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Ayanna Ibrahim-Balogun  
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The Journey to Understand the Influence of Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction in

Writing with African American Students: A Case Study

Ayanna Ibrahim-Balogun

University of Redlands

A Dissertation

Submitted to the

University of Redlands Dissertation Committee

in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the

Doctorate Degree in Leadership for Educational Justice

School of Education

### Abstract

African American students are underperforming in public education. Unfortunately, a lack of literacy achievement is at the forefront of this issue. Within the area of literacy, writing scores of African American children are plummeting across the nation on standardized assessments. The present study was designed to inform classroom practices about writing and writing instruction within the context of culturally responsive and relevant instruction in a diverse classroom.

Through a culturally responsive and relevant instruction (CRRI) lens, this research explored the experiences of four sixth-grade classroom teachers and 147 African American and Mexican American students within a large urban California school district. Utilizing a qualitative mixed-methods design, the research was divided into *mini-cases* to provide a descriptive account and draw conclusions about writing instruction. The two mini-cases consisted of two CRRI trained classroom teachers and their students, and two non-CRRI classroom teachers and their students. To triangulate the results, students' writing samples were scored on standardized rubrics to compare CRRI and non-CRRI students, which provided a complete comparative picture of students' writing experience. Data gathered from teachers revealed two emerging themes: instructional practices and desired outcomes. From the instructional practices theme, three primary attributes arose, namely 1) planning and preparation, 2) instructional delivery and 3) student support. In all, CRRI teachers believed writing to be a tool of empowerment, while non-CRRI teachers viewed writing as a tool for communication. Further, CRRI teachers viewed writing as a multi-dimensional tool for expression, maintaining identity, and empowerment. Consistent with CRRI teachers, CRRI students viewed writing as a tool for personal expression and a healing experience. Non-CRRI students felt writing was used to voice feelings and creativity. Pupil responses revealed four categories: writing perceptions, challenges, successes and the use of technology.

This research provided insights into the missing voice of teachers and students in curriculum, which is a useful construct in understanding the perspectives of teachers and students about writing and writing instruction. Future research is needed that focuses on the perspective of Mexican American students and the influence of CRRI in their learning. Implications for teachers included the need for teacher education programs to explore a comprehensive cultural approach to educating teachers with writing instruction, while attending to the impact of writing instruction on gender. Further, this study implies the need for a multidimensional approach to writing that can equip teachers to educate 21st century learners.

*Key Terms: Culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally relevant and responsive instruction, literacy, writing, multiple literacies, multiple identities, voice, African American students*

UNIVERSITY OF REDLANDS  
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION


This dissertation, written by


Ayanna Blackmon-Balogun

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Under the direction of the dissertation committee and approved by all its members, this dissertation has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **DOCTOR OF EDUCATION**.

Dissertation Committee Signatures

  
Chair

  
Committee Member

  
Committee Member

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The Journey to Understand the Influence of Culturally Relevant and Responsive  
Instruction in Writing with African American Students: A Case Study

**Chapter 1: Introduction**

While reading the children's book *Goin' Somewhere Special* by Patricia McKissack (2001), a common theme resonated with my own upbringing as a child. In the story, a young African American girl is faced with the many challenges of racism during the Jim Crow Era as she travels alone without her grandma for the first time to her favorite place. Despite these disheartening obstacles, she met with encouraging reminders from friends of the family to stay the course and "keep her head up high" even though she felt like giving up and returning home. "Keeping ya' head up" is an African American saying that is used to encourage a person to be proud and determined throughout all experiences, including negative ones. Ultimately in the book, Carol Anne, the main character, reaches someplace special: the public library. This is her favorite place because it is open to everyone.

The theme of resistance throughout troubles relates to my own endeavors as an educator and researcher because the disheartening statistics that face African American students can become daunting. However, the positive thread that inspires my soul and requires me to remain focused on my "someplace special" with "my head held up" throughout the process is the promise and potential of Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy. This pedagogy is uplifting, encouraging, and empowering, even though African American children remain in a stifling place in the history of education.

## **Background**

The current status of African American students in the American public school educational system has been and continues to be a priority in educational research (Lewis, Hancock, James, and Larke, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2005; Noguera, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1995). From the perspectives of Lewis et al. (2008), African American students have been “shortchanged by elementary and secondary schools in the United States” (p. 10). Further, Darling-Hammond (2006) asserted that close to 40% of African American students attend schools that are more segregated and “significantly less well funded, with states like California and Massachusetts spending more on prisons than they spent on higher education” (p.15). Ladson-Billings (1995) concluded that the majority of urban public schools serving African American students suffer from limited educational opportunities and resources, and lack experienced teachers and administrators.

More importantly, literacy achievement is at the forefront of this non-achievement (Turner, 2005). A report completed by EdSource (2008) insisted that “African American student achievement in Language Arts is improving, but more slowly than for any other groups” (p.6). Furthermore, statistics from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading assessment reported in 2009 that Black students had an average score that was lower than white students by 27 points (NAEP, 2009). Unfortunately, according to, National Center on Educational Statistics (NCES) this gap was not significantly different from the 30 point gap reported in 2007 (NCES, 2009).

A closer look at another report by NAEP, *The Nation’s Report Card Writing 2007*, published by NCES (2007), illustrated the dire conditions facing African American students. The

grim results reported for African American students in the area of writing are even worse. While there was a 6-point increase for the national average writing score for Black students from 2002-2007, there was still a 23-point gap between Black and white students. In California, 13 % of the Black students scored proficient compared to 38% of white students (NCES, 2007).

Even though African American students in education are situated in delicate circumstances that have historically continued to exist, the plight of the African American male can be likened to a genocidal glitch in the entire educational system. “Underachievement is an understatement for this marginalized group” as Howard (2008) posited. He argued that African American males represent less than 3% of the Gifted and Talented Education programs and in the advanced classes in public schools. African American males have the highest dropout rates nationally and the lowest college enrollment rates. This marginalized group has been overrepresented in special education classrooms ( EdSource Report, 2008). According to the discipline data, African American males represent 30% of the suspensions and 34% of the expulsions even though they are less than 6% of the population (Howard, 2008; Noguera, 2008; Kunjufu, 2005). This issue of poor academic achievement is so complex that researchers such as Kunjufu (2005), Arronowitz (2008), and Noguera (2008), have compared the underachievement in schools to the overrepresentation in the penal system, high unemployment rates, and high homicide rates. Arronowitz (2008) explained,

The large number of drug busts of young Black and Mexican American men should not be minimized. With over a million blacks, more than 3 percent of the African American population-most of them young (25 percent of young Black men)-within the purview of the criminal justice system, the law may be viewed as a more or less concerted effort to counter by force the power of the peers. This may be regarded in the context of the failure of schools (p. 119-120).

These dire issues concerning African American students and education cannot continue and this study aims to offer the voice of the teachers and the students as a resource providing insight to improve instructional practices.

### **Purpose of the Study**

In a culmination of existing research from the past to the present, a multitude of tenets have been used to explain CRRI, but the research in this study focuses on seven sovereign principals. The purpose of this research is not to assess whether the theory of CRRI is effective or not, presently there are many studies available to prove this (Hale, 1982; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Shade, Kelley, & Oberg, 1997; Gay, 2000; Tatum, 2006, 2008; Au, 2007; Lee, 2007; Howard, 2001, 2008), but to see if it has an influence on writing quality and attitudes towards writing. Therefore, the major research used to describe the first six principals is highlighted and addressed, and the remaining principle, Tenet 7 which emphasizes literacy and writing, is discussed in greater detail.

Writing is used as a vehicle to collect the thoughts and insights of students as this is a necessary tool to determine adequate literacy attainment (Ball, 1996; Harris et al., 2006). Through this study, the researcher examines the “big picture” in relation to writing, utilizing two cases. Understanding how CRRI instruction influences the practices of teachers and students through their own “voices” is the goal. In addition to interpreting the voices of classrooms that are subjected to CRRI, the researcher analyzes the writing strategies of Non-CRRI classrooms.

Voice as situated in this study represents “a language performance-always social, mediated by experience, and culturally embedded” (Sperling & Appleman, 2011, p.71). The participants, teachers, and students involved in this study have contributed their voices by sharing their experiences from the classroom. Collecting and interpreting these voices can

provide insight, offer practical research in the teaching of writing, and inform teacher educators about instructional writing practices. The contributing voices that are heard in this study from teachers and students can create methodologies that encourage future voices to be heard through writing.

### **Statement of the Problem**

African American students have not fared well as evidenced by the aforementioned alarming statistics and research which suggest that intervention is necessary to address these unjust educational disparities. Unless openly addressed, these disheartening conditions in the educational system will continue. To further complicate and accompany this issue is the current status of low literacy achievement and writing performance. As articulated by Howard (2008), this low achievement holds future implications for the low quality of life for African American students, especially African American males. Researchers such as Kimberly Crenshaw, Adrienne Dixon, Tyrone Howard, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Solorzano, and Yosso have examined these issues through a Critical Race Theory (CRT) lens. Solorzano and Yosso (2000) explain CRT in relation to education:

A framework or set of basic perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural, cultural, and interpersonal aspects of education that maintain the marginal position and subordination of students. Critical Race Theory asks such questions as: What roles do schools, school processes, and school structures play in the maintenance of racial, ethnic, and gender subordination. (p. 40-42)

CRT identifies the conditions surrounding African American students as racially situated. CRT theory originated in legal studies with Derrick Bell after he closely examined the injustices that occur in the penal system (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Applied to the educational system, CRT has demonstrated that the disparities in achievement affecting African Americans can be attributed to race and how it plays out in the classroom.

Although the current study uses CRT to frame the problem, Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction (CRRI) as a theoretical and practical tool also is utilized in this study. Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction (CRRI) is emphasized as a vehicle to understand and encourage the achievement of African American students in an urban public school. Earlier studies have shown the positive impact of culturally relevant and responsive instruction on the school success of diverse students, especially African American students (Geisler, et al. 2009; Lovelace, 2009; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Au, 2007). However, there is minimal evidence to support the influence and effect on attitudes and the quality of writing of African American middle school students.

Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction (CRRI) is often referred to as culturally responsive teaching or culturally relevant teaching. It a pedagogy that requires teachers to acknowledge and understand the cultures, realities, interests, and identities of students as sources of knowledge that can be taught (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Gay, 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). While culturally relevant and responsive teaching involves several characteristics, the ultimate goal is to empower, validate, celebrate, and utilize socio-culture identities while teaching the content. The current study operationally categorizes the salient characteristics of CRRI into tenets. These tenets are:

### **Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction Tenets**

Tenet #1: Culture is used as a vehicle to bridge the gap between content and instructional practices, and the worldviews of students. Culture is multifaceted and includes descriptors such as family background, community, race and ethnicity, language, age and generational determinants, and geographic location (Freire, 2005; Hale, 1982; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Shade & Oberg, 1997; Gay, 2000; Lee, 2007; Irvine, 2003; Howard, 2008, 2010; Tatum, 2008; Tatum, 1997, 2007; Delpit, 1995, 2002; Au, 2008).



- Tenet #2: Teachers, as masters of content, must demonstrate care, believe that all students can learn, possess an affirming attitude toward students and learning, and demand excellence (Au, 2008; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Shade & Oberg, 1997; Gay, 2000; Lee, 2007; Irvine, 2003; Howard, 2008, 2010; Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Morrison, K., Robbins, H., & Rose, D. , 2008).
- Tenet #3: Learning is shared between teachers and students and new knowledge must scaffold onto what students already know. Knowledge is validating and empowering, and demands that students become critically aware of their own learning processes (Freire, 2005; Hale, 1982; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Shade & Oberg, 1997; Gay, 2000; Lee, 2007; Irvine, 2003; Howard, 2008, 2010; Tatum, 2008; Tatum, 1997, 2007; Delpit, 1995, 2002).
- Tenet #4: Instruction and environment must be inclusive of language, cultural practices and learning styles, collaborative, and designed around a “community of learners.” Students and teachers are responsible and accountable to each other for the learning process (Freire, 2005; Hale, 1982; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Shade & Oberg, 1997; Gay, 2000; Lee, 2007; Irvine, 2003; Howard, 2008, 2010; Tatum, 2008; Tatum, 1997, 2007; Delpit, 1995, 2002).
- Tenet #5: Content and curriculum are examined and taught critically and strategically using a socio-political lens. Content, curriculum, and assessments must be age appropriate and meet the needs of individual learners (Freire, 2005; Hale, 1982; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Gay, 2000).
- Tenet #6: Multiple literacies and the multiple identities of students are embraced. Instruction must allow these identities to be expressed and expanded upon. Students should feel comfortable situating their sociocultural identities in collaborative and individual settings (Freire, 2005; Kinloch, 2009; Moje, 2008; Moll, 1992; Lewis & Del Valle, 2009; Tatum, 2000).
- Tenet #7: Literacy is highly respected and encouraged. CRRI engages in literary practices that benefit and position learners for optimal expression, empowerment, and validation. Multicultural literature should be used, and purposeful and reflective writing should be encouraged (Au, 2007; Busch & Ball 2004; Lovejoy, 2009; Weinstein, 2007; Jocson, 2006; Malozzi & Malloy, 2007; Singer & Shagoury 2006).

In this dissertation, the term Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction (CRRI) is used to reflect these traits. The theory of culturally relevant and responsive teaching has been traced from the pioneering research completed by Hale (1982), Ladson-Billings (1994), and from multicultural education researchers such as Banks (1995) and Gay (2000). Culturally Relevant

and Responsive Instruction strives to connect the curriculum and content that is appropriate and relevant for students of diverse backgrounds. The theory of culturally relevant and responsive instruction has many implications for many domains of education, including teaching, learning, curriculum, and the students involved in the instructional process. This study is framed with this set of lenses.

To support the goals of this research, the site utilized for collecting data was a large urban school district in Southern California. This district is referred to in this research as Clay School District (Clay USD). Clay USD was chosen as the research location because it currently has one of the highest numbers of African American students in the state of California (EdSource, 2008). Clay USD adopted and implemented a model for utilizing culturally responsive education (CRE) in their classrooms as an instructional response to the persistent underachievement of African American students. CRE is theoretically similar to CRRI; however, the tenets of CRE are identified in order to specifically meet the needs of students in Clay USD. Although there is one component that is different, the significant commonalities are what frame this research. A further explanation of the tenets of CRE and CRRI are addressed in Chapter 3. Despite the minor discrepancy, this district's use of CRE has been fundamentally established to measure the impact of CRRI and writing quality.

Created over twenty years ago in Clay USD, the English Mastery Program (EMP) has used a district-wide culturally responsive model to support African American, Mexican American, Native American, and Hawaiian American students in accessing the core content through their home language and cultural connections. Based on a report developed by Clay USD, the district reported substantial gains in the content areas of reading and math on quarterly district assessments, as well as the state standardized tests. However, despite gains made in these

two areas, a more reflective approach is needed to assess the impact of CRRI in the area of writing.

As a measure of literacy achievement, writing is the key to communication, self expression, and cultural identity (Street, 1993; Moje, 2000; Delpit, 2002). It is a process, a tool for thinking, and grows out of many different purposes. Students need the opportunity to make frequent connections to what they read and write with peers in order to achieve maximum growth in this process (NCTE, 2009).

In reviewing the current research, CRRI has shown a positive impact on academic achievement in the areas of language arts (Au, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Gay, 2000; Delpit, 1990; Tatum, 2008; Callins, 2006; Lee, 2007). While the positive effect of CRRI has been promising in the field of language arts in general, more research is necessary to determine the impact on writing. Thus, the following inquiry about writing was designed.

### **Research Questions**

The goal of this qualitative instrumental case study research is to present a complete description of culturally relevant and responsive instruction in a large urban school district in Southern California. The study intends to explain the attitude of teachers towards teaching writing, and the attitudes of African American students towards learning how to write; it also seeks to understand the influence of CRRI on the quality of writing for African American students by utilizing primary trait scoring guides and voice assessment.

To contribute to the scholarly research on CRRI and writing development, several questions were developed. This instrumental case study was driven by the initial overarching question: *What can we learn from Clay Unified School District?*

The following specific questions address the issue in more detail. According to Stake (2010), a case study is both a process of inquiry about the case and the product of that inquiry; therefore the following questions direct that journey of inquiry:

1. What can we learn from educators who have been formally English Mastery Program (EMP) trained specific to teaching writing? To what extent does Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction (CRRI) influence the teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward teaching writing?
2. What can we learn from educators who have not been formally English Mastery Program (EMP) trained specific to teaching writing?
3. What can we learn from the students who have been taught by teachers who have been formally English Mastery Program (EMP) trained specific to writing? To what extent does Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction (CRRI) influence the students' writing skills and attitudes toward writing?
4. What can we learn from the students who have been taught by teachers who have not been formally English Mastery Program (EMP) trained specific to writing? To what extent does their teacher influence the students' writing skills and attitudes toward writing?

To answer all of these questions a qualitative methodology was employed using questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews. Since the research questions endeavor to understand how such pedagogy has influenced the students involved, students were asked for their reflections on this experience. Questionnaires were provided to all students, African American and Mexican American, to inquire about their attitudes and feelings toward writing as

individual students. Questionnaires offer an opportunity for informants to express and explain their beliefs or values about the writing process (Creswell , 2007; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

Interviewing students in small focus groups followed in order to verify findings. The focus groups, consisting of African American students, served as a vehicle to gather student voices since they are the focus of this study. This type of data collection is relevant for this type of study because it allows the opinions of the participants to be heard in a private manner. Furthermore, allowing students to meet in focus groups provided a collaborative opportunity for students to respond. This group collaboration is a primary function of CRRI and therefore necessary.

For students, peer interaction can support learning and encourage the formation of opinions. Peer interaction may have an adverse affect since students tend to voice their opinions only if they are in agreement with other students. However, the intention in this particular data collection mode is to validate the findings from the written student questionnaires. The researcher expected the students to provide valuable insight into the process of writing. It is the intent of the researcher to use this insight to inform educational practice and increase the writing achievements of African American students.

In an attempt to answer questions #1 and #2, teachers were given the opportunity to voice their personal thoughts about the writing process in their classrooms through a survey that was provided electronically. This form of data collection was provided to accommodate the teachers in their professional daily lives. The follow-up interviews were used to validate the findings from the interviews and offer a more personal opportunity for teachers to express themselves.

From this study the researcher attempted to demonstrate how CRRI influences teachers and their instruction. . The goal for Research Question #1 was to explore the planning involved

in teaching writing using CRRI, and to understand how this process differs from the teaching of writing without the use of CRRI. In order to gain a complete picture of this praxis, online questionnaires were completed by the CRRI teachers. The interviews were used to support the findings from the questionnaires. These interviews were completed face to face to provide teachers with the opportunity to add anything more to the study. In an effort to provide a context for the study, the EMP administrator completed an online questionnaire. All of the data from the questionnaires and interviews was thoroughly read, coded, sorted, and analyzed to develop emerging themes.

Employing the two methods of interviewing and the use of questionnaires to collect information is appropriate for CRRI because CRRI attempts to meet cultural needs while also teaching the content. In this case, providing two modes of data collection for teachers allowed for access to the topics of inquiry. Also, teachers could have been concerned about time constraints and writing thoroughly which may have resorted in providing limited writing responses. Further, teachers may not have wanted to take the time to hand-write responses, so for their convenience, and to gather the best data, electronic submissions were accepted. To add to this, teachers generally feel more comfortable sharing orally, so gathering their perceptions through an oral interview as well as an electronic survey gave the participants an equal opportunity for their voices to be heard. As seen in Table 1, Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction is compatible with these diverse data collection tools.

**Table 1. Research Questions and Modes of Collection**

<b>Questions Guiding this Study</b>	<b>Modes of data collection</b>
<p>1. What can we learn from educators who have been formally English Mastery Program (EMP) trained specific to teaching writing? To what extent does Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction (CRRI) influence the teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward teaching writing?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Surveys</li> <li>▪ Interviews</li> <li>▪</li> </ul>
<p>2. What can we learn from educators who have not been formally English Mastery Program (EMP) trained specific to teaching writing?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Surveys</li> <li>▪ Interviews</li> </ul>
<p>3. What can we learn from the students who have been taught by teachers who have been formally English Mastery Program (EMP) trained specific to writing? To what extent does Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction (CRRI) influence the students' writing skills and attitudes toward writing?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Questionnaire</li> <li>▪ Focus Groups</li> <li>▪ Writing Sample Scores</li> </ul>
<p>4. What can we learn from the students who have been taught by teachers who have not been formally English Mastery Program (EMP) trained specific to writing? To what extent does their teacher influence the students' writing skills and attitudes toward writing?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Questionnaire</li> <li>▪ Writing Sample Scores</li> </ul>

### **Significance of the Study**

Since the implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), students of color have been identified as low achieving when compared to their white counterparts (Howard, 2006; Howard, 2010; Lewis, Hancock, James, Larke, 2008; Nieto, 2004). Research on CRRI has shown increased achievement with diverse student populations (Howard, 2008). Despite the gains from utilizing this instructional approach, more attention should be directed in the area of literacy instruction and more specifically to teaching writing. In an effort to inform classroom practices that relate to writing instruction, this research highlights the voices of teachers and the voices of students from both culturally responsive and non-culturally responsive classrooms. The findings from this research are significant for teachers and educators as they prepare to meet the needs of diverse learners. Examining the perceptions and actions of teachers as they describe the writing instruction process may be of interest and assistance to other educators and also to teacher preparation programs.

### **Methodological Overview**

For this research an instrumental case study approach was employed. To reduce the possibility of misinterpretation, triangulation was used to clarify data. Part of this triangulation includes the use of qualitative methods to further interpret the perceptions of students and teachers, and quantitative measures to understand student writing scores. This research approach was chosen to offer the most comprehensive reflection on how culturally relevant and responsive instruction can influence the thoughts and feelings about writing from everyone involved. Since CRRI is a learning journey for students as well as teachers, this methodology provides the framework for understanding how to better educate African American students. With this data, the teaching of writing can be shaped to benefit these marginalized learners.



Data was collected using several instruments. For a qualitative research approach, Fraenkel & Wallen (2005) recommend three techniques for collecting and analyzing data: observation, interviews or questionnaires, and analysis of documents. In this study, interviews and surveys of teachers and administrators were part of the research process. The researcher collected student questionnaires in order to capture the voices of the students. Because writing is subjective and problematic (Hout, 1990), a holistic approach was employed to analyze the writing samples. Sample writing was collected from 84 students in a CRRI classroom, and 57 student writing samples were collected from a non-CRRI classroom. These samples were coded to protect student identity. Each sample was scored analytically using a primary trait scoring guide, otherwise known as a “narrative rubric” and to score student voice with a “voice scoring rubric.” To eliminate bias, several practitioners were asked to rate the writing. They were chosen by the researcher and several training sessions were given to establish consistency in the scoring and to fully understand the writing measurements. The raters were then given copies of all of the samples and asked to score them in pairs. Data from the raters was collected and analyzed by the researcher using the non-parametric quantitative analysis test commonly known as the Kruskal-Wallis Significance Test, and also a Means Assessment.

The research took place in four culturally diverse middle school classrooms in a very linguistically diverse school district in Southern California. The two school settings included classrooms with teachers who utilized Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction, and classrooms with educators who did not utilize this teaching methodology. A purposeful sample using a modified model Community Nomination (Ladson-Billings, 1994) was drawn to highlight the two specific target groups, i.e., the students who received CRRI and the students who did not receive it within the Clay USD.

### **Clay School District Overview**

The Clay Unified School District (Clay USD) has one of the largest populations of African American students in California (EdSource, 2008). In 1989, a research study was completed in Clay USD and the study revealed that African American students had been low achieving students as early as 1979, and that this issue had not been adequately addressed. The study prompted the recommendation of strategies that could benefit all students which resulted in the formation of a language development committee.

This committee addressed the needs of African American students by developing and implementing a specific plan, and creating a district-wide program for language development of African American students. The primary goal of this program was to attend to the language needs of African American student learners. The rationale behind this type of instruction identified the devaluation of the home language of African American students. From this plan and program, the use of Culturally Responsive and Relevant Instruction became a common practice that addressed the language, curriculum, and instructional needs of African American students.

Nine years later the program was expanded to serve more than 70 elementary and middle schools. The name was changed to English Mastery Program (EMP) to address the needs of other Standard English Learners (SEL). The mission of the EMP program in Clay USD is to continue to carry out the plan of effectively educating students while valuing their home language and culture.

The EMP program currently demonstrates progress in the areas of Reading and Writing according to the district Accountability Report (2004). Despite the efforts and increased gains in these core content areas, there still remains a need to explore the progress of teaching and

learning to write in this district that has adopted a plan to increase the achievement of African American students. Limited data has been available in the area of writing for schools that have implemented the culturally relevant model. This study aims to pilot such data on writing. Table 2. below shows an overview of the phases of this study.

**Table 2. Overview of the Four Phases**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Phase 1: Preparation</b>	<b>Phase 2: Data Collection</b>	<b>Phase 3: Rater Training and Calibration</b>	<b>Phase 4: Analysis and Discussion</b>
<b>Research goals</b>	Develop and distribute research data collection tools	Collect Questionnaires, Surveys, and Host Interviews	Plan meetings with raters to train and calibrate	Analyze data from writing samples, questionnaires, and interviews

This table provides a visual of the four phases of this research. It outlines the major tasks that remain to be completed.

### **Summary**

Nationally, African Americans have the lowest achievement scores and have made the least progress (Lewis, 2008). According to research by Noguera (2008) and Howard (2008) African American males have the lowest representation in education and the highest representation in the penal system. This suggests a causal relationship between literacy development and incarceration (Noguera, 2008; Tatum, 2008; Kunjufu, 2005). Is the American public school system to blame or more importantly, can the public school system take a proactive stance in response? While attempts have been made to educate Black males using CRRI, few researchers have tried to describe the direct impact of culturally responsive instruction on the attainment of the literacy skills needed in writing. The goal of the current research seeks to offer

insight into this area. This study strives to provide a holistic reflection of the CRR I implementation of writing instruction in Clay USD, and understand the experiences of everyone involved during the process. Documenting the experiences of students and educators in this study can inform future teaching practices that are directly related to writing and African American students. The findings from this research also can provide practical insight regarding the infusion of CRR I in classroom instruction.

For the remainder of this work, several major sections are included. Chapter 2 consists of a review of the related literature, followed by Chapter 3 which describes the methodology of the research. In Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 research findings and discussions for further research are addressed.

## Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

The state of California has developed a framework for closing the student achievement gap, (CDE, 2010) and a major concern is creating a strong culture and climate in the classroom. “Recommendation 4” in the framework calls for the state to “Provide Culturally Relevant Professional Development for All School Personnel.” In congruence with this focus, acknowledging the need for Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction (CRRI) within schools, this chapter intends to conceptualize related research in this area, including literacy and writing.

In the current study, Critical Race Theory is used as a general framework to situate the present condition of African American students within the educational system. This research also introduces a conceptual model that depicts the instructional characteristics of CRRI through a set of tenets. These tenets that have been identified through the review of literature relate to culture, teaching, learning, curriculum, instruction, multiple literacies and identities, and writing. The tenets of CRRI guide the presentation of the relevant research.

The present study uses the terms “culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy” and “teaching” interchangeably. From the perception of the researcher, the term “teaching” narrowly refers to the learning that is the responsibility of the teacher, and the term “pedagogy” embodies the entire process of teaching and learning. Therefore, culturally relevant and responsive instruction from the perspective of the researcher is referred to as the exchange of information and the sharing of knowledge between all stakeholders, especially students and educators.

### **Theoretically Framing the Status of African American Students in Public Schools**

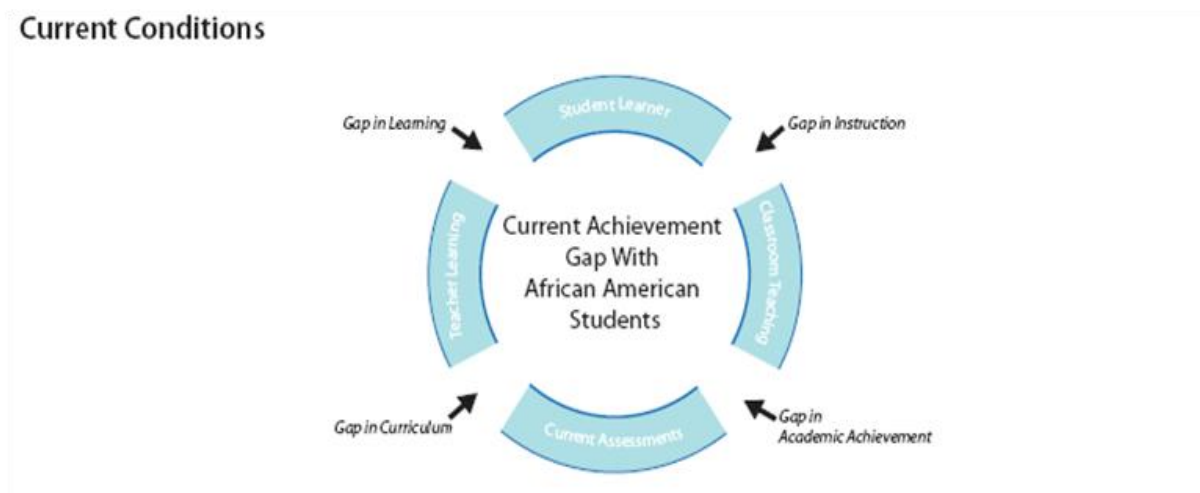
The status of African American students in K-12 education has been inferior to those of other races (Lewis, et al. 2008). The National Center for Education and Statistics (NCES, 2008), reported that African American students comprise approximately 17% of the U.S. public school population. Studies also have indicated that African American students have been overrepresented in special education referrals and school suspensions, comprising 41% and 32% of these populations (Lewis, et al. 2008). African American students have represented 3% in gifted and talented education, while only 21% have been able to enroll in college-level classes (Kunjufu, 2005). Further, only 56% have graduated from high school by age 18 and only 27% have earned their GED by the age of 25 (Kunjufu, 2005). This can best be understood through the lens of critical race theory.

The application of CRT within the education system has consisted of five elements: “(a) the centrality of race and racism and the way they intersect with other forms of subordination, (b) the challenge the dominant ideology, (c) the commitment to social justice, (d) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and (e) a transdisciplinary perspective” (Smith-Maddox & Solarzano, 2002, p. 68). Through the lens of CRT, the assumption that white culture, values, and language have been normative has been challenged. In addition, CRT has recognized that the culture and values of traditionally underserved students need to be considered equally normative and need to be represented in the curriculum. CRT has become embedded within education due largely to the work of Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995). It was the joining of their scholarship in education and CRT that outlined the disparaging conditions of African American students within the educational system. To this extent, Howard asserted that “critical race theory presupposes the historical and contemporary role that race plays and has played in education, and asks a more

penetrating question: “How has racism contributed to the educational disparities, and how can it be dismantled?” (Howard, 2010, p.99).

Along with Howard (2008, 2010), Ladson-Billings & Tate maintained that CRT emphasized the disparities within the national data, assessments, curriculum, and discipline; it also emphasized the disproportionate number of students in special education and identified fundamental historical and institutionalized racism. Structural practices, curriculum, funding, and policies within a school system have helped maintain a certain status quo that not only “frames what students can know and learn, but also casts African American students in a negative light to justify these same restrictive and oppressive practices” (Dixon, 2008, p. 126). National statistics put African American students at the bottom of the achievement gap (Darling-Hammond, 1999). Using a review of the related literature, this conceptual model was developed (Delpit, 2006; Sleeter, 2005; Howard, 2010; Tatum, 2008). This dissertation views this academic achievement gap as a problem that cannot be ignored which is perpetuated in learning, instruction, and the curriculum (Howard, 2010; Sleeter, 2005). See Figure 1 below. This figure provides a visual overview of the present conditions of African American in education.

#### Conceptual Model of the Current Achievement Gap with African American Students



In contrast, when students from underserved populations found themselves represented in the curriculum and instructional styles, they have been able to relate their own life experiences to what they have been learning, and have been more successful (Delgado Bernal, 2002). One way students have been able to relate their life experiences to the curriculum have been through culturally responsive teaching. The practice of culturally responsive teaching has been shown to enable African American students to achieve at high levels (Neito, 1999; Foster, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Gay, 2000).

### **The Development of Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction**

Culturally responsive teaching is a pedagogy that requires teachers to acknowledge and understand students' realities, interests, and culture, and requires teachers to capitalize on this knowledge (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Gay, 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). The goal of culturally responsive teaching has been to celebrate underserved cultures while teaching the content. The theory of cultural responsiveness has affected many domains of education including teaching, learning, curriculum, and the students involved in the instruction process (Gay, 2000).

Many researchers have studied the use of cultural inclusion and have referred to culturally relevant and responsive instruction as cultural congruence, cultural relevance, cultural competence, culturally sensitive pedagogy, cultural compatibility, cultural appropriateness, and culturally responsive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1992; Gay, 2000; Au, 2008). Despite the various descriptors of the term, the intent has remained the same: to educate and empower children of color using a "socially just pedagogy" (Moje, 2007) that includes "funds of knowledge" (Moll, 1992) and the discourses they bring with them to school (Gee, 1996).



Throughout this study, the terms culturally responsive instruction, culturally responsive pedagogy, and culturally responsive teaching are used interchangeably.

Bridging the gap between the home and school identities of African American students has been essential to their success in school (Clay, 2003). Culturally responsive instruction has made liberatory teaching practices possible (Freire, 2000). Researchers such as Hale (1982) and Ladson-Billings (1994) referred to this type of liberatory pedagogy as relevant for the education of African American students. Hale (1982) first stated the purposes of liberatory pedagogy: “The educator advocating for liberation has parallel purposes for educating the oppressed: education for struggle and education for survival” (p. 154). She further contended that education for a struggle has been imperative for African Americans; it has made them more aware of their oppressive place in society in all its forms and disguises (Hale, 1982). Because education for survival has fostered a bridge-building, culturally inclusive schooling environment, it has complemented and reflected the culture of both the home and community. In doing so, the individual survival of African Americans has been “tied to the survival and development of Black people” (Hale, 1982, p.157).

In terms of further defining the dual purposes of education, Hale (1982) maintained that the model has led to a reduction in individualism and competition, and more importantly has promoted practices that have been pedagogically relevant. Some of the most relevant pedagogical practices that underscore this model of educating African American students have included inclusiveness, relevance, and academic rigor. Academic excellence, assistance in making learning enjoyable, and a strong emphasis on the importance of effective language and communication skills also have been core attitudes for educators. Hale’s model (Hale, 1982) for teaching African American students encompassed additional strategies such as: the effective use

of body language, use of standard English, equal amounts of teacher and student talk time, encouragement of group learning, a variety of learning activities, and music in the classroom.

Following in the footsteps of Hale, Gloria Ladson-Billings continued the development of culturally relevant pedagogy. As early as 1992 Ladson-Billings explored the promise of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) with three overarching tenets. Ladson-Billings (1995) described CRP:

A pedagogy of oppression, not unlike critical pedagogy but specifically committed to collective, not merely individual, empowerment. Culturally relevant pedagogy rests on three criteria or propositions: a) students must experience academic success; b) students must develop and /or maintain cultural competence; and c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the current status quo of the social order (p.160).

The first tenet of CRP was based on the notion that academic success should be the ultimate goal of instruction. The second tenet was based on the premise that students need to develop and maintain their cultural competence. The third tenet was established to ensure that students develop a socio-political critical consciousness “that allows them to critique the cultural norms, values, mores and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 476), which was similar to the concept of conscientization developed by Friere (2000).

