

12-2015

The effect of a writing course on the English language arts state assessment examination in a South Texas high school

Esmeralda V. Munoz
The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/etd>



Part of the [Educational Leadership Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Munoz, Esmeralda V., "The effect of a writing course on the English language arts state assessment examination in a South Texas high school" (2015). *Theses and Dissertations*. 68.
<https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/etd/68>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks @ UTRGV. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ UTRGV. For more information, please contact justin.white@utrgv.edu, william.flores01@utrgv.edu.

THE EFFECT OF A WRITING COURSE ON THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STATE
ASSESSMENT EXAMINATION IN A SOUTH TEXAS HIGH SCHOOL

A Dissertation

by

ESMERALDA V. MUÑOZ

Submitted to the Graduate College of
The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

December 2015

Major Subject: Educational Leadership

THE EFFECT OF A WRITING COURSE ON THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STATE
ASSESSMENT EXAMINATION IN A SOUTH TEXAS HIGH SCHOOL

A Dissertation
by
ESMERALDA V. MUÑOZ

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dr. Shirley Mills
Chair of Committee

Dr. Marie Simonsson
Committee Member

Dr. Ralph Carlson
Committee Member

Dr. Miguel De Los Santos
Committee Member

Dr. Colin Charlton
Committee Member

December 2015

Copyright 2015 Esmeralda V. Muñoz

All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

Muñoz, Esmeralda V., The Effect of a Writing Course on the English Language Arts State Assessment Examination in a South Texas High School. Doctor of Education (Ed. D.), December, 2015, 201 pages, 17 tables, references, 153 titles.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the impact a writing course will have on test scores for At-Risk students who are taking the English I and/or English II State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness End-of-Course exam. The group analyzed was comprised of 2nd and 3rd year cohort students. The results of this study showed that there was a significant improvement from pre-test to posttest scores on the STAAR English Language Arts End-of-Course assessment for students who were placed in the Writing II and Writing III courses.

DEDICATION

This is dedicated to all those individuals God gave me throughout my life's journey. To my husband, who held my hand through the unimaginable, and who has stood by side throughout the toughest times of our lives. My darling, you have empowered me to overcome the impossible, and without you in my life, I would not be here. Because of that, and because of so much more, I will love you forever. My doctoral degree was made possible because of you.

Mama, Gracias por haberme dado amor y apoyo toda mi vida. Gracias por ayudarme con los niños mientras que yo iba a la escuela y mientras que hacía tareas en las noches. Tu les has dado el amor y cariño que me diste a mi, y te lo agradezco muchísimo. Sin ti, no hubiera logrado este éxito. Estoy muy agradecida y tan orgullosa que tu eres me madre. Le doy gracias a Dios todos los días de mi vida, que El me dio a ti y a Daddy. To my father, whose voice still lives in my heart and whose spirit is represented in everything thing I do. Daddy I will love you and miss you forever.

This is also dedicated to our three beautiful and amazing children, Madylyn Danielle, Annalyn Noelle, and my baby boy, Roberto Jose Muñoz, II. This is also dedicated to the two angels we did not get to meet, but who we knew for a few brief moments in our lives. Daddy and I will meet you in heaven some day babies. I love you all!

I know now more than ever that God makes all things possible if you have faith in Him. Through courage, conviction, and dedication, your dreams will become a reality.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful for Dr. Shirley Mills, chair of my dissertation committee, for all the words of encouragement, the patience she granted me while I worked toward my goal, for coming to my house to work on polishing my dissertation on rainy days, and for always being there when I needed her the most.

I would like to thank Dr. Marie Simonsson, for the time she gave me when she was the busiest, and for giving me the guidance necessary to make my dream a reality. I also thank Dr. Charlton for his words of encouragement and Dr. De Los Santos for always finding ways to support my endeavors. I would also like to thank Dr. Carlson, for helping me all those Wednesday afternoons, and for all those statistics lessons he taught me, even after he was no longer my professor.

I would also like to thank Alejandra Gonzalez for her constant support and most importantly, for being my friend throughout the course of this endeavor. I would also like to thank my boss, Mr. Albert Canales, for allowing me to realize my dream while I served as dean of instruction on his campus.

Because of all of you, I was able to accomplish my goal...I will be forever grateful.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
LIST OF TABLES.....	x
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	1
Assumptions.....	13
Need for the Study.....	14
Limitations of the Study.....	19
Historical Evolution of Writing Course in High School.....	19
Purpose Statement.....	21
Research Questions.....	21
Definition of Terms.....	21
Significance of the Study.....	24
Summary.....	27

CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	29
State Accountability System in Texas.....	29
STAAR.....	36
A New Assessment Model.....	37
ELA Component of STAAR in Texas.....	41
At-Risk Students in Texas.....	42
Economically Disadvantaged Students.....	44
Program Evaluation.....	45
Title I in Texas.....	48
Graduation Requirements in Texas.....	50
No Child Left Behind.....	51
Writing Intervention.....	54
Teaching Strategies in Writing.....	60
Block Scheduling.....	63
Traditional Scheduling.....	67
Curriculum Based Measurement and Progress Monitoring.....	69
Summary.....	72
CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY	73
Research Design.....	73
Appropriateness of Design.....	75
Purpose Statement.....	76
Research Questions.....	76
Null Hypotheses.....	76

Participants.....	77
Informed Consent.....	77
Confidentiality.....	78
Intervention.....	78
Data Collection.....	80
Data Analysis.....	80
Summary.....	80
CHAPTER IV. RESEARCH, FINDINGS AND RESULTS.....	81
Demographic Information.....	83
Descriptive Analysis.....	85
Summary.....	100
CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	101
Discussion of Findings.....	102
Conclusions.....	105
Implications and Recommendations.....	111
Future Research.....	114
REFERENCES.....	117
APPENDIX A.....	129
APPENDIX B.....	138

APPENDIX C.....	163
APPENDIX D.....	195
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.....	201

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1: Student Demographics.....	10
Table 2: Total Calculations for English Language Arts Examination.....	11
Table 3: 2 nd and 3 rd Year Cohort Retest Period After Intervention.....	13
Table 4: Phase-in and Final Recommended Level II and Level III Standards and Minimum Scores.....	36
Table 5: Projected Retester Dates for 2 nd Year and 3 rd Year Cohort.....	75
Table 6: Demographic Information.....	83
Table 7: Total Calculation of Points for English I and English II Examinations.....	84
Table 8: Descriptive Statistics for English I Pre-Test and Posttest Short Answer #1, Short Answer #2 (Cross-over).....	86
Table 9: Summary Table English I: Two-way ANOVA (2 x 4), Gender and Trials, English I Short Answer Pre-Test and Posttest.....	88
Table 10: Comparison for Analysis for English I Short Answer # 1 and # 2 Pre-Test Posttest scores	90
Table 11: Comparison Between Pre-Test and Posttest Means for English I Short Answers	91
Table 12: Summary Table English I: Two-Way ANOVA (2 x 2), Gender and Trials, English I Short Answer Pre-Test and Posttest	92

Table 13: Descriptive Statistics for English II Pre-Test and Posttest Short Answer #1 and Short Answer #2 (Cross-over).....	94
Table 14: Summary Table English II: Two-Way ANOVA (2 x 4), Gender and Trials, English II Short Answer Pre-Test and Posttest.....	95
Table 15: Pairwise Comparison for Analysis for English II Short Answer Means Pre-Test and Posttest Scores	97
Table 16: Comparison for Analysis for English II Short Answer # 1 and # 2 Pre-Test and Posttest Scores.....	98
Table 17: Summary Table English II: Two-way ANOVA (2 x 2), Gender and Trials, English II Essay Pre-Test and Posttest.....	99

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The “Texas Education Agency (TEA) officials utilize the Texas accountability system to evaluate performance of all schools and districts by use of indicators measured by the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills examination by grade, by subject, and by all grades tested” and all “reports are available to the public on an annual basis” (Zoda, Slate, and Combs, 2011, p. 176). Quennemoen, Lehr, Thurlow, and Massanari (2001) explain that “if states set high standards for student performance, develop assessments that measure student performance” then schools will have the “flexibility they need to change curriculum, instruction, and school organization to enable their students to meet standards” (p. 1).

Statement of the Problem

The state of Texas initiated state assessments in 1980 with the Texas Assessment of Basic Skills (TABS®); in 1984 the Texas Education of Assessment of Minimum Skills or TEAMS was “the first assessment students were required to pass in order to receive a high school diploma” (TEA Technical Digest, 2011, p. 1). The TEAMS changed to the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS®) and “shifted the focus of assessment from minimum skills to academic skills” (TEA Technical Digest, 2011, p. 1). TAAS continued to be the state assessment until it was replaced by the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS®) which was “designed by legislative mandate to be more comprehensive” because it followed “the state-mandated curriculum” known as the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS®) framework (TEA

Technical Digest, 2011, p. 3).

According to Texas Education Agency, “by law, students for whom TAKS is the graduation testing requirement, must pass exit level tests in four content areas- English Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies and Science- to graduate from a Texas public high school” (TEA Technical Digest, 2011, p. 3). In the spring of 2011, the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) replaced the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS®) examination. The STAAR exam exhibits the same expectation: If a student meets minimum passing standards in each area tested, and accrues all credits through courses taken, then a student is granted their high school diploma. Like the TAKS, the STAAR exam includes annual assessments for reading and mathematics in grades 3–8, writing at grades 4 and 7, science at grades 5 and 8, social studies at grade 8, and ultimately, End-of-Course (EOC) assessments for English I, English II, Algebra I, Biology and U.S history. Beginning in 2016, Texas Education Agency (TEA) will voluntarily administer STAAR EOC assessments for English III and Algebra II (TEA, 2014, p. 1). Hull and Rose (1989) explained that “current research on college-age underprepared students had its beginnings in the demographic and policy studies” of the “1960s and 1970s. Schools began to welcome numbers of students who had had no expectations of higher education and little preparation for it” (p. 2). Initially, the state recognized a tremendous disconnect between minimum passing standards on the TAKS and the basic level of knowledge and skills necessary for college readiness. Many students who met passing standards on TAKS, and entered a college or university, would have to take “remedial” courses to make up for the lack of skill in the area of reading and/or math. The lack of skill was determined through the

THEA (Texas Higher Education Assessment) examination that students had to take in order to enter a college or university. Students now take a similar entrance exam known as the Texas Success Initiative exam (TSI). According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (2014):

Remedial education refers to classes taken on a college campus that are below college-level. Students pay tuition and can use financial aid for remedial courses, but they do not receive college credit. Most remediation occurs in reading, writing, and math. Within and among states, ‘remedial’ often is used interchangeably with the terms ‘developmental’ and ‘basic skills.’ Low-income, Hispanic and African-American students are more likely to need remediation than their wealthier, white peers. Forty-one percent of Hispanic students” who enter college are required to take remedial courses in reading, writing, and/or math (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014, p. 1).

According to Bali and Alvarez (2004) “the large presence of minority students,” especially in the southern-most part of the Texas, “including recent immigrant Hispanic students, allows us to study a potentially wide sample of educational experiences and backgrounds” to enhance student achievement for all at-risk student populations (p. 396). King (2015) explains that “President Obama’s budget” for the 2016 school year has allotted “increase spending on ESEA programs, including \$1 Billion for schools that serve the most vulnerable children, including minority students, English learners, students with disabilities and low-income students” (p. 11).

Hanselman, Bruch, Gamoran and Borman (2014) explain that “racial and ethnic differences in school performance are a pervasive and troubling feature of the United States’ educational system (p. 106). Park, Lawson, and Williams (2012) explain:

In the United States, the academic achievement gap is a matter of ethnicity and

socioeconomic status. Due to the remarkable changes in the Hispanic population in the United States, attention to the achievement gap has shifted from African Americans to Hispanics. In 2006, 44.3 million Hispanics accounted for 14.8% of the total population (p. 256)

“As the fastest growing ethnic group in the nation, Latinos have become a force that education must consider with more overt intention” (Brown, Santiago and Lopez, 2003, p. 41). According to Valle, Waxman, Diaz and Padron (2013) “during 2007-2008 school years, Hispanics accounted for 20.4% of the nation’s K-12 public school student population” (p. 173). “It is estimated that by 2046, Hispanics will outnumber white people” and will “constitute more than 25 percent of those younger than age 18” (Altshuler and Schmartz, 2006, p. 6). As the demographics for most public schools have changed, instructional expectations remain the same. With this, the growing aspect of instructional leadership has come into fruition. Gülcan (2012) explains:

Instructional leadership has changed the school administrator’s conventional understanding of role and management. The basic starting point of instructional leadership is to develop instruction. In this leadership approach, it is aimed at designing the school environment completely in line with instruction and as a productive setting (p. 626).

As of now, educators integrate supplemental strategies to facilitate the learning process for at-risk students, but they must assess and maintain the same level of knowledge acquisition as their peers. Kibler (2014) states that “for K-12 schools serving adolescents from language minority backgrounds in the United States, changes in students’ writing are most often conceptualized as growth in English language proficiency or English language arts standardized test scores” (p.

629). Hispanic students account for 96% of the total population for the high school that is used in this study. The assessment used as a measure, the STAAR English Language Arts End-of-Course exam, has an increased rigor that is significantly more difficult for all students to master. The purpose behind the STAAR End-of-Course exams is to ensure that once students graduate from high school, they will possess the skills necessary to be both career and college ready. The new STAAR, State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) End-of-Course exam, also incorporates higher order thinking questions, analytical writing prompts, as well as integrates questions that reflect the highest level of Bloom's Taxonomy. According to the TEA Website:

The rigor of items will be increased by assessing skills at a greater depth and cognitive complexity. Performance standards will be set using empirical data gathered from studies that link performance year to year from grades 3-8 to high school and from specific courses to college and career readiness (TEA, 2014, p.1).

Although the idea behind administering this type of exam showed promise, the results reflected the exact opposite. Unfortunately, the exams administered during the 2012-2013 school year showed that many students, especially those who were labeled At-Risk, did not meet the minimum passing standards (TEA, 2014).

The Texas Education Agency and the STAAR 2012-2013 Summary Report displayed 34,317 of 84,465 students met the minimum passing standards of scoring an 1875 or above in reading. Of those 84,465 students, 64,427 students were labeled as at-risk by the state. Of those 64,427 students who are at-risk, only 19,916 met the minimum passing standard for the reading portion of the English I exam. The results for the writing portion conveyed a much more dismal result. For the English I Writing, 127,958 students were tested. Fifty-one thousand, three hundred

seventeen (51,317) of 127,958 tested students met the minimum passing standard scoring an 1875 or above. Of those 127,958 students in the state, 86,756 are labeled At-Risk and of those, only 27,370 met the minimum passing standard in the area of writing. Data showed that less than half of the state's student population met the minimum standards in both reading and writing for English I (TEA, 2014). These results provoked a significant sense of urgency for many districts. Districts are now engaged with the need to revamp curricula. Some districts have integrated supplemental courses to help all students, especially at-risk student populations, so that they are successful on all STAAR End-of-Course exams. These efforts would possibly assist students in meeting minimum passing standards in all areas and ultimately, help them graduate from high school.

After the first test administration of 2012, the state of Texas changed the requirements for high school students from the initial fifteen STAAR End-of-Course exams to five STAAR End-of-Course exams (TEA Technical Digest, 2011, p. 6). A significant change to the English I and English II exam included the combination of both reading and writing portion of the exams (TEA, 2015, p. 1). Previously, the STAAR English Language Arts exam consisted of two separate exams; one reading portion that included two short stories, 22 multiple choice, and two short answer response, and the writing portion of the exam which included a section for revising and editing and two compositions (TEA, 2015, p. 3). The STAAR English Language Arts End-of-Course exam for both English I and II is now comprised of two reading selections, 22 multiple choice questions, 2 short answer responses, a revising and editing section, and one essay for the composition component (TEA, 2015, p. 3). The short answer response section of the test incorporates one of the two reading selections while the other short answer response question targets specific similarities between the two selections; the similarities could assess any of the

Student Expectations listed through the Texas Education Agency's requirement of English Language Arts knowledge and skills (TEA, 2013, p. 2). Some of these include knowledge in literary devices such as a thematic link between the two selections, knowledge of literary devices, or identifying author's purpose.

The short answer response rubric rates responses from 0-3, 0 being the lowest score a student can earn and 3 being the highest score. The essay component in both English I and English II is rated by Performance Level Descriptors. These are listed in detail in Appendix A and Appendix B in the appendices.

The English I and English II reading and writing portions of the exam are weighted at 50% each. Although one portion of the exam expects knowledge and skill in reading comprehension and literary device usage and identification, the student is also required to answer, in written form, two short answer response questions. The first short answer response expects a student to answer a question pertaining to the first reading selection. The student must include textual evidence from the first reading selection to support their answer. The second short answer response expects a student to answer a question that connects the first with a second reading selection. The second short answer response is known as the 'crossover' question. In the crossover question, the student must include textual evidence from both selections that supports their answer. When results of these assessments are provided to districts, campuses know the percent of mastery per student for each knowledge and skill assessed. According to Moon and Hughes (2002), "proponents argue that performance assessments provide truer, more complex pictures of student achievement" and should be to monitored as part of campus achievement throughout (p. 15). Furthermore, Crawford, Tindal and Carpenter (2006) supported that "performance assessments collect information on a range of skills, each of which contributes

unique information about the target construct” that should be used to further instructional preparation (p. 17). On the STAAR English Language Arts End-of-Course exam, students must display knowledge of literary devices, answer all written responses using complete sentences, and support their answer with textual evidence from one or both selections provided on the exam. The short answer portion of the assessment assesses a student’s reading comprehension and writing skills. According to Reilly, Stafford, Williams, and Corliss (2014):

Open-ended (short answer) assessments are commonly used to measure students’ writing skills, conceptual understanding, and higher order thinking skills such as evaluating, analyzing, and problem solving. By forcing students to construct a response rather than choose from a list of possible answer, students are more fully able to demonstrate what they know and what they are able to do (p. 84).

In addition to the new level of rigor, campus and district accountability was also phased in at specified levels of accountability that should be reached after certain years of implementation. The Texas Education Agency implemented the phase-in standards and final recommendations for passing standards for the English Language Arts End-of-Course examination. For the 2012-2013, the Level II passing standard score was 3626. The 2013-2014 Level II passing standard score was raised to a 3750. Because the passing score was not attained by a large majority of students, the passing standard score for the 2014-2015 school year remained at a 3750. The current passing standard for the 2015-2016 school year was raised to a 3825 for all students who were taking the English I or English II End-of-Course exam for the first time. It is expected that the state will raise the final passing standard score to 4000. The state established multiple indices to measure student mastery: Index 1- Student achievement, Index 2- Student Progress, Index 3- Closing Performance Gaps, and Index 4- Postsecondary Readiness (TEA, 2014). Districts are

now held accountable for passing rates, student growth from one year to the next, and projected college readiness (TEA, 2012, p. 1).

South Texas High School [pseudonym] is located in South Texas Tri-County ISD, in the most southern part of Texas. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the estimated population of residents of this area is over 800,000. Ninety-one percent (91.7%) of this population is Hispanic. The average income for families in this area is \$33,218. Sixty-one percent (61.2%) of the population of persons age 25 or older graduated from high school. South Texas High school is located in a south Texas city that currently holds a population of over 130,000 people. The current average percentage of high school graduates in this city is 73.9%. Twenty-seven percent (27.1%) of the city's population has a bachelor's degree from a college or university. The median household income is \$40,636 per year. (United States Census Bureau, 2015). With the implementation of this new exam, these percentages may possibly change dramatically.

According to The Texas Tribune (2015), there were "28,000 public high school seniors who still need to pass a state exam to get their diplomas" for the May 2015 graduation date (Smith, 2015, p.1). Currently, South Texas High School has 146 fourth year students who have not passed their STAAR exams. Of those 146 students, 46 fourth year students needed to pass both English I and English II. If students did not pass English I and English II End-of-Course assessments, as well as exams in Biology, Algebra I, and U.S. History, those students would not graduate.

