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Struggling Adolescent Writers Describe Their Experiences

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Abstract

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Teri Ann Spargur

MA, San Jose State University, 1987

BS, University of the Pacific, 1980

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Writing continues to be difficult for adolescents throughout the United States. There is little known about writing from the adolescent's perspective. This case study describes six 8th graders' thoughts and motivations on writing. The purpose of the current study was to examine the perceptions and experiences of struggling adolescent writers by taped participant interviews of six students, three male and three female, which scored below proficient on their state writing assessment. The conceptual theoretical framework for the current study is Bandura's social cognitive theory. The central research question of this study focused on the experiences of adolescents who struggle with writing on state assessments. Qualitative data were collected during a three week period and analyzed in two stages. Stage 1 was the analytical compiling of the data into categories; stage 2 examined the data for patterns, themes, and relationships. Thematic analysis revealed six themes. Analysis of data supported the theoretical framework that students who struggle with writing were low on morale and motivation on writing assignments. Results of the study included a desire in the students to excel on their writing assignments, but the eagerness was subdued by the challenges they faced in writing. The data showed that students struggle with the amount of knowledge they have on a given topic and the techniques used to write a coherent sentence. Students stated that they need guidance to gather information on a given topic and with organization of their writing. This study can contribute to social change as it will guide teachers of writing instruction strategies that will respond to the challenge of mastering a difficult and complex subject.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my loving daughters, Stefanye and Sami, who have given me a life of always knowing they are in my corner — whatever I have chosen or will choose throughout my endeavors. I express my love and gratefulness to both of you — for the sacrifices you have made to help me see this journey to completion. Without your support, this would never have been possible.

I hope that the completion of this dissertation and my studies inspires you to work hard and persevere in your own educational goals. You can do anything you put your best effort into and will always get consistent triumphs. I love you!

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Section 1: Introduction to the Study

In 2014, 36% of general education students at E Middle School— the current study's school that is located in Washington State—did not meet academic expectations, and only 1% exceeded expectations (Office of Public Instruction, 2014). Furthermore, approximately 40% of all students in seventh grade in Washington State are not proficient in writing, and many teachers are delivering ineffective writing instruction to struggling writers (Office of Public Instruction, 2014). The problem of low writing achievement is not confined to E Middle School or to Washington State. Throughout the United States, 60% of the states have students performing below minimum proficiency standards in writing (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). Overwhelmingly, researchers have agreed that writing should be a school priority because it is an important part of thinking, learning, and communicating, and it contributes significantly to success in life (National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges, 2013). Researchers have concluded that writing must be "personalized and meaningful" to the writer in order for the student to be motivated to write, which, in turn, is a key aspect of increasing students' writing achievement (Atwell, 1987; Buckner, 2005; Calkins, 2012; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2004; Gallagher, 2015; Graham & Perin, 2007a; Robb, 2004; Turner & Meyer, 2006). Although students develop specific skills through writing practice, if motivation is lacking, the ability to write creatively or effectively is low.

The demand to perform at a proficient level in writing can be a tricky task for teachers and students. Hypothetically, given the current trends in the nations writing test

scores, a classroom teacher could predict that one-third to one-half of students would not be considered proficient writers (National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges, 2013). In 2011, the National Assessment Educational Progress stated that there is a gap in writing achievement with a 10% gap for Black students and a 15% gap for Hispanic students when compared to their White peers (Applebee & Langer, 2011). Teachers are bewilderd as they embark on a search for reasonable approaches to teach writing effectively (Coker & Lewis, 2008).

The research focused on eighth-grade students who were identified as struggling writers through a below-standard score on the seventh grade Washington State Writing Assessment (Office of Public Instruction, 2014). These students were posed questions about their writing experiences, attitudes, self-beliefs, confidence, and motivation. The researcher sought to examine and describe the perceptions of struggling adolescent writers and their writing experience in multiple middle school language arts classrooms. The current study may contribute potential answers for teachers to guide adolescent students to perform better on state writing assessments.

Over the past few decades, motivation has been of interest to many researchers (Alder, Milne, & Stablien, 2006; Turner & Meyer, 2006; Turner & Patrick, 2008). The most reliable indicator to generate motivation is the daily tasks teachers provide for students (Barry, 2007; Brophy, 2010; Deci & Ryan, 2006; Lipstein & Renninger, 2007; Sullo, 2007). A student's perception about the ability to write effectively influences his or her motivation and the outcome of the writing task. The factors of cognitive ability, social motivation, emotional reactions, and behavioral skills influence self-beliefs that predict

writing success (Bandura, 1993; Graham & Perin, 2007a; Pajares, Johnson, & Usher, 2007). Confidence is a key component in self-efficacy and is an important construct in distinguishing proficient writers from poor writers (Bandura, 2006b; Pajares, 2003). It also plays an important role in motivation, as do previous successful experiences, social models, the expressed opinion of others, and one's understanding of one's efficacy as it relates to his or her peers (Pressley & McCormick, 2009).

Juzwik et al. (2006) stated that students perception of writing tasks have not been widely researched in the literature. In fact, research has paid insufficient attention to the cognitive element of writing tasks (Buyse, 2006). Graham and Perin (2007a) stated, "improving writing instruction for adolescents, a topic that has not received enough attention from research or educators, is a necessity for writing as a predictor of academic success and is a requirement for participation in civic life" (p. 445). Previous researchers have utilized students' perceptions; however, students' responses were investigated through multiple-choice questionnaires or short-answer interviews, thus not allowing for a deeper understanding or an explanation of the students' responses. The current researcher used interviews to allow students to explain their perceptions and thinking.

Children think differently than adults and do not perceive their world or experience with adult logic and knowledge (Piaget, 1969). Therefore, conducting a study to synthesize adolescent perspectives of writing will benefit teachers' instructional practices and gain an insight into students' thinking. Commonalities found in the research may lead to proposed solutions for a writing teacher to consider when assisting a struggling adolescent writer. The current study seeks to investigate adolescents'

perceptions and contribute to improved writing instructional practices that enhance proficient writing.

Problem Statement

There is a gap in the research literature concerning the perspective of adolescent writers who scored below the standard on the Washington State Writing Assessment. Students at E Middle School have struggled with writing achievement, and, consequently, many seventh graders failed to meet state standards on the state writing assessment in 2014. Four areas are considered when scoring a seventh grade student's paper: ideas, style, organization, and conventions. Low scores in organization, conventions, and style indicate that the student has not been able to construct a cohesive and well-organized text,according to specific conventions; thus, the low scores in these areas contribute to their failure to meet minimum standards on the state's writing test.

Through the past decades, national studies have reported a need for students to become better writers (National Commission on Writing, 2004; 2010). National assessments show students are writing less, performing poorly, and are not being taught effectively (Hillocks, 2011). In fact, one third of graduating high school students are unprepared for the rigors of college. "Nationally, only 24% of ACT-tested high school graduates were college-ready in English, math, reading, and science" (Perna, 2010, p. 33). Writing teachers need to have a deeper understanding of adolescent writers' self-beliefs in order to guide and help them succeed in becoming proficient writers as measured by the state assessment in expository and persuasive writing. Presently, there are few studies in the research on adolescent writing in general, and there are none that

explore the perspective of adolescents. In addition, the research on adolescent writing in the literature is from the perspective of instruction and does not fully identify the complexity of writing or a struggling writer's perceptions.

Process-writing instructional programs allow students to choose their own topic and write with an authentic voice; unfortunately, very few of these programs are used in the classrooms because students must write to a preselected prompt (Gallagher, 2015). This limitation affects the content and perhaps limits the students' motivation to write (Hidi & Renninger, 2006). This problem affects adolescent writers and jeopardizes their ability to maintain or advance in becoming proficient writers on state assessments because writing is a practice-based skill, and unmotivated students write significantly less (Applebee & Langer, 2011).

Students' writing that is based on the five-paragraph essay format is formulaic; however, it reflects the way writing has traditionally been taught. Some educators adhere to prompted writing as it currently exists; their perception is rooted in strongly held traditional instructional beliefs. Adolescents, however, write more effectively if they choose topics that they know a lot about and have personal investment in. This kind of writing helps them to develop ownership in their work (Calkins, 2012).

The issue of prompted writing versus choice selected writing has been often argued among language arts teachers (Gallagher, 2011). Both positions seem clear, thoroughly supported, and well justified in the literature. The areas that have not been investigated are the students' perceptions and the instructional practices they prefer. Instruction in writing has two main purposes: to prepare students for a society that values

the written word (Gallagher, 2011; National Commission on Writing, 2004) and to assess student learning through writing and in many content areas (Wagner, 2008). Many language arts teachers have described seeing a lack of writing motivation; however, it has not been determined if the issue is student motivation or the prompted formulaic writing students are asked to perform.

There are many possible factors contributing to the problem of writing instruction. The instructional skills of the teacher, a teacher's ability to write well, the instructional methods, such as writing to a prompt selected by the state, and the objectiveness of the scorer on the assessment all contribute to the results (Gallagher, 2011). The writing process improves students' achievement in writing (Collopy, 2005; Davis, 1994; James, 2001); however, the Washington State Writing Assessment only encompasses the use of the process writing and neglects the motivational factor that authentic writing can give to some writers.

Process writing allows a writer to go through four or five stages that professional writers use in their writing (Collopy, 2005). It accommodates a writer's need to plan, brainstorm, organize, write, seek feedback, and revise their work (Goldstein & Carr, 1996). Process writing is a challenge for many students because they must demonstrate proficiency of many skills. Students must learn how to identify, analyze, and develop ideas (Muschla, 2006). The task of writing is complex as students must create choerent sentences, organize paragraphs, and articulate their ideas while using the rules of the English language. "Students must discover their style, develop their voice, and learn how to use precise diction that is fluent while being able to clearly write" (Muschla, 2006,

p.62). Writing is a multi-skilled process, and teachers must efficiently guide students to enable them to master writing in different genres. Motivation is essential in learning to write, and writing assessments should include authentic writing as part of the evaluation of proficient writers (Duke & Hall, 2007). Authentic writing allows the writer to write from his or her personal material and content of his or her actual life.

National reports have urged the educational system to examine the teaching of writing for adolescents; one recent report (National Commission on Writing, 2010) stated that the educational system is not doing enough. In fact, according to Schneider (2007) and the National Assessment of Educational Progress, "the majority of students (66%) do not write well enough to score a proficient mark" (p. 1). Equally important, one-third of students entering into college cannot write well enough to pass an entry level-writing course (Wagner, 2008). It has been acknowledged that adolescent writing instruction in the U.S. may be not meeting the needs of our students (National Commission on Writing, 2010). Although state assessments may not be authentic in terms of self selected writing (Hillocks, 2011), the assessments have indicated that students show a lack of proficiency. Continually, national surveys and assessments have showed that adolescents are writing less, performing poorly, and not taught effective writing skills (Applebee & Langer, 2006; Hillocks, 2011).

The trends and issues of writing in secondary schools suggest that writing is a complex and multi-faceted activity that requires a range of strategies and classroom support (Applebee & Langer, 2011; Graham & Perin, 2007a; Hillocks, 2011). The current researcher acknowledges the need for further research into "teacher behavior and student

attitudes toward writing" (Coker & Lewis, 2008). Coker and Lewis (2008) questioned the belief that teachers know what is best for low performing students, and they set out to study whether understanding the perspective of adolescent writers would give insight into how to improve struggling writers' performance. A student's perception about writing influences his or her motivation, application of skills, and even the outcome of their writing. A strong self-belief is a predictor of writing success. (Pajares et al., 2007).

Purpose of the Study

There is a gap in the current literature regarding adolescents' perspectives on writing, and this is a cause of concern for the national education system. According to Coker and Lewis (2008), a focus on struggling adolescent writers needs a closer examination because their development stage is different from that young writers and adult writers. In addition, writing scores on national tests have not improved over the past ten years due to instructional neglect and an increase of in learning demands on both teachers and students (Applebee & Langer, 2011). Sruggling writer presents a unique perspective that has not been investigated in the literature; most students are not proficient writers, so valid research can lead researchers to specific methods that may enhance low proficient writers' scores.

The purpose of the current case study was to examine the perceptions and experiences of struggling adolescent writers at E Middle School. The current study focused on using self-efficacy to examine the intrinsic or extrinsic influences that struggling writer's experience. Students need to learn, retain, and apply writing skills to increase scores on state assessments. As future employees, they must be able to write for

a variety of purposes and audiences; therefore, the demand on the educational system to develop proficient writers is paramount. The goal of the current study was to investigate struggling writers' perspectives to improve all students' writing skills.

Nature of the Study

Qualitative methodology was used in this study. Asking several students through a narrative model could have been helpful; however, Creswell (2007) stated narrative analysis would focus on the participant's life instead of a specific aspect, such as the participant's perception of writing motivation. For the purpose of the current study, a case study approach was the best fit.

The current qualitative case study closely examined and described the perceptions struggling adolescent writers have of their writing experience in multiple eighth grade classrooms. As Creswell (2010) stated, a case study focuses on the individuals' experiences and their interpretation of those experiences. Students' perceptions were collected and analyzed through face-to-face interviews. The qualitative data collected from this study was coded and synthesized according to Pajares and Valiante's (2006) self-efficacy categories of mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasions, and emotional state. This study might help improve writing achievement, understand the motivation from the perspective of struggling adolescent writers, and aid in creating change in the delivery of writing instruction, moving the instruction toward one that enhances student motivation and their writing.

Research Questions

A descriptive qualitative study is used to understand a phenomenon through the perspectives of the people involved (Merriam, 2002). The current research focused on describing, interpreting, and understanding adolescents' experiences in writing. The current study sought to inform the following research questions:

RQ1. What are the experiences of adolescents who struggle with writing?

RQ2. How do beliefs related to self-efficacy influence a struggling writer's perception of writing experiences in a middle school language arts classroom?

RQ3. What kind of instructional techniques and teacher behaviors do adolescents believe motivate them to achieve the learning objective in writing?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework underpinning this study is Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory. Self-efficacy is at the heart of his theory and encompasses a person's attitude, abilities, and cognitive skills (Carnell, 2006). This theory integrates a continuous interaction between behaviors, cognition, and the environment. Students must construct their own meaning through observational learning, and their own meaning will manifest as attention, retention, reciprocation, and motivation (Bandura, 1986). Self-efficacy will influence an individual's task choice, effort, persistence, and achievement (Bandura, 2006a; Schunk, 1996). To produce a favorable outcome, students are apt to employ activities that they believe will give a positive result, and they avoid those that might result in a negative consequence.

Definition of Terms

Authentic experience: Bagnato (2005) described an authentic experience as one that captures real-life competencies in everyday settings (p.18).

Authentic writing: Describes what is significant and is based on the writer's needs and interests, giving the writer motivation for the activity (Flanagan, 2010).

Constructivism: Richardson (1997) described constructivism as individuals creating their own knowledge and meaning from an interaction between their experiences and their ideas (p. 3).

Direct instruction: Instructional practice in which the teacher disseminates information by directing exactly what is to be learn and demonstrating the steps needed to accomplish a particular academic task (Applebee & Langer, 2011).

Emotional state: It is a state of mind that allows one to monitor or change by self-talk or self-awareness (Pajares & Valiante, 2006).

Extrinsic motivation: It is the motivational standard that appeals to external rewards or constraints (Brophy, 2010).

Intrinsic motivation: It is the motivational standard that exist within and appeals to the need to know through curiosity and competence (Brophy, 2010).

Mastery experience: Self-efficacy is a cyclic process in that successful outcomes caused by self-efficacy also increases self-efficacy (Pajares & Valiante, 2006).

Process writing: Successful writers and authors use these trategies that include prewriting, planning the writing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. The term is often used "synonymously with the workshop model" (James, 2001 pg. 9).

Self-efficacy: Refers to a psychological construct of a learner's self-perception of their ability to put a course of action required to obtain the objective (Pajares, 2006).

Social persuasion: It is a deliberate attempt on the part of one party to influence the attitudes or behavior of another party to achieve some predetermined end (Vander Zanden, 1996).

Traits of writing: It is ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions (Collopy, 2005).

Traditional teaching methods: It is a teaching method by which the teacher is the center of instruction, and the teacher utilizes lecture and teacher-led discussion (Coker & Lewis, 2008).

Vicarious experience: Refers to the arousal of emotional reactions in the observer (Bandura, 1986).

Writer's workshop: Calkins (2007) described this writing practice as a predicted scheduled time to participate in writing through mini-lesson, individual writing time, peer conferencing, and sharing one's writing (pp. 188-191).

Assumptions of the Study

It is implied that all students involved in the current study have teachers who are competent in teaching writing and are striving for the mastery of writing concepts by the students. It is assumed that all students reflected honestly about their writing experiences. The researcher allowed students the freedom of expression without manipulation. The researcher recruited and selected students that represent the overall student population and their diverse attitudes. Additionally, the researcher assumed that the teacher

involvement in selecting students for this study was done fairly and represents the population equally.

Scope, Delimitations, and Limitations of the Study

This study encompassed only a sample of students at E Middle School in Washington State. The current study included only those students who agreed to participate in the study and scored as *below standard* on their seventh grade state writing assessment. E Middle School is situated in an urban community; therefore, perspectives of students from the inner city schools will not be represented in the current study.

Among the limitations of this study were the sample size and cultural differences. It is unlikely that the results can be easily generalizable to a large population or to a group of students who have significantly different cultural and educational experiences. The assumptions that the selection process was accomplished objectively, that the teachers are competent, and that the students participation was genuine and honest all limit the validity of the study. It is expected, however, that the information obtained and the method used can be replicated in other settings, and the results can be coded for similar patterns.

Significance of the Study

Teachers often communicate their expectations for students to learn; however, their teaching practices might not be motivating the students. Although a teacher may think the writing lesson is well planned and engaging to the students, the intent of the lesson might not be transferred to those students. Therefore, a study that can guide a

teacher to a deeper understanding of struggling adolescents' motivational needs may lead to the selection of more effective teaching methods.

This study adds to the body of literature on effective writing strategies by examining the struggling students' perspectives about writing. The perspective of adolescents about writing is not well represented in the literature. This qualitative case study will help fill the gap in the literature.

According to the National Council of Teachers of English (1998), the use of timed writing can hamper the writing process. High-stakes testing can decrease the motivation of adolescents by shifting instruction away from the feedback and revision. Therefore, large scale assessment may delay or prevent high-quality teaching of writing to struggling writers or all students. Students are not performing up to the standards on state writing assessments; therefore, it poses a significant problem. This wide spread problem of struggling writers not scoring proficient on state assessments indicates that writing instruction is not allowing students to master the skills needed to be competent writers. Therefore, an aim of current study is to provide teachers of adolescents clearer insight into the needs of a struggling writer; with the needs of a struggling writer known, it will help teachers better motivate the students, and, in the end, it will improve results on state testing.

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Summary

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Writing is an important and difficult task for many students in the public school system. The manner in which the teacher motivates the students to write plays a significant role in the students demonstrating competence in writing (Gallagher, 2015).

The current study examined the perspectives of struggling adolescents in writing. The researcher collected data concerning writing experiences through interviews. The purpose of the current study examined the perspectives of struggling writer's experiences at E. Middle School.

Section 2 of the current study examined relevant literature in regards to learning theories, writing theories, and motivational theories as they connect to adolescents' writing. Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory is the foundation of the current study; however, the review of literature will go deeper while using his self-efficacy component. It explain the rationale for using a case study methodology design to investigate the research questions. A description of the methodology, interviewee selection process, data collection, and data analysis is presented in Section 3. Section 4 consists of the findings from this case study. Finally, Section 5 discuss the interpretation of the findings and social implications of the current study.

Section 2: Literature Review

The current study examined the phenomenon of adolescent writing motivation. Therefore, this review is organized to provide background on the literature regarding motivation that is required to write proficiently. Currently, a gap exists in the research literature regarding students' perception of what motivates them to write. Motivation for adolescents is a worthy construct to study in more depth to ascertain whether one's motivation to engage in a particular activity has an influence on his or her abilities to engage in basic, proficient, and advanced levels of literacy skill (Moje, 2006).

In fact, a student's logic of why he or she does something may not correspond to a teacher's set of assumptions (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2010). The struggle of students to become proficient in writing has created a problem for the educational system. The implication for the educational system from the results of this current study for Washington State teachers is to guide, motivate, and help adolescent students maintain and improve performance on standardized writing tests. The results from the current case study will assist teachers in administering effective writing instruction that motivates struggling writers. Furthermore, by increasing adolescents' writing abilities, it will increase their ability to perform in the work force by increasing effective communication.

Research Strategy

I conducted a literature review through academic books and articles. I used research databases and focused on addressing motivation and writing. Key words included the following: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, student achievement, student failure, writing, the writing process, improving writing, authentic writing, and

assessing writing. In particular, I performed the literature review to examine the complexity and history of motivation in education, a comparison and contrasts of research theory and practice, and finally, the importance of using students' perceptions of what motivates them to write. The theories referenced here represent a variety of ideas and concepts about motivation and writing. The articles used in this review were sourced mostly from current books and journals about teaching English, research on teaching English, and the psychology of motivation in the academic setting. Education Research Complete and ERIC served as research resources. Searches in the databases contained terms such as the following: *motivation, human behavior, writing, teaching writing, writing instruction, standardized testing, and adolescent development.* The sources used in the current literature review embody well-known motivational theories and writing specialties that other academic scholars have referenced.

