform ideas from their practice might be inadequate. Furthermore, intervening at the knowledge level (i.e., by familiarizing teachers with the emphasis of the CCSS) might be ineffective without also addressing possible situational constraints that are likely to limit implementation, such as curriculum mandates, class size, and students' ability level. Indeed, many of the teachers in this study appear to be conscious of deviations in their teaching from what is expected given the standards. They appear to have different (or additional) criteria in mind in deciding whether particular tasks are suitable as class assignments.

2.6.2 Contribution to research methods

A final potential contribution of the present study is the Writing Tasks Set instrument. The instrument shows promise in eliciting and tracking variation in teachers' understanding and interpretation of a set of academic standards, with respect to writing. This instrument or

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adaptations thereof could be used to supplement straightforward survey items and might be more appropriate, given the construct of interest. That is, asking teachers explicitly about individual task features (i.e., use multiple texts, use of text evidence) that are emphasized in the CCSS might be too direct and might simply reflect teachers' awareness of buzzwords or surface features. Having teachers respond to task descriptions can potentially safeguard against this and result in conceptions of tasks that arise from teachers' understanding rather than pre-determined features. The experience is also more proximal to the instructional activity of selecting or adapting pre-designed tasks for use in the classroom. To increase the authenticity more, the Writing Tasks Set (WTS) could be redesigned as assignment sheets that teachers might distribute to students. Also, in future iterations, the WTS could be expanded so that the task features of particular interest are fully crossed. These improvements, however, would need to be carefully balanced against anticipated response burden.

2.6.3   Limitations

That this study is situated in a single locale restricts generalizability of the findings. It is reasonable to consider, however, that this district (and the teachers therein) might be representative in many ways of other large urban districts in this state or other states. Like many other large districts, for example, this district adopted the CCSS several years ago and had developed a curriculum aligned with the CCSS that teachers are strongly recommended to follow. Also, like many districts across the county, at the time of the study, the district and its teachers were preparing for the first official administration of the next-generation assessment. How this group of teachers understand and respond to the CCSS, then, could conceivably reflect

the thinking of a larger group of teachers implementing the CCSS. This stands to be verified by conducting the study with teachers from various districts.

To the extent that each district is unique in their adoption of new policy, the fact that the present study was conducted in a single site could be considered an affordance. That is, given that all teachers are subject to the same district policies regarding curriculum, assessment, accountability and the like, we can regard these as having been held constant in the analysis. We can reasonably assume that these do not directly play a role in explaining differences in teachers' responses to the survey or the WTS. In other words, we can have greater confidence that what is captured is teacher-level individual differences. (Admittedly, potential institutional confounds at the school-level were not explored in the present study.) Districts' role in interpreting and disseminating policy to teachers is itself an interesting issue for study; however, it is not the focus here. The present study focused on the teachers, since they are the agents who ultimately translate the standards into writing tasks that form the learning opportunities for students.

They sample and sample size of the participants might suggest limitations. First, the sample size of 25 may be considered small for survey research. Certainly a greater number of respondents would bolster confidence in the findings; the resulting clusters of tasks may be more stable, or perhaps different clusters might emerge. I note, however, that the resulting clusters appear have face validity in that they represent distinct and identifiable types of tasks, including tasks that reflect the CCSS-aligned standardized assessment. In any case though, I make no claim that the clusters of tasks or the profiles of teachers identified through the study are exhaustive. Second, the survey participants self-selected into the study. Potentially then, selection bias may be present if, say, the teachers chose to participate because they believe they are very knowledgeable about the CCSS or are confident in their instruction. Such a threat, if present,

does not so much harm the validity of the interpretations of the findings so much as the generalizability. That is, the results might only speak to how another group of competent teachers might understand and respond to the CCSS. On the other hand, the observed variance in teachers' planned instruction and in the relationship between teachers' understanding of the writing tasks endorsed in the CCSS and their interpretation of what that means for the tasks they assign to students suggest that the group of teachers is not homogenous.

Finally, MDS is an exploratory analysis method. As such, the reported results and observed relationship are not considered definitive. As argued earlier, however, MDS (and the related WTS ratings data collection activity) is an appropriate analysis technique for addressing the research questions because one of the principal purposes of MDS is to uncover latent dimensions of perception or judgment (Borg et al., 2013; Kruskal & Wish, 1978). Here, teachers' understanding and interpretation of the CCSS are of interest. Certainly future studies might be conducted with the purpose of testing the findings and relationships uncovered during the present investigation. In-depth qualitative study of some of the cases in the present study can also be undertaken to uncover teachers' thinking with respect to their grouping of tasks and help validate the findings form the MDS analyses. In the next chapter, I detail such a qualitative study, which had the additional objective of looking beyond teachers' understanding of the CCSS and their planned instruction, and into the writing tasks teachers assigned to students.

3.0   STUDY 2: INTERPRETING THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: CASES STUDIES OF ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' SENSEMAKING OF THE WRITING POLICY

Writing is a critical skill that has been linked to academic and career success (National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges, 2003). It is essential for developing thinking skills, for sharing one's knowledge, for learning in content areas, and for creative and personal expression (Applebee & Langer, 2011; Bangert-Drowns, Hurley & Wilkinson, 2004; Graham, Harris, Hebert, 2011; Hillocks, 1984). Yet, national assessments have indicated that at multiple levels, students' writing skills is poor. According to reports on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), for example, only about a third of students in grades 4, 8, and 12 write at a proficient level (NCES, 2011).

The weakness of students' writing skills is perhaps to be expected, given the generally impoverished state of writing instruction throughout the K-12 years. In first grade, for example, students generally receive fewer than 30 minutes a day of writing instruction on average, with instruction in skills or process writing being common (Coker Jr., Farley-Ripple, Jackson, Wen, MacArthur, Jennings, 2015). In third to sixth grades, according recent surveys, teachers spend only 15 minutes a day on average teaching writing, and they infrequently applied evidence-based practices in their instruction (Brindle et al., 2015; Gilbert & Graham, 2010). In addition, studies show that students spend only about 25 minutes of their entire school day engaged in writing

activities (Brindle, Harris, Graham, & Hebert, 2015; Gilbert & Graham, 2010). Such activities often require students to copy notes, complete worksheets, or provide brief answers to comprehension questions. Of the pieces of writing elementary students are in fact asked to produce, reports or brief pieces relating straightforward facts are typical, whereas analytic pieces that require students to construct knowledge are extremely rare (Gilbert & Graham, 2010; Shanahan, 2015). These trends hold throughout middle school (Graham, Capizzi, Harris, Hebert, & Murphy, 2014) and high school (Applebee & Langer, 2009; Gillespie, Graham, Kiuhara, & Hebert, 2014). In sum, writing has long been the neglected 'R' in American education.

Concern about students' writing achievement and the state of writing instruction culminated in an influential report from the National Commission on Writing (2003). The Commission called for "a writing revolution" and a "writing agenda for the nation" (p. 3). It appealed to "every state [to] revisit its education standards to make sure they include a comprehension writing policy" (National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges, 2003, p. 3). Moreover, the Commission called for policymakers to ensure that standards, curriculum, and assessment are aligned, and that assessments of writing competence be designed so as to allow students to actually compose a piece of writing, not just respond to multiple choice or other constrained-format questions.

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS; CCSSO, 2010), adopted by 42 states and DC, represent the response to the call for the writing revolution. Past waves of reform concerning English Language Arts (ELA) instruction have focused on modifications to the standards governing reading, leaving policy guiding writing largely unchanged and overall weak (Graham & Harris, 2015; Graham, Harris, & Santangelo, 2015; Graham & Perin, 2007; Strickland, 2001). Previous state standards related to writing, for example, have historically been unwieldy

(Isaacson, 2010; Shanahan, 2015), poorly specified (Troia et al., 2013), and altogether ineffective for providing teachers with a clear vision of the skills students need to master, and therefore ineffective at conveying what constitutes quality writing instruction and essential learning opportunities for students. The writing standards articulated in the CCSS, in contrast, are widely regarded as clear and succinct (Applebee, 2013; Graham, Harris, & Santangelo, 2015; Shanahan, 2015). Specifically, the CCSS emphasizes cognitively demanding forms of writing that move students from addressing simple prompts mechanically to composing extended pieces involving analytic response to complex texts (Applebee, 2013; Graham & Harris, 2015; Shanahan, 2015). The extent to which elementary teachers' writing instruction reflects the intent of the CCSS is the subject of the present study.

3.1   WRITING POLICY IN THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

The CCSS' vision of effective writing instruction is driven by its core goals to prepare students for high school graduation and success in college, career, and life. To this end, although the ELA standards are organized into four strands – Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language – all these processes are meant to be integrated (Applebee, 2013). Reading and writing, in particularly, are conceived to be intertwined, as students are expected to write about what they read, and to read in order to inform their writing (Shanahan, 2015). Indeed, an important aspect of the writing standards is that they emphasize teaching students "how to use writing to enhance comprehension of text and facilitate learning of content materials" (Graham & Harris, 2013, p. 29).

The CCSS ELA standards are distinguished from previous iterations of academic standards in three particular ways that have implications for writing instruction. First, students should have regular opportunities to study complex texts and academic language (CCSSI, 2014). Students are not merely expected to read and write, but to do so in the context of increasingly challenging texts that ultimately meet the demands of academic and personal life beyond high school. Second, the CCSS promotes building knowledge systematically through content-rich nonfiction. This is aligned with the idea that students "must be immersed in information about the world around them if they are to develop the strong general knowledge and vocabulary they need to become successful readers and be prepared for college, career, and life" (CCSSI, 2014). The third shift from previous standards is the emphasis in the CCSS ELA on close reading and providing evidence from text or multiple texts to support analysis (Shanahan, 2015). Writing in the elementary years used to focus "heavily on having students write about what they know, not about what they read" (Shanahan, 2015, p. 468; Gilbert & Graham, 2010). With the CCSS, students expected to "write about ideas, especially ideas from sources other than themselves" (Shanahan, 2015, p. 468; Culter & Graham, 2008; Gilbert & Graham, 2010;). Specifically, beginning in the 4th and 5th grades, use evidence from texts to "present careful analyses, well-defended claims, and clear information" (CCSSI, 2014; Graham, 2012; Shanahan, 2015).

In line with the major shifts, the types of writing tasks emphasized in the CCSS are text-based writing. More explicitly, the CCSS Writing strand specifies three types of writing that students should focus on – opinion, informative/explanatory, and narrative. Research writing is also highly regarded. The general consensus is that these tasks promote the integration of the reading and writing processes. In 4th and 5th grades, for example, students are expected to write extended "opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and

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information" (NGAC/CCSSO, 2010), informative and explanatory texts that "develop a topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples…" (NGAC/CCSSO, 2010), as well as narratives based on real or imagined experiences or events.

More important than the specific genres of writing students are expected to produce is the statement the CCSS is making about the cognitive work students should be asked to engage in through assigned tasks. That is, the standards aim to have students perform more than fragmented recall of information provided in texts and arrive at more than a surface-level understanding of text. Rather, the standards endorse tasks that challenge students to perform higher-level thinking processes in relation to complex text content, such as comparing and contrasting themes, analyzing conflicting points of view, and explaining how authors use evidence (Graham, 2012). Shanahan (2015) identified three ways of writing about text (i.e., three cognitive activities) that particularly reflect the thinking promoted through the CCSS and that support students' literacy development and content learning. First, the process of summarizing underlies research writing and really any writing involving understanding and paraphrasing text, including using parts of text as supporting evidence. Second, extended analysis and critical evaluation of information through writing are activities that result in deep understanding of content and sometimes lead students to revise their understanding as they read and write. They also require students to use their existing knowledge to interpret information in texts. Notably, the standards signal this type of analytic thinking in the reading standards, but that students should articulate the outcome of their analysis in writing (Shanahan, 2015). Finally, synthesizing multiple sources is recognized as "the most demanding and elaborate approach to writing about reading included in the Common Core" (Shanahan, 2015). For this undertaking, students must do the cognitive work of comparing and contrasting the information in the sources, recognizing

echoes and contradiction and overlapping perspectives. More than summarizing, synthesizing requires students to reassemble the information from original sources into a new text with its own main idea and purpose (Shanahan, 2015). Through rich opportunities to engage in these cognitive activities, to articulate their thoughts and reasoning, students not only deepen their comprehension of text, but also learn to apply and extend the ideas within, such that they themselves become contributors of knowledge and insights (Applebee, 2013; Graham & Harris, 2015; Shanahan, 2015).

The Common Core standards also address goals related to the writing process (e.g., prewriting, drafting, revising, editing) and skills related to organization, vocabulary, and mechanics; however, because the learning objectives related to these do not represent a major shift from previous policies on writing instruction (Shanahan, 2015), the present study delimits the examination of the CCSS writing policy to the key aspects highlighted above.

3.2   THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

3.2.1   Teacher as sensemaker

As clear as the Common Core standards for writing appear to be, decades of research indicate teachers play an important role as sensemakers of policy, meaning that the effectiveness of policy hinges on teachers' understanding of the principles underlying the reform (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Honig, 2006; Spillane, Reiser, & Gomez, 2006). In other words, the enactment of policy depends in large part on what teachers perceive themselves to be responding to (Cohen, 1990; Cohen & Ball, 1990; Cohen & Barnes, 1993; Cohen & Hill, 2000; Cohen, Moffitt, &

Goldin, 2007; Spillane & Jennings, 1997; Spillane & Zeuli, 1999). Because teachers often filter the new policy through the lens of their existing knowledge and practice, they may understand the same message differently (Spillane et al., 2002). For example, in the context of the Educational Policy and Practice Study (EPPS), researchers found that teachers using the same language to characterize teaching strategies endorsed in policy had very different ideas about instruction, with differences being attributable to a variety of factors, including opportunities to learn about the policy and professional development (Cohen & Barnes, 1993; Spillane, 1996, 1998a). More remarkably, even teachers that engaged in similar learning opportunities still had different understandings of policy messages because ultimately they varied with respect to factors such as beliefs about the discipline, teaching, and student ability.

Furthermore, as sensemakers, teachers frequently supplement, rather than replace, their existing views with what a new policy endorses. This is because their existing understandings often lead them to perceive policy messages as variations of what they already believe in and do, rather than as innovative reform ideas (Spillane, 2000; Spillane & Callahan, 2000; Spillane & Zeuli 1999). For example, in Hill's (2001) study of teachers serving on a district committee to adopt materials aligned with the state's mathematics policy, the teachers retained much of their existing curriculum, believing it to be supportive of the goals of the state policy, when in fact, the policy promoted significant changes in teaching and learning. Similarly, Spillane and Zeuli (1999) documented that the majority of teachers who claimed to be implementing a set of standards were responding to an interpretation of the standards influenced by their existing model of teaching. Related to this, researchers found that teachers often attend to the surface aspects of reform while missing the deeper principles (Spillane et al., 2002). For example, Cohen (1990) noted that in perceiving the mere use of manipulatives in mathematics instruction as

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essential, teachers may missed the function that the manipulatives serve. Altogether, evidence suggests that teachers are inclined to perceive the same policy messages differently.

The process of translating standards into practice is more complex than a matter of the teacher understanding the intent of the policy. Research shows that messages from the local education context in which the teacher is situated are a significant source of influence on how teachers translate policy into the classroom (Coburn, 2001; Spillane, 1996; 1998a; 1998b). Essentially, researchers recognize that "policy is often reinterpreted and reshaped by policy makers at every level as it works its way through a system" (Coburn, 2001, p. 150), and as such, the institutional environment plays a role in teachers' work (Rowan & Miskel 1999; Scott 2001). In the case of national reforms, for example, states are typically called upon to convey to districts what the reform means. In turn, districts, through schools, guide, shape, and translate the policy for the practitioners in the classrooms.

The messages local agencies send to teachers are typically regarded as pressures related to the appropriate or desirable ways to teach and are often conveyed in the structure and content of the curriculum, the stakes attached to student assessments, and professional development offerings. In her study of reading instruction reform in California, for example, Coburn (2004) found that teachers encountered multiple messages from their district pertaining to curricula, as in which textbooks to use and which reading approach to adopt. As well, teachers received prescriptions around assessments to administer and rubrics to use. Similarly, in Spillane's (1998) examination of the role of local education agencies in implementing instructional policy, the LEAs focused teachers on discrete decoding and reading comprehension skills by administering an instructional monitoring system and distributing curriculum guidelines emphasizing these skills. Other notable ways in which administrators aimed to impact teachers' instruction were

through messages about how to prepare students for mandatory state-wide assessments, through the content and focus of locally required assessments, through the aim of teacher development programs (Spillane, 1998). In all, local conditions and interacting local policies, particularly related to curriculum and assessment, can play an important role in shaping teachers' response to policy and influence teachers' practice in substantive and consequential ways (Gallucci, 2003).

The messages from the district may not always carry the intent of the reform, however (Hill, 1999; Spillane, 1998). They may miss the intent because the district's agenda to prioritize certain practices might overshadow the larger reform goals (Spillane, 1998). Or, in an attempt to respond to reform ideas, the district might add new programs or revise existing programs in an ad hoc way that that result in multiple incompatible approaches or incoherent message about how to achieving a set of goals (Spillane, 1998). In his studies on implementation of instructional policy, for example, Spillane (1998; 2000) found that local policy makers indeed responded to state-level reforms in ways that had attendant implications for teachers' practice. For example, despite the state's efforts to move the emphasis of reading instruction toward reading comprehension and active construction of meaning, one district continued to promote a reading curriculum that focused exclusively on decoding and discrete skills (Spillane, 1998). Likewise, the district offered little professional development that signaled the shift in policy. Meanwhile, other programs within the district encouraged teachers to review their practice in light of the new state policy. The incoherent vision of effective instruction conveyed by the district left teachers confused about how to teach to the intent of the reform. Similar findings hold for school-level messages intended to offer instructional guidance aligned with new policy.

Theory and evidence from research suggests that as much as teachers might look to the district to construct meaning from policy, to interpret them on their behalf (Darling-Hammond,

1990), teachers do not simply and passively receive and adopt the messages in the local environment and enact them in practice. Rather, teachers typically engage in a process wherein they evaluate what they perceive the district messages to say and decide how to respond. As part of this process, teachers draw upon their existing knowledge, including their understanding of (i.e., perceived message from) the policy itself, as well as their beliefs (e.g., about subject matter, about students, about teaching and learning), and experiences (Spillane et al., 2002; Spillane, Gomez & Mesler, 2009). In this way, teachers are thought to be connected to the context in which they are embedded, while being able to exercise agency and autonomy in matters related to their daily work of teaching (Coburn, 2004).

Several outcomes are possible as a result of the negotiation of the perceived messages, with implication for teachers' instruction. Using Coburn's (2004) typology derived from a study of reading instruction, teachers might respond in one of five ways, ranging from rejecting the message to accommodating it. Upon receiving and understanding a message from their environment, teachers might decide to engage with it, or dismiss it outright. They are likely to *reject* message that are drastically incongruent with their existing beliefs about what was effective or important. Teachers might also *symbolically respond* to messages by adopting surface features, but eschewing true changes in their practice. In the face of conflicting messages about instruction, teachers might decide to continue teaching in multiple ways, setting up *parallel structures* instead of resolving incongruences among different approaches. More often than not, Coburn (2004) and other researchers (Spillane 1999; Spillane & Jennings 1997; Spillane & Zeuli 1999) found that teachers *assimilated* institutional messages by interpreting them in such a way that fits with their preexisting underlying assumptions and preferences. As a result of this process, teachers often understand and enact practices that are different from what

is intended. Teachers are apt to adopt the surface features related to the message, without addressing the deeper underpinnings of the reform or revising their framework for teaching and learning. Finally, in cases where teachers fundamentally agree with the message's full intent and seek to fundamentally modify their assumptions and understandings in light of the new ideas, they are said to *accommodate* the messages they receive from their environment.

Researchers have theorized that several factors influence teachers to respond to messages in one way or another. Coburn (2004), for example, suggested that teachers were more inclined to incorporate (i.e., assimilating or accommodating) local message into their practice if they were congruent with their existing knowledge, beliefs, and practices. To extend this, in considering implementation of two or more converging policies, Russell and Bray (2013) proposed that "clear and unambiguous mandates might be more likely to lead to shared and accurate interpretations" (p. 16). Conversely, when policy goals are broad and ambiguous, the (shared) interpretation that teachers form might not accurately reflect the intent of the standards. Finally, divergence in the theories of action of two or more policies pressing on teachers leads to confusion and conflict among educators. This tends to result in varied interpretations and compromising practices that are not intended by the policymakers.

The present study reflects the importance of taking into account the process by which teachers' make sense of policy and translate it into practice. That is, I aim to examine how teachers negotiate the messages they perceive in the CCSS writing policy with the messages they perceive from their district about how to teach to the standards, and how this is consequential to their writing instruction. Primarily, I treat teachers' perceived messages about the CCSS for writing as preexisting knowledge that teachers draw upon to decide how to respond to district messages aimed at guide their writing instruction. For example, in instances where the district

messages are congruent with teachers' understanding of the CCSS, teachers are expected to assimilate or accommodate the local messages into their interpretation of the CCSS (and their practice). I also regard the CCSS policy and the district policy messages that teachers perceive as policies that are supposed to converge (cf., Russell & Bray, 2013). This allows for exploration of why there might be gaps between the teacher's and the district's understanding (as perceived by the teacher) of the CCSS for writing.

3.2.2 Theoretical framework for examining writing tasks

The aspect of writing instruction the present study specifically focuses on is the writing tasks teachers assign to students. Assigned tasks are a particularly important aspect of instruction to study because they embody a teacher's understanding of the academic standards. That is, they represent the teacher's translation of the cognitive processes students need to engage in and the content students need to learn. They are the means by which teachers direct students' attention to selected curricular content and specific cognitive activities, among all the possible facts and topics, skills and objectives that might have been addressed in a class (Doyle, 1983). As such, tasks are crucial to students' learning and experience of a given curriculum domain (Doyle, 1983; Doyle & Carter, 1984; Newmann, Bryk, & Nagaoka, 2001).

Research indicates that opportunity for students to engage with cognitively demanding writing tasks is associated with the development of student' thinking, reading, and writing skills (Applebee, 1984; Fulwiler & Young, 1982; Langer & Applebee, 1987; Newkirk & Atwell, 1986). When students are challenged to construct knowledge, rather than simply reproduce it from the material given, they will understand the material more deeply (Applebee, 1984). Research shows that extended forms of writing that allow for such integration of new knowledge

are associated with the development of nuanced and coherent thinking, whereas tasks that only require restricted responses result in fragmentary understanding of text (Marshall, 1987; Langer & Applebee, 1987; Newell, 1984). The connection between quality writing tasks and reading skills has also been established. Graham and Hebert's (2010) meta-analysis shows that students with opportunities to generate an analysis or interpretation of text improve more markedly on their reading comprehension as compared with students exposed to more basic tasks such as writing summaries or answering questions. Other research shows that the cognitive demand of writing assignments significantly predict differences in students' reading comprehension skills as assessed on standardized tests (Carbonaro & Gamoran, 2002; Matsumura, 2003; Matsumura et al., 2002a, 2008a; Newmann, Bryk, and Nagaoka, 2001). Finally, research suggests that there is a positive relationship between the quality of writing tasks and students' writing proficiency (Boscolo & Carotti, 2003; Matsumura et al., 2002b). Specifically, the cognitive demand of the text-based writing tasks teachers assign are predictive of several aspects of students' writing, including their ability to reason analytically about text (Matsumura et al., 2015).

Although strong evidence links rigorous writing assignments to student learning, the quality of writing tasks in schools is generally poor. Students are rarely required generate extended responses in which they demonstrate analytic thinking. In elementary grades, only about 4% of observed class time is spent on extended writing (Gilbert & Graham, 2010). Writing about text is particularly rare (Gilbert & Graham, 2010), and even when the selection of text is rich and could support a cognitively demanding task, students are more often guided to recall basic facts (Matsumura et al., 2006; 2015; Newmann et al., 2001). One survey conducted more recently suggests that the trend might be reversing, with 3rd- and 4th-grade teachers responding that they assign at least one narrative, persuasive, and informative writing task monthly (Brindle

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et al., 2015). Given the emphasis on writing in the CCSS that reflects deep thinking about text, the nature and quality of writing tasks that teachers assign need to be explicitly examined.

Despite the general low quality of writing tasks, research suggests that there is important variance in task quality among individual teachers, the source of which needs to be explained. Matsumura (2003), for example, noted that while the majority of the assignments she collected were typically weak, some teachers submitted "outstanding" (p. 21) assignments. Her efforts to explain the variance centered on teachers' interpretation of academic standards. For example, some teachers claimed that a given task adhered to a particular standard when it may be otherwise judged to bear little resemblance (Matsumura, 2003). And two teachers basing an assignment on the same standards may, in the end, design very different tasks. Altogether, an examination of teachers' understanding of standards related to writing seems important in understanding the variance in the writing tasks teachers assign and therefore students' opportunities to achieve the goals set forth in the standards.

Finally, assigned tasks are a worthwhile focus because they have great potential as both a tool and a target of professional development. As concrete artifacts of instruction, tasks can be readily collected and reflected upon. Teachers can be supported in interventions to examine the features of tasks they assign alongside tasks that reflect the intent of the CCSS. This process may help teachers become aware of substantive differences between the opportunities they offer to students and the types of learning experiences students need to meet the goals of the standards.

3.3   THE PRESENT STUDY

The goal of this study is to investigate, through multiple case studies (Yin, 2003) of teachers in

one district, elementary teachers' interpretation and enactment of writing policy in the CCSS. In particular, I focus on the writing tasks teachers assign to students. I examine how teachers' interpretation of the writing tasks to assign is shaped by their negotiation of the messages they perceive in the standards themselves and the messages they perceive from the district (about curriculum and assessments) aimed at influencing their instruction. Further, I examine the extent to which the tasks teachers assign reflect their interpretation of the CCSS and are congruent with the intent of the standards. Given the emphasis of the CCSS, I attend specifically to whether teachers understand the importance of providing students opportunities for cognitively demanding text-based writing.

The research questions guiding this study are as follows. Figure 3.1 depicts the main constructs of interest and their hypothesized relationships.

1. How do teachers negotiate the messages they perceive from the CCSS and the messages they perceive from their district – particularly about curriculum and assessments – in interpreting what the CCSS writing policy means for the writing tasks they assign to students?

2. What is the nature of the writing tasks teachers assign to students? To what extent do the writing tasks reflect the principles of the CCSS writing policy?

Perceived Messages About (Understanding of) CCSS Writing Policy

Negotiation of perceived messages

shape

Perceived District Messages About Writing-Related Curricula and Assessments

Perceived Messages Related to Policy

Interpretation of what CCSS Writing Policy Means for Instruction

largely guides

Interpretation of What Policy Means for Practice

Assigned Writing Tasks

Policy as Implemented in Practice
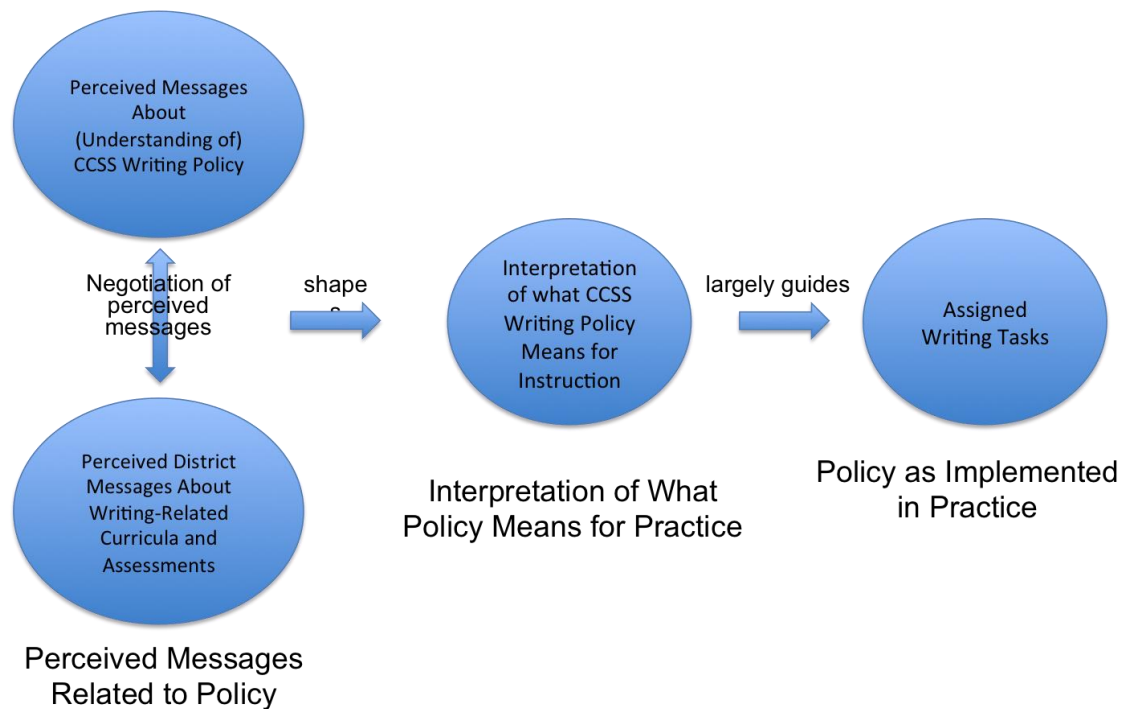
* It is understood that the representation above (and the present study) does not account for multiple other factors that might be involved in teachers' interpretation of policy, such as teachers' prior knowledge, beliefs, and experiences about writing instruction and how students learn.