South Texas Tri-County ISD has several high schools. This study reflects student STAAR scores for South Texas High School. South Texas High School has over 2,000 students (TEA, 2012, p. 10). The demographics for the 2012-2013 school year include the following:

Table 1

Demographics for South Texas High School

African American	Hispanic	White	American Indian	Asian	Pacific Islander	Two or More Races
0.4%	91.6%	6.2%	0.2%	1.2%	0%	0.4%
Economically Disadvantaged	Non-Economically Disadvantaged	English Language Learners (ELLs)	Students with Disciplinary Placement	At-Risk		
42%	57.6%	13.6%	6.1%	56.8%		

Note: Adapted from Texas Education Agency, 2013. Academic Excellence Indicator System archives, Texas Academic Performance Report. The Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR) pull together a wide range of information on the performance of students in each school and district in Texas every year. Performance is shown disaggregated by student groups, including ethnicity and low income status. The reports also provide extensive information on school and district staff, programs, and student demographics. Retrieved from www.ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/tapr/index.html

As part of South Texas Tri-County ISD district initiative to improve STAAR scores, all high schools in South Texas Tri-County ISD implemented a writing class in 9th, 10th, and 11th grades as a supplemental course to help those students who had not passed the 7th grade Writing and 8th grade Reading STAAR examination, and the English I and/or English II STAAR exam. South Texas Tri-County ISD’s goal for this course was to give students the tools necessary to perform well on the English I and English II exam. The table below displays the breakdown for each component of the English Language Arts End-of-Course examination, and the percentages allotted for the reading and writing portion of the exam. The itemization for the English I and II STAAR exam consist of the following:

Table 2

Total Calculations for English Language Arts Examination

% of Total Score of Section	Multiple Choice	% of Score	Performance Component	% of Score
50%	28 Questions (1 point each) 28 points	30%	2 Short Answer (9 points each) 18 points	20%
50%	22 Questions (1 point each) 22 Points	24%	1 Composition 24 Points	26%

Note: Adapted from the ESC Region 20. Services provided by ESC-20 are aligned with, and designed to support, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) adopted by the State Board of Education. Retrieved from <http://www.esc20.net/users/gendocs/STAAR/QRGs/ELAR/STAARQuickReferenceGuideEOCII.pdf>

South Texas High School developed three courses, Writing I, II, and III that were all aligned with the TEKS that corresponded with each English I and English II STAAR End-of-Course exam. All Writing courses taught all components of the English I and English II End-of-Course STAAR assessment. The Writing courses reinforced STAAR level writing throughout the course of the semester. In addition to creating these courses, the campus set up a master schedule to create a common planning time for the Writing I, II, and III teachers and the English teachers for each grade level. The Writing I teacher worked closely with the English I teacher to provide additional STAAR End-of-Course preparation for the students. The Writing II teacher

met with both English I and English II teachers during their content planning time to provide additional writing preparation for the students who failed the English I STAAR End-of-Course, and who would challenge the English II STAAR End-of-Course for the first time during the Spring semester. The Writing III teachers worked alongside the Writing II and Writing III teachers, and taught students the components of either the English I or English II STAAR End-of-Course examinations. According to Rigolino and Freel (2007), “students are placed into basic writing classes largely on the basis of how well they performed on standardized exams” so “one approach to reconfiguring basic writing programs is to” generate a course that would allow for students to receive the supplemental instruction throughout the school day (p. 50). Students placed in the 9th grade writing course were identified and grouped by the score the student earned on their 8th grade Reading STAAR. If the student scored less points than passing score of 1875 (Level II) on their 8th grade exam, counselors were given a directive by administration to remove the student from one of their electives and place them in the Writing I course. Tenth grade students who had not reached the minimum passing standard on their English I STAAR exam were placed in the Writing II course to cover all components that they had not grasped in the English I STAAR during their 9th grade year. Eleventh grade students who had not passed English I and English II STAAR exams were placed in the Writing III course. In order to optimize teacher-student interaction, as well as provide continuous support for the English I and English II STAAR, South Texas Tri-County ISD also mandated that the classroom ratio for the Writing I, II, and III courses be maintained at 18 students per section. Teachers who were selected to teach this course had three or more years of experience in the field of secondary education in the area of English Language Arts. Within each grade level, a total of 108 students

were placed in each writing course. A combined total of 324 students participated in these supplemental courses.

The state of Texas implemented a student’s first retest cycle to take place December of the same calendar year as the Spring or Summer STAAR administration. For example, if the student failed in the Spring or Summer of the 2013 school year, the student would test in December of the 2013 school year. If test results showed that the student did not pass the December retest administration, they would retest again in the Spring of the following school year. If the student did not pass in the Spring of the following school year, the student would retest again in the Summer of the same calendar year. Table 3 shows the retest dates for retesters.

Table 3

2nd and 3rd Year Cohort Retest Period After Intervention

Second Year Cohort High School Students		Third Year Cohort High School Students	
(Students did not pass STAAR ELA I)		(Students failed ELA I/ ELA II)	
Writing II Course		Writing Course III	
March/ July	December	March/ July	December
STAAR ELA I	STAAR ELA I	STAAR ELA II	Retest STAAR
	Retest		ELA II Retest
	Administration		Administration

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made by the researcher when completing this study to ensure the integrity of the study. It was assumed that:

- All teachers are certified by the state of Texas and are deemed highly qualified to teach the content.
- All students are responsible individuals who are in regular attendance, complete assignments, and follow the discipline guidelines as per the student code of conduct.
- All teachers are supported in the area of curriculum and instruction by campus administration.

Need for the study

During the 2014-2015 school year, the effect of the STAAR exam had on state graduation rates was extreme; nearly 30,000 students were unable to graduate because of failure in one or more STAAR exams (Smith, 2015, p.1). This study measured the effect a writing course had on student STAAR scores in the writing portion of the exam for English I and English II. The effect was evident in the writing scores the students obtained on the English I and/or English II STAAR retest examination after taking the writing course. This study also evaluated the effect this writing course had on the writing scores for students who were labeled as at-risk, and who had not met minimum passing standards for the English I and II STAAR the previous test administration. Because the English I and II STAAR exam consists of reading comprehension, proper grammar usage and identification, two short answer responses that must be presented in written form, as well as an essay portion, knowledge in reading comprehension and writing played a significant part on a student's score on the exam. South Texas Tri-County ISD and South Texas High School wanted to ensure that students received the preparation necessary by teaching them grammar strategies, accurate short answer response preparation, as well as provided them with sufficient instruction in the area of composition writing. This study

was needed in order to measure whether the implementation of a supplemental writing course, taken in conjunction with their English II or III class, had an impact for at-risk student scores for the English I and II STAAR End-of-Course exam. This study helped identify the impact this writing course had on how students performed on the writing portion of their exam, as well as conveyed the growth at-risk students accrued on assessment scores from one year to the next. The results from this study exhibited the need for a supplemental writing course at the high school level. This study showed the impact this course had on test scores for the at-risk student population.

According to the state of Texas, graduation requirements were and still are tied directly to the STAAR exam. According to TEA (2014), if “the student meets the STAAR cumulative score requirements in each of the four content areas” then they qualified to graduate under the ‘Distinguished Achievement Plan or Recommended Achievement Plan’” (p. 1). If a student had not met STAAR “cumulative score(s)” on all five STAAR exams, then “the student retests until cumulative score requirements are met” (p. 1). Recent changes to the graduation requirements changed as of May 2015, and they included the following:

Senate Bill 149: Students who are classified in grade 11 or 12 during the 2014-2015, 2015-2016, or 2016-2017 school years who have taken and have failed to achieve the end-of-course (EOC) assessment performance requirements for graduation for not more than two courses are eligible for Individual Graduation Committee (IGC) review [TEC, 28 §28.0258(a) and (l); 19 Tex. Admin. Code § 101.3022]. In order for a student to be eligible to graduate based on an Individual Graduation Committee determination, the student must have satisfactorily completed credit requirements for graduation specified in Chapter 74, must be classified as a 12th grade student, must have taken all required EOC

assessments, and must have been provided an opportunity to retake any EOC assessments for which the student has not previously achieved satisfactory performance (p. 1-2). A student may not graduate under an Individual Graduation Committee (IGC) if the student did not take each EOC assessment required by this subchapter or if the student has not previously achieved satisfactory performance on an assessment. Effective the beginning with the 2014-2015 school year, a student who has taken, but failed to achieve the EOC assessment for no more than two courses may receive a Texas high school diploma if the student has qualified or the Individual Graduation Committee (TEA, 2015, p.1).

According to TEA, the Individual Graduation Committee (IGC) was comprised of the following personnel:

- the teacher of the course for which the student did not pass the required 5 EOC assessments
- the department chair or lead teacher supervising the teacher of the course; and
- as applicable, the student's parent or guardian; a designated advocate; or the student, at the student's option, if the student is at least 18 years old or is an emancipated minor [TEC, §28.0258(b)].
- a principal or designee, the teacher of record or department head for the subject area, and, if the principal chooses, the student's academic counselor (TEA, 2015, p. 2).

Below are all the criteria the Individual Graduation Committee acknowledged to determine whether the student qualified to graduate:

- the completion of a project related to the subject area of the course that demonstrates

proficiency **or**

- the preparation of a portfolio of work samples in the subject area of the course, including work samples from the course that demonstrate proficiency [TEC, §28.0258(f)].
- successfully completes the credit requirements for the foundation high school program identified by the State Board of Education or as otherwise provided by the transition plan adopted by the commissioner in TAC, §74.1021,
- the student successfully completes all additional requirements recommended by the IGC, and
- the committee's vote is unanimous [TEC, §28.0258(i)]. In determining whether a student is qualified to graduate the IGC must consider:
 - the recommendation of the student's teacher in each course for which the student failed to perform satisfactorily on an EOC assessment;
 - the student's grade in each course for which the student failed to perform satisfactorily on an EOC assessment;
 - the student's score on each EOC assessment on which the student failed to perform satisfactorily;
 - the student's performance on any additional requirements recommended by the committee;
 - the number of hours of remediation that the student has attended, including attendance in a college preparatory course, if applicable, or attendance in and successful completion of a transitional college course in reading or mathematics;
 - the student's school attendance rate;

- the student’s satisfaction of any of the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) college readiness benchmarks prescribed by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board;
- the student’s successful completion of a dual credit course in English, mathematics, science, or social studies;
- the student’s successful completion of a high school pre-Advanced Placement (AP), AP, or International Baccalaureate program course in English, mathematics, science, or social studies;
- the student’s rating of advanced high on the most recent high school administration of the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS);
- the student’s score of 50 or greater on a College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) examination;
- the student’s score on the ACT, SAT, or Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test;
- the student’s completion of a sequence of courses under a career and technical education program required to attain an industry-recognized credential or certificate;
- the student’s overall preparedness for postsecondary success; and
- any other academic information designated for consideration by the board of trustees of the school district or charter [TEC, §28.0258(h)].

All changes were submitted and published by the Texas Education Agency on May 2015.

According to Smith (2015), “about 28,000 students in the class of 2015 still must pass one or more of the five state exams in U.S. History, Biology, Algebra I, English I and English II required to graduate. Of those in the class of 2015 who need to retake exams, about half must retake more than one” (p. 1). State Legislation had to move forward with an alternative plan of

action for these students to ensure that all were afforded an opportunity to earn their high school diploma. If a plan was not in place, the number of non-graduates would have been much higher.

Limitations of the Study

- This study did not account for entering 9th grade students for the 2014-2015 school year.
- This study did not account for personal situations students were facing outside of the classroom as part of the results on state assessments.
- This study did not account for those students who were placed in alternative education placements during or prior to assessments and/ classroom instruction.
- This study assessed predominantly at-risk, Hispanic students from a low socio-economic area.
- This study did not research the type of reading instruction students received in 9th and 10th grade.
- This study did not research the type of writing instruction students received in 9th and 10th grade.
- This study did not assess the type of reading and writing instruction that was taking place in the student's current English II or English III classes.

Historical Evolution of Writing Course in High School

The state of Texas identified the need for supplemental instruction in the area of writing in the 2015 report on Phase-in standards for the following school years (TEA, 2014, p.1).

According to the TEA Test Design Information for March 2015, when referring to the writing component of the exam, "students must generate a reasonable idea and confirm the validity of that idea by using specific evidence from the text. Students are scored on the content of their

answers and the text evidence they use, not on the quality of their writing” (p.3). As a result, South Texas Tri-County ISD found that integrating a class that targeted all the relevant skills necessary for instruction in reading and writing, it would possibly effect the writing courses for students who had not passed the English I and/or English II exams. Graham and Sandmel (2011) elaborated further that “call to reform writing instruction is based on the assumption that there are effective practices for teaching this complex skill” (p. 396). Now that writing is assessed in a variety of forms more consistently, Koutsoftas and Gray (2012) state:

The National Commission on Writing (2006) suggested that writing should be a major focus in school reform in the forthcoming years because it is the medium for complex thought in school and the workforce. Beyond the basic need to produce written language for academic tasks, writing helps an individual sort through complex ideas and produce uninterrupted thought on paper (p. 942).

This variety “of writing methods, ranging from explicitly teaching strategies for planning, revising, paragraph and sentence construction, word processing” would be seen “as a tool for writing, and studying and emulating models of good writing” (Graham and Sandmel, 2011, p. 396). Gregg, Coleman, Davis and Chalk (2007), explained that “standards-based reform has led to an increase in the use of impromptu essay tests as the gatekeeper for promotion and graduation” (p. 306). Because 50% of the STAAR English Language Arts assessment is constituted by the writing portion, writing has become a necessary instructional component of standardized exams. Furthermore, because at-risk students are labeled at-risk for multiple factors, implementing effective writing practice became a critical part for the writing courses. Nearly all of the students in the writing classes were labeled at-risk and the writing courses were structured to integrate effective practices to address deficits found within the writing portion of the

student's previous STAAR writing scores. If educators "better understand the barriers" these students were presented with, "professionals might identify and implement needed reforms across current writing curricula" (Gregg, Coleman, Davis & Chalk, 2007, p. 306). The complexity that came with the English Language Arts STAAR End-of-Course called for an isolated course that would not only introduce but reinforce critical strategies that students needed to know in order to holistically craft short answer and essay responses.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this quasi-experimental research study in a South Texas High School was to determine whether a supplemental writing course for at-risk students improved scores on the writing portion of the State Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) English Language Arts End-of-Course exams for both English I and English II.

Research Questions

What is the difference, if any, between the pretest and posttest in English Language Arts English I and English II End-of-Course writing scores?

What is the difference, if any, between the pretest and posttest in English Language Arts English I and English II End-of-Course writing scores and gender?

This research question will be answered for third-year cohort students using two different measures for the English Language Arts End-of-Course exam.

Definition of Terms

STAAR. State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness

TAKS. Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills

Texas Assessment Management System. The Texas Assessment Management System or TAMS is access information and online sites for the STAAR, STAAR Alternate, STAAR A, TELPAS and TAKS assessment programs.

At-Risk. At-Risk in the state of Texas: Having at least one disability, being retained in grade at least once, speaking English less than “very well”, not living with both parents, living in poverty, having parents who emigrated to the U.S. in the past 5 years, and living in a family where neither parent is employed. A student is identified as at risk of dropping out of school based on state-defined criteria (§TEC 29.081.) At-risk status is obtained from the PEIMS 110 records. The percent of at-risk students is calculated as the sum of the students coded as at risk of dropping out of school, divided by the total number of students in membership: number of students coded as at-risk *divided by* total number of students (TEA, 2014).

Drop out. According to the TEA Department of Accountability and Data Quality (2006), a dropout is a student who is enrolled in Texas public school in grades 7-12, does not return to Texas public school the following fall, is not expelled, and does not graduate, receive a GED, continue high school outside the Texas public school system or begin college, or die (TEA, 2006, p. 1).

EOC (STAAR). The State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness, or STAAR, is the state assessment program that was implemented in the 2011—2012 school year. The Texas Education Agency (TEA), in collaboration with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and Texas educators, developed the STAAR program in response to requirements set forth by the 80th and 81st Texas legislatures. STAAR is an assessment program designed to measure the extent to which students have learned and

are able to apply the knowledge and skills defined in the state-mandated curriculum standards, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Every STAAR question is directly aligned to the TEKS currently implemented for the grade/subject or course being assessed. The STAAR program includes STAAR, STAAR Spanish, STAAR L (a linguistically accommodated version), and STAAR A (an accommodated version).

Economically disadvantaged student. An economically disadvantaged student is defined as one who is eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program. [Source: *2007-2008 PEIMS Data Standards*] (TEA, 2015).

Academic Intervention. Academic interventions are not selected at random. First, the student academic problem(s) is defined clearly and in detail. Then, the likely explanations for the academic problem(s) are identified to understand which intervention(s) are likely to help—and which should be avoided. (Wright, 2014, p. 1).

Writing I Course. This course was designed for all 1st year high school students who were classified as 9th grade students. These students were selected to be in the course based on the student's 8th grade STAAR Reading exam score.

Writing II Course. This course was designed for all 2nd year high school students who had not passed their English I End-of-Course STAAR exam.

Writing III Course. This course was designed for all 3rd year high school students who had not passed their English I and/or English II End-of-Course STAAR Exam. Students were grouped into specific class periods based on their exam scores.

Significance of the Study

According to the Texas Academic Performance Report for 2012-2013, South Texas High School consisted of a predominantly Hispanic, economically disadvantaged student population that in the past exhibited low scores and high non-pass rates on state assessments (TEA, 2012, p. 12). The majority of the students who failed state assessments fell under these demographics and were also labeled as at-risk. Although Writing teachers faced multiple challenges when working with at-risk students in these remedial writing courses, the ultimate goal for both teachers and students was to equip students with the strategies necessary to be successful on the STAAR examination, regardless of the student's label. "Secondary school educators- writing teachers included- face increasingly challenging and competing demands" while "simultaneously preparing 'college prep' students for the demands of college writing" (Acker and Halasek, 2008, p. 1). Koutsoftas and Gray (2012) stated that "educators have been required to assess students' achievement using high stakes tests mandated by federal and state laws" but must also ensure that students are prepared for post-secondary education as well (p. 395). One additional concern that has remained prevalent in public schools is the college and career initiative that was created to "increase postsecondary access, improving the quality of a college education, and accelerating college completion" (Garcia and McCauley, 2011, p. 7). Moss and Bordelon (2007) explained that "when considering the performance of low-income students and students of color" many "who do seek admission to college" have obtained "inadequate skill levels" and "frequently necessitate enrollment in remedial classes at the postsecondary level" (p. 198). In many cases, many of these students may have passed standardized assessments, but will fail to meet college-level expectations within their first semester of school. The STAAR End-of-Course exam for all core subjects, especially in the area of English Language Arts, was tailored to meet a higher level

of rigor and reinforced the college and career readiness component by holding campuses accountable through the state accountability system. Solorzano (2008) stated that high stakes tests “were developed” for “the alignment of the tests to curriculum taught in individual classrooms; the use of one measure- the test- to inform high stakes decisions with regard to student placement, promotion and graduation” as well as “to evaluate programs, teachers, and administrators” (p. 260). And although these assessments were considered high-stakes exams, Altschuler and Schmautz (2006) stated that states “establish a baseline level of achievement from which they must demonstrate yearly improvement” (p. 6). If a campus did not perform well on standardized exams, the campus administrators, teachers, and ultimately the district would be subject to scrutiny by the Texas Education Agency by moving in and reforming district and campus operations. Standardized test scores advertise the level of academic preparedness the schools, as well as the district provide, and this can make districts more marketable. However, for schools that have a large minority or at-risk population, standardized test scores serve as a precursor to student failure as a whole. Ruecker (2013) stated that high stakes testing may have had a “negative impact...on minority students” because of the “hierarchies it can create among high school;” this has resulted in the “disconnect between high school and college” (p. 304). It has become imperative that educators facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and skills for state assessments, as well as prepare students for their future endeavors in either the college or career setting. Ramos (2014) stated that “educators need to implement instructional approaches that foster students’ development” to “achieve on high stakes literacy assessments in English” (p. 655). Von der Embse and Hasson (2012), stated that “because indicators of school and student performance are determined through the use of high-stakes tests, it becomes critical to examine any variable which may interfere with the authentic measurement of student achievement and

school effectiveness” (p. 180). Currently, in classrooms with lower performing or at-risk student populations, the student demographic consists of a number of special education students, English Language Learners, 504 students that require academic modifications, and/or students who may be a part of the Response to Intervention (RtI) program that requires some academic or instructional modifications or accommodations. Furthermore, these students are also placed in classes with high teacher-student ratios. Weir, Archer and McAvinue (2010) reinforced that “small classes were a positive feature of special schools and that the reduction in the pupil-teacher ratio in previous year had helped ordinary schools to provide an appropriate educational services for pupils with disabilities” (p. 5). Because students who are categorized as at risk, and receive this label for a variety of reasons according to the state, they usually fall within the “bubble” group. If at-risk students are under the “bubble” group they are “students who are close to passing (state mandated) tests” (Von der Embse and Hasson, 2012, p. 180). Many of these students, when followed from their ninth to their twelfth grade year, failed to pass the STAAR End-of-Course state assessments, even by the end of their senior year. Some of those students had to return after graduation, which many of them were unable to experience, because they failed to pass their state assessments. Of these, more than half failed to pass the STAAR End-of-Course exams even in their fifth year of high school; and many of these students were also part of the at-risk population (TEA, 2014, p. 14). In order to help this particular population, as well as other sub-populations, South Texas Tri-County ISD implemented a supplemental writing course for students who failed to pass their English I and English II STAAR exams their 9th and 10th grade year to help students avoid retesting in the future. In order to determine what students would be placed in the Writing I class, South Texas High School reviewed 7th grade STAAR Writing and 8th grade STAAR Reading scores. Criteria for placement was if students failed their

7th grade Writing STAAR, their 8th grade Reading STAAR or both, they were placed in the Writing I class. South Texas High School also identified those students who had not passed their English I STAAR End-of-Course exam their 9th grade year, and then placed them in the Writing II course. Tenth grade students who had not passed their English I and/or English II STAAR End-of-Course exam in their second year in high school were then placed in the Writing III course. South Texas Tri-County ISD's as well as South Texas High School's goal was to ensure that students who had not passed their exam(s) had had a supplemental course in writing that focused on strengthening the student's writing skills. "The need for intensive instruction with deliberate focus on enhancing academic writing practice" can be integrated if it is this instruction is afforded its own segment of time throughout the school day (Ramos, 2014, p. 656).