During the literature searches, I sought information to explain motivation from an adolescent's point of view. Most of the studies reviewed contained students' perceptions using a Likert-type or limited-response survey; therefore, these studies were not allowing the student to explain what he or she thought about a question or topic. The current case study focused on academic achievement motivation through individual interviews to fill the gap in the literature relevant to adolescent's that struggle with writing.

Motivation in Education

Motivation is a biological, emotional, social, and cognitive behavior that initiates a person to act (Brophy, 2010; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2010). Motivation consistently and positively has been related to educational achievement (Brophy, 2010; Deci & Ryan,

2001; Pintrich & Schunk, 2001; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2010). Educators must exercise instructional techniques that will keep students motivated and eager to learn, improving opportunities for students to experience academic success.

The definitions of motivation in the academic literature through different fields (psychology, sociology, and education) differ in the definitions. Despite the differences, one common assumption is that motivation causes human beings to choose to focus on certain tasks and persist in doing them (Brophy, 2010). A definition of motivation simply stated by Deci and Ryan (2001) is, "to be motivated means to be moved to do something" (pg 3). Achievement motivation specifically refers to performance on tasks wherein standards of value are vigorous and worthwhile (Wigfield, Eccles, Roeser, & Schiefele, 2008). Academic motivation requires a student to work towards the expected outcome and evaluated by the teacher. Through the influence of the students' beliefs and by their desire to learn and the effort they put forth. Therefore, a student perspection becomes important when beliefs are evaluated.

Motivation is necessary to complete a difficult task (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003; Wlodkowski, 2008). Theorists, educators, and researchers have agreed that there is a need for motivating students and that methods of inspiring them to accomplish a task are numerous (Brophy, 2010; Deci & Ryan, 2006; Gallagher, 2015; James, 2001; Pajares & Valiante, 2001; Stipek, 2002). When motivating students to write, however, there are some significant theories that may come into play because writers might exhibit low self-worth and confidence, which can impede learning (Hidi & Boscolo, 2010; Sullo, 2007). Reviewing the literature and formulating a foundation on

the motivation research for the current study began with an examination of over 80 years of research. However, there are many theories of academic motivation that build on previous concepts, for instance, the expectancy value theory as discussed by Atkinson (1957), Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (1970), Weiner's attribution theory (1974), Bandura's social cognitive theory (1977), the need to achieve theory introduced by Murray (1988), and the goal theory by Pintrich (2000a). The primary motivational theories have evolved from Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory (1971) on which the current study is based.

Motivational scientists in the past decades have emphasized that motivation is internally controlled (Fiske, 2010). Fiske (2010) further described motivation as a means for self-enhancement. Furthermore, Fiske (2010) explained that social interaction, self-efficacy, and psychological processes are necessary to consider when determining one's motivational level. All of these factors are governed by emotions, such as self-evaluation of performance, prideful feelings of accomplishment, or the guilt felt with failure (Saarni, Campos, Camras, & Withrington, 2008). Individuals present their own realities on what they find to be motivating (Deci & Ryan, 2006). A student can only interpret a learning experience based on his or her unique perspective, experiences, and beliefs about the academic endeavor (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2010). In fact, Brophy (2010) described student motivation as, "The degree to which students invest attention and effort in various pursuits, which may or may not be the ones desired by their teachers" (p. 3). Students' efforts to complete the learning goals is inherently dependent on their desire to learn (Sullo, 2007).

In the 1960s, motivational scientists investigated motivation through rewards and feedback (Atkinson, 1957). Through the application of scientific wisdom, these beliefs summarized that human behavior is the result of environmental factors (Sullo, 2007). This is known in the literature as extrinsic motivation, explaining that humans want and seek immediate rewards and feedback when striving to obtain a goal (Flanagan, 2010). For example, a student would be putting forth effort for a good grade and for positive feedback from the teacher. An educational system or classroom that use external rewards devalues learning (Fisk, .

However, a shift occurred and motivational scientists began focusing on intrinsic motivation after the introduction of Deci's study in 1971, wherein internal desires and rewards were introduced with self-determination and goal theories were explained and explored. In addition, Deci (1971) believed that extrinsic motivation could become self-determined through transferring the extrinsic reward to a value and then being adopted internally. Deci and Ryan (1991) believed that autonomy, competence, and relatedness were fundamental to the learner in their efforts to achieve the goal. If this fundamental principle is fulfilled, the student will act autonomously and be self-determined. According to Deci, Schwartz, Sheinman, and Ryan (1991), the learner in his or her efforts to achieve his or her goals must use autonomy, competence, and relatedness as fundamental building blocks to success.

A shift occurred in the 1970s when researchers began to focus on intrinsic motivation. With intrinsic motivation, the learner acts or responds for the satisfaction inherent to the behavior itself (Deci & Ryan, 2001). Thus, the learner will engage in the

learning because of curiosity and the pure enjoyment of the activity rather than for perceived external reward. Intrinsically motivated learners care about learning through emotions, interest, concentration, and self-satisfaction. Intrinsic motivation fits well in one's ability to perform adequately on a writing assignment because a motivated learner pays closer attention to the instruction and puts forth the necessary effort to achieve the academic goal (Brophy, 2010) Motivation that is internalized by an individual has been found to be valid for improving students' academic success (Brophy, 2010).

Intrinsic motivation has been deemed more desirable than extrinsic motivation when it comes to education (Brophy, 2010; Deci & Ryan, 2006; Koestner, 2008; Pajares, & Valiante, 2006; Pintrich & Schunk, 2001). Students are asked to do many tasks that they are not intrinsically motivated to perform (Deci & Ryan, 2001). There is a sense of obligation or responsibility to perform the tasks given to them; however, the students are not interested in the activity. Consequently, teachers often remedy an unengaged student by using extrinsic motivation. It is easier and less time consuming than developing intrinsic motivation within the students. Teachers need to forgo the ease of extrinsic motivation and create an environment of intrinsic motivation to sustain self-efficacy (Deci, 1971), giving a student the incentive to persist, exert great effort, and more readily approach difficult tasks. It is self-efficacy that maintains a high level of motivation because a student who believes in the intrinsic value of actions and efforts will strive for positive outcomes (Bandura, 1986).

Self-Efficacy Theory

In 1977, Bandura introduced a cognitive model of learning and development known as self-efficacy. He defined self-efficacy as an, "individual's confidence in their ability to organize and execute a given course of action to solve a problem or accomplish a task" (pg. 2). He further explained that achievement, performance, choice, and persistence were dependent on one's self-efficacy. Furthermore, self-efficacy has many components, such as positive or negative strengths of the individual, the ability to generalize to many situations or just a few, and the difficulty of task. In other words, self-efficacy is the confidence a person holds in his or her abilities. Students formulate understanding about his or her self-efficacy from their performances, observations, and physiological reactions (Schunk & Pajares, 2002). Schunk (1991) characterized students who have a high success rate with academic tasks as people who developed a high level of self-efficacy while students with low academic success developed low self-efficacy. Adolescents work harder and longer and commit more willingness to a task where success and accomplishment is evident (Barry, 2007). Therefore, a student's level of confidence and academic success is contingent on the motivation to learn.

The importance of a student's confidence and willingness to approach a task is clearly articulated in numerous studies. Pajares (1996) recommended for researchers to ask students to articulate their confidence level before the learning because it is more clarifying and analytical for making general academic judgments. If a student states their perceived confidence in her or his ability to write, it will significantly influence the individual's success. If anxiety or writing apprehension is present, a student is less willing

to engage, persist, or complete the writing task. Equally important is the student's

perceived value or purpose of the writing task (Pajares, 2008). It is beneficial for teachers

to be proactive as they support their students' self-beliefs. Confidence is built with

success and persistence to accomplish a goal. Goal setting is one intervention that can

help motivate students in their cognitive development (Gallagher, 2015).

Developmental Aspects of Self-Efficacy During Adolescence

The changes in development that occur in adolescence affect the self-efficacy

beliefs of adolescents. Many argue that hormones are responsible for the many changes

that occur during this period. However, there is also developments and changes in the

structure of the social systems that cannot be underestimated. As opposed to early school

settings, adolescents have many teachers, and this requires an improvement in

management of expectations and assignments (Zimmerman & Cleary, 2008). In addition,

the workload increases as adolescents progress from middle school to high school. If an

adolescent does not effectively handle the increased academic demand, the grades or

mandatory state writing assessments is bound to stay stagnant or decrease; in addition,

their efficacy beliefs revolving around their ability to succeed in school will also decline.

Self-Efficacy in Writing and Motivation in Adolescents

Within a specific academic domain, self-efficacy may be assessed as warranted by

a criterion task (Schunk & Meece, 2010). Schunk and Meece (2010) noted that assessing

whether a student have perceived competence in performing well in an English class is

not a fine-grained measure because an English class encompasses numerous areas and

sub-skills, including writing and reading.

Deegan (2010) conducted a study to explore writing self-efficacy among adolescent girls. The study elaborated on the connection between participation in a creative writing program and the improvement or development of self-efficacy in creative writing in addition to other areas, such as academic motivation. The researcher used a revision of the listening guide methodology. Thus, examining the individual voices from interview transcripts, and analyzed them together with the researcher's personal synthesis and personal impressions. Deegan used eighteen participants from a mentoring program for teen girls. Electronic methods were utilized for data collection and data analysis (Deegan, 2010). The study concluded that there were a strong connection between confidence in writing and confidence in other content areas. The researcher also established a link between participation in a creative writing program and creative writing confidence.

Spicer (2012) investigated the written English self-efficacy of secondary school students in Australia. The author pointed out that how a student felt about written English affects their persistence and motivation to complete English tasks and the amount of effort that the student will expend on his or her academic tasks. The study assessed the motivation, written English self-efficacy, and creativity of adolescent students. The students were grouped into verbally gifted, non-verbally gifted, and non-gifted. The study also examined the influence of socioeconomic status and gender on the writing abilities of the participants. The author concluded that gender influences writing self-efficacy. Females enjoyed more motivation and writing self-efficacy. Female adolescents perceive themselves to be superior writers than their male counterparts. In turn, they scored higher

on writing self-efficacy. Teachers increase writing self-efficacy of the students and motivate the students when the teachers model effective problem-solving behaviors or when the teachers provide students with positive feedback. The author recommended that teachers include goal setting on students with low self-efficacy to increase their motivation level. Another motivational measure is to teach the students self-regulation strategies in writing composition (Spicer, 2012).

Shell, Murphy, and Bruning (2006) designed a study that examined writing and reading self-efficacy and achievement in 153 White adolescents. They administered a writing and reading self-efficacy questionnaire, a writing and reading outcome expectancy instrument, and a timed, holistically scored written essay. Results from the study showed that self-efficacy accounted for a variance in writing and reading. However, these results cannot be generalized because of the homogenous, unrepresentative sample.

Group differences have been demonstrated in self-efficacy revolving around adolescent's writing and motivation. Gender is one of the aspects that attribute to a self-efficacy difference among adolescents. Wigfield, Eccles, and Pintrich (2007) pointed out that it is not uncommon to observe gender variations in measures of academic self-beliefs and motivation. Jacobs, Lanza, Osgood, Eccles, and Wigfield (2002) noted that self-competence beliefs in writing become increasingly differentiated by gender as the age increases. Pajares and Valiante (2009) completed a study in middle schools. The researchers discovered a significant gender differences in writing self-efficacy that

favored girls in middle school. However, the difference became non-significant when female orientations beliefs were controlled.

Culture is another aspect that contributes to group self-efficacy differences among adolescents. Bandura (2006a) noted that there is a large number of studies that have examined establishing cross-cultural generalizability of the self-efficacy theory. Bandura demonstrated that students from countries that practiced authoritarian educational structures have a lower sense of efficacy when assuming responsibility for their own learning. According to Oettingen and Zosuls (2006), adolescents from Asian cultures have a lower self-efficacy belief even though they have a higher performance level. This finding disputed the correlation between culture and adolescents' self-efficacy.

Asian students and those from collectivist cultures rate their efficacy as lower than the students from individualist cultures, though this is not correlated with motivation and achievement (Oettingen & Zosuls, 2006). To validate this, Schunk and Meece (2010) compared the self-efficacy beliefs of Hispanic, White, and African American students. However, the study produced inconsistent findings and have no clear pattern. The specificity of the self-efficacy beliefs that were assessed were attributed to the inconsistent findings. When one is studying ethnic or racial differences in self-efficacy beliefs among adolescents, other variables should also be considered, such as second-language learners and socioeconomic status.

Measuring Writing Self-Efficacy

To study beliefs about self-efficacy, it is imperative to be able to effectively measure these viewpoints, as there is no single measure of perceived self-efficacy,

however, there are numerous "domain-specific self-efficacy scales" (Shell et al., 2006). Perceived self-efficacy is the judgment of the capability of a person to execute certain performances. A typical self-efficacy scale (from 0 to 100) may ask adolescents to rate their confidence of carrying out a specific task, for example writing a research paper on a teacher-assigned topic. According to Pajares and Valiante (2006), it is important to specifically, thoughtfully, and accurately assess self-efficacy.

Shell et al. (2006) developed and revised the most commonly used measures of writing self-efficacy beliefs among adolescents. According to Shell et al. (2006), each instrument contained a task subscale in addition to a component skills subscale. Items from the writing task subscale asked adolescent students to rate their confidence in being able to write a research paper from several references (on a scale of 0 to 100). Items from the writing components subscale scales asked students to rate their confidence in being able to complete nine different writing tasks (on a scale of 0 to 100). Accurately comprehending writing self-efficacy beliefs is essential when helping educators understand students' underlying choices, academic motivation, and behaviors in specific domains (Shell et al., 2006).

Writing Self-Efficacy Interventions

There is useful interventions that can be utilized to increase writing self-efficacy and motivate students to perform better. Self-efficacy beliefs is important in academic success because they add to the motivational behavior of adolescents. Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2008) proposed that self-efficacy influences cognitive engagement through meta-cognition and strategy used. Self-efficacy influenced behavioral engagement

through persistence, effort, and instrument help seeking. Self-efficacy also influenced motivational engagement through value, affect, and interest because all of these influenced achievement and learning. Henceforth, when teachers utilize self-efficacy enhancement strategies, underachieving students become motivated and experience academic improvements. This is because the students will improve their ability to persist, improve their use of strategies, and cultivate their interest in the content area.

Schunk and Meece (2010) emphasized using instructional methods that incorporated teacher modeling for writing, goal setting, progress feedback, and self-evaluation progress. Walker (2007) described various related ways for teachers to implement interventions in promoting higher writing self-efficacy. These methods included encouraging strategic thinking, giving students more choices in the curriculum, changing the assessment types used in the classroom, and providing self-evaluation opportunities (Walker, 2007). Similarly, Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2008) developed the following recommendations: teachers should academically challenge students in a manner that can be most successful after exerting effort; teachers should help students in maintaining high but accurate beliefs; teachers should foster the belief that ability is not a static entity but one that can be improved and changed upon over time; and that the teacher should promote domain-specific self-efficacy rather than improving upon the students' general self-esteem.

In addition, Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2008) noted that most parents and teachers would agree that there is various situations in which students' misinformed self-beliefs is responsible for their academic shortchange. In situations such as these, students would

greatly benefit from teachers who identify, alter, and challenge these inaccurate and misinformed judgments. An equally important concept that is embedded into to self-efficacy is goal setting.

Goal-Setting Theory

There is two broad categories for goal orientation (Pintrich, 2000a). First is an academic or learning goal that involves the task, or mastery goal orientation. Students focus on improvement of the task and move toward mastery of that task or skill. The second refers to performance or ego orientation. Students will focus on the self-satisfaction of the task and diminish the negative evaluations they might experience. There is a need for adolescents support of performance goals more than academic goals because middle schools might be favoring performance goals (Wigfield et al., 2008). This finding was not the same for elementary students; therefore, over time these changes in adolescents' beliefs might influence their academic success. If change transpires over time, it is apparent that self-set academic goals, which will allow the student to self-evaluate his or her performance, become critical in enhancing or maintaining healthy motivation. While evaluating self-efficacy, one must also understand the principles of self-determination.

Self-Determination Theory

The self-determination theory (SDT) introduced by Deci (1971) is accepted as a sound empirical theory. Extensive research consisted of comparison of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of human behavior. In combination with numerous researchers and their studies, SDT evolved and explained that an individual looks at a task and evaluates

it in terms of the individual's competency and how much control he or she will have over

the task. When a student feels competent that he or she will be successful completing a

task, that student will experience autonomy and self-worth. As this occurs, the individual

is intrinsically motivated because of the pure interest and enjoyment of the task. In

essence, the level to which an individual's behavior is self-motivated and self-determined

is the criterion used in SDT.

Learning environments that support students' perceived competence and

autonomy resulted in improved student engagement, persistence, and mastery of skills.

Brophy (2010) suggested promoting self-determination in the classroom and

recommended embedding these concepts to (a) state the rationale of the purpose and

personal importance of the learning activity; (b) acknowledge students' feelings; and (c)

manage the classroom and instruction, utilizing a style that includes choice rather than

control. For 36 years, Deci refined and pursued his work with many other motivational

researchers, and his research increased considerably in the last decade. In fact, many

theories have emerged from his work; for example, Bandura's (1986) social cognitive

theory addressed the complexity of social interactions and motivation; Weiner's (1985)

attribution theory described how choice will influence future actions; and Pajares and

Johnson's (1996) self-efficacy theory materialized from Bandura's social cognitive

theory, encompassing interplay between a self-control system and environmental

influences.

Pajares (2003) concluded that self-efficacy for writing showed a decline with age;

however, some researchers found that the attitude toward writing increased negatively

among middle and high school students (Graham, Berninger, & Abbott, 2012). Therefore, the wide spectrum of findings in the literature and the lack of adolescents' perspectives is the basis of this study. The researcher focused on Pajare's (1996) suggestions that four sources of human behavior should be explored: mastery experience, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasions, and physiological states. The strongest source of efficacy is the mastery experience as the physiological state is the weakest source.

Mastery Experience

Pajares (1996) stated, "individuals gauge the effects of their actions, and their interpretations of these effects help create their efficacy beliefs" (pg. 551). Therefore, if a student is successful at a task, there will be an increase in self-efficacy; failure will decrease self-efficacy. Mastery of a task is the most influential source to improve self-efficacy, and it directly enhanced academic achievement (Bandura, 1986). Teachers' efforts should focus on improving students' self-worth, competence to improve confidence, and academic performance.

Student engagement can be increased with a moderately challenging activity (Turner & Paris, 1995). When a moderately challenging activity is presented to students, they discover new learning, adding to their understanding of the material and eventually adding to their competence. With this new learning, the students can reorganize, evaluate, and learn at a deeper level. A moderately challenging activity will set a purpose for learning for the students while still offering an opportunity for success. A high level challenge can be discouraging to students who might be less likely to be willing to take a risk. A low level challenge can cause boredom. When one is working at an optimal level,

it often becomes its own reward. A moderately challenging activity will increase

engagement, enhance concentration, boost interest, increase effort, and produce more

enjoyment (Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Schneider, & Shernoff, 2003). When students

learn something new, they discover, add meaning to their world, and have fun. It is

important to understand that fun is the genetic payoff for learning (Glasser, 1998), and

this is a connection that is important to the classrooms and school system. However,

learning needs to challenge students enough to implore new experiences while not being

so difficult that it causes frustration (Carnell, 2006). Optimal motivation allows students

to achieve a high level of success while exerting a reasonable level of effort (Brophy,

2010).

Vicarious Experience

It is the actions of others that can produce efficacy information to an individual

(Pajares, 1996). Social comparisons can be valuable because the success of others

allowed the individual to witness accomplishment, evaluation, and apply their abilities to

the task. By observing peers complete or execute a task, it suggests that they too can be

competent at the accomplish of the task (Schunk, 1991). Social environments promote

intrinsic or self-determination motivation when students felt a connection to others, able

to perform effectively, and felt a sense of personal initiative (Brophy, 2010). Peer

interface and the satisfaction that comes with it can be a strong foundation for motivation

(Moorefield-Lang, 2010). Peers can increase curiosity or interest within an individual.

Many students experience an increased confidence in their own ability when present with

peers (Schunk & Pajares, 2002).

Human beings are known to be social animals. Cooperative learning increased student engagement (Slavin, 1988) through social interaction. It is easier to persist or increase effort when others give support and encouragement. It is the observation of others' behaviors, attitudes, and thinking that promotes engagement and learning.

Verbal Persuasions

Peers or others can influence self-efficacy by the verbal or social judgments received from others (Zeldin & Pajares, 2000). Judgments can be either strong praise or encouraging statements about one's abilities. The communication must cultivate a sense that success is attainable. Caution must be given to the persuader because, "it is easier to weaken self-efficacy beliefs through negative appraisals than to strengthen such beliefs through positive encouragement" (Bandura, 1986, p. 72).