Figure 3.1 Representation of Topics of Interest and Their Hypothesized Relationships

The present study contributes to the paucity of research on the implementation of policy related to writing. Specifically, it attends to the writing policy in the CCSS, since how teachers understand and take up the policy speaks to the success of the CCSS initiative. Given that most states did not begin implementing the CCSS until the 2012-2013 school year, there have been few published empirical studies to date on elementary teachers' response to the CCSS, not to mention the writing policy in particular. The few explicit attempts to learn about teachers' response to the ELA CCSS have focused on ELA instruction writ large, with a focus on classroom discourse (e.g., Barrett-Tatum, 2015; Barrett-Tatum & Dooley, 2015). One study that does attend to writing (Wilcox, Jeffrey, & Gardner-Bixler, 2015) found that teachers are generally supportive of the CCSS for writing and believed the standards emphasized nonfiction

reading and writing, and the use of text evidence. Focused on comparisons of instruction at the school level, however, the study does not detail individual teachers' understanding, interpretation, and enactment of the standards. Moreover, given its lens for examining writing instruction as the presence or absence of evidence-based practices, the study does not consider the writing opportunities available for students to achieve the goals set forth in the standards. In the present study, the focus on writing tasks that teachers assign addresses this gap.

The present study also contributes to existing research by attending to the influence of the district in shaping how teachers implement the CCSS writing policy. Much of the available research on policy implementation, largely accounts for differences in teachers' practice by focusing on their prior knowledge, beliefs, and experiences about how students learn, without attending to the nested nature of policy interpretation. While one study (Barrett-Tatum, 2015) recognized that "local interpretations of the CCSS from the [district]…provided important direction for policy implementation" (p. 15), it does not unpack how teachers negotiated the district's influence. Understanding how the messages teachers perceive from their districts reinforce or problematize what instruction that supports the standards might look like could provide insight into ways to better help teachers fulfill the intent of the policy in their practice.

3.4   METHODS

3.4.1   District context and policies

The context of the study is a large urban district in a mid-Atlantic state. The district serves 25,000 students from kindergarten to 12th grade. Approximately 60% of these students are

Hispanic, 30% are African-American, and 9% are of Caucasian, Middle Eastern, or Asian descent. More than 90% of the students received free or reduced-priced lunch. About 15% of students receive special education services, and about 13% are identified as English Language Learners (ELL).

3.4.1.1 Model ELA curriculum. The district is strongly committed to aligning with the Common Core State Standards and preparing students on the path to high school and college readiness. To this end, the district requires teachers to follow the state-provided model English Language Arts curriculum. The curriculum organizes standards into five units of study", each of which reflects six weeks of instruction. For each unit, the model curriculum specifies the targeted student learning objectives (SLO) and corresponding Common Core State Standards (CCSS) to be addressed. The curriculum centers on a skills-and-strategies approach to reading comprehension instruction. Such skills include summarizing, comparing and contrasting characters, identifying theme. The texts, strategies, and instructional activities are not prescribed in the curriculum, but recommended readings are provided. The district elected to follow three of the units in the state's model curriculum. In addition, teachers implement two CCSS-aligned units developed by the University of Pittsburgh's Institute for Learning (IFL). The IFL provides research-based professional development and materials that advance teaching and learning.

In the 4th grade, throughout the five curriculum units, students read a range of literary and informational texts, and personal narratives. With respect to writing, at the end of two of the units, students are expected to write informative/explanatory texts. The other units require students to generate a supported opinion piece, a text-based narrative, and a personal narrative. The curriculum content for the 5th grade is similar. Students read a variety of fiction and nonfiction text and write in different genres. In particular, the culminating assignments ask

students to produce text-based narrative writing, (e.g., rewrite part of a story from an alternate point of view) and informative/explanatory texts.

While teachers are required to follow the model curriculum and administer the culminating tasks, they have the autonomy to design and select all other instructional tasks, including writing tasks, for students. Moreover, there is no prescribed rubric in the district for assessing student work. Essentially then, teachers are in charge of determining the writing opportunities available to students as well as the expectations and criteria for good writing. Because of this flexibility, instruction during the 90-minute ELA/Literacy block is known to vary greatly from teacher to teacher, even within a grade level at the same school.

3.4.1.2 Writing Workshop curriculum. A year ago, the district instituted a 45-minute Writing Workshop period about three times a week, in addition to the ELA/Literacy block. The Writing Workshop follows Lucy Calkins' approach in requiring teachers to teach general writing skills in teacher-directed mini-lessons followed by time for students to work on their writing. The teacher confers with students about their writing and engages students in guided practice as well as sharing of their work. To the extent that the focus is on the writing process and on free expression of ideas, the tasks are typically prompt free, based on students' choice.

For each grade, the district sets out four types of compositions that students should learn to produce and the learning objectives related to each. In 4th grade, students work on a piece of realistic fiction, persuasive essay, researched informational text, and literary essay. Fifth-grade students focus on a personal essay, researched informational text, memoir, and argumentative essay. Writing Workshop endorses regular use of mentor texts to support students' development of the craft of writing in various genres and forms. Students are not, however, asked to write in response to such texts or explicitly refer to these texts in their writing.

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3.4.1.3 Required assessments. At the district level, at the end of each ELA curriculum unit, students complete a unit assessment that measures students' proficiency of the targeted skills of the unit (i.e., selected Common Core standards). The assessment consists of a reading passage followed by several multiple-choice questions, some short-answer questions, and a writing prompt requiring a multi-paragraph response. These assessments were originally designed to align with the state standardized test that preceded the PARCC assessment. Until 2014, the district had administered the state standardized test developed under NCLB. In spring 2015, that is, near the end of the present study, students took the first official PARCC assessment.

3.4.1.4 District professional development. According to teacher reports, the district did not provide professional development specifically on the standards nor on the PARCC assessment. Teachers considered that in following the model curriculum, they were teaching to the standards and satisfying the requirements of the district, the state, and the CCSS. With respect to professional development related to writing instruction, teachers received support specific to Writing Workshop. For each Writing Workshop unit of study teachers are expected to implement, a trainer provided a full-day workshop that involved modeling a lesson and sharing resources. Teacher did not receive any training or support with respect to text-based writing.

3.4.2 Participants

The participants in this multiple case-study research are six 4th- and 5th-grade English Language Arts/Literacy teachers from three schools in one district in an Atlantic state. All of the teachers indicated that they were familiar or very familiar with the CCSS with respect to writing, and they had "strong" or "very strong" intent to teach to the standards.

All of the participants are female. Four are Caucasian, one is African-American, and one identifies as biracial. All teachers hold a Bachelor degree and a regular teaching certification. Four are relatively new teachers (with 2-3 years of experience), while two are seasoned, with 9 and 20 years of experience. Three taught 4th grade and three taught 5th grade. Three teachers taught both ELA and Writing Workshop, two teachers taught disciplinary literacy (i.e., science or social studies) as well as Writing Workshop, and one teacher taught ELA only. A final participant taught Writing Workshop, but not ELA. Table 3.1 presents a summary of the participants. Each teacher is characterized in the results section.

Table 3.1 Case Study Participants

Alias	Sex	Race	Highest Degree	Cert.	Yrs. Exp.	School ID	Gr.	Class	Subject(s) Taught
Helen	F	White	Bachelor	Reg.	20	1	4	Regular	ELA, Writing Workshop, SS
Rhonda	F	Black	Bachelor	Reg.	3	1	5	Regular	ELA, Writing Workshop, SS
Delia	F	White	Bachelor	Reg.	2	2	4	Regular	Writing Workshop, SS, Sci
Marie	F	White	Bachelor	Reg.	9	2	5	Regular	ELA
Sarah	F	White	Bachelor	Reg.	2	2	5	Regular	Writing Workshop, Sci
Corrine	F	Biracial	Bachelor	Reg.	3	3	4	Regular	ELA, Writing Workshop, SS

3.4.3   Data collection

Data were collected on the main constructs of interest in the study (see Figure 3.1). First, to elicit teachers' *perceived messages about (understanding of) the writing policy in the CCSS,* including the types of writing tasks that students should have opportunities to engage in, teachers completed a preliminary interview and an online survey. The core of the survey required them to rate a set of writing tasks (i.e., the Writing Tasks Set) based on the extent to which each supports students to meet the standards related to writing. A follow-up interview probed teachers' rationale for their task ratings, and a final interview revisited teachers' understanding of the

CCSS writing policy. These same data sources also informed teachers' *perceived district messages about writing instruction*, and ultimately, their *interpretation of what the CCSS writing policy means for their instruction*. To capture the latter, the task rating was based on how likely teachers were to assign each task to their students. Finally, the teachers' *assigned writing tasks* were represented by two sets of writing tasks teachers submitted that they deemed aligned to the goals of the CCSS. As well, teacher engaged in an interview in which they were prompted to talk about their assigned tasks. The data sources are summarized in Table 3.2, and related details follow[10].

Table 3.2 Data Collection Activities

Time	Data Source	Construct (see Figure 3.1)
Dec 2014	Interview about perceived messages	Perceived messages about CCSS writing policy Perceived district messages about writing instruction Interpretation of what CCSS writing policy means for instruction
Dec 2014	Collection of writing tasks	Assigned writing tasks
Jan 2015	Survey with task rating activities	Perceived messages about CCSS writing policy Interpretation of what CCSS writing policy means for instruction
Jan 2015	Interview about task ratings	Perceived messages about CCSS writing policy Interpretation of what CCSS writing policy means for instruction
Apr 2015	Collection of writing tasks	Assigned writing tasks
May 2015	Interview about assigned writing tasks	Perceived messages about CCSS writing policy Perceived district messages about writing instruction Interpretation of what CCSS writing policy means for instruction Assigned writing tasks

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[10] All teachers completed all data collection activities, except for Teacher 2 (Marie). She was unable to continue the study past January 2015. As such, she is missing one set of assigned tasks, and the final interview.

3.4.3.1 Interview about perceived messages. The purpose of the first interview, about 45-minutes long, was to gather d information about the teachers and their classroom context, and to elicit their understanding of the CCSS writing policy as well as messages they perceived the district as conveying about how to address the standards. Some core questions were "How familiar are you with the Common Core State Standards?" and "How would you describe the focus or philosophy of the district with respect to writing instruction?" (see Appendix D).

3.4.3.2 Survey with task rating activities. Teachers completed a 16-question online survey (Appendix C). In addition to capturing background information, the questions elicited teachers' understanding of the kinds of writing tasks that support students to meet the goals of the CCSS and the kinds of tasks they plan to assign to students. The primary instrument embedded in the survey was the Writing Tasks Set (WTS), which consists of descriptions of 22 writing tasks that vary on several task features, including the type and number of texts used, the cognitive demand of the prompt, the focal literary element, the genre of writing required, and the response format (Appendix A, B) (See Study 1 for details related to the development of the Writing Tasks Set.) Teachers rated each task first for the extent to which they are likely to assign it to their students (1=not likely at all to 7=extremely likely). Then, they rated the tasks again for the extent to which they believe it supports students to meet the goals of the CCSS (1=not at all to 7=to the utmost extent). Teachers were encouraged to make distinctions, but were not required to distribute their ratings in a particular way. They were also not directed to attend to any particular task features in making their judgments.

An additional survey item asked teachers to indicate how they believe the CCSS intended to affect the writing tasks they assign. For example, should they assign fewer/more/same number

of writing tasks based on text? Or less/more/same amount of analytic writing? A final question required teachers to indicate sources (e.g., PD, curriculum units) that help them make sense of the standards and assessment, and that influence their instruction.

3.4.3.3 Interview about task ratings. Prior to this 45-minute phone interview, teachers received a summary of their task ratings responses (along with the Writing Tasks Set) for review and verification. The interview itself was designed to elicit teachers' thinking behind their both sets of their task ratings. Key open-ended questions included: "What guided your thinking in rating the tasks?" "What aspect of tasks were you attending to in making your decisions?" In addition, all teachers were specifically prompted to talk about their rating for tasks G, Q, S, and F because these tasks are considered aligned with the thrust of the CCSS (i.e., they were modeled after PARCC's performance-based writing assessment tasks). Since the tasks are constant, variation in teachers' responses could reveal interesting differences among them. Finally, for each teacher, I selected a few tasks that they rated high (i.e., were most likely to assign or considered most supportive of the goals of the CCSS) and a few that they rated low, and asked them to think-aloud about these tasks to reveal the thinking behind their rating (see Appendix E).

3.4.3.4 Collection of assigned tasks. The primary source of data for learning about teachers' instruction and their implementation of the CCSS for writing was the collection of assigned tasks. From September to December, teachers collected four writing tasks they assigned to students that they considered to be aligned with the goals of the CCSS. These could be classroom, culminating, or assessment tasks. They could be tasks that the teachers selected or adapted from a published source, or developed from scratch. Teachers provided basic information about each task on a coversheet (Appendix F). Adapted from Clare (2000), the

coversheet required teachers to briefly characterize the task, the text on which the task was based, and the grading criteria. For the present study, teachers were also asked to identify the task from the WTS that most resembled the task they were submitting. In addition to the coversheet and the task itself, teachers were directed to submit the grading scheme and a selection of graded student work. Specifically, teachers should include two responses they deem high quality, and two of medium quality. Between January and April, teachers collected another set of four tasks and accompanying materials. Six of the teachers submitted all required documents, meaning that the total data per teacher consisted of: 8 coversheets (one for each task); 8 tasks; 8 assessment schemes (1 for each task); 32 pieces of graded student work (2 of high and 2 of medium quality for each task). As noted above, Teacher 2 (Marie) was not able to complete the study. She submitted the first batch of four tasks (with accompanying materials).

Analysis of instructional artifacts has been used rather successfully for measuring various aspects of instruction, including students' opportunities to learn generally and the quality of interactions around tasks specifically (Borko, Stecher, Alonzo, Moncure, & McClam, 2005; Borko, Stecher, Kuffner, Arnold, & Wood, 2004; Burstein et al., 1995; Martinez, Borko, Stecher, Luskin, & Kloser, 2012). Borko, Stecher, and colleagues (2005), for example, piloted the use of the "Scoop notebook" to study reform-oriented practice in mathematics and science instruction. The tool was used to collect artifacts related to the instructional and learning activities, materials and strategies, as well as student work. They found positive results, suggesting that the Notebook and the scoring guide can provide accurate information about classroom instruction. Furthermore, Martinez and colleagues (2012)'s Quality Assessment in Science Notebook, designed to capture teachers' assessment practices, was also found to have some validity and predictive power on student achievement. Likewise in a study of reform-aligned language arts

instruction, Matsumura[11] and colleagues (Clare, 2000; Clare & Aschbacher, 2001) found their collection of assigned tasks and student work to be a reliable and valid measure of the quality of classroom tasks. Further research has since been conducted (e.g., Matsumura 2002a; 2002b; 2003; 2008a; 2015) using the artifact collection as a primary data collection tool.

The present study follows Matsumura and colleagues (Clare, 2000; Clare & Aschbacher, 2001; Clare, Valdés, Pascal, & Steinberg, 2001; Matsumura, Garnier, Pascal, & Valdés, 2002) in asking teachers to submit artifacts meeting criteria specified by the researcher (e.g., tasks aligned with or supportive of the CCSS). It also draws upon Matsumura and colleagues' (2002a; 2002b; 2008a) work in considering the completed student work. Graded student work, in particular, is often useful to understand the demands of the assignment, particularly when the teachers' description is unclear (Matsumura et al., 2002a, 2002b; 2008a; Wang, Matsumura, & Correnti, under review). Moreover, since "learning activities are driven by their purposes in the classroom environment, and how activities are evaluated is one of the clearest expressions of those purposes" (Langer & Applebee, 1987, p. 92).

3.4.3.5 Interview about assigned writing tasks. The final 45-minute interview primarily represented an effort to understand the teachers' instructional decisions. Specifically, they were invited to talk about the writing tasks they assigned throughout the year. The conversation was anchored by bringing forth a few of the previously submitted tasks. These were scanned and sent via e-mail to the teacher for review. Some of the questions included: Why did you assign this task to students? In what ways do you think the task helps students to achieve the goals of CCSS? Why do you believe this task most resembles Task X from the Writing Tasks Set? How

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[11] Neé Clare

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did you decide on the grading criteria for a particular task? In what ways did the student work meet or fall short of your expectations for the assignment? (see Appendix G).

In addition, teachers' understanding of the CCSS and the messages they perceived from the district were also revisited. For example, they were asked to articulate their understanding of the key goals or principles of the CCSS for writing and the types of writing tasks that help students meet the goals. Questions included, "What is your understanding of the key goals or principles of the CCSS for writing?" "To what extent are your writing tasks informed by the CCSS?" and "How are the standards for writing addressed in your district?"

3.4.4 Data Analysis

3.4.4.1 Research question 1: How do teachers negotiate the messages they perceive from the CCSS and the messages they perceive from their district – particularly about curriculum and assessments – in interpreting what the CCSS writing policy means for the writing tasks they assign? To answer research question 1, transcripts of all three interviews for all teachers were transcribed and analyzed in random order in NVivo10 (QSR International, 2012), with the identity of the teachers concealed. The analysis process involved multiple re-readings of the interviews and iterative coding (Bernard & Ryan, 2010; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Primarily, I performed applied thematic analysis (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2011), an inductive, content-driven approach to coding and identifying themes in qualitative data, although some codes related to teachers' understanding of the CCSS writing policy could be anticipated in light of the shifts signaled in the standards. For instance, I expected teachers to mention the use of text evidence and the emphasis on opinion writing. I also drew on constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1965; Corbin & Strauss, 2014) in consistently looking across cases (i.e.,

teachers) and considering how the cases and codes fit the emergent theory (i.e., answer to the research question).

The analysis was guided by three analytic questions. First, I asked "What messages do teachers perceive the CCSS as conveying about writing?" I marked instances in the transcripts where teachers articulated a belief or understanding of the types or features of writing emphasized in the CCSS. I did not code comments about general aspects of writing (e.g., vocabulary development, organization, mechanics), as they are not relevant to the present study, nor did I include teachers' description of their practice. Coded instances must reflect teachers understanding of the intent of the policy. Subsequently, a matrix (with 'Teachers' in the rows and 'Features of writing emphasized in CCSS in the columns) was generated to help summarize and compare teachers' understanding of the writing policy (see Table 3.3). I also coded the sources teachers identified as influencing their understanding of the CCSS. Appendix H presents the themes and codes and their definitions that were generated and applied to all interviews.

The survey results were used to triangulate the interview data. Specifically, teachers' self-assessment of their familiarity with the CCSS is considered, and their responses to the item on how the CCSS intended to influence instruction (e.g., have teachers assign more/same/fewer writing tasks based on multiple texts, more/same/fewer narrative writing tasks) is compared with their identification of the key thrusts of the CCSS with respect to writing. Furthermore, teachers' judgment of the extent to which each task in the Writing Tasks Set supports students to meet the goals of the CCSS (Appendix I) are used to substantiate their expressed understanding of the CCSS. Finally, their survey responses about the sources that influenced their understanding are used to triangulate their interview response to the same question.

The second analytic question concerned the district messages teachers perceived from the district related to curricula and assessments of writing. I coded utterances that were relevant to the questions, "According to the teacher, how does the district interpret the CCSS writing standards?" "What message did the teacher receive from the district regarding how the standards should be addressed in teachers' practice?" and "According to the teacher, what role does the district believe various assessments should play in teachers' design of writing tasks?" (see Appendix J).

Since the present study took place in one district context, the six teachers should have experienced the same district messages. Yet, this might not practically be the case. The district messages may have been transmitted through school administrators or other methods, which made potential differences in the message sent possible. More importantly, as the theoretical perspective of the study emphasizes, like all individuals, teachers may interpret the same message in various ways, and these interpretations (rather than the intended messages themselves) are what impact instructional decisions. For these reasons, I coded the messages each individual teacher received as reported in their interviews and allowed for differences among teachers, instead of focusing on the messages the district delivered to teachers.

Following Coburn (2004), after identifying the district messages, I coded teachers' responses to them. I coded utterances in which the teacher expressed an opinion about the district's messages regarding writing instruction, or statements where they were comparing or attempting to reconcile the district's messages with their understanding of the CCSS. I coded whether teachers' perception of the CCSS messages complemented or contradicted their perceived district messages. Finally, I drew on Coburn's (2004) typology to categorize teachers' responses to the local messages as follows: *accepting or accommodating* the district's

prescriptions; *assimilating* district views into preexisting beliefs, knowledge, or experiences*;*

creating parallel approaches to address conflicting messages or priorities; *symbolically*

responding to pressures from the district; or *rejecting the district's messages*.

The third analytic question was: What are teachers' final interpretations of what the

CCSS means for the writing tasks they assign, given the messages they perceived in the CCSS

and the messages they perceived from the district about how to teach to the CCSS. I coded parts

of the transcript in which teachers described tasks they were likely to assign (Appendix K).

Teachers' ratings of the tasks in the WTS based on the extent to which they were likely to assign

each task helped triangulate the interview data (Appendix L). At last, I created a table to

summarize the key constructs under investigation: teachers' understanding of the CCSS, their

understanding of district messages, their response to district messages, and their interpretation of

what the writing policy means for their classroom (see Table 3.4).

3.4.4.2 Research question 2: What is the nature of the writing tasks teachers assign? To

what extent do the writing tasks reflect the principles of the CCSS writing policy? The

categories and codes for characterizing teachers' assigned tasks were developed a priori from

existing research and frameworks (e.g., Doyle, 1983; Doyle & Carter, 1984; Nespor, 1987)

related to analyzing academic tasks and writing tasks in particular. For example, in line with

Doyle's (1983) three-dimension conception of tasks, the *cognitive process* involved, the

resources or conditions for completing the task, and the *task product* were considered.

Specifically reflected in the coding were the key shifts signaled by the CCSS writing policy,

including the use of multiple texts, nonfiction text, and textual evidence in students' responses.

Altogether, the *cognitive process* was operationalized as the cognitive demand of the task – as

assessed with the Instructional Quality Assessment (IQA) tool (Matsumura et al., 2002a; 2002b; 2006; 2008a), – the text-based cognitive process students were asked to undertake, which drew upon Shanahan (2015)'s identification of the specific types of writing-about-text activities that the CCSS endorses – as well as the focal text element of the task. The *task resources or conditions* were operationalized as the number, genre, and complexity of the text(s) upon which the task is based (assessed with the Text complexity: Qualitative measures rubric; CCSSO, 2013). Finally, the *task product* codes characterized the genre of writing required, the response format, and the extent of text use required (see Appendix M for complete codes). I summarized each teacher's collection of tasks according to the coded features, (see Appendices M & N).

3.4.4.3 Trustworthiness. To establish trustworthiness of the qualitative analysis, several steps were taken. First, with respect to the coding of the interviews, the first researcher generated a codebook consisting of codes and definitions (Appendices H, J, K) and used it to train a second coder. The second researcher reviewed the codebook as necessary as she independently coded all three interviews for three randomly selected teachers (50%), using NVivo 10 (QSR International, 2012). Both parties kept analytic memos (Miles & Huberman, 1994) detailing issues related to code definitions, difficult coding decisions, significant instances, negative examples, and summative impressions of the teachers on each construct of interest: teachers' understanding of the CCSS related to writing, messages they perceived in the local environment, their response to district messages, and their ultimate interpretation of what the CCSS means for their writing tasks. Following the independent coding, the two coders met to discuss the analysis, guided by the substance of the analytic memos. The coders discussed each of the teachers in turn, as well as actively comparing and contrasting among them to note trends and patterns. The process resulted

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in refinement of codes as necessary and resolution of disagreements, as in utterances coded to different nodes. Importantly, the top-level descriptors for the teachers were discussed until a consensus was reached. That is, the coders agreed on the aspects of the CCSS writing policy that each teacher grasped or did not fully understand; the messages they perceived from the district intended to guide their writing instruction; the response they had to the district prescriptions (i.e., reject, assimilate); and the interpretation of CCSS they reached.

Similar procedures were followed for ensuring the trustworthiness of the analyses of teachers' assigned tasks. Of the 44 tasks (and accompanying graded student work) that teachers submitted, 24 (55%) were double-coded. Specifically, this included four tasks per teacher. The tasks were double-coded for subjectively defined features, meaning cognitive demand, text complexity, and extent of text use. (Features such as the number and genre of texts a task was based on, and the mode of writing were not double-coded since these were objectively defined.) The second rater was given a codebook with the definitions and decision rules, and was trained to apply the codes. Subsequently, the second rater independently coded the subset of tasks. As part of the process, the rater was required to provide annotations of the ratings she assigned. Thereafter, the principal coder and the second coder met to compare their coding. An overall inter-rater reliability of 81% exact agreement was achieved (83% for text complexity; 79% for cognitive demand and text use). The researchers discussed their ratings to resolve discrepancies. This entailed reviewing annotations of rating decisions, sharpening definitions, and constant comparisons among the corpus of tasks. Throughout the process, disconfirming evidence and alternative interpretations of the same evidence were examined. Analysis memos captured researcher reflections as well as formed an audit trail.

More generally, throughout the study, I took steps to ensure the trustworthiness of the data and of the findings. For example, during the interview, I engaged in iterative questioning (Shenton, 2004) to elicit teachers' understanding and interpretation of policy. That is, in one interview and also across interviews, I posed different questions meant to elicit the same data to help confirm that teachers' responses converged and were consistent. Moreover, as mentioned above, I triangulated interview data with the results of the task sorts. Also, I brought back teachers' ratings of the tasks as well as the assigned tasks they submitted, and allowed them to review and comment on these, which approximates the process of member checking (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Shenton, 2004). In fact, these artifacts anchored the interviews. With respect to data analysis, I engaged in frequent debriefing sessions with other researchers and subjected the study to peer scrutiny (Shenton, 2004). Through both of these mechanisms, I discussed alternate approaches to addressing the research questions, and was open to challenges to the assumptions and biases that might underlie my analysis.

3.5   RESULTS

Consistently, teachers recognized that the CCSS signaled a shift to text-based writing, particularly based on nonfiction texts and complex texts. Moreover, they accurately understood that the CCSS valued having students respond to multiple texts. Teachers clearly perceived opinion writing (and to a lesser extent, informative, and narrative writing) as the main mode of writing students should master, but they tended to envision paragraph-length written products rather than extended pieces wherein students fully developed their ideas. Most emphatic of all, teachers grasped the imperative for students to provide text evidence in their responses.

Teachers' perception of the content and cognitive work of the writing signaled in the CCSS was more varied. For example, while teachers indicated that that the CCSS required "critical thinking" or "high-level thinking," this was rarely operationalized, except as something more than writing a summary. Only one teacher alluded to the core CCSS idea of close reading to understand the author's intent, or the meaning of the text (see Table 3.3).