After analyzing the results of interviews and the research on successful teachers of African American students, Ladson-Billings concluded that culturally relevant pedagogy has been the vehicle by which African American students have been able to achieve success within the education system. According to Ladson-Billings (1994), as culturally relevant teaching has evolved, many strategies that bridge students’ home and school cultures have been implemented. In her book *Dreamkeepers*, based on Afrocentric Feminist Theory, she described the strategies of

successful teachers of African American children. The strategy considered most important to the praxis of CRP was that of the teacher as facilitator. The premise was that all children could be successful when the teacher facilitated bridging the cultures between school and home.

Further insights into effective strategies for teaching African American students were revealed by Geneva Gay. In 2000, she wrote *Culturally Responsive Teaching* as a means to join the theory with the research into the practice of cultural responsiveness (Gay, 2000). Her book highlighted several effective components of cultural responsiveness: caring, communication, curriculum, and instruction. This research contributed to the scholarship and theory of culturally responsive teaching in that it identified what is referred to as power pedagogy which is the praxis of teaching that validates students' identities while simultaneously encouraging them to evolve as learners. Gay (2000) asserted the following:

The individuality of students is deeply entwined with their ethnic identity and cultural socialization. Teachers need to understand very thoroughly both relationships and distinctions between these to avoid compromising the very thing they are most concerned about—the students. Inability to make distinctions among ethnicity, culture and individuality increases the risk that teachers will impose their notions on ethnically diverse students, insult their cultural heritages, or ignore them entirely in the instructional process. In reality, ethnicity, and culture are significant filters through which one's individuality is made manifest. Yet individuality, culture and ethnicity are not synonymous (p.23).

This “socioculturally centered teaching” has promoted students' academic achievement. It has done so by responding to the need for a bridge of discovery for students in the wholeness of their development. According to Gay (2000), culturally responsive pedagogy responded to the educational process by validating, facilitating, liberating, and empowering ethnically diverse students. Cultural Responsiveness was founded on four premises: teachers' attitudes and expectations, cultural communication in the classroom, culturally diverse content in the curriculum, and culturally congruent instructional strategies. It also has been multidimensional,

transformative, and empowering while making learning a priority (Gay, 2000). This is similar to the research of both Hale (1982) and Ladson-Billings (1994) which found that this pedagogy made learning and academic success a non-negotiable while encouraging the notion of individual self development and critique. Unfortunately, the current practices of educators have been contrary to this development. Instead, educators have discounted the identities of students, and therefore have created a “gap” in education (Delpit, 1995).

The contributions of Hale, and Ladson-Billing, Gay together, create a broad understanding of the instructional needs of African American students. In recognition of the previous groundwork in Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction (CRRI) strategies, the two terms “Relevant” and “Responsive” have been used as equal descriptors in the theory throughout the remainder of this review of the literature.

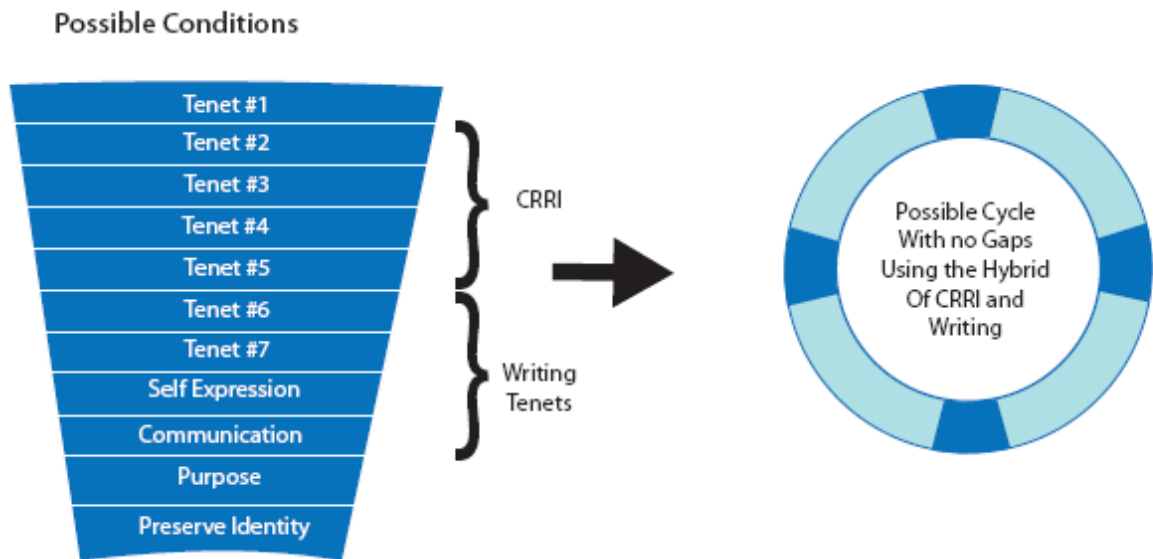
CRRI is a theoretical model that places the learning of African American students at the forefront of instruction and has provided a structure that educators have been able to follow and develop the overall attitudes of African American students in a positive manner. Another goal has been to facilitate the learning process by providing an instructional practice that is liberating, invigorating, and promising (Hale, 1982; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Gay, 2000; Howard, 2008, 2010; Tatum, 2008). Teaching and learning have become more reciprocal, rewarding, and cyclical as instruction has evolved as a means for all to grow and learn (Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Delpit, 2006; Freire, 2000).

### **Seven Cardinal Tenets of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy**

The Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction (CRRI) tenets have emerged from the findings of pioneer researchers in the field, such as Hale, Ladson-Billings, and Gay. CRRI in the current study is described as a conceptual and theoretical model that places African American

students at the center of instruction. Tenets 1 through 6 have developed as pedagogical practices that best facilitate learning for African American students, and have been successfully implemented. Tenet 7 has been developed to specifically address the literacy needs of African American students in both reading and writing. Utilizing these seven tenets aim to fill in the gaps of learning for African American students.

**Figure 2. Conditions with CRRI Conceptual Framework**



### Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction Tenets

Tenet #1: Culture is used as a vehicle to bridge the gap between content and instructional practices and the worldviews of student. Culture is multifaceted and includes descriptors such as family background, community, race and ethnicity, language, age and generational determinants, and geographic location (Freire, 2005; Hale, 1982; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Shade & Oberg, 1997; Gay, 2000; Lee, 2007; Irvine, 2003; Howard, 2008, 2010; Tatum, 2008; Tatum, 1997, 2007; Delpit, 1995, 2002; Au, 2008).

- Tenet #2: Teachers, as masters of content, must demonstrate care and believe all students can learn, possess an affirming attitude toward students and learning, and demand excellence (Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Shade & Oberg, 1997; Gay, 2000; Lee, 2007; Irvine, 2003; Howard, 2008, 2010; Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Morrison, et al. 2008).
- Tenet #3: Learning is shared between teacher and students and must scaffold what students already know. Knowledge is validating and empowering, and demands that students become critically aware of their own learning processes (Freire, 2005; Hale, 1982; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Shade & Oberg, 1997; Gay, 2000; Lee, 2007; Irvine, 2003; Howard, 2008, 2010; Tatum, 2008; Tatum, 1997, 2007; Delpit, 1995, 2002).
- Tenet #4: Instruction and environment must be inclusive of language, cultural practices and learning styles, collaborative, and designed around a “community of learners.” Students and teachers are responsible and accountable for each other’s learning (Freire, 2005; Hale, 1982; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Shade & Oberg, 1997; Gay, 2000; Lee, 2007; Irvine, 2003; Howard, 2008, 2010; Tatum, 2008; Tatum, 1997, 2007; Delpit, 1995, 2002).
- Tenet #5: Content and curriculum is examined and taught critically and strategically using a socio-political lens. Content, curriculum, and assessments must be age appropriate and meet the needs of the individual learners (Freire, 2005; Hale, 1982; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Gay, 2000).
- Tenet #6: Multiple literacies and multiple identities of students are embraced. Instruction must allow these identities to be expressed and expanded upon. Students should

feel comfortable situating their sociocultural identities in collaborative and individual settings (Freire, 2005; Kinloch 2009; Moje, 2008; Moll, 1992; Lewis & Del Valle, 2009; Tatum, 2000).

Tenet #7: Literacy is highly respected and encouraged. CRRI engages in literary practices that benefit and position learners for optimal expression, empowerment, and validation. Multicultural literature should be used and purposeful and reflective writing should be encouraged (Au, 2007; Busch & Ball 2004; Lovejoy, 2009; Weinstein, 2007; Jocson, 2006; Malozzi & Malloy, 2007; Singer & Shagoury 2006).

Tenets 1 through 6 in this research originated from several major researchers (Freire, 2005; Hale, 1982; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Shade & Oberg, 1997; Gay, 2000; Lee, 2007; Irvine, 2003; Howard, 2008, 2010; Tatum, 2008; Tatum, 1997, 2007; Delpit, 1995, 2002; Au, 2008; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). The following paragraphs highlight several of these researchers and their scholarship which has contributed to this study. Since Tenet 1 has been the most overarching tenet, the research for this trait has been presented first. Tenets 2, 3, 4, and 5 are reviewed in clusters because they overlap and are closely related according to several of the researchers. Tenets 6 and 7 are thoroughly reviewed individually and sequentially, as the two build on one another. Tenet 7 (literacy with writing) is discussed in depth, as this was the focus area of this study.

**Tenet 1: Cultural bridge.** Culture has been the most important tenet in the Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction theory. It has been used as a vehicle to bridge the gap between content and instructional practices and the worldviews of students. In order for CRRI to

be successful, the complexity of culture must be examined. Howard (2010) posited the following:

Culture matters because it shapes all aspects of daily living and activities. Culture is a complex constellation of values, mores, norms, customs and ways of being, ways of knowing, and traditions that provides a general design for living , is passed from generation to generation and serves as a pattern for interpreting reality ( p.51).

Examining research from all of the major theorists of CRRI, (Freire, 2005; Hale, 1982; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Shade & Oberg, 1997; Gay, 2000; Lee, 2007; Irvine, 2003; Howard, 2008, 2010; Tatum, 2008; Tatum, 1997, 2007; Delpit, 1995, 2002; Au, 2008; Villegas & Lucas, 2002) reveals that culture is the most significant and comprehensive component because it is the lens through which teachers make their connection to students. Teachers must tap into these “funds of knowledge” to bring meaning to the content as well as the curriculum. Ladson-Billings (1995) stated the following in terms of African American students:

Culturally relevant teaching is to assist in the development of a ‘relevant Black personality’ that allows African American student to choose excellence. Culturally relevant teaching is a pedagogy that empowers student intellectual, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The referents are not merely vehicles for bridging or explaining the dominant culture, they are aspects of the curriculum in their own right (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p.18).

According to Hilliard (1976), “Afro-American cultural style has been described as being organized in a circular fashion in contrast to the linear organization of the Western culture” (p.42). Therefore, learning has had to be cyclical and scaffolded to meet the needs of all African American student learners. Lee (1995) completed a mixed methods research study on six African American high school classes. The study focused on what Lee termed “cognitive apprenticeship based on a cultural foundation” where students were taught how to think through the complexity of signifying (p. 617). Signifying is a literary device often found in the linguistic patterns of African Americans. Lee (1995) used signifying as a tool to promote the understanding of several



African American texts with students. Signifying is a language strategy employed by African Americans that promotes friendly criticism using metaphors and comparisons that imply more than what is actually said while using a humorous tone.

A positive example of how cultural referents such as language can be used during the instruction of African American students was shown in a study by (Lee, 1995). In this study she used Cultural Modeling to describe several “creative aspects of the African American English” (p.618). Cultural Modeling has been used as a CRRI strategy to build understanding based on an aspect of culture, such as language. Once that bridge has been established, concepts have been taught using that aspect of culture. This approach has provided “equitable access and accelerated learning opportunities for all students, but is particularly empowering for students whose culture and language may not be visible in classrooms” (Gay, 2000). Specifically, cultural modeling has built on African American students’ knowledge and experiences, and then uses this information to promote discussion and collaborative writing about the content. In Lee’s study based on Cultural Modeling, the experimental group demonstrated increased student achievement; their pre-test scores and post-test scores were twice as high as those of students in the control group. In a later study by Lee, third and sixth graders who had been taught using Cultural Modeling demonstrated a higher performance on written narratives than students who had not been taught using Cultural Modeling (Risko & Walker-Dalhouse, 2007).

**Tenets 2 and 3: Teacher and learning.** Current research has continued to demonstrate that teachers’ belief systems and the ethos of caring for children have been instrumental in setting a tone in the classroom environment that cultivates students’ desire to learn and strive for excellence. (Raider-Roth, 2005; Delpit, 2003; Walker, 2000; Ware, 2006; Lewis, et al. 2008; Ball, 2000; Howard, 2001). Dedicated teachers have envisioned an education system where all

students are treated as capable learners and the attainment of excellence is the goal. Teachers such as these view their profession as both a calling and an art form. Consequently, researchers have argued that the teacher is the most important factor in the education of African American students. (Ladson-Billings & Darling-Hammond (2000), Irvine (2003), Gay (2000), and Villegas & Lucas (2002). However, a review of the literature completed by Ladson-Billings and Darling Hammond (2000) on the characteristics of good teaching in urban communities revealed that minimal research was available of good teaching in urban schools. They found that teachers “teaching the nation’s neediest children were not included in the studies” (p.12).

The review supported the idea that teachers of African American students have had to work hard and go beyond the borders of the classroom out into the community. CRRI teachers see themselves as a part of the community and believe that knowledge is continually recreated, recycled, and shared by students and teachers. In addition, these teachers have frequently questioned what constitutes knowledge and curriculum. Because of their proactive stance, they have been considered “moral actors whose social and political values and actions shape the institution” (Villegas, & Lucas, 2002). With them, teaching and learning have been complimentary in that the teacher is instrumental in facilitating the learning process. Through the learning process, the construction of knowledge is strategically planned. The following research explains what has occurred in classrooms when this process has been implemented.

Ware (2006) conducted a comparative case study on the teaching strategies of two generations of African American teachers. The study was a follow-up to an earlier pilot study. The research studied the actions of two teachers and classified them as “warm demanders” (Vasquez, 1989; Irvine and Fraser, 1998). Warm demanders are culturally unique pedagogues who have responded to African American students with care and high expectations while

simultaneously holding them accountable. Ware's work demonstrated that teachers who have caring attitudes and nurturing relationships with African American students have increased student achievement. The increase in student achievement has resulted from the "other mothering" techniques displayed when teaching and listening to students. "Other mothering" was also reflected in the caring attitude of these two teachers toward students when it pertained to discipline (Ware, 2006). The teachers in this study taught to the whole child and did not accept that poverty was an excuse for the lack of achievement; instead they asserted that education can eradicate poverty.

In reviews of literature on schools from the South, Walker (2000) and Morris (2004) found that teachers of African American students display characteristics much like those of warm demanders. Some of the themes that emerged from both studies demonstrate that African American teachers and principals were exemplary teachers. Some factors stand out concerning these teachers: They had a demanding teaching style, high expectations, were determined to teach content, and developed relationships with students beyond the classroom. This contradicted the historical viewpoint that schools for African American students were inferior because of limited resources (Walker, 2000). When critically viewed for instructional practices and positive attributes, the segregated African American schools from the South were on a par with the segregated white schools in the South (Lewis, et al. 2008).

As in the other studies, educators and the school community worked together to provide the best education for the students. Parental involvement and strong leadership from school principals were key components found in these schools. Despite the limited resources, parents and the surrounding community still value the high quality found in the learning institutions. Curriculum and extracurricular activities were heavily supported, and students were encouraged

to “be somebody” despite the segregation. Clubs were vital for developing leadership, building relationships between the school and the community, and providing opportunities to participate in athletics. Having these qualities present within the educational system provided a strong web of support that nurtured the growth and development of African American students (Morris, 2004).

Themes that were common to previous research emerged from the research of Howard (2001). Guided by research from Giroux (1988), Waxman (1989), and Nieto (1994), Howard examined what students orally revealed about their culturally responsive learning experience, and by doing so, also gave voice to students who historically had been marginalized. Howard examined the practice of cultural responsiveness through interviews completed by 17 elementary students in a northwestern area of the United States. As he analyzed the data from the interviews, several themes or patterns emerged from their responses: the ethics of caring, the community and family environment, and entertainment. Students perceived that their teachers believed in them and cared about them. Another common response was the feeling of belonging in their classroom, and how the teachers made them feel that the classroom was like another home; it was safe to learn in this atmosphere. The last common thread in Howard’s research was that students were actively engaged in the classroom and felt that their teachers made learning fun.

The study by Howard (2001) confirmed that students enjoy this type of instruction. It is not only beneficial to students’ success, but cultural responsiveness in the classroom is exciting and nurturing for students. Howard demonstrated that students need to have a voice in their instruction, and he asserted that teachers of African American students must have the will and the courage to connect to students’ cultural identities.

Culturally responsive teaching is a pedagogy that requires teachers to acknowledge and understand students' realities, interests, and culture, and also requires them to capitalize on this knowledge in teaching students (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Gay, 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Culturally responsive teaching has several characteristics, but the goal is to celebrate students' culture while teaching the content. This theory of cultural responsiveness has been linked to the multicultural education model first described by Banks as "equity pedagogy" (Banks, 1995). Equity pedagogy, as described by Gay (2000), has been one of the five tenets of multi-cultural educational and has been necessary in order to give students from diverse backgrounds equal access to the content and the curriculum. Culturally responsive instruction has complemented equity pedagogy in that it has strived to make curriculum and content appropriate and relevant to students of diverse backgrounds. The theory of cultural responsiveness has affected many domains of education including teaching, learning, curriculum, and students' involvement in the instruction process.

Villegas & Lucas (2002) have argued for a comprehensive teaching program and curriculum aimed at preparing culturally responsive teachers in a more deliberate and strategic method, unlike the current practice of having pre-service teachers take a few multicultural classes. The intention of their work has been to lay the foundation for preparing pre-service teachers to meet several goals. These goals were based on their findings from empirical and conceptual research on cultural responsiveness, observations of linguistically diverse classrooms, and their work with pre-service teachers. Their research was based on several of the goals or characteristics of culturally responsive teachers. According to them, teachers who are culturally responsive are socioculturally conscious, have an affirming view of students, value themselves, are responsible and capable of educating all students, and understand how a learner constructs

knowledge. These teachers are also been aware of their knowledge about students. They understand students' lives in and out of school and use this knowledge in instruction. The need for teachers to possess traits such as these has been corroborated by Robbins, Linsley, Lindsey, and Terrell (2006) who state:

Culturally proficient teaching and learning focus on communication and relationships. The first level of relationship is for instructor to have a well-developed sense of their own culture. Once instructors have this level of self-knowledge, they are better able to move to developing rapport and establishing trust with the learners in their classrooms. Within an environment of trust, instructors can authentically communicate with the learners. When instructors succeed in creating this environment, they have begun to understand the culture of the classroom and the school organization in which it is found. To be a culturally proficient instructor, you need not know all there is to know about the learners and their histories, worldviews, and cultural practices. Rather, as a culturally proficient instructor, you will acknowledge your need to learn from the learners as much as your need to impart information to them (p. 31).

Further credence was given to the importance of culturally responsive teacher preparation in a case study on the effective teaching of reading by Turner (2005). The findings from this study suggested that “exemplary teachers orchestrate instructional practices, instructional decisions are rooted in their deep pedagogical and subject matter knowledge, and adjustments and changes in teaching practices are based upon ongoing assessment of student abilities, needs, and progress” (p.4). Teachers in the study were chosen using a three-step nomination process. Classroom observations were held, and interviews were conducted. Inside the classroom of one particular teacher, the teacher made adaptations to the curriculum and changed seating arrangements on a regular basis. Students learned in collaborative reading models and interactive reading. This classroom was highly productive and psychologically supportive (Turner, 2005). This teacher bridged the cultural gap and offered individual reading conferences that supported her students in becoming engaged in their own learning.

**Tenets 4 and 5: Curriculum and instruction.** The strategies used to deliver content and curriculum should be strategically chosen in order to support the learning of African American students. Thus, tenets four and five have been situated together because “what” has been taught and “how” it has been taught have been fundamental of the CRRI theory. Specifically, tenet four has emphasized the importance of classroom instruction that is inclusive of languages, learning styles, and cultural practices. Tenet 5 has emphasized the process of critically analyzing the content and curriculum that is taught within a culturally responsive classroom. For example, it has been considered vital that the materials and tools used in the classroom serve a specific purpose in the development of the whole child. Various researchers have provided the rationale for the establishment of tenets four and five.

Hale (1980) wrote that the three main features of curriculum have had an impact on the education of African American students. The first feature focused on the inclusion of the Black perspective in the curriculum consisting of (a) a political/cultural ideology within the curriculum that supports the portrayal of African Americans within a historical and accurate context, and (b) an accurate view of the sociopolitical status of African Americans in the United States that complements the home and community culture. The second feature focused on the “Pedagogical Relevance” of the curriculum, meaning that as a result of studies related to their lived experiences, students emerged with an in-depth understanding of the topic and were liberated from thinking tied to the status quo. The third feature focused on the necessity of teaching African American students with “academic rigor” (1980). In their research, Gay (2000), Ladson-Billings (1994) and Villegas & Lucas (2002), all concur that excellence in education is non-negotiable. Hale (1980) emphasized that teachers need to use instructional strategies that

compliment Black culture. Her suggestions include teachers using learner-friendly body language and collaborative learning.

Ladson-Billings (1994), elaborated on the use of collaborative learning in teaching African American students. She recommended that the classroom should be viewed as a “community of learners” where students not only care about their own individual achievements but also about those of their classmates. The effectiveness of such instruction was demonstrated in a study of third through fifth graders by Florez & McClaslin (2008). This study revealed that students in smaller learning environments produced positive feelings toward learning, and enjoyed having a say in their learning.

The importance of students collaborating in their learning process was further corroborated in a study by Mitra (2004). She conducted a two-year qualitative study grounded in the sociocultural perspective which states that “we learn and become who we are through interaction with others and that learning is a social activity that occurs between people and not just as an individual process” (p.4). The purpose of the study was to examine if “student voice” made a difference in student achievement and development. Using interviews and observations the researcher concluded that “student voice can create meaningful experiences that help meet the developmental needs of youth, especially those who often have been silenced” (p.31). Further, the participants in the groups demonstrated stronger agency, a “tighter-knit description of belonging to a group, and a more profound growth in competencies than youth” who did not participate as much (p.31).

Within the CRR model, collaborative, interactive instruction of students in classrooms has been initiated with a focus on inquiry so that information has been sought—not simply reported. Also, “students are viewed as possessing knowledge that they bring to the classroom”



and are not “empty vessels to be filled by the all knowing teacher” (p.87). Specifically, knowledge has been viewed critically, and culturally relevant teachers are not been “afraid to assume oppositional viewpoints to foster the students’ confidence in challenging what may be considered problematic” (p.94). Concurring with the importance of critically challenging accepted knowledge, Irvine (2003) asserted:

Competent teachers know how to employ multiple perspectives of knowledge that use students’ everyday lived experiences to motivate and assist them in connecting new knowledge to home, community, and global settings...The student’s age, developmental level, race and ethnicity, physical and emotional states, prior experiences, family and home life, learning preferences, attitudes about school, and a myriad of other variables influence the teaching and learning processes. (pp. 46-47)

Teaching African American students to critically examine curriculum was supported by Gay (2000), Villegas & Lucas (2002), and Irvine (2003). They concur that students need to interrogate the curriculum critically and look for inconsistencies and omissions while examining multiple perspectives. Students need to develop this critical eye in order to be empowered to act against social inequalities.

Teachers of African American students have had to be fully passionate and competent with respect to the student and the content to insure that they creatively deliver the content in such a way that connects the knowledge and learning styles of students to the content. In terms of instruction, CRRI teachers have provided many modes of delivery and exposure to the content so that mastery of learning can be achieved. Varied assessments, reflective journals, action plans, debates, storytelling, and oral discussions have been essential to encourage learning because through them students have learned to apply rather than recount what they have learned (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). The classroom climate for instructors has been accepting and encouraging; at the same time, students have shared the floor and taken an interest in asking and answering

authentic questions (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Teachers who have served as both facilitators and participants have ensured that the environment of the classroom remains a safe place for students to voice their opinions and reflect on the learning.

As another proponent of creating culturally relevant instruction, Sleeter (2005) discussed the concept “un-standardizing curriculum.” In her book, *Un-Standardizing Curriculum: Multicultural Teaching in the Standards Based Classroom*, Sleeter presented multiple ways to approach teaching in a multicultural classroom environment, and outlined several key principles that made curriculum more accessible for marginalized students. Sleeter alluded to the fact that providing multicultural curriculum does not mean adding to the regular curriculum, but instead by “identifying key concepts or big ideas regardless of subject area or grade level. Curriculum developed in this manner has placed students’ active engagement with meaningful ideas at the center” (p.45). Referred to as “backward design” by Wiggins & Tighe, it directs teachers to plan what students learn with the end in mind (Sleeter, 2005). This design coincides with the ideas of inquiry espoused by Gay (2000), Villegas & Lucas (2002) and Irvine (2003). However, Sleeter differed from them in that she presented several steps and questions that detailed how to complete this procedure. The goal of this process was that students should interpret what they learned by using multiple perspectives. Sleeter called this process multicultural education.

Sleeter further posited that curriculum resources should be viewed as windows that help students learn about people different from themselves, and that a transformative approach to curriculum should enable students to view “concepts, issues, themes and problems from different perspectives and points of view” (p.89). Curriculum planned in this manner is not “static or a finished product...It is an ongoing intellectual endeavor, created, enacted, and re-created in specific contexts, involving specific teachers and specific students” (p.172).

The aforementioned researchers described that content and curriculum must be carefully crafted and delivered to meet the needs of students. The curriculum should have a sociopolitical critique from several lenses, and instructional delivery should satisfy the learning styles of students while evoking a sociopolitical consciousness. The curriculum needs to be inclusive and strategic; and the learning environment needs to be safe and welcoming of individual thoughts, language, and cultural practices. Assessments and activities need to be varied, and permit relevant dialogue. Instructional strategies need to include collaborative learning that fosters a “community of learners” and promote a classroom environment “in which all students are encouraged to make sense of their learning” (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p. 28).

**Tenets 6: Multiple literacy and identities.** Literacy and Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction appear to be synonymous in the literature as the two topics frequently appear together within articles. As an aspect of literacy, writing has always been presented in a culturally relevant fashion. In fact, current research shows that effective writing strategies have been designed in a culturally relevant manner that requires teachers to provide support to students through a “community of learning” which consists of written topics related to student interests. Writing instruction has been designed to preserve student identities, explore specific topics, or express ideas. In fact, much of the current literature has been centered on the significance of multiple identities and multiple literacies.

Literacy has been understood as the balance between two neutral constructs that are “largely explained by individual variations in cognitive and physical functioning (Alvermann, 200, p. 15). According Alvermann (2009), literacy has evolved from stagnate and autonomous to varied and multifaceted. However, according to Street (1995), as cited in Alvermann (2009) this autonomous model can be replaced by an ideological model that “incorporates an array of social

and cultural ways of knowing that can account for seemingly absent, but always present power structures” (p16). The intention of this description is address the inclusiveness of one belonging to many different discourses (Gee, 2001). Further, Gee (2001) noted that as individuals emerge as literate persons, and as they develop and move in and out of various situations or discourses, they are challenged when their primary discourse or home language does not readily match with the literacy activities sponsored by schools and in many academic assessments.

Multiple literacies are referred to the varied literate behaviors in settings that are inside and outside of school (Beaufort, 2009) and are specific to the social settings in which they occur. According to Lewis & Del Valle, “Identity represents ways of being and performing as members of certain groups as well as the way our selfhood is recognized by others” (2009, p.310) These multiple identities reflect the multiple literacies needed to function within these settings. The significance of identity emerged when marginalized students did not fit the dominant mold within the education system. This alienation transferred into a gap in learning that resulted in a gap in achievement. However, the implementation of CRRI has filled these voids because the theory encourages making certain identities and literacies acceptable within the sociocultural contexts of schooling. As stated by Ladson-Billings (1995) , CRRI “not only addresses student achievement, but also helps students accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that school perpetuate” (p.469). Adding to the complexity of identity and literacy, technological advances such as the internet and various social websites, have adapted to connect with out of school literacy practices that include adolescent identity within a virtual world. In essence, adolescent students have become members of various sociocultural groups that have provided them with many identities and literacies.

Teachers of African American students who have used CRRI effectively have capitalized on the many identities and literacies in an effort to teach content and further develop the whole child. According to Lewis & Del Valle (2009)

Classrooms should offer a space to build on these out-of school literacy practices to negotiate and critically examine systems and structures that student deal with in their everyday lives but that too often serve marginalize students at school and in other institutional contexts (p.314).

Tatum (2000) stated that African American students in particular have been forced to take on the identity of the dominant culture at the expense of their own. This negotiated identity process is in opposition to CRRI because CRRI demands that the entire system of schooling accept, affirm, and validate all students. Tatum asserts that when CRRI demands acceptance, affirmation, and validation, students' sociocultural identities have bridged content and have liberated marginalized students.

Freire (2005) expressed a similar theoretical conception in his idea of liberatory education, where problem posing was at the heart of learning, and the teacher was no longer "merely one who teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn is being taught to teach" (p.80). Educators should promote the development of students' multiple identities and multiple literacies in order for students to become "critical co-investigators" of knowledge. This has resulted in education becoming a practice of freedom as opposed to a practice of domination. This was further affirmed by Kinloch (2009) who suggested that educators should be very suspicious of pedagogical strategies that separate community-based literacy from literacy events that take place in school. In other words, efficient literacy practices need to include the cultural and community contexts of students.

**Tenet 7: Importance of literacy and writing focus.** Cultural identities have been expressed through multiple literacies. Another way of understanding multiple literacies was referred to by Moll (1992) as funds of knowledge or the social capital students gain through their lived experiences. Accessing students' multiple literacies is essential for building bridges of understanding as students attempt to construct knowledge. In order to bridge the content, teachers must understand and capitalized on these "funds of knowledge" (Moll, 1992). Including literacy as a tenet of CRRI has required reading and writing to be more inclusive, reflective, and collaborative.

Literacy has consisted of sociocultural perspectives on the usefulness and validity of reading and writing. Many researchers have suggested the use of responsive practices while teaching literacy. Smitherman (2007) asserted: "We must continue to be vigilant about language as an instrument of social transformation, not only for Black people but for all peoples everywhere...education must be about us and the language we use and understand" (p. 154). Strategies in CRRI have included discussions and written reflections of the topics at hand. Providing a platform in which multiple literacies may be accessed during critical discussions and critical written responses has been imperative. (Au, 2007; Street, 2005; Majiri & Godley, 1998; Stinson, 2008).

Research from NAEP demonstrated that in terms of writing, African American students have been the most underachieving. Because the ability to write well has been directly linked to success in college, the significance of employing CRRI to increase literacy in African American students, particularly in writing, cannot be underestimated. In terms of responsive literacy teaching, Moje (2008) stated that "literacy pedagogy should account for and respond to the texts,

and literacy practices of youths then connect those texts and practices to the disciplines”(p.60). Examples of out-of-school literacies include websites, emails, music lyrics, and magazines.

Elbow (2004) suggested that literacy involves power over letters. This refers to both writing and reading, even though usually only reading is considered when literacy is addressed. Elbow stated that the concentration on developing literacy has been placed solely on the act of reading, and therefore has failed to address the importance of writing as a learning strategy. Writing has provided for more active engagement in terms of understanding concepts and critical thinking. Elbow referred to reading and listening as passive, input modes. In contrast, writing and speaking contribute heavily to the output mode of communication. As such, writing is of equal importance.

Within the current model of education based on standardized testing, writing has been neglected because it cannot be easily standardized. Writing requires students to bring their multiple identities into play. Elbow explained the relationship between reading and writing: “Reading is just like writing: a process of cognitive and social construction in which everyone builds meaning from cues in the text, using as building blocks the word meanings already inside readers’ heads” (p. 12). Elbow further asserted that the act of writing is possible if students can speak and possess language.

Funneling students’ thoughts through the writing process has been successful in urban writing programs. Busch & Ball (2004) illustrated the significance of a San Francisco Bay Area urban writing program with adolescent children. In this program students learned to express themselves through words instead of violence. The intention of the writing programs was to support writing fluency and collaboratively develop writing that validates students’ multiple literacies and multiple identities. In addition, urban writing programs have empowered the

development of students' voices, and motivated them to consider literacy as an expressive mode without extensive attention to grammatical and spelling errors.

Au (2007) also recognized the benefit of using writing to develop literacy in Hawaiian children. Her research led to positive achievements for native students (Au, 1995). She asserted that effective literacy instruction based on cultural responsiveness, must bridge the literacy of diverse backgrounds; educators must embrace the broader concept of literacy, termed multiple literacies.

Au's view of culturally responsive instruction added a new lens to the theory and praxis of literacy through writing. In the past, researchers and educators viewed cultural responsiveness in a vacuum and as an instructional strategy that simply matched culture to instruction. According to Au (2007), educators should promote two goals. First, educators should "help students acquire knowledge, strategies, and skills that will enable them to meet higher standards for literacy and to successfully compete for rewarding jobs in a global economy." Second, educators should "allow students to reach higher standards through culturally responsive instruction or ways of teaching and learning" (Au, 2007, p. 6). Au refers to these two goals of instruction as "hybridity." It is with this hybridity that cultural responsiveness has evolved in order to meet the needs of diverse learners. Au combined cultural responsiveness and literacy in much the same way as Ladson-Billings (1992); however, Au acknowledged the importance of literacy achievement in the lives of Hawaiian students as opposed to Ladson-Billings who examined the achievements of African American students.

For culturally and linguistically diverse students to become productive members of society they have to be fully functional participants in literate communities including those in schools, homes, communities, and workplaces (Callins, 2006; Au, 2007). Callins (2006) stated



that attention to the importance of early reading, as reported by the National Right to Read Foundation, has saved societal costs: 85% of delinquent children and 75% of prison inmates are illiterate, and the cost for taxpayers of adult illiteracy has been \$224 billion a year in welfare payments, crime, job incompetence, lost taxes, and remedial education. Gay (2000) insisted that “literature also is a powerful medium through which students can confront social injustices, visualize racial inequities, and find solutions to personal and political problems” (p. 131).

The bidirectional nature of the relationship between literacy and culture has been a concern in other research. Tatum (2005; 2008) revealed that research on the reading attainment of African American males often reports on the dismal condition of their literacy, yet has ignored their identities pertaining to race and gender identities. As an alternative, Tatum outlined research that would identify the positive influences of cultural contexts on the identity of African American adolescent males and how these contexts have impacted reading achievement and identity development. Further, he indicated that reading achievement for African American males has been stunted by the lack of research about out-of-school contexts, and this has contributed to misinformed pedagogy (Tatum, 2008). This misinformed pedagogy has then resulted in reading instruction that is oversimplified and lacks strategies for African American male learners based on cultural responsiveness.

One essential element that affects the engagement of African American males in school is their sense of being an outcast and being able to include their voices in the process. Until they become comfortable with their place within a social setting, they have difficulty completing tasks. However, when they experience a supportive atmosphere they show great academic resiliency. In his qualitative case study Tatum demonstrated that when culturally responsive

teaching strategies are employed, along with student choice, and content and curriculum are enhance and develop the male identity, literacy achievement results.

Although Tatum (2009) provided sound research for cultural responsiveness in literacy and reading achievement, he neglected to equally address the need for writing (Harris, K., Graham, & Mason, 2006). In fact, writing has often been neglected in research in terms of highlighting literacy achievement. The breadth of literacy achievement in research has focused on reading achievement, and has neglected the need for voice and diverse learners (Majiri, 1996; Norment, 1995; Ball, 1996). Writing has been a voice viewed as a sociocultural task mediated by culture and language.