Furthermore, instructional leaders assisted "to develop the strategies for bringing the goals into reality by allocating the staff, student grouping, and organizing the curriculum" to match student needs (Khan, Khan, Shah and Iqbal, 2009, p. 584). Because the structuring supplemental courses was possible, South Texas Tri-County ISD hired experienced teachers who had three or more years of successful classroom teaching experience in order to support the at-risk and minority populations within the class. Rodriguez (2014) reinforced that when teaching at-risk and minority populations, "such knowledge is critical in creating non-threatening learning environments and curricula for students" would possibly fail the assessments (p. 200). The significance of this study was to inform educational leaders of the success or lack of success this implementation of a supplemental writing course had on student's standardized test scores.

Summary

The new STAAR exam has brought mandatory changes to the public schools in the state of Texas. With a higher level of rigor, new indices of mandated student performance, as well as

significant mandates on level of expectations of skill in post-secondary readiness, Texas districts have had to revamp their instructional system. South Texas Tri-County ISD [pseudonym], along with South Texas High School [pseudonym], integrated a supplemental writing course to assist 2nd year and 3rd year cohort students who were already labeled as at-risk (re-testers) in the district. This course, taken in addition with the English II, or III class, would be beneficial for students. This study delineated the outcome of the implementation of this course, as well as served as a foundation for future curricular and academic changes for the betterment of student performance on the STAAR English I or English II End-of-Course exam.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The state accountability system in Texas indicated that in order for a student to graduate from high school, the student must pass all STAAR exams in English, Math, Science and Social Studies. Two of these assessments are in the area of English Language Arts- English I and English II. This study originated with the implementation of a supplemental writing course for students who had not pass the English I and English II State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) End-of-Course exam in South Texas Tri-County ISD at South Texas High School. The English Language Arts STAAR End-of-Course exam is comprised of short-answer responses, and an essay component. Because of the weight of each component, the district implemented a writing course for those students who had not passed the English I and/or English II exam. The purpose of this quasi-experimental research study in a South Texas high school was to determine whether a supplemental writing course for at-risk students improved scores on the State Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) English Language Arts End-of-Course exams for both English I and English II.

State Accountability System in Texas

The Texas Legislature in 1993 enacted statutes that mandated the creation of the Texas public school accountability system to rate school districts and evaluate campuses. The Texas Assessment of Basic Skills (TABS®) was the first state assessment in 1984 that began in the state of Texas and was followed by the Texas Education of Assessment of Minimum Skills

(TEAMS) which was the first official exam to require mastery before a student graduated from high school (TEA Technical Digest, 2011, p. 1).

The TEAMS changed to the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS®) in the 1990s, which presented knowledge and skill application items to the assessment (TEA Technical Digest, 2011, p. 1). TAAS continued to be the state assessment until it was changed to the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS®) in 2003. TAKS was “designed by legislative mandate to be more comprehensive” because it followed “the state-mandated curriculum” known as the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS®) framework (TEA Technical Digest, 2011, p. 3). According to Texas Education Agency, “by law, students for whom TAKS is the graduation testing requirement must pass exit level tests in four content areas- English Language arts, mathematics, social studies- to graduate from a Texas public high school” (TEA Technical Digest, 2011, p. 3). In the spring of 2011, the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) replaced the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS®) examination that also required that a student meet minimum standards in the tested subject areas for reading, social studies, science, and mathematics. The STAAR End-of-Course (EOC) assessments for English I, English II, Algebra I, Biology and U.S History were created to extend the level of expectations toward college and career readiness standards (TEA Technical Digest, 2011, p. 3). Beginning in 2016, Texas Education Agency (TEA) will voluntarily administer STAAR EOC assessments for English III and Algebra II (TEA, 2014, p. 1). A viable and effective accountability system was achievable in Texas because the state already had the necessary infrastructure in place: a student-level data collection system; a state- mandated curriculum; and a statewide assessment program tied to the curriculum. The English Language Arts curriculum for English I and English II assesses academic writing through open-ended

response format and in the form of an expository essay on the English I assessment and as a persuasive essay in English II assessment. “Effective academic writing is accessible” to students because through writing students will “develop knowledge of and use of academic language forms and functions to signal organization and stance in (persuasive and expository) essays” (Dobbs, 2014, p. 1327). Taylor (2009) stated that one of the major reasons for implementing a state accountability system was because previous assessments were “neither centered around improving academic achievement nor well integrated into the states’ overall accountability system” (p. 3). As a result, districts had to create “multifaceted reading and writing instructional approaches for content text learning” to “improve students’ acquisition of knowledge” (Mason, Davison, Hammer, Miller and Glutting, 2012, p. 1134). Dobbs (2014) stated further that “writing is a major mechanism by which students are expected to demonstrate their academic skills, reflecting their capacity to read, research, evaluate, and synthesize information;” all of which are assessed through the STAAR English Language Arts Assessment (p. 1328-1329). With this, the “growing consensus concerning the importance of reading and writing” became a statewide matter (Braten, Ferguson, Stromso and Anmarkrud, 2014, p. 59).

According to the 2013 Accountability Overview, “districts and campuses were required to meet criteria on up to 25 separate assessment measures and up to 10 dropout and completion measures; the last year for accountability ratings was based on the TAKS was 2011” (p. 7). In addition to this, according to the 2014 TEA Accountability System Overview, “in 2009, the Texas Legislature passed House Bill (HB) 3 mandating the creation of entirely new assessment and accountability systems focused on the achievement of postsecondary readiness for all Texas public school students” (p. 3). TEA worked closely with advisory committees to develop an integrated accountability system based on the adopted goals and guiding principles. As a

transition to the new assessment program, no state accountability ratings were issued in 2012. TEA (2014) Accountability System Overview worked throughout the year with technical and policy advisory committees to develop a new rating system based on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) and a large number of measures to be evaluated were within a performance index framework, eliminating the limitations of a single indicator determining the rating (p. 3). The 2012- 2013 school year marked the first year of ratings and distinction designations based on STAAR results. According to the Post-Secondary Readiness Indicators for the Texas Education Agency Division of Performance Reporting, in “2013, the Texas Legislature passed HB 5, which requires evaluation of additional indicators for postsecondary readiness and distinction designations. The 2014 ratings included a new postsecondary readiness measure (for) college-ready graduates” (p. 2). Future ratings would expand postsecondary readiness indicators to include other measures of postsecondary success. Because of the substantial changes in the level of accountability, the state of Texas determined the Texas Accountability System would integrate a system that would have a significant impact on present-level accountability to reflect a student’s post-secondary readiness. The state of Texas developed goals of accountability that are listed below:

Goals of Texas Accountability System: Texas will be among the top 10 states in postsecondary readiness by 2020, by improving student achievement at all levels in the core subjects of the state curriculum; Ensuring the progress of all students toward achieving advanced academic performance; Closing advanced academic performance level gaps among student groups; and, Rewarding excellence based on other indicators in addition to state assessment results.

Guiding Principles: Student Performance- The accountability system is first and foremost

designed to improve student performance. The system focuses on preparing students in the elementary grades and higher for success after high school.

System Safeguards: The accountability system uses safeguards to minimize unintended consequences.

Recognition of Diversity: The accountability system is fair and addresses the diversity of student populations and educational settings.

Public Participation and Accessibility: The accountability system's development and implementation are informed by advice from Texas educators and the public. The system is understandable and provides performance results that are relevant, meaningful, and easily accessible.

Coordination: The accountability system is part of an overall coordinated strategy for state and federal ratings, reporting, monitoring, and interventions.

Statutory Compliance: The accountability system is designed to comply with statutory requirements.

Local Responsibility: Districts are responsible for submitting accurate data upon which ratings are based.

The system relies on local school districts to develop and implement local accountability systems that complement the state system.

Distinction Designations: Distinction designations are based on higher levels of student performance rather than more students performing at the satisfactory level.

State accountability ratings are based on a framework of four indexes that are used to evaluate the performance of each public campus and district in the state. The framework included a range of indicators to calculate a score for each index and enables a thorough

assessment of campus and district effectiveness. Accountability ratings are based on achieving a target established for each performance index.

- Index 1: Student Achievement provides a snapshot of performance across subjects.
- Index 2: Student Progress measures year-to-year student progress by subject and student group.
- Index 3: Closing Performance Gaps tracks advanced academic achievement of economically disadvantaged students and the lowest performing racial/ethnic student groups.
- Index 4: Postsecondary Readiness emphasizes the importance of earning a high school diploma that provides students with the foundation necessary for success in college, the workforce, job training programs, or the military (TEA, p. 5, 2014).
- Three labels were used to rate the overall performance of districts and campuses – Met Standard, Met Alternative Standard, or Improvement Required – as determined by the four indexes. Broadly based, the performance index framework considered results from the STAAR testing program, in addition to graduation rates and rates of students completing the Recommended High School Program and Distinguished Achievement Program, and other indicators. In addition to evaluating performance for all students, the performance of the following individual groups of students are evaluated in the performance index framework - All Students, African American, American Indian, Asian, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, White, Two or

More Races, Students served by Special Education, Economically Disadvantaged, and English Language Learners (ELLs)

- Distinction Designations: Campuses that receive an accountability rating of Met Standard are eligible for distinction designations. Distinction designations are awarded to campuses based on achievement in several performance indicators relative to a group of campuses of similar type, size, and student demographics (TEA, 2014, p. 1).

Beginning in 2014, campuses and districts were eligible for distinction designation in Postsecondary Readiness. Additional distinctions were also available for campuses for academic achievement in science and social studies and top 25 percent in closing performance gaps (TEA, 2015, p.1). According to TEA, the minimum level of state mandated standards increased as the school years progressed. The STAAR Student Assessment Standards (TEA, 2013) explained the following:

Phase-in period had been implemented for STAAR performance standards to provide school districts with time to adjust instruction, provide new professional development, increase teacher effectiveness, and close knowledge gaps. A four-year, two-step phase-in for Level II will be in place for all general STAAR assessments. In addition, STAAR Algebra II, English III reading, and English III writing will have a two-year, one-step phase-in for Level III. The phase-in for Level III: Advanced Academic Performance will allow an appropriate amount of time for students and school districts to adjust to the new assessment requirements, since this level of performance is required for students to graduate under the Distinguished Achievement Program (DAP) (p. 1). The Level II and Level III Standards are presented in the table below.

Table 4

Phase-in and Final Recommended Level II and Level III Standards and Minimum Scores

Assessment:	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2016	2014
	Level II	Level II	Level II	Final	Level III
	Minimum	Minimum	Minimum	Minimum	
English I	3626	3750	3750	4000	4691
English II	3626	3750	3750	4000	4691

Note. Adapted from Texas Education Agency Student Assessment Division February 2015

Appendix C provides the 2014 Accountability System for the 2014-2015 school year for the state of Texas.

STAAR

According to Espin, Wallace, Campbell, Lembke, Long & Ticha (2008), “41 states require students to take a test in writing or require a writing component on their English/ Language Arts assessments” (p. 174). The State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) was the state assessment program that was implemented in the 2011- 2012 school year. The Texas Education Agency (TEA), in collaboration with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and Texas educators, developed the STAAR program in response to requirements set forth by the 80th and 81st Texas legislatures. STAAR was an assessment program designed to measure the extent to which students have learned and are able to apply the knowledge and skills defined in the state-mandated curriculum standards, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) (Texas Legislature Research Center, 2013, p. 62). Every STAAR question was directly aligned to the TEKS currently implemented for the grade/subject or course being assessed. The STAAR program included STAAR, STAAR Spanish, STAAR L (a

linguistically accommodated version), and STAAR A (an accommodated version) (TEA, 2015).

STAAR had been noted as a more rigorous testing program than the previous assessments used in the state of Texas (TEA, 2012, p. 27). It emphasizes "readiness" standards, which are the knowledge and skills that are considered most important for success in the grade or course subject that follows and for college and career. STAAR, with a higher level of rigor, also more test questions at most grades than did TAKS assessments. The high school assessments, which were grade-level based in the TAKS program, were now course-based exams. For the first time, the state's assessments were timed. Students have four hours to complete each STAAR exam, except for English I and English II, which both have a five-hour time limit (TEA, 2015, p. 1).

A New Assessment Model

The state assessments continued to be based on the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), the standards were designed to prepare students to succeed in college and careers and to compete globally. However, consistent with a growing national consensus regarding the need to provide a more clearly articulated K–16 education program, it focused on fewer skills and addressed those skills in a deeper manner. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) implemented a new assessment model for the STAAR tests for elementary, middle, and high school. The new STAAR assessment tested content covered throughout the course of the school year, as well as content from previous years through Readiness Standards and Supporting Standards. According to Texas Education Agency, Readiness and Supporting Standards are delineated below.

Readiness standards have the following characteristics:

- Are essential for success in the current grade or course
- Are important for preparedness for the next grade or course.

- Support college and career readiness.
- Necessitate in-depth instruction.
- Address significant content and concepts

Readiness standards for English Language Arts:

- For Reading, Writing and English Language Arts- focus on specific reading genres (fiction and expository and on writing for particular purposes

Supporting standards have the following characteristics.

- Introduced in the current grade or course but may be emphasized in a subsequent year.
- Reinforced in the current grade or course, but may be emphasized in a previous year.
- Play a role in preparing students for the next grade or course but not a central role.
- Address more narrowly defined ideas.

Supporting Standards for English Language Arts:

- May apply to other reading genres (poetry, drama, literary nonfiction, and persuasive)

(TEA, 2010, p. 1-2).

Doing so, it strengthened the alignment between what was taught and what was tested for any given subject area course of study. STAAR assessments in areas such as mathematics, reading, writing, and social studies in grades 3–8 continued to address only those TEKS taught in the given subject and grade. The content of other STAAR assessments such as English I, English II, Algebra, Biology and U.S. History changed in the following ways. STAAR science assessments

for grades five and eight continued to address TEKS from multiple grade levels, these tests focused on the science TEKS for those respective grades. The science assessments at these two grades emphasized the 5th and 8th grade curriculum standards that best prepared students for the next grade or course; in addition, these assessments included curriculum standards from two lower grades (i.e., grades 3 and 4 or grades 6 and 7) that supported students' success on future science assessments. In contrast, the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) assessments uniformly addressed TEKS from multiple grade levels without any specific emphasis. The new end-of-course assessments addressed only the TEKS for a given course, as opposed to the high school level TAKS assessments, which addressed TEKS from multiple courses. STAAR English I and English II End-of- Course exams include both readiness and supporting standards that are assessed throughout the exam. In both assessments however, Lapp and Fisher (2012) explained that students must now know “how to develop evidence-supported claims” as well as “understand the power of anticipating the knowledge, questions, and concerns of the intended audience as a way to impress their position” or determine the meaning behind fiction or expository techniques through literary non-fiction (p. 641).

By focusing on the TEKS that were most critical to assess, STAAR measured the academic performance of students as they progressed from elementary to middle to high school (TEA, 2012, p. 27). Based on educator committee recommendations, TEA identified each set of knowledge and skills for each grade or course and drew from the TEKS that were eligible for assessment. The STAAR Assessment Model emphasized a set of knowledge and skills, called readiness standards, on the assessments (TEA, 2010, p. 1). The remaining knowledge and skills considered supporting standards and assessed, though not emphasized,

Readiness standards have the following characteristics:

- They are essential for success in the current grade or course.
- They are important for preparedness for the next grade or course.
- They support college and career readiness.
- They necessitate in-depth instruction.
- They address broad and deep ideas.

Supporting standards have the following characteristics.

- Although introduced in the current grade or course, they may be emphasized in a subsequent year.
- Although reinforced in the current grade or course, they may be emphasized in a previous year.
- They play a role in preparing students for the next grade or course but not a central role.
- They address more narrowly defined ideas.
- TEA is also implementing a number of changes that should serve to test knowledge and skills in a deeper way.
- Tests will contain a greater number of items that have a higher cognitive complexity level.
- Items will be developed to more closely match the cognitive complexity level evident in the TEKS.
- In reading, greater emphasis will be given to critical analysis than to literal understanding.
- In writing, students will be required to write two essays rather than one.
- In social studies, science, and mathematics, process skills will be assessed in context,

not in isolation, which will allow for a more integrated and authentic assessment of these content areas.

- In science and mathematics, the number of open-ended (griddable) items will increase to allow students more opportunity to derive an answer independently (TEA, 2010 p. 1).

ELA Component of STAAR in Texas

Pemberton, Rademacher, Tyler-Wood and Cerejio (2006), explained that one of the ways districts would see significant improvement in their assessment scores was if “content and performance standards set for all students...measure the progress of all students toward the standards and accountability systems that require continuous improvement of student achievement” (p.7). Marzano, Pickering and McTighe (1993) stated “curriculum standards are best described as the goals of classroom instruction” while “content standards, also known as discipline standards, comprised the knowledge and skills specific to a given discipline” (p. 14). Besides content standards, educators and schools must also take into account the differentiation in curriculum that must occur to accommodate special populations. Gullo (2013) stated that “gaps in academic performance among students or between and among schools or classrooms can be due to the uneven distribution of resources coupled with the uneven distribution of students of different ability levels,” which in public schools, cannot be avoided (p. 415). The State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness English Language Arts components for the English I and English II End-of-Course exams are listed in Appendix A. STAAR Readiness and Supporting Standards are listed in Appendix B for English I and English II.