One can develop high or low self-efficacy explicitly through other's modeling or performance. For example, watching others perform and then comparing his or her ability to the witnessed behavior can influence students (Bandura, 1977). As a result, when one sees someone similar to their ability be successful at a task, it can increase self-efficacy. However, the opposite is also true; seeing someone similar fail can decrease one's self-efficacy. Verbal persuasion can be given in various modes, such as suggestion, exhortation, self-instruction, and interpretive modeling (Bandura, 1977). Bandura suggested that enhancing one's self-efficacy can be best achieved through verbal persuasion that evaluates feedback when one's current performance is slightly better than his or her pervious performance level.

Physiological States

Individuals have the capacity to alter their own mental state, such as anxiety, stress, arousal, fatigue, and mood states, and altering a state can contribute to a person's success (Pajares & Johnson, 1996). One can gauge confidence as he or she thinks about a plan of attack to the task. Furthermore, when one allows fears about his or her abilities to guide their actions, a negative result can transpire.

Learning is achievable by a student's ability to set a level that is attainable by the individual (Schunk, 1991). Students with self-doubt expend low effort on difficult tasks. In contrast, students with a high self-concept will select a task at which they can achieve, expend effort, and persevere for a longer time. When students feel they have a real grasp of the content and felt competent with the subject matter, as well as feel in control of their learning and of the outcome of the task, a high concept of self emerges. Control can enhance their willingness to take risks, reorganize, and or persist to achieve to mastery level. With competency, a student will become independent and show versatility. These factors allow an individual to take responsibility for his or her learning. It will become a habit that influences thinking and serves the student throughout life.

Ultimately, self-efficacy is the process in which individuals become competent. It is through the decisions or actions the individuals make that provide the course of action they pursue. Humans strive for power in their lives, power being more than just dominance; it is gained through competence, achievement, and mastery (Sullo, 2007). Knowing that, genetically, humans have internally drive to achieve leaves educators to teach students how to be powerful in a responsible way. Hence, a student who believes he

or she controls learning will strive for higher achievement and should feel more competent. Skinner (1996) explained a learner's action that will lead to outcomes that subsequently become influenced by an individual's perception of control.

Motivation & Learning in Middle Grades

A relationship between writing and motivation follows a similar pattern to motivation and learning. Middle school students embark on a myriad of academic writing tasks each day. The writing tasks can range from a five-paragraph essay to a journal response to a scientific laboratory report. McVey (2008) identified two categories that students find when writing: problems of ability and problems of engagement. "Problems of ability are those related to the act of writing, such as understanding language, grammar, and written structures. Problems of engagement are related to the student's motivation" (McVey, 2008, 42). Some students view writing as an arduous task or just a way to achieve a grade. Students must make a cognitive and affective decision on the amount of involvement they invest in the writing task. Equally important is the way students feel about their writing skills. Their competency on the content they must write affects their motivation to write. These processes required both cognitive and affective concentration, which only adds to the complexity of writing itself.

Skinner, Zimmer-Gembeck, and Connell (1998) found that student engagement declined during middle school and may begin to ebb as early as third grade. It is, therefore, evident that motivation of adolescents is crucial to understanding the factors associated with the decline. Pajares and Valiante (2001) performed a study in which they investigated gender differences of motivation among middle school students. Their

conclusion found that girls described a stronger self-efficacy, self-concept, self-efficacy

for self-regulation, valued writing, goals, and have higher grades in language arts. Boys,

on the other hand, reported performance goals as their strongest motivator. A student's

perceptions about his or her academic abilities and self-efficacy is an essential factor of

motivation that will influence the success of a writing task. In fact, achievement and later

motivation will influence a student to engage in the activity in the future (Becker,

McElvay, & Kortenbruck, 2010). A student's beliefs about his or her academic

capabilities set into motion cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses resulted in

higher success in writing. Teachers who provide challenging, meaningful tasks and who

believed in their students will cultivate a stronger student with confidence to succeed. A

student with a greater belief that he or she can master skills and control his or her

learning will master skills at a faster rate.

Summary

Much of the motivational research has focused on academic or immediate tasks of

motivation. The theories discussed in this review of literature dealt with students'

abilities, choice, and level of engagement in different tasks. Students may be forced to

complete a task they are not interested in; therefore, they may not be invested or

motivated to complete the task. Students can have a variety of reasons or goals for

engaging in different activities, further influencing their motivation. For students to

engage in learning, they must understand the usefulness of the task. By connecting the

various theories in the classroom, students will have a higher academic self-perception

that, in turn, will influence their confidence to engage in an academic task.

The debate about the pros and cons of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation continued in the literature. Intrinsic motivation is for the mere sake or interest in the activity, whereas extrinsic motivation used external rewards. Both served a purpose in education; however, intrinsic motivation is preferred for students' attainment of autonomy and for a desire to continue learning. Overall, a decline in adolescents' confidence in writing might not be nurtured as they progress through school; ironically, "the vast majority of students begin school believing that they can write" (Calkins, 1994). Schools share in the responsibility to incorporate motivational theories as a way to develop confidence and competence in students throughout their education endeavors. A student's self-beliefs can more accurately predict motivation; therefore, using students' responses in the current case study becomes important to fill a gap in the literature and to develop change in educational instructional practices.

Section 3 details and describes the research design used by the researcher to obtain and analyze the data. It explains the ethical considerations, protections, and the role of the researcher. A description of the criteria for selecting participants, data collection, the analysis protocol, and methods used to validate the research is described. The research design is constructed on the following research questions: (a) what are the experiences of adolescents who struggle with writing, (b) how do beliefs related to self-efficacy influence a struggling writer's perception of writing experiences in a middle school language arts classroom, and (c) what kind of instructional techniques and teacher behaviors do adolescents believe motivate them to achieve the learning objective in

writing? Sections 4 and 5 describe the results of the study and address suggestions for

future educational practices on the subject of writing instruction.

Section 3: Research Method

The purpose of the current case study is to find common themes through interviews of students' lived experiences in writing instruction from E. Middle School. The current study addressed a gap in research literature concerning the type of motivation a struggling adolescent writer expected from their teacher when the teacher attempted to encourage creative, authentic writing on state assessments. The problem is that students were faced with writing proficiency expectations and, consequently, many seventh graders at E. Middle School failed to meet state standards on the state writing assessment in 2014. Therefore, the current study focused on perceptions of struggling eighth grader writers and the motivating behaviors given by their teachers, instructional practices, and their interpretations of authentic writing. The purpose is to fill the gap in the literature to understand writing from the student's perspective. Section 3 includes the research methods used for this case study, the rationale for these research methods, a description of the population under investigation, the techniques used when gathering the data, the procedures for obtaining permission of participants, the analysis of the data, and the role of the researcher.

This Section examines the research methods that were employed. Further, the methods employed to improve and maintain the reliability, credibility, and trustworthiness of the findings generated by the present investigative undertaking is examined. It introduces the process of research and then gives details on how the case study's qualitative data was used.

Research Design

The research questions for the current study were (a) what are the experiences of adolescents who struggle with writing, (b) how do beliefs related to self-efficacy influence a struggling writer's perception of writing experiences in a middle school language arts classroom, and (c) what kind of instructional techniques and teacher behaviors do adolescents believe motivate them to achieve the learning objective in writing? The basis of this investigation focused on these questions. As a result, appreciation of the phenomenon of writing may be expanded, and therefore, teachers of adolescence can better understand the learning process and improve instruction in the area of writing and overall motivation.

The purpose of the current case study was to allow students a voice to be heard concerning their motivation in completing writing assignments. An aim of this research was to guide teachers in implementing instructional practices that account for intrinsic motivation of the writer. Overall, the current study gained a perspective of the lived experiences of adolescents.

Hussey and Hussey (2009), a research process is a sequence of five steps: defining the problem, designing the study, gathering data, analyzing the results, and interpreting the data. Research can be distinguished as either deductive or inductive. Deductive exploration starts from general to specific, and it is driven by theoretical knowledge, whereas the inductive approach works from specific experiential data and moves to broader simplification.

The selection or distinguishing between both strategies depended on the nature of research questions. Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2010) stated that the research purpose and the nature of research could be used with more than one strategy at a time. Through an examination of concise research strategies that I constructed a general plan to formulate and address the research questions, gather the data, analyze the data, make recommendations and understand the limitations of this study. This is a qualitative narrative case study research study.

Approach

For the current study, I used the qualitative case study methodology because it is a feasible approach to the problem of defining what struggling students considered as motivating them to write successfully on state writing assessments. The purpose of a case study is to reveal the "essence of a person's lived experience" (Creswell, 2010); therefore, this methodology adhered well with trying to understand the drive to write or difficulties from a struggling student's perspective. The lived experience consisted of perceptions, imagination, thoughts, emotions, and desires (Creswell, 2010). The participants' shared experience were lived with the researcher. The participants' shared experiences with the researcher allow construction of knowledge that themes, conclusions and recommendations can emerge. Based on the students' rich descriptions and the multiple themes that emerged through the interviews, this research generated ideas and hypotheses that will improve writing instruction in classrooms.

Because this study investigated the student's perceptions, a case study is used, as it investigated the complexity of an issue by inquiring through questions a person's life

(Creswell, 2010), becoming a description and interpretation process of the person's lived experiences. This design is meant to investigate a topic from a standpoint other than discovering the phenomenon. Therefore, a case study is a fitting design for this research.

There are few studies that ask students about their school experiences. In addition, students' perceptions of their experiences as it affects their intrinsic or extrinsic motivation are even less common. Studies sought student opinions, however, it has been usually done in a survey form, not allowing them to explain, expand, or question the framework of the question. Consequently, the researcher made the decision for a case study approach that would reveal and explore a student's lived experiences. The students told their stories in their language, rendering the data from their experiences.

Qualitative research, according to Lester (2009), is a "development of inquiry to understand a human or social phenomenon" (p.1). Linda (2009) stated that qualitative research is not presented in the form of numbers but uses themes to explain the data. A definition by Gay and Airasian (2008) described qualitative research as a "collection of data on a variety of topics over time in a setting to gain insights that are not possible with any other type of research." (p.2). When the research's purpose is to investigate the meaning of a phenomenon, qualitative methodology is the primary framework to base the research. There is no statistical measurement in its place, and the word of the subjects is used to unveil the meaning or themes (Linda & Alison, 2010).

Malhotra (2010) stated that quantitative research is the "examination into human or social problems on the basis of testing a theory that is compiled of different variables, measured with numbers and is analyzed with statistics that will determine the validity of

analytical generalization of a theory" (pg. 36). In summary, Guba & Lincoln (2010)

defined quantitative research as experimental research that used a method in which the

experimental tests is being evaluated by data that is in the form of numbers. It is with

qualitative methods that attitudes, behaviors, emotional states, and perceptions can be

explored (Linda & Alison, 2010).

The basic purpose of the case study research is to emphasize the phenomenon (i.e.

how the participants of the human experience interpret it; Creswell, 2010). In general, it

entails gathering insights and perceptions through qualitative, inductive methods such as

discussions, interviews, and participant observations. These common experiences are

used to explore and articulate a deeper appreciation about the characteristics of the

phenomenon (Creswell, 2010). A case study can categorize the themes that clarify

inferences and draw attention to various conditions (Lester, 2009). However, I wished to

discover the core of the students' perceptions; a phenomenological study narrative or a

grounded theory research design would not provide the essences phenomenon. *Essence*

refers to the meaning of an experience within a predetermined context. *Lived experience*

is another important term to case studies and is used in the literature (Creswell, 2010). A

lived experience is how one lives through an event and then describes it through recall

memory. When one is able to recall the event, it becomes meaningful and becomes "an

object of consciousness" (Kleiman, 2004, p.10). Finally, *lifeworld* is used in the literature

as well. It means to exist in the world and have everyday experiences. The experiences

then become personal and shared; the person experiences it alone but shares it with

others. Berndtsson, Claesson, Friberg, & Ohlen (2009) stated, "it is impossible to

transcend the lifeworld because it is where we live, act and have experiences" (p. 259).
Therefore, it is considered first when using a case study.

The current study gained a variety of descriptions of motivation as they pertained to writing in a classroom. Students approached writing from multiple perspectives, so it is necessary to gain a broad spectrum of participants to draw conclusions and make inferences that can add to an understanding of a struggling writer's experience.

Quantitative research is a formal, objective, and methodical procedure where numerical data is used to quantify the results for interpretation by the researcher. Experimental designs focused on the cause and effect relationship through the tests, descriptions, and examination of phenomena through deductive reasoning that will produce the knowledge or results (Linda, 2009). The current study would not meet the criterion of quantitative research because it is based on the words of the participant and not the numbers associated with quantitative research.

By using a small sample size in the form of individuals' interviews, qualitative research followed a loosely defined pathway that can be applied to the understanding of the phenomena. Therefore, the implementation of open-ended questions with subtopics that all students answered equally established a consistency in the data set and allowed all participants the opportunity to make meaning themselves. The current study used a smaller sample of articulate students because they were able to express their understanding of intrinsic motivation when completing a writing assignment or assessment.

Setting and Sample

Under the conjecture of case study methods, I purposely selected participants for this study from a population of eighth graders attending E. Middle School from multiple classrooms; I selected them based on their seventh grade state writing assessment of a rating of below standard. Any students I had previously taught or students assigned to my class rooster were not used in this study. A consent letter was sent to three-fourths of the eight grade students at E. Middle School, requesting the parent or guardian volunteer their child for the study. The letter was sent to their parent's or guardian's home address (Appendix B). Once a parent or guardian volunteered the child, I sent an assent letter asking students if they would like to participate in a interview about their understanding of what motivates them to write; the letter also gave the details about the study (Appendix C).

Potential participants were willing to meet with me in a face-to-face interview for approximately 60 minutes. Students were interviewed and recorded via a digital sound recorder to help present a fuller picture of their experiences in writing motivation, and this occurred until data saturation happened. I wrote field notes, recorded the interview on a digital sound recorder, and used the bracketing technique of journaling to refrain from interjecting my ideas into the interview, which ensured that the participant had not been lead to a certain response. The interviews were transcribed promptly into a print collection of the participants' words to better prepare the data for a formal examination. The participant reviewed the transcription the next day for accuracy and clarity. The use

of audio recording and transcription assisted in the validity of the study, and the peer

reviewer and I reviewed it for accuracy and interpretations.

Data Collection

The data was gathered from face-to-face interviews. An agreement to use the data

was signed by the school district. Participants were asked to participate in face-to-face

interviews to express their experiences in a manner useful for answering the research

questions. Data was collected from the participants with a face-to-face interview

instrument that I created; this instrument contained five questions encompassing self-

efficacy, goals, self-determination, mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal

persuasion, and physiological states (Appendix A). The questions were composed to

enable the participants to easily respond by utilizing open and close-ended formats. The

questions were open-ended because they allowed participants to add their own opinions

and ideas. However, each question contained probing questions that assisted the

participants' focus on the research questions.

The questions were worded using simple terms to guarantee responses that

ensured that the participants were comfortable in answering the questions. During the

interview, I asked the questions in the same order for each participant, except Subject A, I

skipped a question in the order and returned to it after the question I asked was

completed. I listen to the responses as I took notes about the participants' facial

expressions or body language while asking the questions. I made comments on the

comfort and the level of confidence the participant seemed to portray. All these details

were recorded during the interview and could play into the analysis (Zikmund, 2009).

. Each subject's interview began with the same opening (see Appendix A-F) as this allowed for consistency and reliability of the interviews. After the first question I thanked the participants as a way of letting them know they were on track and understood the purpose of the study. After each response I asked the next question without positive or negative judgement. All questions were answered by all the partipants. At the end of the interview, I thanked the participants for their time and stated that I would have the transcript prepared for them to review the next day. The participants were assigned a letter of the alphabet to maintain confidentiality.

There was a key research question for the current study from which five other questions were formulated: What are the experiences of an adolescent who struggles with writing (see Appendix A)? Through the investigation of these questions, a better understanding of the struggles in the writing process was gained, and teachers of adolescence can better appreciate the learning process and instruction.

A common technique for case qualitative research is face-to-face interviews. The interviews were digitally recorded with an Olympus WS-110 voice recorder. The interviews were transcribed in a timely manner to maintain continuity and consistency with the data. The participants were given the interview questions ahead of time to review. Each participant had the purpose of the study explained along with the kinds of behaviors that would be appropriate for participating successfully in an interview. The topics of the research study were presented to the participant to maintain a focus on consistency. Each participant was give the transcripts to review and the interpretations I concluded in the data.

Procedures for Obtaining Permission

The study focused on the experiences of adolescents who did not score proficient on the state assessment. Furthermore, the study particularly involved E. Middle School students. All participants signed an assent form (Appendix C), and guardians signed a consent form (see Appendix B). Ethical considerations were made for the sensitivity of the age of the adolescent before and during the study to ensure that the findings were admissible as a valid scholarly endeavor. I gained the approval from the school district, guardian of the adolescent, and participant for their participation in the study. I assured the participants that during the interview they would be treated with courtesy and respect. This was based on the promise and ethical protection of the participant. In accordance with the protocol of triangulation and accuracy the results of the study would be made available to them upon completion of transcription.

First, the school district superintendent was notified with a request to conduct the study. I then contacted the building administrator, explained the purpose of the study, and obtained permission to conduct the interviews with the students. A letter of cooperation and application for permission was requested and sent to Walden University's and assigned the IRB proposal number 04-03-15-0133739. All signed permissions forms were collected from the guardians and participants. The information placed in the possession of the researcher and peer evaluator will not be shared, therefore, proctecting the confidentiality of the participant. The information will be stored on an external hard drive for 5 years in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home.

Analysis of Data

The methodology used to evaluate the data items was essential in determining the validity of the research. It was vital that I considered using the correct method that provided the most probable outcomes. This research was qualitative and, hence, the methods of qualitative data analysis were used in the examination (Neuman, 2009). Qualitative protocol was also used in the gathering of data.

The data was recorded digitally and transcribed into Microsoft Word. The analysis of the data was done shortly after the collection was completed. The data collected was through the interview questions and any follow up questions that emerged from the interview. To begin with, the interview was conducted using open-ended, broad questions about writing (Appendix A). The face-to-face interview questions were conducted using detailed, comprehensive, and open-ended questions along with probing questions that kept a focus on the research questions (Appendix A). All the questions were written to aptly cover the research process, coded for easy qualitative analysis, and still maintained the focus of the study's research questions.

I first used NVivo qualitative research software to help manage, shape, and make sense of the information. The transcriptions were imported into the software and exported as an Excel worksheet after all interviews were completed and reviewed. The software helped classify, sort, and arrange information that allowed me to further investigate with open coding to identify themes, gain insight, and develop meaningful conclusions. The software only gave subtle trends of the data. I chunked the data by indentifying a key phrase to each answer that captured the participant's perception. Once I had a list of the codes, through the phrases, field notes, and research journal, I established categorical

aggregation of the data. Next, I evaluated the data for patterns, relationships, and themes within the data. Linking the phrases among the participants first into patterns or similarities, thus, categorized the data to indentify themes. Through the identification of patterns and categories I identified 6 themes. I completed a second review of the literature and formulated inferences and generalizations. I wrote narratives on each case that allowed me to gain the essence of the responses given by the participant. Through clustering, I formulated a generalization for each theme and develop a structural description that conveyed the overall "essence of the student's experience" (Creswell, 2010).

To ensure validity the data was reevaluated with a collaborative effort of an experienced teacher. The literacy facilitator in the school district completed a peer review, and signed a confidentiality agreement (see Appendix D). The literacy facilitator has over thirty years of teaching humanities and 3 years of implementing, training, and evaluating students' work in reading and writing. I did not share the findings with the facilitator until she followed the same process as the researcher. She began with journaling of ideas, theories, and philosophies in writing. Then the transcripts were coded for patterns, themes, and relationships. The data from the face-to-face interviews were coded and examined for themes and written up for analysis. The findings were very similar to the researcher's themes and generalization. A three hour conversation was recorded and field notes taken to review later. It was through the use of the district's literacy facilitator that mutual construction of meaning, themes, inferences, and

conclusions of external validity was addressed to make recommendations and generalizations for accuracy.

Reliability and Trustworthiness of the Study

Triangulation of the interviews, my researcher's journal, field notes, and peer review were used too ensure that this study is valid. The reliability of this study consisted of following the research methodology and guidelines as stated in this Section. All interviews used the interview guidelines as recommended by Creswell, 2010. Each participant received the same mannerisms, questions, and respect during the interview.

To ensure trustworthiness in my study, I utilized three methods of quality control. The use of triangulation from multiple sources including open-ended interview questions, journaling my bias, and peer review (Creswell, 2010). The triangulation strengthened this study by looking across all the material collected that responded to my research questions. I wrote narratives for each case and by reading and rereading the narratives, review of the literature, and coding the data I was able to identify information that responded to my research questions. Through the evaluation of the data, I looked across the cases for within-group similarities and differences and formulated the relationships of my research questions to describe the emergent themes. I found 6 emergent themes in the data.

Member-check was used as I gave the transcript to the participant to review. I wrote a synopsis of my interpretation of the responses and asked the participant to comment on the accuracy. Each member dated and signed the transcript and synopsis to ensure accuracy. The participant was given a week to review the synopsis with their

guardian. Being a member of the staff at E Middle School, there was familarity with me and the participants were more likely to "be frank and comprehensive about what they tell" (Merriam, 2002, p.26).