The six teachers perceived several key messages from their local environment about curriculum and assessments related to writing that could influence their interpretation of what the CCSS meant for the writing opportunities they presented to students. Despite being in the same district, there was some variation in the messages teachers perceived. For example, whereas some teachers perceived that the Writing Workshop curriculum was implemented to satisfy the writing standards, another regarded the ELA curriculum as playing that role. Moreover, teachers perceived the district differently in terms of the emphasis on preparing students for various assessments (see Table 3.4). Teachers did not simply accept district messages or mediate their understanding of the writing policy through the lens of the district; rather, they responded to the district messages actively, through a process that often involved negotiating the district prescriptions with their own constructed knowledge of the CCSS policy. In fact, in this particular district, teachers were inclined to perceive the district's idea of addressing writing through parallel curricula (i.e., English Language Arts and Writing Workshop) as contradicting their understanding of the CCSS. They tended therefore not to adopt the district message and teach the two curricula strictly as intended (see Table 3.4). Influenced by this sensemaking process, teachers' overall interpretation of what the CCSS means for their assigned tasks are somewhat varied. In general, the perceived incompatibility of the parallel curricula and the perceived incongruence of the Writing Workshop approach led teachers to favor the ELA version of

writing, which is text-based, but has the limited goal of assessing students' reading skills and comprehension rather than opportunities for text-based writing that allow for more cognitively demanding forms of engagement with the text.

The tasks teachers assigned to students that they deemed as supporting students to meet the goals of the CCSS tend to reflect teachers' interpretation of the CCSS (i.e., the outcome of the negotiation involving messages they perceive from the policy itself and messages they perceive from the district) (see Appendices N and O for teachers' assigned tasks). Collectively, the majority of the tasks were text-based; however, teachers tended to assign tasks that only required surface-level understanding about text. Students were typically called on to summarize text, and only rarely, do they engage in the cognitive activity of synthesizing ideas from multiple texts. Moreover, given teachers' interpretation that students should write to demonstrate comprehension, teachers tended to assign brief responses that are explanatory in nature. This also reflected their understanding that extended pieces, particularly opinion essays, were under the purview of Writing Workshop and not ELA. Finally, while teachers consistently assigned tasks requiring text support, they tended not to focus on the quality of the text evidence and students' reasoning. Frequently, as evidenced in the student work teachers accepted as having fulfilled task requirements, teachers attended to the surface features of the CCSS writing policy, rather than fully meeting its intent to engage students in deeper reading of texts and knowledge construction.

Below, I present the results in the form of case studies. For each teacher, I address the first research question, guided by the three analytic questions about the messages they perceived from the CCSS, their response to perceived district messages, and their overall interpretation of what the CCSS means for the writing opportunities they present to students. Then I address the second research question by characterizing the writing tasks teachers assigned.

Table 3.3 Teachers' Understanding of Writing Task Features that Support the CCSS

| | Cognitive Process | | Task Conditions / Resources | | | Task Product | |
Teacher	Cognitive Demand	Text Element	Number of Texts	Text Genre	Genre of Writing	Response Format	Use of Text
Helen	Critical thinking, NOT basic summary	Various, including theme, style, and organization; author's purpose	Emphasis on multiple texts	More nonfiction; Less fiction	Opinion, info./ explanatory; NOT prompt-free, creative, personal	Paragraph-length; NOT worksheet	"Evidence-based writing"
Rhonda	"High-level thinking"; NOT recall or basic summary	n/a	Emphasis on multiple texts	More nonfiction	Opinion, info/ explanatory, narrative; NOT prompt-free or personal	Extended essay; NOT graphic organizer, worksheet	Text evidence critical
Delia	"Think critically";	Language use (fic.) / text features (nonfic.); "analyze character change"	Emphasis on multiple texts	More nonfiction; Less fiction	Opinion especially; also analytic, info./ explanatory	Paragraph-length and extended responses	Text evidence critical
Marie	Close reading to understand author's intent ("author's point of view")	Narrative element and language (fic.) / factual details and text features (nonfic.)	"Complex and rich texts"; Emphasis on multiple texts	More nonfiction; Less fiction	Analytic, info./ explanatory, opinion	Paragraph-length or longer; responses NOT close-ended or short response	Text evidence critical
Sarah	Deeper thinking; "making inferences"	Language use (fic.) / text features (nonfic.)	"Complex texts"; Emphasis on multiple texts	More nonfiction; Less fiction	Info./explanatory (nonfic.),"continue a story after it ends (fic.); NOT prompt-free, text-free, creative	Paragraph-length or longer responses	Text evidence critical
Corrine	"Critically thinking", summarize; "centered on social issue"	n/a	Text complexity; Emphasis on multiple texts	More nonfiction; Less fiction	Summary, opinion; NOT open-ended, personal	n/a	Text-based; "joining reading and writing"

Table 3.4 Summary of Perceived District Messages & Teachers' Response, and Teachers' Overall Interpretation of What CCSS Means for

Their Assigned Writing Tasks

	About Parallel Curricula (ELA& Writing Workshop)			About How to Address Writing Standards			About Assessments		
	Perceived District Message	Perceived Message about CCSS	Response to District Message	Perceived District Message	Perceived Message about CCSS	Response to District Message	Perceived District Message	Perceived Message about CCSS	Response to District Message
Helen	ELA addressed writing about text. WW addressed "freestyle" writing, with goal to motivate students	*Contradict* district message; students write in various genres about text (i.e., integrated skills and content)	Responded *symbolically* to message about WW, Did not believe WW helped achieve standards	Text-based writing in ELA (to assess reading skills), and not WW, directly addressed the standards.	*Complement* district message; "evidence - based writing," not creative or personal writing	*Assimilated* message, but inclined to assign wider range of tasks and genres to meet student interest	Important to teach to benchmark tests (short summaries) and PARCC assessment (more complex tasks).	*Contradict* district message about benchmarks; *Complement* message about PARCC (critical thinking tasks)	Created *parallel structures*. Assigned benchmark-type tasks and "complex questions" aligned with PARCC

Overall interpretation of what CCSS means for assigned writing tasks: Inclined to assign paragraph-length text-based writing tasks that require higher-level cognitive engagement in a variety of genres.
Overall implication for implementation of CCSS: Interpretation reflected intent of standards to *large extent*. Grasped basic features of writing (e.g., text-based, three main genres) and appeared to attend to cognitive demand of tasks, but also inclined to assign range of tasks not emphasized in CCSS.

	About Parallel Curricula (ELA& Writing Workshop)			About How to Address Writing Standards			About Assessments		
Rhonda	ELA address-ed writing about text. WW focused on generating own topic, freewriting; use of prompt discouraged	*Contradict* district message; Understood focus on multiple sources and use of text evidence	Shifted from *accommodating* both, to *rejecting* WW because it was not benefitting students and not aligned with CCSS	Mandate to teach writing using WW. Writing was not important in ELA, with focus on reading comp skills	*Contradict* district message; "High-level thinking" about multiple texts in extended essays	Shifted from *accommodating* to *assimilating,* by incorporating genres into text-based tasks, to *rejecting* WW altogether	Through adherence to curricula (ELA & WW), students will be prepared for PARCC.	*Contradict* district message; Emphasis on text-based writing based on nonfiction texts	Shifted from *accommodating* message to *assimilateing* it into understanding of PARCC as addressing text-based writing

Overall interpretation of what CCSS means for assigned writing tasks: Inclined to assign brief writing tasks, meant to assess reading comprehension, that are based on more than one text or idea, and requiring text support.
Overall implication for implementation of CCSS: Interpretation reflected intent of standards at a *surface level*. Grasped basic features (e.g., multiple texts, required text evidence), but missed importance of underlying cognitive process or content of students' thinking.

Table 3.4 (continued)

	About Parallel Curricula (ELA& Writing Workshop)			About How to Address Writing Standards			About Assessments		
	Perceived District Message	Perceived Message about CCSS	Response to District Message	Perceived District Message	Perceived Message about CCSS	Response to District Message	Perceived District Message	Perceived Message about CCSS	Response to District Message
Delia	ELA writing is answering prompts based on text. WW is freewriting	*Contradict* district message; Understood use of text evidence as critical	Perceived messages as conflicting; district should pick one; meanwhile, *assimilated* WW	Writing standards addressed via both curricula in different ways.	*Contradict* district message; CCSS endorses addressing form and content together	*Assimilated* WW by transforming tasks into text-based.	Important to teach to benchmarks (summary). Adherence to curricula will prepare students for PARCC	*Complement* district message; Cognitively demanding tasks include summary and writing about multiple texts	*Accommodated* bench-marks by prioritizing summary. Believe prac-tice already supported PARCC

Overall interpretation of what CCSS means for assigned writing tasks: Inclined to assign text-based writing tasks, including opinion writing in particular, in disciplinary subjects and even WW.
Overall implication for implementation of CCSS: Interpretation reflected intent of standards at a *surface level*. Grasped basic features (e.g., multiple texts, required text evidence), but missed importance of underlying cognitive process or content of students' thinking. Viewed text evidence as end unto itself and inaccurately thought some of her existing practice already reflected intent of standards.

Marie	ELA writing is answering text-based prompts, focused on skills. WW is focused on genres and building excitement to write	*Complement* district message; ELA addressed reading response standards, WW for writing standards	As ELA teacher, responsible for reading responses, not writing; *accommoda-ted* message, believing both curricula should exist	Writing standards addressed via both curricula in different ways.	*Contradict* district message; Emphasis on text-based writing	*Assimilated* message. Made ELA writing more "open," creative, and personal (more WW-like)	Important to teach to assessments	*Contradict* district message; teach to standards rather than assessments	*Rejected* message; believed teaching daily objectives prepares for assessments; practice already supported assessments

Overall interpretation of what CCSS means for assigned writing tasks: Despite recognizing the CCSS as emphasizing text-based writing, Marie sought to assign more open, personal-type prompts. She favored tasks that allowed students some opportunity to be creative, while demonstrating understanding of the text.
Overall implication for implementation of CCSS: Interpretation reflected intent of standards to a *small* extent because she preferred offering writing tasks that were not heavily text-based. She believed her existing practice already reflected high-level task, when it only did so at a surface level.

Table 3.4 (continued)

	About Parallel Curricula (ELA& Writing Workshop)			About How to Address Writing Standards			About Assessments		
	Perceived District Message	Perceived Message about CCSS	Response to District Message	Perceived District Message	Perceived Message about CCSS	Response to District Message	Perceived District Message	Perceived Message about CCSS	Response to District Message
Sarah	ELA addressed reading to text, while WW favored creative, "free-range" writing	*Contradict* district message; CCSS very text-based; prompt-free, creative writing irrelevant	Questioned compatibility of parallel curricula (with CCSS), but *accommodated* message out of compliance	Writing standards addressed via both curricula in different ways	*Contradict* district message; CCSS focuses on reading and responding to text	*Assimilated* message; sought to transform WW tasks to better support ELA/ disciplinary writing	Important to teach to PARCC assessment (text-based narrative extension, etc.)	*Complement* district message; Write in 3 genres; engage students in deeper thinking in writing	*Assimilated* teaching to assessment, with focus on cognitive process

Overall interpretation of what CCSS means for assigned writing tasks: Inclined to assign text-based writing tasks that encourage students to apply deeper thinking in writing and to explain their ideas and use of text evidence.

Overall implication for implementation of CCSS: Interpretation reflected intent of standards to *significant extent*. Beyond grasping basic features (e.g., text-based, required use of evidence), Sarah appeared to attend consciously to the cognitive process for completing tasks.

	About Parallel Curricula (ELA& Writing Workshop)			About How to Address Writing Standards			About Assessments		
Corrine	Reading is main focus; writing second. WW supports ELA in meeting the CCSS emphasis on connecting reading and writing	*Complement* district message; Emphasis on connecting reading and writing	Questioned compatibility of parallel approaches, but largely *accommodated* both programs, with slight resequencing of objectives	Writing standards addressed via both curricula in different ways	*Contradict* district message; Understood CCSS writing as text-based, not open-ended and personal	*Assimilated* message; preferred supported opinion and narrative writing; inclined to differentiate based on student needs	"Extremely important" to teach to benchmark (summary) and PARCC assessments (text comp., opinion writing)	*Complement* district message; summary, opinion important, but teach to standards rather than assessments	*Accommodated* teaching to benchmarks assessments

Overall interpretation of what CCSS means for assigned writing tasks: Inclined to assign tasks based on complex texts and especially tasks that align with assessments.

Overall implication for implementation of CCSS: Interpretation reflected intent of standards to a *large extent*. Grasped multiple key features beyond surface ones (e.g., integration of reading and writing, qualitative text complexity). Tended to focus, however, on surface-level features, especially genres of writing, use of text evidence, and also on test preparation.

3.5.1 Helen – Focus on evidence-based writing, minimize text-free writing

Helen is a Caucasian female with a Bachelor's degree and regular teaching certification. She was in her 21st year of teaching. She taught fourth-grade English Language Arts, Writing Workshop, and Social Studies at School 1 to her class of 20 students.

3.5.1.1 Negotiating interpretation of CCSS writing policy. Helen believed she had a "strong" understanding of the CCSS, both generally, and specifically respect to the writing-related standards. She thought the CCSS was endorsing that students read more texts, specifically nonfiction texts. She said, "Anything having to do with informational text or historical text, -- nonfiction – it's a big thing." Furthermore, she thought that the standards called on students to engage in more "evidence-based writing," as in expressing an opinion based on text, particularly multiple texts: "Making sure that [students] form an opinion and give reasons and support those reasons…Everything is evidence-based…It's going back and using evidence that you've read or applying what you've read to maybe something that's happened in your life." In contrast, prompt-free writing or writing on a topic of students' choice "would be something that I just don't think would help them."

Helen understood the CCSS to be emphasizing paragraph-length responses, but not extended, multi-paragraph pieces of writing. Importantly, she dismissed worksheets with traditional selected response tasks; however, "if it's a multiple choice question asking perhaps what a word means, and then backing it up with what evidence from the text [students] found to help them," then she believed it might help students reach the goals of the standards. With respect to the genres of writing, she thought the CCSS favored just about all types (e.g., informative/explanatory writing, analytic writing, and supported opinion writing), excluding

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creative or personal writing. She further believed that various literary elements, including narrative elements, theme, and style and organization, were emphasized. Essentially, Helen understood that with respect to writing, the CCSS aimed to have students engage in "critical thinking – and understand the reasons why texts or articles are written…the author's purpose…It's just getting our kids to think…more critically and outside the box. It's not a simple 'yes or no' or 'Where does the story take place?' That's in the past."

Helen's understanding of the standards is based on familiarity with the primary source. She said, "Most of it is what I pulled up online or what I've looked up myself." In addition, the school required that "each time we write our lesson plan, we have to write the Common Core Standards that we're following…I need to put my student learning objective and [find] the letters and numbers [of the corresponding standards] with it. To a lesser extent, she indicated that the district curriculum, grade-level meetings, and the PARCC assessment informed her about the standards. She indicated, however, the PARCC assessment essentially confirmed her understanding that having students use text evidence to support their response was essential.

Helen perceived several key district messages pertaining to writing that played a role in her interpretation of what the CCSS meant for her instruction. First, she noted that the implementation of Writing Workshop redefined the teaching of writing. Previously, writing had been part of the standards taught in ELA, but with the new program, two types of writing were recognized. Writing about text focused on content and was addressed in ELA; meanwhile a more "freestyle" type of writing, was addressed in Writing Workshop, where the focus was on genre and structure, and motivating students to write. Helen struggled with this message about where and how writing is taught. She said, "When you talk to me about writing, I have to stop and think, '…Which writing? There's Writing Workshop, and then there's writing in response to

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text...' Writing is a touchy subject with me right now." Given her understanding that the CCSS endorsed "evidence-based writing," it was not surprising that Helen eventually confessed that she did not like the Writing Workshop program because she did not feel it helped students achieve the standards. She said, "I personally don't like [Writing Workshop]…It didn't coincide with anything else we were doing." In fact, once, her principal was visiting her Writing Workshop block while she was trying to get students to go back into a story to find evidence for the trait they saw in the characters, something that was not typically done in the program. Helen said, "I kind of do [Writing Workshop] a little bit, [but] have [students] do more text-based writing." In this respect, Helen could be seen as responding symbolically to the district's message about separating writing into two different "programs."

Second, Helen thought the district conveyed the message that the writing in ELA, and not Writing Workshop, directly addressed the standards. Specifically, the district viewed text-based tasks as less about writing development and more about reading response. Helen said, "[The principals] are not so much looking for writing tasks in the ELA block…They're looking more for how you're teaching the [reading comprehension] skills." To the extent that Helen understood the CCSS as prioritizing text-based writing, she agreed with the district's message; however, whereas the district endorsed a narrow view of text-based responses through the model curriculum, in keeping with her understanding of the CCSS as promoting various genres of writing, Helen was inclined to assign a wider range of tasks. In addition, her interpretation of tasks to assign took into serious consideration her students. Capturing student interest was particularly important because Helen had struggling students. She said, "I'd like to do something that would pique their interest, like writing an ending to this story that really doesn't have an ending." Similarly, she had students write a day in the life of a character in a historical novel

they were reading. She believed this creative extension tasks helped students connect with the novel and comprehend it better: "My kids really got carried away [with] that…They were into the novel and into what was going on so I thought they did a really pretty decent job with that. They told me that they understood what was going on. So [that was] writing for understanding, for comprehension." On another occasion, she had students construct a brochure on the colonies. She acknowledged that the task was "nowhere in [the] curriculum, and [I] had to cover a lot of the Common Core Standards, but it was something fun." She had also asked students to write a letter to the editor about an article they read. This too, was not mandated: "I probably sway a little bit away from what is exactly expected [but] I try to do something that I think is going to be interesting and a learning tool for children." In summary, Helen said, "I find skills that I think that [students] should know and I find something interesting that they would want to write rather than forcing them to write about something that they have no interest in."

As characterized, Helen assimilated the district's message that the function of text-based writing was to check for students' reading comprehension; however she interpreted it in light of what she believed her students needed. She seemed conscious of doing so, and comfortable doing so. She said that she did not need to seek prior approval: "I'm pretty good to just do what I want… I mean I think I happen to do some good stuff, so I'm not too concerned about it." In fact, she revealed that she did not always put the standards in the first position; rather she sometimes designed tasks because she thought they were a "cool" way to have students demonstrate what they did and did not understand about a text. She was quite certain that a wide range of tasks satisfied the CCSS, except for the type of text-free writing addressed in Writing Workshop, and that in designing her tasks, she was inevitably going to hit some of the standards. She said, "We've written personal narratives. We've done opinion. We've done expository

because that's all part of the standards…Somewhere in there, there are standards that have been met…None of them are just sit down and write about what somebody did over the weekend" (i.e., non text-based writing).

Finally, according to Helen, the message to teach to the end-of-unit ELA benchmark tests and the standards-aligned PARCC assessment was strong in the district. She said that, "It's conveyed every time somebody walks through my room and wants to see how I'm teaching and what I'm teaching…Our life is based on it." For the most part, Helen adhered to the district's expectations. For example, prior to a benchmark test, she designed an assessment for her students with similar types of questions. At the same time, however, Helen questioned the coherence of the district's messages because she perceived a disconnect between the benchmark assessments and the PARCC assessment. She said that the writing component of the benchmark test was sometimes not helpful in preparing students for the PARCC because it typically required students to write only three to four sentence summaries: "[It] isn't requiring as much writing as…the PARCC would, or…I would." Given her understanding of the CCSS as promoting more critical and higher-level thinking, Helen felt the need to expose students more to challenging analytic tasks. For instance, Helen considered a task asking for a summary of a short story (i.e., identifying the main characters, setting, problem, solution) too simple. Furthermore, she said, "there was not enough meat" to another question asking students to describe and explain their favorite part of a novel; "It may be not enough critical thinking... We're looking at a lot more complex questions now." One task that she was particularly inclined to assign that aligned with the PARCC was requiring students to "form an opinion about a complex, debatable issue, give reasons and support those reasons [with] a lot of evidence." Helen believed that "there's a lot of rigor that goes into [such a task]." To this end, Helen created parallel structures in responding to

the district's conflicting guidance that teachers assign response-to-test tasks that prepare students for both the benchmark assessments and the PARCC assessment.

Given her understanding of the CCSS as privileging paragraph-length text-based writing, her concern with engaging students over designing tasks with the standards in the foreground, and her focus on preparing students for the PARCC assessment, the writing tasks Helen was inclined to assign to help students meet the standards reflected the intent of the standards to a partial extent. Specifically, she accurately grasped several of the key concrete features of writing promoted through the CCSS, such as the genres students should learn to write in (i.e., opinion, expository, narrative) and the text-based nature of the assignments. Most importantly, she appeared to attend to the critical thinking aspect of the prompts in remarking that recall questions and summary writing were insufficiently challenging.

3.5.1.2 Assigned writing tasks. Helen's assigned tasks (Appendix N) appeared to reflect her understanding of the main emphases within the CCSS, her response to district messages about how to address the standards for writing, and her consideration of student interest. That is, aside from a task that was a typical writing-to-model Writing Workshop task (#1), Helen provided students opportunities to engage with a range of fiction- and nonfiction-based writing assignments that required students to demonstrate analytic thinking about text and reference text while writing in particular genres emphasized in the CCSS. For example, she asked students to apply known information about the historical events, conflicts, setting, and characters from a novel, as well as researched information from multiple other sources, including a video, to write an extended narrative about the life of an imagined character. The task required students to have deep understanding of the texts and a strong grasp of how to integrate text information into one's own thinking. As such, it aligned strongly with the intent of the standards and is a fine example

of a task that required a narrative product, but was not defined by the superficial feature that is the genre of writing. Likewise, Helen assigned students to write a full-length opinion essay on whether there should be zoos (#6), after having students read several pieces representing different perspectives. As shown through student work that the teacher accepted as high quality, the task provided evidence of Helen's intent to integrate content and writing skills. Students demonstrated consideration of text ideas, ability to marshal appropriate evidence, as well as command of the genre. At the same time, the student work also showed Helen's inclination to equate provision of evidence with high-quality writing, ignoring the importance of students making their thinking visible. In fact, she said, "Evidence is the most important thing" in her assessment scheme. In their work, students consistently provided reasons and evidence against zoos, but did not explicitly link the evidence to their reason with a clear explanation. For example, one representative paragraph reads, "I think there shouldn't be zoos because the animals are used for entertaining people. For example, the dolphins have to jump through hoops and they are shocked, beat, and not fed until they get it right."

In other respects, Helen's tasks reflected her interpretation of how to address the CCSS for writing. Helen had indicated that it was important to frame tasks to take into account student engagement. Indeed, instead of requiring a basic summary of an article to assess students' understanding, she had students write a persuasive letter as a historical figure (#2) recapitulating the key points. The more authentic activity of letter writing reportedly motivated students. As described above, having students create a narrative reflecting their understanding of a novel also engaged students differently than asking for an analytic essay.

Finally, Helen's tasks also reflected her intention to align with the district imperative to teach to important assessments. For example, the opinion essay on zoos cohered with her

understanding that the PARCC assessment required students to form an opinion about a complex, debatable issue and provide text support for their view. In addition, she also created two tasks to expressly prepare students for the unit benchmark assessment (#4 and #8). Notably, these were two straightforward summaries that were more basic in required cognitive process than other tasks. Altogether, the tasks represented her parallel-structured response to district messages. That is, she had recognized that while the standards and the PARCC assessment aimed to engage students in more demanding cognitive processes than summarizing; she understood that the district benchmarks tests prioritized summary writing, and she intended to teach to both.

3.5.2   Rhonda: Text-based writing as monitoring reading comprehension

Rhonda is an African-American female with a Bachelor's degree and regular teaching certification. She had three years of teaching experience. She taught fifth-grade English Language Arts, Writing Workshop, and Social Studies to a class of 18 students at School 1.

3.5.2.1 Negotiating interpretation of CCSS writing policy. Rhonda claimed to be "very familiar" with the CCSS. She acknowledged narrative, informative, and opinion writing as the main types of writing to emphasize. Furthermore, she understood the CCSS as emphasizing the use of text-based evidence. Specifically, she believed that the CCSS called on students to use multiple sources to support their thinking and writing: "[If students are] writing…persuasive essays, they will need to be able to use different resources for what their opinion is. If they're writing informational text they need to be able to do some research and support their ideas." In contrast to these tasks that require "high-level thinking," Rhonda did not believe that the CCSS called for tasks requiring students to complete graphic organizers or worksheets focusing on

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recall of information, or write a basic summary of only one text. Also, she understood prompt-free or personal writing as out-of-place in the CCSS reform, saying, "[Students are] definitely given prompts. It's not like they can just write what they want to write."

Rhonda indicated that her understanding of the CCSS writing policy was based primarily on her own research, and somewhat on the curriculum they were given, which she assumed was aligned to the CCSS. She did not identify colleagues or literacy coaches or other professional development as having helped her understand the thrust of the standards. She said, "We don't have PD on [the standards]. Kind of like you're expected to know." Finally, this being the first year the state administered the standards-aligned PARCC assessment, Rhonda admitted that the assessment did not play a role in her understanding of the CCSS. Her minimal understanding of the assessment cohered around the idea that text-based writing, specifically analyzing or comparing several different texts or videos, was important.

Rhonda indicated that the only mandate she had from the district with respect to writing was "to teach using the Writers Workshop approach." During the Workshop block, the emphasis was on having students write independently and following the writing process. Teachers may expose students to mentor texts, but the resulting writing is not text-based. Moreover, while students must learn the three types of writing specified in the CCSS writing standards – narrative, opinion, and informative writing – students may choose their own topic to write about. In fact, the district discouraged the use of restricted writing prompts with Writers Workshop. Rhonda said, "My district has mentioned we're trying to shy away from giving writings tasks and focus more so on – I don't want to say letting them free write, but letting them generate their own ideas and their own topics, as opposed to making them focus on a specific topic." So if students were writing an informative piece, for example, it would be "just based on their ideas, what they

want to write about, what they found interesting," not on a text. The Writing Workshop imperative was reinforced with materials and professional development. According to Rhonda, teachers were required to use the curriculum units provided by the district: "You have to go step by step. They give you an outline for each session." In addition, teachers received "a full day workshop on how we should incorporate writing in our 45-minute [Writing Workshop] separate block."

In contrast, Rhonda perceived the district as conveying the message that writing was not important in the context of the ELA period. Rhonda noted that it was up to the teacher to carve out time for writing: "As far as the 90-minute [ELA] block, [writing] doesn't play a big role unless I enforce it and I try to enforce it…through the teacher-created materials." Indeed, teachers were responsible for designing the type of text-based writing tasks in the ELA period. To this end, the priority was on teaching reading comprehension skills, such as comparing and contrasting characters. That is, students would not necessarily have to write an essay; rather, the focus would be "getting them to understand the skill of comparing and contrasting a character trait [for example]…The most writing we do…would be focusing on [providing] evidence to support answers."

Rhonda's response to the separation of teaching writing in a block separate from ELA became increasingly negative over the year as she underwent a process of negotiating the prescriptions with her understanding of the CCSS. To begin, she accommodated the district's message and dutifully waited on the district to tell her how to teach particular units. She recognized that the district "[told] us which standards we need to cover, and basically if you're caught teaching anything different than what they want, then it wouldn't be good for you." Later in the year, Rhonda started to question the district's guidance. She identified the district's

restrictions about the types of writing to address in the Writing Workshop versus the ELA block as a factor that hindered her from helping her students reach the goals of the CCSS. She said, "The district policies…that's all constricted…It does make it a little bit challenging to produce the type of writing samples that would be considered good." For example, she wanted to able to have students write an extended essay to a complex prompt about texts they read in ELA, which aligned with her understanding of the CCSS as endorsing "high-level thinking" about multiple texts in the form of extended essays; however, she did not feel she was able to assign such a task "because of the requirements…coming from the district." Despite these thoughts, Rhonda appeared to rationalize accepting the district's way by saying, "If I focus on a lot of writing tasks for my 90-minute block I'm never gonna get to the skills." She did, however, take steps toward mediating district prescriptions with her beliefs about how to teach to the standards and what students need. She did this by "figuring out a way to incorporate" the types of writing she was directed to teach in Writing Workshop (e.g., extended opinion writing) into her ELA period, where they could be addressed in the context of readings. In this sense, Rhonda assimilated the district's message about how to teach to the standards. Finally, near the end of the year, she took a harder stance and actively rejected the district's message regarding the importance of Writing Workshop. She admitted, "I think the Writing Workshop is a waste of time… I've actually stopped using Writing Workshop because I felt like it wasn't benefiting my kids."