At-Risk Students in Texas

According to Moore (2006), “the term at-risk is used frequently to describe children and youth that are at-risk of a poor outcome” due to “limited reading proficiency, experiencing abuse or trauma, having a disability or illness, or having behavior problems” (p.2). Moore (2006) defined this further with the following:

Measures of family risk include poverty, a low level of parental education, a large number of children, not owning a home, single parenthood, welfare dependence, family dysfunction, abuse, parental mental illness, parental substance abuse, and family discord or illness (p.2).

The U.S. Department of Education (1992) outlined “at-risk students as one who is likely to fail at school” (Archambault, et al., 2010, p. 2). According to the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (2010), “approximately 1.2. Million U.S. students leave high school without a (high school) diploma every year” (Archambault, Diamond, Brown, Cavanaugh, Coffey, Fourse-Aalbu, Richardson, Zygouris-Coe, 2010, p. 2). Johnson and Lampley (2010) explained “at-risk children need additional support for any chance to achieve success in an academic setting” (p. 64). As a result, some campuses had “addressed the problems of students leaving the school system before completing high school” by targeting the “needs of at-risk students” (Beken, Williams, Combs, Slate, 2009, p. 50).

In the state of Texas, a student can be identified as at risk of dropping out of school based on state-defined criteria (§TEC 29.081.) At-risk status was obtained from the PEIMS 110 records. The percent of at-risk students was calculated as the sum of the students coded as at risk of dropping out of school, divided by the total number of students in membership: number of students coded as at-risk *divided by* total number of students (§TEC 29.081.). A column showing

at-risk student performance is shown on the district, region, and state reports. While this column is not available on the campus-level reports, counts of at-risk students are shown in the Profile section of the campus reports (as well as the district, region, and state reports).

The statutory criteria for at-risk status included each student who was under 21 years of age and who:

- was not advanced from one grade level to the next for one or more school years;
- is in grades 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, or 12 and did not maintain an average equivalent to 70 on a scale of 100 in two or more subjects in the foundation curriculum during a semester in the preceding or current school year or is not maintaining such an average in two or more subjects in the foundation curriculum in the current semester;
- did not perform satisfactorily on an assessment instrument administered to the student under TEC Subchapter B, Chapter 39, and who has not in the previous or current school year subsequently performed on that instrument or another appropriate instrument at a level equal to at least 110 percent of the level of satisfactory performance on that instrument;
- is in prekindergarten, kindergarten or grades 1, 2, or 3 and did not perform satisfactorily on a readiness test or assessment instrument administered during the current school year;
- is pregnant or is a parent;
- has been placed in an alternative education program in accordance with §TEC 37.006 during the preceding or current school year;
- has been expelled in accordance with §TEC 37.007 during the preceding or current

school year;

- is currently on parole, probation, deferred prosecution, or other conditional release;
- was previously reported through the PEIMS to have dropped out of school;
- is a student of limited English proficiency, as defined by §TEC 29.052;
- is in the custody or care of the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services or has, during the current school year, been referred to the department by a school official, officer of the juvenile court, or law enforcement official;
- is homeless, as defined by 42 U.S.C. Section 11302 and its subsequent amendments; or
- resided in the preceding school year or resides in the current school year in a residential placement facility in the district, including a detention facility, substance abuse treatment facility, emergency shelter, psychiatric hospital, halfway house, or foster group home.

At risk students were included in this study.

Sources: TEA, PEIMS, (2010) October; Texas Education Code, 81st Texas Legislature

Economically Disadvantaged Students

The economically disadvantaged population is a population that according to state standards has potentially hindered progress in state academic accountability. Mason, et al. (2012) explained that “the difficulties that low-achieving students have when reading and writing about text are substantiated by poor outcomes, outcomes that have remained relatively stable across reading, writing” as well as other assessments “over time for these students” (p. 1134).

Unfortunately, many of the programs integrated by school systems have not been successful for the economically disadvantaged student population. According to Graham and Sandmel (2011),

the findings from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP; Salah-Din, Persky, & Miller, 2008), stated that “only 33% of eighth-grade and 24% of 12th-grade students perform at or above the proficient level in writing (defined as solid academic performance)” (p. 306). This unfortunate statistic has been realized more so in the southern most regions of Texas where a large majority of students are considered of Limited English Proficiency (LEP), Economically Disadvantaged, as well as At-Risk. Morgan (2012) also presented the idea that the reason why teachers were not producing adequate results lay in that “most schools in economically-disadvantaged areas in the US suffer from teachers who are underprepared, and too often work in schools with poor working conditions” (p. 291). According to the TEA website (2010), “the percent of economically disadvantaged students is calculated as the sum of the students coded as eligible for free or reduced-price lunch or eligible for other public assistance, divided by the total number of students: number of students coded as eligible for free or reduced-price lunch or other public assistance *divided by* total number of students” (p.1).

Program Evaluation

The initiation of programs on any campus must undergo a program evaluation to ensure that funding for programs is appropriated accordingly. According to Fitzpatrick, Sanders and Worthen (1997):

Evaluation uses inquiry and judgment methods including (1) determining standards for judging quality and deciding whether those standards should be relative or absolute. (2) collecting relevant information, and (3) applying the standards to determine value, quality, utility, effectiveness, or significance. It leads to recommendations intended to optimize the evaluation object in relation to its intended purpose(s) (p. 5).

To further the purpose behind program evaluation, Fitzpatrick, Sanders and Worthen (1997) stated that “the information gained from an objectives-oriented evaluation can be used to reformulate the purposes of the activity, the activity itself, or the assessment procedures and devices used to determine the achievement of purposes” (p. 81).

According to Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen (1997), “discrepancies between performance and objectives lead to modifications intended to correct the deficiency and the evaluation cycle is repeated” (p. 82). South Texas High School took archival data from previous test scores, placed the students in a writing course, and ultimately the students were re-tested in December of the same academic school year. Previous assessment scores were comprised from either the April exam administration from the previous year, or the summer exam administration before the beginning of the year. This was how the campus evaluated whether the writing course helped students pass the STAAR English Language Arts I and II End-of-Course exams.

Program evaluations are increasingly important for a variety of reasons. Program evaluations could:

- Provide information to stakeholders and sponsors such as the effects, potential limitations, or apparent strengths of the program.
- Determine the need of continued funding
- Indicate the program’s impact on participants
- Discover problems or needs early to prevent more serious problems later
- Reveal which program activities to continue and which ones to end
- Recommend improvements for the future
- Ensure quality
- Build client confidence about purchasing, participating, or using the program.

- Inform staff about the program
- Participating staff gain knowledge and understanding of the program
- In addition, they learn how to conduct an effective evaluation and may be more willing to facilitate future evaluations themselves.
- Assist in prioritizing resources by identifying program components that are most effective or critical.

Help in the planning and delivery of organizational actions provided diagnostic information before any future action was taken. (The University of Texas at Austin, 2015, p. 1).

Program evaluations, according to Cellante and Donne (2013), provided information to make decisions on its ability to comply with mandates from the state education department, and develop or improve the program to meet the goals of the new initiative (p. 1).

Cellante and Donne (2013) stated:

According to O'Leary (2010), evaluation research is defined as 'research that attempts to determine the value of some initiative. Evaluative research identifies an initiative's consequences as well as opportunities for modification and improvement' (p. 138). The primary purpose of program evaluation is to provide timely and constructive information for decision-making. Thus evaluation serves to facilitate a program's development, implementation, and improvement by examining its processes and/or outcomes. A definition of evaluation research specific to educational programs was put forth by the Office of Educational Assessment at the University of Washington, Seattle (2005), as the 'systematic assessment of the processes and/ or outcomes of a program with the intent of furthering its development and improvement' (p. 1).

Title I in Texas

National Title I funding “created by the Elementary and Secondary Act in 1965, consists of 15 federal programs intended to ensure that disadvantaged students have the opportunity to reach proficiency on state assessments through high-quality education” (Taylor, 2009, p. 10). Title I provided federal funding to schools that have low poverty levels. The funding was meant to help students who were at risk of falling behind academically. The funding provided supplemental instruction for students who were economically disadvantaged or at risk for failing to meet state standards. Students were expected to show academic growth at a faster rate with the support of Title I funding.

The Title I program originated as the Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965. It was associated with Title I, Part A of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). According to Moats, Foorman, and Taylor (2006), “the epidemic of reading failure in schools that serve high-poverty and minority populations in the United States has stimulated major federal funding initiatives in the form of the Reading Excellence Act (1998) and the Reading First Component of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001)” (p. 363). Menken (2013) explained that “NCLB was implemented” to bring “an emphasis on high-stakes testing for purposes of accountability; specifically, statewide exams offer a means for the government to ensure that their funding of public schools results in student performance gains” (p. 163). Its primary purpose was to ensure that all children were given the opportunity to be provided with a high quality education. Title I is the largest federally funded education program for elementary and secondary schools. Title I is also designed to focus on special needs populations and to reduce the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students. States that have Title I schools have had several requirements that they have had to adhere to in order to keep funding allotted for

special populations. Schools must have had a child poverty rate of at least 40% to operate a school wide Title I program. A school wide Title I program provided benefits to all students and was not just limited to those students who were considered to be economically disadvantaged (TEA, 2014). Title I in Texas is as follows:

Title I, formerly known as Chapter 1, was part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, and was the foundation of the federal commitment to closing the achievement gap between low-income and other students. Nearly 14,000 of the 15,000 school districts in the nation conduct Title I programs. The original purpose of Title I was additional resources to states and localities for remedial education for children in poverty. The 1994 reauthorization of Title I shifted the program's emphasis from remedial education to helping all disadvantaged children reach rigorous state academic standards expected of all children. Title I funds can be used for instructional activities, counseling, parental involvement, and program improvement. In return, school districts and states must meet accountability requirements for raising student performance. Title I funds generally are used to improve academic achievement in reading and math, but the resources can be used to help students improve their achievement in all of the core academic subjects. Title I funds are flexible, and can be used to provide professional development for teachers; support hiring additional teachers and classroom aides; improve curriculum; enhance parent involvement; extend learning time for students who need extra help; and provide other activities that are tied to raising student achievement (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2014, p. 1).

Graduation Requirements in Texas

According to the Texas Education Agency website, Chapter 74 under Curriculum Requirements Subchapter G. Graduation Requirements, Beginning with School Year 2012-2013:

(e) To receive a high school diploma, a student entering Grade 9 in the 2012-2013 school year and thereafter must complete the following: (1) in accordance with subsection (c) of this section, requirements of the minimum high school program specified in §74.72 of this title, the recommended high school program specified in §74.73 of this title, or the distinguished achievement high school program specified in §74.74 of this title; and (2) testing requirements for graduation as specified in Chapter 101 of this title (relating to Assessment)” (TEA, 2014, p. 1).

For middle grades, social promotion moves students who cannot complete basic middle school requirements into the high school. Unfortunately, for those students who fail to complete requirements for high school, they eventually leave high school without a diploma. Kymes (2004) explains that “U.S. students who sought the American dream could no longer leave school without a diploma or be socially promoted from grade to grade without demonstrated improvement” (p. 58). Since the assessments have changed, and much of the material assessed is at a much higher level of rigor, instructional differentiations must be added to fulfill state requirements for the STAAR exam. In addition to the 26 credits a student must acquire, Koutsoftas and Gray (2012) stated:

Studies of writing performance in U.S. school children indicate that many are writing below expected levels. The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) published reports in 2002 and 2007 documenting the writing proficiency of fourth, eighth, and

twelfth grade students. The 2002 report indicated that 72% of fourth graders, 69% of eighth graders, and 77% of twelfth graders performed below basic level (p. 942).

As a prominent issue in all levels of education, this clearly indicated that academic differentiation for specific students could be made by all public school districts.

No Child Left Behind

In 2002, with bipartisan support, Congress reauthorized ESEA and President George W. Bush signed the law, giving it a new name: No Child Left Behind (NCLB). No Child Left Behind was initiated by the 1983 report titled “A Nation at Risk” that suggested “that the nation was indeed at risk of the educational foundation of society was being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatened the very future” of the nation (Brown, 2013, p. 77). Because of the substantial shortcomings the students had displayed for years through failure rates, the nation had to revamp academic standards and measure them more closely through standardized assessments. Toch (2011) explained, the “U.S. Department of Education is funding two national testing consortia to build such tests, and it is called for more performance-based tests in its blueprint for reauthorizing the federal No Child Left Behind Act” (p. 72). Since stringent standards on assessments were last initiated, curriculum standards were revamped to meet those standards. Miller and Lassmann (2013) explained that “students are taught certain information based on standards” and must “master certain information based on” the “No Child Left Behind (NCLB) enacted in 2004” (p.167). After NCLB set the level of expectations, and assessment results were reviewed, the reality of academic achievement gaps were revealed. Brown (2013) stated that because of the implications that come with NCLB, “a shift in curricular coverage” had to take place “because of the increased focus on mathematics and reading” (p. 78). Deficiencies, although apparent in these areas, were more heavily displayed in the area of English Language

Arts because of the dual component- reading comprehension and written expression in specific modes. The state of Texas initiated multiple tests that have had a varied level of rigor and standardized expectations. The STAAR exam however integrated an additional layer of accountability that included a progressive increase in passing standards every year for the End-of-Course exams. For example, the passing standard for the STAAR English Language Arts exam was 3750 during the 2014-2015 school year. For the 2015-2016 school year, the passing standard was to be moved to 3825, but remained that the 3750 because of the failure rate for the 2014-2015 school year. For 2015-2016 first time testers for the English I and English II Language Arts exam however, the phase-in score was set at 3825. This increase will include an additional number of multiple choice questions right, in addition to the short answer response and writing portion of the exam that was already in place since the 2013-2014 STAAR administration. English language arts teachers are now exposed to “the increased expectations and regulations” with “continuous pressure to increase student achievement” (Thibodeaux, Labat, Lee, and Lebat, 2015, p. 228). Although the increase in standards seemed to have a negative impact on student standards, organizations have created information systems to dissect student output to apply a more prescriptive approach to preparing students, as well as move toward remediation on a more individualized basis. Toch (2011) stated further that “well constructed performance measures, in contrast, go beyond measuring the information students have memorized” and have triggered “more writing and other higher-level tasks when standardized tests measure such skills” to assess students differently (p. 72). Riley (2014) stated that “standardized exams” were used to assess “a diverse population of children to evaluate school performance” and now changed curriculum standards for all core subject areas (p. 622). NCLB, although was created to bring a call to action for student performance, it eventually shed

light on the inconsistencies that fed into minority, at-risk, and special education students. According to Ramalho, Garza and Merchant (2010), “concerns about the effectiveness of American public schools with respect to successfully educating a diverse population of students have generated numerous reforms over the years and have shaped international perceptions about the American educational system” (p. 35). Many parents, educators, and elected officials recognized that a strong, updated law was necessary to expand opportunity for all students in America; to support schools, teachers, and principals; and to strengthen our educational system and economy (U.S. Department of Education, 2015, p.1).

In 2012, the Obama administration began offering flexibility to states regarding specific requirements of NCLB in exchange for rigorous and comprehensive state-developed plans designed to close achievement gaps, increase equity, improve the quality of instruction, and increase outcomes for all students. Thus far 42 states, DC and Puerto Rico have received flexibility from NCLB (U.S. Department of Education, 2015, p. 1). “The 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, now known as NCLB, placed an unprecedented emphasis on student achievement in conjunction with increased levels of accountability for the professionals that worked with students in our public schools” (Roach, Niebling & Kurz, 2008, p. 159). Under this new mandate:

Schools are required to administer tests in reading and mathematics in grades 3 through 8 and once in high school (as cited in U.S. Department of Education, 2004). With this increased amount of testing and the accompanying focus on test results, come requirements for more sophisticated and detailed methods of analyzing the data. Another key feature of NCLB, which does not receive as much ongoing attention as student achievement and AYP objectives, is the requirement that schools, districts, and states

have a system of K–12 standards that are ‘aligned’ with the assessments used in the state accountability system (as cited in U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Schools, districts, and states not considered to be in compliance with NCLB needed to demonstrate that the assessment tools used in their state accountability system had appropriate technical adequacy and were aligned with standards (Roach, Niebling & Kurz, 2008, p. 159).

Writing Intervention

Schumaker and Deshler (2003) explained that there is a “growing body of intervention research” that suggests that “students’ performance can be successfully impacted if well-designed instructional methods are used” (p. 130). Cihak and Castle (2011) explained that “students may experience difficulties describing information, writing sentences, paragraphs, and essays. Compositions may be inadequately organized” and “many researchers and teachers consider writing instruction as a means to assist students to express their ideas” (p. 106). With recent news on change of assessment expectations, “providing young children with rich writing experiences can lay a foundation for learning” and in some cases, may become an essential caveat for a child’s establishment as an academic writer (Cabell, Tortorelli & Gerde, 2013, p. 650). Interventions extended from Kindergarten until the 12th grade to meet specific expectations for assessments, however, can be different from district to district, even within the same state. Nonetheless, state expectations for standardized testing produced an awareness surrounding the notion that students needed to be taught how to write. Unfortunately, results proved that the area of writing was, and still is, one of the weakest areas that was involved in all testing for college acceptance. On the STAAR English Language Arts English I and English II exam, short answer response questions assess reading comprehension with supporting evidence through written

form, as well as different modes of writing. According to Higgins, Miller and Wegmann (2006) a student's "components of the writing process" are molded "as they write for a variety of purposes and in a variety of modes. This enables students to take charge of their own writing and work with components that are interwoven and occur simultaneously and continually" (p. 312). Because the STAAR was divided into two separate parts and writing accounted for half of the student's score, therefore, preparation time for writing has become an integral part of the assessment. Hooper, Costa, McBee, Anderson, Yerby, Childress and Knuth (2011) explained that "given these concerns, educational changes are needed to improve writing performance (p. 44). Fisher and Frey (2013) stated:

Current expectations outlined in most state standards and the Common Core State Standards suggest that students need to write opinions and arguments with evidence, write informational pieces that include details, and write narratives that are highly descriptive. Writing is something that students should do routinely (p. 96).

Ferlazzo and Hull-Sypnieski (2014) stated that educators will now have to "help students focus not only on comprehending texts but also inferring deeper meanings, identifying the writer's craft" and develop "a strong connection between reading and writing" (p. 46). Part of the writing process involved the implementation of consistent writing practice throughout the course of the year to ensure reading and writing stamina, as well as allow for revising and editing strategies during class time in order to prompt the elimination of procedural errors students could commit during state assessments. Ferlazzo and Hull-Sypnieski (2014) explained further that "students should (learn) to use the structure, vocabulary, and style that best suits their purpose, topic, and audience" and all of this is reinforced as preparation for state assessments (p. 47). Although the implications of such intervention seemed geared to meet passing standards on state assessments,

the outcome of such implementations had positive outcome, especially for at-risk students. Graham and Perin (2007) stated that “most contexts of life (school, the workplace, and the community) calls for some level of writing skill, and each context makes overlapping, but not identical, demands. Proficient writers can adapt their writing flexibly to the context in which it takes place” therefore if interventions are implemented accordingly, establishment of this proficiency would be established throughout the course of a student’s academic life (p. 9). Although the implementation of supplemental courses may be implemented for assessment purposes, the remediation also served as a foundation for writing that may occur outside assessments as well.

On the STAAR exam for English Language Arts, two forms of writing are assessed: expository and persuasive essay writing. Olinghouse and Wilson (2013) explained that “persuasive text contains higher diversity” and “informative text (expository) include more content words and elaboration than the other text type as well as maturity” (p. 45). Because students were in essence new writers, maturity in establishing an argument or explaining a particular stance was lacking. Writing interventions allowed for the acquisition of specific writing techniques that reinforced the usage of appropriate methods to use on the writing portion of these assessments. Hoffman (1996) stated that “for students to become strong persuasive writers and speakers, they must become comfortable identifying and using persuasive techniques” (p. 2658). Olinghouse and Wilson (2013) explained further that because: Writing is a complex process, involving the coordination of many high-level cognitive and metacognitive skills. Seminal models of the writing process suggest that producing a quality written text requires generating and organizing ideas, goal-setting, planning, drafting, revising and continuously self-monitoring performance (p. 46).