Role of Researcher

My role in the current study was being the interviewer, analyzed the data, and formulated conclusions and recommendations. I am an English teacher at E. Middle School, so bracketing was needed about the researcher's ideas and philosophies about instructing writing so as to become neutral as possible for the research. This was accomplished through a two week period of journaling on ideas, philosophies, and theories on writing instruction. My bias of writing was that students should have a choice on the topics they write about when given an assignment or assessment. I created the interview instrument with neutrality and bracketing of views through journaling beliefs about writing and motivation. With reflective commentary, I gained an initial impression of each data collection sessions, patterns appeared to emerge in the data collected, and theories generated from the data, allowing for subjectivity, validity, and credibility.

The interviews were conversational and formal as Rubin and Rubin (2012) said that responsive interviewing should be. I kept an informal tone that was inviting and conversational; however, the tone was formal to a point of covering the questions that needed to be addressed. I included field notes in the transcripts. The participants were given the questions in advance to allow them time to consider the answers fully. This preparation helped the participants answer thoroughly, and the interview was less time consuming because of this. I was more of a listener than a participant in the conversation.

Summary

The success of a qualitative study is dependent on effectiveness of the methods used in the study. Inferences and generalizations captured from the data were based on the research questions and implemented by the methodology employed in the current study. This study used face-to-face interviews, field notes, journaling, and peer review to validate the reliability of the themes, inferences, and generalization that were revealed. Section 4 presents the analysis of themes that emerged from the bracketed and coded data from the current research study.

Section 4 of the study organizes, analyzes, and presents the results in a coherent and purposeful way. The data was analyzed and six themes emerged. The authentic words of the students helped to present the themes and explain how the students answered the research questions.

Section 4: Results

I conducted the data analysis based on interviews that were done with 6 participants who scored below proficient on the Washington State Assessment of Learning during their seventh grade year. The interview protocol (Appendix A) was developed while keeping in view that the students were provided with ample scope and avenue to process their thoughts and express their true feelings about the challenges and motivations that they felt about their respected writing skills. Thus, the interview protocol was prepared with open-ended questions that provided the students with an opportunity to express themselves in detail, and their responses can be scrutinized and analyzed at an extensive and minute level. This close investigation of the data allowed me to extract the different perspectives of the students regarding the challenges faced in writing, which has not been stressed upon or analyzed in the literature.

The open-ended questions were written to bring forth points that the students elaborated on in regards to their experiences in writing. Additionally, the open-ended interview protocol provided crucial and extensive data for analysis. This acted as an advantage over close-ended questionnaires where the students were limited in expressing feelings and thoughts. Nevertheless, even after a long questionnaire in close-ended questions, the data required in its entirety is not available because a researcher can never imagine the experiences, situations, or challenges of the students, and thus the scope of the research itself is limited. Thus, the open-ended questions gave the students a chance to think and express themselves and bring forth deeper feelings and challenges.

Another advantage observed during the interviews with open-ended questions were that the students articulated their feelings and experiences that were absent in previous studies. This could be because even though the previous studies were conducted on the students who did not display proficient writing skills, they were given a long list of close-ended questions to fill in; due to low writing skills, the students were not able to explain or discuss their experiences and opinions. This fault observed in the previous studies addressed this weakness by conducting verbal interviews with open-ended questions.

Evidence of Quality

The purpose of this study was to record and analyze the perceptions of middle school students' writing, so the validity of the study depended on the authenticity of the students' responses. Creswell suggested (2007) using at least two of eight validation strategies when conducting a qualitative research design. I employed four of his strategies in this study: clarification of researcher's bias, triangulation, rich and thick descriptions, and member checking. First I indentified myself as an 8th grade English teacher, as well as, I did not use any students I had on my class roster. Through a two week period, I wrote on my ideas, theories, and philosophies on writing and motivation, thus, acknowledging my bias. Triangulation was ensured by the interviews, field notes, and peer review. I maintained a non-intrusive attitude in order for the data to reflect the perceptions of the students. I did not ask leading question or add opinions to the students' response. A warm and supportive attitude was maintained to encourage the students to speak honestly about their experiences (see Appendix N). I ensured that each student was

given adequate time to express themselves. Field notes were written in a research journal and placed in the transcript where the responses were generated (Appendix L). Peer review was completed by the literacy facilitator, who was given copies of all the transcripts to review and coded for themes found in the data. The themes were very similar to the researcher's evaluation. I transcribed the data using thick, rich descriptions to acquire themes. Finally, each participant was given the transcripts to review the next day. Furthermore, member-check process was important for me to share the interpretations with the participants which gave them an opportunity to provide me feedback to my interpretations.

The data collection sought to capture the "essence of real experiences" of the participant's ability to articulate their perspective (Creswell, 2010). I conducted the interviews in the same manner, using the same opening, and the same ending to be able to generalize the interpretations. All interviews used the same interview protocol. There were no abnormalities found in this study. The only limitation of this study was that participants gave a different amount of information in their responses to the questions. The data analysis has been done without bias and was strictly based on the answers given by the students and the theoretical framework and literature review. This provided a complete and correct picture of the situation.

The results will draw conclusions based on the data analysis covered in this Section, and recommendations will be provided to enhance the writing skills of the students. Section 5 will discuss the scope of future studies, which the current study will provide.

Description of Participants

The participants' ages ranged from 13 to 15 years of old (see Table 1); the study

included three females and three males. The subjects scored below proficient on the

state's writing assessment for both fourth and seventh grade. A score of 10 would be

considered proficient in the state of Washington.

Table 1

Participants Demographics

Participant	Age	Gender	Fourth Grade MSP Score	Seventh Grade MSP Score
Subject A	13	female	6	9
Subject B	15	male	8	9
Subject C	13	female	4	8
Subject D	14	female	5	7
Subject E	14	male	6	9
Subject F	14	male	7	8

The responses of the students showed a similarity for a few of the questions, but

there were differences in some of the responses. The responses showed some similarities

in the motivational factors of the students, the challenges they faced, their expectations of

a writing assignment, and what they liked about a writing assignments or writing itself.

Appendix L depicts the various responses of the six students to the interview questions.

Table 2 represents the opinions and experiences of the students in brief and considered as

the basis of the further results analysis. The responses will be further broken down into

different categories in and discussed further in this Section; this enabled the researcher to

analyze the data at a micro level and draw appropriate conclusions (see Table 3).

Data Collection and Organization

Data was collected over 7 school days during the spring of 2015. The responses

from the participants were used in the analysis, and interpretation of the data centered on

their exact words. I used categorical aggregation to manage the data (Creswell, 2010).

This qualitative method allowed me to write descriptive narratives of each participant's

interview data. I was then able to organized the data and answer the research questions

(Creswell, 2010). Data presented themes and allowed me to gain a general understanding

of how the participants felt about writing. The six themes that emerged were as follows:

(a) present level of writing of the students and their experiences, (b) motivating factors:

intrinsic or extrinsic, (c) de-motivating factors, (d) expectations of students regarding

writing assignments, (e) teacher's role in motivating and developing student's writing

skills, and (f) the role of goal setting. Figure 1 illustrates the six emergent themes that

began to develop.

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                    ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
                    │  Themes Derived From Interviews  │
                    └─────────────────────────────────┘
                                     │
  ┌──────────────────────────────────┐    ┌──────────────────────────────────┐
  │ Present Level of Writing          │    │ Expectations of Writing          │
  │ Experiences                       │    │ Assignment                        │
  └──────────────────────────────────┘    └──────────────────────────────────┘

  ┌──────────────────────────────────┐    ┌──────────────────────────────────┐
  │ Motivating Factors: Intrinsic or  │    │          Teacher's Role          │
  │ Extrinsic                         │    │                                   │
  └──────────────────────────────────┘    └──────────────────────────────────┘