Stuart & Volk (2002) view “collaborative literacy practices as a resource that many Mexican American children might bring from home that could be used in implementing culturally responsive literacy pedagogy” that increases achievement. Therefore, collaborative tasks are utilized throughout the study as a culturally responsive strategy.

As early as 1995, Norment began to study the effects of writing and academic performance for African American students. His study contributed understanding that classroom instruction needed to be congruent and complimentary to the different modes of discourse and also the syntactical relationships within paragraphs to improve the writing of African American students. Norment focused on the linguistic competencies and linguistic environments that African American students bring to the classroom. This focus has contributed to the theory of cultural relevance because the writing instruction has supported and encouraged the cultural identities. Therefore, it has strengthened the ability of students to attain academic excellence.

In this study, Norment examined the relationship between culture/language and background as they relate to the style of writing narratives and expository text by using 30

African American students and 60 writing samples chosen randomly from a college campus. The findings revealed that their culture/language and background influenced the writing in the areas of structure and cohesiveness because the African American writers used a similar organizational pattern. Norment (1995) discovered that since writing mastery is known to develop over time, teachers have had to develop knowledge of the African American linguistic style and competence in order to maximize writing potential through modeling of the various genres. As a result, instructors have been encouraged to develop writing curricula that includes strategies and activities based on this modeling of the various genres.

For some youth who have been able to connect their identities to both their in-school and out-of-school literacies, writing has been perceived as a refuge. More urban youth, especially African American males, have become engaged in the act of writing as more educational institutions have begun to use writing as a tool for expression, rather than isolated grammatical exercises (Mahiri, 1994; 1996). As such, Mahiri's work has contributed to understanding the importance of culturally relevant and responsive instruction. In 1998, Majiri further contributed to CRRI theory in writing for urban youth through a study that revealed that the consequences of literacy are connected to the way writing is socially constructed. Simply put, identity for some youth is shaped by their ability to write and their usage of writing. Thus, when students cannot express themselves or demonstrate their competency in writing, they are deprived of a part of their identity.

Moje (2008) suggests that responsive literacy pedagogy requires knowledge of young people, knowledge of the subject areas, and knowledge of texts that are valued among youth. These practices do not have to match the identity of students perfectly, but texts must feel real. Literate practices need to enact reading and writing to explore the lives of the youth and for them

to engage in the world. In a study completed by Bartlett (2007), literacy was explored as a “sociocultural approach” where the literacy activities involved students “actively” (p. 53). Further, “doing literacy involves active and improvised identity work on two levels: the interpersonal (seeming) and intrapersonal (feeling)” (p.55). In other words, students build their identities, they need to feel and seem literate as they carry out literate practices. Moje (2000) also conducted a study using five at risk adolescents. Her study sought to understand their literacy practices as tools in the lives of these youth. The voices of these youth were expressed through unsanctioned literacy practices like graffiti to claim space and construct identities. The recommendation in her study suggested that educators should create and include the practices in pedagogy as an effort to connect to these students and engage them in their learning.

Mitra (2004) conducted a study in which efforts were made to increase “student voice” and agency. As a result, students developed a sense of belonging and autonomy as they resolved their local issues. These students improved academically as teachers constructed the classrooms and environments that solicited their voice.

Majiri included research from Street (1984; 1993) which posited literacy as a political function that has different implications within different sociocultural contexts. Within this framework, the sociocultural notion of writing for African American youth in Majiri’s study led to the suggestion of bridging the liberating voice of the out-of-school literacy practices of students to the classroom. Also included in the research from Mahiri, was the work of Camitta, which stated that vernacular writing is an out-of-school literacy that does not conform to educational institutions, but to those of social life and culture (Majiri, 1996).

Arnetha Ball has written for over twenty years on the effects of writing for culturally diverse students. In 1996, she explored the important use of voice in writing. The premise of her

research was based on the work of Bahktin (1981) and on the idea that writing consists of “dialogue articulations of consciousness.” These articulations demonstrate the multiple voices students possess and the specific devices that are particular to a culture. Multiple voices depend on the sociocultural view of language. Different cultures inherently participate in and value particular literary behaviors. Some literary devices such as “modes of expression” and “text design patterns” reflect what African Americans have deemed necessary in their literary discourse. Ball asserted that using styles from the African American linguistic repertoire such as interactive involvement with the audience, anecdotes, and reflections, can increase engagement and enrichment in English classes.

In Ball’s study, she observed and analyzed writing samples from four African American students in a college preparatory English classroom. She concluded that teachers need to be willing to “hear” those multiple voices of students, and that when used strategically these devices can be translated into practices that promote strategic school success. At the classroom level, the language preferences, text design patterns, and modes of expression of African American students can be included in the curriculum, not only as building blocks for bridging community-based experiences, but as rich resources of knowledge that students should know to express their ideas in a variety of forms (Ball, 1996, p.35).

In essence, the inclusion of linguistic patterns in schools can benefit all students because it enhances the ability to communicate more effectively with a diverse group of people.

More recently, to develop literacy identity, culturally responsive instructional practices in writing have been enhanced and used as tools such as the importance of including the linguistic styles while writing, writing for liberation, and writing with out-of-school literacies in the classroom. As examined by Singer and Shagoury (2006), students have developed multiple out-

of-school literacy practices. They stated that writing for a sense of agency as well as social justice issues should be included in the curriculum. In their research they tried to promote student agency through social justice issues. Students were given books based on social justice issues and were required to write and create projects. Students who participated in the study were passionate about their work and were able to grow as writers and activists. The foundation for educational justice has allowed students to have equitable learning experiences in the classroom. As research has been completed on culturally responsive instruction, the use of writing has emerged as a strong instrument for promoting social justice activism in the classroom.

Chris Street (2005) completed research on building writing communities to serve as scaffold for conducting writing workshops that engage writers. As described by Street, writing communities provide an environment that allows students to write at their own pace about their own concerns. In the study by Street (2005), trust was created with reluctant writers by modeling the writing process with them. His research revealed that “the one key to transforming reluctant writers is to provide a social context that leads to identity transformation” (p.641). Because writing is a social process, the community of writing in class allowed students to engage in the social act of writing. The students who participated in the study became engaged, confident, and more productive as they began to see themselves as a part of a community of writers.

When students experience a “non-threatening space for negotiating and applying home language, and understanding that it is linked to identity” they write successfully (Hill, 2009). Students become aware of the internal power they possess when they do not have to compromise who they are as writers, and when they are able to preserve their voice in the process.

Hill completed a study with two African American students in a suburban Detroit school. Through interviews, observations, and writing samples Hill was able to document the growth of

students as writers. The two students used African American Vernacular English, and did not want to compromise their identities. The culturally responsive teacher in the study valued the students' home language and taught them how to "code-switch" between their home language and Standard English while writing. Recommendations from this research included allowing students the opportunity to utilize standard and nonstandard English. The research also demonstrated that modeling writing and providing feedback have been useful during the writing process. Emphasizing correct grammar has been more useful after the writing ideas have been articulated.

Studies completed by Weinstein (2007) and William (2006) have confirmed that educational and academic writing has at times suppressed identity and culture, and as a result students who have written in the classroom setting have felt isolated and irrelevant. According to Gee (2001) and Street (1995) writing has been situated in a particular context, and schools need to do a better job at merging personal and academic writing. In an article by William, the idea of identity was described as inseparable from academic writing. He described his experiences as a classroom teacher and the benefits of exposing students to the identities of authors and then making personal connections to their work as writers.

A more contemporary view of the connection between the identities of authors and their writing has emerged in rap music. Rap and poetry are examples of expression in a non-threatening manner, and have social pleas for belonging. Weinstein (2007) pointed out that writing rap is pleasurable and empowering and therefore connected to cultural, community, and family discourses. In this study, Weinstein analyzed the out-of-school literacy practices of four Chicago students. Weinstein based the theoretical framework on social literacy. Social literacy focuses on types of reading and writing practices that occur in addition to the practices at school.

Weinstein found that the written expression displayed in writing rap is in fact political, self motivated, creative, and culturally reflective.

Educators who have capitalized on such a rich metaphorical bank of cultural out-of-school literacy practices have been wise. Students' engagement in reading, writing, and orally presenting their "personal writing" has increased overall academic writing and achievement for African American youth (Jocson, 2006; Malozzi, 2007; Weinstein, 2007). These "code-switching" pedagogies offer resources for teachers who are interested in linking home languages and literacies to school work. In the study by Jocson (2006), poetry was analyzed as another out-of-school literacy practice. Jocson used field notes, student surveys, participant observations, student work, and audio-taped sessions, using a framework called PPP to analyze the data. PPP represented poetry as a practice, process, and product. From this research, the author concluded that poetry exposes real life issues, and helps make sense of students' identities within a social setting.

Lovejoy's (2009) research has supported teachers during this era of testing and accountability by providing a framework for student voices through self-directed writing. The framework has provided a way to build a community of diverse writers who share knowledge and interests (Lovejoy, 2009). This diverse population of students, who have been taught by predominantly white teaching staff, has reinforced the need for cross cultural communication and identity development in the classroom. Lovejoy's approach has provided such a platform. He used the research by Daniels & Zeleman to re-emphasize that the importance of promoting growth in student writing has been to make sure that teachers have been understanding and appreciative of students' linguistic competence and the multiple identities students bring with them to school. It is within this social context that gains in writing proficiency have been made.



Lovejoy (2009) further added that writing from students should have the flexibility to be expressive. Once students have expressed themselves in writing, they have at times chosen to develop their writing into a “mature” piece reflective of the dominant modes.

In Lovejoy’s (2009) study of student writing, he chose writings from a classroom of high school students who wrote formally and informally on topics that were of interest to them. Students initially felt that the self-directed writing assignments were a waste of time. However, toward the end of the semester, students began to share that they felt that they had developed as people as a result of developing as writers. Lovejoy chose to guide students by providing topics, but there were no prompts or time limits involved as the process took place. Lovejoy concluded by asserting that students participate and engage more with their writing when they receive the affirmation that their writing is valued. Have their writing affirmed and valued is a direct reflection of cultural responsiveness because this instruction validates students and their identities.

Finally, researchers such as Lovejoy (2009) and Geisler, et al. (2009) have reiterated the desperate need for differentiated writing. Differentiated writing has been viewed as a culturally relevant approach to writing because it has met the needs of individual students and has provided equitable access to writing instruction by offering student choice and support throughout the process. Studies by Geisler, Hessler, Gardner, and Lovelace (2009) demonstrated that five African American students improved their writing by using differentiated strategies aimed at increasing vocabulary and writing fluency.

Differentiated writing intervention has contributed to closing the achievement gap in writing between African American students and other students. This instruction has targeted strategies that have improved vocabulary and fluency (Geisler, et al. 2009). In fact, the use of

differentiated writing strategies has resulted in improved writing outcomes for African American students. As the authors pointed out, writing has often been one of the most neglected basic forms of academic skills, yet one of the most important (Geisler, et al. 2009). Not only has it been the most neglected, it has been the most overlooked in forms of teaching, evaluating, and structuring curriculum. Vocabulary, length of writing, self monitoring, and holistic scoring have been used as focal points during the writing instruction of this research. The results of the research revealed that the limited vocabulary of urban African American students has limited their writing achievement. The infusion of vocabulary development and writing instruction has proven to be a promising feature of advancing the writing capabilities of students in the study.

### **Summary**

Current research supports that CRRRI has been a powerful tool when addressing African American students in education. More specifically, the literature has alluded to literacy, with an emphasis on writing, as a staple in this theory instead of an option. If educators have a desire to close the achievement gap, their literacy instruction needs to include a balanced approach to relevant reading and writing. Writing has permitted students to apply the culturally responsive content and instruction in their daily lives. Also, writing has helped to develop and defend a non-negotiable identity complete with language and multiple literacies. This has happened while students have been situated in the cusp of their community critiquing the world and knowledge around them.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following definitions of terms are basic to this study and shape the understanding of the research. These definitions were developed using the researcher's interpretations of current research. The remainder of this study targets the strategies and instructional practices of Clay

USD, and the following terms represent the researcher's vantage point. In Chapter 3, the methodology of the research is explained and chapters 4 and 5 describe the findings, and a discussion of the study.

Achievement Gap: This term is used to classify students who do not meet the expected achievement gains in education. It is often used to describe the academic discrepancy between Black and white students.

Calibration: When scoring writing samples, it is a process used to align the scoring procedures; the purpose is to establish a baseline within the group that is responsible for scoring

Critical Race Theory: A theory used to describe and define the inequities within the educational and American justice systems as they pertain to race. Critical race theory, as the researcher views the term, is derived from researchers Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995).

Culturally Responsive Teaching, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, Culturally Relevant Teaching, Culturally Responsive Instruction: are terms that refer to the same theory inspired by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994) and Gay (2000), that is used to support culture and home language that is infused with core curriculum, instruction, and educational praxis. The intention of using the theory is to include students' backgrounds in the learning process for validation and empowerment.

Culturally Responsive and Relevant Education (CRRE): CRRE is the term Clay USD utilizes to describe the type of instruction used in their English Program. This term can be understood as a theoretical foundation used to meet the needs of diverse linguistic learners such as African Americans, Mexican Americans, Native Americans, and Hawaiian Americans.

District Writing Prompts: A writing prompt is a hypothetical writing situation created to gauge student response. Writing prompts are written to solicit different genres of writing. These prompts were created by district level staff members and administered to all students in the district to solicit the genre of persuasive writing. They were chosen because they are unbiased.

Differentiated Writing: a term used to describe how teachers make writing accessible to all students despite the diversity.

English Mastery Program (EMP): EMP was designed to meet the various language needs of the Clay Urban School District. This was originally implemented to meet the academic needs of African American students by validating the home language, and teaching students to transfer this knowledge into Standardized English. Later, this program expanded to meet the needs of Mexican Americans, Native Americans, and Hawaiian Americans.

Educational Justice: a term used to define and describe fairness within an educational system, and further demands the distribution of equity.

Holistic Scoring Guide: A type of writing rubric used to assign a numerical value to a writing piece while identifying certain writing qualities.

NAEP: National Assessment of Educational Progress, otherwise known as “the nation’s report card” is a national educational data base with statistics on the status of American students in the American public school systems.

Culturally Responsive and Relevant Instruction (CRRRI) Classroom: Classroom with a teacher who has received English Mastery Program (EMP) training based in culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy

Non-Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction Classroom: Classroom with a teacher who has not received English Mastery Program (EMP) training based in culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy

Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction Teacher: Classroom teacher who has received English Mastery Program (EMP) training based in culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy

Non-Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction Teacher: Classroom teacher who has not received English Mastery Program (EMP) training based in culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy

Literacy: Literacy is defined as the ability and the willingness to use reading and writing to construct meaning from a printed text in ways that meet the requirements of a particular social context (Au, 1993).

Primary Trait Writing Scoring Guide/Rubric: a primary trait writing rubric that identifies, specifies, and assigns numeric value to a certain trait within a writing piece.

Rater/Reader: a person who reads a sample writing piece and assigns a numeric marker to the writing sample based on the traits from a particular scoring guide

Sociocultural context: refers to the cultural and social aspects of a student

Standard English Learners (SEL): Students who come to school with a home language other than Standard English.

Voice: a term used to describe an author's tone or personal style used in writing. Voice also refers to an author's ability to maintain and display personal identity in writing.

Voice Assessment: this assessment measures the extent that an author uses words or phrases in their writing to reveal personal opinions, beliefs, culture, and identity.

Writing: As a component of the balanced literacy approach, writing is the ability to effectively communicate thoughts and ideas via paper or electronically using Standard English.

Writing Rubric: a subjective instrument used to score writing through a series of numerical values that are assigned to certain qualities present in written assignments.

As stated previously, the above definitions are operational terms that are used for clarity in this study. These terms are defined by the researcher as referents of understanding for this study.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

The goal of this mixed methods study is to seek knowledge about culturally relevant and responsive instruction and the influence of this instruction on the writing quality of African American students in an urban public school district. Furthermore, this study aims to describe what happens as educators and students experience the process of writing. The qualitative goal of this study is to diagnose whether an experiential value can be placed on the participants. Since this study seeks to understand whether CRRI has had an impact on writing, a quantitative approach is taken. The purpose for employing the combined use of qualitative and quantitative approaches will be clarified later.

This chapter provides a blueprint for understanding how the study was designed, and includes a descriptive background of a large case study of Clay Urban School District, and its two mini-cases. Following the explanation of the case is the methodology of the study.

#### **The Case of Clay Urban School District**

The Clay Urban School District (Clay USD) is located in Southern California. According to the “Fingertip Facts Sheet 2009-2010” Clay USD is responsible for educating 617,798 students in 518 elementary schools, 126 middle schools, 127 high schools, 19 SPAN schools, 40 continuation schools, 19 special education schools, 11 community day schools, and 31 Opportunity High Schools. Clay USD has a total of 71,851 employees including 33,214 regular teachers, 4,453 other certificated support staff, 2,308 certificated administrators, and 31,876 classified personnel. The breakdown of ethnicities in Clay USD is as follows: 3.6% Asian students, 10.8% African American students, 2.3% Filipino students, 74.2 % Hispanic students and 8.4% white students.

Clay County educates more African American students than in any other county in California (EdSource, 2008). Over twenty years ago the need to better educate students became policy. In 1998, the name of the program was changed to meet the growing demands of other Standard English Learners.

In 2001, the Clay Urban School District published a brochure that advertised the merger of two programs. The mission of this new union was to “eliminate disparities in the educational outcomes for African-American and other underachieving students.” Five tenets were identified:

Tenet #1-Students’ Opportunity to Learn

Tenet #2- Student Opportunities to Learn (Adult focused)

Tenet #3- Professional Development for teachers and administrators responsible for the education of African American students

Tenet#4- Engage African American parents and the community in the education of African American students

Tenet #5- Ongoing planning, systemic monitoring, and reporting

These tenets along with recommendations, performance goals, and evaluations were designed to increase the academic success of African American students in several areas such as reading and math achievement, discipline referrals, increasing the number of African American students enrolled in A-G requirements and Advanced Placement classes, and teacher and administrative trainings that use culturally responsive pedagogy.

From the tenets described above, a list of key elements of Culturally Relevant Education (CRE) was identified in order to support educators and administrators and meet the needs of African American learners. From this list, the researcher matched the identified CRE Clay USD tenets to the seven staple tenets revealed in this study through the comprehensive review of the



literature. As stated before, the tenets from the review of literature and Clay USD are not exact, but are very closely aligned due to the same foundational experts in the area of culturally responsive teaching. Matching these tenets, as seen in Table 3, allowed the researcher to reliably use Clay USD as a case study site in order to understand the influence of CRRI in writing. The following tenets are listed below in Table 3.

**Table 3- Clay USD CRE Tenets vs. CRRI Tenets**

Clay USD Tenets	CRRI Tenets
<p>The teacher incorporates Culturally Responsive Pedagogy into rigorous classroom instruction. (Uses the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of students to make learning encounters more relevant and effective).</p>	<p>Culture is used as a vehicle to bridge the gap between content and instructional practices and the worldviews of students. Culture is multifaceted and includes descriptors such as family background, community, race and ethnicity, language, age and generational determinants and geographic location (Freire, 2005; Hale, 1982; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Gay, 2000; Lee, 2007; Irvine, 2003; Howard, 2008,2010; Tatum, 2008; Tatum, 1997, 2007; Delpit, 1995, 2002; Au, 2008).-Tenet #1</p>
<p>The teacher creates an accepting, affirmative, risk-free classroom environment in which the culture and language of each student is validated, valued, and respected, and authentic Accomplishments are regularly recognized.</p>	<p>Learning is shared between teachers and students and must be scaffold with what students already know. Knowledge is validating, empowering and demands that students become critically aware of their own learning process (Freire, 2005; Hale, 1982; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Shade &amp; Oberg, 1997; Gay, 2000; Lee, 2007; Irvine, 2003; Howard, 2008,2010; Tatum, 2008; Tatum, 1997, 2007; Delpit, 1995, 2002).-Tenet #3</p>
<p>The teacher infuses culturally relevant literature and instructional materials into academically rigorous curricula organized around concepts that students are expected to know deeply.</p>	<p>Content and curriculum is examined and taught critically and strategically using a socio-political lens. Content, curriculum, and assessments must be age appropriate and meet the needs of the individual learners (Freire,2005; Hale, 1982; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Gay, 2000).-Tenet #5</p>

The teacher demonstrates knowledge and understanding of issues of language variation in SELs (Standard English Learners) and ELs (English Learners) and incorporates appropriate strategies to support academic English mastery.	No Matching Tenet on Understanding Language Variation
The <i>teacher</i> employs strategies throughout the curriculum, including “contrastive analysis” “personal thesaurus” and “accountable talk” that facilitate the students' mastery of Academic English and use of language that sustains learning.	Literacy is highly respected and encouraged. CRRRI engages in literary practices that benefit and position the learner for optimal expression, empowerment and validation. Multicultural literature should be used and purposeful and reflective writing should be encouraged (Au, 2007; Busch & Ball 2004; Lovejoy, 2009; Weinstein, 2007; Jocson, 2006; Malozzi & Malloy, 2007 Singer & Shagoury, 2006). – Tenet #7
The <i>teacher</i> promotes increased confidence, problem solving behaviors, and the development in students of habits of mind that empower them to achieve their full potential.	Multiple literacies and multiple identities of students are embraced. Instruction must allow these identities to be expressed and expanded upon. Students should feel comfortable situating their socio-cultural identities in collaborative and individual settings (Freire, 2005; Kinloch, 2009; Moje ,2008; Moll, 1992: Lewis & Del Valle, 2009; Tatum, 2000).-Tenet #6
The <i>teacher</i> demonstrates knowledge of the learning styles and strengths of culturally diverse students and builds upon students' learning strengths to develop self-monitoring and self-management skills to promote academic growth.	Instruction and environment must be inclusive of language, cultural practices and learning styles, collaborative, and designed around a “community of learners.” Students and teacher are responsible and accountable for each other’s learning (Freire,2005; Hale, 1982; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Shade & Oberg, 1997; Gay, 2000; Lee, 2007; Irvine, 2003; Howard, 2008, 2010; Tatum, 2008; Tatum, 1997, 2007; Delpit, 1995, 2002).-Tenet #4
The classroom environment is culturally	Teachers must demonstrate care and believe all

<p>relevant and responsive to the students and sets “clear expectations” by defining what students are expected to learn, and displaying criteria and models of work that meet standards.</p>	<p>students can learn, possess an affirming attitude toward students and learning, and demand excellence (Villegas &amp; Lucas, 2002). – Tenet#2</p>
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Table 4 shows that Clay USD is supported by the research literature on the positive attributes of Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction outlined as CRRI tenets. Out of the eight tenets identified through Clay USD, seven are in congruence with the tenets outlined through the comprehensive review of literature. Tenet 4 of Clay USD is specific to the needs of the learners of Clay USD, stating that teachers need to “demonstrate knowledge and understanding of issues of language variations in SELs (Standard English Learners) and ELs (English Learners) and incorporate appropriate strategies to support academic English mastery.” This was not established as a non-negotiable CRRI tenet, according to the review of literature; therefore the researcher omitted it from the seven staple tenets that framed this research.

The seven cardinal tenets of CRRI in alignment with the tenets of CRE are the most significant, thereby making Clay USD a viable place to study culturally responsive teaching pedagogy in praxis.

**Research Methods**

The overall purpose of this study is to examine the influence of culturally relevant and responsive instruction in writing of African American students using case study as the primary methodology. The researcher gathered and analyzed data employing both qualitative and quantitative measures. Creswell (2007) asserts that a case study develops in-depth description and analysis, and focuses on an event, program, or activity, and uses multiple sources such as

interviews, observations, and artifacts. For the purpose of this dissertation, the term “mini-case” refers to small case within a larger case study. The two mini-cases referenced in this study are the CRRI classes and the Non-CRRI classrooms. These two mini-cases are bound into one large case which can be referred to as Clay USD. The intention of the entire instrumental case study was to inform practice, in particular, writing practices that benefit African American students. Although these two groups have commonalities, they possess very different attributes that need to be understood and described.

Stake (2010) points out that all research is both qualitative and quantitative, and both are not equally present in research, most research appears to be either more qualitative or more quantitative. He also asserts that research studies with an emphasis on personal experience in “described situations are considered qualitative.” Employing a mixed methodology, using both qualitative and quantitative methods, allows the reader to clarify meaning. Also, “qualitative research is interpretive, experiential, situational, and personalistic” (Stake, 2010, p.14) which lays the foundation for this study. In this study the researcher describes the steps involved in such a journey of inquiry.

As a secondary methodology, the researcher employed a few of the quantitative characteristics of causal comparative research. The data collected from this approach provided numerical support for this instrumental case study. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed “to provide a more complete picture of a situation” (Frankel & Wallen, 2006, p.443). Often referred to as a triangulation design, in which the researcher collects both quantitative and qualitative data together in an effort to validate findings (Frankel & Wallen, 2006), both sets of data are employed to clarify findings. In the following paragraphs, both methodologies are described in further detail.

### **Qualitative Approach**

Qualitative research attempts to understand the quality of a particular event or activity (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). This particular study aims to investigate and examine the process of writing in classrooms, and which practices are culturally responsive to instruction. The researcher attempts to “capture the thinking of the participants from the participants’ perspectives” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

Fraenkel & Wallen refer to five general characteristics of qualitative studies, including natural setting, data collection in the form words or pictures, concern for the process as well as the product, data that is analyzed inductively, and the participants’ perspectives. This research was conducted in a natural setting and data was collected and inductively analyzed using the words or voices of the participants.

Stake (2010) outlined four major characteristics similar to those identified by Fraenkel & Wallen that describe qualitative research: 1) interpretive, 2) experiential, 3) situational, and 4) personalistic. The interpretive characteristic is described by Stake as keyed in on human affairs from different views, and researchers who are respectful to intuition and comfortable with multiple meanings. The research in this study is interpretive as it allows for various data collection methods.

The experiential characteristic is described as empirical and field-oriented with an emphasis on observations by participants that are focused on what is seen and not felt. This study is experiential because it analyzes only the data presented in the form of surveys, questionnaires, and transcriptions of student focus groups and teacher interviews. The interviews were conducted in the natural settings of the participants. The analysis of the data took place in a natural setting and relied heavily on the voices of the participants.

Qualitative research is situational when the orientation of objects and activities are embedded in a “unique set of contexts” (Stake, 2010). Research is situational when it is viewed from a holistic perspective, rich in context, and rarely highlights direct comparisons. This particular study is situational because it features two mini-cases bound into one large case. The intent was to gather the perceptions of the CRRI and Non-CRRI teachers and students involved in the process of writing. The aim was not to compare them and recommend the use of either of the classroom strategies, but to present the actual experiences to inform instructional writing practices.

Finally, this research is personalistic; it is empathetic towards understanding individual perceptions instead of commonalities, gauged to grasp individual points of view and the issues that they present. The qualitative researcher is the “main research instrument” (Stake, 2010, p.15) that analyzes the voices of individual students and teachers.

In order to understand and conceptualize the writing process in both classes, an instrumental case study approach is explored. This type of case study offers insight into a much larger goal (Frankel & Wallen, 2006), in this case, writing instruction for African American students within Clay USD. The intent was to gather perceptions of the process from students embedded in a “bounded system” (Creswell, 2007). The primary intent of this approach was to understand the perceptions of those involved in the process. A purposive homogeneous sampling was used to examine the common traits within those groups. Data was collected using student and teacher questionnaires, and classroom observations and interviews from directors of the EP in Clay USD.

The researcher also critically analyzed the character trait of voice in the writing pieces. While maintaining fidelity to CRRI, the holistic guide that measured voice aimed to measure what extent the students' identity and culture was maintained throughout the writing piece.

Stake wrote that “when qualitative study is done well, it is also likely to be well triangulated with key evidence assertions, and interpretations redundant” (Stake, 2010, p.16). Researchers who do qualitative studies have to be strategic in delivering unbiased interpretations that are balanced with enough information so that readers can make their own assumptions. Triangulated data offers that support. In this particular study, program information, questionnaires, interviews, and writing samples were gathered to illustrate the context of Clay USD. Teachers were questioned for insight into their teaching practices, students were questioned for their attitudes toward learning to write and on writing in general, and the quantitative data was used to explore the results of this process. Triangulation occurred as the results from all three aspects of the data were interactively analyzed. This process is described below.

### **Instrumental Case Study Description**

According to Stake (2010), there are three types of cases: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. An intrinsic case study is undertaken to understand a particular case or situation; the case “itself is of interest” (p.445). Stake describes the term “instrumental case study” which signifies a particular case or issue that is “examined to provide insight into an issue or redraw a generalization” (p. 445). The collective or multiple case study also tries to understand an issue in further depth, similar to an instrumental case study, however, the collective case study examines several cases in an effort to advance the understanding of a “large collection of cases” (p.446).

This particular case is an instrumental case study as it strives to understand and inform instructional practices in the area of writing for African American students. Situated in two mini-cases, this case study aims to comprehend the voices and perceptions of teachers and students in an effort to explain the various writing practices that occur in Clay USD. The study was established in a mixed methods design, with triangulation as the procedure employed for verification of evidence and a reduction of the likelihood of misinterpretation. This study is a mixed methods design as it employs multiple methods, or modes, of collection interactively for data interpretation and analysis (Stake, 2010, p. 125).

### **Triangulation Description**

As previously mentioned by Stake (2010), qualitative data is interpretive, experiential, situational, and personalistic. Many people who are qualitative in nature try to improve the way things work. This study was conducted in that method. In this case study the researcher intended to understand the context of four classrooms within a school district in an effort to “generate descriptions and situational interpretations of phenomena that the researcher can offer colleagues, students, and other for modifying their own understandings of phenomena” (Stake, 2010, p. 57).

Specifically in this study triangulation is employed through a mixed methods design to grasp the issue of writing in a large urban school district. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected through multiple instruments and analyzed to see if the findings validated each other. The modes of inquiry were then utilized to cross-check and verify meanings that emerged from the data. Qualitative data included surveys, questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews. The quantitative data collected derived from the scores of the student writing samples. The



analysis of the teacher interviews, student questionnaires, and the scored writing samples were components of the mixed methods designs.

Triangulation also is an appropriate method for examining CRRI; it provides several vehicles of understanding, a premise of CRRI which seeks to respect different cultures and learning styles in order to instruct students and fill in the gaps associated with leaning (Gay, 2000). The remainder of the chapter describes how these multiple modes of understanding were analyzed and interpreted. The quantitative portion of triangulation in this design is described in the following paragraphs.

### **Quantitative Approach**

A quantitative approach is used to explain the writing skills possessed by both groups. This quantitative approach is referred to by Frankel and Wallen (2006), as causal-comparative as “investigators attempt to determine the cause or consequences of differences that already exist between or among groups of individuals” (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006, p.370). Comparisons were made between the writing samples of the two mini-cases. Comparing the data from the two mini-cases was not intended to favor either instructional practice. The quantitative data was used to reinforce the other findings within the triangulation design.

Since this study attempts to explain two mini-cases using quantitative methods as support for the findings, the quantitative methodology was not used in the purest sense. This case examines only the context of four classrooms and not a large data set, therefore making it insufficient numerically to stand alone as quantitative research. However, despite the insufficient number of participants, this research is causal comparative in design due to there being no treatment to either of the classrooms (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). The quantitative data was used as the third angle of the triangle to better inform the instructional practices of writing.

Clay USD currently has several types of classroom instructional practices; the two explored by the researcher were the CRRRI English classroom and the general English classroom. One intention of this study was to understand any differences in writing for African American students in the CRRRI classrooms and African American students in Non-CRRRI classrooms. This study also examines attitudes toward writing from African American students in the CRRRI classrooms. In order to gather data on the attitudes of African American students from the CRRRI classrooms, focus groups were included as a method. Students were interviewed in small groups on their school campus. Since the study is comprised of a limited sample of African American students, Mexican American student data from questionnaires and student writing samples were included for both mini-cases in this study. A Kruskal-Wallis test was run to determine if there were any significant differences between the two races. Since this was not the case, the researcher determined that all of scores of the Mexican American students could be used for data.

To control certain variables in this research, these factors were matched: teachers' experience, age, grade level, and socio-economic status of students, and the ethnic composition of the school.

In the remainder of this chapter the researcher describes in detail the path by which the research was conducted within each phase. There were four total phases of the study, and prior to each phase a chart precedes the narrative of that phase.

## **Participants**

The participants were selected based on the recommendations of the English Mastery Program (EMP) Director, Clinay Campbell. The recommendations were determined by high the

number of African American students enrolled and the success of the implementation of the EP at that school. The CRRI classrooms had 84 (36 males and 48 females), 21 of these students were African American and 63 were Mexican American. There were 13 African American females in the classes and 8 African American males. The Non-CRRI classrooms had 57 students; 7 of these students were African American and 50 were Mexican American. There were 4 African American females and 3 African American males in the classes. All of these students ranged from 10-12 years of age.

Four teachers were involved in the study and the pairs are referred to as Mini-Case #1 and Mini-Case #2. Mini-Case #1 represents the teachers trained in CRRI who work at Lincoln Middle School, a pseudonym for the actual school name. Mini-Case #2 were teachers from Ibrahim Comprehensive School, Ibrahim is a pseudonym for the other school site involved. Both mini-cases are described below.

**Mini-Case #1.** This particular case was comprised of two teachers who were trained in the EP program. Lincoln Middle school has an enrollment of 1293 students ranging from 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and 26 % of the student population is African American and 73% are Mexican American. Ms. Washington (a pseudonym), has taught in the classroom for 27 years, and in the EP program since its inception. The second teacher from Lincoln Middle School is Ms. Abraham (a pseudonym). She was EMP trained and has worked as an EMP teacher for over 5 years, and has been teaching in the classroom for 12 years.

**Mini-Case #2.** This mini-case is comprised of two teachers who were not trained in the EMP program. Ibrahim Comprehensive has an enrollment of 2975 students ranging from kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grade; 18% of the student population is African American and 80% are

Mexican American. Ms. Bluejay, (a pseudonym), has taught in the classroom for 27 years. She has been in the teaching profession for 12 years. The second teacher from Ibrahim Comprehensive is Mr. Cardinal, (a pseudonym) who has worked in the education system for over 10 years and has been teaching in the classroom for 7 years.

For the remainder of this chapter the researcher depicts in detail the path by which the research was conducted within each phase. Table 4 displays the four total phases of the study; prior to each phase a chart precedes the narrative of that phase.

**Table 4. Four Phases of Study**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Phase 1: Preparation</b>	<b>Phase 2: Data Collection</b>	<b>Phase 3: Rater Training and Calibration</b>	<b>Phase 4: Analysis and Discussion</b>
<b>Research goals</b>	Develop and distribute research data collection tools	Collect Questionnaires, Surveys, and Host Interviews	Meet with raters to train and calibrate	Analyze data from writing samples, questionnaires and interviews
<b>Events</b>	Research tools developed and distributed  Research Instruments Described  Distribution of Data Collection Tools  Prepared Rater Training Documents and scheduled Dates for Training	Teacher and Student Interview Process Described  Document collection Described	Rater Descriptions  Forms Involved in Process  Training #1 Described  Overview of Study  Recording of scores  Calibration of “Primary Trait” rubric  Sample Scoring Session A  Sample Scoring Session B  Training #2 Described  Overview of Study  Recording of Scores  Calibration of “Primary Trait” rubric  Sample Scoring Session A  Sample Scoring Session B	Data Verification: Triangulation Described  Entering and Running Tests on Writing Scores  Analyzing and Interpreting Responses  -Analyze and interpret student questionnaires for themes  -Analyze and interpret teacher questionnaires for themes  - Analyze and interpret student focus groups  -Analyze and interpret teacher interviews for themes  - Analyze director’s questionnaire  Write Chapter 4: Results section of findings  Write Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications of study

This table demonstrates the procedures used to carry out the study. Each of the phases was significant in creating, collecting, and analyzing data.