Rhonda's increasing familiarity with the PARCC assessment due to district pressure to prepare students for the standards-aligned test likely led to her rejection of the district messages about the teaching of writing and shaped her ultimate interpretation of what the CCSS meant for her instruction. Toward the beginning of the year, when she had minimal information and professional development on the assessment, Rhonda championed Writing Workshop, saying, "I

think Writing Workshop is working really well. I see some improvement [in] their writing when they have the opportunity to write freely." Moreover, she believed that the message the district was sending was that, "through your daily teaching, if you follow these standards and curriculum, then your kids should be ready for the PARCC." Later, after a district-wide professional development session on the PARCC assessment, she came to understand the test as more aligned with 'skills' (taught in ELA) than 'writing components,' (the focus of Writing Workshop), which cohered with her understanding of the CCSS as emphasizing text-based writing. Accordingly, she filtered her decisions about the tasks to assign to students through the assessment, and these tasks were far from the text-free, prompt-free tasks from Writing Workshop. In fact, if she had "more of an opportunity to do [her] own thing during the Writing Workshop,…it would definitely be geared toward preparing…a little bit more for the PARCC test as opposed to just having [students] think of a topic on their own to write." Clearly for Rhonda, the two dominant district messages related to writing instruction – adhering to the Writing Workshop approach and preparing students for the standards-aligned assessment – were incompatible. She responded by rejecting the former and accommodating the latter.

Rhonda's understanding of the CCSS as emphasizing nonfiction texts and the use of text-based evidence in student writing corresponded with her understanding of the PARCC assessment and what the district wanted teachers to focus on. That is, Rhonda rated a task as more preferable "if it requires students to use textual evidence, because textual evidence was a big one on the PARCC. Anything dealing with informative [text, too]." She articulated that her focus was "asking students questions that would require them to use textual-based evidence to support their thinking and to justify their thinking." She aimed to assign "open-ended questions where there's no clear right or wrong answer…The kids can state their opinion, and the only way

that they're wrong [is] that they don't use textual-based evidence." In addition, Rhonda understood that the CCSS emphasized having students examine two or more texts or ideas. Given what she had seen on the PARCC practice assessments, she decided that this meant assigning tasks that "required students to look at two or more things." Specifically, she wanted students "to be able to use two different pieces of information and figure out some similarities or differences, or answer a question using multiple resources as opposed to just one." She noted one of the sample analytic essay tasks as being ideal, "because of the fact that [students] had to find two different resources and then write an essay on both. That would lead to the PARCC." She also preferred a task requiring students to "read two articles and watch a video…and write a response using evidence from the text [because that]…was exactly what they had to do…on the PARCC practice test."

Rhonda largely disregarded the district message about writing instruction with the Writing Workshop approach because it did not cohere with her understanding of the CCSS. Meanwhile, she accepted the district prescription to teach to the writing component of the PARCC assessment because it corresponded to her understanding of the CCSS as endorsing writing based primarily on multiple nonfiction texts. Given this, Rhonda's interpretation of the writing tasks to assign to help students meet the goals of the CCSS reflected the intent of the standards somewhat accurately, but on a surface level. That is, drawing upon the limited PD provided by the district on the assessment, Rhonda seemed to believe that the essence of CCSS-aligned tasks was simply that they dealt with more than one text or idea and that they required text support. She summarized the lone PD session on the assessment, saying, "They told us for fifth grade, most of the questions…asked [students] to compare two texts with a video, or two different texts…" The underlying cognitive process that was required or the content of the

student's thinking about the prompt or texts did not seem to be important considerations for the writing opportunities Rhonda presented to her students. For example, she thought a straightforward summary task requiring a paragraph of writing would be aligned with the intent of the standards if students were asked to "identify more than one…main idea" in the text. She explained, "In this instance, they're only identifying one main idea, but on the PARCC, they have to identify more than one." In this and the previous examples, Rhonda did not speak of the cognitive rigor involved in weighing ideas from multiple texts or how such a process might lead to deeper understanding of the issue at hand. The division between Writing Workshop and ELA in the district likely contributed to this surface-level interpretation. That is, according to the district, the writing in ELA, which Rhonda ultimately deemed more aligned with the PARCC assessment (and therefore the CCSS), was supposed to focus on reading comprehension skills (i.e., performing compare and contrast, being able to make a connection, providing evidence) rather than the substance of student's thinking. Moreover, in ELA (as opposed to Writing Workshop), the expected type of writing was brief responses instead of extended pieces requiring elaboration of reasoning.

3.5.2.2 Assigned writing tasks. The tasks Rhonda assigned were clearly focused on developing and assessing students' reading comprehension and skills in the context of ELA (Appendix N). That is, the focus of the tasks reflected the skills emphasized in the ELA curriculum, including summarizing, and comparing and contrasting characters, and identifying theme. The tasks had potential to be aligned with the intent of the standards insofar as most of them were based on full-length novels (i.e., complex texts) that could support deep thinking, most of the prompts themselves required a level of inference or analysis and required some use of text. For instance,

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students had to identify a possible theme for a chapter from a novel, use provide supporting evidence, and justify how the evidence supports the theme (#5).

The constrained nature of the required responses, however, rendered the tasks unsuitable for meeting the goals of the standards. That is, with the exception of one task (#3), all others required a constrained or brief response that allowed for extremely limited writing production. One task asking students to write a summary of a chapter of a novel in fact did not require students to generate a coherent piece of writing (#8). Instead, students completed a worksheet on which they identified the inciting incident, problem, and solution in isolation. Moreover, four of the eight tasks Rhonda submitted, including the theme task mentioned above, were in a graphic organizer format (#4-#7). Students typically completed the task by jotting no more than one sentence (sometimes just a phrase) in each space. With such brief responses, the task provided little insight into students' thinking. In fact, in line with her understanding that as long as students provided an answer along with text evidence, they could not be wrong, Rhonda accepted as high quality writing products that demonstrated little cognitive work.

Rhonda's interpretation of tasks that met the writing standards as necessarily brief and for the purpose of assessing students' reading comprehension reflected messages from the district and her response to them. Specifically, the parallel curricula of ELA and Writing Workshop led Rhonda to perceive a deep divide that should or could not be bridged between having students show their understanding of text and having students generate extended pieces in particular genres. As a result, her tasks served as comprehension checks and mechanical demonstrations of learning rather than opportunities to use writing as a vehicle to explore and deepen ideas about text and issues.

3.5.3   Delia: Transform Writing Workshop tasks into text-based tasks

Delia is a Caucasian female with a Bachelor's degree and regular teaching certification. She was a third-year teacher. She taught fourth-grade Writing Workshop, Social Studies, and Science at School 2 to a class of 17 students.

3.5.3.1 Negotiating interpretation of CCSS writing policy. Delia considered herself "familiar" with the overarching goal of the CCSS. She said, "I think what's happening now in Common Core is they want students to think critically. They want them to really understand why they're doing things. I think that they want them to be thinkers." She elaborated with an example: "I think that they want to see that the kids can read a story and analyze how did the character change, not just sit there and write down character traits…I think they're asking them to think deeper." In addition, Delia considered the CCSS to be encouraging students to read more lengthy nonfiction and less fiction texts. She understood paragraph and extended response tasks based on texts, especially multiple texts as important. Delia also thought the CCSS was endorsing analytic writing, informative/explanatory writing, and opinion pieces.

Most importantly, she understood that use of text evidence was particularly critical. She said, "When [students] are writing opinion pieces, [the CCSS] want them to be able to not only write an opinion but also give back up. Why do you feel that way? Where did you get this from? They want them to support. You have to have reasons. You can't just say, 'Well, this is how I feel.'… [Students] need to give concrete details." She even suggested that tasks including multiple-choice questions could be supportive of the goals of the CCSS if they required students to provide evidence in support of their selection.

Delia indicated that her understanding of the CCSS was substantially influenced by district workshops that explained how students were to approach writing tasks: "You want to have them really look at the text…and figure out…where are you going to get your answers from. And… it's no longer that you gotta write five paragraphs. You have to be able to answer the question…to be specific." The standards themselves, school-level curriculum, and PARCC-related resources, such as workbooks, also helped her grasp the new writing policy.

Like several other teachers, Delia perceived the district as relaying the message that the writing standards are addressed primarily via Writing Workshop, but also through ELA (and other literacy disciplines, such as social studies and science). She said, "What happens is [students] have a 90-minute ELA block, and then they have a separate block that you're supposed to teach Writing Workshop. So I think [the district is] addressing [the standards] in two different fashions, if you will,…two different ways." Delia believed the district was more invested in the Lucy Calkins' model because it subscribed to the Writing Workshop curriculum shortly after adopting the CCSS. Moreover, teachers received regular professional development on the approach. Conversely, teachers did not receive support for teaching writing within other subject blocks. Yet, teachers were also told that evidence-based writing, the focus of ELA, was extremely important. Delia recognized with great clarity the conflicting messages and its impact on her enacting instruction that met the standards. For example, when asked to articulate her learning goals for students with respect to writing, she replied:

> I don't know. It's difficult to explain because it depends on which model you're
> looking at. Because Lucy Calkins, that you have them free write. The Writing
> Workshop model… kind of goes a little bit up against where you're structured and
> teaching them to respond, summarize, and stuff like that. Yeah, it's kind of

conflicting. [Our district] kind of conflicts. I don't know how to explain it. They want [students] to use an evidence-based writing. They want them to be able to form an opinion and have something to back up, and then they have a Writing Workshop model. That's why I'm struggling to answer you because it's just such a − I don't even know how to explain it. It's just such different − teach them this way, but then when you're doing this, do that. It's a little crazy. I don't know why the district -- It's almost like having two different conflicting ways of doing things…. And then you've gotta, as a teacher, try and find some kind of middle ground… I think they have to pick one or the other model, which they want.

Delia did not, however, wait for the district to revise its message. Her understanding of the CCSS and her experience with Writing Workshop lead her to believe that the ELA-type of writing was more effective. She said, "I get the concept of the Writing Workshop model…I get the whole let's let them write and let's let them generate their ideas, but I personally believe you need to be a little bit more focused. I think the Lucy Calkins model for our students doesn't necessarily work…. I didn't see a huge change in their writing…." Delia ended up transforming the Workshop approach to allow her to focus on teaching students to write opinion pieces that depended on text evidence, something she gathered was important in the CCSS, but a departure from the design of the Writing Workshop program, which focused on a range of text-free writing. She said, "[Students] do very well with opinion writing if you give them an article. Maybe the article is about school lunches, and they have to refer back to the text why school lunches should be changed or how they feel about it." This assignment resembled more closely tasks that the district considered within the realm of ELA. Sometimes Delia intentionally sought to align Writing Workshop integrally with the reading and writing requirements in ELA, which

was beyond the mandate of the district. She explained, "I teach writing. [Students] read [*Charlotte's Web*] with the [ELA] teacher. And then when they came to me, I said to them, '…We're going to write an opinion piece…Would you want next year's students to read this book?...And you're going to tell me why or why not and give me evidence from the text.'"

In her role as a disciplinary literacy teacher, Delia was less conflicted. She accepted the district prescriptions to use writing primarily to support reading comprehension of social studies and science-related texts. This largely cohered with her understanding of the CCSS' emphasis on engaging students in nonfiction texts and requiring text evidence in students' writing. Delia again regarded her role as supporting the focal ELA skills. She said, "I tried to make sure that I'm reinforcing what the reading teacher is teaching." For example, in science class, she gave students an article about the human body. "They have to answer the question, and I ask them to show evidence, and then they have to write and explain what part of the body they felt was the most useful. They have to go back and get stuff from the text and say why they picked that."

As for local messages about assessment that potentially influenced Delia's interpretation of effective writing tasks aligned with the CCSS, Delia accepted the unit benchmark tests as an important measure to the district. Understanding that "all of these unit assessments,… they want the kids to summarize," she believed the summary was an effective and cognitively demanding culminating task. She frequently assigned students to summarize articles, reminding them to include "the main idea with three details, and the details need to be in....logical order." The district message about the PARCC assessment also appeared to influence Delia, by supporting her interpretation and implementation of the standards. According to Delia, teachers were told "to make sure that you hit the Common Core standards, and if you're hitting [them], and doing what [you] need to do in response to writing, the PARCC should just kind of work itself out."

Given this, Delia's felt rather confident in continuing with her preferred writing tasks. In fact, she felt her practice was already explicitly connected to components of the assessment. For example, she said, "Even before they came out with PARCC, I've always tried to make sure that the students know what the main idea is…and the details." Moreover, with respect to the task requiring students to synthesize ideas from multiple sources, including a video excerpt, she noted, "That's something I have [students] do. And I was doing that even before they stated that that video part was going to be on the PARCC."

In all, Delia's negotiation of the district message regarding Writing Workshop and general acceptance of other messages resulted in her privileging summary and opinion writing, which partially reflected the intent of the standards. First, her understanding of reading and writing as cross-disciplinary skills was accurate. Moreover, her commitment to reinforcing students' writing development in Writing Workshop, social studies, and science is commendable. Particularly notable is her ability to translate the opinion-writing imperative in the CCSS into the different subjects. Delia was also accurate in holding the use of text evidence in high regard, saying, "Whenever [students respond to] texts,…they have to make sure that they go back to the text and back it up with evidence. They can't just say that this is their response." Like Helen, however, Delia might have misinterpreted the criteria for providing text evidence as an end unto itself rather than regarding it as a means to engage students in complex thinking and writing about sources. That is, she too believed that multiple-choice questions could support students meet the standards, if students were required to provide text evidence. She said, "I'm not opposed to giving them multiple choice, by any means, but they have to give the evidence of why they chose the answer they chose. They just can't randomly choose an answer." Similarly, Delia's preference for straightforward summary writing might signal a missed opportunity to

engage students in more rigorous forms of writing that demand the generation, instead of recapitulation, of knowledge and ideas. Her belief that simply by offering video as a text source, she was aligning with the goals of a synthesis task reinforces this idea of surface-level implementation of the standards with focus on concrete features of tasks rather than underlying messages about the rigor of thinking.

3.5.3.2 Assigned writing tasks. Delia's tasks (Appendix N) reflected her acceptance of both Writing Workshop and disciplinary literacy as approaches to meet the CCSS writing standards. The Writing Workshop assignments showed her intent to assign tasks that required students to use text more than the program prescribed, in order to better support the ELA objectives. For example, her four fiction-based tasks #2, #4, #5, and #7) addressed reading standards related to comparing and contrasting characters, and considering how point of view influences how events are described. In addition, they supported students to learn the genres specified in the writing strand of the CCSS, particularly opinion and narrative writing. Given her role as a Writing Workshop teacher, however, the tasks still arguably encouraged more creativity and personal expression than adherence to text ideas. In other words, the text was used more as a model of genre than a source for close reading. For example, in rewriting a passage from an alternate point of view (Task #7), students were told to keep the gist of the storyline, but they could make up new events and characters. And for their essay (#4) on whether they would recommend *Charlotte's Web,* their reasons could have minimal connection to text content. For example, one student wrote that the novel was worth reading because "it shows words you never seen before. For instance,…I didn't know what salutations meant. But now that I read it, I know…"

Delia's science tasks ranged in the extent to which they were likely to help students meet the demands of the CCSS for writing. Two of the tasks squarely reflected the district prescription

to use writing primarily to support reading comprehension as well as the benchmark assessment's emphasis on summary (#1 and #3). That is, she had students demonstrate surface-level understanding of a single article through a straightforward summary. In contrast, her most cognitively rigorous task required students to read two articles, each on a different arctic animal, then synthesize the information in order to address how they are able to survive in the arctic (#6). This task, conceived and through completion, activated students' comparison and contrast skills, and text-use skills in writing an informative text. Students were able to identify and elaborate upon the features the two animals had in common (e.g., body structures and "behaviors they use to stay warm and protect themselves") and provide extensive evidence from each text (i.e., about five facts from each article). The task, however, could have supported students' engagement in the cognitive process more since, by and large, students wrote separate paragraphs on the two animals instead of comparing them integrally. As it was, Delia rewarded students largely for the amount of evidence they provided.

3.5.4   Marie: Creative extension tasks, and focus on point of view

Marie is a Caucasian female with a Bachelor's degree, regular teaching certification, and nine years of experience. She taught fifth-grade English Language Arts at School 2 to 23 students.

3.5.4.1 Negotiating interpretation of CCSS writing policy. Marie stated that she was "familiar" with the CCSS. In particular, she acknowledged the shift to more complex texts: "I get the gist behind the more complex and rich texts." Yet, she thought the CCSS was encouraging the use of shorter texts. She acknowledged that tasks based on nonfiction texts, particularly

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multiple texts, were important. In particular, students should be guided to examine different texts for commonalities and differences.

In talking about how writing is different in the CCSS compared with past standards, Marie noted the emphasis on text-based writing. She said that whereas in the past, after reading a poem, students might be asked to "write an essay about a time when you were afraid," nowadays, students would be asked to synthesize ideas from the poem, using references from the text. Specifically, Marie noted the emphasis on close reading of text to understand the author's intent. She referred to this as an emphasis on the author's "point of view." She said that in the past, students would have also been asked to write opinion essays, but "not so heavily based on understanding what the author or the article's point of view was. Now, there is an increased focus on what the students are basing their opinion on, "what they're rooted in, what the point [of the article] is." She elaborated on this point, saying:

> Before the kids would just have to read and understand, but now they are asked to read and analyze where the authors is coming from a lot more…They want students to delve into the text to understand the point of view that what they're reading is being written from and why it's important, whereas before, it might have touched on point of view, but it was…very surface, cursory… This is more in-depth. Do you understand why the author put this in here? Why do you think the authors wrote it this way?...That's the biggest difference I can see.

With respect to response format, Marie understood the CCSS to be guiding teachers away from close-ended, short-answer tasks and toward tasks requiring paragraph or longer responses. She thought that analytic, informative/explanatory, and supported opinion writing were called for in the CCSS, and that writing prompts should focus more on narrative elements or factual details,

and on language use or text features. For example, whereas in the past students might have copied notes about text features or been asked to read and respond to multiple choice questions, now they're being asked, "Why is the author using these features?" In summary, Marie said, "The recurring theme [of the CCSS] seems to be 'Why? Why? Or How?'...It's definitely looking more at [texts] from the eyes of the writer and getting to the real underlying meaning." Marie indicated via survey responses that her understanding of the CCSS for writing was substantially influenced by the primary source of the standards themselves, as well as the district curriculum and professional development around the standards.

From Marie's perspective, the district, by design, endorsed the parallel curricula of ELA and Writing Workshop because of signals within the standards themselves. She explained, "The Common Core standards for writing, if you look at them, they basically, say, 'Can you write a narrative with these elements? Can you write an informational text with them?'…The reading response standards are actually in the Integration of Knowledge and Ideas section of the reading standards, not in the writing standards." Given this message, Marie believed that she was responsible for only the standards related to reading and responding to literary and informational texts, but not the standards related to writing in particular genres. In essence, as an ELA teacher, she did not need to concern herself with "how [students] wrote so much as what they're writing." For example, she thought asking students to write an opinion essay on a social issue fell within the purview of Writing Workshop because it addressed the standard "Write opinion pieces on topics or texts" within the writing strand. She said, "That's not something I would grade on whether [students] understood the social issue in the text." Conversely, for tasks that require students to compare and contrast or identify problem-solution, they would not be evaluated "on a particular type of writing,…but on could they execute the skill." Marie did think the district

intended for Writing Workshop to support students' ability to write in response to text. She said, "The idea is to build the children's writing skills and their excitement about writing in the Workshop, because it's more of a creative aspect of writing. And the district is trying to connect the skill-building and the excitement with the reading curriculum so that, when…you put the two together, you come up with a much more…skilled response."

Like the other teachers profiled so far, Marie felt conflicted about how to address writing in the context of the CCSS given the split focus; however, in direct contrast to the others, Marie did not question the usefulness of prompt-free writing and seek to distance herself from it. Rather, she wished for more latitude to engage students in open and personal responses that were loosely text-based, that allowed for more "creative expression." For example, she wanted to be able to say to students after reading a passage, "What do you wanna write today? Do you wanna write a poem? Do you wanna write a response to what you thought one of the characters was feeling?" She wanted to be able to provide "an opportunity for the kids to take what's in their heads and get it out onto paper," rather than having students respond to specific prompts. In line with this, she also said that the best writing was writing that connected on a personal level: "I know that in the past, curriculum was big on connections. That role has lessened, but when I allow [my students] to just respond to something, a lot of times, they put in their own connections whether they're required to or not, and that's exciting to me because if you can read something and make a personal connection to it, at least I know that it meant something to you." Ultimately, Marie would "would love to see" the writing standards addressed in combination with the reading response standards, but she felt that the district curricula limited her ability to interpret the standards in that way.

Within the parameters of the curriculum then, Marie favored tasks that allowed students some opportunity to be creative, while demonstrating understanding of the text. She showed particular preference for the narrative extension task because through students' imaginative continuation of a story, using the same characters and traits, she could assess whether students understood the big idea of the text as well as the narrative techniques and elements the author used. She said, "To me, that encompasses every skill that they need to be able to do because if they don't understand the intent of the author, they're not going to be able to do that task." Likewise, she thought a task asking students to retell events from an alternate point of view was especially rigorous because it "forces [students] not only to analyze how the main character is seeing the events…they need to integrate the skill of 'compare and contrast.' Then, they need to integrate the skill of alternate point of view..."

Finally, while Marie recognized the importance of assessments in the district, she did not seem to place it in the first position. Rather, she prioritized the curriculum that her daily teaching is based on and believed that in addressing her daily objectives, students would acquire the skills necessary for success, more broadly defined. She said:

> I try to look at everything based on what I want [students] to have when they walk out at the end of the day…I would hope that what we are doing in the class would negate the need for test prep. If what I'm doing…on a daily basis, following the Common Core…is helping the students to truly understand what they are reading, then I don't have to worry about the PARCC test…it's not a separate thing."

Like Delia, Marie drew links between what she currently did with students and tasks that she believed would appear on the PARCC assessment. In doing so, like Delia, Marie revealed an attention to superficial traits of tasks. For example, she equated the synthesis task as something

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she already did because "We are always reading two things at one time." She further noted that her students liked "the different format, the way the information is presented," referring to the inclusion of texts in the form of an audio or video excerpt. Her remarks left out the cognitive work essential to the task, which was arguably more important than the number or format of the texts involved. In fact, the task as she characterized it, requiring students to "pull out the important information" seemed to demand little more than summarizing.

3.5.4.2 Assigned writing tasks. The tasks Marie assigned to support students to meet the standards reflected her response to the perceived district messages and her expressed preferences. Specifically, all four of the tasks she submitted were based on a work of fiction and focused on narrative elements, particularly point of view (Appendix N). Two tasks (#2 & #3) required students to retell a passage from another character's point of view. In this way, students engaged in extended narrative and imaginative writing. The two other tasks required students to compare characters' points of view (#1) and explain what a character might do, given what the students had learned about him or her (#4). To the extent that the tasks were text-based and built on students' narrative and explanatory skills, they appeared to reflect key shifts from the CCSS. On the other hand, Marie's tasks did not reflect her understanding that the CCSS encouraged students to make use of multiple texts, nor did they capture the importance of opinion writing.

Beyond surface features, Marie's assigned writing tasks were not quite aligned with her expressed intent and the intent of the CCSS. That is, while she regarded narrative extension tasks or "alternate point of view" rewrites as high-level because they integrated several cognitive skills, in practice, she accepted as a high-level a piece of student work that merely retold every occurrence in the text mechanically and in sequence, without engaging meaningfully with the shift in perspective. The student did not, for example, reveal the character's inner thoughts,

feelings, beliefs, or motivations or to change the sequence or details of the events. In fact, one student that did alter the telling of the story received the following comment: "You were not supposed to change the <u>events</u>, only the <u>point of view</u> from which the events are told." In all, the analytic aspect of this narrative extension task – analysis of the characters, of the author's message – was not reinforced. So, despite the potential of the task, based on what Marie accepted as quality work, it addressed merely a surface-level understanding of the text and of the concept of point of view. At most, the task engaged students in the exercise of retelling. Likewise, for the task requiring students to imagine what a character might do and explain why, in the responses that Marie accepted as fulfilling the demands of the task, the justification students gave for the character's (Tyler's) actions did not reference or draw upon the character's known traits or motivations. For example, one student thought that Tyler would be inclined to take certain pictures of rabbits because they "show the rabbits being active." This explanation did not account for why Tyler would be especially interested in or emotionally attached to rabbits as a subject matter. Marie's writing tasks fell short of supporting the CCSS goals of guiding students toward making inferences based on text, or applying given knowledge to new contexts.

3.5.5   Sarah: Focus on thinking and evidence demands of text-based writing

Sarah is a Caucasian female with a Bachelor's degree and regular teaching certification. She was a third-year teacher. Sarah taught fifth-grade Writing Workshop and Science at School 2 to a class of 20 students.

3.5.5.1 Negotiating interpretation of CCSS writing policy. Sarah believed her understanding of the CCSS was "above average." She noted that students were asked to engage with more

complex texts than in previous standards; yet, like Marie, she thought the standard called for shorter texts. Sarah recognized that the CCSS called upon students to engage in deeper thinking in their writing. She said, "Sometimes [the answer] is not given to them, just written right out there. They have to think about what the question is asking them and make inferences and figure out what the text is [saying] and [use] context clues to pull out the information that the task is asking them." Sarah believed it is critical for students to support their ideas with evidence from the text and be able to explain them: "The writing is very…text-based and [students] need to show evidence… They…need to support their answers. Where did they find it? …You can't just write an answer anymore and then just leave it at that." More specifically, she believed the CCSS was requiring different types of writing based on the text genre. For example, she recognized the shift toward requiring students to "read across multiple texts or videos, [and] use information all across in order to respond to a task." With fiction texts, she thought the writing tasks the CCSS was endorsing was having students "continue on with a story after it ends,…by using the clues and the information that were already given" or something "about character traits and how [a] character react." Prompt-free and text-free creative writing, however, was not considered relevant to the CCSS. Finally, Sarah thought the CCSS was encouraging students to write paragraph or longer responses focused on use of language or text features.

Sarah's understanding of the CCSS was substantially influenced by district professional development, grade-level meeting, as well vertical grade-level meetings, in which teachers from grades three to five gather to talk about how they address common standards, such as using evidence. To a lesser extent, the standards themselves, district professional development, and the PARCC assessment informed her grasp of the standards.

As with all the other teachers, Sarah perceived the district as making a distinction between the creative, "free-range" writing of Writing Workshop and the response-to-text writing covered in ELA or disciplinary subject, with a focus on a reading skill (such as comparing and contrasting or identifying main idea). Sarah believed the district envisioned that both Writing Workshop and ELA addressed the CCSS. She explained that the Writing Workshop "covers the writing standards in a more creative way…The language arts teacher is preparing [students] through reading and writing, and then I have them for science, where we're working on that as well. The Writers Workshop… helps them to get their ideas out…So they're getting kind of both." Also like other teachers, Sarah found the approaches somewhat incompatible, with the Writing Workshop being a departure from her understanding of the standards. For example, she recognized Writing Workshop as "totally different than reading and responding and analyzing something… It totally doesn't match up with [the CCSS]." Unlike other teachers, however, Sarah did not reject the district's message that Writing Workshop supported students to achieve the standards. Instead, she largely accepted the approach with an attitude of compliance, saying, "That's just something that our district required [us] to do. So we do it…"

While the district (and she) appeared to endorse the Writing Workshop approach, Sarah believed the district was also conveying the message that the program did not directly support students to succeed in the standards-aligned assessment. Through a district-sponsored training session on the PARCC assessment, she learned that all writing tasks required students to respond to text in some form, prompting her to realize that "Writing Workshop is very creative. [Students are] not given a prompt… I personally don't think it's a good fit for preparing [for the PARCC assessment]. I think it would be more of the assignments you would be given in an ELA class or in response to reading in like a science or a social studies." Specifically, she learned through

district PD on the PARCC assessment that in response to fiction, students would need to write a narrative extension of a short story, "using all of the information that the author had already given them" or write a response in which they consider the point of view of a character, for example, by using known character traits to "decide what would be that character's next step or what would their point of view be in responding to whatever's happening in the text." Accordingly, she thought she could support the ELA teacher by addressing some of these aspects in Writing Workshop. For nonfiction, she understood that students should be prepared to respond to texts with supporting evidence, which was already a focus of writing in science. She said, "A lot of what we do in everything, we use evidence to support and we're trying to get them to get more familiar and better at being able to back up their responses."