  ┌──────────────────────────────────┐    ┌──────────────────────────────────┐
  │      De-Motivating Factors        │    │           Goal Setting            │
  └──────────────────────────────────┘    └──────────────────────────────────┘
```
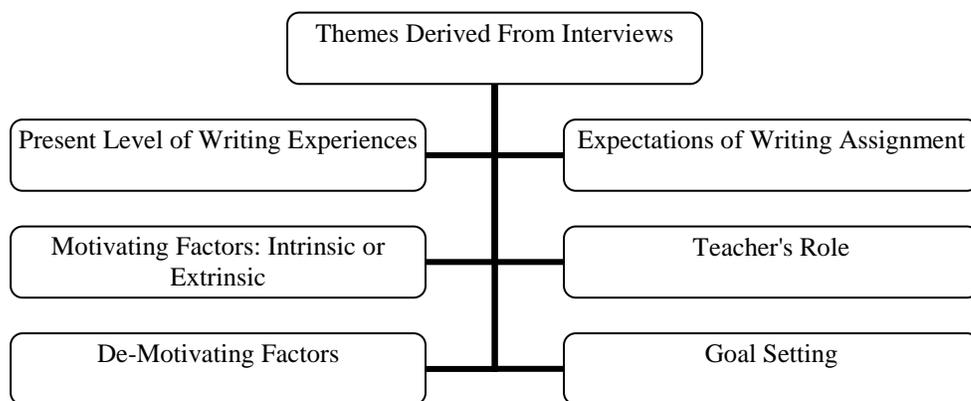
Figure 1. Six Emergent Themes.

Once the themes emerged, I began to look across all subjects' responses for within group similarities and differences and applied them to the research questions.

Table 2 (Appendix L) clearly shows the similarities in answers of many questions, but differences emerged in the answers to other questions. However, a common interpretation on the motivational factors, self-efficacy, and goal setting can be drawn from these responses after the categorization of the data.

<div align="center">**Findings**</div>

Emergent Themes

The candid responses of the students listed in the Table in Appendix L shows a lot of similarity in different areas of motivation and challenges in writing. Some of the similar points, which came forth, are writing process found to be difficult; the students did not like too many paragraph requirements; grammar errors; too many writing techniques proved a challenge for the students; long planners and webs; and the students liked the writing process of revision.

I found that many students require or ask for help with their writing assignments. Thus, the results have been organized into six different categories to study the various motivational factors of the students' writing assignments. These categories enabled the researcher to alienate the motivational factors and then relate them to the theoretical framework and the existing literature. This enabled the researcher to collate the results and the existing literature to draw a conclusion and provide recommendations. The results have been organized into the following 6 categories:

1. Present level of writing of the students.

2. The motivating factors for students' writing and are they intrinsic or extrinsic.

3. De-motivating factors influence student writing.

4. Expectations set for writing that students must complete.

5. The role the teacher plays in motivating and guiding students.

6. Goal setting affects the students' ability to embrace intrinsic motivation.

Present level of writing of students. Each student responded with struggles in writing either by statements or by grades. The students found the writing process to be very difficult due to various restrictions and self-challenges. This is evident from the following response of the Subject A:

> When I start to write something, say like an essay, I struggle because it takes a while for me to process the ideas and process my brain on what I want to write about. Sometimes it is hard for me because I am not good at writing and English is hard. I speak Vietnamese at home and the two languages become confusing because sometimes the English word is not in Vietnamese. I try really hard to learn new techniques so I can get better at writing. It takes a while for me to get the hang of writing in school. Well, I really like writing and the teachers here really help us express our feelings. They teach us more techniques to writing. Tell us and showing us there is more than one way to write and make a sentence. I don't always remember them.

Students repeated in various statements that the limitation of ideas, lacking access to details, the knowledge of the topic, and grammar were all a hindrance to their success

in writing. Subject C stated that writing was hard because of the lack of many ideas, and it is frustrating when asked to put those ideas on paper:

> It was really difficult, really difficult, until I started to go to extra classes for it. I learn more about it. I learn more about it by going over it and over it many times. I had to go through every nook and cranny of it, like topic sentences. The more practice the better I get... Well, writing is really hard. What I have in my head is not what gets put on paper. It takes so long. When I begin I have lots of ideas, but then they get all mixed up and I don't know what to do.

The challenges faced by the students is to articulate their ideas and put them down on the paper coherently; there was confusion with too many ideas and in sorting out the main ideas that should be used in the essay. Equally important is the difficulty the students have when writing on topics that they are not aware of or do not know too well. The ability to remember many techniques of writing, using correct spelling, and finding grammar errors made the essay incoherent, and the writing experience stressful and un-pleasurable. This is evident from the following response of Subject D:

> I think that this year in my Block class I did really bad on an argumentative essay. Well, slightly bad or a really bad job because I had too much information from all the readings, so I talked about some stuff I shouldn't have in the essay. I didn't talk about the main part, so I need to focus on not the small stuff but the main points. I should also know the topic better and it was confusing.

Confusion of the topic caused four students to give up on the writing assignment. When students were asked to write an assessment and did not have help by peers or the teacher, they were easily frustrated and confused, as stated by Subject E, "When I get confused and my ideas get all mixed up. I just start giving up, even if I know I will get into trouble." Organization of thoughts and ideas hamper students from being able to write what they are thinking.

The motivating factors for students' writing are they intrinsic or extrinsic. The factor liked most about the writing process was that it provided the students with an opportunity to express their ideas and views freely. The students thought that the writing assignments provide a voice for them and act as a medium to express their feelings and raise their voice on any subject. Additionally, some of the students felt that writing assignments were important for future prospects and would be needed in their future. In addition, the students felt that the different types of essays like persuasive essays and argumentative essays instill skills such as negotiation skills, debating skills, and presentation skills. Subject A stated the following:

> I really don't dislike writing, it is really important for high school and
> college. There is so much writing and it will get you some place in life.
> You get to write your opinions, you get to write about something you have
> a lot of information about; when you have a connection with the topic.
> You can also share your ideas in the writing. I wish we did more
> argumentative because people agree and disagree on the other side, but I
> like when we debate it first.

Students acknowledged the importance of writing in their future endeavors. They have a desire to write proficiently in a way where their ideas are understood and their voices are heard by an audience. Subject B stated the enjoyment of writing and being able to express his opinion:

> I enjoy writing myself. It could be a good way to pass the time. I will write about how my day is going, conversations with my friends, or just what I am feeling. I think we should write more persuasive because kids my age could use it. It can be useful when we are trying to get our parents to let us do something or get something. I like getting my opinion out, like getting what I feel about things out on paper. I want others to be able to read it, and know my ideas.

The factor or the part of the writing process liked by most of the students was the "revision part." They felt that the revision process provided them with an opportunity to correct their mistakes and make their essays perfect; and they learned from repeated revisions, which they also enjoyed. They also felt that instead of following the pre-writing stage of the writing process, they should straightaway start on writing the essay, and any corrections can be taken care of during the revision. This is evident from the following responses of Subject A:

> I love to revise my writing because you get to see your mistakes and you could change the punctuation. Well, the punctuation is hard, but sometimes I get it. When the teacher gives you feedback, you can change it and you learn from your mistakes.

Subject B considered himself to be an avid writer and understood the importance of revision, saying, "I like the revise the most because it teaches us how to go back and re-read our narratives or essays. I like when we revise with other people because you get your paper fixed and your paper sounds better." The use of peers or teacher help was consistent in all the subjects because the students value the feedback and find it helpful in the organization of their writing assignment.

De-motivating factors influence student writing. Different parts of the writing process, pre-writing, drafting, revision, and publishing, were found to be difficult for all the subjects. The parts of the writing process that make the writing experience frustrating and not likeable are long planners and webs; they consider these acts to be unnecessary and tiresome. They believed that getting straight to the writing is important, and any mistakes can be corrected during the revision process. All subjects disliked the requirement of writing five or more paragraphs, which becomes too much for the students, especially when they are short of ideas and lack information or knowledge about the given topic. This was evident from Subject C's interview response:

That you have to write a bunch of paragraphs, it is a lot, it is too much, like, if you don't know anything about the topic then it is too much. I dislike the rough draft and then you have to write it all over again. Like, why don't we just revise it, then write the rough draft.

The task of writing for many students was overwhelming because of the multiple steps in the writing process. Subject B stated the following:

I don't like the prewriting. I just want to begin writing and we just have to copy what we just wrote. It is pain; the long planners are the worst. It is just a lot of unnecessary work. This year we use a short version of three ideas, hook, and thesis. It is much better. There is a certain expectation to writing it always has to be five paragraphs and sometimes I don't have that many opinions on writing.

Pre-writing was an area in the writing process that increased frustration for many of the students, as Subject D articulated:

Last year, we had to fill out a huge planner and it took forever. You just had to write and write ... there was so much I couldn't get it done. When you have to write five paragraphs and sometimes I don't have that many ideas on the writing. I don't like the prewriting. I hate having to fill out those long planners and then just copy what I wrote into a draft, then to a final draft.

Expectations set for writing that students are to complete. Students' perceptions of the formulaic five-paragraph essay were that this construct is overwhelming and un-necessary. Subject E stated the following:

Every writing assignment has to be five paragraphs and you don't always have enough ideas. Then you have to do a planner and that makes me mess up my ideas. Then you have to write it and I don't even use my planner and my ideas go, like, random. I have to revise and, that is stupid,

it is good enough and I hate to have to write the final draft after I all ready

wrote it once.

The writing process and the 5-paragraph essay demonstrated the frustration and

arduous tasks that students are being asked to complete. When a student was lost in the

writing process or does not have ideas, the student gave up quickly. Subject E stated, "I

can start a writing assignment pretty good, but I don't finish them. We have to write every

night, but most of the time I don't do my homework."

The role the teacher plays in motivating and guiding students. Students

depend on their teacher or peers to help them think through their writing. They enjoy

reading their work to peers or an audience. Teacher modeling is important to the students

who struggle with writing, especially when writing a distinctive type of sentence such as

"an appositive sentence." Students depend on the modeling to add to their construction of

"interesting sentences." The many different types of sentences available can be

overwhelming because the vast number is difficult to remember, thus affecting their

ability to write clearly. Two students voiced the need to have debates or conversations

before writing because it assisted them with ideas and organization.

Goal setting affects the students' ability to embrace intrinsic motivation. Only

one student set goals before writing. The lack of goal setting can be attributed to the lack

of confidence in the students' ability to write proficiently.

The Table in Appendix M depicts the different categories and the responses

categorized to assess the various motivational factors of the students. The table shows the

correlation of the open-ended interview questions with the six categories identified and

how the responses of the specific questions led to the identification of the various factors that drive or motivate the students to complete writing assignments.

Thus, from the above results, it is evident that these current teaching practices in writing have not been very successful, and the students are still struggling. The reason for this failure seems to be the lack of understanding of the motivation of the students and their liking and disliking of the writing process.

Response to Research Questions

I will answer the research questions by identifying and delineating various factors affecting the writing skills of the students. I will answer each of the research questions by analyzing each of the factors within the six categories separately and then compare them with the theory and existing literature.

Findings for Research Question 1

What are the experiences of adolescents who struggle with writing? Through discovery, adolescents who struggle with writing lack effective ideas, lack knowledge of the topic, and have an overwhelming feeling while using the writing process; therefore, these students lack the ability to complete the assignment to proficiency. Motivation is necessary to persist and complete a difficult task (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003; Wlodkowski, 2008). They seek the help of teachers or peers to assist them with ideas, organization, or they just want an audience. The responses of the students showed that the students are motivated to write intrinsically, and extrinsic motivation does not come into play. As discussed in Section 2, the theoretical framework, extrinsic motivation is the motivational standard that appeals to the materialistic or external rewards or constraints

(Brophy, 2010) while intrinsic motivation is the motivational standard that exists within

and appeals to the need to know through curiosity and competence (Brophy, 2010). Table

4 represents the percentage of students who were intrinsically or extrinsically motivated.

Table 2

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

Student	Motivational Factors	Extrinsic/Intrinsic Motivation
Subject A	Express your feelings and opinions; important for future personal and future growth	Intrinsic Motivation
Subject B	Enjoy writing; get to express how you feel	Intrinsic Motivation
Subject C	Like it only when I get to express my views	Intrinsic Motivation
Subject D	When people understand and agree with my views	Intrinsic and Extrinsic
Subject E	Writing in science	Intrinsic
Subject F	Being able to put my thoughts down	Intrinsic

It is evident from the responses of the students that extrinsic motivation did not

play a role or played a very minimal role in enhancing the writing skills of the students or

motivating the students to enhance their writing skills. None of the responses mentioned

any materialistic award or recognition that they wanted and for which they would want to

write a better essay. Instead, the students talked about the importance of writing for their

future educational and professional purposes and that writing provides them with an

opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings and learn new skills like persuasion, negotiation, and debating. The latter reasons mentioned by the students fall under intrinsic motivation. This is evident from the response of Subject A:

> It is really important for high school and college. There is soooo much writing and it will get you some place in life. You get to write your opinions, you get to write about something you have a lot of information about; when you have a connection with the topic. You can also share your ideas in the writing. One of my favorite things about writing is sometimes you get to write about things you like.

Thus, it is evident from the above response that Subject A is intrinsically motivated to write essays and other assignments because she feels that it is important for high school and college. Additionally, Subject A felt that the writing is enjoyable, and she is motivated to write because it provides her with an opportunity to write her opinions and feelings about any given subject. Subject A was also excited while describing how she felt about writing and how it gives her an opportunity to express her opinion and debate about a topic. For example, she mentioned that a large number of people agree with online dating, but, in reality, it is all a hoax. She excitedly argued that online dating is just a hoax, and most of the time people behind the screen just pretend to be someone else, are not true to what they say, or are falsely pretending to be someone else so that they hack other's accounts.

Only in case of Subject D was there evidence of both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Subject D liked writing because he got an opportunity to express his views

and state his opinions, showing intrinsic motivation; on the other hand, he had a strong

desire and expectation that he would like writing better if people understood his views

and appreciated and agreed with him, showing a strong desire for "recognition and

appreciation," which is extrinsic motivation. This Subject's response does not conform to

the responses of the other subjects, however, in a previous question, "Do you remember a

writing assignment that was very successful?" Subject D stated:

> Yes, I was in the office and a lady helped me finish a writing assessment because
>
> I couldn't go back to class until I finished. I was able to tell her what I was
>
> thinking and then she would summarize it for me and then I would write about it.

An inference can be made that this student required help to complete the assessment and

his self-effacy is very low, leading to no confidence in his ability, no persistence, and

inability to complete the assessment.

It is evident from the above response and excitement of Subject A, along with

many of the other students, that what appeals to them in writing is the ability to express

their views and opinions. Bandura (1977) explained that achievement, performance,

choice and persistence are dependent on one's self-efficacy. These students articulated

intrinsic motivation; however a low self-efficacy might be present because the writing is

difficult and their point of view does not always come across to the reader. The students

lack a connection to the topic; as Pajares (2008) stated, the perceived value or purpose of

the writing task is important to the completion of the task.

Findings for Research Question 2

How do beliefs related to self-efficacy influence a struggling writer's perception of writing experiences in a middle school language arts classroom? The responses of the students to the open-ended interview questions revealed the fact that the students enjoyed writing and produced a better writing assignment if they were knowledgeable about the given topic or the topics of interest. If the topic was not very familiar or not to their interest, then they felt confused and nervous as to what to put down on the paper. This made the writing process hard for them. The confidence level or self-efficacy in all participants was overall low. The lack of self-efficacy in writing influenced the engagement, value, and interest in completing writing assignments to a level of proficiency. The self-efficacy level did not have a clear measurement; however, the perceived judgment of one's capabilities revolves around their confidence to carry out a specific task (Shell et al., 2006). Therefore, it is important for the student to rate their confidence level.

The above is evident from the response of Subject C, when she mentioned that she feels frustrated when the topic is not known to her and that she likes to write. Subject A can focus only when she is well informed on the topic or when her perceptions of competence, motivation and persistence are present. Subject A stated:

> What frustrates me with writing is when you have to think a lot and you
> don't know about the subject. Like, when you don't know about the topic
> you have to write about. What keeps me focused is when you have most of
> the information to put into your essay. If they could just tell you what to

write and put it on the side of your paper, and then you could just write

about that. You could have the topic and the reasons and then you would

just have to explain from your point of view.

A similar response was elicited from the five other students: Subject B, Subject C, Subject D, Subject E, and Subject F who all liked writing only when they could identify with the topic. According to Subject B, he felt more relaxed with the school writing assignments than that of the state tests because in the latter, the topics given were usually not known to him, but at school, even with unknown topics, he is given time and help by the teachers to understand and write on the topic. According to Subject C, she felt excited and focused on writing if she could connect to the writing, such with writing short stories or books. Shunck and Meece (2010) stated that teacher modeling strategies for writing, goal setting, progress feedback, and self-evaluation will improve an underachieving student's self-efficacy and motivation.

Findings for Research Question 3

What kind of instructional techniques and teacher behaviors do adolescents believe motivate them to achieve the learning objective in writing? Another fact that emerged during the interview process was that the students felt that they performed better and wrote a better essay when they received assistance from someone: their peers, tutors, or teachers. They felt that they needed help with the assimilation of the information about the topic, organizing the ideas, and brainstorming process. They felt that too many ideas or too few ideas about the topic confused them and decreased the quality of the paper,

affecting their writing skills. Table 3 depicts the instances of successful assignments due

to teachers or someone's help.

Table 3

Successful Assignments

Student	Successful Assignments	Help Available	Unsuccessful Assignments	Help Available for Unsuccessful Assignments
Subject A	One	Yes	One	No
Subject B	All	Yes	State Test	No
Subject C	Many	Yes, Always	None	No
Subject D	One	Yes	None	No
Subject E	One	Yes	All	No
Subject F	One	No	Most	No

Thus, it is evident from the above table that the students could successfully write

a proficient assignment when tutors, peers, or family members helped; but at any instance

when help was unavailable, the students could not complete their tasks successfully.

According to Subject D, all his assignments were unsuccessful. However, one assignment

was successful because he had received help from a peer; however, in all other cases,

there was no help available, and he gave up on the assignments. This is also clearly

visible in the description provided by Subject C in her answer to the following question:

"Do you remember a writing assignment that was unsuccessful?" According to Subject

C, she never wrote any unsuccessful assignments except the state assessments. The

explanation given by her for this was as follows:

No, not really, because most of the time someone helps me with it. I get to

write with someone. All my teachers know that they are helping me, so it

is easier. I always have help so I don't really have unsuccessful writing

assignment. The big state tests are hard. I don't get to have help. It isn't fair

that I don't get help on them.

On the other hand, Subject E stated, "I can start writing assignment pretty good,

but I don't finish them." Thus, to motivate the students and hone their writing skills, they

need help with their essays. The students are requesting help with providing information,

organization, grammar, and summarizing their ideas so that they can produce a coherent

essay. For example, Subject B gets help and encouragement from his mother to write at

home. And he received help from teachers at school.

Students are asking for guidance and help with the writing process as a long

writing assignment is overwhelming and often students lack the knowledge to write on

the topic. There was only one case where the student received help on a writing

assignment from the classroom teacher; in all other cases, the help was gained from

parents, peers, or an external tutor. Patterns, relationships, and themes described as

findings are supported by the data.

Cooperative learning increases student engagement (Slavin, 1988) through social

interaction. It is easier to persist or increase effort when others give support and

encouragement. It is the observation of others' behaviors, attitudes, and thinking that

promotes engagement and learning. Shunck and Meece (2010) conveyed that when

students have a grasp of the content and feel competent they are in control of their

learning.

Many researchers have stated that the purpose of the learning activity to the

learner is paramount to the success of the task (Bandura, 2006; Barry, 2007; Brophy,

2010; Calkins, 2012; Gallagher, 2015; & Pajares, 2008). One of the leading de-

motivating factors that came forth and affected the writing skills and the will of students

to write assignments was "the requirement of filling out long planners in the pre-writing

process." Before beginning the assignment, the students felt defeated and frustrated. The

students felt that this was an unnecessary wastage of time and effort; they felt they could

instead get straight to writing the assignment, and any corrections could be made during

the revision process. The students felt the pre-writing process was not important and did

not help them improve their writing skills. According to Subject A, the pre-writing part of

the writing process is the worst part. She felt that this part could be skipped because it

does not contribute to their writing skills enhancement or help them with writing the

paper. Other students shared the same feeling. According to them, the long planners and

webs take a long time to fill out, and they could understand the meaningfulness of this

part of the writing process.

A student's belief about his or her academic abilities set into motion the amount of

effort of cognitive, behavioral, and motional investment they are willing to put forth with

a task that is moderately challenging and meaningful (Becker, McElvay, & Kortenbruck,

2010). The students felt that the number of writing techniques taught over the years was

too many to remember, and, most of the time, they were unable to recall all the

techniques while writing the assignments, thus hampering grammar. The students found

it difficult to remember the techniques like different types of hooks, variety of ways to

write a topic sentence, thesis statements, and taking care of the grammar and spelling in

the writing assignments. According to Subject F, "Most of the writing assignments, I

don't finish because they take too long and I get lost." Subject E stated, "When I don't have enough details and it gets confusing to write on a topic. I just try and make stuff up and it really doesn't make sense." Finally, Subject D stated, "When I get confused and my ideas get all mixed up. I just start giving up, even if I know I will get into trouble." It is apparent that the task of writing can be overwhelming, and the struggling writer needs help along the way.

The various writing techniques in the writing process included four to five stages that a student must follow to produce a quality piece of work and enhance their writing skills. As discussed above, this included the writers making a plan, brainstorming, organizing, drafting, seeking feedback, and revising their work. In these stages, the present study revealed that the students felt confused and at a loss in the brainstorming and organizing stage either due to a lack of ideas or too many ideas; while in the writing stage, they could not follow every technique because they could not remember all the techniques and how and where to use them.

The study revealed that the strict requirement of the essays of five or more paragraphs frustrated the students, especially when they were short of information or ideas on the given topic. Thus, students felt that with a lack of proper information and ideas to put on the paper, it becomes difficult or impossible to write five or more paragraphs, and their writing assignment suffers. On the other hand, the students expressed that with the presence of information or knowledge about the given topic, they were easily able to write five or more paragraphs, and the only difficulty faced in the later case was organizing the essay and following the correct writing techniques. McVey

(2008) conveyed two problems that hamper students ability to master a skill; one writing

is a hard task and second, problem of engagement and expectations. This is evident from

the following response of Subject B, "There is a certain expectation to writing, it always

has to be five paragraphs, and sometimes I don't have that many opinions on writing." In

addition, Subject D expressed similar feelings about this requirement, which also made

him dislike the writing process itself:

> Writing essays is the worst. When we just have to write, like a paragraph,
>
> it is easy. When you have to write a lot of paragraphs, like five, it is really
>
> annoying. I can get my point across in one paragraph.

Thus, the students felt forced and compelled to write five paragraphs without any

intrinsic motivation and the results felt drastic to the students. The students felt that their

ideas and content should be evaluated rather than on the length of the assignment. They

felt that most of the time, they lacked enough content or were clueless about how to

elaborate on specific ideas and support them with additional content and arguments to

fulfill the requirement of five paragraphs. In absence of five paragraphs, their grades are

deducted, and they felt more frustrated and disliked this requirement. The root cause of

the points discussed above stem from the topics not being of interest and or a limited

knowledge about the topic.

Summary

The qualitative data collection method adopted in the current study provided a

respectable insight in the perceptions, feelings, challenges, likes, and dislikes of the

students toward the writing process. These insights were not captured in the previous

research studies described in Section 2. The results of the study showed that the students who struggle with writing were low on morale and motivation when it came to writing assignments. This was because they faced many challenges and difficulties while going through the entire writing process. The study revealed that there was a basic desire in the students to excel in their writing assignments, but this zeal was always subdued by the challenges they faced.

The students liked writing because they felt that writing provided them with an opportunity to express their feelings, opinions, and views about a particular subject. However, this liking was stifled most of the time by a lack of knowledge about the topic or the topic not being interesting. Only a few of the finding were unexpected and revealed that incorporating writing topics on the students' experiences in life and their classes gave them a greater sense of purpose and engagement, especially when an audience was provided. Giving students autonomy in writing was actually threatening for the students who were successful within their known parameters. Some students were found to be motivated, more engaged, and saw a noticeable impact on writing when better content was given. A possible explanation for these results is that students succeed more in a setting where help is available from the teachers, parents, peers, and tutors. Students' writing was based on the expectation of a message rather than demonstrating mastery of a "set of decontextualized skills."

The results also revealed the fact that in the absence of an interesting topic or information about the topic, the students felt challenged by the strict requirement of five or more paragraphs. Additionally, every student felt frustrated by the pre-writing process.