## Phases of Study

The following chart, Table 5, is a synopsis of Phase 1. It is situated to provide a narrowed point a reference of the first stage of this investigation. This section describes the preparation of this case study.

**Table 5- Overview of Phase 1**

Category	Phase 1: Preparation
<b>Research Goals</b>	Develop and distribute research data collection tools
<b>Events</b>	Research tools developed and distributed Research Instruments Described Distribution of Data Collection Tools Prepared Rater Training Documents and scheduled Dates for Training

In the following narrative, the specific steps of the phase are described.

**Phase 1: Preparation.** During Phase 1, the main objectives were to develop all of the necessary documents needed to collect data and distribute them to the teachers involved. Several types of documents were created. Since the research questions aimed at finding out about the two types of mini-cases, instruments were created that could collect as much data as possible. The documents used are described in the following paragraphs. The other goal of this phase was to make appointments with teachers from the classrooms that would be used in the study. This process was guided and coordinated through the assistance of the EMP director of Clay USD. The director chose the two schools that would be most accessible and that would offer the most information to the researcher.

***Research instruments described.*** The research instruments in this qualitative study were used to collect a comprehensive snapshot of the teaching of writing in four classrooms. This task required the researcher to develop several tools: teacher surveys, teacher interview questions, teacher check-off list, student questionnaires, student interview questions, student questionnaire response template, writing calibration procedures, calibration template, reader/rater training agendas, reader/rater packets, Primary Trait scoring guides and voice scoring guides, Voice rubrics, and primary trait rubrics.

***Teacher surveys.*** Teacher surveys were used to discern general knowledge about each teacher. This survey also collected the thoughts of the teachers on the preparation and the teaching of writing. There were seven questions on the survey and all of them related to the instruction for writing.

***Teacher interview questions.*** The present study asked the teacher three general questions about the teaching of writing and its significance. Whereas the teacher survey really sought to understand the actual time preparation behind the teaching of writing, this tool was designed to be more specific about writing instruction for struggling students, and also to support multiple literacies in the classroom. Writing training and enjoyable moments while teaching writing were discussed.

***Teacher check-off list.*** The teacher check off list was designed to assist teachers in organization of the data and the documents needed. It listed what the researcher needed from the teacher and what was required from the students. Since the director of EP was agreed to pick up the documents from the teachers, this check-off sheet assisted in making sure all of the documents were present prior to the pick up. The Teacher check-off list also highlighted the procedures for teachers to code student writing samples and questionnaires.

***Student questionnaires.*** This tool was used to question the students about their thoughts and feelings toward writing. It consisted of seven questions ranging from their challenges in writing to their successful moments. The questions were designed to situate students as writers, providing them with a way to think about writing before the interviews.

***Student interview questions.*** In an attempt to triangulate students' thoughts and feelings toward writing, these students were asked to verbally share their feelings. Within the nature of culturally responsive instruction, students are allowed the opportunity to share their thoughts in more than one way. This interview was their oral chance to voice their opinions through three overarching questions.

***Student questionnaire response template.*** This template was created as a four-square design to collect answers to each student question on the student questionnaire by gender and race. It was designed to collect these answers by teacher; for example, each teacher has a response template for question #1. Creating this type of document allows for the researcher to view all of the responses to the same questions at once.

***Writing calibration procedures.*** This document was created to be distributed to the reader/raters during training. The researcher did not assume that all teachers involved were experienced enough to calibrate without guidance. This document guided the process. It listed the steps of the process beginning with the reading of the writing samples. This document was used as a frame of reference during the training of the reader/raters.

***Calibration template.*** This calibration template was the chart used to record the scores of the writing sample during the calibration process. These documents allowed the researcher and the raters to record and observe their scores that were gathered during the training and scoring



process of calibration. Once the samples were scored with 80% accuracy, it was determined that the raters were then calibrated.

***Reader/rater training agendas.*** These agendas outlined what would happen during the trainings for the raters. It served as a reference to explain the study, the scoring procedures, bias, expectations, and recording the scores.

***Reader/rater packets.*** These packets included the necessary documents the raters would need to participate in the writing calibration process. Included in the packet were consent forms for the raters, agendas, scoring guides, calibration procedures, calibration templates, writing samples, and “Teaching to Reach All Learners Matrix.”

***Teaching to reach all learners matrix.*** This document was distributed to the raters as a method that measures their culturally responsiveness.

***Director questions.*** This document was created to bring wholeness to the study by seeking the insight of the leader using ten reflective questions about writing, instruction, program direction, and the journey of the program over the last twenty years.

***Primary trait/narrative rubric.*** This was a six point “narrative rubric” used to score the writing samples of the students using numeric values to correspond to the quality of writing presented in the student samples with “1” the lowest score and “6” the highest. There were six categories on the rubric: Focus, Elaboration, Organization, Conventions, and Integration This rubric is a general rubric used by the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association.

***Voice scoring rubric.*** This instrument was used to examine the student voice in the writing. By using a six point scale, this rubric assigned a numeric value to various personal traits found throughout the writing samples with “1” the lowest score and “6” the highest.

*Primary trait and voice scoring guides.* These documents were created by the researcher to collect the actual scores assigned by the raters. It is a three column sheet that has a column for each rater's score and a third column for the master rater if there was a discrepancy in scoring between the two raters. This document was used to input the scores into an Excel spreadsheet. Six of them were created for each stack of writing samples.

### **Writing Assessments**

Writing assessments have been generally scored subjectively in the past until certain types of general scoring guides became useful and economical. Commonly referred to as "holistic scoring" and "primary trait" scoring by researchers like Vacc (1989) and Hendrickson, (1980) this research utilizes two. As described by Hout, there are three traits for the assessment of writing: primary, analytic, and holistic (1990). The two used in this research were the primary trait, and a voice rubric.

Hendrickson (1980) posits: "Primary trait procedures identify specific aspects of writing, ranging from mechanical grammar and punctuation to variables reflecting the exercise's logical organization, form or creativity." Since primary trait scoring tracks one or more traits of the actual writing task, this study uses Rubric #2, which measures the elements of the genre. Primary trait scoring, similar to holistic scoring guides, simply assigns a numeric value to a writing piece based on the overall quality of the writing (Hendrickson, 1980; Hout, 1990). These scores can be assigned numerical values from "1" to "6." Writing samples that possess very few, if any mistakes, receive the higher scores.

Primary trait scoring looks specifically at the genre of writing and assesses how well the writer met the purpose for the writing assignment or prompt. For example, if the writing task

asked a student to write a narrative essay, the primary trait scoring guide scores how well the students wrote the narrative. The execution of the written narrative is scored as opposed to the writing in general. A narrative must have character development, therefore the scoring guide of a narrative assesses how well the character was developed and described.

Voice assessments are also a type of scoring guide used to assess writing. A voice assessment scoring guide examines how well the writer communicates identity by writing using numerical values from “1” to “6.” Since identity preservation is a key element in CRRI, assessing voice is a necessary. Voice assessments measure elements such as word choice and creative expressions in the writing. This type of assessment can be used with most genres of writing, but is frequently used for the “persuasion genre,” “narrative genre,” and “response to literature,” genres in writing. Voice assessments are used to score narrative essays in this study. The use of scoring guides is described in Phase 3.

**Distribution of data collection tools.** Once the data collection tools were created and packaged by the teacher, the researcher delivered them to the director for distribution via email. The director delivered the materials to the schools. At this point in the research the dates were discussed for pick up based on the needs and time constraints of the schools. A two-week time frame was established.

**Prepared rater training dates.** The next portion of the study established the rater/ reader dates and made connections with interested parties. Phone calls, texts, and emails were sent in regard to dates for the first training. After a week of planning the first date for training was set up.

The following chart, Table 6, is a synopsis of Phase 2. It is situated to provide a narrow point a reference of the second stage of this investigation. This section is dedicated to the data collection of this study.

**Table 6- Overview of Phase 2**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Phase 2: Data Collection</b>
<b>Research Goals</b>	Collect Questionnaires, Surveys, and Host Interviews
<b>Events</b>	Teacher and Student Interview Process Described Document collection Described

In the following narrative, the specific steps of the phase are described.

### **Phase 2: Data Collection**

The purpose of Phase 2 was to collect all of the documents and the necessary data collection tools. The researcher made arrangements with the Clay USD director and scheduled appointments with the teachers to collect data and conduct interviews. Once these appointments were confirmed, the researcher sent the teachers the teacher check-off list. These lists were given to the teachers to ensure that all documents and needs were met prior to the visit. The scheduled appointments were arranged so that the researcher could gather together all of the teacher surveys and student questionnaires. Upon arrival at the sites, the researcher met with the teachers and discussed interview locations and the items on the check-off list. Once all of the items were collected, interviews were held.

**Teacher and student interview process described.** The first school the researcher visited was Washington Middle School. Because teachers were in staff development for the day, the researcher met with students first from both classes in small focus groups separated by gender in a small empty classroom. Ms. Washington's students were interviewed first, and then Ms. Abraham's students. After meeting with students and recording them on an audio recorder,

the researcher met with teachers to collect their data and interview them. These interviews were recorded as well. In between the interviews with Ms. Washington and Ms. Abraham, the researcher was permitted to record part of the staff meeting with the principal and other teachers. The interactions and interview conversations are analyzed in Chapter 4.

The second school visited was Ibrahim Comprehensive School. This time the researcher met with Mr. Cardinal prior to meeting the students. After confirming the teacher check-off list, the interview was held and questions were asked from the teacher interview questions. The interview was recorded as students finished an assignment. Once the interview was completed, the students were directed to stop working and listen to the researcher. The researcher asked the questions from the student interview questions in focus groups and used an audio recorder to collect their conversations.

In the second classroom, Ms. Bluejay had students complete a research project when the researcher arrived. The teacher and the researcher completed the teacher check-off list together and then she prepared the students for the interview process by making an announcement. Since the students were completing their writing on computers, the teacher instructed them to save their work and shut down their computers. The teacher gave the researcher permission to ask the questions to the whole class. The students answered questions aloud while the researcher recorded their responses. During the interview, the teacher reminded the students to refer to a writing train above the whiteboard.

**CRRI African American focus group participants.** To understand the attitudes of African American students in the CRRI classes, they were interviewed in a focus group in a natural setting. This focus group was comprised of 21 African American students from the ages

of 11-12. This was the only focus group in the study. All focus group data, emanated from this group of African American students.

**Document collection described.** Once the researcher finished the interviews and the collection of data, and there was a meeting held with the director to package all of the documents by teachers and by the school. Each teacher was assigned a large envelope and all of the collected documents were placed in their respected envelopes. Once the teachers collected all of their materials, these envelopes were grouped by school. In this manner the researcher could code and separate the data by gender and race. This process was completed by the researcher.

The requirements of the University of Redlands Institutional Review Board were taken into full consideration when this research was conducted. Therefore, written consent was received from the teachers involved and maximum steps were taken to ensure the protection of the identity of all participants.

Student writing responses were organized by teacher. As the researcher counted the sample from each teacher, a colored sticker was placed on each writing sample. Each teacher had a specific color assigned to them. There were four colors, one for each teacher. Ms. Washington was assigned the pink stickers, Ms. Abraham was assigned orange, Mr. Cardinal was assigned green, and Ms. Bluejay was assigned yellow.

Once each student writing samples had a sticker, the samples were put into six stacks. Six stacks were needed in order to manage the scoring of the 141 writing samples. Since each stack had to be read by two readers for each rubric, the number had to be tangible. The researcher collected and distributed the writing samples in six different piles or stacks one at a time. After one teacher had a sample in each pile, then another teacher had six of their samples assigned to the six piles.

This process was repeated until all of the samples from all teachers were distributed into the six piles.

The next step of coding involved the researcher assigning the stacks a number “1” through “6” on a sticky note. After the stacks were given numbers, the actual writing samples had a number written on their stickers. For example, in “Stack 1” the first writing sample was labeled “001” and this continued through “024.” There were 24-25 samples per stack, so on the outside of the Writing Sample folders, the numbers of the enclosed writing samples were written just in case a sample got misplaced. For example, “Stack 1” had a label that read “Stack #1:001-024.” “Stack #2” had a label that read “Stack 2:025-049.” The “Stack #3” label read “Stack #3: 50-73.” The “Stack #4” label read “Stack #4: 74-97.” The “Stack #5” read “Stack #5: 98-121.” The “Stack #6” label read “Stack #6:122-145.”

After all of the samples were numbered and placed in their respectful folders. To keep track of each of the samples, the primary scoring guide and the voice rubric scoring guide was placed in each folder. Once they were placed in the folders, the researcher wrote the actual numbers from the corresponding writing samples on the scoring guides. This was done to provide tracking in case one of the samples was misplaced. For instance, the primary trait scoring guide for “Stack #1” had “001-024” written in the right column to verify the samples. This coding was done to all of the samples to ensure that the raters would not have any biases while reading and recording writing sample scores. All the raters could see the actual stickers and race and gender codes, but the researcher did not tell the raters what the codes signified on the samples. The rating of these samples and the recording of the scores are explained in Phase #3.

An Excel spreadsheet was created to record the final writing scores. The spreadsheet contained all of the variables of the specified data, such as entries for the student codes, Primary Trait Scoring, Voice Assessment, Gender, and Ethnicity for each student. The researcher recorded all of the scores from the writing samples and all of the variables described into this spreadsheet. This process is explained in detail in Phase 3.

The following chart, Table 7, is a synopsis of Phase 3. It is situated to provide a visual reference of the third stage of this investigation. The table describes the steps involved in the training and calibration of the raters.

**Table 7- Overview of Phase 3**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Phase 3: Rater Training and Calibration</b>
<b>Research Goals</b>	Meet with raters to train and calibrate writing samples
<b>Events</b>	Rater Descriptions Forms Involved in Process Training #1 Described Overview of Study Calibration Process Recording of scores Calibration of Primary Trait rubric Sample Scoring Session A Sample Scoring Session B Training #2 Described Overview of Study Recording of Scores Calibration of Primary Trait rubric Sample Scoring Session A



	Sample Scoring Session B
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This table outlines the procedures of the rater training and calibration.

### **Phase 3: Rater and Calibration Training**

The purpose of Phase 3 was twofold. The first objective was to train rater/readers on scoring the writing samples using the chosen scoring guides. The second goal for phase 3 was to calibrate their scoring. This process protects the reliability of the data and offers numerical insight to the case study. Done as a means of triangulating, or checking data, the researcher wanted to capture a picture of the writing skills of the students who belong to each mini-case and write about the journey of scoring writing as a group.

During the calibration process of this research, raters established a baseline of what was expected for each score on the scoring guide. The purpose of calibration is to outline the rationale for assigning a numeric score to sample writing and is necessary in order to justify scoring from various raters. Using a model from the NAEP (2007), illustrates the importance of utilizing samples that reflect “low, moderate, and high performance levels to establish a basis of the training” (p.55).

Raters often come with different strengths and backgrounds, and in an effort to measure the success of a program, it was necessary for raters to use a similar assessment process. If this process is avoided, the scoring of the samples may not be consistent. Inconsistency complicates the data analysis and the interpretation of the data. Calibration is mandatory to maintain consistency and expectations when scoring. It was completed over the course of four meetings, and throughout this process readers were trained by the researcher to read, score, and report using the scoring guides.

**Rater descriptions.** Raters were chosen by the researcher; they assessed and assigned numeric value to the writing samples using holistic primary trait rubrics and voice assessments. Raters were teachers credentialed by the state of California to teach, and had at least five years of experience in grading writing samples. These teachers were chosen because of their expertise in assessing student writing at the middle school level. There were eight raters throughout the process.

**Forms involved in process.** Several forms were involved while training the raters: training agenda, calibration template, primary trait scoring guide, voice scoring guide, calibration procedures, reader/rater consent forms, and the “Teaching to Reach All Learners Matrix” primary trait and voice rubric.

**Training #1 described.** The first session included describing the study, discussing the expectations of the raters, and familiarizing the raters with the two scoring guides and the recording documents that were used to rate the writing. This session also concentrated on the teachers, and the teacher-researcher reached a consensus on the numerical values placed on the scoring guides. The following steps were completed:

**Overview of Study.** Once the raters arrived, manila folders with all of the training forms enclosed were handed to them. The overview of the study and the agenda were the first two documents in the folder. The first item on the agenda was to understand the rationale of the study. This overview of the study was listed first on the “Training #1 Agenda” page in two paragraphs. The researcher felt this was important in order to explain the context of their assistance in rating the writing samples. The researcher described the contents of the folders and then waited for the raters to complete the “Rater/Reader Consent” form and the “Teaching to Reach All Learners” form. Once they completed the documents, the researcher explained the

study. When the overview was completed the researcher moved to the next item on the agenda, the calibration process.

*Calibration process described.* The calibration process was discussed using the “Writing Calibration Procedures” form in their folders. This document outlined the basic procedures needed to calibrate writing. The researcher reviewed the steps needed to complete the cycle of calibration.

Bias was discussed next as it relates to writing. This topic needed to be discussed as it laid out what the possible biases of the raters could be as they read writing samples. Some of the raters shared that handwriting, paragraph structure, spelling, grammar, and the appearance of the writing can influence bias. A consensus was drawn about the spelling and grammar. If the writing had too many grammatical or spelling errors and influenced the readability of the sample, then the raters were to mark low scores in the “Conventions” section. Once it was established that the content of the writing was the focus, the next item on the agenda was the calibration process.

The first step discussed was the understanding of the primary trait scoring guide in the folders. This was accomplished by having conversations about the individual categories on the rubric. Questions that were asked had to do with clarifying if students had to answer the entire prompt or if scoring be completed with the student only answering parts of the prompt. Once clarification was made about students answering the entire prompt, another question surfaced about two categories on the scoring guide. The two sections that needed further clarification were “Organization” and “Integration.” Using a consensus it was decided that “Integration” gave a numerical value to answering all of the parts of a narrative, and integrating all of the other

categories on the scoring guide. The “Organization” category on the rubric addressed the structure of the narrative writing.

Once these clarifications were made, raters were given numbers to record their personal scores. Their first writing samples were identified as Demo A in their folders. These sample writings were gathered by the researcher from several classroom teachers currently working at the same site as the researcher. These samples were copied and the names were removed from the samples. Raters had to read the writing demo and score it using the rubric, and record the score on the “Calibration Template” next to their respective numbers. For example, rater #2 only wrote responses on line #2 of the “Calibration Template.” They told were not to share their scores until everyone was finished. After every reader completed scoring, a discussion was held about each reader’s score. There were some inconsistencies in the scoring. A consensus was reached after everyone voiced their opinions and agreed upon a set score, and that score was placed in the “My Score” column on the template. This score was the final score. Demo B was located in the folder and readers were instructed to follow the same procedures, score individually, record it by their corresponding number on the template, and wait for others to finish. After the scoring of Demo A, the consistency among raters with Demo B was closer. There was very little discussion among raters about the scoring differences. Raters who scored differently than the majority quickly recognized their mistakes and then agreed with the majority. This process was done for a third time using Demo C to clarify the expectations. This time there was 100% consistency in scoring.

The next step in this process was the actual calibration of the scores. The idea behind calibration is to have readers agree on the scoring with 80% accuracy. Once an accuracy of 80%, or 4 out of 5 is reached, calibration is achieved. Using the model from the NAEP Writing

Framework (2007) illustrated the importance of utilizing samples that reflect “low, moderate, and high performance levels to establish a basis of the training” (p. 55).

***Calibration of “Primary Trait” rubric.*** The primary trait, or what is commonly referred to as the genre rubric, was the first to be scored. The writing prompt required students to write autobiographical narratives; therefore the primary trait rubric was a narrative rubric. Raters were given five different narrative writing samples in their folders to score individually and record on the “Calibration Template.” The same procedures used in the training of scoring were used in the calibration of the primary trait scoring. Readers were given time to score and share results. The results of the first five samples scored were with 100% accuracy, so no further calibration was needed. Readers were then ready to score on their own using the actual samples gathered from Clay USD.

***Recording of scores.*** Scoring the actual writing samples was different; raters had to read the same stack of samples together and record the scores on the “Primary Trait Scoring Guide” in the folders. There were three columns on the scoring guide: Rater #1, Rater #2, and Final Score. The raters in each pair were either Rater 1 or Rater 2. This was important because raters had to write their scores for the actual sample in the columns that pertained to their assigned number. If there was a discrepancy between the scores, the researcher, or the master rater, would read the sample and decide which score it would receive. This score was written in the third column. If there had been a constant difference in scoring the master rater would have retrained the reader, however, this did not occur. In addition, scorers were assigned to a colored rubric. For example, Rater #1 was given a pink narrative rubric and Rater #2 was given a yellow narrative rubric. This process was done to distinguish the rubrics in the folders and to easily manage the documents.

*Sample scoring session A.* During Scoring Session A, readers scored three stacks using the Primary Trait Scoring Guide. This session was completed during the second half of the day of Training #1. Readers read and recorded the scores of these samples on the guide. Readers wrote the score of the writing sample next to the code on the scoring guide. In this way readers could alternate samples once they finished them. For example, Rater #1 would read sample 024 from stack #1. Then they would write the coded sample number on the actual rubric. Using the rubric, they would come up with an average score from all of the categories. This number would be written and circled at the top of the rubric. Then the reader would record that number next to the code on the scoring guide. Then the second scorer would switch samples and score the same sample and record their score on the scoring guide. Each sample was read and scored twice using different colored rubrics.

The actual names of the readers were written on the outside of the folders in order to track who read what samples. This ensured the inter-rater reliability for the second scoring using the voice rubric. Scored rubrics were kept in the corresponding folders of the samples. Once the stack was complete it held several items: scoring guide, writing samples, and two sets of scored rubrics (one set per reader).

*Sample scoring session B.* During Session B, readers were given the last two stacks to score using the Primary Trait Scoring Guide. The identical procedures were followed as in Session A.

**Training #2 described.** Training #2 of this study was centered on the training of the voice rubric. Since two new readers were involved, the entire process described in Training #1 had to be repeated. The overview of the study had to be reviewed and the procedures involved in the recording of the scores had to be briefly revisited. The previously trained raters explained the

process to the newly trained raters. The only section of the process that had to be explicitly guided was the use of the voice rubric and the discussion that established a consensus.

*Calibration of voice rubric.* This process did not take as much time as the first training because the process was essentially the same. The voice rubric was comprised of six boxes ranging from “1” to “6” and within these boxes were the descriptions that clarified finding voice in a piece of writing. The more detailed and explicit the voice, the higher the corresponding number found in the square. Specifically, to receive a score of a “6” the writing sample had to have been written in a very personal style by the student. Prior to the voice scoring of these writing samples, the researcher took out the actual Primary Trait Scoring Guide. This way there would be no influence on the voice scoring rubric. Another factor in the scoring process of these samples was the readers who rated them. Readers did not read the same stack a second time, as this could influence their scoring using the second rubric. In other words, if a rater had already scored Stack #1, they could not score that stack again. This method established confidence and reliability in the data.

*Sample scoring session A.* During Scoring Session A, readers scored three stacks using the Voice Scoring Guide. Readers read and recorded the scores of these samples on the guide. Readers wrote the score of the writing sample next to the code on the scoring guide. Therefore, readers could alternate samples once they finished them. For example, Rater #1 would read sample 112 from stack #5. Then they would write the coded sample number on the actual rubric. Using the rubric, they would come up with a score. This number would be written and circled at the top of the rubric. Then the reader would record that number next to the code on the scoring guide. Then the second scorer would switch samples and score the same sample and record their

score on the scoring guide. Each sample was read and scored twice using different colored rubrics.

The actual names of the readers were written on the outside of the folders in order to track who had read what samples. Once the stack was complete it held several items: scoring guide, writing samples, four colored sets of scored rubrics (one set per reader).

**Sample scoring session B.** During Session B, readers were given the last two stacks to score using the Voice Trait Scoring Guide and the voice rubric. The same procedures were followed as in Session A. This session completed the actual scoring of all of the writing samples and the final stage in the data collection.

This phase was significant in that it provided experiential knowledge on the calibration process of scoring writing, and eliminated any bias associated with the researcher scoring the writing. This phase also described the necessary process in the area of writing. In Phase 4, the last phase of the study, there is an explanation of how all the data was analyzed.

**Phase 4: Analysis and Discussion**

The following chart, Table 8, is a synopsis of Phase 4. This section discusses the analysis of this study.

**Table 8- Overview of Phase 4**

Category	Phase 4: Analysis and Discussion
<b>Research Goals</b>	Analyze data from writing samples, questionnaires and interview
<b>Events</b>	Data Verification: Triangulation Described Entering Data and Analyze the Writing Scores Analyzing and Interpreting Responses -Analyze and interpret student questionnaires for themes -Analyze and interpret teacher questionnaires for themes - Analyze and interpret student focus groups -Analyze and interpret teacher interviews for themes - Analyze director’s questionnaire



In the following narrative, the specific steps of the phase are described.

#### **Phase 4: Analysis and Discussion**

In this final stage of the research, the researcher describes the methods used in analyzing all of the data collected. This qualitative instrumental case study was designed to understand the process with teachers and African American students while experiencing writing instruction in Clay USD. Several methods were employed to interpret the collected data. To grasp the complete process, the researcher used questionnaires, interviews, writing samples, surveys, and documents. The researcher used triangulation as a means of building confidence and reliability in the evidence. The following paragraphs explain how the data was interpreted.

**Data verification.** Triangulation is used in this study by the researcher to “get meanings straight; to be more confident that the evidence is good, to develop various habits called ‘triangulation’” (Stake, 2010, p.122). This research strives to gather evidence from various data collection forms and use them interactively, often called mixed methods, to build confidence in the interpretation. Triangulation in this study is defined as rechecking the evidence, and examining the differences to see multiple meanings. Mixing the methods increases the level of confidence in research (Stake, 2010) making the interpretation of these multiple forms of data credibly work together. This particular study used the mixed methods approach to increase the confidence in this research. The multiple tools used interchangeably were questionnaires, interviews, surveys, writing samples, and various documents and publications from Clay USD.

The interviews were completed after the written responses in an effort to clarify meaning from the questionnaires and the survey. The student interviews were completed after the questionnaires had been completed so that they could clarify or further explain their feelings about writing. Interviews held with the teachers and students were completed at the school site. The interview questions were available for participants to view prior to the actual interview.

Teachers and students were informed that the interview was audio recorded for accuracy. Students were interviewed in a focus group based on the students who returned the consent forms. Teachers were interviewed individually.

**Analyzing and interpreting responses.** Analyzing and interpreting data from this case study can inform readers of how Clay USD works in terms of teaching writing as seen through the eyes of students and teachers. In order to capture this image in full, the responses from the interviews and questionnaires were analyzed and coded for themes and then synthesized for meaning. These methods were used to answer all of the research questions.

Teacher interviews, the director's questionnaire, and African American student focus group data was analyzed repeatedly until themes and ideas emerged. To start, interviews and focus group audio recordings were transcribed. After the transcriptions were complete, the data was thoroughly read for themes, issues, or topics. As the issues or themes began to emerge, they were recorded by the researcher. Then the researcher read the data again sorting the information into the categories provided. These categories were entered as "nodes" in the NVIVO 9 program, software used to analyze qualitative data, for additional classifying.

Once the categories were entered into the NVIVO 9 program, the researcher added quotes from the participants in the categories established by the nodes. The coding was emergent and the themes identified informed further data collection. The coding categories were "progressively focused" (Stake, 2010), and were refined as the research questions posited new meanings. Data that was already coded had to be recoded several times to "zoom in on targets" (p. 129). As a result of triangulation, the researcher employed mixed methods of data collection and solicited another researcher as another set of eyes to assist in describing and interpreting the findings. The

mixed methods included: the director's questionnaire, teacher surveys, teacher interviews, student questionnaires, student focus groups, and student writing samples.

**Teacher surveys.** The teacher surveys were used primarily to gather information about the individual educators and their backgrounds in the teaching of writing. Therefore, the answers from these surveys established a profile for the teachers. Using a four quadrant model in a word processing program, the researcher simply typed the information from the surveys of each teacher. The two CRRI teacher responses were placed at the top of the document and the Non-CRRI teacher responses were written into the bottom two quadrants.

**Teacher interviews.** The following steps explain how teacher interviews were analyzed and interpreted.

1. Interviews were transcribed and printed.
2. The researcher read the transcripts of each mini-case. Mini-Case #1 was read first.
3. After reading the interviews several times, notes were recorded.
4. After reading the transcripts three times, the notes from each teacher in the mini- case were compared for similarities. The researcher was not simply looking for comments or words that teachers had in common, but the underlying themes or concerns that they shared, and these comments were synthesized for meaning.
5. Using these meanings, themes were created.
6. The researcher inserted the themes into the NVIVO 9 program using nodes. Then the researcher coded the themes/nodes by different colors.
7. The transcriptions were downloaded onto the program into a "teacher project" folder.
8. Using theme assigned colors, the researcher was able to code the transcriptions every time that node/theme was noticed, and sort the comment into a space with that theme.

9. Once this step was completed the researcher was then able to print the citations according to the theme.
10. Using these comments, the researcher was able to read the citations using “progressive focusing” to zoom in on the targeted meaning.

The researcher was then able to extract these examples from the research and place them in a separate document. This process, or “pulling out” method, allowed the researcher to clarify or analyze evidence found from several teachers (Stake, 2010, p.134).

**Director questionnaire.** The director’s perspective provided an overview of the district and knowledge of the district on a macro research level. The questionnaire also provided information from a macro perspective. To analyze the questionnaire data, the researcher continued to read the director’s questionnaire searching for commonalities and patterns. The data was further coded according to the emerging patterns and the thoughts from the director that pertained to the research questions. The researcher’s aim in analyzing the perspective of the director was to provide a context of the district regarding the status of the district. Several themes were extracted from the director’s questionnaire and placed in a separate word document.

**Student focus groups.** Although qualitative data analysis can have various steps, the three central components rely heavily on “coding the data,” “combining the codes into themes,” and finally, displaying the data in such a way that easily lends itself to a “visual understanding” (Cresswell, 2007). This research does not deviate from these overarching elements. Essentially, this stage of the research involves the disaggregation of the responses from the students. In terms of coding, the themes or common threads are highlighted and noted using the NVIVO 9 program. Student Focus groups were analyzed using the same procedures used for teacher interviews.

1. Interviews were transcribed and printed.
2. The researcher read the transcripts of each mini-case. Mini-Case #1 was read first.
3. After reading the interviews several times, notes were recorded.
4. After reading the transcripts three times the notes from each teacher in the mini- case were compared for similarities. The researcher was not simply looking for comments or words that teachers had in common, but underlying themes or concerns that they shared, and these comments were synthesized for meaning.
5. Using these meanings, themes were created.
6. The researcher inserted the themes into the NVIVO 9 program using nodes. Then the researcher coded the themes/nodes by color.
7. The transcriptions were downloaded onto the program into a “student project” folder.
8. Using themed assigned colors, the researcher was able to code the transcriptions every time a node/theme was noticed, and sort the comment into a space with that theme.
9. Once this step was completed the researcher was then able to print the citations according to the theme.
10. Using these comments, the researcher was able to read the student responses using “progressive focusing” to zoom in on the targeted meaning.

Coding the actual samples assisted in analyzing the data because the researcher focused on the themes or common responses that were shared throughout the questionnaire. Keeping in mind that the focus of this study is to understand the perception of the writing experience, not the student experience in general, therefore, attention was given to the responses that describe those writing experiences. Sorting the responses by themes or categories, such as what was expected to emerge and what was interesting, allowed the researcher to then compare those experiences of

the students. In this case, the researcher tried to establish the common perceptions of writing in an effort to inform writing instruction for African American students. There were three African American focus groups: Ms. Washington's group of boys was focus group #1, Ms. Washington's group of girls was focus group #2, and Ms. Abraham's group of boys and girls was focus group #3.

**Student questionnaires.** Student questionnaires were first analyzed by teacher and then by individual questions on a four quadrant template. Using the "Student Questionnaire Response Template" the researcher recorded student responses in the respected quadrant. There were four quadrants on the template: African American and Mexican American, and male and female. There were seven questions on the student questionnaire; therefore there were seven templates per teacher.

1. The researcher read each teacher's set of questionnaires in isolation to maintain validity in recording the answers. For Ms. Washington's class, the researcher read all of the responses for question #1 and recorded the information in the corresponding quadrant for the corresponding student. The entire response from each question was not recorded, just a selected phrase from the response. If several students had similar responses, then tally marks were noted to quantify how many times similar thoughts emerged.
2. Once all of the students' responses were recorded for each class, the researcher typed the results in the same template that was used to collect the data.
3. Using these typed templates as a guide, common patterns were coded with a highlighter. There were four ideas or concerns that students commented on: writing, the writing process, challenges, and successes.

4. Using these emerging themes, the researcher classified and typed the themes separately in a word processing program for each mini-case.
5. Then the researcher typed the related responses directly from the student questionnaires into the document underneath the corresponding category for each mini-case.
6. Using these responses, the researcher interpreted the comments, sorted for patterns, and for overall positive or negative tones.
7. The recognizable patterns and interpretations were then synthesized for meaning.

### **Entering and Analyzing the Writing Scores**

This process took place in three steps: organizing the data, recording the data, and analyzing the data. The following narrative describes these steps in detail.

**Organizing the data.** Using the scoring guides and the actual writing samples, the data was entered into a spreadsheet. The individual writing samples were pulled out of the folders, and according to the gender and race code on the writing sample, the researcher wrote this data next to the code. For example, on the scoring guide it only listed the “Student Code” and the “Official Score.” To the right of the code, the researcher wrote the gender and race and to the left of the code, and the researcher wrote in the color of the sticker from the sample. This information was located on the actual writing sample. Then the researcher went back through each scoring guide and highlighted all of the data according to the color of the stickers. Then the researcher went through each scoring guide and entered all of the scores highlighted with “pink.” A similar pattern was done for the “orange” class. Finally, the data was entered for the “green” and “yellow” scores. In this fashion, the researcher did not have to process the scoring guides or the samples while analyzing the data. They were entered by color, which represents the teacher,

gender, race, and each score. The researcher periodically cross-checked the Excel sheet with the actual scoring guide and the actual writing sample to ensure the data was being entered properly.

**Recording the data.** The writing samples were sorted back into classes according to the colored labels situated on the top of the writing samples. Once they were in their respected classes, the race, gender, identifying codes and actual scores for both the primary trait and the scoring guide was checked a second time by referencing the rubric, the scoring guide, and the writing sample. Finally, all of the data was entered into a spreadsheet and transferred into SPSS for analysis.

**Analyzing the data.** The goal of the research was to unveil the voices of teachers and students in Clay USD in order to inform writing practices for African American students. To understand these perspectives, several measures were explored. Teacher interviews and student focus groups had to be recorded, transcribed, and interpreted. The last measure that was examined was the student writing samples. Using these writing samples scores provided a clear picture of the instructional writing practice cycle within the CRRI and Non-CRRI classroom. Teachers imparted knowledge, and taught the content and materials, while students learned. Using students' writing samples determined how the information transferred to the students' writing. These writing samples were previously scored using a team of raters and were analyzed using several tests, a statistical means assessment, and the Kruskal-Wallis test (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008).