To the extent that Sarah was inclined to emphasize narrative writing and use of text evidence, her interpretation of the writing tasks that support students to achieve the goals of the CCSS are like that of other teachers. Sarah was rather distinct from the others, however, in that instead of focusing on the task products students should generate (i.e., the genres of writing students should learn), or superficial task features (e.g., number of texts), she tended to talk about tasks in terms of the cognitive process involved. For example, Sarah did not simply state that the CCSS required narrative writing; rather, she understood that in producing a text-based narrative piece, students needed to be called upon to marshal known information (e.g., about events or characters) in order to apply it to a new situation. And when probed about whether she was inclined to assign opinion writing, she clarified, "I don't think it would be so much [writing] their opinion and supporting it. I think it would be more of analyzing a text." Similarly, whereas Rhonda was inclined to regard the synthesis writing task as encouraging the use of multiple texts, and whereas Delia thought the addition of the video text was the significant aspect, Sarah

articulated that the main point of such a task was to support students to "distinguish what's the same, what's different, what does one author have to say that another author didn't have to say. Are there information that's similar, different? Did one person say something that contradicts someone else?…Just to get an overall understanding of one topic to be able to compare and contrast what one author's saying as opposed to another."

Along the same lines, in contrast with other teachers, Sarah tended not to regard the use of text evidence as an end. While some teachers believed that a response was correct as long as there was text support, Sarah was inclined to focus more on students' thinking and their use of text evidence to demonstrate their thinking. She noted that students often "copied things from the text. They're not citing it. They're just trying to fit it in. But I tell them all the time, it's important I hear your voice. I want to hear what you think about [the topic]." To this end, in addition to citing appropriate evidence, she aimed to teach students "to tell why they're using that piece of evidence in the first place and how it ties into what they're being asked to do…"

Ultimately, Sarah's focus on the cognitive processes involved in writing intersected with her assessment of student needs in her interpretation of tasks to assign to support students to achieve the goals of the CCSS. That is, in her view, students had difficulty engaging in the expected cognitive activity of certain tasks. She said, "They just can't seem to respond to the full question…[For example,] it will say 'describe' and they are not describing. Or explain how your evidence ties into whatever it is that they're writing about, and they just can't make that connection. They're not explaining enough." Having identified students' weaknesses, she believed it was important to assign tasks that targeted these skills. She said that in selecting or designing tasks, she considered "the skills that they need to know and need to use." She was less likely to assign tasks if they "wouldn't really get [students] to that level…[if] it wasn't really

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something that they needed to think critically to do." For example, she felt that students were "pretty familiar" with writing an opinion essay on an article, and "wouldn't have trouble with that," so she was less inclined to assign such a task. In all, Sarah's focus on the cognitive process of writing tasks as opposed to their form suggests that she grasped the intent of the standards accurately as trying to elevate the rigor of students' interactions with text.

3.5.5.2 Assigned writing tasks. Among the eight writing tasks Sarah submitted that she believed were aligned with the goals of the CCSS, three were science-related (Appendix N). As expected, these tasks required students to read nonfiction selection(s) and write in the informative/ explanatory genre. In terms of the cognitive process, one required a straightforward summarization (#4). Another task asked students to explain reasons why scientists might study insects closely (#1). What made this more challenging than a simple comprehension task was that the main topic of the text was not scientists and why they study insects. If this were the case, students would merely have to summarize the information provided. Instead, the article focused on surprising facts one could learn about animals through observation. As such, students needed to reformulate the information from the text to write a response addressing the prompt. There was a level of interpretation and reading between the lines involved. The other task (#7) was similar, but it had the added complexity of requiring students to reference two sources. That is, students were asked to write an essay comparing and contrasting mushrooms and plants; however, the texts did not extensively contrast the two topics; therefore, students themselves needed to do the cognitive work of considering information in one text in light of the information in the second text (as well as their prior knowledge). Notably, as evidenced in what she accepted as high-quality work that fulfilled task requirements, Sarah's assigned tasks did not consistently reflect the emphasis she placed on explaining text evidence. That is, the student work Sarah

accepted as having met the demands of task (and presumably the corresponding standards) tended to allow the evidence to speak for itself, rather than make an explicit connection to the claim. For example, one student wrote, "I think scientists study insects closely…because when they watch them closely, they find out more about the way they live." After an extensive direct quotation from the text, the student proceeded to give the next reason, without commenting on the selected text.

In addition to the science-related tasks, Sarah submitted five tasks she used in her role as the Writing Workshop teacher that she believed supported students to meet the goals of the standards related to writing. One of these tasks was not text-based (#8). It required students to write a creative narrative inspired by a story starter. This task did not appear to fit with her general impression that typical Writing Workshop tasks were ineffective for supporting the CCSS. The other the tasks did, however, align with her resolve to support the ELA teacher by having students focus on characters, particularly through narrative extensions of stories. Like several other teachers, Sarah asked students to rewrite a passage from an alternate point of view. Unlike most other teachers, such as Marie, who accepted student work that were just a retelling of the events as fully meeting the demands of the task, Sarah required students to demonstrate an understanding of the character's feelings and motivations having analyzed what was already provided in the text. She said, "Based on the information from the text…they needed to apply it to their writing to be able to even know what Alex's mother's point of view would have been." The student work products Sarah rated as high quality showed some evidence of this. For example, a student provided insight into how Alec's mother (in *The Black Stallion*) felt about her son wanting to keep the horse, writing, "She *wanted* her boy to realize that he shouldn't be proud [to]…own a stallion. She *thinks* that it's a terrible idea. She *thinks* that this wild animal is going

to hurt her son. All she *wants* is that that animal isn't around her son running loose" [italics added]. The student reasonably inferred and articulated the character's fears and wishes, which were lacking in the original texts. In response to student work that did not meet Sarah's expectations, she prompted students to give more voice to the mother's thoughts and feelings. On one piece, she wrote, "Does the mom think [keeping the horse] is a good idea? Why?" She explained that she expected "language that expresses Alex's mother's feelings…[Students] would have had to figure out…things that the mother would have said…"

Sarah also regarded another common task differently from other teachers, including Marie. That is, she required students' responses to include a justification of the character's (Tyler's) actions that directly referenced the text and drew upon the character's known traits or motivations. For example, one student offered, "Tyler…was amazed that there were rabbits hiding inside the daisies and that the rabbits found just the right spot to hide from animals that can attack. Tyler was shocked that there were actually rabbits living in his flowers…" Such an explanation credibly accounted for why Tyler might be especially interested in the rabbits for his photography project. In all, Sarah's writing tasks seemed to support students to meet the goals of the CCSS with respect to writing by not only aligning with the technical features (e.g., genre of writing, use text-based evidence), but in terms of the intent to have students read texts closely to gather information that they could use to make sound inferences.

3.5.6   Corrine: District- and assessment-driven vision of text-based writing

Corrine self-identified as a biracial female. She had a Bachelor's degree and regular teaching certification, and had taught for three years. She taught fourth-grade English Language Arts, Writing Workshop, and Social Studies at School 3 to a class of 23 students.

3.5.6.1 Negotiating interpretation of CCSS writing policy. Corrine felt that she is "strong" in her understanding of the CCSS writing-related standards. She understood a key shift as the increased use of complex texts, particularly nonfiction texts and lengthier texts. Moreover, Corrine recognized that students were called on to write about these rigorous texts. She said, "The Common Core Standards for writing is based on a lot of text information. It's text based." In explicitly contrasting the CCSS with previous standards, Corrine acknowledged the emphasis on text-based writing. She said, "Literacy is so much different than it used to be…The Common Core Standards is focused on expressing, it's focused on writing, it's focused on…joining reading and writing together."

Accordingly, the types of writing students are expected to engage in are also different. Corrine characterized writing tasks that met past standards as "definitely easier. [They weren't] as thought provoking, as rich" because they were more open-ended and personal, whereas now, in the CCSS, students need to be able to "compare and contrast and read across texts." She elaborated about the shift toward engaging students more deeply, saying, "It's more thinking…The children really critically thinking about what they're reading. Being able to…summarize and also be able to explain what this text means…And then be able to make their own opinion…Always going back into the text and always making sure that they are explicitly reading and understanding what the author has written." In fact, students are expected to find evidence and explain their answers. Specifically, she thought that the CCSS endorsed writing "centered on a social issue…It's a lot of social conscience writing" and writing that called upon students to apply their knowledge, to "use what they know and what they've learned."

One of the main sources that informed Corrine's understanding of the CCSS was a workshop on understanding how the Common Core is different from past standards. She recalled

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the focus on text complexity and "how to gauge a student's comprehension toward the text." Another important source was grade-level meetings, where a district supervisor talked about "certain standards that they want taught" and had teachers "unpack" them by writing demonstration of learning (DOL) tasks to the standards. In addition, Corrine was guided by the district curriculum based on the standards. Finally, she navigated the Common Core website and the PARCC website to familiarize herself with what she was accountable for teaching.

As with her colleagues, Corrine received the district's message that in ELA, "reading is the main focus, and then writing would be the second." She also thought the district was conveying the idea that Writing Workshop would support ELA in meeting the CCSS emphasis on connecting reading and writing. She said, "The new program...Writing Workshop, brings it a little bit even tighter regarding the writing aspect [and] the reading aspect." Corrine thought the integration of the two literacy processes was important, saying, "The fact that they're tying the writing and the reading together, I feel that it's going to benefit the students in the long run. And it has made a major impact in how I teach now..." Corrine "applauded [the district's] effort for recognizing that we really need a really strong program." At the same time, however, she questioned whether improved student writing could be effectively achieved through the two separate curricula. She said, "Unfortunately… I feel like the district, even though it tries its best…with all of the different types of curriculum and different types of programs, it's a lot. And there's not one focal point." Even though Writing Workshop should support ELA, Corrine found it "troubling and conflicting" that the learning objectives for the Workshop units sometimes did not coincide with those of the district's ELA curriculum. As a result, Corrine often needed to realign for herself the standards to address in a given unit to support students to meet the goals of the CCSS.

Corrine relied significantly on the district to interpret what the CCSS meant for her instruction. She said, "Of course I do what the district wants….It is to the utmost extent…that my writing instruction is based on what the district wants me to teach." For example, she noted that teachers "are assigned certain types of writing task that we must teach,…for instance the personal narrative and opinion writing, and then we have the research. I do adhere to that…" Specifically, she spoke about teaching students to form an opinion based on a reading and finding supporting evidence for their claims. In addition to the types of tasks, she noted the district's message on text complexity. She said, "Text complexity is really one of those focus that our supervisor and our schools really [want] the language arts teachers to [care about in] instruction to the students… Having the students understand their Lexile, understand where they're at," Accordingly, she reported seeking out scientific and historical texts, believing that those are challenging for students because they feature more difficult vocabulary and promote critical thinking.

Corrine's adherence to district messages was sometimes mediated by her concern for student needs and student engagement. She said, "The only way I steer away from [what the district wants me to teach] is when I see a student who needs something a little bit more or different." Such concerns, then, ultimately influenced how she preferred to address the writing standards in her classroom. For example, noting that there was not enough differentiated tasks, Corrine said, "We're mainly given these tasks for writing and this is what we're told…But the only thing is it doesn't accommodate or help the strugglers, the students…who don't understand opinion [writing] .…They think an opinion is the same thing as a fact or they don't understand how to find the evidence." For those students, she would be inclined to create a different writing task. Furthermore, among all the genres of writing she was expected to teach, Corrine especially

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preferred assigning personal narratives, saying, "It's really important…because it's a comfort zone [for students]. They know themselves and know their special moments and people, the special places, and they're able to express it a little bit better than informational research, any other writing. It's just the one that they tend to be able to be better engaged in, to know a lot about, and not afraid to write." With respect to text selection too, Corrine thought it was important not only to attend to the Lexile score or text complexity, but to take into consideration student interest: "I mean the rigorous text, of course they're great, but a lot of times [students] don't make a connection to the text because it's unfamiliar… it's just not engaging."

Above all, the strongest messages Corrine perceived from the district, and the strongest sources of influence on her interpretation of what the CCSS meant for her instruction, concerned assessments. She indicated the "guiding principle" of the district as "teaching all of the skills that's going to help [students] to succeed [on] the PARCC…as well as the benchmark tests. Our school has been doing nothing but getting ready to prepare us, as well as our students, for… these tests." She understood that it was "extremely important" for teachers to ensure that they have taught all the skills and standards that the students would be assessed on the two assessments. While Corrine recognized that "there's a bigger picture than this…that the long goal here is to…teach students to be better thinkers," she accepted the district's message that the assessments are "the avenues that's going to take the students to something bigger and greater...The assessment is definitely guiding us in that direction."

As a result, then, Corrine responded to the line of district messages by fully accommodating the assessments in her instruction. Specifically, she understood the PARCC assessment as emphasizing comprehension of text. This included "being able to find theme and being able to connect different characters and settings and discuss in detail about characters and

their traits and a lot of the different elements of a narrative." Accordingly, she was inclined to assign students to write analytic essays, which "help with the close reading,…being able to understand what they're reading…and finding what is the meaning behind [the text]. This task can better help my students….with the upcoming assessments." Corrine also thought both the PARCC and the benchmark tests emphasized opinion writing, supported with "a lot of evidence." To this end, and combined with her understanding of the CCSS as emphasizing writing about social issues, she aimed to have students write "an opinion essay about someone else in a faraway land... and see what their opinions are, see if they can connect, see how they feel about somebody else's story…Definitely want to see any empathy or sympathy that they may have for that character. It gives them a conscious awareness…and I think that's really, really important." Moreover, Corrine's principal impressed upon the teachers that the PARCC featured "a lot of comparing and contrasting…Using a lot of…different types of text...including videos." Finally, the district benchmark assessments particularly prioritized summaries. As a result, she reported, "We're writing summary just about every other day… It's really important, especially with our district unit benchmarks because the end part of those benchmarks consist of…summary writing. So we definitely have to prepare the students for that."

Corrine's consideration of the district's message, led her to an interpretation of the standards that reflected many of the key emphases. For example, she grasped that her assignments should integrate reading and writing, with attention to close reading in order to teach students to understand characters and theme. She recognized narrative, opinion, and researched informational writing as the main genres students should learn. Moreover, in her thinking beyond Lexile scores and considering texts that expose students to social and global issues, she seemed to understand the idea of text complexity beyond a surface level. On the other

hand, by focusing on the forms of writing that students needed to produce for the assessments, Corrine might have lost sight of the "bigger picture." That is, more often than not, her justification for focusing on certain tasks was because they would prepare students for the tests, not because they would foster particular kinds of thinking that students needed to be "college and career ready," or that would support them to construct knowledge or learn across content areas, which are the explicit goals of the CCSS. Specifically, Corrine's distillation of effective opinion writing as "using a lot of evidence" and connecting personally with a social issue seemed to neglect the main cognitive objective of having students critically analyze a complex situation or evaluate various arguments. Similarly, Corrine seemed to regard the key feature of a synthesis task as "using a lot of different types of texts" rather than defining it by the thinking processes required of students. Altogether, Corrine seemed to exemplify the phenomenon that teaching to high-stakes tests, specifically by assigning tasks that mirrored assessment tasks, often result in that learning opportunities that reflected the reform practices in form only.

3.5.6.2 Assigned writing tasks. In most respects, Corrine's tasks aligned with her intent to adhere to district prescriptions and the district's interpretation of tasks that supported the CCSS (Appendix N). For example, the personal writing task (#4) specifically satisfied the Writing Workshop requirement to have students write a personal narrative, and the tasks altogether covered the three main genres – narrative, opinion, and informative/explanatory. The sample of writing assignments from Corrine also reflected her understanding that writing tasks that supported the goals of the CCSS should be text-based. Moreover, her preference for novels seemed to align with her intent to meet the district's imperative for using complex texts.

Beyond surface features, with respect to cognitive processes, Corrine's tasks reflected her weak interpretation of the standards in large part due to her intention to align with district

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messages about prioritizing text comprehension skills. Corrine rarely demanded that students demonstrate in writing their interpretation or analysis of text, despite selecting some complex texts that could support such critical reading. Two of her tasks (#1 and #5), for example, simply required students to fill in a graphic organizer with fragmented information. Moreover, two tasks (#3 and #5) checked for surface-level comprehension by engaging students in straightforward summarization (as required on benchmark assessments). Many of Corrine's writing tasks did not draw upon the affordances of teaching rich, full-length novels.

Other tasks also seemed to miss the mark on the interaction between text and task, with attention to the target cognitive process. For instance, the task of having students create a narrative around a new character for a given text without further parameters (#6) might have supported students to master the standards related to writing a narrative with the expected elements (e.g., dialogue, description, etc.); however, it does not really encourage nuanced understanding of the text as written. A version of this task that better aligns with the intent of the standards to promote close reading *through* creative narrative writing might guide students to create a new storyline involving an existing character, showing how this person might react to a new situation (i.e., problem or dilemma) given what has already been revealed about his/her personality and motivations. Or, turning the focus toward theme instead of character, students might create a new plotline and character, but be required to have their work reinforce the story's overall message. To take another example, Corrine likely intended Task #2 to mirror the PARCC assessment synthesis task, requiring students to weigh different perspectives on the same topic. To the extent that she exposed students to two texts, including a video, she achieved this; however, students could (and did, according to Corrine) successfully complete the task by stating

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their opinion without direct references to either source, let alone show evidence of having wrestled with potentially contradictory ideas from the two texts.

Corrine's final two tasks (#7 and #8) stretched students to perform more cognitively demanding activities in relation to text that more closely supported the standards. Students had to write an extended response identifying and explaining themes that pertained to both of the main characters in the novel *A Long Walk to Water* by Linda Sue Park. Particularly given that the novel is structured as two parallel narratives set decades apart that intertwined towards the end, the task directly guided students to revisit the text to understand the relationship between the two characters (and narratives) more deeply. Similarly, Task #8, about whether a character was weak or strong (#8) encouraged analytic thinking and the articulation thereof in the form of an opinion essay. In both cases, the student work reflected Corrine's stated emphasis on "using a lot of evidence." That is, they typically provided two or three pieces of evidence per statement; however, students very rarely explained their reasoning for providing evidence. In this respect, the tasks addressed the CCSS call for evidence-based writing, but only in a mechanical way.

3.6   DISCUSSION

3.6.1   Implications for policy implementation

A clear writing policy of the kind constituted in the CCSS, that recognizes the integral nature of reading and writing processes and that draws attention to the substance of students' thinking about text, had long been anticipated. Such policy has the potential to address persistent deficiencies in students' writing skills by way of improving the quality of writing instruction.

The extent to which this improvement could be realized, however, depends on how teachers interpret the policy. Of course, teachers do so within an institutional context, which itself interprets policy and exerts its own pressures on educators (Coburn, 2001; Spillane, 1996). Yet, despite research recognizing local education agencies as mediators of state and national policy (e.g., Coburn, 2005; Spillane, 1998a; 1998b Spillane, 2000), few studies have examined how teachers navigate messages in the local environment in their interpretation of policy. The present study contributed to this small body of research.

The results of the present study reflect past findings that teachers do not passively accept the messages in their immediate environment (Coburn, 2004). Rather they respond in several different ways, for example, by rejecting messages altogether or assimilating the message into their practice. More precisely, this study suggests that teachers do not simply understand policy through the lens of district prescriptions and guidelines. Nor do they evaluate the messages only through the filter of their prior knowledge, beliefs, and experiences about how students learn or what is effective teaching. The present results suggest that teachers bring forth the understanding of the policy that they have constructed to help them respond to district messages. This is important because it suggests that the referent is not entirely within the teacher. That is, when teachers are deciding whether to adopt district messages, they do not simply consider, "Is this good for my students?" or "Do I like the approach the district wants me to use?" Rather, they are apt to consider the external and original referent (i.e., the policy, or at least the messages they perceived from it), and ask, "Will this help my students meet the standards?" and "Is this in line with what I understand as the goals of the reform?" Given this, it might be important to learn more about how teachers construct understandings of policy messages in the first place, including the signals they attend to in the form or content of the policy, and the main sources

they draw upon to inform their understanding. This might lead to ways to better craft or disseminate policy to increase the likelihood that teachers will understand the policy as intended and will invoke it in their negotiation of district messages.

The results of the present study also highlight the complexity of the multi-leveled nature of policy implementation. That is, theoretically, the district messages should reflect the principles of the CCSS writing policy; however, more often than not (12 times out of 18 total; see Table 3.4), teachers regarded the messages as contradicting the CCSS as they understood it. Following Coburn (2004)'s finding, when the perceived messages complement, teachers were inclined to incorporate it in their interpretation and their practice. Indeed, of the six times the messages were deemed to correspond, they were assimilated twice, and accommodated the other four times. On the other hand, when the message from the district was perceived to diverge from that of the CCSS, teachers experienced genuine confusion and conflict, and were inclined to vary in their response and implementation (Russell & Bray, 2013). In the present study, five of the 12 times, teachers resolved the contradiction by assimilating the district message. They rejected the district message outright four times, and also accommodated it, enacted symbolic response, and parallel structure in one instance each. The complexity is also evident in the messages teachers perceived from the district in the first place. That is, given the same district context, teachers should have received the same message about curriculum and assessments that are meant to guide their instruction in the era of the CCSS. This was not the case. For example, whereas some teachers were under the impression that the Writing Workshop curriculum was implemented to satisfy the writing standards, another perceived the district as conveying the message that the ELA curriculum filled that role. On the one hand, differences in perceived district messages might not warrant intense scrutiny, given that individuals are disposed to understand ideas in

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different ways. On the other hand, as the implications are consequential to teachers' interpretation of and instructional response to larger policy ideas, districts should ensure that their messages are clearly conveyed and accurately received, for example, through more professional development on curriculum implementation. Entities at a higher level in the system might also be expected to play a more active role in monitoring, guiding, and approving the programming, curriculum, and assessments of districts.

3.6.2 Implications for policy guiding writing instruction

In addition to offering considerations for policy implementation and implementation research in general, the present study provides some insights into how the CCSS writing policy is taken up specifically. Such insights are important because writing has rarely been the focus of literacy instruction reform. Moreover, the policies to guide writing instruction that have been adopted have hardly evolved over time (Graham & Harris, 2015; Graham & Perin, 2007; Shanahan, 2015; Strickland, 2001). In contrast, the writing policy in the CCSS signals major shifts and is widely regarded as promising for improving the teaching and learning of writing. Thus, the CCSS is an opportune time to learn about how writing policy might impact teachers' practice and students' learning opportunities.

In line with previous research, the results of the present study show that teachers tend to grasp messages related to surface-level aspects of the reform, while missing deeper, more abstract principles (Cohen, 1990; Spillane et al., 2002; Spillane & Zeuli, 1999). Specifically, the CCSS was intended to guide teachers away from mechanical or procedural forms of writing and cursory engagement with text. En route to meeting the goals for college and career readiness, students are to learn to use writing to deepen their understanding of the author's message, to

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generate and explain insights into text ideas, and to critically evaluate text information –

particularly contrasting perspectives from multiple texts – in order to formulate an opinion or

synthesize understanding of the subject. In practice, teachers readily shifted toward providing

students opportunities to write about text(s), requiring text evidence when they do so, and

emphasizing the three types of writing explicitly noted in the standards (i.e., opinion,

informative/explanatory, and narrative); yet, they rarely guided students to attend to the quality

of their ideas and the adequacy of their evidence. In all, teachers rarely upheld the potential of

tasks for high-level cognitive activity. In this way, teachers considered simply asking students to

read and summarize two texts as supporting the goals of the CCSS. Similarly, teachers were

inclined to ask students to express their opinion on a topic and regard them as having fulfilled the

task demands as long as they provided any kind of text support. In the end, the teachers in the

present study assigned writing tasks that only reflected the intent of the CCSS writing policy to a

partial extent.

While such departures from the full intent of the policy might be attributed to teachers'

idiosyncratic process of sensemaking, research suggests that the formulation of policy itself and

the way in which policy messages convey new ideas play a significant role in teachers'

understanding and interpretation (Cohen & Ball, 1990; Hill, 2001; 2006; Spillane et al., 2002).

That is, some policies better enable implementing agents to "understand what is problematic

about their current behavior and to construct practices that might ameliorate the problems"

(Spillane et al., 2002, p. 414). In the case of the CCSS writing policy, teachers' firm grasp of

aspects related to the input (e.g., text selection) and output (e.g., genres of writing products) of

writing tasks might reflect the explicitness with which these are addressed in the standards, as

well as the deliberate focus of the CCSS on writing products that student are to be able to

generate. Notably, for example, the first three standards in the writing strand require students to write opinion, informative, and narrative texts. Much less explicit in the standards is the cognitive process that students are to engage in generating the content for their writing. (The cognitive process is not to be confused with the writing process, with its focus on prewriting, writing, editing, and revising.)

With respect to the cognitive process, the CCSS intends to endorse higher levels of thinking through close reading of text(s), but signals for this tend not to be so clear. To take one example, in the standard "Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text," teachers are inclined to pick up on phrases that convey concrete and actionable messages. Rhonda, for example, thought *two or more* signaled an important principle; others might have been inclined to select *historical, scientific, or technical text*s given the standard, and to require that students reference the text in their writing ("*based on specific information in the text")*. Meanwhile, the words *explain* and *relationships or interactions* are likely meant to prompt teachers to have students examine multiple entities deeply, inferring and analyzing the different ways each depends on, connects with, or contradicts the others. Such interpretations of standards correspond with how teachers talked about writing tasks that support students to meet the standards (and the assessments). That is, teachers often talked about preparing students for the "types of questions" they might encounter in the era of the CCSS – by which they mean the task conditions (e.g., multiple texts, nonfiction, paragraph-length response, required use of evidence) – as opposed to the "types of thinking" students would have to demonstrate. Even if teachers attended to the key words *explain* and *relationships* in the standards above*,* students could conceivably explain a relationship between two individuals,

events, etc. by simply summarizing the text, if the text was explicitly about the interaction between these two entities. In this case, the goal of having students do the cognitive work of gathering relevant information about each topic from the text and inferring their relationship from such information is lost. Yet, teachers might believe that students have engaged in "critical thinking" or "higher-level thinking." Altogether, issues with the representation of the policy itself, including ambiguity in the use of language might pose a problem to teachers in the position of selecting and operationalizing constructs to emphasize in their practice, and might result in interpretations and practice that do not fully align with the intent of the policymakers (Cohen & Ball, 1990; Hill, 2001; 2006; Spillane, 1998b; Spillane et al., 2002).

This point about the clarity of signals in the CCSS writing policy extends beyond the wording of individual standards, and beyond interpretation at the teacher-level. That is, the district in the present study instituted the Writing Workshop as a parallel curriculum to the existing ELA curriculum to address the writing standards. According to all teachers, it did so because it regarded the CCSS as endorsing two types of writing – writing that is keyed to text and about demonstrating reading skills, and writing that is less text-dependent and about developing skills such as writing in genre, and organizing ideas. The district arrived at such an interpretation in large part because, despite its underlying principle of integrating reading and writing, separate strands for the two processes persist in the standards. Although not referenced by the teachers, other signals in the CCSS might be contributing to the misunderstanding. Specifically, the CCSS clearly identified a key shift of the ELA standards as "Reading, writing, and speaking <u>grounded in evidence from texts</u>, both literary and informational" (underline in original). It stated:

The Common Core emphasizes using evidence from texts to present careful analyses, well-defended claims, and clear information. Rather than asking students questions they can answer solely from their prior knowledge and experience, the standards call for students to answer questions that depend on their having read the texts with care…Frequently, forms of writing in K–12 have drawn heavily from student experience and opinion, which alone will not prepare students for the demands of college, career, and life.…The standards' focus on evidence-based writing along with the ability to inform and persuade is a significant shift from current practice."

Despite this clear statement, *Appendix C: Samples of Student Writing* features tasks in the three required genres (i.e., opinion, informative/explanatory, and narrative) that could have been completed without reference to texts. Indeed, the 4th-grade opinion piece contained no recognizable reference to sources other than students' own knowledge and experiences; the 5th-grade student work for the explanatory writing task included few general references to text; and the narratives for 4th and 5th grade were entirely text independent. Moreover, none of the annotations consider the use of text or the reading-writing connection in the student work. The district's separation of the function of writing (e.g., to deepen understanding of text, to engage with text ideas in order to form opinions about them) from its form (e.g., opinion essay), in this light, is therefore understandable, but no less unfortunate. That is, as a consequence of the district's messages, teachers experienced real conflict about how support students to meet the goals of the standards, and in many cases, they negotiated a solution in which they assimilated the district's message and enacted writing tasks that primarily guided students to demonstrate their understanding of their reading instead of develop extended pieces that reflected complex

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thinking about ideas in the text. This aligns with research and theory indicating that coherence, or lack thereof, within parts of a policy significantly negatively impacts implementing agents' interpretation of policy (Cohen, 1998; Spillane et al., 2002).