The students felt that the planners and webs, which were required to be filled as part of the pre-writing process, were too much pressure. The students felt that they could get to the main writing process rather than going through the pre-writing process. According to the students, the revision part was the most important because it provided them with an opportunity to identify their mistakes and correct them.

Students felt more confident and motivated when help from peers, teachers, and parents were available. Students were motivated to write because they felt that writing provided them with an opportunity to express their feelings, views, and opinions. Thus, students are intrinsically motivated to write quality assignments but are being limited by various challenges they face in the writing process (Schunk & Meece, 2010). Thus, the teachers should be required to understand the students' motivational factors and challenges and change the course structure and teaching styles accordingly to produce maximum learning, retention, and quality writing.

Section 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Demand of writing for struggling students is difficult, as their motivation and self-efficacy is low. An aim of this study was to investigate the lived experiences of students that struggle in writing. A qualitative case study was designed to interview 6 adolescents that struggle in writing. The data was collected according to the methods set forth in Section 3. The data was triangulated, analyzed, and interpreted for recommendations to improve writing instruction in the classroom.

The problem for the students in the current study reflected that they were of low self-efficacy when it came to writing assignments. Although they enjoyed writing because they got the opportunity to express their feelings, the various technical requirements of writing and unknown topics lowered their writing skills, self-efficacy, competence, motivation, persistence and confidence. It is through Bandura, 2006a and Pajares', 2008 work that informed the terms of this study. Most students requested help from the teacher, peers, or adults. If the struggling writer was required to depend on their own background knowledge and what they could remember about writing they became overwhelmed and frustrated. The low self-efficacy hampered their ability to write proficiently. In contrast, students expressed that classroom writing activities helped to bring the desired level of learning and writing skills. The difficulty was when the struggling writer had to rely only on themselves and did not have the opportunity to receive help from others.

Interpretation of Findings

Utilizing and considering individual needs of students can assist in improving the educational experience for students. To make the learning experience successful for all students, adjustment to the delivery of instruction in such a way that it is congruent with the students' needs constitutes "best practice" in education (Hawthorne, 2008).

Discovering the unique learning styles would be extremely helpful if teachers incorporate appropriate teaching techniques that accommodate the struggling writer. Mainly, students learn in the classroom and knowledge shared in the classroom is based on the value and importance of the content (Hawthorne, 2008). If the classroom teaching is purely a lecture method, many students lose the ability to discuss the topic and gain insight or justify their thinking with others; thus, the willingness to write according to the desired expectation can become hampered (Kong, & Hoare, 2011). Therefore, to make the classroom environment more stimulating and interactive, it is necessary to use a variety of instructional methods (Kong, & Hoare, 2011). In congruence to the results of the current study, the teachers can use a "shared and learning" environment in the classroom to create awareness about the prospective topics of the writing assignments for the students (Calkins, 2012).

In the given scenario of the current research study, it is beneficial for the students to have a learning environment wherein the students can learn while writing. Students require the teachers to focus on preparing the background information on the topic before having the students write. Here, the background means that the teachers need to impart knowledge and information to the students regarding various possible topics that will be

done in the classroom, as well as topics that can come in the state tests. The teachers

using or conducting a "sharing sessions" where the students can share the challenges,

likes, and dislikes that they face and feel about the writing process would benefit the

adolescent writer (Calkins, 2012). The short conference may enable the teachers to

understand the motivational factors of the students and then construct the course

framework to get a maximum out of the desired results. Additionally, the teachers can

devise programs and frameworks that will help the students to overcome the challenges

they face while writing assignments.

Learning style enables the students to respond to their learning environments, and

it is based on how the students perceive, interact, and respond in the classroom

(Hawthorne, 2008). Social and physiological behaviors, characteristics, and cognitive

learning styles must be considered when engaging students (Hawthorne, 2008). These are

considered as stable indicators in which learners respond, interact, and perceive an

environment (Raphael, Pressley, & Mohan, 2008). One of biggest advantages of

identifying a learning style is that it helps in solving student's problems (Hawthorne,

2009). For one to have control over their self-confidence level in a responsive way, it is

important for an individual to be more skilled in problem solving (Hawthorne, 2009).

Understanding of one's own learning styles empowers students to know how and why

they are different from others (Raphael et al., 2008).

Discovering what methods of learning work and which ones do not makes the

learners learn more confidently and enthusiastically and is essential to self-efficacy

(Hawthorne, 2009). Moreover, teachers need not dissect a student's needs because the

students know which methods of learning suits them best to succeed in the classroom (Kong & Hoare, 2011). Identification of learning styles by the students helps teachers because the teachers only need to guide the students through the process.

In addition, students taking responsibility for their learning, curiosity, and attitude toward learning establishes a stronger sense of self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation (Hawthorne, 2008). Equally important is the students need and ability to set goals, thus having the opportunity to self-evaluate and reflect. Searching for answers of their needs will increase the autonomy that the students are craving. It will also help them explore their subject more deeply and thoughtfully through their preferred mode of learning (Kong & Hoare, 2011; Hawthorne, 2009).

Topics that were of little interest to the students were those that they knew limited knowledge on the topic most of the time.

Thus, it is optimal to create awareness among the students about a given topic before giving it to them. As discussed, writing is a multi-skilled process, and guidance for students is needed to enable them to master writing in different genres (Duke & Hall, 2007). Motivation is essential when learning to write, and writing assessments should include authentic writing as part of the evaluation of proficient writers. Authentic writing allows the writer to write from his or her personal material and content of his or her actual life (Duke & Hall, 2007). Thus, the topic from the student's personal sphere of life will allow them to realize that the topics directly or indirectly are related to their lives, which in turn will create interest.

As discussed above a student's perception about writing influences his or her motivation, application of skills, and even the outcome. These self-beliefs are strong predictors of writing success (Pajares et al., 2007). In the current study, students' self-beliefs were weak due to the difficulty of the topics or the other challenges that they face during the writing process.

During a national scoring conference, teachers found that if the student is asked to write from their personal experiences, they write and explore the topic well, which also gives them an abundance of ideas for writing and ample room for reflection (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). According to English language arts teachers, students are reluctant to reveal details about their lives (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). The academic researchers also agreed to this fact because there are students from different cultures, and their self-expression is not valued, so they face a lot of difficulty when writing topics that are personal (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). Not all the students are able to respond about their life experiences successfully. According to this study, making young students think about a larger concept or writing prompt that ask them to write on broader theme makes no sense (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2009). They further stated that if teachers do this, they would penalize the students for the rest of their lives. This study suggested using a follow up prompt that would be beneficial for older students (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2009). New beginning can be of the themes that can take forms such as "a new sports season;" "a new school year;" "moving to new home;" or "changing habit." Other themes that were suggested included "what were the ways new beginnings affected

you;" and "write an essay about your experience of new beginning" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). The use of background knowledge is personalized for the writer, therefore eliminating the lack of ideas or details the struggling writer needs to perform proficiently on the state assessments.

Prompts of personal experiences can be given to the adolescents; however, there should be something very essential to talk about, otherwise adolescents write superficially (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). The focus should be on significance, which will have an impact on their lives. Assignments and tasks should be designed in such a way to encourage the thinking process of analyzing, evaluating, arguing, and synthesizing (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013; National Survey of Student Engagement, 2009).

Topics and issues that are open to a variety of approaches and topics would benefit the struggling writer. The complexity and controversies of the topics used on state assessments that open up the possibilities for all students to have an opinion will reach a wider range of students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013; National Survey of Student Engagement, 2009). Providing realistic scenarios to students will enhance the writing situation and will increase awareness of audience. In spite of asking for an opinion, use of "cue words" that promote argumentative strategies can be helpful (Raphael et al., 2008). Adding additional instructions of writing a proficient essay will remind the students constantly about requirements and expectations to meet a score of proficiency. Encouraging and focusing students on a particular component of the problem will be of assistance to adolescents (Smith & Swain, 2011; Hawthorne, 2008).

Many prompts were shown at the National Scoring Conference in 2010 that attracted the attention of the teacher's because the results were listed in writing. This prompt appeared in Indiana's administration of ISTEP (Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress for grade 10; Smith & Swain, 2011), and appears as follows:

> Your state university offered residential summer academy to high school students where students will spend four weeks with professionals in the field of: Art, computer science, biology, Physical education, Math, music. The program included living in the university and working with professionals. In the application process, students were required to identify the field of their interest, and what they hope to learn from this summer academy. Students were required to write a persuasive essay in which they were asked to state the field that interests them and why they have chosen that field and in the end what they hope to gain after completing this summer camp (p. 3).

This prompt stood out because it was authentic answers, and students had a choice to choose the area in which they wanted to study. The prompt gave a variety of cues as to what was exactly required in the essay. Of course, students wrote about themselves and their strengths and weakness (Smith & Swain, 2011). They included both anecdotes from their lives and other rhetorical strategies. In the application format, students were asked to write a multi-paragraph essay (Smith & Swain, 2011). It is evident that one single prompt cannot inspire each and every student; however, motivational factors and learning styles are equally important. Thus, it illustrated principles of accessibility and

authenticity for a wide range of students' motivations and knowledge base (Smith & Swain, 2011).

Raphael et al. (2008) performed a study that involved nine teachers who were stated to be, "Teachers who focus on understanding tasks, concepts and value interests and stimulate more as compared to the teachers who assign irrelevant and uninteresting work." When students are allowed autonomy, they tend to do their best. Such types of practices work best with the students because they feel proud on whatever the outcome is (Raphael et al., 2008). Autonomy improves motivation and scoring of writing skills as opposed to background knowledge and motivational levels of the student. Teachers can guide the students best with writing prompts, but ultimately, amazing and different ideas come from the mind of the student.

Engaging students is the best resource, and it is crucial for the success of the students when writing or doing any other learning process. A focused study of high school and middle school students was conducted to find out the barriers in students' writing. Almost 36% of comments were related to students' engagement (Raphael et al., 2008). One student said, "To write on the topic which is of no interest, is just wastage of time." Another said, "Why is it necessary to write in the past. We should write what is happening today. One of the most powerful responses from the student was, "If you care more about the topic, you will care more about writing." Although it seems to be a very simple statement, it is very powerful in determining the motivational factors and the learning styles of the students (Raphael et al., 2008).

A New York state standard stated the following:

Firstly, Students will listen, read, write, and speak for understanding and

information. Secondly, Students will speak, listen, write, and read for

expression and literary response. Thirdly, Students will speak, listen,

write, and read for evaluation and critical analysis. Fourthly, Students will

speak, listen, and read for social interaction. (National Survey of Student

Engagement, 2009 p.2).

Writing is a skill, and it needs practice and to be taught simultaneously. It is

essential that the students understand the directions and organize ideas in a coherent way

(National Survey of Student Engagement, 2009). According to Raphael et al. (2008),

students are more prone to be strategic learners, and they are more prone to be analytical,

critical thinkers, writers, and communicators when they learn to recognize the patterns of

constructing and thinking and are able to apply it to their writing.

Implications for Social Change

The generalizations that can be drawn for social change offers a set of best

practices in writing instruction that includes the needs of the struggling writer. The

practices should include providing opportunities to discuss the topic and assisting the

writer with knowledge of the content, organization, and adequate time for revision.

Training for teachers and literacy coaches that address the needs of the struggling writer

could help assist all students with writing. For example, increased collaboration in the

classroom will allow all students equal access to background information, resources, or

knowledge.

Another social change implication is to evaluate the instructional practices in writing. Traditional writing programs do not include writing in all content areas. This study will contribute to social change by providing insight into the perceptions of a struggling adolescent writer. Writing is an essential skill for communicating thoughts and information in today's society. It is a life skill students will use whether or not they pursue higher education. It is a way they communicate their knowledge and ideas with others. As education moves from multiple choice/ short answer assessment formats to extended response, the ability to organize ideas and express them in a way that others are able to make meaning out of will continue to become more and more important.

Recommendations

Based on the theoretical study, existing literature and research, and the results of the current study, the following recommendations should be considered by the educational system and teachers to enhance the writing skills of adolescents.

Topics of interest that provide the students or an option of self-creating a topic would benefit the struggling writer. The topic from the student's life, experiences, or interest areas is suggested. In the case of a teacher wanting to give a social, economic, historical, or political topic, it is necessary to introduce the topic in advance and help students become aware about the varying viewpoints by giving them a chance to garner information before they actually start the writing process.

The students develop their interest toward writing essays when the topic provided to them is of interest and gathers information about their life or personal experiences. These topics are easy to write because the topics flow from their personal lives, and they

do not have to work toward coming up with ideas and details; they can concentrate on the flow of their writing. If the teachers provide discussion and sharing with peers about their ideas, the students can derive the meaning of the topic before attempting to write.

The writing skills of the students depend a lot on the topic provided to them. For example, if a student were to write an essay on the political background of the Meiji Restoration, he or she would have to think it over twice, develop an interest, gather information, and structure the ideas. This process is time consuming, so it becomes important that the student is given ample time to research the topic.

The time given for research should not include the writing time. The research time should be given in advance so that the students can plan out their ideas. The topic should be clear and concise. Any vague topic will not generate interest. The teacher should decide in advance the topic to be given, and it should be easy to understand. If the topics are vague or very complicated, students become unmotivated. In such a case, the teacher should give brief details or "talking points" about the topic, and then the students should research the topic. Many students are not comfortable researching, and they just write down preconceived thoughts. This is not fair, and the students should be taught that research work is very important because it opens new gateways of knowledge and ideas.

The following factors should be kept in mind while giving the topic to the students:

1. The topic should be easily understandable.
2. The topic should be generic in nature, and if it is a specific issue, the teacher should attempt to discuss the topic with the students beforehand.

3. The teacher should give ample time to the students to research the topic.

The structuring and organization of the ideas is more difficult with topics of social importance. The students feel more comfortable writing down their personal experiences because they comprehend the whole situation in their mind and have a structure about the ideas. This should be the ideal pattern of writing an essay. First, the student should assimilate the "rough ideas" and then go about structuring them in a meaningful sequence. Before introducing any topic to the students, the teachers should make sure that the topics are taught or discussed in the class, and the students should have a comfort level in terms of understanding the meaning of the topic.

The educational system has brought to light importance of curriculum and its contribution to the development of learning and mastery of skills. Today, the role of teachers is not just to act as evaluator, but also to encourage students to try to find out the meaning of their education. The teachers should discuss the topic in advance and highlight the key areas from which they can derive information. In this way, the students are able to make use of a diverse and stimulating environment where they can develop their writing skills.

One thing that is very important is that the information gathering should not be too much. It is an old saying that too much or too little information are both dangerous. Therefore, the students should gather appropriate information and then follow his or her ideas and thoughts. Research work is important because it highlights the previous work done in the particular area. The students must derive the required information and not include any unnecessary information.

Support of teachers, peers, and family should assist the students with the essay. The educational system has evolved as modern educators have sought and understood the value of students thinking and developing their ideas through discussion and writing. Traditionally education was focused on the nascent objectives of education. The modern day teacher acts as a catalyst that speeds up the rate of their development. Therefore, it is very important that teachers guide and mentor the students at every stage of the writing process and help solve their queries. The students, while writing the essay, have many queries and doubts about sentence structuring, paragraph building, citations, and the coherent flow of thoughts and ideas. Teachers, or an experienced writer, can solve these problems and assist the struggling writer.

The role of the teachers in this field is of immense importance because the teachers understand their students. They understand the students' needs, and they guide the development of a mature writer. Similarly, family support is equally important. Families should encourage students to hone their writing skills rather than pinpointing their flaws. This way, the students will be motivated to write and rectify their mistakes. Constant motivation by the teachers and family members will prove to be beneficial. The students work better when they are encouraged to perform in a positive environment, one without any self-doubt and fear.

Motivation is vital to academic success and the educational system should incorporate instructional strategies that enhance self-efficacy in adolescents. No student can excel in the first instance, and practice is very important throughout the writing

process. The student needs assistance through all the stages of the writing process; struggling writers require support and feedback from their teachers and family members.

If students are unable to freely communicate, it becomes difficult for them to be open to new ideas and thoughts, which are self-deprecating and dissatisfying. Therefore, to achieve a point where there is freedom of expression, the students and teachers should have an understanding of each other's thought processes. A teacher also needs a student who can follow his or her example and deliver excellent essays, and students constantly need the guidance of the teachers. Therefore, the mutual interdependence between teacher and student guide them toward proficiency. Various studies have proven that students perform better in the motivational and open environments where the teachers value their learning outcomes.

The type and topic of the writing assignment can enhance motivation and success. Adolescents' development of interpersonal relationships needs consideration to satisfy the struggling writer's desire for an audience. If the students think that the writing assignments will enhance their other social and communication skills, then they will be more motivated to enhance their writing skills.

The students should be given more argumentative and persuasive types of essays, which will hone their social skills. Today, one of the roles of the teacher is to develop the social personality of the student and his or her thought process. Students desire to be appreciated and motivated in their writing, and this instills a new confidence in their abilities and confidence.

A lot of emphasis is given to the writing skills of the students because writing prowess increases the imagination of the student. They visualize things and start developing new ideas. For example, if the topic is "a lavish dinner party," the student will be inspired to visualize the real scenario, and they will pen down words like dining table, grand menu, cutlery, chandeliers, and others. This will enable them to form sentences and use their imagination to bring the essay to life.

Today, the scope of education has enlarged and moved on beyond the personal characteristics of the students. It is important to hone their extracurricular and social skills as well. To be a proficient writer, the students must understand that there is free flow of information between the students and the teachers.

The development of adolescents comes with interpersonal relationships and communication, and writing to peers inspires them to excel and write brilliantly. Essay writing is not an activity, but it is a whole process whereby various skills of the students are assimilated to produce an essay. The tests obtained from the interviews of the current study indicate that the students have an interest in the field of writing, but they cannot perform due to constraints of lacking writing authentically in school and on state assessments.

Communication and social skills are important to the whole student as a learner, as well as the academic cognitive skills that students need to be able to extract information and apply them to their essays. Cognitive skills refer to those abilities that a learner acquires, assimilates, and gathers information from various resources and apply

them to their understanding of the world. For a student, it is very important to develop these skills because it helps create a diversified approach toward the topic.

Kantz in her article, "Helping Students Use Textual Sources Persuasively," put an emphasis on the "value and importance of reading and how reading prowess should be developed. She dealt with various aspects of reading and stated that reading should be aimed at developing a deeper understanding of the subject rather than just reading the phrases" (Loftus, 2012, p. 1). Her article's principle take away was to help students understand the rhetorical meaning of the phrases rather than just reading the phrases. Unless the students will develop the reading skills, they cannot structure their ideas in a coherent manner. Once they understand the meaning of the text, they will be in a better position to write an essay (Loftus, 2012).

In her article, Kantz said that professors should aim at developing the writing skills and rhetorical proficiency in writing papers. Her purpose is to enable the students to write in a way so that they think and then write. This will develop writing skills and help them get a better understanding of the subject. Reading is a skill that needs to be acquired. She highlighted various elements of reading comprehension such as facts, opinions, situational truth, and how these are incorporated in texts that need to be analyzed by the students as they read. Reading is not just about going over the words, but having an in-depth knowledge of the meaning of those words and what they convey.

The following quote by Wright (2015, p. 131) highlighted the importance of literacy skills and how the ideas generated in the minds of the students can be jotted down in a coherent manner:

The more closely the author thinks of why he wrote, the more he comes to regard his imagination as a kind of self-generating cement which glued his facts together, and his emotions as a kind of dark and obscure designer of those facts. Reluctantly, he comes to the conclusion that to account for his book is to account for his life.

The explanation of the importance of the pre-writing process to students and offer feedback to the students on their organization, details, and reasoning can enhance the struggling writer's ability to write proficiently. At the same time, the planners should be shortened so that the students can understand its importance and get accustomed with it.

As seen in the data, the students have a penchant for writing, but they lack the subjective approach toward writing. This approach will come when they are well prepared for their assignments and have complete control over the topic. Any essay requires a lot of pre-writing practice and planning.

Pre-writing enables students to have enough time to plan and think about the topic. The planning part includes assimilating information from various sources, developing ideas, framing sentences, and building coherent sentence structuring. The structure of the sentences is very important in any essay writing, and, therefore, the students must take care to develop logical sentence building. Without a proper and logical sentence framing, students cannot write a good essay. Sentence framing requires a good grasp of grammar, logical ideas, and coherent flow of words; as Graham and Fitzgerald (2014) stated:

Pre-writing engages students in activities designed to help them generate or organize ideas for their composition. Engaging adolescents in such activities before they write a first draft improves the quality of their writing. Pre-writing activities include gathering possible information for a paper through reading or developing a visual representation of their ideas before sitting down to write. For example, some common pre-writing activities include encouraging group and individual planning before writing, organizing pre-writing ideas, prompting students to plan after providing a brief demonstration of how to do so, or assigning reading material pertinent to a topic and then encouraging students to plan their work (p. 699).

Adolescent development requires a shift from dependency to autonomy; therefore, they should be given freedom in terms of how long of an essay they want to write; this should be done until they garner enough information or knowledge about the topic. Paragraph restrictions should be removed at the initial stages until students get accustomed to the given topics.

In the past, curriculum was considered a way of teaching and providing knowledge according to fixed standards. However, with reform of the educational system through the passing of laws and equality a shift is manifesting towards a focus on the curriculum and the student as a learner. Therefore, the integration of the students' experiences and view point is paramount to the educational content taught. Freedom given to the students is very important because it develops confidence and motivation. Curriculum has broadened though history and apart from passing cognitive skills, it is

important to create an interest in the writing and teach the students new ways to practice their writing prowess.

As discussed above, the study indicated that the strict requirement of the essays of five or more paragraphs frustrates the students, especially when they are short of information or ideas on the given topic. This restricts their writing skills, and they feel more frustrated. Rather than feeling energetic and hopeful, they start ignoring writing. This should not be encouraged, and the students should be given freedom in terms of paragraph writing. The student should be encouraged to decide the writing pattern and page length in the initial stage. This will encourage the students to take up writing projects, and then, gradually, they will develop interests in writing.

Students should not be scared of failure. Teachers should develop their skills, and even if the students commit mistakes, they should be motivated to attempt the writing again. This will remove the self-doubt in the students.Writing techniques can be taught after the students have completed their writing assignments. The teachers can point out where a technique can be used and which one was missing during the revision process. This way, the students will get more experience that is practical to the creation of an essay that flows coherently. This will also be enjoyable because all the students in the current study liked the revision part of the writing process to assess and correct their mistakes.

Unless students practically implement a technique in their writing, they don't remember the technique. Therefore, it is advisable to teach the techniques one by one and provide an opportunity to practice and implement the writing technique. Students tend to