The Kruskal-Wallis is a non-parametric independent group comparison that makes no assumptions about the distribution of data. It is a distribution free test normally used to compare three or more independent groups. Since the students' writing samples were not randomly assigned, the non-parametric assessment was run. This assessment did not posit any assumptions



about the distribution. Ultimately, these tests were run to understand the scores of the CRRI classes in comparison to the Non-CRRI classes. Five tests were run using the SPSS Quantitative Analysis Program, and analyzed in several categories:

- 1) Race (Black and Mexican American)
- 2) CRRI classes and Non-CRRI classes
- 3) Ms. Washington and Ms. Abraham
- 4) Ms. Bluejay and Mr. Cardinal
- 5) Overall Mean Score Analysis

Due to the small number of African American students, the first test run was the Kruskal-Wallis test. This test was run to verify that there were no differences between Black students and Mexican American students. Since there were no significant differences, a second Kruskal-Wallis test was run to examine any differences between the CRRI classrooms (treatment) and the Non-CRRI classrooms (control). According to this test, there was a significant difference, so a Statistical Means Test was run to understand the difference. Once this test was run, the researcher sought to learn if there were any differences within the mini-cases. As a result of these differences within both mini-cases, statistical means tests were run to examine the differences. Finally a statistical means assessment was run with all teachers to understand, draw conclusions, and clarify the entire picture presented in the case.

### **Role of Researcher**

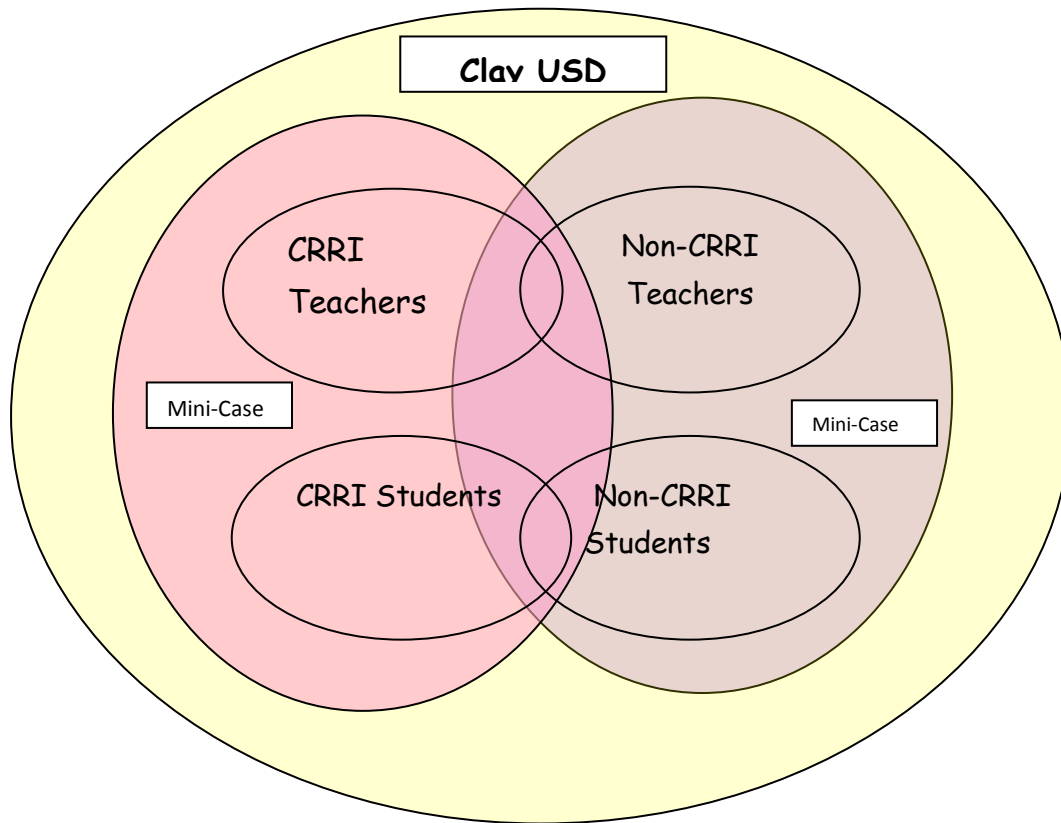
The lens of the researcher is critical in this study because the researcher serves as an instrument (Stake, 2010). As an instrument, the researcher employed experiential knowledge and CRRI to operationally explain the occurrences within the two mini-cases. Data collected from teachers and students was synthesized to develop and extract prevailing themes. After microanalyzing and interpreting these themes, (Stake, 2010) the researcher offered assertions.

Based on these assertions, the researcher generated instructional strategies to close the achievement gap for African American students.

### **Summary**

The goal of this research is to provide the education field and the Clay Unified School district English Program with a substantial reflection on writing for African American students. This study also seeks to reveal the feelings and attitudes of teachers and students involved in the writing process. A qualitative and quantitative approach was appropriate to fully understand this process in an effort to add to scholarly research in the area of writing. Interviews, questionnaires, and writing samples were used as the data collection instruments. Triangulation of the data from teachers, students, and student writing samples was used to verify data and provide solid research. Since CRRI benefits all learners, and there were no significant differences between African American and Mexican American students, the study includes data from both races. This research was utilized as an effort to develop educational opportunities for African American students.

As a strategy for understanding this journey of inquiry regarding writing in Clay USD, a Venn diagram was created. This organizer is used as a guide to understanding the following research findings. See Figure 3 below.

**Figure 3. Complex Venn Diagram of Clay USD Case**

**This Venn diagram is a visual representation of Clay USD as a large case, inclusive of the two mini-cases.**

In an effort to understand the data presented from the Clay USD Case Study, the following chapter presents the findings by the participants: the director, teachers, students, and also writing samples. The director's perspective sets the context for the data. The teachers, students, and the writing samples provide the triangulated data that is needed to completely understand this case. The responses from the teachers, the first leg of the triangle, provide insight for research questions #1 and #2:

1. What can we learn from educators who have been formally English Mastery Program (EMP) trained specific to teaching writing? To what extent does Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction (CRRRI) influence the teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward teaching writing?
2. What can we learn from educators who have not been formally English Mastery Program (EMP) trained specific to teaching writing?

The students and the analysis of the student writing scores provided responses for research questions #3 and #4:

3. What can we learn from students who have been taught by teachers who have been formally English Mastery Program (EMP) trained specific to writing? To what extent does Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction (CRRRI) influence the students' writing skills and attitudes toward writing?
4. What can we learn from the students who have been taught by teachers who have not been formally English Mastery Program (EMP) trained specific to writing? To what extent does their teacher influence the students' writing skills and attitudes toward writing?

### **Chapter 4: Findings**

This chapter presents the results of the data from an instrumental case study that was designed to explore the experiences of four teachers in the Clay Urban School District. The researcher outlined the data collection and analysis process using Stake's (2010) qualitative methodology in the previous chapter. This research explores "cases and narratives on how things work" (Stake, p. 40), and presents the data in an "effort to generate descriptions and situational interpretations of phenomena that the researcher can offer colleagues, students, and others for modifying their own understandings of phenomena" (Stake, 2010, p. 57). The study addresses learning about the educational practices of four classrooms in an effort to inform the praxis of teaching writing in a large urban school district with consideration for instruction that is culturally relevant and responsive for particular students.

Four teachers were chosen and grouped in two mini-cases, Mini-Case #1 and Mini-Case #2. Mini-Case #1 describes the experiences of two teachers who were trained in CRRI and the pupils enrolled in those classrooms. Mini-Case #2 describes the experiences of two teachers who were not formally trained to use CRRI strategies and the students enrolled in their classes. To provide an in-depth understanding of how these data sets are situated as one case study, a Venn diagram of Clay Urban School District was introduced in Chapter 3 (Figure 3).

For the overarching case study, data was collected via two mini-cases, and data from each mini-case was paired in like categories for analysis. In other words, teachers in Mini-Case #1 were presented with teacher data from Mini-Case #2. Likewise, pupil data was presented together. The researcher chose this style of organization in response to the research questions and for reader clarity. Thematic categories were established through what Stake refers to as "progressive focusing" as described in Chapter 3. From these initial themes, data was entered

into NVIVO 9 and further sorted. The following data represents these emerging themes from teachers and students.

Triangulation methodology aims to improve the quality of the evidence; therefore, these research findings were positioned to emphasize the three vantage points: teachers, students, and student writing samples. Positing the findings from these three angles offered the responses needed to answer the research questions in this study. To answer research questions (RQ) #1 and #2, findings from CRRI and Non-CRRI teachers were presented first.

RQ#1: What can we learn from educators who have been formally English Mastery Program (EMP) trained specific to teaching writing? To what extent does Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction (CRRI) influence the teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward teaching writing?

RQ#2: What can we learn from educators who have not been formally English Mastery Program (EMP) trained specific to teaching writing?

Sequentially, to partially answer research questions #3 and #4, about students' attitudes towards writing, student data was presented.

RQ#3: What can we learn from students who have been taught by teachers who have been formally English Mastery Program (EMP) trained specific to writing? To what extent does Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction (CRRI) influence students' writing skills and attitudes toward writing?

RQ#4: What can we learn from students who have been taught by teachers who have not been formally English Mastery Program (EMP) trained specific to writing? To what extent does their teacher influence students' writing skills and attitudes toward writing?

Further, to expand on the latter segment of questions #3 and #4 regarding students' skills, the writing data was presented. Figure 4 displays the triangulated data described in this study.

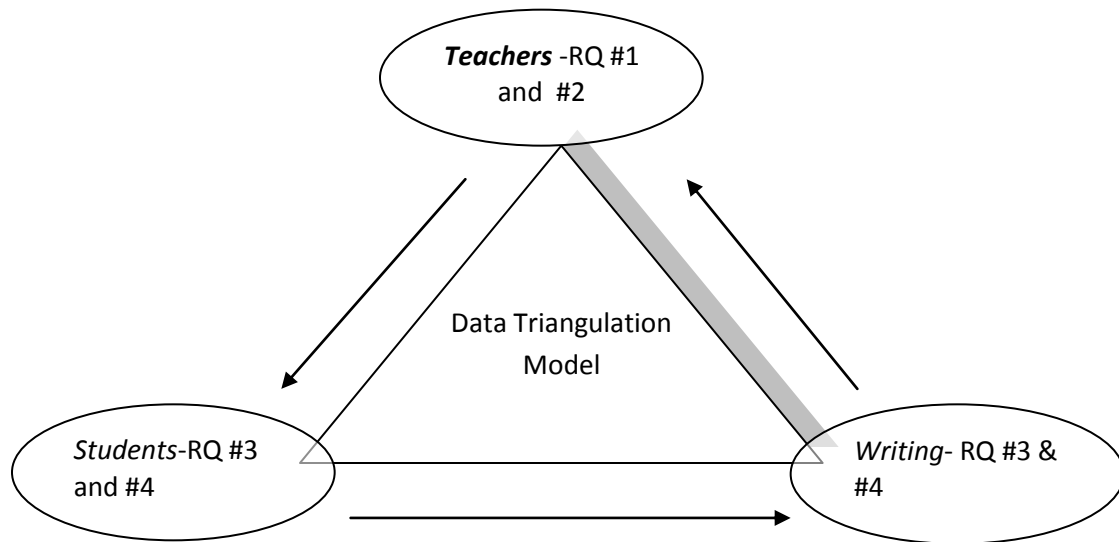
**Figure 4. Data Triangulation Model**

Figure 4 can be referred to as a visual model of how the data is presented in this study. Teachers as facilitators were responsible for imparting the writing knowledge to the students, and students absorbed the instruction and produced writing reflective of learning. Accompanying this data is the foundational background of the Clay USD. To contextually situate this data presented through triangulation, a closer introspection was conveyed from the director of the English Program. Although the information extracted from the director's data is not presented in this model, the analysis of that data was fundamental in establishing the context of the study. Thus, this data was presented first. Following the director's data were the three points of triangulation: teachers, students, and student writing samples.

### **General Findings**

*Setting the Context:* EMP Director, Dr. Clinay Campbell, is the EMP coordinator in Clay School Urban School District and is responsible for the daily operations of the program and the budget allocations for the school, the facilitator of the bi-monthly meetings with principals, and

also plans the agenda for the monthly meetings with teachers and parents. According to Dr. Campbell, the EMP program has proven successful over the twenty years it has been effective in Clay USD. However, the two major issues that affect the program today are the budget and a lack of support. In recent years, the California state budget has impacted the funding of the program. Since the budget has affected EMP, the program has decreased its services, Dr. Campbell stated:

By 2005, EMP expanded to serve 78 elementary and middle schools in Clay USD and by 2009; it serviced 80 elementary and secondary schools. Due to a change in how Clay USD distributed Title I funds, the EMP budget was drastically cut so that it now only provides direct services to 45 schools.

Dr. Campbell expressed concern about the budget as it relates to the success of the program and reported that because of minimum support, the program is in jeopardy. She stated that even the support offered to the individual school sites has been downsized from 21 District Support Personnel to 3 support liaisons. These support liaisons are responsible for training and monitoring the program, developing the monthly conferences, the 3-day Fall seminar, and the weekend professional development conference.

When asked about the future of the program, she said, "It is already understaffed and underfunded; subsequently, the future does not look very promising with more budget cuts expected to occur in 2011-2012." This highlights the fragile future of the EMP program, and demonstrates the uncertainty of the future. Despite the budget cuts and lack of financial support given to the program through the district, Dr. Campbell continues to believe in the program. She said:

Yes, [there has been success with African American students] because the English Mastery Program (EMP) is a comprehensive, research-based program designed to address the acquisition of school language, literacy and learning through culturally responsive pedagogy. When you look at the test scores throughout the years, there is a



definite trend of increase in the writing and reading scores of children who have participated in English Mastery Program at schools that have implemented the program with fidelity.

Even though the EMP program has proven successful with African American students within this district as evidenced by increased test scores in reading and writing, concern about equitable financial and physical support continues to exist. Dr. Campbell stated:

I am proud of the fact that the Program has lasted twenty years despite the overt and covert political agenda concerning the educational progress of English Learners only. It is a sad state of affairs when those in charge of educating all children and leaving none behind do not put the needs of those most in need first. Equity education should be a “both” and not an “either/or” when it comes to ensuring academic success culturally and linguistically diverse students. Adults need to leave their “adult” agenda behind and put the “student” agenda first.

Dr. Campbell expressed concern about the issues facing the EMP program. In light of their proven success with African American students, the program is in jeopardy. Dr. Campbell believes the current status of the program is due to the emphasis placed on English Learners. In essence, the program was historically established to increase the success of African American students, but the current status of financial and physical support demonstrates otherwise.

To understand the data through triangulation, the subsequent sections are outlined: teachers, students, and writing samples. Primarily, teachers have the most significant role in writing instruction in the classroom; consequently, data from teachers is presented first. Within the teacher category are the findings of the data gathered from questionnaires and interviews. After sorting and coding all of the statements made by the teachers during their interviews, two major properties that describe this category emerged: instructional practices and desired outcomes. Within the property of instructional practices three main themes or attributes emerged: planning and preparation, instructional delivery, and student support. Table 9 demonstrates a

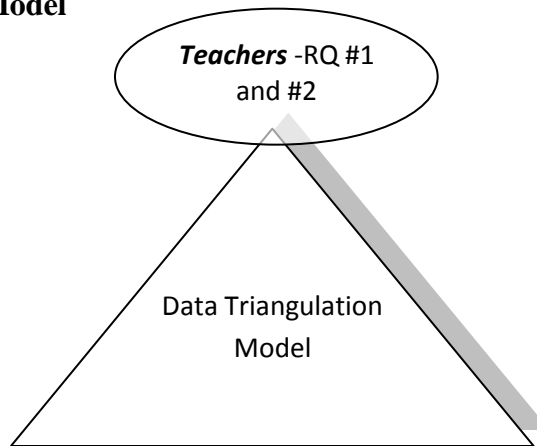
model that compares findings for teachers and is represented in the following chart. The responses by the CRRI teachers are paired with the responses by the Non-CRRI teachers.

**Table 9 Teacher Chart of Findings**

Teachers	CRRI Experiences RQ#1	Non-CRRI Experiences (RQ#2)
<b>Instructional Practices</b>		
<i>Planning and preparation</i>	Writing as empowerment and communication tool  Aware race is a socially constructed identity and capitalized on writing  Teacher envisioned and set high expectations  Create content and curriculum to match learner  Allowed creativity and expression that embraces	Writing as a tool of communication  Culture and race are silenced  Standards based learning  Content and curriculum was based on standards  Content and curriculum was relevant to students in general
<i>Instructional delivery</i>	Learning is scaffolded, yet rigorous and relative  Cultural literature, student learning style, and student interest	Learning is scaffolded  Teaching content is more important than teaching child
<i>Student support</i>	“Contrastive analysis” of home language to Academic English  Differentiated instruction, collaboration deliberate & strategic  Encouraging global possibilities  Feedback is crucial	Group work was practiced  Journaling to improve writing

<p><b>Desired Outcomes</b></p> <p><i>Student options/Structured writing</i></p> <p><i>Excellence in Standard English/ Success on district assessments</i></p> <p><i>Maximize student potential/ Individual student success</i></p>	<p>Competent writers fully confident and proficient in using English language</p> <p>Empowered by own word Writing sets stage for endless possibilities and propels them to be college bound and the “White House”</p>	<p>Structured writing</p> <p>Writing designed to demonstrate knowledge</p> <p>Student/individual success</p>
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**Figure 4.1 Triangulation Model**



**1<sup>st</sup> Point of Triangulation: Teachers**

**Mini-case #1: CRRI-Teachers**

The first category, teachers, was comprised of two Mini-Cases. There were two teachers in Mini-Case #1. Both teachers were trained in the school district English Mastery Program, and they both taught at the same school. The following narrative describes each of the teacher’s

responses that were reported on the teacher survey. The data from the teacher survey established a profile of the teachers and the descriptions of their writing instruction.

Ms. Washington, an African American woman, has been a teacher for 27 years and firmly asserted that writing is a bridge to success. She spends two or three days in preparation for writing assignments. According to the survey, Ms. Washington “almost always” provides feedback, and three to five days are spent on writing instruction in her classroom. Ms. Washington stated that three exposures are needed for students to write to mastery. Further, modeling is frequently demonstrated in her teaching. Students are given frequent opportunities for shared/peer writing. She said that “writing is the most important communication skill, but the most difficult.” Ms. Washington also shared that low achievement in writing is due to lack of organizational structure and student preparation. For Ms. Washington, mastering academic English is a vehicle for students to preserve and share their cultural identity:

We have stories to tell and our language is as good as anybody else’s but we must master Standard English so we can score high on our exams, so that we can be able to fit into whatever area of society we find ourselves in, whether it is in the neighborhood or whether it is in the White House.- Ms. Washington, 2011.

The second teacher in Mini-Case #1 is Ms. Abraham, an African American who has taught for 12 years. She spends two or three days in preparation for writing assignments. She “almost always” provides feedback, and three to five days are spent on writing instruction in her classroom. Ms. Abraham stated that four or more exposures are needed for students to write to mastery, and modeling is always demonstrated in her teaching. Students are always given opportunities for shared/peer writing. Ms. Abraham also said that low achievement in writing is due to teacher training and instruction, lack of organizational structure, and a lack of student interest in writing. In Ms. Abraham’s class students write in their journals every day. Like Ms.

Washington, Ms. Abraham ascertains that mastery of Standard English prepares students for life. She said, “You just start where you are. I am trying to do this global model, we need to be able to really compete in the society, I want our kids to the point where they are college bound” [Ms. Abraham 11/10, p.3].

### **Thematic Outcomes**

Teachers in this study revealed instructional practices that shaped their teaching of writing. From the transcripts of their interviews, three major ideas related to writing instruction emerged: (1) planning and preparation, (2) instructional delivery, and (3) student support.

**Instructional practice 1: Planning and preparation.** The data from the teachers’ comments encompassed their motives behind planning and delivering the material in particular sequences. One of the teachers, Ms. Washington, mentioned what inspires her when she plans her writing instruction. Ms. Washington said, “I believe overall, that the most rewarding experience is when they leave the room knowing that they are writers and that they are readers and not to let anybody take that away from them” [Ms. Washington-11/10, p. 3]. Her writing instruction situates writing as a tool of empowerment for the students as well as a tool of communication. Because our educational system is centered on “standardization,” most teachers are focused on the standard or the act of writing, Ms. Washington begins with the knowledge of writing as a liberatory and empowerment tool, and teaches writing with a keen sense of awareness that race and culture should be developed and magnified through their writing. Her encouragement in the merging of cultural identity and writing creates endless possibilities instead of limitations. She asserts:

Our goal and our vision [is] that our children will be able to master Standard English. So in order to do that you have to be great and serious about reading and writing from our heart it also comes from our experiences, places we have been. Just to know that as people of color we are often told that we can’t write and that our words are not valuable,

we have bad English, or you know we speak two mixed up languages or some broken English or whatever. They [students] just need to know that's not true that we have stories to tell and our language is as good as anybody else's. [Ms.Washington-11/10, p. 3].

This statement implies that even though she has high expectations, Ms. Washington creates space for students to be involved with their learning through student options. Ms. Washington's classroom schedule is rigorous with high demands and expectations. As a counter-balance, students are offered choices within the writing process thereby contributing to their learning through the decisions they make. Teachers coexist in the classroom setting as facilitators of learning. However, the responsibility for learning is with the student as well as the teacher. Offering students choices corresponds with CRRI Tenets 3 and 4 as instruction and environment must be inclusive of the learner. Gay (2000) asserts, "Teachers are demanding, but facilitative, supportive and accessible" (p.48). This is a very different notion than teaching to the curriculum or teaching to pass a standardized test. In Ms. Washington's CRRI class, students are capable of meeting high expectations, actively participate in learning, and pass standardized assessments.

Ms. Washington adds:

We try to do story a week, we try to do a novel every month, take home novel and we try to do a written piece with each of the four genres that are assessed for the performance assessment. So they have two or three chances to get their narrative pieces in, they have two or three options to get their expository piece in. [We ask them] are you going to do a research paper or are you going to do a how to paper, what are you going to do for expository and response to literature, which book are you going to write about?' [It] could be a speech that you write or it could be an essay...It's where we get different options, to show our expertise [Ms.Washington-11/10, p. 3].

Ms. Abraham, on the other hand, contributed to the planning and preparation section by sharing that structure is her greatest emphasis in writing. She detailed the building blocks of how to compose structured writing: "I spend a lot of time on writing structure. I start off with

paragraph structure, then sentence structure, you build vocabulary with different types of sentences.” Next, she further described the process she uses to teach students how to navigate between their home language and Academic English. She said, “Well I do a whole section on the writing process and then we get to editing, and revising and editing, we rely heavily on the contrastive analysis, for them to edit their own papers, from home language to main stream American English [Ms. Abraham-11/10. p. 1].

Her drive continues as she teaches students to think critically about the sources they find and the materials they use: “I try to show them proper usage of using the computer for research. As we were doing their articles, I was talking about resources and they mentioned Wikipedia. And I said, ‘Do you know that anyone can go on and write on one of those.’ So, I just try and connect them to some viable resources that they can use in their research” [Ms. Abraham-11/10.p1]. Thinking critically about the curriculum is grounded in CRRI, Tenet #3, which identifies the need to validate knowledge and empower students to become critically aware of their learning process.

In addition to teaching students to think critically about learning, Ms. Abraham included the choice of creative writing in the content and curriculum. Her approach addresses the idea of developing students’ identities as literate writers:

I am really interested in them developing their style in sixth grade, as well. So everything doesn’t look like an essay. Some [of] them might want to use humor and sarcasm, so we take a look at a lot of different forms of literature. We do a huge poetry unit, so that is one thing I focus on [Ms. Abraham-11/10. p 3].

Not once within the transcript of either teacher was the word “standard” used in reference to California State Standards, which led the researcher to affirm that teachers in the CRRI classes

reshape the prescribed curriculum to meet the needs of their learners. This is critical in the area of writing since writing is used as a mode of student expression, not as a “conforming to state standards” expression. Tenet #5 of CRRI echoes this notion that “content and curriculum must be age appropriate and meet the needs of all learners.”

**Instructional practice 2: Instructional delivery/** Mini-Case #1 teachers (CRRI trained) were explicit about the instructional sequences in their classrooms. Both educators emphasized the significance of (1) reading being interwoven with writing, (2) the importance of contrastive analysis during the process of writing, and (3) scaffolding on students’ culture and prior knowledge.

**Reading interwoven to writing.** As a result of the co-dependent relationship between reading and writing, CRRI teachers reiterated throughout their interviews the importance of reading multicultural literature to springboard writing lessons. Teachers found that modeling multicultural literature allows students to relate and identify content with themselves and their writing practices. Ms. Abraham said that she has to “stress the importance of reading and writing because they are so closely connected; to have success in one area, you really have to be able to do both [read and write]” [Ms. Abraham-11/10. p 1]. As a part of the teacher’s instructional delivery in writing, teachers voiced and consistently connected writing to reading.

**Importance of contrastive analysis.** In addition to utilizing literature to deliver writing, CRRI teachers also use *contrastive analysis* to “unpack” the students’ home language. Unpacking the students’ home language refers to code-switching and text-speak, the abbreviated language used for instant or text messaging. The need to unpack language during the process of writing occurs throughout the data. Employing contrastive analysis as a language strategy permits teachers and students to navigate between the use of the home language and Academic



English. Teachers deemed unpacking as a necessary delivery practice in writing due to the frequent use of texting and a student culture of social networking. CRRI teachers often spoke of teaching students the situational appropriateness of the home language and text-speak. Consistent with the CRRI teaching, teachers do not condemn the use of text-speak and misspelled words.

Ms. Abraham said:

We do the contrastive analysis and then also using cultural pieces really help[s] to engage students who don't normally like to write so that is a good tool to use as well...I noticed that I have to do a lot of redirecting when it comes to spelling because the whole texting era and everything like that. We use that as teachable moments [and] we use a lot of technology in the classroom [Ms. Abraham-11/10. p 1].

Congruent with the sixth tenet of CRRI, contrastive analysis encourages students to bring their home language and multiple identities into the classroom without fear of ridicule. Through contrastive analysis, teachers model the translation of the home language into Standard English. Students taught in both of these classrooms were empowered by this skill as it allowed them to proudly claim all of their socio-cultural identities while transferring them into their writing.

**Scaffolding on student culture and prior knowledge.** Another key finding from the data was the “start where they are” mentality from teachers. CRRI teachers demonstrate an understanding of student strengths (Morrison, et al 2008) as a building block of learning. In other words, teachers emphasize the importance of scaffolding new learning onto the students’ culture and prior knowledge. The remarks of the students were consistent with the assertions of the teachers:

I like how she makes writing easy because she gives us “do nows” and she gives makes us do essays that are fun and they're understandable. And she also explains writing. And she makes it easy like if we don't understand it she makes another way to understand it. She has lots of ways to let us learn the understanding of writing and everything that you need to know. She makes it easier. [Abraham Focus Group, 11/10, p. 4]

In accordance with CRRI training, teachers utilize the students' cultural or interest driven "funds of knowledge" as a scaffolding strategy. Ms. Washington further supports the notion of scaffolding school learning with the prior knowledge of children:

They got to find what they like and what they are interested in. I had a student once she had really high score in sixth grade, but by the time she got to eighth, she was endangered of not even graduating. Her teacher told me that she couldn't write. She wasn't writing and there were some papers [she hadn't] turned in. So I asked them if I could work with her and the parent, and the principal said, "Yes, you can try to help her get these last papers in. Because if she didn't get them done, she wouldn't graduate." We went to a quiet room and I remembered how much she loved her dogs, so I asked her to talk into the tape recorder about her dogs. So that is part of our tradition, that oral tradition. She started telling me the whole story and this and that, so then when she finished telling all of these stories about her dogs, I said, take the tape and begin to write out what you were talking about. Put it in Standard English, put it in paragraphs. And when we finish that stage, we can rewrite it. And that[s] just how you do it, start with where you are and make it better [Ms. Washington-11/10, p. 3].

Unlike the inequitable practice of excluding the home language and cultural knowledge that is seen in public schools today, scaffolding on prior knowledge offers a very different instructional delivery method. CRT insists that present-day education offers only standardized curriculum and standardized assessments based on state standards (Sleeter, 2005), which perpetuates the status quo. Conversely, through CRRI, teachers in this study apply a child-centered learning based on the validation and empowerment of the socio-cultural student as a whole child. Standardization is the opposite of CRRI.

**Instructional practice 3: Student support.** CRRI teachers emphasize the importance of student support as a key issue to students' success in their classrooms. Student support was highlighted in terms of individual support and collaborative group support.

**Individual support.** Individual writing support was given to students on an as-needed basis through the teacher and a community of learning. Aligned with the teaching of CRRI, teachers offer individual support through a collaborative group as students are held responsible

for one another's learning that capitalizes on individual strengths and creating self-awareness.

Students are strategically placed in groups for deliberate results. These nurturing and inter-dependent cooperative environments create a sense of belonging and a means of support. Ms.

Abraham from the CRRI classroom said:

I wanted someone to be the artist or the talker. That's how I explain it to them but I want them to be able to work together and not just all the little black girls work here and I wanted them to have mixed groupings and not just heterogeneous groupings [Ms. Abraham-11/10. p 2].

A student from Ms. Abraham's CRRI classroom said:

We work together. She [the teacher] looks at our skills and then she chooses our partners...And she looks at what we specialize in. Then she looks at what the other people specializes in. Like what would make a better team and it would help. If I didn't know a part of a paragraph and she [the other student] did, she'd help and then if I knew something else and she [the other student] didn't, it's better [Ms. Abraham-11/10. p 2].

Through the instructional practice of student support, CRRI teachers encourage shared learning by holding students accountable to each other through collaborative groups. Within both CRRI classrooms, teachers and students described their roles and responsibilities in their groups. The instructional practice of student accountability is a different philosophy than just working with a partner.

In addition to communal student accountability, teachers in CRRI classrooms support students through written feedback on writing assignments along with one-on-one assistance. Ms. Abraham disclosed that previously she was unable to provide timely feedback on student writing assignments due to class size. However, her current class size is smaller which allows her to offer students the essential feedback that improves their writing. She said, "I can move faster, so the feedback is really crucial to help them improve with their writing" [Ms. Abraham-11/10. p 4].

Ms. Washington explained that, like Ms. Abraham, she too uses small groups and one-on-one instruction to support her struggling learners. She said:

So within the classroom, the way we intervene, is to group our students in terms of once we do the direct instruction, then students who need more one on one help, if they are sent to the centers or in smaller groups. That's when I can go and work one on one with um maybe the group that needs the extra support and then, if that is not providing the results I want then, there are pull out classes. First of all, they have to know that they can do it, 'cause by sixth grade they have been struggling for a while with reading and writing so there self esteem is gone, so a lot of times I used a lot of poetry 'cause poetry doesn't have to follow any rules and we can use that as a springboard to writing in other genres [Ms.Washington-11/10, p. 2].

The instructional practice of student support provided by Mini-Case #1 offers teachers the experiential insight into CRRI classroom practices which supports student writing.

Congruently, Tenet #4 of CRRI correlates to instructional the practices of student support as an emphasis is placed on students as community learners. Thereby, the CRRI instructional practices are congruent with CRRI Tenet #4 through the use of cooperative learning that motivates students via how teachers plan, teach, and support students. Educators who use an inclusive teaching perspective give every student in the classroom an opportunity to be accountable for the learning. Theoretically, if everyone is accountable for student achievement, failure is not an option.

The desired outcome was the second largest category evident from the teacher interviews. The comments from teachers persistently described the writing expectations of their classroom. Overall, instruction needs to meet the needs of the students so that students are empowered writers ready to meet the demands of a growing society. The CRRI teachers' desires fall into the following categories: (1) student options, (2) excellence in Standard English as an expectation, and (3) maximizing student potential.

**Desired outcomes: Student options.** This is a major concept that emerged from the data. Teachers believe that options enable students to express themselves through writing. Student options allow students to choose their topics and their individual mode of sharing their writing. With student options, pupils are given the freedom to choose to hand write assignments or utilize technology by typing their assignments.

In agreement with NCTE (2009), teachers from the CRRI mini-case understand the need for students to meet the challenge of writing for various purposes. As such, they assign writing task for many genres and for many purposes. Writing for varied purposes includes genre-based writing, academic essays, technical writing, and personal reflective writing. Within the classroom, CRRI teachers incorporate purposeful writing as well as reflective writing. Ms. Abraham submitted that she often allows students to engage in personal and reflective writing. She said, “Journaling is another area where they can freely write about what they want” [Ms. Abraham-11/10. p 2].

Teachers have found that the reflective practices of writing are useful for students to express themselves through their personal writings such as poetry, songs, and raps. When teachers provide students with the options of purposeful or reflective writing, the three dimensional dynamic of writing (personal, purposeful, and empowering) becomes relevant. Consistent with Tenet #7 of CRRI, purposeful and personal-reflective writing helps students to navigate their multiple identities: student, socio-cultural adolescent, artist, son, daughter, and writer. One of the major premises of CRRI is to create a community of learning and promote belonging while maintaining an individual voice. Accordingly, teachers in the study allow writing to serve as a tool to reveal the multiple selves. Ms. Abraham said:

In the past, when we had limited technology, I created something called a blog book, where the kids would create blog topics and answer each other’s blog in a journal. So it is

interactive journaling with the concept of blogging because we didn't have computers and they loved it they really like it, they got into it. They had blog IDs and they would go and sign-in and "this was my name" and it would be, "I like your topic, let me blog on your topic." It was always on some issue they studied, maybe like global warming and then they would form their opinions about it and form assertions and they were able to blog on each other's [blog sites] [Ms. Abraham-11/10. p 2].

Teachers repeatedly spoke of their writing showcase, the students' closing activity of the year. The desired outcome of this activity was to display their students to the school as writers.

Despite the public attention and pressure associated with the writing showcase, Ms. Washington maintained student choice by offering students multiple options. Ms. Washington said:

We take all different kinds, we mostly focus on poetry, but they can put in short stories, whatever they feel is their best piece and we like to produce a student- authored text for the end of the semesters and the end of the school year...we bind them and make little booklets [Ms.Washington-11/10, p. 4].

For Ms. Washington, the writing showcase was an equally exciting and anticipated event for teachers as it was for students. She said, "The most enjoyable experience is seeing the kids produce their anthology, they are looking for their best piece of writing" [Ms.Washington-11/10, p. 2].

The CRRRI teachers were actively engaged in producing the best quality of work from students while maintaining the authentic voices of their student writers. Teachers' expectations were evident as students were given a choice of genre and purpose for writing in addition to a choice in the packaging of the final product. Ms. Washington said:

When we give an assignment we try to give options in terms of how they show their proficiency, the culminating task. We want it written but if you want to write it you can put artwork with it, that's excellent. You can also put it in a PowerPoint. If you really want it up on the board it needs to be typed, because that proves that you are working with technology. In order to get it to the "4" or "3" stage, and to get it on the board, I will work with you. You are going to go through the writing process, your first draft, wonderful, you got the ideas on the paper, you wrote it with your heart, second draft

we're looking over it to see how we can make it better third draft, you may have typed something up at home, but is it really related to the rubric of a "3" or "4" so we are always trying to make it better [Ms.Washington-11/10, p. 2].

Taken as a whole, CRRI teachers who provide students with student options give pupils the freedom to choose to their topics, select their mode of presentation, and the genre used to showcase their work. This empowerment through student options meets the teachers' desired outcome so they can reach the best quality of their students' work through these student options.