In order to accomplish this, Olinghouse and Wilson (2013) sustained that in addition to teaching the methodology behind the questions asked on the assessment, “content knowledge” and “specific knowledge related to the topic of the written text” should coincide in succession with writing strategies as well (p. 46). Shah (1986) stated that now “writing has gained the attention of educational professionals, parents, and others” because of how writing was assessed in public schools (p. 109). Because “different students have different learning styles, and “different backgrounds or cultures,” teachers can draw from a diversity of backgrounds that can further the body of knowledge and “best serve the student body” (Maxwell, 2010, p. 233). These helped provide students the right tools on the assessment and help strengthen their argument or explanation in their writing. Kealy and Ritzhaupt (2010) stated that using “knowledge, beliefs, metacognitive strategies, and motivations of the learner” educators created “internally-generated feedback and the goals, strategies, and tactics used during the learning process” in writing (p. 26). Writing strategies through specified intervention, would establish the right environment when it came to learning about the writing process. Writing is also an area that is assessed in college entrance exams such as Texas Success Initiative (TSI), American College Test (ACT), Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) and Advanced Placement (AP) exams in disciplines to include Calculus, History and Physics. According to Fisher and Frey (2013) “effective writing teachers know that building stamina, discussion, and knowledge are integral for developing stronger writers” (p. 100).

In addition to an increase on state standards in academic readiness, the state of Texas was one of many states that initiated the post-secondary connection from a student’s pre-kindergarten grade level to a student’s bachelor’s degree in the university. Furthermore, the state held districts accountable in the area of college and career readiness to ensure that when a student graduated

from high school they would be ready for college level rigor. The P-16 initiative was initiated to create a more connected level of education from primary to college level courses. Brown and Conley (2007) explained:

Adoption by states of 'P-16' legislation (Blanco et al., 2003) is one more indicator that state policymakers are re-conceptualizing the organizational structure of their public education systems from preschool through postsecondary education in ways that connect the levels more directly. Writing is a subject that is used in different careers, and in order to enforce that districts graduate students who are career-ready, they must have adequate knowledge and skill in the area of writing (p. 140).

A portion of the English Language Arts state exams assess writing to confirm whether a student has had enough preparation in reading and writing comprehension. "Teachers (now) assess writing to monitor students' growth as writers, inform instruction, provide feedback, and evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching" (Graham, Herbert and Harris, 2011, p. 2). Since writing is a component of both college and career readiness, the state of Texas granted 50% of the score point to come from writing portion of the exam.

The TEA website (2014) defined the P-16 initiative as follows:

P-16 describes an integrated system of education stretching from preschool (the "P") through a four-year college degree ("grade 16"). It is designed to improve student achievement by getting children off to a good start, raising academic standards, conducting appropriate assessments, improving teacher quality and generally smoothing student transitions from one level of learning to the next. It also focuses on helping all children meet the proficiency levels needed to succeed at the next education level and in the workforce. The P-16 philosophy supports students during their early education and K-

12 public school experience and builds a bridge from high school completion to postsecondary success (p. 1).

Harris, Graham, Friedlander and Laud (2013) noted that “failure to acquire strong writing abilities restricts opportunities for both postsecondary education and employment” for students who plan on pursuing any career path after graduation (p. 538). If writing intervention was delivered appropriately to students, especially those who were considered to be lower performers, according to Harris et al., research indicated:

Less than a third of students in the United States have mastered the skills necessary for proficient, or grade level appropriate writing on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Most of our students in the United States have scored at the basic level or below, which denotes only partial mastery of the writing skills needed at each grade. A deteriorating attitude toward writing across the grades has also been reported (p. 540).

Harris, Graham, Friedlander & Laud (2013) explained that six critical characteristics for writing interventions ought to be the following:

1. Collective participation of teachers within the same school with similar needs
2. Basing professional development around the characteristics, strengths, and needs of the students in these teachers’ current classrooms
3. Attention to content knowledge needs of teachers, including pedagogical content knowledge
4. Opportunities for active learning and practice of the new methods being learned, including opportunities to see examples of these methods being used and to analyze the work
5. Use of materials and other artifacts during professional development that are identical

to those to be used in the classroom

6. Feedback on performance while learning, and before using these methods in the classroom, so that understandings and skills critical in implementation are developed (p. 541).

Another key component for writing intervention was having sufficient time for curriculum-based monitoring systems throughout the course of the intervention. Espin et.al. (2008) explained that “with regard to writing time, effects were seen for reliability but not for validity. Increased time to write was associated with increased alternate form reliability, especially for older students” (p. 177). Kern, Andre, Schilke, Barton, and McGuire (2003) further stated that “a significant amount of instructional time must be devoted to actual writing for our students to grow as writers” (p. 816). When additional instructional time was provided for writing, student progress would be assessed in increments throughout the process and would be measured by curriculum-based assessments. When formative assessments, or curriculum-based assessments were tied to state standards and were measured as such, then students would see their progress immediately and therefore improve the areas in which they are the most weakest. According to Stage and Jacobson (2001), “an intervention and goal are devised and progress monitoring is used to determine the student’s progress towards goals over time” (p. 407). To ensure that the appropriate level of interaction and preparation was occurring, progress monitoring reinforced the implementation of curriculum, and allowed for refinement throughout the course of the intervention.

Teaching Strategies in Writing

Kern et al. (2003) stated that “teachers might better prepare their students for writing assessments by thoughtful, focused, and strategic writing lesson plans based on a set of guiding

principles and the English language arts standards as a framework for instructional decision making” (p. 825). Boyles (2003) stated that “teaching written response strategies” that responded to literary open-ended questions was key to passing state assessments (p. 16). Vogler (2002) stated that there were “notable increases in the use of open-response questions, creative/critical thinking questions, problem-solving activities, use of rubrics or scoring guides, (and) writing assignments” (p. 39). Pemberton, Rademacher, Tyler-Wood, and Cerejio (2006) discussed the importance of outlining instructional strategies to that of state curriculum standards (p.283). Feldman (2012) broke down how reading and writing are cognitively linked and how if incorporated effectively, correct strategy or remediation could have successful results:

The first of three mental operations is the knowledge-shared process, which includes phonemic awareness, word recognition, vocabulary, text, organization and syntax. The second operation is communications, how writers anticipate the needs of their readers and how readers use their knowledge about authors to improve comprehension. The third perspective is the collaboration uses the reading and writing found in many activities. The activities involved in reading and writing require various types of reasoning that include learning from text, analysis of text, and composition revision (p. 19).

Holmes, Day, Park, Bonn and Roll (2014), stated that scaffolding “students’ orientation and reflection processes was found to improve the quality” of writing during classroom activities (p. 525). Boyles (2003) stated that the “instructional components...encompass basically the same scaffolds or supports- explain the new skill, model it” and eventually “remove the scaffolds until students achieve independence” (p. 17). “To be an effective writer, one must learn-and be able to effectively use- a variety of separate skills to create a coherent piece of text” more time allotted may facilitate this task for struggling students (Jacobson and Reid, 2010, p. 157). Moreover,

Pemberton, Rademacher, Tyler-Wood, and Cerejio (2006) described that “in the area of writing, curriculum standards are designed to help students become successful writers” so adhering closely to standards and assessing them accordingly would provide both teacher and student viable and relevant data, plus immediate feedback (p. 284). Through this creative writing course, teachers established their writing classes to meet the needs of all their student population, including special populations. They executed lessons that were more closely tied to the STAAR English Language Arts exams and reinforced all the skills necessary for the assessment. The writing courses also served as an additional hour for English Language Arts remediation and reinforcement; this allotted more time within a student’s schedule to learn the writing process much more effectively. Zumbrunn and Bruning (2013) stated that “providing students with ample, yet developmentally appropriate and scaffolded writing opportunities, may promote writing development” (p. 93). According to Tobin (2010), the writing class “enables students to focus on writing as a process in a creative, supportive environment” that provided “a nonjudgmental learning atmosphere, which enhances and develops necessary writing process skills” (p. 230). Because students already came in with an English Language Arts class in their schedule, the writing teachers established writing as the focal point for the class. The writing class “focuses on strengthening the student’s processes of writing, rather than focusing solely on the end product so that the student can emerge as more metacognitively aware and more able to manage and develop his or her own writing” (Consalvo and Maloch, 2015, p. 121). Hadaway and Young (2002) sustained that writing classes were designed to “give students opportunity to write” and create “communicative tasks, the freedom to task risks, meaningful feedback on writing efforts” (p. 5). This produced more fluent writers. Saddler (2006) explained that teaching writing strategies helped students create “plans for accomplishing a task and effective strategy

instruction” that “helps promote active student involvement” that ultimately was “extensive, structured, and explicit instruction that meets student needs” (p. 292). The additional hour of ELA allowed for more time given for goal setting and writing planning. Lane, Graham, Harris, and Weisenbach (2006) stated:

Students incorporate (goal setting, self-monitoring, self-instructions, and self-reinforcement) needed to apply the target strategies, better understand the writing task, and regulate their writing behavior. In addition, this approach enhances students’ motivation for writing by making students’ writing gains visible, connecting these gains to the knowledge and strategies they are learning, and emphasizing the importance of effort as a key factor in learning to write well (p. 60).

Writing teachers were also given a common planning time and were given one hour to plan each day, everyday of the week. The writing teachers had the time for the collaboration to ensure that the necessary TEKS were taught, and that all student expectations were covered effectively.

During common planning time, the teachers received essential rubrics for STAAR English I and English II End-of-Course writing prompts and short answers, and shared ideas on implementing writing strategies in the classroom. These rubrics served as a guide for all student writing.

Block Scheduling

A high school’s master schedule can be manipulated a number of ways to help benefit the campus, and most importantly, the student population. The traditional bell schedule has eight periods that are timed at 51 or 57 minutes, per period, each day. Block scheduling has either four or five periods a day that are timed at 90 minutes to 120 minutes per period each day. There are many pluses to having block scheduling. Kern, et.al (2003) outlined the necessities for sufficient time that should be allotted to writing. They explained that “a significant amount of instructional

time must be devoted to actual writing for our students to grow as writers” and because of this, a writing course should establish its own purpose and goal-oriented objectives that students would reach as they progressed as skilled writers (p. 816). Trenta and Newman (2002) stated:

Students who were being educated in a block-scheduling environment appeared to do as well as students in the traditional environment in most indicator areas and showed a significant positive relationship with better achievement in the academic subject areas. Hence, there is support for the inference that block scheduling has ‘an influence’ on academic success in this high school (p. 64).

Nichols (2005) stated, that there was an “overall average increase in student achievement for language arts courses” when block scheduling was utilized (p. 307). Mowen and Mowen (2004) stated that block scheduling “reduces the need for constant class changes, the number of classes students have on any given day” and “provide increased content emphasis and time on task” (p. 50). Because block scheduling allows for more time during for a particular subject area, many schools chose to follow block scheduling versus the traditional bell scheduling model. The writing classes served as the second hour of English Language Arts that could be seen as a block schedule for struggling students.

The Center of Public Education (2006): Proponents of block schedules pointed to the following benefits:

- More time on task with longer class periods, classroom learning is less rushed; less time is spent on transitions between classes and classroom management activities, such as calling attendance and organizing and focusing the class. Teachers have the flexibility that enables them to allow students to spend more “time on task,” practicing and working with particular information and ideas.

- Depth and breadth: With more time, teachers can delve more deeply into subject matter, because they are no longer pressed by the clock to squeeze as much content as possible into a single lesson. The longer periods allow students the opportunity to experience subject material through a mixture of learning contexts and media. Math and science teachers especially appreciate the added time to conduct more in-depth exercises and lab experiments.
- More opportunities for planning and professional development: The longer blocks of time enable schools to build in reserve time for teachers to engage in common planning and on-site professional development. Shiel (2003) explained that “supporting teachers through the provision of materials and professional development experiences aimed at implementing strategy elements” would show substantial growth among the student population (p. 695).
- Stronger adult-child relationships: More time allows for greater interaction between teacher and student; when teachers have fewer students in class and students have fewer teachers, more in-depth relationships can be forged. Farbman and Kaplan (2005) found that teachers report satisfaction with the teaching load from this arrangement (typically three–four classes and a total of approximately 70–80 students compared with five–six classes and about 100 students in a traditional schedule), saying it allowed teachers to track their students’ progress, and made the job much less overwhelming (p.1).

In addition, studies indicated that discipline problems decreased (O’Neil, 1995; Freeman, 2001).

As one high school teacher explained, “It’s a whole lot easier managing 75 kids,” as opposed to

125 under the traditional period (O’Neil, 1995, p. 23).

While block scheduling re-emerged over the past two decades, the traditional “period” schedule (where students typically take six to eight subjects a day, in 45– to 50-minute blocks of time) persisted, with almost two-thirds of public schools on a traditional schedule in 2004 (Strizek, Pittsonberger, Riordan, Lyter, and Orlofsky, 2006, p. 1).

Yet block scheduling was more prevalent in certain types of schools to facilitate the learning process for most special populations, including advanced or gifted and talented groups:

- High schools were more likely to use this strategy (45 percent vs. 32 percent of elementary schools)
- Charter schools were more likely to use block scheduling than other non-charter public schools (49 percent vs. 32 percent)
- Public schools were more likely than private schools to adopt block schedules (35 percent vs. 24 percent)
- Central city schools were more likely to use block schedules (43 percent) than urban fringe schools (33 percent) or rural schools (29 percent)
(Center for public Education, 2006)

According to the Texas Education Agency Office of Policy Planning and Research-Division of Research and Evaluation (1999), “research in the area of cognitive psychology suggests that learning may be facilitated by the extended periods of instructional time created in block schedules” (p. 3). The National Education Commission on Time and Learning (1994) “asserts that the school clock governs how families organize their lives, how administrators oversee their schools, how teachers work through the curriculum, and most significantly, how material is presented and the opportunities students have to comprehend and master it” (Texas

Education Agency, 1999, p. 8). Jenkins, Queen, and Algozzine (2002) stated:

With more time in a class period and less emphasis on lecturing, teachers can engage students in activities that address various learning styles and that allow students to apply content knowledge to real-world problems by working together in teams. The potential for block scheduling alternatives to result in differentiation of instruction and contribute to educational reform was evident (p. 196).

Traditional Scheduling

According to the Center for Public Education (2006) the initiative known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) began reform in many ways; however, the bell schedule was not one of them. Schools operated on seven to eight hour days, 180 days per school year. With new demands by both state and federal governments, organizations looked to maximize student achievement by possibly changing the traditional bell schedule. The Center of Public Education (2006) stated:

The basic public school September–June schedule emanates from the nation’s agrarian past, with a conventional school calendar of nine months followed by a three-month summer vacation during which time many children helped with harvesting crops. Another vestige of our rural past is that some schools in the South and the Midwest start up in late August, yet have a one- or two-week break in the fall at harvest time (p.1).

As education officials and policymakers sought ways to increase “time on task” for public school students, one of the strategies considered was block scheduling—schedules that offered classes in longer “blocks” of time (usually 90-minutes or more) with subjects offered on alternating days or alternating semesters or trimesters (a school year divided into three

semesters). During the 1960s and 1970s, as many as 15 percent of junior and senior high schools experimented with some form of “flexible modular scheduling,” but this strategy was eventually abandoned by most (Center for Public Education, 2006, p. 1).

The Texas Education Agency Office of Policy Planning and Research- Division of Research and Evaluation (1999), cited Watts and Castle (1993), and stated that “traditional, inflexible scheduling is based on meeting administrative and institutional needs at the possible expense of meeting learners’ needs” (p. 5). The demands enforced by endorsements and credit requirements for high school students, the necessity for more time for certain courses, as well as certain special populations of students (i.e. special education students, advanced students, public schools have had to force a one size fits all approach for student schedules. Even if traditional bell schedules are implemented in many districts, research supports that block scheduling has provided teachers with “sufficient training to acquire strategies and skills needed to teach successfully in large blocks of time. In addition, block scheduling helps teachers apply this knowledge in the classroom by allowing more planning time” (Texas Education Agency, 1999, p. 9). Due to financial implications, the traditional bell schedule is the most commonly used schedule for high schools in the state of Texas.

Benefits of block scheduling versus traditional bell scheduling is stated by the Texas Education Agency Office of Policy Planning and Research- Division of Research and Evaluation (1999):

- More opportunities for individual attention from teachers
- The opportunity to take more classes and have more options within the program (new format allows for greater diversity in a program of studies and permits students to take more elective courses)
- More opportunities to participate in class

- Greater diversity in class activities
- Fewer subjects to prepare for, and homework that is easier to manage
- More time for experiments and projects
- Educators Report these impressions about Block Scheduling:
- Improved school climate
- Better quality work from students
- More opportunities for students to engage in group projects
- Fewer textbooks needed, resulting in reduced costs
- Fewer students per teacher at one time, allowing more individualized attention
- More time for collaborative planning
- Semester transition helps avoid mid-year slump
- Dropouts can reenter at mid-year as new classes are just starting

Note: Adapted from Guskey and Kifer (1995). (as cited in Texas Education Agency, 1999, p. 12)

Curriculum Based Measurement and Progress Monitoring

Espin, Wallace, Campbell, Lembke, Long, and Ticha (2008) explained that in order to ensure that students received the instruction necessary, “a system of progress measurement that allows teachers to evaluate the success of their instruction and monitor growth of students toward success on a state standards test” would help students reach state accountability requirements (p. 175). Ritchey (2006) stated that “teachers use and rely on information provided by various assessment instruments to guide their instruction and to identify students for who instructional changes are needed” (p. 26). While in the writing classes, teachers monitored students who failed to meet expectations on certain skills, revamped their curriculum immediately to spiral back and

reinforce the concepts students were weaker in, and ultimately, assessed again until the teachers student achieved mastery. Espin, De La Paz, Scierka, and Roelofs (2005) stated that “curriculum-based measurement (CBM) is a system of measurement that can be used by teachers to monitor student progress over time and to evaluate the effects of instructional programs” and “written expression at the secondary level has been consistent in its findings regarding the potential use” (p. 209). Feldman (2012) stated that results “provide direction for educators as they consider restructuring the language arts curriculum to use writing as a means to improve reading performance and to supplement reading remediation for secondary students” (p. 18). Ticha (2008) explained that “examination of the relation between CBM (curriculum based measurement) scores and performance on state standards tests in writing is importance” because now there are high stakes implications with graduation (p. 177).

According to Ediger (2003), ultimately, “a harmony between the objective and subjective facets to make quality decisions pertaining to pupil progress” was now facilitated by the ability to assess skill acquisition prior to state assessments taking place. With higher level descriptors for TEKS and student expectations, formative assessments became a snapshot of what the students knew and became and integral part of the bigger picture-what the student would know by the end of the year. Graham (1990) explained some factors that would prevent a student from performing well on state assessments:

First, text production was especially cumbersome that it hindered the generation of ideas. Second, students lacked the knowledge of the writing process. Third, students were unaware of specific cognitive writing strategies to apply and assist with writing expression (p. 106).

According to Brimi (2012), “the writing process embodies a series of complex mental

functions that are not easily measured by objective tests” (p. 53). There were multiple factors that provided inaccurate findings if the students were not assessed correctly. Some included understanding the writing prompt, applying background knowledge pertaining to the writing prompt, or failure to address the question that was asked in the writing prompt. Special populations such as at-risk students, needed a more in depth curriculum that was tailored to fit each individual student appropriately. Because schools nationwide experienced this same issue with their at-risk student populations, this study supported whether or not districts would benefit from such intervention.