learn more by practical learning. Teachers should teach one method and ask the students to write the paper according to that technique. This will help the students develop their writing skills.

There cannot be a set pattern for teaching the techniques to the students. Teachers should analyze the students and then decide which technique to use. Not every student can learn every writing technique. Therefore, it is the duty of teachers to teach the technique depending upon the innate skills of the students. Once a student is skilled in that technique, the teacher should take an exam to judge the grasping power of the students. This will help teachers explore new avenues in writing papers, and they will be better able to judge their potential. Many educators have different views on this matter. Some educators say that teachers should teach all the techniques, and then students should use them one by one. Nevertheless, the correct way is to teach them one by one because their memory is short lived. They tend to remember new things and forget old things.

Writing techniques are essential because they equip the students with the skill set required to enhance their writing prowess. These techniques are instrumental in garnering the interest of the students. Teachers should motivate the students to practice these techniques regularly so that students do not forget them. Practical experience is very important when honing students' writing skills. It is not a theoretical subject that can be jumbled up. Students should be required to write a paragraph daily so that they can practice a new technique every day.

The revision process can be done until the essays become perfect and match all the requirements. This will enable the students to identify their mistakes and correct them. In addition, the repeated revisions will create a long-term memory of the writing techniques. As author Butler (Gallagher, 2011) stated:

> The revision process can be done till the essays of the students become perfect and match all the requirements. This will enable them to identify their mistakes and correct it. In addition, the repeated revisions will create a long-term memory of the writing techniques and the students in course of time easily forget other writing skills since too many writing techniques taught in the beginning. (p. 148)

The significance of regular writing and revision of the techniques is important for many educators. They focus on the regular revisions so that the lessons taught to the students are clear. It has been observed that the students do not remember past events very distinctly. Due to this hindrance, it is advisable that the students should inculcate the habit of regular revision. This will help them retain the concepts.

Sharing the writing of the students in the class and appreciating their ideas and views motivates them intrinsically. The appreciation of their ideas and opinions will be well received by their peers and will motivate them to write well or improve their thinking.

There is a need for setting the expectations higher in the curriculum. There is a need for recognition of other important abstract factors, such as motivation, encouragement, cognitive skills, practical knowledge, and the ability to put acquired

knowledge to real life scenarios. This is not possible in the traditional curriculum. For example, the traditional curriculum does not distinguish the significance of internal rewards and merits. It can help students recognize their abilities and enhance their cognitive skills in a confident manner. Nevertheless, this should be the definitive motive of the educational system: to enhance the learning outcomes and provide a student with the skills necessary to apply them to various situations. Therefore, the teacher's role becomes very important here. Teachers should work toward developing motivation in the students and helping them cope with the pressure and frustration that writing can elicit.

If a student writes a proficient paragraph, the teacher should attempt to read it out to the class and appreciate the student's effort, ideas, and communication skills. This will instill confidence in the student and give a sense of self-adulation. This will inspire him or her to excel in his or her writing prowess and constantly strive toward it. In the absence of motivation, the student feels neglected, and the student loses the drive to perform. Writing an essay is a skilled activity that requires an interest and a general inclination toward writing. The role of motivation is very significant in cultivating an interest in completing a learning activity. As the student discovers his or her skills, traits and capabilities self-introspection is necessary for motivation to be present. Understanding one's abilities and knowledge encourages the student to perform at higher levels.

Graham, MacArthur, and Fitzgerald's (2013) statement highlighted the importance of the writing skills developed in the early stages of an academic career. The students tend to learn more in the earlier stages because they are driven by motivation

and inspiration. Nevertheless, as they grow older, they lose the drive that they get from motivation. Therefore, the teachers should plan their teaching schedule so that it gives a platform to the students who can then explore their traits and highlight their talents in the classroom.

Writing well is not just an option for the students, but they should make it a habit because, today it is in demand. It is important to be well read because it reflects the educational standard of the person. It is one of the main criteria for participation in the civic life. The rate at which the students are passing shows that many students are inclined toward education, but this does not mean that they are good writers. One of the reasons why the students lack a certain amount of proficiency in writing is due to a lack of literacy skills.

The practice of writing provides state-like tests and environments to the students at the end of the semester or one to two months before state tests in order to prepare them for the state tests. This should be done as the final part of the writing process after the students have gained confidence on their writing skills and have made considerable improvements.

Students thrive in a positive class environment; therefore, teachers should create a friendly and competitive environment where the students compete with each other in a healthy spirit. This can be achieved by taking regular exams. The purpose of exams should not be to give them a score and mock them for a lower score. The aim of the exams should be to judge the writing skills and to highlight the areas that require improvement.

Many students fear state tests and demonstrate indifference to the requirements of the tests. However, this practice should be discouraged because it leads to a lack of confidence. The students should be encouraged to participate in class tests so that they can judge their potential, and teachers can also find out the deficiencies in their writing skills. This fosters a learning environment in the classrooms. The purpose of the tests should be to test the potential of the student and to take their writing skills seriously.

The pattern of the tests should be subjective, and the students should be given a chance to write down their thoughts in a limited time frame. A time frame is very important because it enhances the speed of the students. For example, if a student is proficient by only writing 200 words in three hours, this is efficient, however, the speed and word count is also equally important to the state tests. Utilizing the recommendations in this study can guide teachers who are considering what a struggling writer needs when his or her writing skills are below proficient. Teachers that pay close attention to the background knowledge, self-efficacy level, and expectations of the assignment will enhance the struggling writers' writing skills. It is the responsibility of the teachers to engage the motivational level and confidence of the struggling writer, if the achievement gap is to be lessened. I intend that the findings of this research study be used in the school district as a basis for gathering a cadre of teachers to form a writing Professional Learning Community (PLC) to study and improve writing instruction.

Connection to Theoretical Framework

As discussed in Section 2, Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory encompasses a person's attitude, abilities, and cognitive skills, which is known as self-efficacy. This

theory incorporates a continuous interaction between behaviors, cognition, and the environment of person. Students assimilate their own meaning through observational learning as attention, retention, reciprocation, and motivation (Bandura, 1986). Self-efficacy will influence an individual's choice, effort, persistence, and achievement (Bandura, 1997; Schunk, 1996). Students are apt to make use of these factors on activities that they believe will produce a favorable outcome and avoid those that might result in a negative consequence. Self-efficacy is the answer to the cognitive process that contributes to adolescence's academic success (Carnell, 2006).

This was apparent in the present study as well where the students' writing success was dominated by their intrinsic motivation and efforts at writing. This was evident from the response of Subject C, who stated that she worked very hard to write a good essay; this showed that she was intrinsically motivated to excel in her writing assignment in the class. She stated the following:

> It was really difficult, really difficult, until I started to go to extra classes for it. I learn more about it. I learn more about it by going over it and over it many times. I had to go through every nook and cranny of it, like topic sentence. The more practice the better I get.

Nevertheless, this sense of self-efficacy and motivation died away when it came to the state tests. On those tests, she could not get a proficient score and felt that writing assignments were difficult. This was because she did not get any help from the teachers or external tutors. Again the statistics of the national surveys that consider the state test scores as the basis of their survey results would still show the same drastic figures of

more and more students failing the state tests and having low writing skills (Applebee &

Langer, 2006). The root cause of this was that the writers did not know the topics that

were given in the state tests. Additionally, they were timed, thus the scope of researching

the given topic and attaining help was impossible. Students were at a loss, relying only on

their limited knowledge and low confidence to complete the assessment.

For a continuous flux, motivation is a dynamic process and an essential element

of language acquisition. Individual learner's motivation is influenced by external and

internal factors (Brophy, 2010). External factors are related to socio-cultural and

contextual background whereas internal factors are related to perceived relevance,

attitude toward activity, intrinsic interest, and the value of the activity (Raphael et al.,

2008). The factors such as control over the learning activity, feeling of mastery, a sense

of agency all influence a learner's motivation (Applebee & Langer, 2006; Raphael et al.,

2008).

To enhance motivation, there are three psychological needs that need to be met.

Firstly, to overcome challenges, there has to be competency. Second, there needs to be

autonomy. Third, there needs to be relatedness, which refers to the individuals' need to

be connected to and esteemed by others (Applebee & Langer, 2006; Raphael et al., 2008).

A sense of self-determination and self-worth is essentially important to increase intrinsic

motivation. Learners should be given ample opportunities for self-expression and social

interaction. Apart from all this enjoyment, personal causation and interest are

indispensable factors (Kong & Hoare, 2011; Hawthorne, 2008; Raphael et al., 2008).

Motivation for every student is different, and teachers can work actively in improving students' motivation. For enhancing students' motivation, teachers should engage students in meaningful discussions that consider their focus on writing and make the topic relevant to a cultural and social context (Kong & Hoare, 2011; Hawthorne, 2008; Raphael et al., 2008). Designing writing tasks will interest the students and offer opportunities for self-expression and social interaction (Applebee & Langer, 2006; Raphael et al., 2008). As stated by Subject C, "I like getting my opinion out, like getting what I feel about things on paper. I want others to be able to read it, and know my ideas." It is important to the adolescent writer that their ideas or opinions be coherent and shared to an authentic audience.

Amongst most of the students who were interviewed, intrinsic motivation has been connected to increase of self-regulation, self-determination, and self-efficacy. However, the development of intrinsic motivation on writing in the research is weak. The five-paragraph essay has faced criticism for its unquestioned position at the center a writing class. Deci and Ryan (2006) stated that intrinsic motivation and self-determination is an essential ingredient to academic success. They further explained that even a "modest opportunity to be self-determining in relation to one's learning appears to enhance intrinsic motivation" (Deci & Ryan, 2006 p. 320). In other words, if the students are motivated intrinsically, they will be able to determine for themselves their own challenges, goals, tasks, and outcomes within their entire education. Specific components of self-determination include that people possess a natural inclination to write and succeed in their endeavors (Deci & Ryan, 1991).

Pajares and Valiante (2009) argued that someone with extrinsic motivation will try to choose easier tasks whereas intrinsically motivated students choose tasks that are challenging. The intrinsic reward increases when success is achieved. For example, to save time and energy, students who present extrinsic motivation will choose to write a paper based on past courses and subjects that have already been explored. On the other hand, intrinsically motivated students will choose to write about unfamiliar topics because they will learn more about the topic.

Intrinsically motivated students will not think about time and energy, rather they will be more focused on writing, researching, and thinking. This type of intrinsic motivation is based on rewards but not in a traditional behavioral sense (Smith & Swain, 2011; Accapezzato, 2013; Raphael et al., 2008). Rewards with this type of motivation are created and discovered within the individual. Outside persons will only intervene in the motivational process (Smith & Swain, 2011; Hawthorne, 2008). Subject A stated the following:

> When I feel I've met my goal. I feel success and my goal has been achieved. I try to feel if I did a really good job on it. Most of time I do feel good...You become speechless because you don't have anything else you could put into it. Now that you know what you are doing.

Students who are motivated extrinsically simply rehash old ideas and will learn only if the teacher asks them to learn and view the topic from a different angle, hence imposing external rewards of intellectual growth on the students (Raphael et al., 2008; Applebee & Langer, 2006; Hawthorne, 2008; Kong & Hoare, 2011). Intrinsically

motivated students seek and create intellectual rewards by the nature of their enthusiasm about learning even if the teacher has not asked the students to speak or write about a new topic. As Deci and Ryan (2001) noted, intrinsic motivation is "persistence in the absence of immediate extrinsic contingencies." Only one of the subjects in the current study expressed intrinsic motivation.

Ultimately, an informational environment provides multiple and flexible courses of action rather than strict, predictable behavior. Deci and Ryan (2001) suggested that for meeting flexible goals, self-determining environments help to clarify an individuals' effectiveness. According to the notion of entropy, an informational environment acknowledges flexibility of externally and internally constructed goals unlike controlling environments (externally) where only requirements and criteria are focused on (Deci & Ryan, 2001; Applebee & Langer, 2006; Smith & Swain, 2011). In other words, teachers who allow students to write on topics of their own choice acknowledge the students' intrinsic motivation. In these cases, even the students' extrinsic motivation of earning strong grades will change to intrinsic goals because they will be able to write on a topic they love too (Accapezzato, 2013). But a teacher who asks students to write about a single structured topic takes the risk of influencing the students' writing skills negatively; students will write because of extrinsic motivation only, and the sole purpose will be to earn strong grades (Accapezzato, 2013).

Deci and Ryan elaborated on White's reflectance theory (1986). It stated that by the way of competence, people naturally desire to excel within any social and personal framework (Baird, Fensham, Gunstone, & White, 1991). Deci and Ryan further argued

that for the people to be continuously and intrinsically motivated, a feeling of satisfaction and reward is enough (Deci & Ryan, 2001; Applebee & Langer, 2006; Smith & Swain, 2011). Even with students, a satisfying feeling of a job well done is sufficient to intrinsically motivate their writing activities. External appreciation driven based motivation requires additional reinforcements from time to time, but with intrinsic motivation, additional reinforcements are not necessary (Deci & Ryan, 2001; Applebee & Langer, 2006; Smith & Swain, 2011).

The results clearly showed that some students were intrinsically motivated. The others were not motivated at all except for to finish the assignment. Subject F stated, "Most of the writing assignments, I don't finish because they take too long and I get lost." In addition, the student who was intrinsically motivated took more effort and practiced repeatedly to hone his or her writing skills. The other students just wanted to get the work done but often did not complete the assignment.

Recommendations for Future Study

The existing studies done in this field were mostly quantitative and lacked the data about the motivational factors of the students. The current study was limited because the sample size for the qualitative research was very small, and only six students were interviewed. However, the results of the study revealed some very interesting facts that had not been listed in previous studies. The future research can build on these results by conducting research on a larger scale with larger sample size from different schools and for different grade levels.

Being an English teacher of writing, over the years, I have built theories and knowledge on the pedagogy of writing. Reflecting on the narratives revealed that students do not always have enough information to complete an assignment. The thinking, as a teacher, was that students could write if they have some background knowledge on the topic; however, according to the struggling writer, this is not true. The confidence of the student is hampered, the writer is stuck, and the quality is not what the student perceived before beginning writing.

Future studies on a larger scale can be either qualitative or quantitative. In the case where the research is done using a quantitative methodology with a close-ended questionnaire, the current study can be considered as the basis of preparing the questionnaire and insert relevant questions, which would yield the desired data on the motivational factors of the students for writing assignments. This will enable the researcher to get extensive data and the right insight into the factors that drive the students to specific learning. This study can be further used by the education systems to bring forth changes in course structure and to organize the courses according to the motivational drivers of the students. Thus, the current study can be considered a framework for future studies in this field.

Summary

The above section discussed the conclusion, recommendations, and future scope of this research. Its aim is to improve the writing of struggling writers and show the role teachers can have in writing success. The current study reflected that the students had low morale when it came to writing assignments. Although they enjoyed writing because they

got the opportunity to express their feelings, the various technical requirements of writing and unknown topics lowered their skills and grades. It seemed that the teachers had very little assistance in the classroom when helping the students at individual levels. The struggling writer needs guidance not only with writing skills, but with self-efficacy, competence, persistence, and confidence. The teachers did not concentrate on the learning styles or the motivational factors behind the learning decomposition of the struggling writers, and this led to the construction of inefficient course modules and classroom-teaching activities that failed to bring the desired level of learning and writing skills.

The recommendations are generic in nature, and it is not necessary that all the students need the same assistance and improvement because writing is a continuum. It is up to the teacher to evaluate the writing skills and to apply the measures as applicable. The time given for research should not include the writing time. Discussions on the topic help the struggling writer. Teachers should consider providing feedback to the students throughout the writing process to correct any misconceptions. The topic should be clear and concise. Any vague topic will not generate interest from the students. This will help the students in penning down their ideas in an effective way. Writing can become an area of pleasure for all students in all content areas, if the educational system accounts for different levels of background knowledge and intrinsic motivation level of the writer.

Similarly, the teachers should foster a healthy environment where the students are motivated and inspired to perform effectively. Teachers should act as guides, mentors, and authors who can help with the individual needs and problems of the students. The

feedback the teacher provides with suggestions on where a writing technique can strengthen the students' writing helps with increasing confidence in the writer. Students enjoy the revision stage of the writing process, but they need guidance and support to improve their writing.

The other aspects, such as timed assessments, freedom of expression from the students' experiences, and a competitive environment, are also beneficial for the development of the writing skills. It is important to analyze all these recommendations and then apply them. Students are not born writers, but they embrace this skill with the passage of time and by investing their time, patience, and success into the process. All students want to write to communicate their point of view, opinions, and thoughts; it is the responsibility of the educational system to ensure that all students write proficiently.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interviewee:
Date:
Time:
Location:

1. Please talk a little bit about your school experiences in writing.
a. Do you remember a writing assignment that was very successful?
b. Do you remember a writing assignment that was unsuccessful?
c. What kind of grades do you usually receive on your writing?

2. What are your feelings toward writing?
a. What do you like or dislike about writing?
b. What are some of your favorite things about writing?
c. What are some of your least favorite things about writing?
d. What part of the writing process to you like?
e. What part of the writing process to you dislike?

3. What kinds of writing do you wish you did more of in school?
   a. What kinds of writing do you wish you did less of in school?
   b. What frustrates you when you are writing?
   c. What keeps you focused when writing?
   d. What really makes you want to write?

4. Do you ever think about the strategies that teacher use to help make writing easier?
a. What strategies help you use?
b. What strategies do you dislike?

5. Do you set goals when beginning a writing assignment?
a. How do you determine your goal?
b. How do you use your goals?
c. How do you know when you have met your goal?
d. Do goals motivate you?

Appendix B: Assent for Participation

Hello, my name is Teri Spargur and I am doing a research project to learn about motivation from students that struggle in writing. The purpose of this study is to seek your perspective of what motivates you to write. I would like to hear how you feel about writing; understand your perspective on motivation, and how teachers can help you in writing. Your perspective is unique and it will help teachers guide writing instruction in classrooms.

I am inviting you to join my project. I am inviting all students that struggled on the 7th grade state writing assessment to be in the study. I am going to read this form to you. I want you to learn about the project before you decide if you want to be in it.

Who am I:

I am a student at Walden University. I am working on my doctoral degree. You may already know me as an 8th grade English teacher but this study is separate from that role.

About the Project:

If you agree to be in this project, you will be asked to:

- You will be asked to sign this form of consent, in which, you are willing to talk about your perspective on writing and motivation via a discussion. Your perspective will be recorded, transcribed exactly as you say it.
- Have your parent or guardian sign a permission consent form to participate in the study.
- You will be given a copy of all questions before the interview.
- You will be asked to participate in a face-to-face interview with me that will last approximately 60 minutes in length.

Here are some sample questions:

Please talk a little bit about your school experiences in writing.
Do you remember a writing assignment that was very successful? Please explain.
Do you remember a writing assignment that was unsuccessful? Please explain.
What kind of grades do you usually receive on your writing? Please explain.

It's your choice:

You don't have to be in this project if you don't want to. If you decide now that you want to join the project, you can still change your mind later. If you want to stop, you can.

Being in this project might make you tired or stressed, just like your English class. If applicable, describe the risks of any other possible harms that might go beyond the discomforts of everyday life. Writing might not be a favorite activity of yours in school, but we are hoping this project might help others by you telling us what can be hard or easy in writing.

Privacy:

Everything you tell me during this project will be kept private. That means that no one else will know your name or what answers you gave. The only time I have to tell someone is if I learn about something that could hurt you or someone else.

Asking Questions:

You can ask me any questions you want now. If you think of a question later, you or your parents can reach me at (425) 754-8282. If you or your parents would like to ask my university a question, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. Her phone number is (612) 312-1210.

I will give you and your parent or guardian a copy of this form.

Please sign your name below if you want to join this project.

Name of Child

_____

Child Signature

_____

Date

_____

Researcher Signature

_____

Appendix C: Confidentiality Agreement

Name of Signer:

During the course of my activity in collecting data for this research: Struggling Adolescent Writers Describe Their Writing Experience, I will have access to information, which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement, I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.
2. I will not in any way divulge copy, release, sell, and loan, alter or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.
3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant's name is not used.
4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification, or purging of confidential information.
5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the job that I will perform.
6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.
7. I will only access or use systems or devices I am officially authorized to access and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Signature: Date:

Community Research Everett School District

Appendix D: Transcript Subject A

Interviewee: Subject A
Date:4/20/2015
Time: 2:15 pm
Location: Conference Room Evergreen Middle School

After reading the Assent Form to the student, a signature was obtained.
R - I thank you for contributing to my study on "Struggling Adolescent Writers Describe Their Writing Experience." As you know, I am a teacher here at Evergreen, this interview and study has nothing to do with Everett School District or Evergreen Middle School. I am a student at Walden University and hopes of obtaining my Ph.d. I will be asking you a series of questions on writing. Do you have a copy of the questions? You may refer and use the questions at any time.
S - Yes
R- Great. I would like to remind you that at time during the interview that you may stop the interview or if there is a question you do not want to answer, you can say, I don't want to answer the question. Does that make sense?
S - Yes, I can stop if I want to.
R - The purpose of this study is to hear from your I am interested in your perceptions and experiences writing. Do you have any questions?
R - Okay then let's get started, remember you can stop at any time. (Student shakes her head, yes) The first question - Please talks a little bit about your school experiences in writing.
S - When I start to write something, say like an essay, I struggle because it takes a while for me to process the ideas and process my brain on what I want to write about. Sometimes it is hard for me because I am not good at writing and English is hard. I speak Vietnamese at home and the two languages become confusing because sometimes the English word is not in Vietnamese. I try really hard to learn new techniques so I can get better at writing. It takes a while for me to get the hang of writing in school.
R - Do you remember a writing assignment that was very successful?
S - I remember in 7th grade I did an expository essay. It was pretty successful because my Block (English) teacher helped me (tone changed to excitement). He explained a lot of details that I should know about the city of Everett. I really don't know much before that. He taught me what were the easy steps to finish the writing. I think I did a really good job on that essay test.
R - Do you remember a writing assignment that was unsuccessful?
S - Ummmm ... I think that this year in my Block class I did really bad on an argumentative essay. Well, slightly bad or a really bad job because I had too much information from all the readings, so I talked about some stuff I shouldn't have in the essay. didn't talk about the main part, so I need focus on not the small stuff but the main points. I should also know the topic better and it was confusing.

R - What kind of grades do you usually receive on your writing?

S - I usually receive a B or a C.

R - What are your feelings toward writing?

S - My feelings towards writing is nervous. When I get nervous my brain gets mixed up and I can't sort it out. I don't know which detail I should put in or if this is right or not right.

R - What do you like or dislike about writing?

S - Ummm ... I really don't dislike writing, it is really important for high school and college. There is soooo much writing and it will get you some place in life.

R- What do you like about writing?

S - You get to write your opinions, you get to write about something you have a lot of information about; when you have a connection with the topic. You can also share your ideas in the writing.

R- What are some of your favorite things about writing?

S - Um, one of my favorite things about writing is sometimes you get to write about things you like.

R - What are some of your least favorite things about writing?

S - That you have to write a bunch of paragraphs. It is a lot, it is too much, like, if you don't know anything about the topic then it is too much.

R - What part of the writing process to you like?

S - (tone changed to excitement) I love to revise my writing because you get to see your mistakes and you could change the punctuation. Well, the punctuation is hard, but sometimes I get it. When the teacher gives you feedback you can change it and you learn from your mistakes.

R - What part of the writing process to you dislike?

S - I dislike the rough draft and then you have to write it all over again. Like, why don't we just revise it, then write the rough draft.

R - What kinds of writing do you wish you did more of in school?

S - I wish we did more argumentative because people agree and disagree on the other side, but I like when we debate it first. Like a lot of people agree with online dating, but it really is not. There is so much hoax going on, like behind the screen people are not taking dating seriously. Like people will hack your account or just talk about themselves.