*Desired outcomes: Excellence in Standard English as an expectation.* In addition to providing students with options, teachers felt that all students were capable of mastering the Standard English without losing their identity and use of the home language. As a result, teachers placed an emphasis on students' ability to discern the use of the home language and the ability to translate their language to Standard English. This was a non-negotiable expectation. Ms.

Washington said:

Practice, practice, practice. "Constant review is the students glue" is one of our little statements. Why are they so proficient in video games? Because they spend a lot of time working on the video game, so that is why they are so good at it. So it is the same concept when dealing with writing, the more they write the better they'll become in writing. The more they read the more proficient they will become and that is why I stress it. And that's why I want to make it important to the student, and it's gotta be done! [Ms.Washington-11/10, p. 2]

*Mastery of Standard English* is a tenet in the EP program and is evident within these two classrooms. This tenet was not specified within the CRRI tenets, but the activity of transference of language remains constant. Within CRRI Tenet #1, the overarching idea is to bridge the gap in learning between content and instructional practices through students' culture and language. For teachers to solidify students learning and the mastery of Standard English, CRRI teachers make connections between the students' culture and the home language, and the content and instruction. In doing so, the teachers intentionally teach students the appropriateness of the home

language versus the use of Standard English. The incorporation of the home language to mastering Standard English is best stated by Ms. Abraham: “We talk about style and writing poetry and how important it is to incorporate home language for emphasis and tone and all that...so it is not just one sided” [Ms. Abraham-11/10, p 1]. Teachers achieved this bridging through contrastive analysis, the process by which students “code-switch” their home language into Standard English. Incorporating the students’ home language validates students’ identities and simultaneously provides tools for student empowerment. Ms. Abraham said:

It is very important that they identify some of the features [of contrastive analysis], so that they know what to change...we are always trying to get them to master that mainstream American English. I use it [contrastive analysis] a lot when I teach editing and revision.

Ultimately, the teachers want to develop students as literate beings in society. Mastering Standard English is a strategy that accomplishes this goal. For them, the students’ ability to communicate and write in Standard English is considered the gatekeeper to societal possibilities. Perfecting the wordsmith craft was consistently emphasized by CRRI teachers. Ms. Washington said:

That is one of the goals of EMP, to make student s proficient in writing and the academic language. EMP focuses on using contrastive analysis, using culturally relevant literature having a technology center and having a listening center in your classroom. Within the listening center you are using culturally relevant books on tape or short vignettes or could even be a classic piece of writing that you want to use from the audio book. So, having those four major pillars help our students to master Standard English. That’s our goal and our vision that our children will be able to master Standard English. That’s what we are working toward. [Ms.Washington-11/10, p. 4].



The teachers' desire to preserve students' identities and home language is consistent with Tenet #6 of CRRI, as it embraces the multiple literacies and multiple identities of students. The next attribute expands on the untapped potential of students.

***Desired outcomes: Maximizing student potential and global belonging.*** The teachers' desire to maximize students' potential, and a sense of global belonging was a prominent desired outcome. The teachers emphasized the need for learning to read and write in Standard English as holding the potential to maximize students' lived experiences and their place in the world (global belonging). CRRI teachers articulated the importance of their belief that all students can learn. This particular construct has an overwhelming sense for students to reach beyond their community to attain greatness. Ms. Washington said:

I tell them every day, imagine all of these famous writers Sandra Cisneros, Gary Soto, Langston Hughes, all of these wonderful writers, and I tell them what if you started right now in sixth grade and you wrote a page a day and you kept working on that, by the time you got out of high school, you would have published books, you would be established as a writer and you would be on your way and you could do anything else you wanted to but you would already be an established writer. I tell them to interview their relatives when they go to Mexico, when they go to the south, interview those people take their stories take the family history and document and write it and keep it alive and pass it on there is their wealth right there...their culture, their history, their family members and their writing documentation [Ms.Washington-11/10, p. 4].

According to these teachers, reading and writing are the gatekeepers to the future, and teachers have the responsibility to create a canvas for students to see possibilities. Additionally, teachers believe that the mastery of the written English language can liberate students from their social conditions. The resounding tone of the interviews echoes beyond the cry for freedom from inequities to an exclamation of the teachers' overwhelming desire for students to attain unimaginable and unprecedented success. Ms. Washington said:

We must master Standard English so we can score high on our exams, so that we can be able to fit into whatever area of society we find ourselves in. Whether it is in the neighborhood or whether it is in the White House [Ms. Washington-11/10, p. 4].

Overall, there is an answer to RQ#1 which asks: “What can we learn from educators who have been formally English Mastery Program (EMP) trained specific to teaching writing? To what extent does Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction (CRRI) influence the teachers’ knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward teaching writing?” We can rely on the data shared from the CRRI teachers. Both CRRI teachers used writing as a multidimensional tool, a tool used for expression, maintaining identity, and a gatekeeper for success. High expectations were established while student options were included. Learning was a communal construct that included responsibility. Instructional practices inclusive of language and culture had a hierarchal position over standardization.

Along similar lines, analyzing data from Non-CRRI teachers prepared an answer to RQ #2: “What can we learn from educators who have not been formally English Mastery Program (EMP) trained specific to teaching writing?” In an effort to respond to this research question, the following narrative from Non-CRRI teachers who shared their voices and classroom instructional practices was prepared.

### ***Mini-case #2: Non-CRRI Teachers***

Mini-Case #2 teachers were in a different school within the same large urban school district as Mini-Case #1. Mr. Cardinal and Ms. Bluejay, who were not CRRI trained, comprised the non-CRRI teachers.

Ms. Bluejay, an African American woman, has been a teacher for 12 years. She believes that writing is an imperative skill for her students. As a result of this belief, she trained in the Jane Schaffer Writing Program, 6+1 Traits Writing, and the UCLA Writing Program. She spends

one week in preparation for writing assignments. She usually provides feedback to students, and more than two weeks are spent on writing instruction in her classroom. Ms. Bluejay said that students need four or more exposures in order to write to mastery. For her, modeling is always demonstrated through teaching. Students are always given the opportunity for shared/peer writing. She said:

I think writing is important. It is a way for students to express themselves, but not only to express themselves it is a tool to know if the students really understood the concepts or the standards you are trying to teach[Ms. Bluejay-12/10. p 1].

Ms. Bluejay shared her belief that low-achievement in writing is due to teacher training and instruction, teacher/student accountability, student preparation, and the lack of interest in writing. In Ms. Bluejay's class, students write in their journal every day. She shared her own feelings about writing:

I think as a teacher and writing, I wasn't a strong writer. I was verbally strong, but in writing I lacked many skills growing up so to have that, I felt like I had inadequacies myself, like I wasn't going to be a strong English teacher and it turned out through Jane Schaffer, I felt more comfortable and more sure of myself as I am teaching writing.[Ms. Bluejay-12/10. p 2].

Mr. Cardinal, a Mexican American male, has been a teacher for 10 years. For him, writing is an important skill to master. He said, "I believe writing is essential to the success of every student's academic career" [Mr. Cardinal-12/10. p 1]. He spends one to two hours in preparation for writing assignments. He usually provides feedback to students, and more than two weeks are spent on writing instruction in his classroom. Like Ms. Bluejay, Mr. Cardinal stated that four or more exposures are needed for students to write to mastery, and modeling is frequently demonstrated in his teaching. Students are frequently given opportunities for shared/peer writing. Mr. Cardinal also shared his belief that low-achievement in writing is due to teacher training and instruction, lack of organizational structure, and student preparation.

Both teachers shared their experiences about teaching writing and how they complete this task. Even though these teachers were not formally trained in CRRI, baseline elements of the theory resonated through their interviews. In particular, Tenet #3 Learning, Tenet #4 Instruction, and Tenet #5 Content and Curriculum, were slightly evident within the instructional sequences and following each category, the researcher explained the relationship between the data and the theory of culturally responsive and relevant instruction.

### **Thematic Outcomes**

Through the analysis of non-CRRI teachers the same two major properties emerged to describe this category: instructional practices and desired outcomes. Within instructional practices three main attributes were evident: (1) planning and preparation, (2) instructional delivery, and (3) student support within the property of instructional practices.

Both teachers in this mini-case stressed that their writing training in college did not prepare them to be effective teachers of writing. Teaching writing for them has been a journey of discovery. Most of the discovery process began while they were teacher assistants learning from the teacher they were assigned to assist. In this study, they shared their experiences about their journey in teaching writing and the help they received along the way:

I was a TA [teacher assistant] about 15 years ago...as a TA, the teacher taught me how to identify the different parts of Jane Schaffer [Jane Schaffer writing program]...she taught me all of the fundamental things about the program because I was working with the students...Then I became a teacher here at the school, and I continued to teach that way in my class, but I did not have formal training [Ms. Bluejay-12/10. p 2].

This emerging teacher of writing prevailed as the interviews continued. Both Mr. Cardinal and Ms. Bluejay shared that most of their writing training had been mastered on the job through the guidance of another educator. Mr. Cardinal said:

I base my experience through seeing other teachers. I was a TA before became a teacher I got most of my ideas and thoughts from them. I never really had any true training on writing or anything like that. Not that I remember, I am pretty sure I had some in college but that's been a long time. No, not any particular training that sent me to teach a particular way on how to teach writing. No, I never had anything like that. You learn as you go.... [Mr. Cardinal-12/10. p 2].

Situating his reality within a CRT framework, Mr. Cardinal's lack of training in writing instruction exemplifies the systemic practice of a culture neutral instruction that maintains the marginality and subordination of ethnic students.

**Instructional practices: Planning and preparation.** The two teachers in this mini-case called attention to the planning and preparedness of students for writing. These non-CRRI trained teachers stressed the significance of preparing students for state testing and meeting standards. Consistent with their focus on state testing in preparation, these teachers also focused on state testing as they planned activities for their students. Ms. Bluejay illustrates this emphasis on state testing:

So in my preparation, we are basically looking or breaking down each of the standards. We are looking at the academic language within the standard and having the kids understand what the standard is about is very important. Once I have taught them how to do that, we just break each individual part of the prompt down and eventually that's the way I teach that particular writing essay [Ms. Bluejay-12/10. p 1].

In Mr. Cardinal's planning and preparation of writing instruction, his goal was to use literature as a model representative of what he identifies as good writing. When prompted for his approach to struggling writers, Mr. Cardinal said:

[I help them] By using different techniques, by exposing them to different genres, make them see the differences and how to write different things. For instance, like in short stories, they have their own way of building suspense and having climax and falling action and their resolution. And its really short...they get those short stories a lot easier. Like if they are having problems a novel, I have them get chunks of those novels and compare them to a short story. So we try to do that.... [Mr. Cardinal-12/10. p.1].

These non-CRRI teachers emphasize planning for students through “scaffolding” and “chunking” the material. The term “chunking” describes a form of instruction where teachers present the lesson in segments, while scaffolding refers to building onto students’ existing knowledge. The teachers believe that their knowledge of writing instruction is ongoing and continues to improve with practice. The techniques of scaffolding and chunking relate to Tenet #3 in CRRI, which states that learning is shared between the teacher and students and based on what they already know. Teachers in this mini-case said they learn alongside their students. They did not mention building upon student’s cultures, multiple literacies, or multiple identities. The anchor for their instruction is based on achievement standards and state testing.

**Instructional practice: Instructional delivery.** Non-CRRI teachers deliver writing instruction similar to CRRI teachers in that both scaffold lessons for students’ comprehension, however some differences are evident. Non-CRRI instructional delivery centers around class achievement on the district-wide assessments. On the other hand, Ms. Bluejay’s approach resembles CRRI through her use of age appropriate literature. Ms. Bluejay said:

I take simple children’s books, like the true story of the three little pigs, a book by Martin T. called Pigsty, you know, you name it. Fairytales, simple children picture books to teach them how to write or to respond to literature I give them a writing prompt based on that particular small book. Because I took small books, I think that helped him, he was familiar with the stories it helped him understand the whole process of writing to the point where that student did very well on the actual periodic assessment that was given by the district [Ms. Bluejay-12/10. p 3].

Another description of the use of age-appropriate material was shared when Ms. Bluejay spoke of the Jane Schaffer writing program, and about Bart Simpson. Even though using a clip from “The Simpsons” was an attempt to strike interest with students, the students, as socio-cultural beings, were not asked to participate in the process. The goal of this type of writing

instruction is to formulate and standardize writing so that students understand and are comfortable with the writing process. The approach, however, doesn't allow students to be critically involved with their own learning. According to CRRI, writing assignments that lack student participation do not impact the student as a cultural being, thus the student is disconnected from the writing. Ms. Bluejay explains how she appeals to student interest while placing emphasis on assessment rather than soliciting participation:

I will teach the Jane Schaffer coding and I have a lesson called "Bart Simpson Taught Me How To Write," so that is a unit I teach for responding to literature. Basically, I take a clip from one of the episodes from "The Simpsons," and they have to critique the credibility or decide if the character, Ms. Kerbopel, Bart's fourth grade teacher, is a credible character, based on the evidence suggested in the actions. Not the whole episode, they are only watching a small clip of it and then they read a synopsis of the clip. Once that's done the students have to go in and find textual evidence to support what their thesis is and so, I teach a unit, but I use Jane Schaffer and the kids really come alive and instead of just reading from a text and answering a prompt, the students feel like there is not a question in their mind as to what they have to do when it comes down to the actual writing assessment then I find all the essays after that the students really do well. So I think the reading the clip, having scaffolding exercises that we are doing in class, using Jane Schaffer that writing program has caused my students to be very successful on that particular test [Ms. Bluejay-12/10. p 1].

Tenet #3 is based on the foundation of knowledge being shared between the teacher and their students. In this way, non-CRRI teachers in this study were culturally responsive by learning the writing process as they taught. Nevertheless, Tenet #3 declares that knowledge is validating and empowering, and requires students to become critically aware of their own process. Although Ms. Bluejay and Mr. Cardinal present students with rigorous writing activities, they do not meet the criteria for CRRI since they do not teach students to become critically aware of the writing, or solicit their participation.

**Instructional practices: Student support.** Teachers in Mini-Case #2 tried to assist their students in writing to the best of their abilities. Ms. Bluejay spoke of the Jane Schaffer program as a means of offering structure and support to her students,

I think it [writing training from Jane Schaffer] has helped my population of students... a lot of the students are able to benefit from the formula writing because it is so structured. A lot of kids that I have had difficulty writing in the past and when they were given this formula for doing analytical writing or essay writing the students have been successful in their writing. I am able to see mature writing [Ms. Bluejay-12/10. p 1].

In addition to the support provided by structured writing, Ms. Bluejay stressed the importance of grammar support through the use of daily oral language and everyday journal writing. Her concern with the new era of texting and technology and the effects on the way students respond in Standard English is as follows:

Unfortunately, what that [use of technology] translates to instead of their writing being written in correct English, they are writing text, AIMing, or whatever it is that they are doing. They tend to write in text language instead of them writing the proper way. We do a lot of typing, a lot of power points a lot of story books, so I am allowing them to do a lot of computers. When I was teaching metaphors or figurative language, I brought in different rap songs...and things like that...[things] that they hear on the TV and on the radio maybe on their Ipods, MP3s [Ms. Bluejay-12/10. p 2].

For Ms. Bluejay, text messaging and instant messaging interfere with learning how to write correctly. In contrast to the CRRI teachers, rather than incorporating the “funds of knowledge” as suggested by CRRI Tenet #4, the non-CRRI teachers do not teach students to code-switch or incorporate their home language or multiple literacies into their writing. In other words, the difference between the CRRI and non-CRRI teachers is the absence of bridging pre-existing knowledge and cultural identity to the content.

Mr. Cardinal provided student support through collaborative grouping. These groups were designed for communal learning and to hold students accountable. Unlike the CRRI groups,



Mr. Cardinal randomly assigned students to groups. The groups were not assembled according to student-strengths or other selection criteria. Mr. Cardinal said:

Pretty much everybody in the table has a job and it has to do with writing. One is in charge of the whole group, to speak for them. We call them the speaker. We also have a recorder who writes for the group. The other one is an assistant to them in those assignments. They also have other jobs. They pick up papers and bring information to the group. They work together as a group if I give them an assignment. We tend to have group assignments twice a week and they come up with answers on their own. I only facilitate. They come up with all the answers and it can be from taking Cornell notes from a textbook, having an assignment dealing with something in their anthology, or answering questions from the anthology textbook. And they'll answer those questions together as a group. Everybody giving their opinion and explanation, and then getting all that information and putting it in one paper and getting all of their ideas and putting them in one paper [Mr. Cardinal-12/10. p 1].

For struggling writers within this process, his response was:

When some kids are struggling, basically I start off with short stories because that is the easiest for them to understand especially when it comes to writing, they have difficulties in writing especially when it comes to this grade level, this is the biggest problem they have is writing...they must be able to construct a five paragraph essay and know structure [Mr. Cardinal-12/10. p 1].

In Mr. Cardinal's class, support comes from collaborative grouping and student accountability. Tenet #4 stresses the importance of student accountability with the inclusion of language and cultural practices. The non-CRRI teachers in the study differ from CRRI as pupil responsibility is not connected to students' identities or strengths. Non-CRRI teachers utilized some aspects of culturally responsive instruction by planning lessons based on student interests, supporting students through small groups, creating tasks that were of interest to the students, and instituting writing as a respected skill in the classroom. Nonetheless, the essential elements of CRRI (race, multiple literacies, and socio-cultural identity) were not included in student learning.

Like CRRRI teachers, the non-CRRRI teachers in Mini-Case #2 want students to be successful; the desired outcomes of student success include: (1) structured writing, (2) students scoring well on district writing assessments, and (3) individual student success.

**Desired Outcomes: Structured writing.** Writing was a key skill in non-CRRRI classrooms. When asked to identify their instructional writing goal they stated:

[Students must know] how to structure their paragraph properly. When I say that, I mean it needs to make sense because coming to me a lot of them are writing one huge paragraph, one continuous huge paragraph that doesn't have punctuation, they just forget all the rules in writing and they forget all the rules of grammar and mechanics. All of that they forget, so one of the main things I want them to make sure that they are able to do is, if they are given a prompt, and to respond to that prompt in a well written paragraph. At least a paragraph! [Ms. Bluejay-12/10. p 4].

According to Ms. Bluejay, mastering paragraph structure is imperative in the classroom. Mr. Cardinal was asked to describe his ultimate writing goal for students and he agreed with Ms. Bluejay. His response was students should be able to write with structure. Students were expected to demonstrate success in the structure and mechanics of writing. These two teachers were also in alignment when commenting about student success.

**Desired outcomes: Success on district writing assessments.**

In Mr. Cardinal's class, success is measured by individual student accomplishment. He says he finds joy in the growth of students. He stated:

A lot kids they tend to improve a lot, some stay kind of average. They don't increase as much but the ones that take more joy in it are the ones that start off really low and take big steps on their writing, but it is difficult with this group of kids...they are all at different levels so I don't have like a table like where all of them are at the same levels and they all move up at the same levels, so I don't see those type of increases. My increases are individual type increases, so my joy is individually [Mr. Cardinal-12/10. p.2].

**Desired outcomes: Individual student success.**

The teachers want the best for their students. The success of the students is important to them. Ms. Bluejay commented:

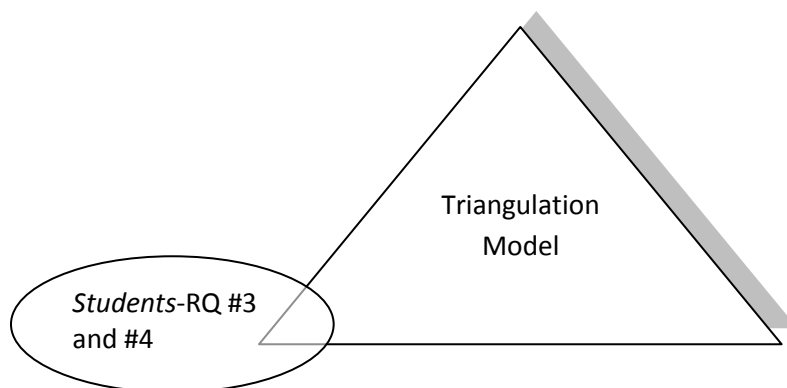
So this particular student he stayed quiet, and he never asked questions. And all of a sudden we are USC in one of their classes. We are having this course. Everybody else is on winter break and we are having classes. And he just stands up and says, I get it! I get it Ms. Bluejay! And he was able to explain it to me and everything. That was one of the most enjoyable experiences I have had while teaching writing [Ms. Bluejay-12/10. p 4].

In her class, Ms. Bluejay determines success by individual accomplishments. In all, her desired outcome is for individual student success.

Taken as a whole, and a response to RQ #2, non-CRRI trained teachers maintained some instructional practices that embodied the tenets of CRRI, such as high expectations for their students and being driven by student success. Their desired outcomes included teaching students to structure their writing, helping students perform well on the district assessments, and assisting individual students in becoming successful writers. Using teacher voices to inform practice is only the first part of the triangle or case of Clay USD, the second part that must be examined is the students.

Figure 4.2 demonstrates the next angle worth examining.

**Figure 4.2 Triangulation Model**



## **2<sup>nd</sup> Point of Triangulation: Students**

In the second category, student data from questionnaires and focus groups was analyzed. This data was used to answer RQ #3 and #4 as these questions design the inquiry around what can be learned from students:

RQ#3: What can we learn from the students who have been taught by teachers who have been formally English Mastery Program (EMP) trained specific to writing? To what extent does Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction (CRR) influence the students' writing skills and attitudes toward writing?

RQ#4: What can we learn from the students who have been taught by teachers who have not been formally English Mastery Program (EMP) trained specific to writing? To what extent does their teacher influence the students' writing skills and attitudes toward writing?

Emerging properties that describe this category include: writing perceptions, challenges, successes, and technology. Underneath the writing perceptions category was the attribute, the tools for expression. A model comparing the findings is represented in the following table.

**Table 10 Student Findings**

<b>Students</b>	<b>CRRI Experiences</b> <b>RQ #3</b>	<b>Non-CRRI Experiences</b> <b>RQ #4</b>
<b>Writing perceptions</b>		
<i>Tools for expression</i>	Writing as more than a tool for communication, is a tool for personal empowerment	Writing as a tool of communication
<i>Personal Task</i>	Express voice and feelings Express creativity Expression of healing Personal	Express voice and feelings Express creativity
<b>Challenges</b>	Process too long Writing essays Grammar and spelling Lack of choice Concern for use of home language	Process too long Writing essays Grammar and spelling Lack of choice
<b>Successes</b>		
<i>Overcoming Challenges</i>	Overcoming challenges	Overcoming challenges
<i>Teacher Interactions</i>	Intertwined with teacher	Intertwined with teacher
<b>Technology</b>	Faster and friendly Accepts home language “like a game”	Fast and fun

**Mini-case #1: CRRI Students.**

**Thematic outcomes.** According to Sperling, M. & Apleman, D. (2011) “the concept of voice permeates perspectives on reading and writing and has helped guide both literacy research

and teaching” (p.70). More specifically, the study of voice in education has been at the forefront of literacy research. The researcher has tried to understand the voices of teachers and students in an effort to gather data that informs instruction practice in the area of writing. In this section of Chapter 4, the researcher highlights the voices of students, and discusses the most salient issues that were shared in student focus groups and questionnaires.

Overall, the majority of the students in this study thought that writing was an important and necessary task, but with varying purposes. One student pointed to the practical purpose of writing: “I think writing is important ‘cuz when you get older you're gonna have to write...” (WBF, 12/10, p. 2). Similarly, another student said, “In my opinion, writing is important because it helps with comprehension and it will get most people on in life” (Abraham Focus Group3, p.2). A third student emphasized the importance of writing to communicate when he said, “I can communicate through writing through writing letters, if people are deaf they can communicate through writing since they can't talk” (Abraham Focus Group3, p.4).

In addition to viewing writing as an important tool, students in the CRRRI classroom also felt writing had many purposes, including: a mode of communication, a tool of expression, and a tool for healing. Tools, as described by Moje (2008) are ways of making meaning or situating oneself within the fabric of society. CRRRI students spoke of using writing as a tool for placing themselves within society. Further, students referred to writing as a personal and intimate task.

**Writing perceptions: Tools for expression.** As a tool, students use writing to express themselves. Nearly forty percent of the student questionnaire responses reflected the students’ desire to write as a means of expressing themselves. For students, expression serves a deeper purpose beyond the academic. According to the voices of the students, expression can symbolize a manifestation of self, an articulation of multiple identities, and a demonstration of creativity.

Through writing as a tool for expression, CRRI students have a voice. The voice of students through written expression facilitates healing, empowerment, and self-restoration. Writing as a tool for expression through voice was described by students in this way:

I love writing because I get to express a whole different me. Also I get to write about anything that is true or not true and different kinds of genres [Abraham/hm, 12/10, p.17].

I love writing, it makes me so happy because I get to express myself as I write a story [WBF, 12/10.p.12].

I think it [writing] is very fun and I enjoy it a whole lot. I think it is fun because u can write about your feelings and what u know about yourself or other people [WBF, 12/10.p.13].

I like writing because it makes me express myself what I want to tell. It makes me feel creative. It is fun being creative and sometimes I add pictures [Washington Focus Group2, 12/10.p.14].

Writing as a tool for expressing student voice allows students to express their feelings and gives them a sense of empowerment. This sense of empowerment provides healing that can be traced to the research of Majiri (1998), which enhanced the purposes of writings to include writing as a refuge. The use of writing for healing and refuge is seen in the following student remarks:

I write to communicate in letters or poems to myself to, like, encourage me to do stuff that I say I can't do (Abraham Focus Group3, p.3).

I think writing is important because sometimes there is something going on in your life and the way you can express it is with writing. It helps! (Abraham Focus Group3, 12/10, p.2)

It helps you feel better (Abraham Focus Group3, 12/10, p.2).

Well, I write songs because it helps me it just helps me for my mind so whatever just comes. I write it down and I end up making me like a song. (Abraham Focus Group3, p.1).

If nobody wants to listen to me I just write I just write and I write a letter and just give it to somebody then and then they can help me solve my problem” (Abraham Focus Group3, p.1).

Through remarks that allude to writing as a tool for expression, student creativity can be observed. Students expressed a desire to be heard on their terms and with their guidelines; they want to choose the topics and genres for their writing. Consistent with the research of Callins (2006), students expressed the need for freedom in creativity and choice in topics. They said:

I like doing what I want to write about (Abraham Focus Group3, p.5).

Sometimes, it's depending on who what's going on in your life when you choose, because maybe you have something interesting happening and you want to do a free write (Abraham Focus Group3, p.5).

Sometimes you don't have anything [to write about] so then you'd rather write about something somebody's telling you (Abraham Focus Group3, p.6).

I like the choice (Abraham Focus Group3, p.6).

I just like writing about my own topics so I can make up my own stories (Washington Focus Group1, p.2).

I like free writing also because sometimes everybody else is doing math or something or like in Ms. Washington's class, they are doing history or something and I am writing a narrative story, or like a fictional story, when I am done, I got 10 -15 sheets of paper, its like I wrote a movie or something...I wanted to continue (Washington Focus Group1, p.2).

Yes, [I like writing] because when you write it lets your imagination go wild! [Abraham Focus Group3, 12/10, p.28].

Consequently, the students who expressed displeasure with writing commented that they do not get to choose what they write about. Students submitted:

I don't like writing because the teacher doesn't tell me to write something fun and entertaining. If the writing process was fun, creative and entertaining, I'll love it! If they tell me to write about the Earth spinning the other way, now that will be fantastic! [AbrahamHF, 12/10, p.31].



I don't like that we have to write about certain things, I like free writing and what I want to write about (Washington Focus Group1, 12/10, p.3).

I hate writing only if it is my writing. I do not like having a story that I cannot make up [WashingtonBM, 12/10, p.4].

I don't like writing because it's not exciting. It is very boring no matter what you write about in less the book is based off of your favorite movie like my favorite movies are all the "Twilight" [Mr. Cardinal, 17BM-12/10, p.5]

All my teachers that I had in past, never let me write what I want to. I think I am good at writing, but I never get a chance [Ms. BluejayHF,-12/10, p.11].

**Writing perceptions: Personal task.** As students discussed their perception of writing, they disclosed their view of writing as a personal task that they wanted to complete. Students commented:

I usually write letters to my friends, my cousin, she lives far away so I mainly write lots of letters and send her pictures [Abraham Focus Group3, p.3].

Ok, like when I don't use the computer to communicate with writing, sometimes I do, but it's just like things I write just to myself to keep [my writing] personal [Washington Focus Group2, p.2].

I write because my mom has diabetes and she's blind [Abraham Focus Group3, p.2].

In this way, students in the CRRI groups write for many purposes; this demonstrates their understanding of the complex nature of writing. They share their teachers' view of writing as the gatekeeper to success. They wrote:

I think I like the process because writing gets you to places, like you can be famous for just writing a story [Washington Focus Group2, p.8].

Just a little writing can get you anywhere you wanna go [Washington Focus Group2, p.8].

In all, students perceive writing as a necessary task that serves multiple purposes. They use writing as a tool for expression that gives them a voice that establishes them within society. Writing as a tool for expression allows students to use writing to complete personal tasks such as sending emails or other forms of communication. Through writing as a tool for expression, students vocalize the task of writing as a multifaceted practice, are operationally equipped to navigate academic and cultural spaces, personally inspired, and can find a place of refuge for their multiple selves.

**Writing perceptions: Challenges.** Ultimately, students from CRRRI classrooms illuminated through their transcripts and questionnaires some of the problems they encountered in writing. Throughout the data, CRRRI students openly shared the challenges they experienced with writing. Some students expressed concerns about teachers who failed to provide clear prompts or explanation of assignments. Students shared:

Sometime[s] I write the wrong word and sometime[s] I don't get what the teacher is telling me. Sometime[s] I get nervous and put the same words again [Abraham, 12/10, p.39].

I don't like writing because I think it's boring and I don't know what to write. I feel uncomfortable because then I get confuse[d] in writing because instead of writing a paragraph I write a summary [Abraham Focus Group3, 12/10, p.32].

I feel nervous about the writing process because I am scared to do something wrong [Abraham Focus Group3, 12/10, p.6].

For these students, the most prominent challenge was their insecurity with writing. They highlight their concerns using words such as nervous, uncomfortable, and scared, which indicates a lack of confidence or security in their writing skills. Other areas of concern included: the length of the process, writing essays, grammar and spelling, and the lack of choice or ideas. Further, many students thought that the length of the process was too long. They said:

I'm mad 'cuz I have to go all the way through that just to get this, then I have to rewrite it, pre-write it, and then get it edited and proof read it, and all of that, type it. Yeah, we have to type our papers. If we don't type our papers we get like Cs on our work. And she says we have to have at least one typed paper a month and that's only a C [WB, 12/10, p.9].

I think it takes forever to be finish [Abraham Focus Group3, 12/10, p.11].

I don't like it [the writing process] because it takes too long [Washington, 12/10, p.16].

Not only were students unhappy with the length of the process, they translated the lengthiness into boredom with writing. One student said, "My thoughts and feelings about the process is boring. I think the process is really long" [Abraham, 12/10, p.33]. Similarly, a second student said, "I don't like the writing process because it is too slow" [Washington, 12/10, p.19]. On the other hand, not all students who believed the writing process was too long disliked it. Ms. Washington's student said, "I do like writing, but the steps take u long time and I do not write neat and I get writer's cramp" [Washington, 12/10, p.16].

Throughout the data, students expressed unease with the technical aspects of the writing experience. Their concerns centered on spelling and grammar in their writing:

I get frustrated with the spelling [Washington, 12/10, p.11].

My challenge was grammar. I would spell something wrong or not saying [it] right [Washington, 12/10, p.13].

My greatest challenge was grammar and spelling.

We always do our best but she [was] always correcting us, and she doesn't tell us why...she doesn't explain she just says do this over, and then like every time we write something, it's like she's professional at all kinds of stuff, but we're like amateurs, and she corrects our papers, and we end up getting like Ds and Fs on it because we do what we write and she does not write. Some people they write how they talk, and we write how we talk, in that area, that's how we talk [Washington Focus Group2, 12/10, p.8].

For these sixth grade students, the joy in writing was overrun with the technicalities about their use of language. These students did not mention code-switching or being taught to

incorporate their home language. For them, the teacher focused on their errors without an explanation.

**Writing perceptions: Successes (overcoming challenges/teacher-interaction).** Despite the challenges CRRI faced by students, several successes were highlighted. Overcoming challenges and teacher interactions dominated the successes during the focus group discussions.

**Overcoming Challenges.** Students reported that when they were able to write essays and compose with few spelling and grammatical errors they felt successful. Students said:

My most successful moment of [in] writing was when I won a writing contest. My teacher gave me helpful ideas and she made sure I had good topic sentence. This was a very happy moment because my parents were proud of me [AbrahamLF, 12/10, p. 33].

The most successful moment I had in writing is when I turned in a 500 word essay. I had to follow the teacher's directions [AbrahamLF, 12/10, p. 19].

My most successful moment of my writing was writing my "about me" story I realized I used a lot of details I got an A+ and felt very happy and very achievable. I know and understand a great process to be a great writer. My teacher really liked it and put it on a wall known as "Amazing Authors" I was really proud of myself and so was my family [AbrahamLF, 12/10, p. 5].

In this way, students felt that they were successful when they overcame the challenges they had with the technical aspects of writing.

**Teacher interactions.** Student success was commonly tied to their interactions with teachers. Students also experienced success when teachers publicly recognized their work. They shared:

She [my teacher] helped me become a much better writer (Abraham Focus Group3, p.8).

Mrs. Washington helped. She made me a better writer because she made me understand the processing of writing. She helped me get it, like understand it more, instead of just like putting stuff down on a piece of paper and saying, Oh I'm done. She actually made it easy for me to understand writing (Washington Focus Group2, p.8).

To make it click for me, she actually made essays for us to do so she actually like explained what to do for writing. She actually made it kinda easy by explaining and showing us and like letting us to get ready. So she's actually preparing us for higher grades and stuff. So she mainly helped me click by just explaining it then, if we need help she explains it over in a simpler way (Abraham Focus Group3, p.8).

A second way students described experiencing success was through the interactions they had with their teachers. As such, students referred to help from their teachers as the cause or link to their success.

**Writing perceptions: Technology.** Through both student questionnaires and focus group responses, students repeatedly mentioned their use of technology, an exciting and important factor in the lives of nearly all students. As a result, students stressed that technology was important for practical purposes. Some of their comments include:

I usually get on email and text and stuff. But I think computers are better to write with to communicate with because it's faster. You don't really have to try to write all faster you can just type what you need (Abraham Focus Group3, p.3).

Sign Language, computers, Braille is a way of communicating, writing is in books, books that have writing in it, if you don't read and or communicate what you learn, pictures, commercials and shows...Computers, email, AIM, MySpace, Gmail, vantage, online, Bluetooth and electronic devices will allow you to play with people across the country, texting, two people were texting and two people were right next to each other (Washington Focus Group2, p.2).

Ok, you can use computers and you can write letters, you can use cell phones, like texting (Washington Focus Group1, p.3).

I like typing better than writing 'cuz when I type like ideas come to me and I just type and then I'm happy, when I'm writing, I'm getting hand cramps and then I have to stop and then I forget what I was gonna say. But when I'm typing, it's better. I get kind of bored when I write, like hand write, but when I'm typing it's kind of fun to me (Washington Focus Group2, p.10).

Yeah it's better for you to type it 'cuz sometimes it tells you how many words you have, then like if you're writing you're supposed to go back and count a thousand words, and that is dumb (Washington Focus Group2, p.11).

These students use technology for the ease and efficiency, communicating through email or text messaging. For the CRRI students, technology is a necessary part of life.