Altogether, it is evident that at least one district and some of its teachers are conscientiously interpreting and consciously responding to the policy messages, but encountering some challenges in doing so. Improvements to the policy in future iterations might better help implementing agents to attend to the principles underlying the policy. Prior research had suggested, for example, that vignettes with thick description that illustrate reform ideas in practice and the rationale of the motivation for the reform may help convey policy messages more cogently, and may be more likely to lead to intended instructional changes than expressing complex or abstract reform ideas as goal statements or a list of objectives, as in a set of academic standards (Cohen & Ball, 1990; Spillane et al., 2002). This recommendation has yet to be applied and studied in earnest. Another idea, specifically to sharpen the writing policy by clarifying the kinds of assigned tasks that align with the intent of the standards, might be to provide a sample of annotated tasks. Appendix B of the CCSS currently features sample performance tasks; however, these in large part echo the language of the standards and are presented as descriptions of what students might be asked to do. Teachers might benefit from reading a rationale of why these tasks support the main thrusts of the CCSS writing policy. Such annotation would provide an opportunity to draw attention not (only) to the surface features of the tasks, but the cognitive process that students are intended to engage in.

To complement improvements to the writing policy, professional development at multiple levels – targeted to district leaders and to teachers – might also be designed with the goal of highlighting and illustrating the more abstract, but fundamental shifts in the writing

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policy. To this end, the tasks that teachers assign to students might be brought forth as artifacts of practice to anchor the intervention, to serve as both the tool for and the target of improvement. In all, the CCSS promised "fewer, clearer, higher" standards. With respect to the writing standards, the intent to have students engage in higher-level thinking processes that integrate reading and writing as key literacies for academic and career success is evident. With improved clarity and coherence, district leaders and teachers might reach a clearer understanding of the policy and might arrive at an interpretation of it that better reflects the intent, with positive implications for the writing development of students.

3.6.3   Limitations and future research

The small sample size of participants and the fact that the six teachers in the study (strongly) intended to teach to the CCSS also preclude generalizability of the results. That is, we cannot be sure that, given a sample of teachers who are less inclined to teach to the policy or less familiar with the CCSS, they would have invoked their understanding of the standards in the same way as the case study teachers. In other words, questions remain regarding how the robustness of teachers' perceived understanding might play a role in their negotiation process. Moreover, this study was conducted in one district only. As such, the district's interpretation of the CCSS writing policy might be specific to this context, and the findings about teachers' subsequent responses are very limited in generalizability. The district is by no means an outlier, however. Despite being managed by the state Department of Education, it had not received any special training on implementing the CCSS or on writing instruction. Moreover, the district is rather typical insofar as the ELA curriculum reflects a skills and strategies approach to literacy instruction. Finally, it is like many districts in adopting multiple policies or approaches to writing

instruction, including Writing Workshop, in particular. So, the idea that the district conveys various messages about programming, curriculum, and assessments as a means to guide teachers' instruction in the era of the CCSS is widely applicable. Nevertheless, future research might be conducted with a larger sample of districts and teachers nested within districts to better understand how teachers negotiate their understanding of the standards with district pressures.

The timing of the study is in some ways unique. That is, research suggests that teachers are strongly influenced by messages in high-stakes assessment (e.g., Hamilton, 2003; Hamilton, Stecher, & Klein, 2002; Koretz & Hamilton, 2006; Stecher, 2002; Supovitz, 2009); however, at the time of the study, the CCSS-aligned PARCC assessment had just been piloted and was about to be administered widely for the first time. Teachers were still rather unfamiliar with the types of writing tasks that students would encounter in the assessment, and the district was still gathering information themselves and conveying few messages about what the assessment meant for teachers' writing instruction. This might have accounted for many of the teachers' perception that teaching to support students to meet the standards and teaching to prepare students for success on the assessment was one and the same, and their inclination to regard the benchmark assessments as the target. Perhaps as both the district and teachers individually learned more about the standards-aligned assessment and the stakes attached to them, the sentiment would shift and impact how teachers make sense of the writing policy. Future research might examine teachers' understanding and interpretation of the writing policy, given an established high-stakes assessment.

Another major limitation of the study is that while I elicited the messages teachers perceived in the CCSS and noted the sources that significantly influenced the understanding teachers constructed, I do not trace the process by which teachers arrived at their understanding.

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Thus, it is not entirely clear what it is in the policy itself or the other sources that contributed to their understanding. Moreover, the study did not track on the factors that are thought to influence teachers' response to institutional messages, namely the degree of congruence among messages, their intensity, pervasiveness, and voluntariness (Coburn, 2004). Future research that examine these nuances might be in better position to shed more light on how teachers resolve contradictions that they perceive in divergent messages, as well as insights into crafting and conveying policy messages that are more likely to influence teachers' instruction as intended.

Furthermore, a wide range of other factors known to influence teachers' sensemaking was not systematically explored. For example, teachers' prior knowledge, experiences, and beliefs about students, and about teaching and learning were not specifically examined, although some teachers (i.e., Helen and Corrine) did draw attention to student needs in their negotiation of what the writing policy meant for their practice. In any case, the goal of the study was not to determine which factor(s) might be more prevalent than others in teachers' sensemaking process, or to exhaustively account for all influences. Instead, the aim was to investigate how teachers understood the CCSS writing policy and how that understanding might be consequential to their interpretation of what the policy means for their practice, specifically in their negotiation of district messages about how to teach to the standards.

Related to the above limitation, student-level and class-level background information was not available. Given this, it is not possible to discount the idea that the writing tasks teachers assigned is attributable at least in part to differences in students' achievement levels and their learning needs. That is, teachers with struggling students might, despite their understanding of the standards and intent to teach to them, offer opportunities to students that are in some ways less aligned with the principles underlying the standards. For example, they might assign less

cognitively demanding tasks, or they might recognize as high quality student writing products that in fact fall short of the intent of the assignment. In recognizing that teachers must necessarily teach with their students in mind, the present study nevertheless positioned the CCSS as the referent in examining teachers' tasks. That is, as a response to the call for a "writing revolution" (National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges, 2003, p. 3), the CCSS writing policy is intended to shape teachers' writing instruction and to improve the quality of learning opportunities for all students in a particular direction, with the same ends. The present study was in part an attempt to learn about the extent to which the policy might be approaching its goals and the challenges that might still need to be addressed. Additional research might aim to more systematically account for the wide range of factors that might influence teachers' understanding of, interpretation of, and instructional response to a set of standards, including the CCSS writing standards in particular. Such insights into teachers' sensemaking process might provide further leverage points for helping teachers grasp the full intent of the policy.

4.0   CONCLUSION

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS), with its vision to position students on the path to college and career readiness, represent an opportunity to improve writing instruction and reverse unfavorable trends related to students' writing development and achievement. Whereas past literacy reforms have largely neglected writing while privileging reading (Graham & Perin, 2007; Strickland, 2001), the CCSS explicitly set learning goals for students related to writing, elevating writing to a central role in the mission of schooling (Graham & Harris, 2015). More specifically and radically, the CCSS endorse the integration of the two literacy processes of reading and writing (Applebee, 2013; Shanahan, 2015). In doing so, it suggests the importance of writing as a way to reinforce and deepen understanding of text, to question and examine ideas in text, and to generate and convey insights about text. Accordingly, the texts students read are regarded as sources of content to learn, or the basis for one's opinion, or resources for constructing new knowledge. In these regards, the CCSS position writing as more than a mechanical or formulaic activity (Hillocks, 2002) and more than a process. Indeed, the types of writing that would support students to achieve future academic and career success are necessarily cognitively demanding, requiring analysis, synthesis, or evaluation of ideas in text(s). Hence, altogether, the CCSS signals a need for major transformations in the teaching of writing, including the learning opportunities presented to students.

The extent to which teachers' actual instruction reflects the key principles of the CCSS, however, remained to be examined. And this is more complicated than a question of whether teachers have the skill or will to teach in a reform-aligned way. Decades of research on policy implementation suggest that how policy plays out in practice depends in large part on what teachers perceive themselves to be responding to and what they interpret the policy to mean for their instruction (Coburn, 2001; Haug, 1999; Honig, 2006; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). As a result of their sensemaking process, teachers are inclined to perceive new policy as a variant of what they are already familiar with, which leads to insignificant changes in their instruction. Moreover, teachers commonly adopt surface-level features of policy, while missing deep, underlying principles.

To date, little research is available on the implementation of writing policy generally, and CCSS specifically; therefore, what teachers understand the CCSS to be targeting and how that affects their instruction remains to be thoroughly investigated. In addition, most studies of implementation tend to regard teachers' *understanding* and *interpretation* of policy as one and the same. Disentangling the constructs might lead to different insights with actionable implications. For example, if teachers are not adequately informed about policy changes, they might need more opportunities to learn about the reform and work with the standards. On the other hand, if teachers have a sound understanding of the main policy messages, but their interpretation of what that means for their practice is misaligned, we might look to intervene on sources that have a strong potential to mediate teachers' understanding. These influences include their beliefs about how students learn, high-stakes assessments, and practical constraints (e.g., time, class size). Moreover, messages and pressures from the local institutional environment (i.e., district) would be important to examine, for these are known to influence teachers' sensemaking

(Coburn, 2001; Spillane, 1996; 1998a; 1998b). In fact, given that "policy is often reinterpreted and reshaped by policymakers at every level as it works its way through a system" (Coburn, 2001, p. 150), district messages designed to guide teachers' instruction would already represent an interpretation of the policy. Teachers' perception of and response to the district messages, then, would play a significant role in how the policy manifests in their practice.

Identifying the aspects of the CCSS writing reform that teachers and district administrators easily grasp and implement versus the ideas that they tend to only partially grasp or misconstrue altogether might highlight signals in the policy itself that might hinder clear understanding of the policy and lead to interpretations that do not align with the intent (Cohen & Hill, 2000; Hill, 2001). In turn, insight gained from this might contribute to the development of timely interventions to support implementation of the standards. Such an investigation is needed since a recurring critique of the CCSS with respect to writing is precisely that, despite clearly articulating the writing outcomes students are expected to demonstrate, the standards provide little guidance as to the learning opportunities that a coherent writing program should offer to students to support them in meeting the expectations (Graham & Harris, 2015; Shanahan, 2015). As a result, teachers and district administrators are left to interpret for themselves how to implement the standards in practice. In this way, the standards are vulnerable to variation in interpretation and in implementation quality.

The present research, herein detailed in two studies, contributes to an understanding of how the CCSS for writing are translated into practice. Below, I provide a summary of the key findings of the two studies. Then, I address the implications of the research for policy guiding literacy instruction, research on policy implementation, and professional development for improved writing instruction.

4.1 KEY FINDINGS

4.1.1 Study 1: Teachers' understanding and interpretation of writing policy in the Common Core State Standards

In the first study, I performed multidimensional scaling of data from task sort activities designed to elicit teachers' understanding of the CCSS with respect to writing, and what they interpret the standards to mean for the writing tasks they assign to students. One key finding is that the CCSS appears to provide teachers a lens for thinking about writing tasks that moves them beyond simple classification based on the genre of the text or the type of writing required. That is, in deciding the extent to which given tasks support the goals of the CCSS, teachers appear to consider the interaction between text genre and the genre of the writing product. As well, teachers appear to take into account the function or use of text, and the cognitive demand of the task. Specifically, the majority of teachers appear to accurately understand that the CCSS is endorsing cognitively demanding text-based writing, such as extended informative writing that requires synthesis of multiple texts and supported opinion essays. On the other hand, about a third of the teachers consider narrative write-like tasks as most aligned with the goals of the CCSS. Although the CCSS ultimately encourages that students engage with a range of writing tasks, it is unlikely that narrative write-like tasks are intended as the primary kind of task for preparing students for college and careers.

Another major finding of the first study is that the majority of teachers are not particularly inclined to assign the type of writing tasks that they understand to be the most supportive of the standards, whatever that may be. In the end, about half of the teachers in the sample are most likely to assign the cognitively demanding tasks described above. In addition,

about 40% of the teachers planned to assign tasks characterized by brief responses to a wide range of texts. The study does not address why teachers interpret the CCSS to mean that they should assign these types of tasks to students; however, survey results show that for a large majority of teachers, district policies and expectations substantially influence their interpretation.

4.1.2 Study 2: Interpreting the Common Core State Standards: Case studies of elementary teachers' sensemaking of the writing policy

In the second study, I employ a multi-case deign to specifically examine how six teachers interpretation of what the CCSS means for the writing tasks they assign to students might be shaped by their negotiation of the messages they perceive from the CCSS and the messages they perceive from the district about how to address the standards. Two key findings emerged from this study. First, while teachers easily grasp some of the key messages from the CCSS writing policy (e.g., privilege nonfiction texts, opinion writing, and use of text evidence), they struggle significantly with larger and more abstract principles underlying the reform. In particular, they grapple with what it means to integrate reading and writing, which has consequences for the thinking and evidence demands of the writing tasks they assign to students. Teachers' struggle is complicated by the district's attempt to address the CCSS by endorsing two curricula — one focusing on reading skills and comprehension (ELA), and one focusing on writing skills and process (Writing Workshop). Teachers perceive the parallel curricula as incompatible with the focus of the standards on text-based, evidence-based writing. In the end, as part of their process of interpreting the standards for themselves, teachers negotiated the conflicting messages in various ways. For example, one teacher adhered to the ELA curriculum while rejecting the Writing Workshop approach, while another teacher taught the two curricula in parallel, as the

district intended, but minimized the types of writing-to-model tasks for creative writing tasks that characterize Writing Workshop. A third teacher assimilated Writing Workshop into the preferred ELA program, transforming the Workshop tasks to resemble the type of analytic text-based writing that the district designated for ELA instruction. Teachers' resulting interpretation of how to address the standards are reflected in their assigned writing tasks. That is, a few teachers' tasks approached the goal of engaging students in deep thinking about texts through their writing; however, most tasks did not resemble the cognitively demanding type of text-based writing intended as the focus of the reform.

The second related finding is that the district itself encounters great difficulty in interpreting what it means to create a coherent instructional program that responds to the CCSS' call for a focus on analytic text-based writing. In trying to address the writing policy as two strands – response-to-text writing in ELA and creative and personal writing in Writing Workshop – the district in fact might have missed the importance of integrating reading and writing. District administrators might have been attending to signals from the standards themselves, however, in deciding on the dual-curricula approach to teaching writing. That is, the writing strand of the CCSS does specify the genre of writing students should learn and the skills (e.g., related to organization, mechanics) without mentioning the content of students' writing, the without drawing specific links to reading. The district might also be influenced by what is familiar. The Writing Workshop approach, after is, is a widely adopted program that subscribes to the process approach to teaching writing. This is the approach that has been championed by past standards guiding writing instruction. In all, there is evidence to suggest that at multiple levels of the system, implementing agents are struggling to put into practice the key principles underlying the CCSS writing standards.

4.2 IMPLICATIONS

4.2.1 Policy guiding writing instruction

The present research suggests that implementing agents at multiple levels, specifically district administrators and teachers, would greatly benefit from a revision or supplement to policy (i.e., standards) guiding literacy instruction. Such a revision might aim to be more explicit about the intention to integrate reading and writing. As well, it might seek to elevate the importance of attending to the cognitive work that students should engage in. In doing so, the revised standards would have the potential to move teachers beyond regarding them as providing guidance only on the writing products students must produce (i.e., opinion, informative, and narrative writing).

To achieve these aims, policymakers might attend to the structure of the message. This means possibly reconsidering organizing the standards into separate strands named Reading and Writing. Multiple researchers have in fact noted this as a questionable decision (e.g., Applebee, 2015; Shanahan, 2015). Indeed, this might be a key factor inhibiting implementation of the writing policy as intended. Furthermore, greater attention needs to be paid to creating internal coherence among messages related to the policy. Introductory statements, anchor standards, and appendices, for example, should send a unified message about the principles of the reform.

4.2.2 Research on policy implementation

One implication that the present studies have for research on policy implementation is that teachers' understanding and interpretation of policy might be distinct (albeit related), and research might benefit from examining them as such. Regarding them in this way does not mean

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privileging one process over the other; rather, this might allow for more precise understanding of the (internal and external) influences and factors that inform teachers' understanding and their interpretation. The result of such work might provide for more leverage points to intervene on to support teachers to implement policy in a way that is more aligned with its intent. This is particularly important as the second study suggests that teachers bring their understanding of policy to bear in negotiating its meaning for their practice, even in the face of seemingly uncompromisable district directives.

4.2.3   Professional development for improved writing instruction

The present research suggests that teachers would benefit from professional development for improved writing instruction. Even given the need to negotiate district messages and feeling the need to offer writing opportunities that fit within the constraints, teachers by and large have the autonomy to design and adapt writing tasks for their students. To this end, teachers would benefit from interventions that help them to deliver writing tasks that align with the CCSS writing policy not only in form (i.e., surface features, such as being text-based, resulting in opinion piece, and requiring use of evidence), but also and importantly, in function (i.e., cognitively demanding, requiring integral use of text).

Such professional development might use teachers' assigned writing tasks themselves as a basis for instructional improvement. Using contrasting examples, for instance, teachers might learn about what makes a text-based opinion prompt more substantive than another (e.g., Compare "Did you like the story? Explain why or why not with examples." with "Having read articles on the benefits and costs of space exploration, write an opinion essay about whether you believe the government should continue to fund space exploration. Use text ideas to inform your

opinion, and use these as evidence to support your arguments."). Examining student work might also be a productive and concrete way to help teachers understand what responses look like that fully meet the criteria for performing the cognitive work required of the task and for using and explaining text evidence in an effective way. Professional learning efforts might anticipate and address teachers' concern that student ability might limit their use of rigorous tasks by suggesting ways to scaffold students' writing capabilities in a way that does not dilute or neglect the message of the standards.

4.3   DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The present research provides some initial insight, on a small scale, into the implementation of the CCSS writing policy. Future research might seek to understand on a larger scale how district administrators and classroom educators understand and take up the standards in practice. This entails studies with not only more teachers, and teachers at various grade levels, but also potentially teachers in various disciplines. After all, the CCSS also endorses literacy across subjects, including social studies, science, and even math. While the genre of text that form the basis of writing and the types of writing products students are expected to generate might differ across disciplines, the CCSS expects that the underlying principle of having students consider and draw information from text to inform understandings and to make arguments, and the push toward more cognitively demanding tasks would carry over throughout the school curricula. In such a way, students are truly positioned to be on the path to college and career readiness.

Future studies might also focus more on different levels of the education system, and the interaction among the different levels, in understanding how standards are translated into

practice. Specifically, more research might elucidate how district administrators consume and make sense of state and national policies, particularly academic standards, and how that impacts school administrators. In turn, the factors that influence administrators' understanding and interpretation of policy have implications for the street-level bureaucrats, the teachers. We would benefit from learning, specifically with respect to literacy instruction, how leaders at each juncture process the incoming messages from the level above, and the kinds of options and available to them to respond to the messages in order to form a coherent interpretation of the policy for themselves and those that they must provide guidance for.

Finally, the recent passing of the Every Child Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the permission it gives to states to formulate their own set of college- and career-aligned standards might allow for future research that examines how the signals in policy might play a role in shaping implementing agents' understanding and interpretation. That is, if states revise their standards while retaining the focus on integrating reading and writing, and on presenting students with opportunities to engage in rigorous cognitive activities, we might be in a position to study the influence of variation in the how a set of standards is structured and articulated (and supported with supplemental materials and messages) on the implementation of the standards. In all, the examples of directions future research might take all point toward supporting teachers to improve the quality of writing opportunities they offer to students, and in turn, preparing students for future academic and career success.

APPENDIX A

WRITING TASKS SET (WTS)

a. Selected Response Questions about Opinion Piece	**b. Graphic Organizer on Short Basal Text**	**c. Paragraph Summary of a Short Story**	**d. Worksheet on Short Story**
Students read an opinion piece about food in school cafeterias. Then they complete a set of selected response questions. For example, for one question, students select the best summary of the text. For another question, students select from a list three phrases that help establish the author's attitude, then they select three pieces of supporting evidence from the text.	Students read a short text about Chinese and US New Year celebrations from the basal reader. Then they complete a Venn diagram, identifying some similarities and differences mentioned in the text between the two traditions.	Students summarize a short story in a paragraph. They must identify the main characters, setting, problem, and solution to the problem.	Students complete a worksheet in response to a short story. Five of the seven questions on the worksheet are multiple-choice, about the plot and characters. The other two questions require 1-2 sentence answers recalling a given event in the story (i.e., "What happened when Manuel performed at the talent show?").
e. Opinion Essay on Social Issue	**f. Opinion Essay on Article**	**g. Narrative Extension of Short Story**	**h. Selected Response Questions about Science Text**
Students engaged in a discussion, grounded in personal/background knowledge and experiences, about the values and dangers of social media. They write a multi-paragraph opinion essay about whether they are for or against the use of social media for applications and platforms for students their age.	Students read an article about one village in Kenya that made great progress towards beating poverty over four years. Students write an essay explaining whether, based on the article, the author has convinced them that we can end poverty in our lifetime. They need to provide evidence from the text.	Students read a story that ends with the main character receiving a letter from his grandpa. Students write a continuation of the narrative, deciding what the character does with the letter, how he reacts if he opens it and reads it, etc., using what they learned about the relationship between the boy and his grandpa.	Students read a selection from a science textbook and answer selected response questions about text features (e.g., What are italics used for?). There are also short answer questions requiring students to state their opinion (e.g., Did the subheadings help you understand the text? Explain.)
i. Poetry Using Figurative Language	**j. Short-Answer Opinion Questions on Historical Documents**	**k. Personal Narrative Inspired by Short Story and Play**	**l. Graphic Organizer on Novels**
Students learn figurative language and poetic devices through definitions and examples from various poems. Students must write a rhyming poem that uses at least five different kinds of figurative language.	Students read excerpts of three historical documents (e.g., the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, Bill of Rights) and answer a series of short-answer questions asking for their opinion about the main concepts (e.g., Why do you think it is important to have rights? What does "pursuit of happiness" mean to you?)	Students read a story and an excerpt of a play in which the main characters learn that their first impressions of someone is wrong. Students write a reflective narrative about a time when their prejudgment of someone turned out to be wrong.	Students read two novels. In a multi-column graphic organizer chart, they identify the main characters of each novel; name three character traits for each character, make a connection between each character and someone they know, and argue whether each character would make a good friend.
m. Short Summary	**n. Short Response about Poem**	**o. Open Questions**	**p. Opinion Paragraph**

of Magazine Article	Students read a poem and write a	based on Interviews	about Novel
Students read an article from a children's magazine such as *Scholastic News* or *Time for Kids.* They summarize the article in a few sentences. They must include the main idea and key details.	short response to the question, "What big idea can you infer from reading the poem? Include specific words or phrases from the poem to explain your thinking."	In preparation for reading nonfiction articles about various family traditions, students reflect upon their own family and interview family members in order to answer a set of questions (e.g., What is your favorite family tradition? How did it start?)	Students write a paragraph describing their favorite part of a novel and explaining why they like it.
q. Analytic Essay on a Short Story and Poem Students read a short story and a poem. Then they write an essay explaining how the theme of the story is shown through the characters, and the theme of the poem is shown through the speaker.	**r. Opinion Paragraph about Short Story** Students state whether they like a short story and explain why in a paragraph, making specific references to the text.	**s. Synthesis Paragraphs based on Articles and Video** Students read two articles and watch a video about natural disasters. Then they write several paragraphs about how natural disasters impact humans. Students must give supporting evidence from the texts.	**t. Question about News Article** Students read a selection of news articles (each about 300 words) from *Scholastic News* and *Time for Kids*. Students choose one article to identify the organizational pattern used (e.g., description, problem-solution, compare and contrast), and explain in a few sentences which alternate organization would work well for informing readers about the topic.
u. Prompt-Free Descriptive Writing focused on Style Students write a paragraph on a topic of their choice to practice or demonstrate the use of descriptive language, mimicking the style of mentor texts.	**v. Researched Informational Text focused on Text Features** Students research and write a three-paragraph informational text about a historical topic, using appropriate non-fiction text features and text structures, as in mentor texts.		

Figure A.1 Writing Tasks Set (WTS)

APPENDIX B

FEATURES OF THE WRITING TASKS SET

	CCSS KEY SHIFTS		HIGHER ORDER THINKING					TEXT SELECTION					
	DOYLE (1983) TASK DIMENSIONS		COG. PROCESS					TASK CONDITIONS					
	FEATURES		Cog. Demand				Text Element			# of Texts			Genre (Type)
	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	DETAILED DESCRIPTION	1	2	3	4	Narrative /Details	Theme/ Big Idea	Language /Text Features	0	1	>1	Fiction
a	Selected Response Questions about Opinion Piece	Students read an opinion piece about food in school cafeterias. Then they complete a set of selected response questions. For example, students select the best summary of the text; students select a phrase that help establish the author's attitude, then they select three pieces of supporting evidence.	X				X				X		
b	Graphic Organizer on Short Basal Text	Students read a short text about Chinese and US New Year celebrations from the basal reader. Then they complete a Venn diagram, identifying some similarities and differences mentioned in the text between the two traditions.	X				X				X		
c	Paragraph Summary of a Short Story	Students summarize a short story in a paragraph. They must identify the main characters, setting, problem, and solution to the problem.		X			X				X		X (story)
d	Worksheet on Short Story	Students complete a worksheet in response to a short story. Five of the seven questions on the worksheet are multiple-choice, about the plot and characters. The other two questions require 1-2 sentence answers recalling a given event in the story (i.e., "What happened when Manuel performed at the talent show?").	X				X				X		X (story)
e	Opinion Essay on Social Issue	Students engaged in a discussion, grounded in personal/background knowledge and experiences, about the values and dangers of social media. They write a multi-paragraph opinion essay about whether they are for or against the use of social media for applications and platforms for students their age.				X		X		X			
f	Opinion Essay on Article	Students read an article about one village in Kenya that made great progress towards beating poverty over four years. Students write an essay explaining whether, based on the article, the author has convinced them that we can end poverty in our lifetime. They need to provide evidence from the text.				X		X			X		
g	Narrative Extension of Short Story	(Adapted PARCC - Narrative) Students read a story that ends with the main character receiving letter from his grandpa. They write a continuation of the narrative, deciding what the character does with the letter, how he reacts if he opens it and reads it, etc., using what they learned about the boy and his grandpa.			X		X				X		X (story)

h	Selected Response Questions about Science Text	Students read a selection from a science textbook and completed a worksheet with selected response questions about text features (e.g., What are italics used for?) and short answer questions requiring students to state their opinion (e.g., Did the subheadings help you understand the text? Explain.)	X						X		X			
i	Poetry Using Figurative Language	Students learned figurative language and poetic devices through definitions and examples from various poems. Students must write a rhyming poem that uses at least five different kinds of fig. lang.	X						X			X	X (poems)
j	Short-Answer Opinion Questions on Historical Documents	Students read excerpts of three historical documents (e.g., the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, Bill of Rights) and answer a series of short-answer questions asking for their opinion about the main concepts (e.g, Why do you think it is important to have rights? What does "the pursuit of happiness" mean to you?)	X				X				X		
k	Personal Narrative Inspired by Short Story and Play	Students read a story and an excerpt of a play in which the main characters learn that their first impressions of someone is wrong. Students write a reflective narrative about a time when their prejudgment of someone turned out to be wrong.		X			X				X		X (story, play excerpt)
l	Graphic Organizer on Novels	Students read two novels. In a multi-column graphic organizer chart, they identify the main characters of each novel; name three character traits for each character, make a connection between each character and someone they know, and argue whether each character would make a good friend.	X			X						X	X (novel)
m	Short Summary of Magazine Article	Students read an article from a children's magazine such as *Scholastic News* or *Time for Kids*. They summarize the article in a few sentences. They must include the main idea and key details.	X			X				X			
n	Short Response about Poem	Students read a poem and write a short response to the question, "What big idea can you infer from reading the poem? Include specific words or phrases from the poem to explain your thinking."		X			X				X		X (poem)
o	Open Questions Based on Interviews	In preparation for reading nonfiction articles about various family traditions, students reflect upon their own family and interview family members in order to answers to a set of 8 questions (e.g., What is your favorite family tradition? How did it start?)	X			X			X				
p	Opinion paragraph about Novel	Students write a paragraph describing their favorite part of a novel and explaining why they like it.	X		X						X		X (novel)

q	Analytical Essay on a Short Story and Poem	(PARCC Task - Literary Analysis) Students read a short story and a poem. Then they write an essay explaining how the theme of the story is shown through the characters, and the theme of the poem is shown through the speaker. Students are asked to provide specific details from the texts.			X			X				X	X (story, poem)
r	Opinion Paragraph about Short Story	Students state whether they like a short story and explain why in a paragraph, making specific references to the text.	X			X					X		X (story)
s	Synthesis Paragraphs based on Article and Video	(Adapted PARCC Task - Research Simulation) Students read two articles and watch a video about natural disasters. Then they write multiple paragraphs about how natural disasters impact humans. Students must give supporting evidence from the texts.					X	X				X	
t	Question about News Article	Students read a selection of news articles (each about 300 words) from *Scholastic News* and *Time for Kids*. Students choose one article to identify the organizational pattern used (e.g., description, problem-solution, compare and contrast), and explain in a few sentences which alternate organization would work well for informing readers about the topic.			X				X			X	
u	Prompt-Free Descriptive Writing Focused on Style	Students write a paragraph on a topic of their choice to practice or demonstrate the use of descriptive language, mimicking the style of mentor texts.		X				X				X	X (various)
v	Researched Informational Text Focused on Text Features	Students research and write a three-paragraph informational text about a historical topic, using appropriate non-fiction text features and text sturctures, as in mentor texts.				X		X				X	
		TOTAL (22)	7	6	5	4	11	6	5	2	11	9	11

	WRITING PRODUCT									EVIDENCE USE			
	TASK PRODUCT												
e)	Mode of Writing					Response Format				Text Reference Requirement			
Non-fiction	Mechanical	Summary	Narrative/ Creative	Inform / Expl.	Opinion	GO	Select Resp./ Q-A	Brief - Parag.	Extend-ed	N/A	General	Specific	Text as Model
X (article)				X			X					X	
X (basal)	X					X					X		
		X						X			X		
X							X				X		
					X				X	X			
X (article)					X				X			X	
			X						X				X

X (sci. text)				X		X			X		
			X				X				X
X (artifact)					X	X					X
			X					X	X		
	X					X			X		
X (article)	X						X		X		
				X			X			X	
				X		X			X		
					X		X		X		

	3	2	4	8	5	2	5	8	7	3	8	7	4
				X				X			X		
					X		X				X		
X (article, video)				X				X			X		
X (article)				X			X			X			
			X					X					X
X (various)				X				X			X		
9	3	2	4	8	5	2	5	8	7	3	8	7	4

Figure B.1 Features of the Writing Tasks Set

APPENDIX C

SURVEY OF TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETATION OF THE

CCSS ELA WRITING POLICY

Welcome, Eligibility, & Consent

. **Welcome!**

Thank you for participating in this survey, which is part of the Online Professional Learning research study approved by the University of Pittsburgh School of Education.