Espin, Wallace, Campbell, Lembke, Long, and Ticha (2008) stated “that Curriculum-based monitoring systems highlighted “the effects of progress monitoring using CBM writing measures on teacher instruction and student achievement” (p. 176). To ensure that the appropriate level of interaction and preparation was occurring, progress monitoring reinforced the implementation of curriculum, and allowed for refinement throughout the course of the intervention. Ediger (2003) stated that data driven decision-making was essential, especially with this course, because this dictated what TEKS and/or categories needed to be targeted throughout the course of the intervention. The research site implemented benchmarks for teachers that were uploaded to the district assessment drive and were analyzed by the teachers and the Dean of Instruction to further extend knowledge and acquisition in the classroom. Ediger (2003) stated that assessments served as “a one shot approach in determining achievement since state mandated tests are given once a year” and eventually shaped the teacher’s perspective for each student’s acquisition of skill throughout the treatment period (p. 11).

Summary

This research incorporated the writing courses as a supplemental course for those students who were unable to pass the STAAR English I and English II End-of-Course exams throughout the course of their high school career. Multiple aspects were taken into consideration when researching this particular course such as allotting additional time for remediation, providing curriculum-based assessments for progress monitoring, as well as integrating an efficient planning period for the teachers who worked with these students. By analyzing all components and researching the student's outcome on the exams, the researcher made the determination based on viable, archival data.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this quasi-experimental research study in a south Texas high school was to determine whether a supplemental writing course for at-risk students improves writing scores on the State Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) English Language Arts End-of-Course exams for both English I and English II. Students without middle school STAAR English Language Arts scores were eliminated from the group. Students who were placed in the writing courses were grouped by classification and by archival test scores for the previous State Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) English Language Arts End-of-Course exam. These scores were part of the 2013-2014 STAAR released scores for the English Language Arts End-of-Course exam. Students who failed the English I STAAR, and who were second-year students, went into the Writing II course. Students who were third-year students were placed in the English III Writing course. State Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) English Language Arts End-of-Course exam scores were examined to show growth from previous STAAR scores.

Research Design

The present study was a quasi-experimental study designed to assess the results of supplemental writing course interventions on state assessment writing scores for the English I and II State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) exams for students at a south Texas high school. This study analyzed the pre-test and post-test writing scores for the English I and English II STAAR exam for those students who were in the supplemental writing

course. At the research site, the total population of 100 students in supplemental writing course, Writing II and Writing III course, tested the State Assessment of Academic Readiness English Language Arts I and II End-of-Course exam and scores will be analyzed from previous to current STAAR results.

Through this particular design, a three-way factorial analysis of variance procedure highlighted the two independent variables and how they impacted the results. In this study, there were three independent variables that included (1) English Language Arts curriculum used as interventions and (2) whether the student is male or female and (3) student classification. Each of these factors had significant impact on the dependent variable that in this case, was determined by the writing scores pre-treatment and writing scores post-treatment. The design showed whether the implementation of a supplemental writing course as a treatment, in addition to the student's regular English course, helped At-Risk male or female students, sophomore or junior students writing scores for the STAAR English I and English II exams improved. The chart below indicated when students retested. The most recent retest score used was compared to the December retest administration.

Table 5

Projected Retester Dates for 2nd Year and 3rd Year Cohort

Second Year Cohort High School Students (Students did not pass STAAR ELA I)		Third Year Cohort High School Students (Students failed ELA I/ ELA II)	
Writing II Course		Writing Course III	
March/ July	December	March/ July	December
Retest STAAR ELA I	STAAR ELA I Retest Administration	Retest STAAR ELA I/ ELA II	Retest STAAR ELA I/ ELA II Retest Administration

Appropriateness of Design

Experimental research “determines the impact of an intervention on an outcome for participants in a study” (Creswell, 2005, p. 591). Quasi-experimental designs “approximate the conditions of the true experiment in a setting which does not allow the control and/or manipulation of all relevant variables” (Isaac & Michael, 1997, p. 46). This quantitative, quasi-experimental design did not include random assignment to treatments, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Because quantitative archival data were available for the study, a quantitative quasi-experimental statistical analysis was performed using this data as pre-test and post-test data examined significant differences in the mean scores from previous STAAR English I and English II Language Arts exams and scores after students were placed in the supplemental writing course.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this quasi-experimental research study in a South Texas High School is to determine whether a supplemental writing course for at-risk students improves scores on the writing portion of the State Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) English Language Arts End-of-Course exams for both English I and English II.

Research Questions

The following research question guided the study:

What is the difference, if any, between the pretest and posttest in English Language Arts End-of-Course English I writing scores?

What is the difference, if any, between the pretest and posttest in English Language Arts End-of-Course English II writing scores and gender?

Null Hypotheses

There were seven null hypotheses that were derived from the research question and they were as follows.

There were three main effects:

There is no difference between gender.

There is no difference between trials.

There is one cell effect interaction:

There is no difference among cells for gender and trials.

Participants

The total population of 100 students enrolled in the Writing II and Writing III courses had taken the State Assessment of Academic Readiness English Language Arts I and II End-of-Course exam the previous year. Based on archival data from the previous school year, students were placed in a Writing II or Writing III course according to their entry date. These classified students into specific cohorts. Student selections for the study were based on student background information, labeled as at-risk based on the criteria designated by the state of Texas. The students labeled as at-risk took this course in conjunction with a regular English Language Arts course. Throughout the day, the student had 114 minutes of English Language Arts instructional time in total- 57 minutes for their English class and 57 minutes for the Writing class. Students took these courses in two separate classes with two different teachers. This study determined whether at-risk male or female students showed significant improvement on the writing portion of the English Language Arts End-of-Course State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness English I and English II exam with the implementation of this intervention.

The Writing II and Writing III course at the south Texas high school had a maximum class size of 18 students per class period. A total of 100 students were analyzed in this study.

Informed Consent

Because the study used archival data and the individual results were analyzed, consent was obtained from the district superintendent (Appendix C) to enter the south Texas high school. The consent form met The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley IRB requirements. As per IRB:

The purpose of the document is to provide participants with sufficient information to make an informed and voluntary decision about taking part in the research. The document

also advises participants that they may withdraw at any time, and provides additional information about anonymity and confidentiality (as appropriate) and the contact information of the primary investigator and the Institutional Review Board. In most circumstances, the document should be signed by the participant. The information in this document should be written in a language that the participant will understand and should avoid esoteric and exculpatory language. It is generally recommended that the language should be at no more than an eighth grade reading level. The informed consent form should be part of a larger process of informed consent. Researchers should not simply aim to get participants to sign off on the form, but should answer questions as appropriate. The researcher must only use copies of the informed consent form with the ORA approval stamp, and cannot use the informed consent form past the specified approval date. This approved version will be provided to researchers as a hardcopy and Adobe Acrobat PDF file (University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, 2014, p. 1).

Confidentiality

Confidentiality of all participants was ensured since no individual data were recorded. The class mean was calculated to measure any relationship between the supplemental writing course and results on the STAAR English Language Arts I and II End-of-Course exam.

Intervention

The Writing II and Writing III courses were designed to target all writing components of the STAAR English I and English II End-of-Course exams. The students were taught how to answer open-ended response questions, focus on grammar for revising and editing strategies, and were taught how to write the required essay type for the STAAR exam. English I exam requires an expository essay and the English II exam requires a persuasive essay. Students were taught

how to write both types essays. Any significant difference in writing test scores on short answer response items and essay response items between previous STAAR English Language Arts I and II exams and present STAAR English Language Arts writing scores for short answer response items and essay response items after the implementation of the supplemental Writing II/ Writing III course was measured by raw score on the present State of Texas Assessment Readiness English Language Arts I and II End-of-Course short answer and essay response raw scores. The Writing II and Writing III follow the assessed curriculum under the English I and English II Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness English Language Arts End-of-Course I and II exam. All students placed in the course were placed in the course because they had failed the STAAR English I End-of-Course exam or STAAR English II End-of-Course exam. The Writing II and Writing II course was designed for students who had not passed the English I and English II End-of-Course STAAR exam. The Writing II and Writing III course focused on short-answer response questions, and focused instruction on writing the expository and persuasive essay.

The district assessment system known as the Texas Assessment Management System was used to access student test pre-test and post-test scores. All data was transferred on to an excel document and was analyzed in SPSS.

The intervention stated that when an at-risk student took a regular English course in conjunction with the Writing Course, the student was more likely to show significant improvement on their assessment scores, or ultimately pass the STAAR English Language Arts exam. The intervention was for a course of four months, from August until the designated re-test date in December 2014. The analysis provided student growth as well as pass rates after the four-month intervention.

Data Collection

In this quasi-experimental research study, a STAAR examination in English I and English II was previously administered to provide data for analysis. Based on the student's previous STAAR English I and/or English II scores, if the student failed, they would be placed in the Writing II or Writing III course, depending on their entry-cohort level.

The English I and English II tests from the previous March or July test administration was used as a pretest measure. After four months of intervention, the students retested the STAAR English I and English II exams in December. The scores were compared from the previous test administration to the December test administration test scores. The following variables were used:

Independent Variable. At-risk students, gender, and classification.

Dependent Variable. English I and English II STAAR scores.

Data Analysis

Deriving of statistical power included a sample size and was determined using a three-way factorial ANOVA to analyze obtained data. There were three null hypotheses that were tested with an F -distribution with a working alpha that was one half of the reporting alpha level of .05 (Box, 1953). The present study utilized an exploratory and confirmatory analysis side by side (Tukey, 1977).

Summary

The data analyzed was that of students who were placed in a writing course for supplemental instruction in the area of English Language Arts for the STAAR End-of-Course examination. The student data included the student's previous state assessment scores, and the student's retest scores for the STAAR assessment after a four-month remediation period.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH, FINDINGS AND RESULTS

The purpose of this quasi-experimental research study in a South Texas High School was to determine whether a supplemental writing course for at-risk students improved scores on the writing portion of the State Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) English Language Arts End-of-Course exams for English I and English II. When at-risk student took the Writing course as a supplemental course in addition to their English class, based on state assessment data gathered from the student's retest in either English I and/or English II, they were more likely to show improvement the writing portion of their state assessment scores. This study showed that when this intervention was implemented, the students who had previously failed the writing portions on the previous STAAR administration, showed significant improvement on their writing scores on the December retest. This study conveyed the difference between the pre-test and posttest scores on the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness End-of-Course exam in the area of English Language Arts.

This chapter presents the research findings of the analyses on all data collected from this quasi-experimental study. Data were gathered through the Texas Assessment Management System and were entered into SPSS and a two-way factorial ANOVA (2 x 4) with one between subjects, gender, and one repeated measures or within-subjects factor, English I short answer 1 pre-test and posttest scores, English I short answer 2 pre-test and posttest scores. In the present study, exploratory and confirmatory data analyses were conducted side by side (Tukey, 1977).

The groups were comprised of 2nd year cohort students who took the STAAR English Language Arts End-of-Course examination for English I, and 3rd year cohort students who took the STAAR English Language Arts End-of-Course examination for English II. The data collected for 2nd year cohort students were pre-test and post-test short-answer and essay scores for the English I STAAR End-of-Course exam. The data collected for 3rd year cohort students were pre-test and post-test short-answer and essay scores for the English II STAAR End-of-Course exam. The two groups selected consist of 50 second year cohort students and 50 third year cohort students. They were randomly selected from a total of 216 students registered under the Writing I and Writing II courses at the high school. Exploratory analyses consisted of descriptive statistics, including mean, variance, standard deviation and sphericity. Confirmatory factor analyses were used to identify variables and to test the null hypotheses respectively. The null hypotheses for this study were tested with a F distribution at the .05 level of significance.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section provides demographic information about the district and the demographic profile of the students within the high school. Section two will display the descriptive statistics for the first and second research questions along with the confirmatory analysis. Lastly, section four includes a summary of the chapter. There were two null hypotheses for the two main effects in the present study:

There is no difference between gender.

There is no difference between trials.

There was one cell effect in the present study:

There is no difference among cells for gender and trials.

Demographic Information

The study was conducted in a south Texas high school, which is located within a south Texas independent school district. The student population for the high school was comprised of approximately 90% Hispanic, 40% economically disadvantaged, and 60% at-risk. The high school has over 2,000 students. Table 6 displays percentages of those students who may have been involved in this study.

Table 6

Demographic Information

Hispanic	Economically Disadvantaged	At-Risk	Student Total
90%	40%	60%	2,000+

The first section of the analyses included a section that describes the possible number of points each student could obtain on the dependent measures for the present study: STAAR English Language Arts English I and English II End-of-Course examination. Table 7 shows the number of points allotted for the single short-answer question, the cross-over short answer question, and the number of points allotted for the essay question.

Table 7

Total Calculation of Points for English I and English II Examinations (Dependent Measures)

% of Total Score of Section	Multiple Choice	% of Score	Performance Component	% of Score
Reading Selection 50%	28 Questions (1 point each) 28 points	30%	2 Short Answer (9 points each) 18 points	20%
Writing Section 50%	22 Questions (1 point each) 22 Points	24%	1 Composition 24 Points	26%

Note: Adapted from the ESC Region 20. Services provided by ESC-20 are aligned with, and designed to support, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) adopted by the State Board of Education. Retrieved from <http://www.esc20.net/users/gendocs/STAAR/QRGs/ELAR/STAARQuickReferenceGuideEOCII.pdf>

All subjects were randomly selected from two writing classes labeled Writing I and Writing II.

The students were separated by second or third year cohort, which was determined by entry date for each student. All participants in this study were identified as at-risk students through the campus information system. Additional descriptive data analyses of each dependent variable in the present study, including means, standard error of means, and variance are provided in the forthcoming subsection, by gender and dependent measures.

Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive analysis reflected student's writing scores that are presented by dependent measures (trials) and gender. The subjects were randomly selected and comprised of 38 males and 12 females. There were 50 students who were second year cohort that were analyzed in this group. In Table 8, the descriptive statistics for English I pre-test and English I post-test scores for short answer #1 and short answer #2 are indicated below.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics for English I Pre-Test and Post-Test Short Answer #1, Short Answer #2

(Cross-over)

Dependent Measures	Gender (0-Male; 1-Female)	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
English I	0	1.82	2.264	38
Pre-Test Score	1	1.50	2.39	12
Short Answer #1	Total	1.74	2.275	50
English I	0	3.79	2.055	38
Post-Test Score	1	4.75	1.545	12
Short Answer #1	Total	4.02	1.974	50
English I	0	2.21	1.803	38
Pre-Test Score	1	2.50	1.545	12
Short Answer #2	Total	2.28	1.773	50
English I	0	2.84	1.966	38
Post-Test Score	1	2.50	2.153	12
Short Answer #2	Total	2.76	1.996	50

Homogeneity of the variance covariance matrices for the present study was assumed, Box's M Tests (Box's M = 9.058, $F = .775$; $df 2 = 1901.312$, $P > .05$).

Table 9 shows the Two-Way Factorial ANOVA for English I short answer scores, (2 x 4) with one factor between subjects, males and females, one factor within subjects, repeated measures, English I short answer 1 pre-test and posttest scores, English I short answer 2 pre-test and posttest scores.

Table 9

Summary Table English I

Two-way ANOVA (2 x 4), Gender and Trials, English I Short Answer (1 and 2) Pre-Test and Posttest

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	<u>F</u>
Between Subjects	337.5	49		
Gender	.799	1	.799	.114
error b	336.701	48	7.015	
Within Subjects	589.956	50		
English I Short Answer	133.656	3	44.552	14.386
English I Short Answer X Gender	10.356	3	3.452	1.115
“error” w	445.944	144	3.097	
Total	927.456	99		

*P < .05; **P < .01

Partial Eta Squared between pre-test and posttest effect is .51, therefore 51% of the total variance was explained or accounted for among English I pre-test and posttest scores.

Through Mauchly's Test, sphericity is assumed for the English I test scores. Mauchly's test was significant because $p > .05$, which in this case was .621. Because the significant was greater than .05, the differences in variances was not significantly different from one another. Sphericity was assumed for the present analyses.

In Table 10, the pairwise comparison shows that there was a significant mean difference for English I when comparing each short answer with its counterpart. There was a significant mean difference between the pre-test score 1 and post-test score 1 for each of the short answers. There was a significant mean difference between pre-test score 2 and posttest score 2. Based on the means, the mean difference is significant at the .05 and .01 level.

Table 10

Pairwise Comparison for Analysis for English I Short Answer # 1 and # 2 Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

English I		Mean Difference	Std. Error	<u>P</u>	Lower	Upper
Short Answer					Bound	Bound
Pre-test/Posttest						
1	2	-2.612	.415	.000	-3.753	-1.470
	3	-.697	.412	.582	-1.831	.436
	4	-1.1013	.425	.128	-2.184	.158
2	3	1.914	.349	.000	.953	2.875
	4	1.599	.433	.003	.407	2.790
3	4	-1.914	.349	.000	-2.875	-9.53

Based on the estimated marginal means, the mean difference was significant at the .05 level and at the .01 level.

In Table 11, the comparison shows there was significant mean difference for English I when comparing each short answer 1 with it's counterpart. There was a significant mean difference between pre-test score 1 and posttest score 1 for the first English I short answer 1 response. There was no significant mean difference between pre-test score 2 and posttest score 2 for the second English I short answer response.

Table 11

Comparison Between Pre-Test and Posttest Means for English I Short Answers

English I Short Answers	Pre-test Mean	Posttest Mean	Difference	<u>P</u>
1 st Short Answer	1.66	4.27	-2.61	.00**
2 nd Short Answer	2.36	2.76	-.32	1.00

*P < .05; **P < .01

Table 12 shows the Two-Way Factorial ANOVA for English I essay scores, (2 x 2) with one factor between subjects, males and females, one factor within subjects, repeated measures, pre-test and posttest.

Table 12

Summary Table English I Essay

Two-way ANOVA (2 x 2), Gender and Trials, English I Essays Pre-Test and Posttest

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	<u>F</u>
Between Subjects	286.56	49		
Gender	1.90	1	1.90	.32
error b	284.66	48	5.93	
Within Subjects	282.47	50		
English I Short Answer	124.43	1	124.43	39.66
English I Short Answer X Gender	7.43	1	7.43	2.37
“error” w	150.61	48	3.14	
Total	569.03	99		

*P < .05; **P < .01

Below, the descriptive statistics for English I essays presents the Cohen’s *d* effect size standard measure for the mean difference between standard deviation units.

$$d = \frac{-2.28}{2.39} = -.67$$

This indicates the unit difference you can expect between pre-test and posttest scores. Standard deviation unit of .67 or two-thirds of a standard deviation unit of mean difference was shown between English I pre-test essay scores and English I posttest essay scores.

English II Table 13 shows the difference in mean scores for each gender, male and female, and the mean scores for each pre-test and posttest score. The English II short answer #1 pre-test mean score for both male and female was 1.38. The English II short answer #1 posttest mean score for both male and female was 4.56. The English II short answer # 2 pre-test mean for both male and female was 1.92. The English II short answer # 2 posttest score for both male and female was 3.54. Each short answer had a significant mean difference in pre-test and posttest scores.

Table 13

Descriptive Statistics for English II Pre-Test and Posttest Short Answer #1 and Short Answer #2

(Cross-over)

Dependent Measures	Gender (0- Male; 1- Female)	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
English II	0	1.35	1.872	31
Pre-Test Score	1	1.42	2.317	19
<u>Short Answer # 1</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>1.38</u>	<u>2.029</u>	<u>50</u>
English II	0	4.74	2.160	31
Posttest Scores	1	4.26	2.077	19
<u>Short Answer # 1</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>4.56</u>	<u>2.120</u>	<u>50</u>
English II	0	1.55	1.524	31
Pre-Test Score	1	2.53	2.065	19
<u>Short Answer #2</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>1.92</u>	<u>1.794</u>	<u>50</u>
<u>(cross-over)</u>				
English II	0	3.39	2.155	31
Posttest Scores	1	3.79	1.686	19
Short Answer #2	Total	3.54	1.982	50
<u>(cross-over)</u>				

Homogeneity of the variance covariance matrices for the present study was assumed, Box's M Tests (Box's M = 6.428, $F = .579$; $df 2 = 6759.690$, $P > .05$).

Table 14 shows the Two-Way Factorial ANOVA for English II short answer scores, (2 x 4) with one factor between subjects, males and females, one factor within subjects, repeated measures, English II short answer 1 pre-test and posttest scores, English II short answer 2 pre-test and posttest scores.