Overall, the students experienced challenges and successes in their writing. While challenges were heavily linked to the technical aspects of the writing, and poor writing instruction, the successes were tied to their interaction with teachers. Students exercised writing practices for their personal, creative expression and academic advantages. Writing for these students is perceived as a refuge from their social realities. Further, writing is interconnected with empowerment.

### ***Mini-Case #2: Non- CRRI Students***

#### **Thematic Outcomes**

Students in Mini-Case #2, non-CRRI students, have similar beliefs to students in Mini-Case #1, CRRI students. Consequently, students in the non-CRRI classrooms have views about writing that parallel students in the CRRI classrooms, and fall into the same overarching themes: writing perceptions, challenges, and successes. Non-CRRI students did not express technology as an area of interest.

**Writing Perceptions: Tools for expression.** In Mini-Case #2 writing as a tool for expression embodies student voice. Student voice allows students to express their feelings and creativity. These non-CRRI students mirror CRRI students in the way they view the mechanisms that give students a voice to express feelings and thoughts. In contrast to CRRI students, writing was not considered three dimensional. Students simply reported that writing was pivotal in voicing opinions, improving writing skills, and that having choices in writing were important. Students thought about writing for expression and as a tool for communication as follows:

I love writing! I love writing because it's a great way to express yourself and show creativity [Ms. Bluejay, 12/10, p. 1].

I like writing because I can get a chance to express what is going on around me [Bluejay, 12/10, p. 2].

I do like writing because when you write you can express yourself and write fantasies or autobiography [Bluejay, 12/10, p. 2].

I like writing about my stories and what has happened to me in life; that's what I like to write. [BluejayHM, 12/10, p.9]

My thoughts of writing is wonderful and fun and my feelings are you are free inside and you can write what you are feeling [Cardinal23BF, 12/10, p.4].

These students used writing as a tool for expression to write creatively.

**Writing Perceptions: Challenges.** Like CRRI students, non-CRRI students struggled with the challenge of the lengthiness of writing, the lack of freedom in creativity, and writing essays with word count limitations. Also, grammar and punctuation were consistent issues that surfaced in the data. Some students mentioned that the logistical demands on writing were too much to bear. One student complained about, "having to write a true story that is really short and having to stretch it and it still be a true story." The other student data focused on challenges that closely resembled the CRRI students wrote:

The writing process takes a lot of steps. I think it is great because most people need something to guide them during writing [BluejayHF, 12/10, p.4]

How I feel about the writing process is that it's 'stricting and that we have to write a long story over and over. I feel 'stricting with this [BluejayHF, 12/10, p.5]

The writing process is a long process, but at the end it's correct and ready to be turned in [BluejayHM, 12/10, p.9]

Writing essays has been a challenge to me sometimes [BluejayHF, 12/10, p.12]

I feel nervous because I don't know how I'll do. At the same time I feel encouraged because I want to be a good student and make my teachers and parents happy [BluejayHF, 12/10, p.15]

My thoughts about the writing process are that the process is a little long. My feelings are that I do not want to go through that. [BluejayHF, 12/10, p.17]

A challenge I've had in the past was trying to find words that describe how the character feels. Another one is deciding the setting of the story [BluejayBF, 12/10, p.1].

**Writing Perceptions: Successes (overcoming challenges/teacher-interaction).**

Likewise, similar to the CRRI students' data was the non-CRRI students' data signifying student success. Students placed their success on the recognition and acknowledgement of the teacher.

Students commented on the dependence of their success being weighted heavily by the teacher's involvement. The one student who stated that his success was based on a personal

accomplishment had this to say:

My most successful moment was when I could really grasp and understand the whole story up to the point where you feel that you are the character itself in the story [13HF, 12/10, p3].

In spite of this individual success, students were most proud when their teachers acknowledged their writing and rewarded them in some way. Some of the students testified to being rewarded ice cream shakes and classroom recognition. Through the teachers' acts of kindness, these successful moments were crystallized in the eyes of the students as being great.

The most successful was with USC readers; I made a story and did a play of it. My teacher loved it and kept a copy and sometime later, I got a note from the principal saying it was great and displayed it in the main office. [BluejayHF, 12/10, p.15]

She is helping us with "write with a train" that she has up on the wall and it has all the step for writing, and she is teaching us all to become better writer in life. And the good moments we have be when we have tests on it [BluejayHF, 12/10, p.16]

My most successful moment was when my teacher taught me how to write straight and spell words right, and when I got the hang of those things my teacher started clapping for me. That was the most successful moment [Cardinal23BF, 12/10, p.4].



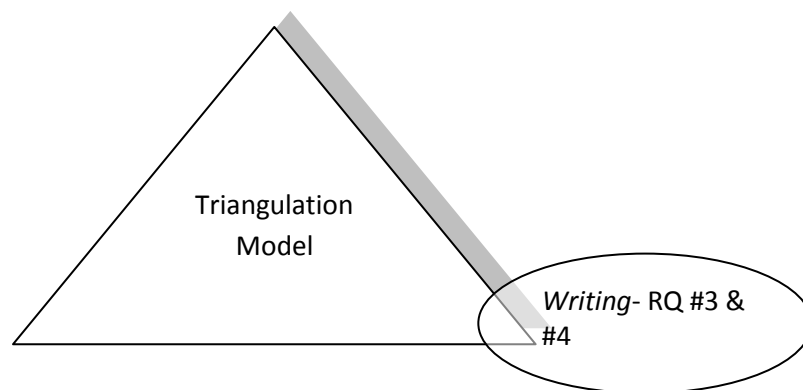
A successful moment for me was when I completed a 1000 word ace and the teacher treated me to Wendy's for a shake [Cardinal17BM, 12/10, p.5].

The best time was when I got a four because the teacher read my story in front of the whole class [Cardinal37HM, 12/10, p.10].

Similar to CRRI students, success was acknowledged by students as overcoming challenges and teacher acknowledgement of their writing.

**Writing Perceptions: Technology.** Technology was referred to as a friendly mode of communication for non-CRRI students as well. However, students from this group did not comment on how technology allowed them to also embrace their home language. From the perspective of students, writing can be a necessary yet cumbersome task without the assistance of their teachers. Students commented that the help from their teachers determined their success with writing. CRRI students argued for writing being used as a tool for healing and self expression. Non-CRRI students stressed that writing was imperative for creativity and expression. To further understand how the efforts of these teachers and students play a significant role in students' actual writing, Figure 4.3 displays the third side of the triangle, student writing samples.

**Figure 4.3 Triangulation Model**



### **3<sup>rd</sup> Point of Triangulation: Student Writing Score Results**

This study is primarily a case study. The nature of collecting and scoring the writing sample from students in each mini-case (the CRRI and Non-CRRI) classes provides another point of analysis that adds to the third leg of the triangulation. The quantitative analysis was not completed to accept or reject any hypotheses, since only a snapshot of data was collected, but rather to provide the evidence that there may or may not have been measurable differences in the two mini-case groups. The quantitative data from the writing scores was then linked to each teacher to reflect the instructional styles described by those teachers. To take a picture of the writing skills of students from both mini-cases, writing samples were analyzed using scores from both the primary trait scoring guide and the voice rubric. The following data was analyzed using SPSS Quantitative Analysis Program descriptive statistics and the Kruskal-Wallis Test, a non-parametric comparison test. A non-parametric test such as the Kruskal-Wallis was the assessment of choice due to the lack of randomness of the participants. Since these scores represent all of the students involved, this test was the most conservative in not assuming equal variances within the data. The means test and the Kruskal-Wallis test compared the following categories: 1) Race-Mexican American/a and African American; 2) CRRI classes and Non-CRRI classes; 3) The two teachers in Mini-Case #1 CRRI – Ms. Washington and Ms. Abraham; 4) The two teachers in Mini-Case #2 Non- CRRI Ms. Bluejay and Mr. Cardinal; and 5) Overall SPSS Mean Score Analysis.

**Race- Mexican American/a and African American.** Clay USD is comprised of a larger population of Mexican American students than African American students. Since CRRI instructional strategies promote learning for all students, and the Mexican American population contributed to most of the student writing samples, data for the Mexican American students was

included in this study. However, the overall goal of this study was to provide information to support African American students in writing, so the researcher ran the first quantitative analysis through SPSS to determine any significant differences between African American students and Mexican American students. Using the Kruskal-Wallis Test, there were no significant differences in the scores between Black and Mexican American students. Since there were no significant differences, these results established that students of both races possessed similar writing skills as scored on the Genre Scoring Guide ( $p = .482$ ) and on the Voice Rubric ( $p = .373$ ). The total scores would be reflective of both races and sufficient to run further quantitative test.

**CRRI Classes and Non-CRRI Classes.** The second Kruskal-Wallis Test ran measured the significance differences between the CRRI (treatment) students and the Non-CRRI (control) students among the two scoring rubrics. The results revealed that there was a significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) in the Genre/Primary Trait scoring guide among the CRRI (treatment) and the Non-CRRI (control) group. However, there was no significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) between the two groups using the voice rubric for the CRRI (treatment) students and the Non-CRRI (control) students. In order to narrow the results of the data, a third test was run, a means test. The purpose of this test was to understand which scores were actually higher. The means test for both groups revealed that the CRRI (Treatment) group scored a lower mean score on both scoring rubrics than the Non-CRRI group. See Table 11 below.

**Table 11- The SPSS Mean Scores for CRRI (T=treatment) classes and Non-CRRI (C=control) class**

Treatment		Genre Scoring Guide	Voice Rubric
C	Mean	2.82	2.84
	N	56	56
	Std. Deviation	.936	.804
T	Mean	2.38	2.56
	N	84	84
	Std. Deviation	.820	.827
Total	Mean	2.56	2.67
	N	141	141
	Std. Deviation	.889	.824

The results from this test revealed that there were no significant differences when examining the voice rubric, but it was apparent that the genre rubric scores were higher for the control group. The data augments the comments of the teachers. CRRI teachers stressed the importance of writing that is germane to multiple purposes and socially constructed. The Non-CRRI teachers described writing as a communication and expression tool driven by structure. The fundamental purpose of the genre scoring guide is to score the structure of the writing piece. However, the researcher tried to pinpoint the exact differences between the two teachers within each mini-case; then the researcher could trace back their results to their descriptions of their writing practices. The following narratives describe the findings of these quantitative inquiries.

**CRRI- Mini- Case #1: Ms. Washington and Ms. Abraham.** A fourth test was run in order to examine any significant differences among teachers of the treatment group. Using the

Kruskal-Wallis Test within in the CRRI mini-case, there were highly significant differences ( $p > .001$ ) between the two teachers on both measures, the Primary Trait/Genre Scoring and the Voice Rubric. The researcher wanted to understand the significance of these differences, so a means test was run.

The mean scores for the two classes are displayed in Table 12.

**Table 12 – SPSS Mean Scores for Washington versus Abraham**

Treatment	Class		Genre Scoring Guide	Voice Rubric
Abraham	Mean		2.72	2.97
	N		39	39
	Std. Deviation		.916	.707
Washington	Mean		2.09	2.20
	N		45	45
	Std. Deviation		.596	.757
Total	Mean		2.38	2.56
	N		84	84
	Std. Deviation		.820	.827

According to the means assessment, Ms. Abraham's students scored a mean score of 2.72 on the Genre Scoring and Ms. Washington's students scored a mean score of 2.09. On the Voice Rubric, Ms. Abraham scored a mean score of 2.97 and Ms. Washington scored a mean score of 2.56. As a whole, Mini-Case #1 displayed lower mean scores than Mini-Case #2, but closer attention should be directed to the individual teachers, as there was a significant difference. The data displays the particular differences between teachers and was necessary to trace backward to the instructional practices of each teacher. In an effort to gather a clearer picture for writing in Mini-Case #2, similar tests were run.

**Non-CRRI- Ms. Bluejay and Mr. Cardinal.** In congruence with CRRI teachers, within Mini-Case #2 there were highly significant differences ( $p > .001$ ) using the Kruskal-Wallis test between the two teachers on both measures, the Primary Trait/Genre Scoring and the Voice Rubric. Therefore, a means test was run to observe the actual difference.

The mean scores for the two classes are displayed in Table 13.

**Table 13- SPSS Mean Scores for Bluejay and Mr. Cardinal**

Class		Genre Scoring Guide	Voice Rubric
Bluejay	Mean	3.14	3.00
	N	22	22
	Std. Deviation	.990	1.069
Cardinal	Mean	2.63	2.74
	N	35	35
	Std. Deviation	.843	.561
Total	Mean	2.82	2.84
	N	57	57
	Std. Deviation	.928	.797

In the analysis of the Kruskal-Wallis test, the Genre/Primary Trait mean score from Ms. Bluejay's class was 3.14 and for Mr. Cardinal's class the mean score was 2.63. The results from the Voice Rubric show that Ms. Bluejay scored an average of 3.00 and Mr. Cardinal scored a mean score of 2.74. These data display the differences within Mini-Case #1. Nevertheless, even though this mini-case scored higher on average in comparison to Mini-Case #1, further analysis was warranted. From this analysis the researcher was able to pinpoint which teacher scored highest. Again, tracing the data to this point provided insight into the instructional practices of particular teachers.

**Overall SPSS means scoring analysis.** Finally, there was an analysis run for the overall mean scores of all teachers involved in the case. This analysis was run to examine how each individual teacher compared to each other. This data serves as a platform to further discuss the instructional practices related to each teacher. For both the Primary Trait and the Genre Scoring guides, Ms. Bluejay (Non-CRRI) had the highest mean scores, followed by Ms. Abraham (CRRI), then Mr. Cardinal, (Non-CRRI) and Ms. Washington (CRRI). See Table 14.

**Table 14-Overall SPSS Mean Scores for Clay USD Case**

Class		Genre Scoring Guide	Voice Rubric
Bluejay Non-CRRI	Mean	3.14	3.00
	N	22	22
	Std. Deviation	.990	1.069
Abraham CRRI	Mean	2.72	2.97
	N	39	39
	Std. Deviation	.916	.707
Cardinal Non-CRRI	Mean	2.63	2.74
	N	35	35
	Std. Deviation	.843	.561
Washington CRRI	Mean	2.09	2.20
	N	45	45
	Std. Deviation	.596	.757
Total	Mean	2.56	2.67
	N	141	141
	Std. Deviation	.889	.824

The quantitative data in this study served as a comprehensive vehicle to examine the product of the instructional practices of writing in Clay USD, and to add a layer of insight to the mini-cases. There were significant differences within the data between the treatment and the

control group which lead the researcher to clarify the understanding of the differences as they relate to individual teachers. As a result, the researcher noted that there were significant differences, and then sought to explain these differences through means tests. The findings revealed that Ms. Bluejay and Ms. Abraham were among the higher scoring teachers using the Genre scoring guide and the Voice Rubric. There is further discussion of these differences in Chapter 5.

### **Summary**

In the 1<sup>st</sup> point of triangulation, teachers, CRRI teachers focus on learning to write as a means of personal empowerment and success, while non-CRRI teachers assert that test results are instrumental in driving students to learn to write. Nevertheless, student learning is dependent on the development of writers, scaffolded instruction, teacher modeled writing, and writing instruction in cooperative groups. Although the significance of writing structure is evident in both mini-cases, CRRI teachers balance both purpose and the personal aspects of writing. Ms. Abraham commented that students have a strong sense of structure, however, she maintains that having students write poetry is important because it allows them to use their home language and “develop their own style” [Abraham, 12/10, p.1].

Overall, CRRI teachers believe that writing serves a tool for many purposes. Writing, from their perspective is seen as a tool for expression and empowerment, a tool for the preservation of culture and multiple identities, and a tool for academic purposes. CRRI teachers have high expectations for students while they allow students to have a choice and a voice in their writing; they utilize “contrastive analysis” as a strategy to code-switch the student home language into Standard English.



Through the interviews it was evident that Non-CRRI teachers view writing as an important tool for expression and communication that also serves academic purposes. Ms. Bluejay commented that writing in her class was a “tool to know if the students really understood the concepts or standards you are trying to teach” [Ms.Bluejay, 12/10, p.1]. Although both educators within Mini-Case #2 believe that teaching writing structure is a key element in their classroom, they add that individual student success is encouraged. For Mr. Cardinal, his students begin his class at many different levels. His most enjoyable moment while teaching writing was described in this way: “My increases are individual type of increases, so my joy is individually.”[Mr.Cardinal, 12/10, p. 2].

Teachers in both mini-cases shared a desire for their students to do well in writing. CRRI teachers explained that there is a necessary connection between race and culture in the planning and preparation of lessons, while non-CRRI teachers emphasized the desire to help students perform well on district assessments.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> point of triangulation, students from both groups perceive writing as an important task for communication and a tool for expression. Students said that writing is used to demonstrate creativity.

As for the CRRI students, they believe that writing is a tool for freedom, expression, empowerment, and the accomplishment of personal tasks. Interpreting their questionnaires lead the researcher to assert that writing serves multiple purposes for them. Writing is a vehicle for the expression of creativity, and a personal coveted space.

Through the CRRI focus groups, African American students shared their passion for writing and constantly expressed their use of writing as a tool for healing. Many said that the process was lengthy, but felt comforted when the teacher provided feedback, acknowledgement,

and support throughout the process. African American students, particularly males, vehemently expressed the desire to be given a choice when writing. Through writing, CRRI students establish a found refuge. One student said, “I write a lot of songs... ‘cause, sometimes for me, it expresses how I feel a lot, like it expresses some things about me... I write songs because it helps me... it just helps me for my mind (Abraham Focus Group3, p.3).

As for the Non-CRRI students, they concurrently stressed the significance of writing as a communication tool and a way to express feelings. Students from this group also shared that writing is a form of entertainment and a place for creativity. One student said, “I write when I am bored, you get to use your imagination.” [Cardinal37HM, 12/10, p.10]

In both cases, students perceive the technical aspects of writing as a challenge. These challenges include: grammar and spelling, writing essays, lack of choice and the lengthy writing process. Overall, students have experienced success in the context of overcoming their challenges. For many students, the successes were directly connected to their interactions with teachers. A student from Ms. Washington’s class said, “My successful moment was when I did an essay about my life and culture and my teacher put it on the board.” [WashingtonBM, 12/10, p.23]

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> point of triangulation, student writing score results, following both mini-cases, is the Student Writing section, which is the presentation of the quantitative data. This quantitative data answers research questions #3 and #4. These questions sought to understand the skill level demonstrated within the mini-cases and between individual teachers. As a third leg to the triangulation design, it was necessary to view the results from the student writing samples to add clarity to the study. The qualitative data demonstrates the attitudes and practices involved in writing, but the quantitative data reflects the results of these instructional practices.

Descriptively, the scores of the student writing samples displayed the writing skills of the students in the two classrooms. Similar to analyzing the qualitative data, progressive focusing was employed, and several tests were run in an effort to examine and interpret the scores more accurately. Due to the low population of African American students, a Kruskal-Wallis test on race was run to determine if there was a significant difference between African American writers and Mexican American writers. Since there was no difference, a second test was run to determine if there was a significant difference between the treatment group (CRRI) and the control group (Non-CRRI).

In view of the fact that there was a significant difference for the Genre Scoring Guide, more tests were run to see if the difference was a result of particular teachers. The findings from the Kruskal-Wallis and the means assessment among mini-cases, demonstrated that Ms. Abraham, (CRRI mini-case) and Ms. Bluejay, (Non-CRRI mini-case), scored significantly higher than the other teachers within their respected mini-case. The SPSS means test demonstrated that Ms. Bluejay had the highest score among all of the teachers for both scoring guides. Ms. Abraham followed statistically with the next highest scores. The information presented in this third leg of triangulation caused the researcher to closely reflect on the practices of these two teachers.

By understanding the voices of teachers and of students, and the writing sample scores, the researcher can begin to understand and learn about the influence of CRRI on the status of writing instruction in the Clay Urban School District. The following chapter discusses these findings in greater detail and offers implications for future work.

## **Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusions**

### **The Problem**

Nationally, African Americans have the lowest academic achievement scores and have made the least progress (Lewis et al., 2008). This study is a reflection of the Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction implementation in Clay USD of writing instruction, and an understanding of the experiences of all involved during the process. The experiences of students and educators throughout the study can inform future practice directly related to writing and African American students. The findings from this research also provide practical insight into the infusion of CRRI in classroom instruction.

Current research supports that CRRI is a powerful tool for addressing African American students in education. More specifically, the related literature alludes to literacy with an emphasis on writing as a staple in this theory instead of an option. If educators want to close the achievement gap, literacy instruction should include a balanced approach to relevant reading and writing. Writing permits students to apply culturally responsive content and instruction in the daily lives of students. Also, writing helps them develop and defend a non-negotiated identity complete with language and multiple literacies while situated in the midst of their community critiquing the world and the knowledge around them. Finally, employing CRRI with writing as a staple empowers the whole student as a 21st century socio-cultural young adult who is equipped to belong in a diverse complex society.

### **The Methods**

The goal of this research is to provide the education field with a reflection on the writing practices of four classrooms in Clay School USD. The theory of Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction (CRRI) provides a lens for understanding the instructional practices related to writing in Clay USD. This instrumental case study employs data triangulation utilizing

mixed methods to grasp the complete picture of the case. The use of triangulation was possible by exploring and analyzing data from teachers, students, and student writing samples. The mixed methods tool was used to collect the data that originated from teacher interviews and surveys, student questionnaires, African American focus groups, and scored student writing samples. These methods were progressively focused and analyzed interactively. This research can be utilized to develop educational opportunities for African American students. The following research questions (RQ) guided this study,

1. What can we learn from educators who have been formally English Mastery Program (EMP) trained specific to teaching writing? To what extent does Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction (CRRI) influence the teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward teaching writing?
2. What can we learn from educators who have not been formally English Mastery Program (EMP) trained specific to teaching writing?
3. What can we learn from the students who have been taught by teachers who have been formally English Mastery Program (EMP) trained specific to writing? To what extent does Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction (CRRI) influence the students' writing skills and attitudes toward writing?
4. What can we learn from the students who have been taught by teachers who have not been formally English Mastery Program (EMP) trained specific to writing? To what extent does their teacher influence the students' writing skills and attitudes toward writing?

Using the results from the director, teachers, students, and student writing samples provided insight into the writing practices of Clay USD. Using the CRRI as a lens for understanding, and in an effort to answer these research questions, the following findings were presented.

### **Research Findings**

To address research question #1: “What can we learn from educators who have been formally English Mastery Program (EMP) trained specific to teaching writing? To what extent does Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction (CRRI) influence the teachers’ knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward teaching writing? Several profound lessons can be learned from teachers formally trained in the EMP program.”

First, CRRI teachers believe that mastering Standard English is a gatekeeper to success for their minority students. Both CRRI teachers stressed the magnitude of students becoming proficient in their usage of Standard English through reading and writing. Writing for these teachers is more than an act of communication in academia; they view writing as not just a tool but a key that unlocks all of the possibilities for success in life. These teachers shared in the interviews their concern that race plays a part in the lives of their students, and that capitalizing on writing is a deliberate act to preserve the socio-cultural identities of their students. These concerns are in line with CRRI Tenets # 6 which states that “instruction must allow these identities to be expressed and expanded upon.”

Second, being trained in Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction affords these teachers the knowledge and skills to teach their students about a language strategy commonly referred to as “contrastive analysis.” This skill, directly aligned with CRRI Tenet # 4, allows teachers the ability to successfully teach students how to navigate between home languages and

academic language. Teachers did not criticize the students' home language, but showed them the "situational appropriateness" of their language. As a result, their students felt empowered to own their words and selectively use them for creative, personal, and academic purposes.

In addition to contrastive analysis, teachers trained in CRRI present reading and writing as two interdependent functions, not isolated from one another. In the teacher interviews and in the student interviews, reading multicultural literature followed by a writing assignment was a common practice in these classrooms. Also in CRRI classrooms, teachers have high expectations for students while allowing students to have a choice and voice in their writing. Creating their own rigorous curriculum and shaping content to scaffold knowledge already possessed by their students is a prevalent practice in the classrooms. These practices demonstrate CRRI Tenet # 5 which addresses the content and curriculum that is shaped to meet the needs of the learners, and CRRI Tenet #2 which declares the value of the teachers' attitude is key in the classroom.

Finally, students were supported by strategic grouping, differentiated instruction, and "constant review as the students glue" according to Ms. Washington [12/10, p.2]. Overall, these teachers believe in their students as evidenced by the interviews, in fact, both Ms. Washington and Ms. Abraham, both stated that their teaching is based on the "start where you are" model.

RQ #2, "What can we learn from educators who have not been formally English Mastery Program (EMP) trained specific to teaching writing?"

In Mini-Case #2, Non-CRRI teachers represent thousands of teachers across America who have not been formally trained to teach writing in their teacher preparation programs. Several researchers, like Darling-Hammond, Villegas & Lucas (2002), Sleeter (2005), Delpit (2006), Lee (2007) have written about the lack of teacher preparedness when it comes to teaching literacy to diverse learners. If it were not for the writing training Ms. Bluejay received on her

own, she too would have been without the necessary skills that are needed to teach writing. Several issues can be raised by as a result of the examination of these two teachers.

Both of the teachers from Non-CRRI classrooms stressed the significance of structure as a writing practice. As an average result from the writing samples on the Genre Scoring Guide, these teachers demonstrated higher scores. The Genre Scoring Guide measures how well students structure their narrative essays. Since structure is a common practice within these classrooms it was not unexpected for these classrooms to score higher.

Using the data drawn from the teacher interviews and the teacher surveys, it is evident that writing training is very useful in the classroom due to the fact that Ms. Bluejay scored the highest of all teachers in the study. She has been a teacher for 12 years, similar to Ms. Abraham, however, she has been trained in several methods of teaching writing.

Even though Ms. Bluejay scored the highest among the teachers in this study, her focus was on teaching standards and not students. She utilized formulaic writing to teach writing structure. In addition, she provided several instructional practices that facilitated students in learning the writing process. However, despite all of the positive strategies used in her classroom, students and their cultures were not mentioned. As a result, her students failed to comment on the more personal and liberating uses of writing. Teachers who adhere to writing programs with only formulaic teaching do a disservice to students of color. Writing should be employed to articulate the multiple literacies and identities that students bring to classrooms. In this way their writing becomes their voice.

Another issue that surfaced through the data was the teachers' commitment to state standards. On the one hand, CRRI teachers constantly remarked on the importance of the student and mastering the English Language; on the other hand in the Non-CRRI classroom it



was mastering of the state standards. Ms. Bluejay, reiterated several times in her interviews the importance of students faring well on their district assessments and mastering the standards.

Finally, both teachers in this group demonstrate the tenets of CRRI due to their practice of scaffolding their writing instruction to students on familiar literature and short stories. Mr. Cardinal stated that students “get short stories a lot easier” and Ms. Washington said that providing the students with children’s books allows them to grasp the structure of the story. Ms. Washington also has students write everyday in journals with journal prompts that respond to non-fiction texts “like young reporters.” Even though Ms. Bluejay does not refer to the students’ cultures and multiple identities in her instruction, she allows them to explore the roles of different writing tasks and genres. These tasks could be deemed purely culturally responsive if she allowed them to choose the roles. As it stands, she relates to their interests and this is partially fitting for CRRI Tenet #5, which encourages the content to be “age appropriate,” but falls short when it does not use a “critical and socio-political lens.”

At the core, the instruction described by these two teachers was premised on the desire for their students to excel in the writing task. Despite the fact that they both admitted to not having any formal writing training until in the classroom, the knowledge they possess on writing structure has helped their students score higher than the CRRI classrooms. These teachers have positive attitudes toward teaching writing and plan lessons that nurture and support student writing skills through small groups and frequent writing assignments. Although these teachers were not formally trained in CRRI and did not include students’ multiple literacies and identities in their instruction, elements of CRRI were traced within the two classes. As a second leg to triangulation and to understand how students perceived this instruction, students were examined for information as well. The synopses of the findings related to students are reported in response

to research question #3: “What can we learn from the students who have been taught by teachers who have been formally English Mastery Program (EMP) trained specific to writing? To what extent does Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction (CRRI) influence the students’ writing skills and attitudes toward writing?”

The perceptions of students in the CRRI and Non-CRRI classrooms are very similar; however, data from the CRRI students and the CRRI African American focus group reveal distinguishing variables. To start, CRRI students believe that their writing serves multiple purposes as evidenced by their questionnaires and focus groups. Students recorded that their writing relieves them of stress, and the ability to write can free them to be anything they want to be in life, and writing is a private and personal task. CRRI students shared that writing allows them to be creative, and voice their own thoughts. These comments are in direct correlation with CRRI tenet #7 which posits that writing is utilized by the student writing for optimal expression.

CRRI students like writing as a communication tool and as a vehicle for expressing themselves; however, they feel the tedious tasks of writing presents many challenges for them. One of the challenges is the writing process itself. Students commented that it takes too long and often causes their hands to hurt, which is why they like texting and typing. Students shared that writing essays with a word limit is a challenge but typing on a computer is easier, as the computer counts for them. Grammar, spelling, and punctuation kept emerging as a challenge for students. However, some of the successes mentioned throughout the study reflect students overcoming these challenges with the help of their teachers. Students constantly shared that their individual successes were connected to a teacher assisting them in their writing process, or from teachers acknowledging their work. Teachers’ acknowledgement of student work came in the form of publicly praising, writing publicly posted, or treats rewarded for writing well.

The African American students commented on how their teacher had taught them about appropriate times to use their home language. They mentioned that when they write poems, songs, or raps, they can use their home language, but when they turn in their assignments it is their responsibility to switch to academic English. African American students also perceive writing as a tool for personal encouragement and a source of healing. African American girls in the focus groups shared that they enjoy texting and social networking because it allows them to use their home language without being corrected. They also stated that it was fun to text because they could receive instant feedback and it was sort of like a game to them. They commented that their teachers allowed them to choose pieces of their writing to type and turn in once a month. This point is in alignment with CRRI Tenet #4, which addresses instruction and environment being inclusive of the learner, as their teachers allowed them to be involved in the process by choosing their own writing pieces.

African American boys consistently shared that they like writing and like having the freedom to choose their topics. Some of the topics mentioned to write about were: video games, non-fiction, wildlife, sports, and fiction. Throughout their three page transcript the mention of free writing appeared five times. One little boy commented, “By me being able to express my feelings, you don’t have to worry about anyone else’s opinion, you can just be in your zone and [that’s] the reason I like to write [WashingtonFocusGroup1, 12/10, p.3].

In essence, CRRI students like writing for many different purposes. They were aware of the appropriateness of their home language, but they also viewed it as a valuable asset as it served several purposes. African American students enjoy writing for personal and creative tasks and they said that they like it when teachers allow them to choose their own topics.

Non-CRRI students possess similar traits to the CRRI students and their voices are shared in research question #4: “What can we learn from the students who have been taught by teachers who have not been formally English Mastery Program (EMP) trained specific to writing? To what extent does their teacher influence the students’ writing skills and attitudes toward writing?”

Students from both groups perceive writing as a very important task. Similarly, Non-CRRI and CRRI students view writing as a tool for expression and a tool for communication. Non-CRRI students also were in agreement with CRRI students: They believe that the freedom to choose tasks and writing for creativity is important.

Likewise, when examining the challenges associated with writing, students perceived grammar and spelling, writing essays with word limits, lack of choice, and the lengthy writing process as the most dominant of these challenges.

As far as student success, Non-CRRI students stated that their writing success was directly linked to the interaction of the teachers. Comments like, “When my teacher claps for me” and “I feel successful when my teacher reads my paper in front of the class” were prevalent throughout the questionnaires. Throughout the student data, students expressed that when they overcame challenges such as grammar, spelling, and punctuation, and writing essays, they felt proud and successful. Students were in agreement with CRRI students about technology as they regard it as fun, fast, and friendly.

In sum, students in the Non- CRRI classes enjoy writing as evidenced by their responses in the questionnaires. Although they did not describe writing as a tool for social empowerment, they felt it was a great way to express their feelings. Their comments regarding successes and challenges were very similar to the CRRI students. Overall, students want to be successful and

write well, but consider this to be highly likely only through the teachers' assistance and acknowledgement.

Finally, after examining the quantitative aspect of this triangulated study, it was clear that more work needs to be done in all of the classrooms as far as writing is concerned. The total scores were on a "1" to "6" point rubric score. The average score for the control group, Non-CRRI, was a 2.82 for the Genre Scoring Guide and 2.84 for the Voice Rubric. On a 6-point scale this is still a failing grade. Ms. Bluejay's class scored the highest mean score of 3.14 for the Genre Scoring Guide and a mean score 3.00 on the Voice Rubric. These scores were also failing. As the education community advances in research practices to assist in multi-dimensional writing, using CRRI strategies paired with specific writing techniques should be at the forefront.

### **Implications**

Student writers enter public classrooms with various socio-cultural identities and prior experiences. In such a demanding 21st century, students need to be able to comfortably navigate between these multiple literacies peacefully and confidently. Writing instruction must facilitate this process. By providing students options in their learning, CRRI teachers in Mini-Case #1 demonstrated these practices. Teachers who do not promote this freer writing inadvertently suppress students and the voices of their students. In this nature, writing instruction and the purpose of writing is one dimensional, standardized. Examining this type of practice has to be viewed through a CRT lens, which maintains that only one master narrative is acceptable. Further research also needs to explore the issue of CRRI and its influence on gender.

### **Future Implications for Educators and Administrators**

Future research needs to be explored to include African American students in a much larger sample, and include other students of color. It would be relevant to examine the practices

of state and local school districts using a similar lens in an effort to gain insight into the present condition of writing in America. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores suggest that writing data representing African American and other minority students are at an all time low, therefore teachers need to use CRRI in the classroom and the training they receive in writing. These gaps will continue to increase unless teachers are equipped to teach the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner in the area of writing, and include cultural identities and multiple literacies. With the advancement of technology, teachers also need to be trained on instructing students who come with digital literacies. The issue of teachers not being administered pre-service writing training in order to effectively educate students of color is worth examining. Darling-Hammond (2006) states:

Inequalities in spending, class sizes, textbooks, computers, facilities, curriculum offerings and access to qualified teachers contributes to disparate achievement by races and class, which increasingly feeds the “school to prison pipeline (p.13).

In essence, teachers need to be provided with strategic writing training to meet the needs of diverse learners. The intention of this study was to explore how Clay Urban School District CRRI and Non-CRRI teachers and students experience writing in an effort to inform writing instruction. Even though both types of teachers were novice writing teachers, their care regarding the writing process was demonstrated through the findings of the study.

### **Future Implications for Teacher Educator Programs**

Proper writing training and culturally relevant and responsive instruction training should be a staple within teacher education programs. The classes need to focus on practices that encourage the cultural identities of students. Teachers who are bound to programs or formulaic teaching do a disservice to students of color. Students should be exposed to and trained in the many purposes of writing. Teachers should be flexible in providing options for students to

demonstrate writing for these multiple purposes. Students possessing multiple literacies and identities should employ writing to articulate these characteristics.

Further research and interpretation is needed, but when students feel like their success is linked to teacher approval, the obvious questions are: What can teacher education programs do to train teachers to develop students of diverse populations to be autonomous writers without feeling dependent on the teacher? Do students seek the approval of their writing from teachers as a result of teacher expectations? Are the multiple literate voices of students being silenced in today's classrooms? Do students feel like their voices are being held captive, and further, what can be done to release these voices?

Teachers and teacher educators need to focus on using writing as a multi-dimensional instrument that hears these silenced voices. Lastly, further research is needed in the area of the instructional writing practices of successful teachers who balance teaching writing that empowers students while maintaining their identities and high standardized test scores.