Often, policymakers expect new standards and teaching practices to be implemented without considering that teachers understand and interpret these new ideas in unique, valid ways. Instead of regarding policy as perfect and variations in implementation as failure, we seek to understand teachers' perspectives, for these may inform more successful policy design and communication. The goal of the present survey is therefore to understand from the teachers' perspective what the new (Common Core) standards and aligned assessment mean for teachers' ELA writing instruction and what might influence teachers to interpret policy the way they do. As such, there are no incorrect answers. Your honest responses are appreciated.

Eligibility

To participate in the survey, you must meet all of the following criteria:

1. be a classroom teacher (e.g., not paraprofessional)
2. currently teach English Language Arts (preferred) or literacy-relevant content area (i.e., Social Studies, Science)
3. teach grades 4 or 5
4. be currently involved in the University of Pittsburgh's Online Professional Development Study

Please confirm whether you meet the eligibility criteria.

○ Yes, I meet the eligibility criteria

○ No, I do NOT meet the eligibility criteria

. **Confidentiality & Privacy**

Your name and contact information are requested only for the purpose of research. Please be assured that all information will be kept strictly confidential. That is, your survey responses will be identified only by an ID code. All stored data will have this number on it and not your real name. All of your responses are confidential, and data will be kept under lock and key.

Contact

Should you have any questions or concerns about the survey, please contact:
Elaine Wang
Ph.D. Candidate/Graduate Student Researcher
Learning Research and Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh
elw51@pitt.edu

Consent

Please consent to taking the survey.

◯ Yes, I consent
◯ No, I do NOT consent

Instructions

. **Instructions**

This survey consists of 18 questions (8 substantive questions and 10 brief questions about your teaching context and background). The survey will take about 20 minutes to complete. At the end of the survey, you will be asked to indicate a date and time when you will be available for a 30-40 minute interview about your responses to a few of the survey questions.

Part 1: Your Teaching Context

. **Part 1: Your Teaching Context**

Q1.
Current School

[   ]

Q2. Which grade(s) ELA do you currently teach? (Select all that apply)

☐ 4th Grade
☐ 5th Grade

Q3.
Which subjects do you currently teach? (Select all that apply)

☐ ELA / Literacy
☐ Writing Workshop

☐ Social Studies

☐ Science

☐ Other (please specify below)

[   ]

Q4.

Think about the class you are focusing on for this research project. Which of the following describes your class?

○ A "regular" class

○ A self-contained special education class

○ A self-contained gifted education class

○ A self-contained ESL or ELL class

Part 2: Your Familiarity with the CCSS and the New Assessment for ELA

. **Part 2: Your Familiarity with and Support for the Common Core State Standards and the New Standardized Assessment in ELA (i.e., PARCC or State Test), WIth Emphasis on Writing**

Q5. **Please rate each of the following. You don't need to have to studied the Common Core State Standards and new standardized assessment (i.e., PARCC or state test) directly to be familiar with them. You are encouraged to think about the different ways you might have encountered the ideas carried in the standards and assessments, for example, through your district's curriculum or benchmark tests, etc.**

	Very Weak	Weak	Adequate	Strong	Very Strong
Your knowledge of (familiarity with) the Common Core State standards for ELA generally	○	○	○	○	○
Your knowledge of (familiarity with) the Common Core State standards that relate to writing	○	○	○	○	○
Your support for writing-related standards	○	○	○	○	○
Your intent to teach to the writing-related standards	○	○	○	○	○
How well you are actually able to teach to the writing-related standards	○	○	○	○	○
	Very Weak	Weak	Adequate	Strong	Very Strong
Your knowledge of (familiarity with) the new assessment generally	○	○	○	○	○
Your knowledge of (familiarity with) the new assessment's writing component specifically	○	○	○	○	○
Your support for the new					

assessment's writing component	○	○	○	○	○
Your intent to prepare students for the new assessment's writing component	○	○	○	○	○
How well you are actually able to prepare students for the new assessment's writing component	○	○	○	○	○

Part 3: Writing Tasks in the Context of the CCSS & the New Assessment

. **Part 3: Writing Tasks in the Context of the Common Core State Standards and the New Assessment**

Please click and download this attached file (Writing Tasks Set). You will need it for the next few questions. You might find it helpful to print it out.

Q7. Please refer to the 22 writing tasks in the attached file (Writing Tasks Set). Please sort the tasks into categories/groups of your choosing. Feel free to sort on whichever characteristic(s) you wish. You may have between 2-10 groups. **Each task must only belong to one group.**

Give each group a descriptive name, then list the letter of each task you placed into that group (e.g., "Tasks that focus on characters: a, j, q, s)

Group 1 Name & Tasks	
Group 2 Name & Tasks	
Group 3 Name & Tasks	
Group 4 Name & Tasks	
Group 5 Name & Tasks	
Group 6 Name & Tasks	
Group 7 Name & Tasks	
Group 8 Name & Tasks	
Group 9 Name & Tasks	
Group 10 Name & Tasks	

Q7. Please refer to the 22 writing tasks in the attached file (<u>Writing Tasks Set</u>). For each task, please answer this question: **"In this era of the Common Core State Standards and new standardized assessment, and given your teaching context, how likely are you to assign each of the following tasks to your class?"** Assume all texts are grade-level appropriate.

There are 7 response options (Not Likely At All to Extremely Likely). While you may distribute your responses however you like, you are encouraged to use the full range.

	Not Likely at All	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Undecided	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Extremely Likely
a. Selected response questions about opinion piece	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
b. Graphic organizer on short basal text	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
c. Paragraph summary of a short story	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
d. Worksheet on short story	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
e. Opinion essay on social issue	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
f. Opinion essay on article	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
g. Narrative extension of short story	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
h. Selected response questions about science text	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
i. Poetry using figurative language	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
j. Short-answer opinion questions on historical documents	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
k. Personal narrative inspired by short story and play	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
l. Graphic organizer on novels	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
m. Short summary of magazine article	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
n. Short response about poem	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
o. Open questions based on interviews	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
p. Opinion paragraph about novel	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
q. Analytical essay on a short story and poem	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
r. Opinion paragraph about short story	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
s. Synthesis paragraphs based on articles and video	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
t. Questions about news article	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
u. Prompt-free descriptive writing focused on style	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
v. Researched informational	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

text focused on text features

	Not Likely at All	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Undecided	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Extremely Likely

Q8. Again, please refer to the 22 writing tasks in the attached file (Writing Tasks Set). This time, please answer this question for each writing task: **"To what extent do you think the task supports students to achieve the learning goals represented in the Common Core State Standards and the new standardized assessment?"** Answer based on your understanding of what the standards and assessment are trying to achieve, regardless of whether you support it and regardless of what you (plan to) do in your teaching. Assume all texts are grade-level appropriate.

Again, there are 7 response options (Not At All to To the Utmost Extent). While you may distribute your responses however you like, you are encouraged to use the full range.

	Not At All	To a Very Small Extent	To a Small Extent	To a Moderate Extent	To a Fairly Great Extent	To a Great Extent	To the Utmost Extent
a. Selected response questions about opinion piece	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
b. Graphic organizer on short basal text	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
c. Paragraph summary of a short story	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
d. Worksheet on short story	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
e. Opinion essay on social issue	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
f. Opinion essay on article	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
g. Narrative extension of short story	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
h. Selected response questions about science text	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
i. Poetry using figurative language	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
j. Short-answer opinion questions on historical documents	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
k. Personal narrative inspired by short story and play	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
l. Graphic organizer on novels	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
m. Short summary of magazine article	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
n. Short response about poem	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
o. Open questions based on interviews	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
p. Opinion paragraph about novel	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
q. Analytical essay on a short story and poem	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
r. Opinion paragraph about short story	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Not At All	To a Very Small Extent	To a Small Extent	To a Moderate Extent	To a Fairly Great Extent	To a Great Extent	To the Utmost Extent
s. Synthesis paragraphs based on articles and video	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
t. Questions about news article	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
u. Prompt-free descriptive writing focused on style	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
v. Researched informational text focused on text features	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q9. In what ways have the writing tasks you assign changed as a result of the Common Core State Standards and/or the new standardized assessment? Select the mid-point if the standards and assessment have not lead to either of the changes described.

Because of the Common Core State Standards and/or the new standardized assessment, you...

Assign FEWER texts to read	○	○	○	Assign MORE texts to read
Assign LESS fiction	○	○	○	Assign MORE fiction
Assign LESS nonfiction	○	○	○	Assign MORE nonfiction
Assign SHORTER texts (e.g., excerpts, short articles)	○	○	○	Assign LENGTHIER texts (e.g., full-length novels)
Assign FEWER writing tasks based on text	○	○	○	Assign MORE writing tasks based on text
Assign FEWER writing tasks based on more than one text	○	○	○	Assign MORE writing tasks based on more than one text
Assign FEWER close-ended or short-response questions	○	○	○	Assign MORE close-ended or short-response questions
Assign LESS paragraph-response writing	○	○	○	Assign MORE paragraph-response writing
Assign LESS extended writing (i.e., multiple paragraphs)	○	○	○	Assign MORE extended writing (i.e., multiple paragraphs)
Assign LESS narrative, personal, or creative writing	○	○	○	Assign MORE narrative, personal, or creative writing
Assign LESS informational/explanatory writing (including summaries)	○	○	○	Assign MORE informational/explanatory writing (including summaries)
Assign LESS analytical writing	○	○	○	Assign MORE analytical writing
Assign LESS supported opinion or argumentative writing	○	○	○	Assign MORE supported opinion or argumentative writing
Assign FEWER tasks focused on plot or main ideas & details	○	○	○	Assign MORE tasks focused on plot or main ideas & details
Assign FEWER tasks focused on theme or big idea	○	○	○	Assign MORE tasks focused on theme or big idea
Assign FEWER tasks focused on language use or text features	○	○	○	Assign MORE tasks focused on language use or text features

Grade student work more HOLISTICALLY	○	○	○	Grade student work more based on SPECIFIC CRITERIA/ "look-fors"
Develop my OWN grading criteria more often	○	○	○	Use PROVIDED grading criteria more often (e.g., district, state, or other rubric)
Focus LESS on use of text support in evaluating student writing	○	○	○	Focus MORE on use of text support in evaluating student writing
Give LESS guidance or less explicit directions to students about what to include in their writing	○	○	○	Give MORE guidance or more explicit directions to students about what to include in their writing

Part 4: Influences on Your Understanding of the CCSS and the New Assessment

. Part 4: Influences on Your Understanding and Interpretation of the Common Core State Standards and the New Standardized Assessment

Q10. Please indicate the sources that contribute SUBSTANTIALLY to your understanding of what writing tasks look like that support students to achieve the learning goals represented in the Common Core State Standards and the new standardized assessment. (Select all that apply)

☐ a. Common Core State Standards

☐ b. Information about the new assessment on the PARCC website

☐ c. Spring 2014 PARCC assessment field test

☐ d. State-level curriculum

☐ e. District administrators

☐ f. District-level coaches or instructional leaders

☐ g. District-level curriculum documents & materials

☐ h. District-wide PD

☐ i. School administrators (i.e., principal)

☐ j. School-level instructional coaches or leaders

☐ k. School-level curriculum documents & materials

☐ l. School-level PD

☐ m. Scheduled grade-level or ELA team meetings

☐ n. Informal meetings or conversations with colleagues

☐ o. Institute for Learning (IFL) PD (i.e., workshop)

☐ p. Institute for Learning (IFL) curriculum documents & materials

☐ q. Professional affiliation (e.g., NCTE, AFT, NEA)

☐ r. General websites for educators

☐ s. None of the above

Q11. Please indicate the sources that contribute SUBSTANTIALLY to your decisions about the writing tasks to assign to students.

☐ a. Common Core State Standards

☐ b. Information about the new assessment on the PARCC website

☐ c. Spring 2014 PARCC assessment field test

☐ d. State-level curriculum

☐ e. District administrators

☐ f. District-level coaches or instructional leaders

☐ g. District-level curriculum documents & materials

☐ k. School-level curriculum documents & materials

☐ l. School-level PD

☐ m. Scheduled grade-level or ELA team meetings

☐ n. Informal meetings or conversations with colleagues

☐ o. Institute for Learning (IFL) PD (i.e., workshop)

☐ p. Institute for Learning (IFL) curriculum documents & materials

☐ q. Professional affiliation (e.g., NCTE, AFT, NEA)

- [ ] h. District-wide PD
- [ ] i. School administrators (i.e., principal)
- [ ] j. School-level instructional coaches or leaders

- [ ] r. General websites for educators
- [ ] s. None of the above

Q12. Please indicate the factors that SUBSTANTIALLY influence (in either a positive or constraining way) your decisions about the writing tasks to assign to students.

- [ ] a. Personal knowledge of / view about / experience with previous ELA standards
- [ ] b. Personal knowledge of / views about / experience with standardized assessments of writing
- [ ] c. Personal knowledge of / beliefs about what to teach & what students should learn with regards to writing (e.g., from teacher education, continuing education, prior experience)
- [ ] d. Teacher accountability / evaluation policy
- [ ] e. Student accountability policy (e.g., meet district benchmarks, for school progress status)
- [ ] f. Curriculum content
- [ ] g. Curriculum pacing

- [ ] h. Time needed to grade student work
- [ ] i. Effort needed to develop grading criteria for tasks
- [ ] j. Class size
- [ ] k. Student ability or needs
- [ ] l. Student attitude / work ethic
- [ ] m. Student behavior / classroom management
- [ ] n. None of the above

Part 5: Your Background

. **Part 5: Your Background**

Q13. What is your gender?

- ( ) Male
- ( ) Female
- ( ) Prefer not to answer

Q14. What is your race/ethnicity?

- ( ) White / Caucasian (not of Hispanic origin)
- ( ) Black / African-American (not of Hispanic origin)
- ( ) Hispanic (regardless of race)
- ( ) Asian or Pacific Islander
- ( ) American Indian or Alaska Native
- ( ) Biracial
- ( ) Other or prefer not to answer

Q15. Which degree(s) do you hold? And what is the area(s) of concentration for each

degree?

☐ Bachelor

☐ Master

☐ Ph.D.

☐ Prefer not to answer

Q16. What type of teaching certification do you hold?

○ Not certified

○ Temporary, provisional, or emergency certification

○ Regular, standard certification

○ Alternative certification (e.g., Teach for America)

○ National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification

○ Other or prefer not to answer

Q17. How many years have you taught?

Total	
ELA	
4th or 5th Grade	
In this district	
At this school	

Part 6: Information for Follow-Up Interview

Q18. Please complete the following information to schedule the follow-up phone interview. Possible dates and times are as follows. Please indicate a 40-minute block of time when you would like the interview to take place. You will receive an e-mail confirmation. Thank you!

Fri 1/9 @ 9:00-10:00 am
Fri 1/9 @ 12:00-4:30 pm

Mon 1/12 @ 9:00 am-4:30 pm
Mon 1/12 @ 7:00-9:00 pm

Tue 1/13 @ 10:30 am-1:30 pm
Tue 1/13 @ 7:00-9:00 pm

Wed 1/14 @ 9:00 am-3:00 pm
Wed 1/14 @ 7:00-9:00 pm

Thu 1/15 @ 9:00 am-5:00 pm
Thu 1/15 @ 7:00-9:00 pm

Fri 1/16 @ 9:00-10:00 am
Fri 1/16 @ 1:00-3:00 pm
Fri 1/16 @ 7:00-9:00 pm

Mon 1/19 @ 11:00 am-5:00 pm
Mon 1/19 @ 7:00-9:00 pm

Name	
Phone #	
Preferred Date & Time 1	
Preferred Date & Time 2	

Figure C.1 Survey of Teachers' Understanding and Interpretation of the CCSS ELA Writing Policy

PROTOCOL FOR INTERVIEW ABOUT PERCEIVED MESSAGES &

INTEPRETATION OF CCSS

Identification

1. Please state your name, your school, and position (grade and subject taught).

2. How long have you taught in this district? At this school?

Perceived district messages

3. How would you describe the focus or philosophy of the district with respect to writing instruction?

   - What is the role/place of writing in the ELA course or curriculum?

   - What does the district mandate or require of you with respect to writing instruction?

   - What kinds of writing should be emphasized or taught?

   - What knowledge, skills, and understanding should students gain with respect to writing?

4. What resources or supports (e.g., curriculum, PD, coaches) do you receive from the district with respect to writing instruction? To what extent do these resources or supports influence your instruction?

Perceived messages about CCSS writing policy

5. How familiar would you say you are with the Common Core State Standards for writing? (i.e., very weak-weak-adequate-strong-very strong)

    -   What kinds of writing should be emphasized or taught?

    -   What knowledge, skills, and understanding should students gain with respect to writing?

6. How, if at all, has your writing instruction changed or do you expect it to change as a result of the new standards (i.e., the CCSS)?

    -   What's different about teaching to the CCSS?

7. How familiar would you say you are with the PARCC writing assessment? (i.e., very weak-weak-adequate-strong-very strong)

8. How, if at all, has your writing instruction changed or do you expect it to change as a result of the PARCC assessment?

    -   How are you preparing students for the PARCC assessment?

9. What sources or factors influenced your familiarity with or understanding of the CCSS?

Interpretation of what CCSS means for writing instruction/tasks

10. What are the main goals of writing instruction? Explain.

11. What kinds of writing tasks do students engage in during a unit? What do you get students to write about? Why do you prefer to assign these kinds of writing tasks?

12. What does a high-quality ideal writing task look like in your classroom? What is your idea of a cognitively demanding/challenging writing task?

- What should the task ask students to do?

- What should the prompt sound like?

- What should the instructions for students sound like?

- How much guidance should students be given?

- How much should students be expected to write?

- What should be included in the assessment criteria?

- What do good responses sound like? What do poor responses sound like?

APPENDIX E

PROTOCOL FOR INTERVIEW ABOUT WRITING TASKS SET RATINGS

Free sort of writing tasks

Let's look at the categories you free-sorted the tasks into. I'll pause a bit for you to review the tasks and your responses.

1. On what basis did you sort the tasks?

   - What were the features or dimensions of the tasks that you attended to in sorting the tasks the way you did?

   - Why did you decide to use these features or dimensions?

   - Are they particularly helpful or important in thinking about writing task?

2. Could you talk briefly about each of the categories and the tasks you sorted into each?

Interpretation of what the CCSS mean for writing instruction/tasks

Now let's look at which tasks you said you were likely to assign to your class. I'll pause a bit for you to review your responses.

3. Why did you give the responses that you did?

- What guided your decision making throughout the activity?

- What were you thinking about to help you decide on your responses?

- What aspects of tasks were you thinking about to make your decisions?

- What did you notice (attend to) with regard to the tasks to help you decide on your responses?

- Are the tasks you rated as similar for the same underlying reason, or for different reasons?

4. Were there tasks that were easier to rate than other? Which? Why?

- Were there tasks that were more difficult to rate than others? Which? Why?

5. (Select tasks teachers deemed most likely to assign) Could you do a think-aloud, take me through your thinking with these tasks?

6. (Select tasks teachers deemed most unlikely to assign) Could you do a think-aloud, take me through your thinking with these tasks?

7. (Select PARCC assessment-like tasks: G, Q, S) Why did you rate this task the way you did?

- What is it about this task that makes you likely/unlikely to assign it?

8. To what extent do you think the tasks you plan to assign to your students reflect your understanding of the intent of the CCSS?

- Why do you think this is so?

- How might you account for the similarities/dissimilarities?

9. (Select Task F) What kind of assessment tool and assessment criteria are you likely to use to assess the student work for this task? Why?

10. Is there anything else you would like to add (would like me to know) about the process by which you decided which tasks you are likely to assign to your class?

Perceived messages about CCSS writing policy

Now let's look at which tasks you believed support students to achieve the goals represented in the Common Core State Standards. I'll pause a bit for you to review your responses.

11. Why did you give the responses that you did?

- What guided your decision making throughout the activity?

- What were you thinking about to help you decide on your responses?

- What aspects of tasks were you thinking about to make your decisions?

- What did you notice (attend to) with regard to the tasks to help you decide on your responses?

- Are the tasks you rated as similar for the same underlying reason, or for different reasons?

12. Were there tasks that were easier to rate than other? Which? Why?

- Were there tasks that were more difficult to rate than others? Which? Why?

13. (Select tasks teachers deemed most supportive of the CCSS) Could you do a think-aloud, take me through your thinking with these tasks?

14. (Select tasks teachers deemed most unsupportive of the CCSS) Could you do a think-aloud, take me through your thinking with these tasks?

15. (Select PARCC assessment-like tasks: G, Q, S) Why did you rate this task the way you did?

- What is it about this task that makes you believe it supports/does not support students to achieve the goals of the CCSS?

16. (I will select a task the teacher is unlikely to assign even though it is deemed to support the goals of CCSS) Why are you unlikely to assign this task even though you believe it supports students to meet the goals of the CCSS?

17. (I will select a task the teacher has deemed not to support the goals of CCSS, yet they are very likely to assign it) Why are you likely to assign this task even though you don't think it supports students to meet the goals of the CCSS?

18. Is there anything else you would like to add (would like me to know) about the process by which you came to decide which tasks support the goals of the CCSS?

WRITING TASK COVERSHEET

UNIT (please circle):	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
TASK (please circle):	**1**	**2**	**Culminating**	**Assessment**
DATE ASSIGNED:	_____			

ARTIFACTS TO INCLUDE

1. Following this coversheet, please insert into the provided binder in order:
     ___ a writing assignment that you consider to be high quality and aligned with the goals of the **STATE STANDARDS** and/or
        the **STATE ASSESSMENT** (or the culminating task, or the assessment task of the unit)
     ___ the text that the writing task is based on, if possible
     ___ the grading criteria for the writing task that is given to students
     ___ two pieces of graded student work deemed **HIGH QUALITY** (please affix H stickers)
     ___ two pieces of graded student work deemed **MEDIUM QUALITY** (please affix M stickers)

Originals or clear photocopies are appreciated!

ABOUT THE TASK

2. Please briefly state the task and the instructions given to students:

_____

_____

3. Is this task prescribed by the curriculum? (i.e., Were you required to assign this task?)   YES   NO

4. Did you design/develop/adapt this task? (i.e., Answer NO if this is taken straight from a source)   YES   NO

5. Which task from the Writing Task Set (see back of this page) does this task most resemble?   _____

ABOUT THE TEXT

6. Please provide the following information about the text(s) that the writing task is based on:
Title: _____   Author: _____

7. Is this text prescribed by the curriculum? (i.e., Were you required to teach this text?)   YES   NO

ABOUT THE GRADING CRITERIA

8. Please summarize the expectations **GIVEN TO STUDENTS** for quality work. If grading scheme is not included in the binder, please describe below in as much detail as possible.

Expectations: _____

_____

Grading – High: _____

_____

Grading – Medium: _____

_____

Grading – Low: _____

_____

9. Did you design/develop/adapt the grading criteria? (i.e., Answer NO if it was taken straight from a source) YES   NO

APPENDIX G

PROTOCOL FOR INTERVIEW ABOUT WRITING TASKS

Teaching context

1. Tell me a little bit about your class of students as a group.

    - What are their strengths related to ELA?

    - What are their weaknesses related to ELA?

    - What aspects of writing do you think students have a good handle on?

    - What aspects are areas of improvement?

2. What ultimately are your instructional goals (or learning goals for students) this year with

    respect to writing?

Perceived district messages about writing instruction

3. Tell me a little bit about the ELA curriculum.

    - What is the role of (text-based) writing within the curriculum?

4. How are the standards for writing addressed…?

- In your district/school?

- In your classroom?

Perceived message about CCSS writing policy

5. How well would you say you understand (how familiar are you with) the key goals or principles of the CCSS for writing? (Very Familiar, Familiar, Adequately Familiar, Not Very Familiar, Not Familiar at All)

   - What is your understanding of the key goals or principles of the CCSS for writing? (If someone isn't familiar with the CCSS for writing, what would you tell them? If someone used to teach but has retired, and they're thinking, "What is so different about the CCSS in terms of writing?" what would you say?)

   - What is your understanding of the types of writing tasks that help students achieve the standards?

   - How, if at all, has your writing instruction changed or do you expect it to change as a result of the new standards (i.e., the CCSS)?

6. How well would you say you understand (how familiar are you with) the key goals or principles of the PARCC assessment with respect to writing? (Very Familiar, Familiar, Adequately Familiar, Not Very Familiar, Not Familiar at All)

   - What is your understanding of what the PARCC assessment assesses with respect to writing? (If someone isn't familiar with the PARCC assessment with respect to writing, what would you tell them? If someone used to teach but has retired, and they're thinking,

"What is so different about the PARCC assessment in terms of writing?" what would you say?)

- How, if at all, has your writing instruction changed or do you expect it to change as a result of the PARCC assessment?

Interpretation of what CCSS means for writing tasks to assign

7. How do you design or choose your writing tasks?

   - To what extent are the writing tasks you assign prescribed by the district or the school, as opposed to designed or selected by you?

   - To what extent are your writing tasks informed by the CCSS? What did you emphasize as you prepared students to meet the CCSS?

   - To what extent are your writing tasks informed by the PARCC assessment? What did you emphasize as you prepared students for the PARCC assessment?

8. What factors supported or hindered you from designing or implementing tasks that would help reach your instructional goals (or learning goals for students)? In which ways?

Artifact-prompted reflection about assigned tasks

For this part of the interview, I'll be referencing the PDF file I sent. This is a collection of the eight writing tasks you submitted throughout this project. I'd like to start by having you look through it and select two that are typical/representative of the writing tasks you assign to students.

Rationale for Task

9. In what ways is it typical or not?

10. Why did you assign this task to students? What was the main purpose or main goal of the
    task?

Assessment of Task

11. Tell me about the assessment scheme you used to evaluate student work.

    - How did you decide on the assessment criteria for this particular task?

    - How representative is the assessment criteria that you used for this task?