R - What kinds of writing do you wish you did less of in school?

S - Essays, they are just too hard.

R - What frustrates you when you are writing?

S - What frustrates me with writing is when you have to think a lot and you don't know about the subject. Like, when you don't know about the topic you have to write about.

R -What keeps you focused when writing?

S - What keeps me focused is when you have most of the information to put into your essay. If they could just tell you what to write and put it on the side of your paper, and then you could just write about that. You could have the topic and the reasons and then you would just have to explain from your point of view.

R - What really makes you want to write?

S - What really makes me want to write is that could ummmm (long pause). I could add my opinions to the ideas. I like to pass on the question.

R - Do you ever think about the strategies that teacher use to help make writing easier?

S - Yes, I try and use them when I am writing, but it is hard when I have to think about what to write.

R - What strategies help you use?

S - By using the most important strategies first, but I really don't know them. Just focus on the main part and topic. like to do the easier topic first and the hard topic last.

R - What strategies do you dislike?

S - There are not any strategies that I dislike.

R - Do you set goals when beginning a writing assignment?

S - Yes, I do set goal and it depends on the topic.

R - How do you determine your goal?

S - How I determine my goal is to look back at my previous writing or essay. I look at my mistakes first, then I look which ones I can change. I then change it on my new essay.

R - How do you know when you've met your goal?

S - When I feel I've met my goal. I feel success and my goal has been achieved. I try to feel if I did a really good job on it and most of the time I do.

R - Do goals motivate you?

S - Goals do motivate me because when I think I have reached my goal. You have a position and feeling that you put so much effort into it. You become speechless because you don't have anything else you could put into it. Now that you know what you are doing you can achieve your goal.

Appendix E: Transcript Subject B

Interviewee: Subject B
Date: 4/21/2015
Time: 2:15 pm
Location: Conference Room Evergreen Middle School

After reading the Assent Form to the student, a signature was obtained.

R - I thank you for contributing to my study on "Struggling Adolescent Writers Describe Their Writing Experience." As you know, I am a teacher here at Evergreen, this interview and study has nothing to do with Everett School District or Evergreen Middle School. I am a student at Walden University and hopes of obtaining my Ph.d. I will be asking you a series of questions on writing. Do you have a copy of the questions? You may refer and use the questions at any time.

S - I am ready

R- Great. I would like to remind you that at time during the interview that you may stop the interview or if there is a question you do not want to answer, you can say, I don't want to answer the question. Does that make sense?

S - Yes, I can stop if I want to.

R - The purpose of this study is to hear from you, I am interested in your perceptions and experiences writing. Do you have any questions?

S - No.

R - Okay then let's get started, remember you can stop at any time. (Student shakes her head, yes) The first question - Please talks a little bit about your school experiences in writing.

S - Well, I really like writing and the teachers here really help us express our feelings. They teach us more techniques to writing. Tell us and showing us there is more than one to write and make a sentence. I don't always remember them.

R- Thank you. Do you remember a writing assignment that was very successful?

S - Yes, there was one assignment months ago that we had to write about a hero. It was a narrative about what makes someone a hero and I wrote about my mom. It was about how she takes care of me, she gives me the strength to do things, especially when I no sure about doing it. She just helps me a lot.

R - Are there any other successful assignments in all your schooling?

S - Not really, like, they all have been successful because I tried my best.

R - Do you remember a writing assignment that was unsuccessful?

S - When I do assignments in class I do fine, but the writing assessments with the state I don't do well on. I don't get what to write about and I don't know the topic that well.

R- What type of grades do you usually get in writing?

S - I get 3+'s.

R - What are your feelings toward writing?

S - It is mutual, I enjoy writing myself. It could be a good way to pass the time. I will write about how my day is going, conversations with my friends, or just what I am feeling. My mom is a teacher, so she encourages me to write.
R - What do you like or dislike about writing?
S - Nothing really writing is writing. here's no limit to writing
R - What do you like about writing?
S - It helps like shy people to express their feelings. I can write about how I feel, but writing to other topics can be hard.
R - What are some of your favorite things about writing?
S - Just being able to put my thinking down on paper.
R- What is the least part of writing?
S- There is a certain expectation to writing it always has to be 5 paragraphs and sometimes I don't have that many opinions on writing.
R - What part of the writing process to you like?
S - I like the revise the most because it teaches us how to go back and re-read our narratives or essays. I like when we revise with other people because you get your paper fixed and your paper sounds better.
R - What part of the writing process to you dislike?
S - I don't like the prewriting. I just want to begin writing and we just have to copy what we jsut wrote. It is pain; the long planners are the worst. It is just a lot of unnecessary work. This year we use a short version of three ideas, hook, and thesis. It is much better.
R- What frustrates you when you are writing?
S - When I don't have enough examples to write on a topic. I run out of details and then I just have to put something in and it doesn't sound write.
R - What keeps you focused when writing?
S - When I get to write the long essays in chunks, like not having to sit all day to finish it. You can have more time to think and then come back to it another day. The teacher in class encouraging you or listening to music can be helpful too.
R - What really makes you want to write?
S = When I am confused or inspired by a great topic. My mom can help me want to write because she is a teacher; she teaches elementary school and tells me how important it is to write. She really likes writing and she encourages me.
R - What makes a great topic?
S - Something I know a lot about, like sports or girls.
R - What kinds of writing do you wish you did more of in school?
S - I think we should more persuasive and because kids my age could use it. It can be useful when we are trying to get our parents to let us do something or get something.
R - Do you ever think about the strategies that teacher use to help make writing easier?
S - I like all the techniques, it is fun to learn how to put together a better sentence and the different ways you can do it. I do think about them all the time and try to use them in my writing. They will help my writing sound better to my peers and other people.
R - What frustrates when you write?
S - When someone else reads my writing and they don't understand what I mean. It just doesn't feel right when they don't get it.

R - What strategies do you dislike?
S - No, not really. The teachers teach us what we need to know.
R - Do you set goals when beginning a writing assignment?
S - No, not really. I just start writing.

Appendix F: Transcript Subject C

Interviewee: Subject C
Date: 4/22/2015
Time: 2:15 pm
Location: Conference Room Evergreen Middle School

After reading the Assent Form to the student a signature was obtained.

R - I thank you for contributing to my study on "Struggling Adolescent Writers Describe Their Writing Experience." As you know, I am a teacher here at Evergreen, this interview and study has nothing to do with Everett School District or Evergreen Middle School. I am a student at Walden University and hopes of obtaining my Ph.d. I will be asking you a series of questions on writing. Do you have a copy of the questions? You may refer and use the questions at any time.
S - Yes
R- Great. I would like to remind you that at time during the interview that you may stop the interview or if there is a question you do not want to answer, you can say, I don't want to answer the question. Does that make sense?
S - Yes, I can stop if I want to.
R - The purpose of this study is to hear from you-I am interested in your perceptions and experiences writing. Do you have any questions?
S - What do perceptions mean?
R - Your point of view or opinion.
S - Okay.
R - Any other questions?
S - No.
R - Okay then let's get started, remember you can stop at any time. (Student shakes her head, yes) The first question -Please talks a little bit about your school experiences in writing.
S - It was really difficult, really difficult, until I started to go to extra classes for it. I learn more about it. I learn more about it by going over it and over it many times. I had to go through every nook and cranny of it, like topic sentence. The more practice the better I get.
R- Thank you. Do you remember a writing assignment that was very successful?
S - Yeah, it was a debating argument, it was about whether zoos should be abolished or not. I was very successful with it. I got 3's in all areas. That was because I was working on it for months with my extra teacher. We were just breaking it down and fixing it as we were going along. I looked over it many times.
R - Are there any other successful assignments in all your schooling?
S - Yes, they are mainly stories, and I read a lot. So I know a lot about them.
R - Do you remember a writing assignment that was unsuccessful?
S - No, not really, because most of the time someone helps me with it. I get to write with someone. All my teachers know that they are helping me, so it is easier. I always have

help so I don't really have unsuccessful writing assignment. The big state test are hard. I don't get to have help. It isn't fair that I don't get help on them.

R- What type of grades do you usually get in writing?

S - B;s or B-'s, not that high but pretty good.

R - What are your feelings toward writing?

S - It is okay, but it is not like how I like to write it. I don't really like writing because I don't get to express really how I feel. It is really hard for me. I have the ideas, but it is hard to get on paper. I have so much in my head but it is really hard to get it down on paper.

R- What do believe makes it hard?

S - Just spelling and grammar. When I read it in my head it is perfect, but when someone else reads it, my spelling is wrong. I forget commas or periods, even semicolons. With my spelling everything will be bad.

R - What do you like or dislike about writing?

S - I like getting my opinion out, like getting what I feel about things out on paper. I want others to be able to read it, and know your ideas.

R - What do you dislike about writing?

S - Doing it by myself. It is hard because I don't know a lot of spelling or commas or stuff like that. It can be a lot of work and I just procrastinate and never get it done.

R - What are some of your favorite things about writing?

S - Umm (long pause) - just getting my ideas down.

R - What part of the writing process to you like?

S - When it is done and everything is correct. Then when someone reads it and I get an awesome grade. (tone changed to excited)

R - The writing process is the prewriting, drafting, revising and editing.

S - Oh, the drafting. Putting my ideas down.

R - What part of the writing process to you dislike?

S - The revising, it looks right to me and I don't know what to change.

R- What frustrates you when you are writing?

S - Spelling and grammar.

R - What keeps you focused when writing?

S - It is hard to stay focused there is too much going in my head.

R - What really makes you want to write?

S = A really good story.

R - What kinds of writing do you wish you did more of in school?

S - Stories, that really speaks to you. I see a lot of books and I see how they put it all together and it can be scary or shows a lot of feelings. They have all these techniques in writing. They use a lot of fancy words and I want to do that too. They make it sound so exciting or sad or scary. I want to do that with my words. Like, I want to write something and have someone feel what I am feeling. Like oh, my gosh, that just happened and the reader gets it.

R - Do you ever think about the strategies that teacher use to help make writing easier?

S - There is so many over the years that it is hard to say. Each year it is different. The outline I am using in 8th grade is working good. It is simple and you can get right to

writing. Last year, we had to fill out a huge planner and it took forever. You just had to write and write, there was so much I couldn't get it done. It is easier because you have three reasons and a thesis and then you write. It is simple and easy and organized.

R - What strategies do you dislike?

S - The long, long planners or the webs. The web is messy and I can't make sense of it, so my writing is not organized.

R - Do you set goals when beginning a writing assignment?

S - No, I never set goals.

R - Do goals motivate you?

S - No

Appendix G: Transcript Subject D

Interviewee: Subject D
Date: 4/23/2015
Time: 3:15 pm
Location: Conference Room Evergreen Middle School

After reading the Assent Form to the student a signature was obtained.

R - I thank you for contributing to my study on "Struggling Adolescent Writers Describe Their Writing Experience." As you know, I am a teacher here at Evergreen, this interview and study has nothing to do with Everett School District or Evergreen Middle School. I am a student at Walden University and hopes of obtaining my Ph.d. I will be asking you a series of questions on writing. Do you have a copy of the questions? You may refer and use the questions at any time.

S - I am ready

R- Great. would like to remind you that at time during the interview that you may stop the interview or if there is a question you do not want to answer, you can say, I don't want to answer the question. Does that make sense?

S - Yes, I can stop if I want to.

R - The purpose of this study is to hear from you, I am interested in your perceptions and experiences writing. Do you have any questions?

S - No.

R - Okay then let's get started, remember you can stop at any time. The first question - Please talks a little bit about your school experiences in writing.

S - Well, writing is really hard. What I have in my head is not what gets put on paper. It takes so long. When I begin I have lots of ideas, but then they get all mixed up and I don't know what to do.

R- Thank you. Do you remember a writing assignment that was very successful?

S - Yes, I was in the office and a lady helped me finish a writing assessment because I couldn't go back to class until I finished. I was able to tell her what I was thinking and then she would summarize it for me and then I would write about it.

R - Are there any other successful assignments in all your schooling?

S - Not really, they are usually all bad. Most of the time I don't finish them, so they are really bad, and the teacher doesn't understand them.

R - Do you remember a writing assignment that was unsuccessful?

S - All of them are unsuccessful, except when that lady helped me.

R- What type of grades do you usually get in writing?

S - I get 2 or 1's - usually F's.

R - What are your feelings toward writing?

S - I don't like it. I would rather have a conversation with someone then have to write it. You can really argue with someone or hear what they say and have more ideas.

R - What do you like or dislike about writing?

S - Writing essays is the worst. When we just have to write, like a paragraph, it is easy. When you have to write a lot of paragraphs like five, it is really annoying. I can get my point across in one paragraph.

R - What do you like about writing?

S - I like when people agree with what I put down. Like they understand what I mean.

R - What are some of your favorite things about writing?

S - Writing shorter assignments or just a little part of the topic.

R- What is the least part of writing?

S- When you have to write 5 paragraphs and sometimes I don't have that many ideas on the writing.

R - What part of the writing process do you like?

S - Just putting together the draft, I want that to be all I have to do. I hate having to re-write it to a final draft.

R - What part of the writing process to you dislike?

S - I don't like the prewriting. I hate having to fill out those long planners and then just copy what I wrote to a draft, then to a final draft.

R- What frustrates you when you are writing?

S - When I get confused and my ideas get all mixed up. I just start giving up, even if I know I will get into trouble.

R - What keeps you focused when writing?

S - I wish I could listen to music it helps me concentrate.

R - What really makes you want to write?

S = When I see a teacher write a sentence that sounds really good, then I want to write that sentence and make it sound like hers.

R - What kinds of writing do you wish you did more of in school?

S - Telling adventure stories, like what I read. I read *Divergent* series, and the *Maze Runner* series, I like series because the story goes on and on.

R - Do you ever think about the strategies that teacher use to help make writing easier?

S - I really like when the teacher teaches the different types of sentences, then I can copy the ideas and try if for myself. They match the type of sentences I read about.

R - What frustrates when you write?

S - All of it, but mostly when I get confused and can't sort it out.

R - What strategies do you dislike?

S - Those stupid long planners when you can't begin writing until you fill it all the way out. Like I know what I have to put into an essay, so planning each sentence is confusing.

R - Do you set goals when beginning a writing assignment?

S - No, not really.

Appendix H: Transcript Subject E

Interviewee: Subject E
Date: 4/24/2015
Time: 2:15 pm
Location: Conference Room Evergreen Middle School

After reading the Assent Form to the student, a signature was obtained.

R - I thank you for contributing to my study on "Struggling Adolescent Writers Describe Their Writing Experience." As you know, I am a teacher here at Evergreen, this interview and study has nothing to do with Everett School District or Evergreen Middle School. I am a student at Walden University and hopes of obtaining my Ph.d. I will be asking you a series of questions on writing. Do you have a copy of the questions? You may refer and use the questions at any time.
S - Okay
R- Great. I would like to remind you that at time during the interview that you may stop the interview or if there is a question you do not want to answer, you can say, I don't want to answer the question. Does that make sense?
S - Yes.
R - The purpose of this study is to hear from you, I am interested in your perceptions and experiences writing. Do you have any questions?
S - No.
R - Okay then let's get started, remember you can stop at any time. The first question - Please talks a little bit about your school experiences in writing.
S - Writing is hard and it can be confusing. get to writing and then so many ideas run into my head so fast that I can't remember them. It's like my brain goes on hyper drive and I can't keep up with it. My writing will be very random and hard to understand.
R- Thank you. Do you remember a writing assignment that was very successful?
S - No, We have to write every night but most of the time I don't do my homework
R - Are there any other successful assignments in all your schooling?
S - I got to write a short made up story about villains once, I think it was 4 grade. I like villains because those are the characters I know a lot about. They come from the video games I play.
R - Do you remember a writing assignment that was unsuccessful?
S - I can start a writing assignment pretty good, but I don't finish them.
R- What type of grades do you usually get in writing?
S - Usually D's.
R - What are your feelings toward writing?
S - I don't like it. It is too hard and confusing because there is so much you have to do.
R - Can you elaborate on that?
S - Well, when you write in get jumbled up and it's hard to remember all the pieces. I hate grammar; I get F's on that part. I will rush and then I forget about periods and capitals, so the teacher always yells at me.

R - What do you like or dislike about writing?

S - I would rather talk about something then have to write it.

R - What do you like about writing?

S - If I have a really good idea for a story, it is okay.

R - What are some of your favorite things about writing?

S - Sometimes you can be creative. Most of the time you have to write essays about stupid stuff.

R- What is the worst part of writing?

S- I don't like writing.

R - What part of the writing process to you like?

S - I like just drafting the writing, I hate having to redo it over and over again.

R - Can you elaborate on that?

S - Every writing assignment has to be 5 paragraphs and you don't always have enough ideas. Then you have to do a planner and that makes me mess up my ideas. Then you have to write it and I don't even use my planner and my ideas go, like, random. I have to revise and, that is stupid, it is good enough and I hate to have to write the final draft after I all ready wrote it once.

R- What frustrates you when you are writing?

S - When I don't have enough details and it get confusing to write on a topic. I just try and make stuff up and it really doesn't make sense.

R - What keeps you focused when writing?

S - I usually daydream and think about a story I'd rather write because I don't have any ideas.

R - What really makes you want to write?

S - Nothing really, I do like writing a conclusion in science cause you can figure things out from the data.

R - What kinds of writing do you wish you did more of in school?

S - Just writing stories that you can make up.

R - Do you ever think about the strategies that teacher use to help make writing easier?

S - I like all the techniques, because then I can put it down so it sounds good. There are way to many ways to write a sentence and I can't remember them all.

R - What strategies do you dislike?

S - The really long sentences, like appositives.

R - Do you set goals when beginning a writing assignment?

S - No, not really.

Appendix I: Transcript Subject F

Interviewee: Subject F
Date: 4/27/2015
Time: 2:15 pm
Location: Conference Room Evergreen Middle School

After reading the Assent Form to the student, a signature was obtained.

R - I thank you for contributing to my study on "Struggling Adolescent Writers Describe Their Writing Experience." As you know, I am a teacher here at Evergreen, this interview and study has nothing to do with Everett School District or Evergreen Middle School. I am a student at Walden University and hopes of obtaining my Ph.d. I will be asking you a series of questions on writing. Do you have a copy of the questions? You may refer and use the questions at any time.
S - I am ready.
R- Great. I would like to remind you that at time during the interview that you may stop the interview or if there is a question you do not want to answer, you can say, I don't want to answer the question. Does that make sense?
S - Yes.
R - The purpose of this study is to hear from you, I am interested in your perceptions and experiences writing. Do you have any questions?
S - No.
R - Okay then let's get started, remember you can stop at any time. (Student shakes his head, yes) The first question -Please talks a little bit about your school experiences in writing.
S - Writing essays take too long, like, sometimes it takes a whole week to finish and I'd rather do something else fun.
R- Thank you. Do you remember a writing assignment that was very successful?
S - Yes, I wrote an essay about my grandpa just a few months ago, he was my hero.
R - Do you remember a writing assignment that was unsuccessful?
S - Most of the writing assignments, I don't finish because they take too long and I get lost. Like I have good ideas on one day and then another day I can't remember what I was thinking.
R- What type of grades do you usually get in writing?
S - I get D's or F's.
R - What are your feelings toward writing?
S - I don't like it. I don't have any good ideas like they have in books. I just go blank and can't think of anything good.
R - What do you like or dislike about writing?
S - I dislike most of it, but really hate writing a planner. I hate them.
R - What do you like about writing?
S - Nothing
R - What are some of your favorite things about writing?

S - Being able to put my thoughts down when I have them.
R- What is the least part of writing?
S- Writing always has to be 5 paragraphs and sometimes I don't have that many ideas or any ideas.
R - What part of the writing process to you like?
S - I like reading to others.
R - What part of the writing process to you dislike?
S - All of it.
R- What frustrates you when you are writing?
S - The frustration I feel is that I don't have many ideas.
R - What keeps you focused when writing?
S - Music, at least I can listen to someone else's ideas.
R - What really makes you want to write?
S - Nothing, maybe if we get to type it.
R - What kinds of writing do you wish you did more of in school?
S - Just writing what you want, like about stuff I know.
R - Do you ever think about the strategies that teacher use to help make writing easier?
S - I like all the techniques of putting together a really good sentence, it is fun to learn how to put them together, You usually just need to write one that way, and I can do that.
R - What frustrates when you write?
S - Coming up with good ideas.
R - Do you set goals when beginning a writing assignment?
S - No.

Appendix J: Excerpt From Researcher's Journal and Field Notes

As Subject C enters the conference room she is tentative to sit down and appears nervous. We went over the purpose of the study, handed her the questions that would be asked and offered to clarify any questions. After giving her about four minutes to review the questions, I sensed that she was less tentative. I answered her question, will this help her pass the state writing test? My response to her was ultimately her participation will help teachers, thus, help students in the end. She asked if we had to answer the questions in order and I responded that we did not and she could answer them in the order she wanted. We began with question 1 and continued through all the questions in order. It was noted that as the interview progressed the participant appeared relaxed, freely answered the questions and enjoyed the process at the end.

Appendix K: Table M1

Table M1

Responses From Participants

Questions	Subject A	Subject B	Subject C	Subject D	Subject E	Subject F
School experience in writing	Struggling, and hard	Like writing. teachers help.	Very difficult. Repeated efforts	Very hard. Ideas not expressed on paper	Hard and confusing	Very difficult
Successful writing assignments	One. Expository Essay. Teacher helped extensively	One. Mother who is a teacher helped	One. Debating essay teacher helped. Story assignments	One. received help from peers.	One. Fantasy story about villains	One. How to Build. Dad helped
Unsuccessful writing assignment	One. Argumentative Essay. Didn't know topic well. Too much information to process	None. All successful as gave best efforts	Only state tests where I don't get help. School assignments all good as help is always available	One. Received help from a peer	All Didn't know topic well. Too much information to process	Most of them. Doesn't have good ideas
Grades on writing	B or C	B's	B or B-	D's or F's	F's	D's
Feelings towards writing	Nervous. Thoughts get mixed up	Enjoy. Good way to pass time. Mother encourages	Don't like it. Can't express my ideas well on paper due to poor grammar and spelling mistakes	Don't like it. Prefer a conversation	Hate it. Thoughts get mixed up	Don't like it. I don't have any ideas.
Like/Dislike about writing	Don't dislike. It's important for college and future prospects	Express feelings. But other topics can be hard	Express your opinion. Don't like doing it on my own because of poor	Don't like too many paragraphs to be written in an	Hate it. Like conclusions in science. Like short	Don't like it. too hard.

			grammar	essay. Like it when reader agrees with my ideas	stories.	
Favorite things about writing	Write about things you like	Write about things you like	Express feelings. But other topics can be hard	Express your opinions	Creativity	Expressing yourself
Least favorite things about writing	Too many paragraphs. Too much if topic is not known/clear	Too many paragraphs.	Revision. Don't know what to change	Too many paragraphs. Too much if ideas are limited	Writing Process	Rewriting.
Part of Writing Process liked	Revisions. Learn from your mistakes	Revisions. Learn from your mistakes	Drafting	Drafting. Don't want to rewrite full essay	Drafting	Drafting
Part of Writing process disliked	Rough drafts and long planners	Pre-writing and long planners	Revisions and Long planners	Prewriting and Long planners	Long planners	Planners
Type of writings you want to do more	Argumentative essay. Debating and voicing your	Persuasive essays. Hone our negotiation	Stories. I want my writing up to their standards	Telling adventure stories	Short stories	How to do things
What frustrates you when writing	Lack of knowledge about the topic	Not enough examples and have to put things forcefully which doesn't sound good. People don't understand your essay	Spelling and grammar mistakes which makes it hard for anyone to understand my essay and for me to express coherently	Get confused with ideas and then give up writing in mid-way which ultimately lands me in trouble with my	Get confused with ideas and then give up. Spelling and grammar mistakes	Spelling and grammar mistakes

What keeps you focused while writing	Information on topic and then just providing opinions	Writing in parts and with breaks. Listening to music helps	Lack focus and concentration	grades Wish to listen to music to concentrate		Listening to music
What motivates you to write	Express my opinion	When inspired by a great topic about which I know	A good story	To write a good sentence like my teacher	Science	Watching a good movie
Does teacher's strategies make writing easier	Yes. But sometimes I get confused and forget as there are too many techniques	Yes. I try to remember them and they make my writing good	Sometimes. Don't remember the technique always as there are too many	Yes. I try to use it and match up to the examples given by the teacher	Yes, the sentences sound good.	Yes, teacher models
Strategies which you use	Focus on main part and not too much on technique. Do easier topics first	Whatever teachers ask us to	Outline of 8th grade with thesis and 3 reasons is simple and organized		Sentences types	Planner
Do you set goals for writing	Yes, Depends on topic	No	No	No	No	No
How you determine your goal	My previous work					
How do you know you have achieved your goal	When I feel happy					
Do goals motivate you	Yes, It give meaning to your efforts		No			

Appendix L: Table N1

Table N1

Factors Affecting Motivation

Categories	Questions	Factors Identified
Present level of writing their experiences	1. Please talk a little bit about your school experiences in writing. 2. Do you remember a writing assignment that was very successful? 3. Do you remember a writing assignment that was unsuccessful? 4. What kind of grades do you usually receive on your writing?	1. Average, Below Average. 1. Students feel nervous or don't like writing or feel it's very hard
The motivation factors: intrinsic or extrinsic	1. What do you like or dislike about writing? 2. What are some of your favorite things about writing? 3. What part of the writing process to you like?	1. Express your opinions and views 2. Revision helps to assess your mistakes
De-motivating factors	1. What are some of your least favorite things about writing? 2. What part of the writing process to you dislike?	1. Long planners and webs 2. Writing too many paragraphs
Expectations regarding writing assignments	1. What kinds of writing do you wish you did more of in school? 2. What kinds of writing do you wish you did less of in school? 3. What frustrates you when you are writing?	1. Argumentative Essays & Persuasive essays. Short stories 2. Writing too many paragraphs frustrates 3. Don't have knowledge of the topic
Teacher's role in motivating	Do you ever think about the strategies that teacher use to help make writing easier? 1. What strategies help you use? 2. What strategies do you dislike?	1. Sometimes it makes writing easier 2. They forget as there are too many techniques 3. Individual help on the assignments are more helpful
The role of goal setting	Do you set goals when beginning a writing assignment? 1. How do you determine your goal? 2. How do you use your goals?	1. Except one student, none of them set goals for their writing

3. How do you know when you
have met your goal?
4. Do goals motivate you?