### **Limitations**

There were several limitations in this study. The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of CRRI on writing instruction with African American students. Even though Clay USD has a very high concentration of African American students, for this particular study the classes that were chosen as the Non-CRRI classrooms lacked a sufficient number of African American students. Therefore, in an effort to analyze data, a non-parametric analysis test was run that determined that there was no significant difference between African American students and Mexican American students.

Another limitation of this study was the uneven classroom enrollment numbers. In the CRRI mini-case, there were 141 student writing samples and questionnaires that were scored and

analyzed while in the Non-CRRI there were 57 student writing samples and questionnaires. To address this issue the SPSS means assessments was used to analyze the quantitative data.

In an ideal case study, at least two writing samples should be collected, one at the beginning of the school year and one at the end so they can be measured. Further, to add to the limitation presented around the collection of one writing sample, these samples were collected very early in the school year. Due to the sample being collected after 35 days of instruction, students were not given an adequate time to master the writing of any one genre, and teachers were not given the appropriate time to teach writing instruction to any sort to mastery. Again, in an ideal study, data should be gathered at a minimum of two times during the school year however, if this were not feasible, then it should be collected toward the end of the year to allow for maximum instruction and maximum learning.

Another limitation was presented during the study regarding the comparison of the district tenets for CRRI and the seven tenets that were developed as a result of the related literature. The district posed “contrastive analysis” as a tenet. In this study contrastive analysis was not considered as a tenet due to the complexity of the linguistic training involved. Since this research intends to inform instructional writing practices relating to African American students, the CRRI tenets were developed for practitioners so they could adopt them with a sense of urgency. The contrastive analysis tenet requires more in depth training, therefore was not included.

Finally, a limitation to this study was the CRRI professional development training materials and online resources available on the district website. All of the resources related to the implementation of CRRI have been posted to the webpage assigned to teachers in the Clay USD.



Therefore, examining the affect on classroom teachers not formally trained was difficult due to the amount of information provided on the website.

### **Summary**

Allowing teachers and students to share their voices provides insight into how the influence of CRRI affects writing. Writing should be a three-dimensional model inclusive of utilizing writing as a tool for personal expression and empowerment, communication, and academic purposes. Multiple literacies and sociocultural identities should be preserved through writing. Writing should allow students to be liberated as they gain access and become more proficient in using Academic English.

Writing instruction must provide a balanced space for these sociocultural identities to be expressed and expanded upon, and should be seen as an academic tool for many purposes. Teachers need to embrace students' home languages while also being experts on writing strategies for diverse youth. Students should feel encouraged and comfortable situating their sociocultural identities in collaborative and individual settings.

If we are to close the achievement gap in learning for African American and Mexican American students, we need teachers who are comprehensively trained in writing and Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A- Teacher Survey

#### Teacher Survey

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade level: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Years of Experience in current position: \_\_\_\_\_

P Trained

Not  Trained

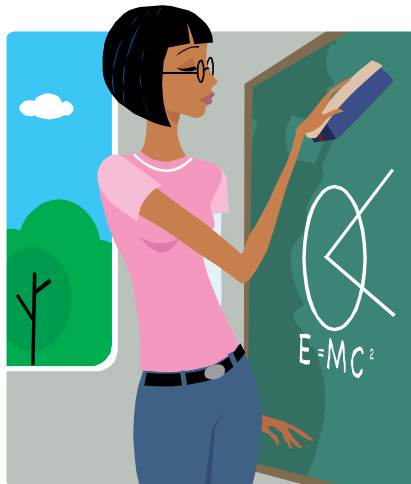
1. In your opinion, what are some reasons for low achievement in writing? Mark all that apply.
  - a. Lack of Writing Program
  - b. Teacher Training and instruction
  - c. Teacher/Student accountability
  - d. Lack of organizational structure
  - e. Student preparation
  - f. Lack of interest in writing
  - g. Various topics not engaging
2. How much time do you spend in preparation for student writing instruction?
  - a. 1-2 hours
  - b. 2-4 hours
  - c. 2-3 days
  - d. 1 week
3. How often is feedback provided to students?
  - a. None
  - b. Sometimes
  - c. Almost always
  - d. For sure always
4. How much time is used to instruct students on each genre?
  - a. 1-2 days
  - b. 3-5 days
  - c. 1-2 weeks
  - d. More than two weeks
5. How much writing practice is afforded to students for mastery/final writing piece?
  - a. 1 exposure
  - b. 2 exposures
  - c. 3 exposures
  - d. 4 or however many would be needed for mastery
6. How often is modeling demonstrated for any particular writing piece?
  - a. Never
  - b. Sometimes
  - c. Frequently
  - d. Always
7. How often there are opportunities for shared/peer writing experiences in composition, editing, revision?
  - a. Never
  - b. Sometimes
  - c. Frequently
  - d. Always



## Appendix B: Teacher Interview Questions

**Teacher Interview Questions**

1. Describe in your own words, your feelings about the importance of writing?
  
2. How does your use of Academic English Mastery Program and Culturally Responsive and Relevant Instructional strategies influence your teaching of writing?
  - a. Explain what you may do to support struggling writers?
  - b. Explain what you may do to support their multiple literacies?
  
3. By the time your students leave your classroom, what writing skills must they know if they don't know anything else?
  - a. What has been your most enjoyable experience while teaching writing?





## Appendix C: Student Questionnaire

**Student Questionnaire**

**Directions: Please write the answers to these questions on a separate piece of paper. Please answer honestly and completely. Feel free to write as much as you need to write to answer the question.**

1. Do you like writing? Why or Why not?
2. Describe in your own words, your thoughts and feelings about the writing process?
3. What have been your greatest challenges with writing in the past?
4. In your opinion, what are some characteristics of a “good” writer?
5. Do you feel you possess the character traits needed to be a successful writer?
6. What has been your worst score in writing? Why did you receive this score?
7. What has been your most successful moment while writing? What did your teacher do to make it successful? Describe this moment in detail.



Appendix D: Student Interview Questions

**Student Interview Questions**

1. In your opinion, why do you think writing is important?
  
2. What are some of the ways you communicate through writing?
  
3. Describe in your own words, your thoughts and feelings about the writing process?
  - a. Successes? Challenges?
  - b. Current teachers style of teaching writing?



Appendix E: Student Questionnaire Response Template

**Qualitative Data Question #1-Teacher:**

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	<b>Latino</b>	<b>African American</b>
<b>Female</b>		
<b>Male</b>		

## Appendix F: Writing Prompt

**Autobiographical Narrative  
Writing Prompt****Directions:**

In this writing test you will respond to the writing task below

- You will have time to plan your response and write a first draft with edits
- Only what you write on your final draft, will be scored
- Use only a No. 2 pencil to write your response
- You may mark on the prompt

**Scoring:**

Your writing will be scored by how well you:

- ✓ Develop a plot with a beginning, middle, and an end (problem/conflict, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution)
- ✓ Develop a setting and character(s) including yourself
- ✓ Use appropriate strategies including examples of dialogue, suspense, exposition, or narrative action
- ✓ Use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization

**Writing the Autobiographical Narrative:**

**Think seriously about a time when you witnessed a friend or a family member do something you did not approve of. Write an autobiographical narrative explaining the situation. Explain how you were personally affected because of what you witnessed. What did you learn from this experience?**

When you write about this experience, remember:

- To develop a plot with a beginning, a middle, and an end
- Make the event or the experience “come alive”
- To develop a setting and character(s)
- Describe what you experienced, what you saw, heard, and felt
- To use appropriate strategies (Example: dialogue, suspense, narrative action)
- To use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization

## Appendix G: Parent Consent Form

To the Parent(s)/Guardian(s) of:

I am studying the connections among students' reading, writing and positive attitudes. To help me understand these connections, your child will participate in activities that include writing and discussion. These activities strengthen your child's regular classroom English Language Arts development lessons by providing additional experience and support for basic skills in writing. With your permission, and the agreement of your child, each student who participates in the project will contribute to the study of writing.

***Benefits***

Your child's participation will help us understand more about the ways that adolescents learn and use writing to communicate in meaningful ways.

***Voluntary Participation***

Your child's participation is entirely voluntary and you, or your child, may choose to stop participating at any time. Classroom grades or placement will not be affected in any way by leaving the project. You **do not** have to agree that your child take part in this project.

***Confidentiality***

We will keep students' information confidential so that they cannot be individually identified. No student names will be used in project results. Raw data will not be shared with school faculty, administration or students.

***Questions***

I hope that you allow your child to participate in this interesting and enjoyable writing project. If you have any questions, please contact Ms Ayanna Ibrahim-Balogun at [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]

***Consent***

The project will begin in September, 2010. On the next page, you will find a form where you can choose if (a) you are willing to have your child participate in the activities, and (b) your child is willing to participate in activities described in this letter. Please mark the appropriate places on the form, sign it, and have your child return it to his or her teacher as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Ayanna Ibrahim-Balogun  
University of Redlands  
School of Education  
University of Redlands  
Redlands, California 92373  
(909) 748-8867

**INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

I have read the letter describing the English Language Arts/Writing project to be offered in Los Angeles Unified School District English Language Arts students. I understand what participation involves and that students' work is confidential. It is clear that no names will be associated with the information. I understand that Mrs. Ibrahim-Balogun is available to answer any questions that I may have about the project. I understand that participation in the project is voluntary and may be stopped at any time. A decision to stop participation will not affect classroom grade or placement.

**STUDENT'S NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

**PARENT/GUARDIAN**

I **agree** to let my child participate in the English language arts project. \_\_\_\_\_

I **do not want** my child to participate in the English language arts project. \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**STUDENT**

I **agree** to participate in the English language arts project. \_\_\_\_\_

I **do not want** to participate in the English language arts project. \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Student \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix H: Writing Calibration Procedures

*Writing Calibration Procedures*

**Preparation:** Prior to the calibration meeting, the facilitator will generate and photocopy several mixed ability writing samples. These samples are to be used in discussion to originate and establish a baseline for writing expectations.

1. Outline Goals of Calibration
2. Readers/Raters will be given the Scoring Guides to discuss the purposes of writing
3. “Anchor” papers, otherwise known as sample writings used for calibration baselines, will be provided and shared to thoroughly discuss key elements of that genre
4. A common writing “Demo A” will be provided and scored individually by the reader/rater that was previously scored by the researcher.
5. Collectively the group will discuss and justify their individual scores assigned to the sample
6. Through discussion, a consensus will be established regarding the scoring of the sample
7. Writing “Demo B” will be distributed and individually scored
8. The group will collectively assemble again to share their justification of the numeric scores
9. If there is a rater who frequently has different scores, the facilitator of the training must address the issue individually
10. Once the group has reached a strong consensus on three consecutive writing samples, on what is expected, the calibration process will begin.
11. The calibration process consists of the readers reading a total of five samples. For the raters to be completely calibrated, 80 %,( four out of five) overall writing scores must be similar. If this is not the case with the first five samples, then raters will read a second set of five samples until 80% calibration is reached.
12. This process will be the model for each of the following scoring guides, Primary Trait and “Voice” Rubric.







## Appendix K: Voice Rubric

**AIMS Six Trait Analytic Writing Rubric – Official Scoring Guide****VOICE**

<p><b>6</b></p> <p>The writer has chosen a voice appropriate for the topic, purpose and audience. The writer seems deeply committed to the topic, and there is an exceptional sense of “writing to be read.” The writing is expressive, engaging, or sincere. The writing is characterized by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an effective level of closeness to or distance from the audience (e.g., a narrative should have a strong personal voice, while an expository piece may require extensive use of outside resources and a more academic voice; nevertheless, both should be engaging, lively, or interesting. Technical writing may require greater distance.)</li> <li>• an exceptionally strong sense of audience; the writer seems to be aware of the reader and of how to communicate the message most effectively. The reader may discern the writer behind the words and feel a sense of interaction.</li> <li>• a sense that the topic has come to life; when appropriate, the writing may show originality, liveliness, honesty, conviction, excitement, humor, or suspense.</li> </ul>	<p><b>5</b></p> <p>The writer has chosen a voice appropriate for the topic, purpose, and audience. The writer seems committed to the topic, and there is a sense of “writing to be read.” The writing is expressive, engaging or sincere. The writing is characterized by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an appropriate level of closeness to or distance from the audience (e.g., a narrative should have a strong personal voice while an expository piece may require extensive use of outside resources and a more academic voice; nevertheless, both should be engaging, lively or interesting. Technical writing may require greater distance.)</li> <li>• a strong sense of audience; the writer seems to be aware of the reader and of how to communicate the message most effectively. The reader may discern the writer behind the words and feel a sense of interaction.</li> <li>• a sense that the topic has come to life; when appropriate, the writing may show originality, liveliness, honesty, conviction, excitement, humor, or suspense.</li> </ul>	<p><b>4</b></p> <p>A voice is present. The writer demonstrates commitment to the topic, and there may be a sense of “writing to be read.” In places, the writing is expressive, engaging, or sincere. The writing is characterized by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a questionable or inconsistent level of closeness to or distance from the audience.</li> <li>• a sense of audience; the writer seems to be aware of the reader but has not consistently employed an appropriate voice. The reader may glimpse the writer behind the words and feel a sense of interaction in places.</li> <li>• liveliness, sincerity, or humor when appropriate; however, at times the writing may be either inappropriately casual or personal, or inappropriately formal and stiff.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3</b></p> <p>The writer’s commitment to the topic seems inconsistent. A sense of the writer may emerge at times; however, the voice is either inappropriately personal or inappropriately impersonal. The writing is characterized by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a limited sense of audience; the writer’s awareness of the reader is unclear.</li> <li>• an occasional sense of the writer behind the words; however, the voice may shift or disappear a line or two later and the writing become somewhat mechanical.</li> <li>• a limited ability to shift to a more objective voice when necessary.</li> </ul>	<p><b>2</b></p> <p>The writing provides little sense of involvement or commitment. There is no evidence that the writer has chosen a suitable voice. The writing is characterized by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• little engagement of the writer; the writing tends to be largely flat, lifeless, stiff, or mechanical.</li> <li>• a voice that is likely to be overly informal and personal.</li> <li>• a lack of audience awareness; there is little sense of “writing to be read.”</li> <li>• little or no hint of the writer behind the words. There is rarely a sense of interaction between reader and writer.</li> </ul>	<p><b>1</b></p> <p>The writing seems to lack a sense of involvement or commitment. The writing is characterized by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no engagement of the writer; the writing is flat and lifeless.</li> <li>• a lack of audience awareness; there is no sense of “writing to be read.”</li> <li>• no hint of the writer behind the words. There is no sense of interaction between writer and reader; the writing does not involve or engage the reader.</li> </ul>



Appendix M: Primary Trait-Narrative Rubric

Rubric for a Narrative Writing Piece

FEATURES	6	5	4	3	2	1
<b>FOCUS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Subject and unifying event clear and maintained</li> <li>•Theme/unifying theme explicitly stated</li> <li>•Reactions present throughout</li> <li>•Has effective closing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Subject and unifying event clear and maintained</li> <li>•Theme/unifying event is stated in opening or conclusion</li> <li>•Reactions present throughout (may not be even)</li> <li>•Has closing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Subject and unifying event are clear - may be prompt dependent (requiring reader inference)</li> <li>•Theme/unifying event is stated and/or summarized</li> <li>•Reactions present</li> <li>•May end abruptly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Subject/topic clear; theme/unifying event may not</li> <li>•Reader is able to infer theme/unifying even</li> <li>•Overpromise/underdeliver OR underpromise/overdeliver</li> <li>•No reactions</li> <li>•Abrupt ending</li> <li>•Lacks sufficiency to demonstrate a developed focus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Subject/issue vague</li> <li>•Reader must infer main event and theme</li> <li>•Unrelated ideas or major drift from focus (brainstorming)</li> <li>•May be insufficient writing to determine that subject and unifying event can be maintained</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Subject and issue unclear, limited or confusing</li> <li>•Insufficient writing to show criteria are met</li> </ul>
<b>ELABORATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Most episodes and reactions elaborated with specific detail</li> <li>•Some episodes may be developed with more detail than others (not necessarily balanced or even)</li> <li>•Some development of depth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Some episodes or reactions elaborated with specific details</li> <li>•Contains minimal depth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•May contain list of episodes/events and/or reactions with some extensions</li> <li>•Most elaboration may be general</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•May contain simple list of episodes and/or reactions with no extensions</li> <li>•Mostly general or underdeveloped</li> <li>•Lacks sufficiency to demonstrate developed elaboration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Some attempt at elaboration</li> <li>•May be confusing, unclear, or repetitive</li> <li>•May be insufficient writing to determine that elaboration can be maintained.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Elaboration is absent, confusing, or repetitive</li> <li>•Insufficient writing to show that criteria are met</li> </ul>
<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Narrative structure clear-sequence of episodes moves logically through time without noticeable gaps</li> <li>•Episodes appropriately paragraphed</li> <li>•Coherence and cohesion demonstrated through some appropriate use of devices (transitions, pronouns, causal linkage, etc.)</li> <li>•Varied sentence structure produces some cohesion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Narrative structure is evident - sequence of episodes moves logically through time with a beginning, middle and ending with few gaps</li> <li>•Most paragraphing is appropriate</li> <li>•Coherence and cohesion (sentence to sentence) evident; may depend on holistic structure (chronology)</li> <li>•Most transitions are appropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Narrative structure is noticeable, but the reader may have to infer it-sequence of episodes moves logically through time with some gaps</li> <li>•Some appropriate paragraphing</li> <li>•Evidence of coherence may depend on sequence</li> <li>•If present, transitions may be simplistic or even redundant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Structure is attempted, but reader may still have to infer</li> <li>•Lacks appropriate narrative structure (off-mode)</li> <li>•May have a major lapse or inappropriate transitions that disrupt progression of events</li> <li>•May have little evidence of appropriate paragraphing</li> <li>•Limited structure within paragraphs (e.g., lacks purposeful ordering of sentences)</li> <li>•Lacks sufficiency to demonstrate developed organization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Structure is attempted, but with little success (may be a random presentation of ideas)</li> <li>•Confusing</li> <li>•Insufficient writing to determine that organization can be sustained</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Very confusing/little or no attempt at structure</li> <li>•Insufficient writing to meet criteria</li> </ul>

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<b>CONVENTIONS</b>	Uses consistent agreement between parts of speech. No errors in mechanics. Creative and effective use of spelling strategies.	Consistent agreement between parts of speech. Uses correct punctuation, capitalization, etc. Consistent use of spelling strategies.	Maintains agreement between parts of speech. Few errors in mechanics. Applies basic grade level spelling.	Occasional errors between parts of speech. Some errors in mechanics. Some evidence of spelling strategies.	Inconsistent agreement between parts of speech. Many errors in mechanics. Limited evidence of spelling strategies.	Parts of speech show lack of agreement. Frequent errors in mechanics. Little or no evidence of spelling strategies.
<b>INTEGRATION</b>	•Fully-developed paper for grade level •Clear and purposeful Focus; in-depth, balanced elaboration; sequence of episodes is coherently and cohesively developed throughout	•Developed paper for grade level •All features are not equally well-developed throughout	•Bare-bones-developed paper for grade level •Simple and clear, presenting nothing more than the essentials •Limited depth	•Partially developed •Some (or one) of the feature(s) are not sufficiently formed, but all are present •Lacks narrative structure •Inference is usually required	•Attempts to address the assignment, but only rudiments of techniques for forming Focus, Elaboration, and Organization can be detected •Some confusion and/or disjointedness •May be insufficient writing to determine that the features can be maintained	•Does not fulfill the assignment; barely deals with the topic; or does not present most or all of the features •Insufficient writing to show that criteria are met

**Focus:** *The clarity with which a paper presents and maintains a clear main idea, point of view, unifying event or theme.*

**Support/Elaboration:** *The degree to which the main point or event is elaborated and explained by specific details, descriptions, and reactions*

**Organization:** *The clarity of the logical flow of ideas (coherence and cohesion)*

**Conventions:** *Use of standard written English*

**Integration:** *Evaluation of the paper based on a focused, global judgment of how effectively the paper as a whole uses basic features to fulfill the assignment*

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Appendix N: Teaching to Reach all Learners Matrix 3

## *Teaching to Reach All Learners*

*"Culturally relevant teaching is a pedagogy of opposition...specifically committed to a collective, not merely individual, empowerment" (Ladson-Billings, 1994).*

**Directions:** Please complete the following matrix on Culturally Responsive Pedagogy using the rating scales provided to discover your level of expertise in each domain. Once you are finished, add your totals and circle your corresponding levels.

<b>The Rating Scale: 1- Never</b>	<b>2- Rarely</b>	<b>3-Sometimes</b>	<b>4-Usually</b>	<b>5-Always</b>
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**Classroom Environment**

1. Your classroom environment is inviting and visually stimulating \_\_\_\_\_
2. Your classroom reflects cultural diversity on the walls and classroom materials \_\_\_\_\_
3. Your classroom is print rich with resources of instructional strategies previously taught \_\_\_\_\_
4. In your classroom there is a culture of respect and posters of encouragement \_\_\_\_\_
5. You intentionally post materials in your room that are age and subject appropriate \_\_\_\_\_
6. In your classroom, there is evidence of standards, objectives and an agenda for the day \_\_\_\_\_
7. Various forms of student work are posted and up to date \_\_\_\_\_
8. Classroom is arranged in a fashion conducive for group work \_\_\_\_\_
9. Your body language demonstrates care and passion \_\_\_\_\_
10. You as a teacher are prepared and welcoming toward your students \_\_\_\_\_

**Add Total:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Below Basic</b>	<b>Basic</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
<b>1-19</b>	<b>20-29</b>	<b>30-39</b>	<b>40-50</b>

**Classroom Instructional Delivery**

1. Caring yet firm tones and pitches are used when speaking and language is "student friendly" \_\_\_\_\_
2. Hand gestures or "acting out" information is used to make a point \_\_\_\_\_
3. Activities are planned, interactive and structured with time appropriateness in mind \_\_\_\_\_
4. Instructional delivery of material is modeled and varied using multiple modalities (i.e. technology, music, visuals) to meet cultural learning styles \_\_\_\_\_
5. Instruction is designed to promote students' critical and reflective thinking \_\_\_\_\_
6. Instruction is carried out in such a way that culture is validated and empowered \_\_\_\_\_
7. Anticipatory sets of a lesson must be in congruence with what students already know \_\_\_\_\_
8. Lessons in your class move from whole "picture" to segments of connected learnings \_\_\_\_\_
9. You as a teacher are often honest about perspectives and purpose of material \_\_\_\_\_
10. Teaching, in your opinion, must be fluid and open for adjustments \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Below Basic</b>	<b>Basic</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
<b>1-19</b>	<b>20-29</b>	<b>30-39</b>	<b>40-50</b>

**Add Total:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Teaching to Reach All Learners*

The Rating Scale: 1- Never    2- Rarely    3-Sometimes    4-Usually    5-Always

**Classroom Curriculum and Assessment**

1. Curriculum is age appropriate, relevant and meaningful to students \_\_\_\_\_
2. Curriculum is culturally appropriate or mediated before instruction and must include information about histories, cultures, contributions, experiences, perspectives, and issues of students’ respective ethnic groups \_\_\_\_\_
3. Curriculum is structured for scaffolding during learning and knowledge is viewed critically and problematic \_\_\_\_\_
4. Curriculum is taught to empower, liberate or transform students’ thinking \_\_\_\_\_
5. Curriculum should be intrinsically motivating, placing students and teachers in a close interaction with each other and facilitating better collaboration \_\_\_\_\_
6. Curriculum content must infuse thoughtful analysis of the text and requires students to think critically \_\_\_\_\_
7. Students who are assessed in the classroom are engaged in the process of self knowing and self assessments \_\_\_\_\_
8. Students should have choice from a variety of assessments including oral, technical, musical, dramatic demonstrations of knowing content \_\_\_\_\_
9. Assessments should be interwoven within lessons and varied in length and structure \_\_\_\_\_
10. Formal and informal assessments motivate students to develop a broader sociopolitical consciousness that allows them to critique cultural norms, values and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities \_\_\_\_\_

**Add Total** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Below Basic</b>	<b>Basic</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
<b>1-19</b>	<b>20-29</b>	<b>30-39</b>	<b>40-50</b>

## *Teaching to Reach All Learners*

<b>The Rating Scale:</b> 0 -Never	1-Sometimes	2-Always
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### **Classroom Teacher Beliefs, Attitudes and Actions: An Internal Reflection**

1. Believes all students can learn and come to school with skills \_\_\_\_\_
2. You are a passionate firm believer in your profession and identify strongly with teaching \_\_\_\_\_
3. You see yourself as a part of the community and feel responsible to give back to the community \_\_\_\_\_
4. In your opinion, teaching is not a technical career; your work is an artistry \_\_\_\_\_
5. It is your belief that students' are apprenticed in a learning community rather than taught in an isolated and unrelated way \_\_\_\_\_
6. Your students real life experience is legitimized as they become a part of the "official" curriculum \_\_\_\_\_
7. It is your belief that teachers participate in a broad conception of literacy that incorporates oratory, creative and physical demonstrations of understanding \_\_\_\_\_
8. You are cognizant of yourself as a political being and understand that students must develop a broader sociopolitical consciousness that allows them to critique cultural norms, values and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities \_\_\_\_\_
9. Specifically, your teaching is a pedagogy that empowers student intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. These cultural referents are not merely vehicles for bridging and explaining the dominant culture; they are aspects of the curriculum in their own right \_\_\_\_\_
10. You feel "real" education is about extending a students' abilities and thinking and your classroom is always focused on instruction that is related to your students \_\_\_\_\_
11. Your Instruction involves an in depth knowledge of the student and the subject matter \_\_\_\_\_
12. In your classroom, teaching starts with building good relationships and being passionate about learning \_\_\_\_\_
13. You demand, reinforce, and produce academic excellence by attending to their academic needs equitably \_\_\_\_\_
14. You find ways to channel and value student leadership skills into positive academically important ways, especially your male students \_\_\_\_\_
15. In your classroom, it is important you utilize and praise diverse cultures, student interest, community members and age appropriate materials as vehicles for learning \_\_\_\_\_
16. In your classroom, you allow students to use their home language to understand concepts and teach them how to translate or "codeswitch" academic language \_\_\_\_\_
17. Your relationships are fluid and equitable with individual bonds that extend beyond the school and into the community \_\_\_\_\_

18. In your class, you do not shy away from issues or topics on race and culture in the classroom\_\_\_\_\_
19. Even in the difficult task of disciplining, you do not allow students to lose face or be disrespected in the process, and if this happens you immediately begin restoring pride\_\_\_\_\_
20. Your actions honor students sense of dignity and humanity, their personhood is never doubted. Self worth and self concept are promoted in every basic way by acknowledging the individuals worthiness to be a part of a supportive and loving community of learners\_\_\_\_\_
21. Your lessons involve students in the knowledge construction process, so that they can ask significant questions about the nature of the curriculum with the ultimate goal being to ensure they have a sense of ownership of their knowledge\_\_\_\_\_
22. Your teaching is framed with imperative and relative questions because you believe knowledge should be viewed critically and problematic\_\_\_\_\_
23. It is normal for you to invite members of the church, community, or staff (persons who have relationships with students) to talk about the accomplishments of the students or to teach a concept \_\_\_\_\_
24. In your presence, your students are treated as competent so that they can demonstrate competence because all children can learn. Your instruction is caring and demonstrates a sense of “family” \_\_\_\_\_
25. You view literacy as a tool for liberation and your teaching is transformative and continuous. It pulls out knowledge and builds instead of making “deposits” of learning \_\_\_\_\_

**Add Total:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Below Basic</b>	<b>Basic</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
<b>1-20</b>	<b>25-35</b>	<b>36-45</b>	<b>46-50</b>

*Created by Ayanna Ibrahim-Balogun 2009, adapted from Ladson-Billings (1994) and Geneva Gay (2000)*



### *Teaching to Reach All Learners*

1. Please circle the corresponding number reflective of each score in each area. Your score reflects your culturally responsiveness in that area.
2. Add those totals up in each area and divide that number by 4. **This number gives you an overall average score of your Culturally Relevant and Responsive Teaching.**

<p><b>Classroom Environment</b></p> <p>Below Basic= 1                  Basic= 2                  Proficient= 3                  Advanced= 4</p>	<p><b>Classroom Instruction</b></p> <p>Below Basic= 1                  Basic= 2                  Proficient= 3                  Advanced= 4</p>
<p>Total score:                  _____</p>	
<p>Below Basic= 1                  Basic= 2                  Proficient= 3                  Advanced= 4</p> <p><b>Classroom Curriculum and Assessments</b></p>	<p>Below Basic= 1                  Basic= 2                  Proficient= 3                  Advanced= 4</p> <p><b>Classroom Teacher: Beliefs, Attitudes and Actions</b></p>

*Created by Ayanna Ibrahim-Balogun 2009, adapted from Ladson-Billings (1994) and Geneva Gay (2000)*

## Appendix O: Rater/Reader Consent

To the Readers/Raters:

I am studying the connections among students' classroom instruction, writing and positive attitudes. To help me understand these connections, you have been asked to assist in the grading of the writing samples.

***Benefits***

Your participation will help me understand more about the ways that adolescents learn and use writing to communicate in meaningful ways.

***Voluntary Participation***

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. You will be given calibration training on the scoring process and required to use your expertise in grading the samples with care and without bias.

***Confidentiality***

We will keep students' information confidential so that they cannot be individually identified. No student names will be used in project results. Raw data will not be shared with school faculty, administration or students.

***Questions***

I hope that you participate in this interesting and enjoyable writing project. If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Ayanna Ibrahim-Balogun at [REDACTED].

***Consent***

The project will consist of grading several writing samples using three rubrics: Holistic (General Writing) scoring, Primary Trait (Narrative) Scoring Guide, and a "Voice" rubric.

Sincerely and Gratefully,

Ayanna Ibrahim-Balogun  
University of Redlands  
School of Education  
University of Redlands  
Redlands, California 92373  
(909) 748-8867

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I have read the letter describing the English Language Arts/Writing project. I understand what participation involves and that students' work is confidential. It is clear that no names will be associated with the information. I understand that Mrs. Ibrahim-Balogun is available to answer any questions that I may have about the project. I understand that participation in the project is voluntary and may be stopped at any time.

I **agree** to participate in the English language arts dissertation research on writing. \_\_\_\_\_

I do **not want** to participate in the English language arts project. \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Teacher/Rater \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix P: Rater Training #1 Agenda

**Training #1****1. Overview of the study:**

African American students have not fared well as evidenced by the aforementioned alarming statistics and research that continue to scream for interventions to aid in these unjust educational disparities. Unless openly addressed, these disheartening conditions in our educational system will continue. Further complicating this issue is the current status of low literacy achievement and writing performance.

Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction (CRRI) often referred to as culturally responsive teaching or culturally relevant teaching is a pedagogy that requires teachers to acknowledge and understand the students' culture, realities, interests, and identity as sources of knowledge to teach them (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Gay, 2000; Villegas and Lucas, 2002). While culturally responsive teaching involves several characteristics, the ultimate goal is to empower, validate, celebrate and utilize one's socio-culture identities while teaching the content.

To contribute to the scholarly research on CRRI and writing development, this proposed study will compare African American student writing samples produced from classrooms with teachers employing CRRI with African American writing samples from classrooms with teachers who do not employ CRRI. In addition, this research will also attempt to investigate the experiences and insights of the students and educators involved in CRRI classrooms and non-CRRI classrooms.

**2. Description of the Calibration Process**

- See Writing Calibration Procedures

**3. Bias**

- What is it?
- What are the biases we carry as teachers of writing?
- Do we have a bias about handwriting and spelling?

**4. Rubric Discussion**

- Introduce rubrics and functions
- Discuss salient features of the rubrics
- Begin to collaboratively discuss expectations
- Calibrate samples with each Holistic Scoring Guide Rubric

**5. Set up Sessions "A" and "B" for scoring**

## Appendix Q: Rater Training #1 Continued

**Training #1 Agenda continued**Overview of the meeting:

- ✓ Review explanation of the calibration process using the score rubrics
- ✓ Review the expectations set at the last meeting
- ✓ Collect Primary Trait scoring guide rubric sheets
- ✓ Score several (5 or more) samples individually until there 80% consistency on the final score using the Primary Trait Scoring Guide
- ✓ Give raters Primary Trait Scoring guides for assigned students

**Session A**Overview of the meeting:

- ✓ Collect Primary Trait scoring guide rubric sheets
- ✓ Explanation of the calibration process using the score rubrics.
- ✓ Review the expectations set at the last meeting
- ✓ Score several (5 or more) samples individually until there 80% consistency on the final score using the “Voice” Scoring Guide
- ✓ Give raters “Voice” scoring guides with assigned students

**Session B**Overview of the meeting:

- ✓ Collect “Voice” scoring guide rubrics
- ✓ Give raters “Thank You” gifts
- ✓ Explanation of final stages research

## Appendix R: Teacher Research Checklist

**Teacher Research Check-off Sheet**

Teacher : \_\_\_\_\_

**Teachers**

- Teacher questionnaire
- Initial Writing turned in\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_
- District Writing turned in\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_
- Consent Forms\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_
- Teacher Interview Complete

**Students**

- Student questionnaire
- Interviews Complete

**Coding directions:**

To protect the identities of students involved, simple coding must be done on all student writing samples and questionnaires to describe student gender and student ethnicity.

1. Use classroom attendance roster to number students. For example if student is #1 on the attendance roster, the student shall be labeled #1 on top of their paper.
2. Label student ethnicity "H" for Hispanic and "B" for Black.
3. Label student "M" for male student and "F" for female student.
4. For example, the top of a student's paper may read #1BM. This would be decoded as the number #1 on student of a teacher's class roster and be a Black male.

## Appendix S: Rater/Teacher Survey

**Rater/Teacher Survey**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Current Assignment/Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Years of Experience in current position: \_\_\_\_\_

Collegiate Educational background: \_\_\_\_\_

1. In your opinion, what are some reasons for low achievement in writing? Mark all that apply.
  - a. Lack of Writing Program
  - b. Teacher Training and instruction
  - c. Teacher/Student accountability
  - d. Lack of organizational structure
  - e. Student preparation
  - f. Lack of interest in writing
  - g. Various topics not engaging
2. How much time do you spend in preparation for student writing instruction?
  - a. 1-2 hours
  - b. 2-4 hours
  - c. 2-3 days
  - d. 1 week
3. How often is feedback provided to students?
  - a. None
  - b. Sometimes
  - c. Almost always
  - d. For sure always
4. How much time is used to instruct students on each genre?
  - a. 1-2 days
  - b. 3-5 days
  - c. 1-2 weeks
  - d. More than two weeks
5. How much writing practice is afforded to students for mastery/final writing piece?
  - a. 1 exposure
  - b. 2 exposures
  - c. 3 exposures
  - d. 4 or however many would be needed for mastery



## Appendix T: Director's Questions

**EMP Director's thoughts and feelings....**

**Please complete the questions electronically and email the answers back to me.**

- 1. Describe in your own words, the Clay USD EMP program from its inception to its current status.**
- 2. Describe major accomplishments and challenges of the EMP program, currently and in the past.**
- 3. Do you feel EMP has continued to meet the need of African American students? Why or why not?**
- 4. Describe the influence of writing within the EMP program and its impact with students.**
- 5. Describe the training that EMP teachers receive and is this training isolated to only them in the district?**
- 6. How are teachers chosen to participate in the EMP program and are there incentives for doing so?**
- 7. How are teachers monitored or supported through this program?**
- 8. Describe your role in the program?**
- 9. Describe the future of EMP.**
- 10. Are there any closing thoughts and/or feelings? Is there anything you are most proud?**