12. In what ways did the student work meet or fall short of your expectations for the assignment?

Reflection on Task

13. In what ways do you think the task helps students to achieve the goals of CCSS with respect
    to writing?

14. Why do you believe this task most resembles Task X from the Writing Tasks Set?

INTERVIEW CODING SCHEME ADDRESSING PERCEIVED MESSAGES ABOUT

(UNDERSTANDING OF) THE CCSS WRITING POLICY

Perceived messages about CCSS writing policy

The codes in this category aimed to surface what teachers understand as the main thrust of the CCSS with respect to writing.

Analytic/guiding questions

- What do teachers think the CCSS is saying about how the content and types of writing teachers should emphasize?

- What kinds of thinking and writing do teachers think the CCSS want students to demonstrate?

- What kinds of writing tasks, or features of writing tasks, will help students meet the goals of the CCSS?

Table H.1 Coding for Perceived Messages About CCSS Writing Policy

Theme	Code	Definition (Teachers believe the CCSS emphasize…)
Text-Based Cognitive Activity	Mechanical	Identifying information or other procedural activities
	Summarization	Paraphrase or retell main idea and supporting details
	Application	Applying known information or ideas to another context (without critical analysis)
	Analysis	Analysis or critical evaluation of information
	Synthesis/Research	Combining ideas from multiple sources to create new presentation of knowledge
	Writing to model text	Imitating features of text genre; no interaction with text content
Text Element	Character trait	Concepts related to character traits, changes in characters over time, etc.
	Language/Text features	Examining the language use in texts (fiction) or the structure or text features (nonfiction)
	Plot/Facts & details	Understanding the main events or facts in a text
	Point of view	Having students analyze point of view or rewrite a text from a different pov. This typically pertains to narrative texts
	Skills-based	Tasks based on specific reading skills or objectives such as compare and contrast, cause and effect, identifying theme, etc.
	Theme/Message	Analyzing theme (fiction) or message (nonfiction)
Text Selection	Complex texts	Writing in response to complex, rigorous texts
	Fiction texts	Writing based on fiction texts
	Nonfiction texts	Writing based on nonfiction texts
	Multiple texts	Writing based on multiple texts
General Type of Writing	Non text-based	Writing that is not based on text, including writing that might use text ideas for inspiration, but does not require comprehension of text and prompt-free writing
	Text-based	Writing that is based on text, reflecting comprehension of text
	Writing to model	Writing that focuses on learning features of text genre, with no interaction with text content
Genre of Writing	Informative or explanatory writing	Factual, possibly researched, texts
	Narrative writing	Narratives, including extending a narrative that students have read
	Opinion writing	Opinion pieces, in which students express a point of view (and support it with text evidence)
	Personal writing	Writing focused on "I", includes reflective writing
Response Format	Graphic organizer	Completion of graphic organizer
	Selected response	Tasks in the form of multiple choice
	Short answer	Responses of a few words.
	Brief response	Paragraph (or two) responses
	Extended response	Responses of several paragraphs
Key Response Features	Text evidence	Providing text evidence in support of responses and ideas
	Explanation of evidence	Explanation of ideas, or connection of evidence to claims

Influences on teachers' understanding of CCSS writing policy

The codes in this category pertained to the sources or influences that informed teachers' understanding of the CCSS writing policy.

Analytic/guiding questions

- What sources substantively informed or guided teachers' understanding of the content and types of writing that is important in the CCSS?

- How did the standards-aligned PARCC assessment play a role in teacher' understanding of the thinking and writing the CCSS want students to demonstrate?

Table H.2 Coding for Influences on Teachers' Understanding of CCSS Writing Policy

Theme	Code	Definition
Influence	Colleagues	Teachers' understanding for the CCSS is substantively influenced by meetings and interactions with colleagues
	Curriculum	Teachers' understanding of the CCSS is substantively influenced by the state/district curriculum
	Professional development	Teachers' understanding of the CCSS is substantively influenced by the district professional development
	PARCC	Teachers' understanding of the CCSS is substantively influenced by the PARCC assessment
Familiarity with PARCC Assessment	Not very familiar	Teachers state that they do not know much about what is on the assessment with respect to writing tasks.
	Familiar	Teachers state that they are quite familiar or knowledgeable about the PARCC assessment with respect to writing tasks.

TEACHERS' RATINGS BASED ON THE EXTENT TO WHICH THEY BELIEVE THE TASKS IN THE WRITING TASKS SET (APPENDIX A) SUPPORT STUDENTS TO ACHIEVE THE GOALS OF THE CCSS

Table I.1 Teachers' Ratings Based on the Extent to Which They Believe the Tasks in the Writing Tasks Set Support Students to Achieve the Goals OF the CCSS

Teacher	Not At All	Very Small Extent	Small Extent	Moderate Extent	Fairly Great Extent	Great Extent	Utmost Extent
Helen		d, u	c, o, p	b, i, r	g, h	a, e, j, k, n, q, v	f, l, m, s, t
Rhonda	b, c, d, h, k, l, m, o, p, r, t, u			q	a, e, f, g, i, j, n	s, v	
Delia	d		c, n	b, k, m,	a, o, t, v	e, l	f, g, h, i, j, p, q, r, s, u
Marie		d	c, m, n, q	a, b, k, p, r	l, o	e, t	f, g, h, i, j, s, u, v
Sarah		d	c, m, n, q	a, b, p, r	e, l, o	t, v	f, g, h, i, j, k, s, u
Corrine				b, h, i, o	g, j, m, n	l, p, f	a, c, d, e, k, q, r, s, t, u, v

APPENDIX J

INTERVIEW CODING SCHEME ADDRESSING PERCEIVED DISTRICT MESSAGES

Perceived district messages

Of interest were teachers' perception of key district messages about curriculum and instruction, and assessment related to writing.

Analytic/guiding questions

- How does the district believe the standards should be addressed in teachers' practice?

- What role does the district believe assessments should play in teachers' design of writing tasks?

- What kinds of assessment writing tasks are emphasized in the district's messages?

Table J.1 Themes, Codes, and Definitions for Perceived District Messages

Theme	Code	Definition (Teachers believe the district is conveying the idea that…)
Messages About Parallel Curricula	ELA skills	ELA (SS and Science) focuses on writing that demonstrates reading skills and comprehension
	WW text-free	In contrast to ELA, Writing Workshop addresses creative, prompt-free writing. Students are encouraged to express themselves freely
	WW genres	Writing Workshop (and not ELA) is where students have opportunities to write lengthy narratives, and informative and opinion pieces
	WW writing process	Writing Workshop addresses CCSS by focusing on the writing process (e.g., brainstorming, drafting, editing, revising, etc.)
Message About Curriculum & Instruction (Meeting Standards)	Prescribed curriculum	Teachers should to teach to the curriculum (and they are being monitored for whether they do so)
	ELA	To meet writing standards, teachers should focus on teaching reading-based responses that focus on the reading skill of the ELA unit (e.g., compare and contrast, identifying theme)
	WW	CCSS writing standards are addressed in WW; writing is "not done" in ELA. Writing skills are developed in WW
Messages About Assessment	Benchmarks	Benchmark assessments are important. Teachers should teach to the benchmark assessment tasks
	Curriculum prepares PARCC	In teaching to the curriculum they are given, teachers are adequately preparing students for the PARCC assessment
	PARCC assessment	Student success on the PARCC assessment is important. Teachers should teach to the PARCC assessment tasks
Understanding of Assessment Writing Tasks	PARCC tasks	What teachers understand about writing tasks that students will be asked to complete on the PARCC assessment
	Benchmark tasks	Writing tasks that teachers understand students will be asked What teachers understand about writing tasks that students will be asked to complete on the benchmark assessments

Response to perceived district messages

This set of codes addresses teachers' response to the district messages they perceived. The codes capture how teachers negotiate the various understandings, messages, and beliefs, and why they assign the writing tasks that they do.

Analytic/guiding question

- To what extent do teachers accept the district's messages about writing instruction?

- To what extent do teachers negotiate their understanding of the CCSS in light of district messages about writing instruction?

Table J.2 Themes, Codes, and Definitions for Response to District Messages

Theme	Code	Definition (Teachers believe the district is conveying the idea that…)
Response to Messages About Parallel Curricula	Support WW or messages related to WW	Teacher supports Writing Workshop or messages related to addressing the writing standards through this program
	Conflicting messages	Teacher perceives conflicting info about the types of writing opportunities students need. Specifically, the teacher perceives a dissonance between the writing required in ELA and in Writing Workshop (and the goals of the CCSS)
Response to Messages About Curriculum & (Instruction Meeting Standards)	Writing in ELA is not important	Teacher believes the district's message that writing is addressed through WW, that writing in ELA is not important
	More writing should happen in ELA	Teacher believes ELA should be the place to address writing standards more squarely
	Writing is addressed in WW and ELA, differently	Teacher believes different types of writing are addressed through WW and ELA, and each addresses the standards
	Connect WW to ELA (SS or Science)	Teacher seeks ways to connect the writing in WW to the writing in ELA, even though this is not endorsed. Teachers might even say that they "sneak" writing into ELA
	Abandon WW	Teacher believes WW is not a good program or is ineffective for developing students' writing skills
	Teach however one wants	Teacher makes a statement to the effect that she teaches however she wants or how she believes is best. She does not always following the curriculum or expectations of the district
	Student concerns	Teacher believes that consideration of students' characteristics, needs, and interests should be more important following the curriculum
Response to Messages About Assessment	Teach to curriculum	Teachers accepts that teaching to the curriculum will help students achieve the standards and do well on the assessments
	Teach to benchmark	Teacher accepts the importance of teaching to benchmark tests
	Teach to PARCC	Teacher accepts the PARCC assessment as the ultimate guide
	Benchmark concerns	Teacher questions the extent to which the district benchmark tasks are aligned with the CCSS
	PARCC concerns	Teacher questions the extent to which PARCC assessment tasks help students to achieve the goals of the CCSS
Relation of Perceived Messages	Complement	Perceived messages agree
	Contradict	Perceived messages do not agree; teacher might be conflicted
Ultimate Response to District Message (Coburn, 2004)	Reject	Teacher dismisses the district message outright. It might be drastically incongruent with existing beliefs or understandings
	Symbolic	Teacher adopting surface features of message, while eschewing calls related to deep changes in practice
	Parallel structures	Teacher continues teaching in multiple ways, instead of resolving incongruences among different approaches
	Assimilate	Teacher interprets message in a way that fits with preexisting assumptions and preferences; the result is often different from what is intended
	Accommodate	Teacher fundamentally agree with the message's full intent and seeks to modify their assumptions and understandings in light of message

APPENDIX K

INTERVIEW CODING SCHEME ADDRESSING TEACHERS' INTERPRETATION OF WHAT THE CCSS MEANS FOR WRITING INSTRUCTION/TASKS

This set of codes address how teachers ultimately interpret what the CCSS writing policy to mean for their classroom instruction, given their response to district messages and other influences, especially the messages they perceived from the CCSS itself.

Analytic/guiding questions

- What are the features of writing tasks that teachers are inclined to assign to students?

- What kinds of writing tasks do teachers believe students need opportunities to engage in to achieve the goals of the standards?

Themes, codes, and definitions

The codes are the same as those used for teachers' understanding of the CCSS writing policy (see Appendix H).

TEACHERS' RATINGS BASED ON HOW LIKELY THEY ARE TO ASSIGN TASKS IN THE WRITING TASKS SET (APPENDIX A)

Table L.1 Teachers' Ratings Based on How Likely They are to Assign Tasks in the Writing Tasks Set (Appendix A)

Teacher	Not Likely At All	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Undecided	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Extremely Likely
Helen	b, d, r	c, i, p	o, u	e, g, h, j, l, v	k, q, t	a, f, m, n, s	
Rhonda			d, h	k, n, q, u	e, f, o, t, v	a, b, i	c, g, j, l, m, p, r, s
Delia	b, d, k, n, q	i, o, v	a, l, m	c, e, f, g, h, j, p	r, s, t, u		
Marie	d, u	r	c, j	f, m	a, b, e, h, k, o, p, q, v	l, s, n	g, i, t
Sarah	d, j, k	e	c, n, o	f, i, q, r, s	a, b, h, l, m, p, t	v	g, u
Corrine			h, o	b, m	k, u	i, j, l, n, q, s, t	a, c, d, e, f, g, p, r, v

CODING SCHEME ADDRESSING TEACHERS' ASSIGNED WRITING TASKS

The following codes are deliberately similar to the set for teachers' understanding of the CCSS writing policy and for their interpretation of what the CCSS means for their instruction (Appendix H), so as to facilitate comparison among the constructs.

Table M.1 Coding Scheme for Teachers' Assigned Writing Tasks

Task Element (Doyle, 1983)	Coding Category	Code	Brief Definition
Cognitive Process	Cognitive Demand (IQA; Matsumura et al., 2002a; 2002b)	1 2 3 4	Recall of fragmented info Surface-level understanding Basic or constrained interpretation/analysis/ application Nuanced and developed interpretation/analysis/ application
	Text-Based Cognitive Activity (Applebee, 1981; Shanahan, 2015)	Not Text-Based Mechanical Summarization Application Analysis Synthesis Writing to Text Model	Writing is not based on interaction with text Identifying info or other procedural activities Retell main idea and supporting details Applying known information or ideas to another context (without critical analysis) Analysis or critical evaluation of information Combining ideas from multiple sources to create new presentation of knowledge Imitating features of text genre
	Text Element	Narrative elements/ Facts and details Theme/Message Language/Text Features	Events, setting, and characters in fiction/ Main idea in nonfiction Meaning or message of the text Author's writing and choices

Table M.1 (continued)

Task Conditions / Resources	Number of Texts	None	Task is not based on text
		One	Task is based on one text
		More than one	Task is based on multiple texts
		Model text(s)	Task is based on use of model text(s), to learn features of text genre, with no engagement with content
	Text Genre	No text	Task is not based on text
		Fiction	Short story, novel, poetry, play
		Nonfiction	News or magazine articles, textbooks
	Text Type	Short Story	Short story or tale
		Novel	Full-length novel
		Poetry	Selection of poems
		Play	Play
		Article	News or magazine article
		Textbook	Selection from basal reader or disciplinary textbook
	Text Complexity (CCSSO, 2013)	Slightly complex	One level of meaning, single theme, literal language use and clear structure
		Moderately complex	Multiple clear levels of meaning, common theme, explicit and familiar language, somewhat complex structure
		Very complex	Multiple levels of meaning, implicit abstract theme, complex use of language and structure
		Exceedingly complex	Multiple levels of meaning, complex and sophisticated theme, dense and complex language, intricate structure
Task Product	Genre of Writing (CCSSO, 2010)	Limited writing	Writing without composing (multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, short answer, copying text)
		Informative/explanatory	Writing that explains or synthesizes
		Narrative	Telling a series of events, with characters, etc.
		Opinion	Arguing a side on an issue
	Response Format	Graphic organizer	Answer by completing graphic organizer
		Selected response	Answer by selecting from multiple choices
		Short answer	Answer in a few words
		Brief response	Answer in formulaic form or paragraph
		Extended response	Answer in elaborated form (e.g., essay)
	Use of Text	None	Does not require use of text
		General	Features cursory, procedural references to text
		Specific	Features specific text evidence to support ideas
		Text as model	Text used as stylistic model, but not for content
	Extent of Text Use	None	Does not require use of text
		Limited	Features 1 or 2 references to text
		Extensive	Features more than 2 pieces of text evidence to support ideas

APPENDIX N

OVERVIEW OF WRITING TASKS TEACHERS ASSIGNED AND DEEMED

SUPPORTIVE OF THE GOALS OF THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

Table N.1 Overview of Writing Tasks Teachers Assigned

| Task | Description | Cognitive Process | | | Task Conditions/ Resources | | | Task Product | | |
		Cognitive Demand	Cognitive Activity	Text Element	No. of Texts	Text Type	Text Complexity	Genre of Writing	Response Format	Use of Text
Helen										
1	Write a personal narrative	3 (Basic application)	Writing to text model	Narrative elements	Model	Personal Narrative	n/a	Narrative	Extended	Text as model
2	Write a persuasive letter	2 (Surface-level understanding)	Application	Facts & details	1	Nonfic. (Article)	Slight	Opinion	Brief (1 para.)	Specific Limited
3	Write an ending to a story	4 (Nuanced application)	Application	Narrative elements	1	Fiction (Story)	Very	Narrative	Extended	General Limited
4	Explain a core idea in the text	2 (Surface-level understanding)	Summarize	Facts & details	1	Nonfic. (Article)	Slight	Explan.	Brief (2 para.)	Specific Limited
5	Apply factual info from multiple sources to write a narrative	4 (Developed application)	Synthesis	Facts & details	> 1	Fiction (Novel excerpt)	Exceed.	Narrative	Extended	General, Extens.
6	Write an opinion essay on whether there should be zoos	4 (Developed application)	Analysis	Facts & details	1	Nonfic. (Essays)	Exceed.	Opinion	Extended	Specific Extens.
7	Compare and contrast how the hamburger and taco became popular	2 (Surface-level understanding)	Summarize	Facts & details	2	Nonfic. (Articles)	Slight	Explan.	Brief (1 para.)	Specific Limited
8	Summarize article	2 (Surface-level understanding)	Summarize	Facts & details	1	Nonfic. (Article)	Exceed.	Inform.	Brief (1 para.)	General Extens.
Rhonda										
1	Respond to multiple choice and short answer questions	1 (Fragmented recall)	Mechanic.	Narrative elements	1	Fiction (Novel excerpt)	Very	Limited	Selected Resp./ Short ans	General Limited
2	Respond to short answer questions	1 (Fragmented recall)	Mechanic.	Narrative elements	1	Fiction (Story)	Very	Limited	Short answer	General Limited
3	Explain why you admire a character	3 (Basic analysis)	Analysis	Character	1	Fiction (Novel excerpt)	Very	Opinion	Extended	Specific Extens.
4	Use context clues to identify word meaning	1 (Fragmented recall)	Mechanic.	Language	1	Fiction (Passage)	Slight	Limited	Graphic organizer	None

Task	Description	Cognitive Demand	Cognitive Activity	Text Element	No. of Texts	Text Type	Text Complexity	Genre of Writing	Response Format	Use of Text
5	Identify and explain lessons learned from text	3 (Constrained analysis)	Analysis	Theme	1	Fiction (Novel excerpt)	Exceed.	Limited	Graphic organizer	General, Limited
6	Analyze character's feelings	1 (Fragmented recall	Mechanic.	Character	1	Fiction (Novel excerpt)	Exceed.	Limited	Graphic organizer	Specific Limited
7	Compare and contrast two characters	2 (Surface-level understanding)	Mechanic.	Character	1	Fiction (Novel excerpt)	Exceed.	Limited	Graphic organizer	Specific Limited
8	Summarize chapter	1 (Fragmented recall)	Mechanic.	Narrative elements (plot)	1	Fiction (Novel excerpt)	Exceed.	Limited	Short ans	General Limited

Delia

Task	Description	Cognitive Demand	Cognitive Activity	Text Element	No. of Texts	Text Type	Text Complexity	Genre of Writing	Response Format	Use of Text
1	Summarize article	2 (Surface-level understanding)	Summarize	Facts & details	1	Nonfic. (Passage)	Slight	Inform.	Brief (1 para.)	General Extens.
2	Explain how characters feel	3 (Constrained analysis)	Analysis	Character	1	Fiction (Novel excerpt)	Moderate	Explan.	Brief (2 para.)	Specific Limited
3	Summarize article	2 (Surface-level understanding)	Summarize	Facts & details	1	Nonfic. (Article)	Slight	Inform.	Brief (1 para.)	General Extens.
4	Explain whether 4th-graders should read *Charlotte's Web*.	2 (Surface-level understanding)	Application	Narrative elements	1	Fiction (Novel)	Moderate	Opinion	Brief (1 para.)	General Extens.
5	Retell passage from another character's pov	2 (Surface-level understanding)	Summarize	Narrative elements (pov)	1	Fiction (Story)	Slight	Narrative	Extended	Specific Extens.
6	Explain how two animals survive in the arctic	3 (Basic interpretation)	Synthesis	Facts & details	2	Nonfic. (Articles)	n/a	Explan.	Extended	Specific Extens.
7	Retell passage from another character's pov	2 (Surface-level understanding)	Application	Narrative elements (pov)	Model	Fiction (Story)	Slight	Narrative	Extended	Text as model
8	Explain challenges a polar bear might face in a new environment	2 (Surface-level understanding)	Not text-based	Facts & details	0	No text	No text	Explan.	Brief (1 para.)	None

Task	Description	Cognitive Demand	Cognitive Activity	Text Element	No. of Texts	Text Type	Text Complexity	Genre of Writing	Response Format	Use of Text
Marie										
1	Compare characters' points of view	3 (Basic analysis)	Analysis	Narrative element (pov)	1	Fiction (Story)	Moderate	Explan.	Extended	Specific Extens.
2	Retell passage from another character's pov	2 (Surface-level understanding)	Summarize	Narrative elements (pov)	1	Fiction (Story)	Slight	Narrative	Extended	Specific Extens.
3	Retell passage from another character's pov	2 (Surface-level understanding)	Summarize	Narrative elements (pov)	1	Fiction (Novel excerpt)	Moderate	Narrative	Extended	Specific Extens.
4	Explain what a character might do	2 (Surface-level understanding)	Application	Narrative elements	1	Fiction (Story)	Moderate	Explan.	Brief (1 para.)	General Limited
Sarah										
1	Explain why scientists study insects closely	3 (Constrained interpretation)	Analysis	Facts & details	1	Nonfic. (Article)	Slight	Explan.	Brief (2 para.)	Specific Extens.
2	Retell passage from another character's pov	3 (Basic application)	Application	Narrative elements (pov)	1	Fiction (Story)	Moderate	Narrative	Extended	Specific Extens.
3	Explain whether or not you liked a story	2 (Surface-level understanding)	Application	Narrative elements	1	Fiction (Story)	Moderate	Opinion	Brief (1 para.)	Specific Limited
4	Summarize article	2 (Surface-level understanding)	Summarize	Facts & details	1	Nonfic. (Article)	Slight	Inform.	Brief (1 para.)	General Extens.
5	Explain what a character might do	3 (Constrained application)	Application	Narrative elements	1	Fiction (Story)	Moderate	Explan.	Brief (1 para.)	General Limited
6	Write a continuation of a passage from a story	3 (Constrained application)	Application	Narrative elements, Language	1	Fiction (Novel excerpt)	Moderate	Narrative	Brief (2 para.)	General Limited
7	Compare and contrast plants and mushrooms	3 (Basic analysis)	Synthesis	Facts & details	2	Nonfic. (Articles)	Moderate	Inform.	Extended	Specific Extens.
8	Write a narrative	3 (Basic application)	Not text-based	Narrative elements	0	No text	No text	Narrative	Extended	None

Task	Description	Cognitive Demand	Cognitive Activity	Text Element	No. of Texts	Text Type	Text Complexity	Genre of Writing	Response Format	Use of Text
Corrine										
1	Use context clues to identify word meaning & answer comp. questions	1 (Fragmented recall)	Mechanic.	Narrative elements, Language	1	Fiction (Novel chapters)	Moderate	Limited.	Selected Resp./ Short ans	None
2	Write an opinion essay on whether parents should cancel Christmas	2 (Surface-level understanding)	Application	Facts & details (Ideas)	2	Nonfic. (Article, Video)	Slight	Opinion	Brief (1 para.)	None
3	Summarize novel chapter	2 (Surface-level understanding)	Summarize	Narrative elements (plot)	1	Fiction (Novel chapter)	Moderate	Inform.	Brief (1 para.)	General Extens.
4	"Write about a time when you thought you might lose something or someone you loved	2 (Surface-level understanding)	Not text-based	Narrative elements	0	No text	No text	Narrative	Extended	None
5	Summarize a novel	1 (Fragmented recall)	Mechanic.	Narrative elements	1	Fiction (Novel)	Very	Limited	Graphic organizer	General Extens.
6	Create a narrative around a new character	3 (Basic application)	Writing to text model	Narrative elements	1	Fiction (Novel)	Very	Narrative	Extended	Text as model
7	Explain how the stories of two characters in a novel connect	3 (Basic analysis)	Analysis	Theme	1	Fiction (Novel)	Exceed.	Explan.	Extended	Specific Extens.
8	"Is ___ a character is a weak or strong character?"	3 (Basic analysis)	Analysis	Character	1	Fiction (Novel)	Exceed.	Opinion	Extended	Specific Extens.

SUMMARY OF CODING OF WRITING TASKS TEACHERS ASSIGNED AND

In the first column, the code(s) that reflect the intended messages in the CCSS writing standards is (are) bolded. In the subsequent columns, the most frequently-occurring code for each task feature is bolded for each teacher. In the final column, the most frequently-occurring code for all teachers is bolded (i.e., based on the total of 44 tasks collected from all teachers). Comparing the bolded text in the first column to the bolded text in the other columns, then, reveals the extent to which teachers' assigned tasks are congruent with the features of tasks emphasized in the CCSS.

Table O.1 Summary of Coding of Writing Tasks Teachers Assigned

Task Feature	Helen	Rhonda	Delia	Marie	Sarah	Corrine	Total (n=44)
COGNITIVE PROCESS							
Cognitive Demand							
1 (Fragmented Recall)	-	**5**	-	-	-	2	7 (16%)
2 (Surface Understanding)	4	1	**6**	3	2	3	**19 (43%)**
3 (Basic Analysis)	1	2	2	1	**6**	3	15 (34%)
4 (Extended Analysis)	3	-	-	-	-	-	3 (7%)
Cognitive Activity							
Not Text Based	-	-	1	-	1	1	3 (7%)
Mechanical	-	**6**	-	-	-	2	8 (18%)
Summarization	3	-	**4**	2	1	1	**11 (25%)**
Application	2	-	1	1	**4**	1	9 (17%)
Analysis	1	2	1	1	1	**2**	8 (20%)
Synthesis	1	-	1	-	1	-	3 (7%)
Writing to Text Model	1	-	-	-	-	1	2 (5%)

Table O.1 (continued)

	Helen	Rhonda	Delia	Marie	Sarah	Corrine	Total (n=44)
			TASK CONDITIONS / RESOURCES				
Number of Texts							
0	1	-	1	-	1	1	4 (9%)
1	**5**	**8**	**6**	**4**	**6**	**6**	**35 (80%)**
>1	2	-	1	-	1	1	5 (11%)
Text Genre							
Fiction	2	**8**	**4**	**4**	**4**	**6**	**28 (64%)**
Nonfiction	**5**	-	3	-	3	1	12 (27%)
No Text	1	-	1	-	1	1	4 (9%)
Text Type							
Short Story (or excerpt of)	1	2	2	**3**	**3**	-	11 (25%)
Novel (or excerpt of)	**5**	**6**	2	1	1	**6**	**21 (48%)**
Article	1	-	**3**	-	**3**	1	8 (18%)
No Text	1	-	1	-	1	1	4 (9%)
Text Complexity							
Slightly Complex	**3**	1	**4**	1	2	1	**12 (27%)**
Moderately Complex	0	0	2	**3**	**5**	**2**	**12 (27%)**
Very Complex	1	3	-	-	-	**2**	6 (14%)
Exceedingly Complex	**3**	**4**	-	-	-	**2**	9 (20%)
No Text	1	-	2	-	1	1	5 (11%)
			TASK PRODUCTS				
Genre of Writing							
Limited Writing Involved	-	**7**	-	-	-	**2**	9 (20%)
Informative/Explanatory	**3**	-	**5**	**2**	**4**	**2**	**16 (36%)**
Opinion	2	1	1	-	1	**2**	7 (16%)
Narrative	**3**	-	2	**2**	3	**2**	12 (27%)
Response Format							
Graphic Organizer	-	**4**	-	-	-	1	5 (11%)
Selected Response	-	-	-	-	-	-	0 (0%)
Short Answer	-	3	-	-	-	1	4 (9%)
Brief Response	**4**	-	**5**	**3**	**5**	2	**19 (43%)**
Extended Response	**4**	1	3	1	3	**4**	16 (36%)
Use of Text							
General	3	**4**	**3**	1	3	2	16 (36%)
Specific	**4**	3	**3**	**3**	**4**	2	**19 (43%)**
Text as model	1	-	1	-	-	1	3 (7%)
None	-	1	1	-	1	**3**	6 (14%)
Extent of Text Use							
Limited	**4**	**6**	2	1	3	-	16 (36%)
Extensive	3	1	**5**	**3**	**4**	**4**	**20 (45%)**
None	1	1	1	-	1	**4**	8 (18%)

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