Table 14

Summary English II

Two-way ANOVA (2 x 4), Gender and Trials, English II Short Answer Pre-Test and Posttest

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	<u>F</u>
Between Subjects	247.50	49		
Gender	2.758	1	2.758	.541
error b	244.742	48	5.099	
Within Subjects	810.747	50		
English I Short Answer	286.047	3	95.349	26.841
English I Short Answer X Gender	13.167	3	4.389	1.236
“error” w	511.533	144	3.552	
Total	1804.50	99		

*P < .05; **P < .01

Partial Eta Squared between pre-test and posttest effect is .58, therefore 58% of the total variance was explained or accounted by the mean difference between the English II pre-test and posttest scores.

Mauchly's Test, sphericity was assumed for the English II test scores. Mauchly's test was significant because $p > .05$, which in this case is .427. Because the significant was greater than .05, the differences in variances were not significantly different from one another. Sphericity was assumed for the present analyses.

In Table 15, the pairwise comparison, there was significant mean difference for English II when comparing each short answer with its counterpart. There was a significant mean difference between the English II pre-test score 1 and English II posttest score 1 for each of the short answers. There was a significant mean difference between English II pre-test score 2 and English II posttest score 2.

Table 15

Pairwise Comparison for Analysis for English II Short Answer Pre-Test and Posttest Scores

English II Short Answers	Pre-test Mean	Posttest Mean	Difference	<u>P</u>	Partial Eta Squared
1 st Short Answer	1.388	4.503	-3.115	.000**	.58
2 nd Short Answer	2.037	3.588	-1.551	.001**	

*P < .05; **P < .01

In Table 16, the pairwise comparison, there was significant mean difference for English II when comparing each short answer with its counterpart. There was a significant mean difference between the pre-test score 1 and post-test score 1 for each of the short answers. There was a significant mean difference between pre-test score 2 and posttest score 2. Based on the estimated marginal means, the mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Table 16

Comparison for Analysis for English II Short Answer # 1 and # 2 Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

English II		Mean Difference	Std. Error	<i>p</i>	Lower	Upper
Short Answer					Bound	Bound
Pre-test/Posttest						
1	2	-3.115	.381	.000	-4.162	-2.067
	3	-.649	.410	.720	-1.778	.480
	4	-2.200	.446	.000	-3.427	-.947
2	3	2.465	.348	.000	2.067	4.162
3	2	-2.465	.348	.000	-3.424	-1.506
	4	-1.551	.389	.001	-2.621	-.481

Based on the estimated marginal means, the mean difference is significant at the .05 level and at the .01 level.

Table 17 shows the Two-Way Factorial ANOVA, (2 x 2) with one factor between subjects, males and females, one factor within subjects, repeated measures, pre-test and posttest.

Table 17

Summary Table English II Essays

Two-way ANOVA (2 x 2), Gender and Trials, English II Essay Pre-Test and Posttest

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	<u>F</u>
Between Subjects	256.41	49		
Gender	1.003	1	1.003	.188
error b	255.407	48	5.321	
Within Subjects	394.239			
English II Essay	228.549	1	228.549	66.917
English II Essay X Gender	1.749	1	1.749	.512
“error” w	163.941	48	3.415	
Total	650.649	99		

*P < .05; **P < .01

Below, the Descriptive Statistics for English II essay scores presents the Cohen’s *d* effect size standard measure for the mean difference between standard deviation units.

$$d = \frac{-3.18}{2.86} = -1.11$$

This indicates the unit difference you can expect between pre-test and posttest scores. Standard deviation unit of 1.11 or over one standard deviation unit of improvement was shown between English II pre-test essay scores and English II posttest essay scores.

Summary

The statistical data presented in each of the tables above dictates that there is a significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores after the writing intervention was applied to at-risk students. This study conveyed educational significance on the level of improvement the students showed on their retest, based on their placement in the supplemental writing course, which was taken in conjunction with their English Language Arts class. This data suggests that if a student is identified and placed in the writing class after failing the STAAR English I or English II End-of-Course, they are more likely to have an increase in writing scores. If there is a significant increase, this may allow for a student to pass the End-of-Course for English I or English II.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) in the area of English Language Arts consists of two assessments: one for English I and one for English II. Since the initiation of this state assessment, the state has changed the final English I and English II STAAR assessment to model the previous state assessment known as the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). Although the exam follows the same model, the level of rigor implemented in this exam is completely different than what was originally assessed through TAKS. Because the level of academic preparedness for this assessment has increased, additional academic support in English I and English II is maintained by the quasi-experimental findings indicated in Chapter IV. This study focused on at-risk student groups for 2nd and 3rd year cohort students at South Texas high school. This research suggested that after a four-month intervention in a supplemental course, Writing I or Writing II, taken in conjunction with a student's English I or English II class, significantly improved student scores after having failed the assessment during the initial exam administration.

The purpose of this study was to analyze the impact a writing course had on test scores for At-Risk students who are taking the English I or English II State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness End-of-Course exam. This study examines the notion that At-Risk students can be successful on the STAAR English I or English II examinations, or any state mandated assessment, when an additional hour is allotted for the students. According to Cramer and

Mason (2014), “effective instruction is needed to provide students with revision tools extending beyond editing for mechanics” and in writing, this requires additional time to accomplish this throughout the school day (p. 38). Furthermore, with this additional classroom time and “setting, students would work with a variety of peer editors, and benefit from a variety of perspectives, strengths, and talents” (Cramer and Mason, 2014, p. 50). The findings indicated that students who took the English I or English II STAAR assessment prior to receiving a supplemental writing course, were much more successful on the December retest after a four-month intervention. The students showed significant growth from the previous test administration scores to the retest scores in the December test administration.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: What is the difference, if any, between the pretest and posttest in English Language Arts End-of-Course English I writing scores?

According to Saddler and Asaro (2007), “writing is a highly complex and demanding task. Although many students struggle occasionally with writing, writing is especially difficult for less skills writers” (p. 223). Results of this study found that there was a significant difference between writing scores on the student’s previous attempt at the English I assessment and the student’s retest scores after placement in the Writing I course, which was taken in conjunction with the student’s English I class. The students who were randomly selected for this particular study were labeled as at-risk students by the campus reporting system. At-risk youth are labeled this if they meet the criteria designated by the state. Since many of the students already came with deficits, the writing classed helped them hone in on rectifying their weaknesses and

strengthen the stronger aspects of their writing. According to Sreckovic, Common, Knowles and Lane (2014), “studies suggest writing is the most significant academic deficit for these students” (p. 57). During the supplemental course, the instruction “provided students with a strategy to guide them through the writing process” (Ennis and Jolivette, 2014, p. 27). The student scores for 2nd year cohort students for the English I STAAR examination were dissected to represent the raw score for each of the writing components of the examination. Each of the short answer response questions and the student essay points were gathered and compared to the student’s retest scores after the four-month intervention. The descriptive analyses conveyed that there was a gain in post test scores for both male and female 2nd year cohort students on the English I STAAR examination. The difference in scores was nearly one standard deviation different than the student’s previous score on the short answer response questions. The difference in scores for the student’s essay scores were also nearly one standard deviation different than the student’s previous essay score. The data of the confirmatory analyses rejected the null hypotheses that stated that there was no difference in English I writing scores for 2nd year cohort students. The effect size in the comparison in 2nd year cohort respectively was .51. The difference between the pretest and posttest in English Language Arts English I End-of-Course writing for second year male and female cohort students was significant. According to the findings presented in this study, there was no significant difference between male and female students who were part of the 2nd year cohort, or Writing II class.

Research Question 2: What is the difference, if any, between the pretest and posttest in English Language Arts End-of-Course English II writing scores?

Results of this study found that there was a significant difference between writing scores on the student's previous attempt at the English II assessment and the student's retest scores after placement in the Writing I course, which was taken in conjunction with the student's English II class. The students who were randomly selected for this particular study were labeled as at-risk students by the campus reporting system. According to Schumaker and Deshler (2003), "the limited set of skills and strategies possessed by these students, underscores why their chances of passing district and state assessments are slim" (p. 130). In addition to failing assessments, Ziolkowska (2007) states that "children think of themselves as failures and their failure becomes public. Everyone knows the child is repeating—teachers, parents, and other students. They have poor self-esteem and retention negatively effects peer relationships" (p. 78). Because the negative aspects of failure are twofold, the intervention provides additional time for students to acquire the skills necessary to pass.

The student scores for 3rd year cohort students for the English II STAAR examination were dissected to represent the raw score for each of the writing components of the examination. Each of the short answer response questions and the student essay points were gathered and compared to the student's retest scores after the four-month intervention. The descriptive analyses conveyed that there was a gain in post test scores for both male and female 3rd year cohort students on the English II STAAR examination. The difference in scores was over one standard deviation different than the student's previous score on the short answer response

questions. The difference in scores for the student's essay scores were also nearly one standard deviation better than the student's previous essay score. The data of the confirmatory analyses rejected the null hypotheses that stated that there was no difference in English II writing scores for 3rd year cohort students. The effect size in the comparison in 3rd year cohort respectively was .64. There was no significant difference between the pretest and posttest in English Language Arts English II End-of-Course writing scores for 3rd year cohort between male and female cohort students.

Conclusions

This study sought to examine differences, if any, between pre-test and posttest scores for second year and third year cohort students for the English I and English II STAAR examination. This study also suggested that with a supplemental writing course in the area of English Language Arts allowed for student scores on the STAAR English I and English II assessment to improve significantly. Both males and females improved significantly on both short answer and essay scores on both assessments. Based on the data analyses and the discussion of the findings, the conclusions suggest the following:

First, the students who were selected for this particular study were part of a school that educates a predominantly at-risk student group. The students who took the supplemental writing course in conjunction with their English II or English III class were given an additional hour of instruction in the area of English Language Arts for remediation purposes. The Writing classes also had a smaller teacher-student ratio that consisted of 18 students per teacher. According to Whitney, Ridgeman, Masquelier (2011), when "classes are small," teachers can target "students

with learning disabilities or emotional problems along with gifted students or others simply seeking a more flexible curriculum” and can work on a more individualized basis for students (p. 526). Because the level of intensity that is connected to the writing process, especially for at-risk students, additional time should be given to craft to ensure that students do it appropriately. Zorbaz (2015) states that some problems with writing “emerge during the thinking process, in the form of inability to construct or arrange the knowledge on the mental plan, some others are experienced while conveying the mentally constructed and arranged knowledge into writing” (p. 71). Furthermore, Zorbaz (2015) explains that “a person who has no knowledge of writing his/her thoughts in a decent composition, having difficulty in creating a coherent text with a proper narrative and constantly worrying about making grammatical mistakes is likely to have high levels of writing apprehension” toward writing therefore impeding their growth and eventually, their graduation from high school (p. 72). As the results of this study indicated, when students were placed in a supplemental writing course, after obtaining minimal points on the writing portions on the previous exam administration, the students either improved or doubled the amount of points achieved on the retest after a four-month intervention.

South Texas High School had a number of contributing factors that may have been precursors for poor results on state exams, had the school district not created a supplemental course for the STAAR English Language Arts exam. Many of the students who attend this high school are labeled at-risk, economically disadvantaged, or are classified as a special education student, or are English Language Learners. Compton-Lilly (2014) state that “high-poverty communities are limited to high-poverty lives options for change are made available through possibilities for agency that reflect” monumental academic change (p. 376). Statistically, the odds for favorable results on state assessments are not in the campus’ favor because with double-

digit percentages for these student groups nearly dictates that the majority of these students would fail. This study reinforces the notion that if students, regardless of their label, are given additional time in the area they are weakest in, which in this case was English Language Arts, then they too could be successful on state assessments.

The district mandated that the numbers remain low for the writing courses to allow for a more structured writing environment for the students. Tanner (2013) states that “public schools- overcrowded classrooms, outmoded buildings and facilities, lack of adequate curricular offerings and resources, changing demographics and children in poverty” are only some of the obstacles faced by schools, including South Texas High School (p.4). According to Gillespie, Graham, Kiuahara, and Hebert (2013), “approximately 87% of all public school students in the U.S. must now become adept at using writing to help them analyze and think about the information presented in class” and “this includes using writing as a tool for learning” in all subject areas in both middle school and high school (p. 1045). Because students in the writing courses are labeled as at-risk, they need additional supplemental time to facilitate the learning process, especially in areas they are weakest in performance.

A number of historical tensions (small rural schools versus consolidations; the common core versus differentiated curricula; racially segregated versus desegregated schools; the rise of special and gifted education; local versus federal control) in the context of immigration, urbanization and industrialization (Reese, 2011, p. 275).

Recent changes, especially sharp ones in American public schools, have enticed districts to make monumental changes to the traditional public school system. Because changes cannot be eliminated, many schools have undergone a metamorphosis of sorts to facilitate the learning process for all students. Kohnen (2013) explains that “for decades, national studies have found

that high school students do little writing” which is a prominent indicator of master in this subject area (p. 234). According to Donato and de Onis (1994), “federal and state policymakers charged that misguided educational reformers allowed standards to slip, student performance to decline, and the overall quality of high school education to deteriorate” (p. 173).

The United States education system depends on legislation and funding at the federal, state and local levels. Public understanding of assessment therefore is important to educational reform in the USA. Recent educational reforms in the US also rely on assessment information as evidence of the effectiveness of the reform, designing some sort of accountability system into the reform (Brookhart, 2013, p. 52).

Because students fit into the at-risk group, which include immigrants, special population students, and students in poverty, does not mean they cannot be successful on a state assessment. Hong and You (2012) state that “one of the many challenges for educators is addressing the needs of an increasing student population that is culturally and linguistically diverse” (p. 232). Nonetheless, teachers must find ways to diversify curriculum to meet the needs of all students. Craven and Kimmel (2002) state that “critical to the creation of a multicultural, transformational learning experience is understanding of the language, social, cultural, and philosophical needs of all students” (p. 61). Hines (2008) states that providing a “culturally proficient school facilitates meaningful teaching and learning relationship between students and teachers” and “students are engaged in classroom and school wide activities that prepare them for functioning in diverse society” (p. 210). According to Heaney (2006), “based on patterns of poor academic performance and apparent lack of motivation, familiar constructions of underprepared students” are labeled as “cognitively or culturally deficient and unsuited for college” (p. 30). If a school

does their best to facilitate the learning process by allowing for more time in the subject area of need, then the likelihood of their success is probable. Doherty Stahl and Schweid (2013) state:

Recent theories of reading comprehension development inform instructional goals for our students. It is important for teachers to have confidence that acquisition of these goals will enable their students to meet the demands of the new ELA tests that are generally based on these theories (p. 122).

Roid (1994) adds that “one curriculum area that has a long history of research and development in performance assessment is language arts, specifically direct writing assessment” (p. 159).

With different assessments implemented from year to year, research must continue to be the driving force to ensure that students are given the proper level of intervention for state assessment preparation, as well as lifelong learning. Gillespie, Graham, Kiuahara, and Hebert (2014) state:

First, writing promotes explicitness, as the learner must make specific decisions about which information is most important when writing about subject matter material. Second, it is integrative, as writing leads learners to make explicit connections between ideas, as they commit them to text and organize them into a coherent whole. Third, writing supports reflection, as the permanence of writing makes it easier to review, reexamine, connect, analyze and critique ideas once they are transcribed. Fourth, it fosters a personal involvement with the target information, as the learner must decide how it will be treated when writing about it. Fifth, writing helps learners think about what ideas mean, as they put them into written words. The findings from three meta-analyses support the contention that writing enhances students’ learning (p. 1044).

This study also suggests that if students are afforded an additional hour in the area of English Language Arts, they are much more likely to achieve successful scores on state assessments. Hull and Rose (1989) state that “all sorts of people, young and old, of varied races” are identified because their “written language is sufficiently poor to impair their functioning day to day” (p. 1). Because there are two assessments in this particular subject area, and are two of five assessments students must pass to graduate, this study supports that additional time in English Language Arts for at-risk students produce favorable results on their state assessments in English Language Arts. In addition to this, the additional hour will fortify the students knowledge in reading and writing, which will then help them achieve more at the post-secondary level. Doherty Stahl and Schweid (2013) explain that “the best preparation is high-quality literacy instruction” through additional instructional time during the school day, “that is aligned with the standards and builds student thresholds” in writing (p. 124). An increase of time for this subject area allows at-risk students the probability of passing state assessments for English I and English II to further their track toward graduation. Moreover, Lifshitz and Har-Zvi (2015) reinforce that creating a knowledgeable background for students in writing is an integral part of the student’s academic well-being, especially because “writing is an activity that is necessary for satisfactory performance in many aspects of individual’s life and well-being” (p. 54). To ensure that teachers foster a growth mindset within at-risk students, as writing teachers they reinforce the need of “how to plan, generate content, organize, address an appropriate audience, revise, and improve their written composition” (p. 157). Sormunen, Tanni, Alamettälä, and Heinström, (2014) state:

Collaboration brings many benefits to the knowledge and building process: for example, joint efforts to complete learning assignments encourages students to discuss the problem

in hand from various viewpoints, to activate and share relevant knowledge about the problem, to generate ideas on how to solve the problem, and to search and negotiate the use of information sources (p. 1217).

With this additional hour of English Language Arts instruction, teachers can fortify this type of learning so that it takes place in their classrooms.

Implications and Recommendations

In Texas, for the 2014-2015 school year, there were 28,000 students who could not graduate high because they were unable to pass two or more STAAR examinations. As a result of such a huge number, the state of Texas had to implement an Individual Graduation Committee where districts developed individualized graduation requirements to afford those students who did not meet passing requirements for STAAR assessments the opportunity to graduate. The state of Texas has not yet identified whether the same individualized committee will be instituted for the 2015-2016 high school graduates. The findings of this study provide supporting evidence to help implement supplemental interventions for students who are labeled as at-risk of not graduating from high school.

Because of the academic repercussions the STAAR End-of-Course has had on students in Texas, it is necessary to provide academic interventions to students who are at-risk of not graduating. Bulger and Watson (2006) state that the at-risk label no longer implies a different “race or class” and “it encompasses a variety of limitations to learning” and “defines at-risk as a term with origins in K-12 education” that “are poorly equipped to perform up to academic standards” (p. 24). Ziolkowska (2007) reinforces that “educators need to search for alternative programs that are more effective. Early intervention and quality instruction are the keys to helping more students be successful with reading and writing” (p. 79). It is also necessary that

schools develop programs that intervene at the appropriate time, and do not wait for students to reach their senior year in high school to initiate considerable interventions. Academic interventions for state assessments are extremely important for at-risk students who cannot master knowledge and skills for an assessment because state assessments are “generally more difficult to design test items at higher levels of cognitive complexity” and with writing, multiple modes of cognitive complexity are employed (Hout, Elliott, and Frueh, 2012, p. 34). Saddler and Asaro-Saddler (2010) explain that “writing requires an attention to a physical process of putting fingers on keys or pencil to paper and a mental process of idea creation and the wording of those ideas to effectively render thoughts” (p. 159). This study suggests that if the appropriate interventions are implemented, and if students are provided an additional hour of instructional time in the area of academic weakness in other tested subject areas (i.e. Biology, Algebra, or U.S. History) this same study can further suggest academic gains for students, especially those labeled as at-risk. Hout, Elliot and Frueh (2012) further support that “schools must first file improvement plans, make curriculum changes, and offer students tutoring; if progress is not shown, they are required to restructure in various ways”- this supplemental writing course is one way of restructuring academic delivery and intervention (p. 35). Furthermore, having additional time for the supplemental writing course, according to Saddler and Asaro-Saddler (2010), helps improve “one of the fundamental building blocks of good writing, namely, the ability to write effective and complete sentences through” a variety of activities which are “an important element in our approaches to helping children become better writers” (p. 163). If educators are given time to “apply these standards to sentence combinations through teacher modeling and discussion” (Saddler and Asaro-Saddler, 2010, p. 163).

It is important that students are monitored immediately after taking the state assessment for the first time. This study was made possible because of the immediate attention to student scores for all students who failed to meet the passing standard for tested subject areas, especially in the area of English Language Arts. Students of the southern most area of Texas face additional implications that may inhibit academic progress, such as language acquisition barriers, and because of this, it is important to diversify specific sites of intervention, to meet the needs of all students effectively. Legters and Balfanz (2010) state that with the correct academic initiatives, “it is possible to create schools that are organized and resourced enough to meet the academic and social needs of students who have multiple risk factors for failure” (p. 12). Inoue (2014) states that “failure is a complex blend of these various elements, an inevitable aspect of any writing classroom or program” (p. 331). According to Sanchez (2009), “teachers knowing about students and their families is critical to ensuring relevant classroom instruction” (p. 161). Wang, Hsu, Chen, Ko, Ku, and Chan (2014), sustain that “it is essential to help students develop their writing abilities to express themselves and clearly transfer their intended thoughts into text. By doing so, the communication between each individual can be successfully achieved” (p. 234). Furthermore, Shah (2009) states that “building psychological motivation” that at-risk students can reach their goal of passing these state assessments can be done with additional instructional allotted to their area of weakness (p. 212). According to Connor, Alberto, Compton, and O’Connor (2014), reading and writing “difficulties present serious and potentially lifelong challenges. Children who do not read well are more likely to be retained a grade in school, drop out of high school, become teen parents, or enter the juvenile justice system” (p. viii). By conducting this study, evidence suggested that with additional instructional time in the area of English Language Arts, at-risk students were able to reach state requirements on STAAR

examinations. It is time to look into additional time in tested subject areas, especially for students who are at-risk of not graduating. This study provides substantial evidence that students, regardless of labels, or placement in special groups can pass state assessments if they are afforded reinforcement in areas where they need it most.

Future Research

Future research is recommended for this study. In order to determine whether a supplemental writing course significantly improved State of Texas Assessment Academic Readiness (STAAR) English Language Arts End-of-Course exam writing scores, an experimental design study with random assignment and a control group is recommended for future research that would specifically examine whether the supplemental writing course could work better for various student demographic groups such as age, gender, socio-economic status. Researchers can continue this study by initiating a possible mixed-method study where student interviews are conducted and used as personal responses to the different types of writing they do in their writing class. What type of writing interests them? Do different types of writing improve motivation for passing the exam? Were students able to monitor their progress throughout the duration of the class? If so, what were the results and how did that improve student efficacy? Students' abilities to write effectively are essential skills for entering college and/or the workforce. Since college readiness is an important goal for all students, it is prudent to continue building best-practice interventions that create successful students.

Districts who chose to ignore the need for remediation or supplemental reinforcement in English Language Arts for their at-risk student groups have now found their failure rate to be double that of South Texas High School and South Texas Tri-County ISD. If schools or districts from around the state of Texas created the same initiatives for their at-risk youth prior to the

28,000 non-graduating high school students that left without a diploma in 2014-2015, then maybe these students would have had the opportunity of obtaining a diploma without a blemish on their transcript; the one that denotes that the student would not have graduated without the help of a campus committee, or Individual Graduation Committee. Although it has not yet been determined, there will be post-secondary implications student will have to face if they graduated because of the Individual Graduation Committee. Therefore, the lack of effective implementation of initiatives will have a lifelong effect on the same at-risk students, who have already had the odds stacked against them for years. Had initiatives been implemented in other states, then maybe the national percentage of high school graduates for minority or at-risk student populations would reflect a much different number, one that would possibly coincide with that of the at-risk student's counterparts in public high schools. As educational leaders, it is our role to give students every possibility of obtaining a high school diploma. Continuing to do things as they have always been done must change to reflect the change in the demographics of this state and of this country. This study highly encourages the state to look beyond traditional scheduling to find a more formidable way of educating all students, regardless of labels. Educational leaders must prescribe the right type of instructional interventions to fill any academic gaps that may prevent students from passing state assessments. This study also reinforces that this particular methodology can be applied to all tested subject area(s) that are part of the mandated state assessments, and can be implemented in the student's weakest subject area. Furthermore, this study recommends that block scheduling be implemented to facilitate the learning process, especially for at-risk student groups, as well as allot more time for teacher planning, staff development, and instructional support for teachers and students. The overwhelming percentages of failing students across the state not only suggests but mandates that changes be implemented

immediately. The sense of urgency is now palpable across the state. It is up to the educational leaders of this state, as well as this nation, to find a more effective way of tailoring instruction to fit all at-risk student populations appropriately.

REFERENCES

- Acker, S. R., & Halasek, K. (2008). Preparing high school students for college-level writing: using ePortfolio to support a successful transition. *JGE: The Journal Of General Education*, 57(1), 1-14.
- Altshuler S.J. & Schmautz, T. (2006). No Hispanic students left behind: The consequences of “high-stakes” testing. *Children & Schools*, 28(1), 5-14.
- Archambault, L., Diamond, D., Coffey, M., Foures-Aalbu, D., Richardson, J., Zygouris-Coe, V., Brown, R., Cavanaugh, C. (2010). Research committee issues brief: An exploration of at-risk learners and online education. *International Association for K-12 Online Learning*, 2-22. Retrieved from http://www.inacol.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/NACOL_CreditRecovery_PromisingPractices.pdf
- Bali, V. A., & Alvarez, R. M. (2004). The race gap in student achievement scores: Longitudinal evidence from a racially diverse school district. *Policy Studies Journal*, 32(3), 393-415. doi:10.1111/j.1541-0072.2004.00072.x
- Beken, J. A., Williams, J., Combs, J.P., Slate, J.R. (2009). At-risk students at traditional and academic alternative school settings: Differences in math and English performance indicators. *Florida Journal of Educational Administration & Policy*, 3(1), 49-61.
- Boyles, N. (2003). From sparse to specific: Teaching students to write quality answers to open-ended comprehension questions. *New England Reading Association Journal*, 39(2), 16-22.
- Box, G. E. P. (1954). Non-normality and tests of variance. *Biometrika*, 40, 318-335.
- Bråten, I., Ferguson, L. E., Stromso, H. I., & Anmarkrud, O. (2014). Students working with multiple conflicting documents on a scientific issue: Relations between epistemic cognition while reading and sourcing and argumentation in essays. *British Journal Of Educational Psychology*, 84(1), 58-85.
- Brimi, H. (2012). Teaching writing in the shadow of standardized writing assessment: An exploratory study. *American Secondary Education*, 41(1), 52-77.
- Brookhart, S. M. (2013). The public understanding of assessment in educational reform in the United States. *Oxford Review of Education*, 39(1), 52-71. doi:10.1080/03054985.2013.764751

- Brown, E. (2013). No child left behind and the teaching of character education. *ABNF Journal*, 24(3), 77-82.
- Brown, R. S., & Conley, D. T. (2007). Comparing state high school assessments to standards for success in entry-level university courses. *Educational Assessment*, 12(2), 137-160.
- Brown, S. E., Santiago, D., & Lopez, E. (2003). Latinos in higher education. *Change*, 35(2), 40.
- Bulger, S., & Watson, D. (2006). Broadening the definition of at-risk students. (Undetermined). *Community College Enterprise*, 12(2), 23-32.
- Cabell, S. S., Tortorelli, L. S., & Gerde, H. K. (2013). How do I write...? Scaffolding preschoolers' early writing skills. *Reading Teacher*, 66(8), 650-659.
- Cellante, D., & Donne, V. (n.d.). A program evaluation process to meet the needs of English language learners. *Education*, 134(1), 1-8.
- Center for Public Education. (2006, September). Making time: What research says about re-organizing school schedules. Retrieved from <http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/>
- Cihak, D. F., & Castle, K. (2011). Improving expository writing skills with explicit and strategy instructional methods in inclusive middle school classrooms. *International Journal of Special Education*, 26(3), 106-113.
- Compton-Lilly, C. (2014). The development of writing habitus: A ten-year Case study of a young writer. *Written Communication*, 31(4), 371-403. doi:10.1177/0741088314549539
- Connor, C. M., Alberto, P. A., Compton, D. L., O'Connor, R. E. (2014). Improving reading outcomes for students with or at risk for reading disabilities: a synthesis of the contributions from the institute of educational sciences research centers. *National Center for Special Education Research*. U.S. Department of Education. (i-94). <http://ies.ed.gov/ncser/>
- Consalvo, A. A., & Maloch, B. (2015). Keeping the teacher at arm's length: Student resistance in writing conferences in two high school classrooms. *Journal of Classroom Interaction*, 50(2), 120-132.
- Craven, A.E., Kimmel, J.C. (2002). Experiential analysis of a multicultural learning adventure in a Hispanic-serving institution. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 1(1), 59-68.
- Creswell, J.W. (2005) *Educational research: conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Cramer, A. M., & Mason, L. H. (2014). The effects of strategy instruction for writing and revising persuasive quick writes for middle school students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Behavioral Disorders*, 40(1), 37-51.

- Crawford, L., Tindal, G., & Carpenter, D. M. (2006). Exploring the validity of the Oregon extended writing assessment. *Journal of Special Education, 40*(1), 16-27.
- Dobbs, C. L. (2014). Signaling organization and stance: academic language use in middle grade persuasive writing. *Reading & Writing, 27*(8), 1327-1352.
- Donato, R., & de Onis, C. (1994). Mexican Americans in middle schools: The illusion of educational reform. *Theory into Practice, 33*(3), 173-182.
- Dougherty Stahl, K. K., & Schweid, J. J. (2013). Beyond march madness: Fruitful practices to prepare for high-stakes ELA tests. *Reading Teacher, 67*(2), 121-125.
- Ediger, M. (2003). Data driven decision making. *College Student Journal, 37*(1), 9-15.
- Ennis, R. P., & Jolivet, K. (2014). Using self-regulated strategy development for persuasive writing to increase the writing and self-efficacy skills of students with emotional and behavioral disorders in health class. *Behavioral Disorders, 40*(1), 26-36.
- Espin, C. A., De La Paz, S., Scierka, B. J., & Roelofs, L. (2005). The relationship between curriculum-based measures in written expression and quality and completeness of expository writing for middle school students. *Journal of Special Education, 38*(4), 208-217.
- Espin, C., Wallace, T., Campbell, H., Lembke, E. S., Long, J. D., & Ticha, R. (2008). Curriculum-based measurement in writing: predicting the success of high-school students on state standards tests. *Exceptional Children, 74*(2), 174-193.
- Feldman (2012). The relationship of writing and writing instruction with standardized reading scores for secondary students. *The Ohio Reading Teacher, 42*(1), 18-31.
- Ferlazzo, L., & Hull-Sypniewski, K. (2014). Teaching argument writing to ELLs. *Educational Leadership, 71*(7), 46-52.
- Fisher, D. D., & Frey, N. (2013). A range of writing across the content areas. *Reading Teacher, 67*(2), 96-101. doi:10.1002/trtr.1200
- Fitzpatrick, J. L., Sanders, J. R., & Worthen, B. R. (1997). Program evaluation: alternative approaches and practical guidelines 2nd ed.; United States of America: Longman.
- Freeman, C. (2001). Blocking the school schedule: Potential for instructional change. Retrieved on August 24, 2006 from Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement, College of Education and Human Development, University of Minnesota
<http://www.education.umn.edu/CAREI/Reports/docs/BlockingSchedules.pdf#search%22Blocking%20the%20school%20schedule3A%20Potential%20for%20instructional%20change%22>

- García, J. V., & McCauley, A. K. (2011). Transforming a region. *Change*, 43(6), 6-13. doi:10.1080/00091383.2011.618077
- Gillespie, A., Graham, S., Kiuahara, S., & Hebert, M. (2014). High school teachers use of writing to support students' learning: a national survey. *Reading & Writing*, 27(6), 1043-1072.
- Graham, S. (1990). The role of text production factors in learning disabled students' composition. *Journal of Education Psychology*, 89, 170-182.
- Graham, S., Hebert, M., & Harris, K. R. (2011). Throw 'em out or make 'em better? State and district high-stakes writing assessments. *Focus on Exceptional Children*, 44(1), 1-12.
- Graham, S., & Perin, D. (2007). Writing next: Effective strategies to improve writing of adolescents in middle and high schools. *Alliance for Excellent Education*, 1-77.
- Graham, S., & Sandmel, K. (2011). The process writing approach: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Educational Research*, 104(6), 396-407. doi:10.1080/00220671.2010.488703
- Gregg, N., Coleman, C., Davis, M., & Chalk, J. C. (2007). Timed essay writing: Implications for high-stakes tests. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 40(4), 306-318.
- Gülcan, M. (2012). Research on instructional leadership competencies of school principals. *Education*, 132(3), 625-635.
- Gullo, D.F. (2013). Improving instructional practices, policies, and student outcomes for early childhood language and literacy through data-driven decision making. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 41(6), 413-421. doi:10.1007/s10643-013-0581-x
- Hadaway, N. L., & Young, T. A. (2002). Accommodating diversity in literacy instruction through interactive writing. *New England Reading Association Journal*, 38(3), 5-9.
- Hanselman, P., Bruch, S. K., Gamoran, A., & Borman, G. D. (2014). Threat in context: School moderation of the impact of social identity threat on racial/ethnic achievement gaps. *Sociology of Education*, 87(2), 106-124. doi:10.1177/0038040714525970
- Harris, K. K., Graham, S. S., Friedlander, B. B., & Laud, L. L., (2013). Bring powerful writing strategies into your classroom! Why and how. *Reading Teacher*, 66(7), 538-542.
- Heaney, A. (2006). The synergy program: Reframing critical reading and writing for at-risk students. *Journal of Basic Writing (CUNY)*, 25(1), 26-52.
- Higgins, B., Miller, M., & Wegmann, S. (2006). Teaching to the test...not! Balancing best practice and testing requirements in writing. *Reading Teacher*, 60(4), 310-319. doi:10.1598/RT.60.4.1

- Hines, M. (2008). The interactive effects of race and gender on inservice teachers' perceptions of Caucasian American principals' culturally proficient school leadership. *International Journal of Diversity in Organizations, Communities & Nations*, 8(2), 209-219.
- Hoffman, J. L. (1996). Learning the art of persuasion. *Teaching Pre K-8*, 26(7), 58.
- Holmes, N. N., Day, J., Park, A., Bonn, D., & Roll, I. (2014). Making the failure more productive: scaffolding the invention process to improve inquiry behaviors and outcomes in invention activities. *Instructional Science*, 42(4), 523-538.
- Hong, S., & You, S. (2012). Understanding Latino children's heterogeneous academic growth trajectories: latent growth mixture modeling approach. *Journal of Educational Research*, 105(4), 235-244. doi:10.1080/00220671.2011.584921
- Hooper, S. R., Costa, L. C., McBee, M., Anderson, K., Yerby, D. C., Childress, A., Knuth, S. B. (2009). A written language intervention of at-risk second grade students: randomized controlled trial of the process assessment of the learner lesson plans in a tier 2 response-to-intervention (RtI) model. *Annals of Dyslexia*. 63, 44-64.
- Hout, M., Elliott, S., & Frueh, S. (2012). Do high-stakes tests improve learning?. *Issues in Science & Technology*, 29(1), 33-38.
- Hull, G., & Rose, M. (1989). Rethinking remediation: toward a social-cognitive understanding of problematic reading and writing. *Written Communication*, 139.
- Inoue, A.B. (2014). Theorizing failure in U.S. writing assessments. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 48(3), 330-352.
- Isaac, S., and Michael, W.B. (1997). *Handbook in research and evaluation: A collection of principles, methods, and strategies useful in the planning design, and evaluation of studies in education and the behavioral sciences*. (3rd Ed.) San Diego, CA: Educational and Industrial Testing Services.
- Jacobson, L. T., & Reid, R. (2010). Improving the persuasive essay writing of high school students with ADHD. *Exceptional Children*, 76(2), 157-174.
- Jenkins, E., Queen, A., & Algozzine, B. (2002). To block or not to block: that's not the question. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 95(4), 196-202.
- Johnson, K. C., Lampley, J. H. (2010). Mentoring at-risk middle school students. *SRATE Journal* 19(2). 64-69.
- Kealy, W. A., & Ritzhaupt, A. D. (2010). Assessment certitude as a feedback strategy for learners' constructed responses. *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 43(1), 25-45.

- Kern, D., Andre, W., Schilke, R., Barton, J., & McGuire, M.C. (2003). Less is more: Preparing students for state writing assessments. *The Reading Teacher*, 56(8), 816-826.
- Khan, Z., Khan, U., Shah, R., & Iqbal, J. (2009). Instructional leadership, supervision and teacher development. *Dialogue (1819-6462)*, 4(4), 580-592.
- Kibler, A. K. (2014). From high school to the noviciado: An adolescent linguistic minority student's multilingual journey in writing. *Modern Language Journal*, 98(2), 629-651.
- King, J. B. (2015). White house initiative on educational excellence for Hispanics. Deputy Secretary of Education [webinar]. Webinar_P12-education_civil-rights_equity_with_John_King.pdf.
- Kohnen, A. A. (2013). Informational writing in high school science. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 57(3), 233-242.
- Koutsoftas, A.A., & Gray,S. (2012). A structural equation model of the writing process in typically-developing sixth grade children. *Reading and Writing*, 26(6). 941-966, doi: 10.1007/s11145-012-9399
- Koutsoftas, A. A., & Gray, S. (2012). Comparison of narrative and expository writing in students with and without language-learning disabilities. *Language, Speech & Hearing Services In Schools*, 43(4), 395-409.
- Kymes, N. (2004). The No Child Left Behind act: a look at provisions, philosophies, and compromises. *Journal of Industrial Teacher Education*, 41(2), 58-68.
- Legters, N., & Balfanz, R. (2010). Do we have what it takes to put all students on the graduation path?. *New Directions for Youth Development*, 2010(127), 11-24. doi:10.1002/yd.359
- Lane, K. L., Graham, S., Harris, K. R., Weisenbach (2006). Teaching writing strategies to young students struggling with writing and at risk for behavioral disorders: self-regulated strategy development. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 39(1), 60-64.
- Lapp, D. L., & Fisher, D. D. (2012). Real-Time Teaching. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 54(5), 372-375.
- Lifshitz, N. n., & Har-Zvi, S. s. (2015). A comparison between students who receive and who do not receive a writing readiness interventions on handwriting quality, speed and positive reactions. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 43(1), 47-55.
- Marzano, R. J., Pickering, D., & McTighe, J. (1993). *Assessing student outcomes*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

- Mason, L.H., Davison, M.D., Hammer, C.S., C., Miller, C.A., Glutting, J.J. (2012). Knowledge, writing and language outcomes for reading comprehension and writing intervention. *Reading and Writing, 26*(7), 1133-1158.
- Maxwell, A. (2010). Assessment strategies for a history exam, or, why short-answer questions are better than in-class essays. *History Teacher, 43*(2), 233-245.
- Menken, K. (2013). Restrictive language education policies and emergent bilingual youth: a perfect storm with imperfect outcomes. *Theory into Practice, 52*(3), 160-168.
doi:10.1080/00405841.2013.804307
- Miller, N., & Lassmann, M.E. (2013). What are we teaching our students? *Education, 134*(2), 167-171.
- Moats, L., Foorman, B., & Taylor, P. (2006). How quality of writing instruction impacts high-risk fourth graders' writing. *Reading & Writing, 19*(4), 363-391.
- Moon, T. R., & Hughes, K. R. (2002). Training and scoring issues involved in large-scale writing assessments. *Educational Measurement: Issues & Practice, 21*(2), 15-19.
- Moore, K. A. (2006). Defining the term at-risk. *Child Trends, 12*(2006), 1-3.
- Morgan, H. (2012). Poverty-stricken schools: What we can learn from the rest of the world and from successful schools in economically disadvantaged areas in the U.S. *Education, 133*(2), 291-297.
- Moss, B., & Bordelon, S. (2007). Preparing students for college-level reading and writing: implementing a rhetoric and writing class in the senior year. *Reading Research & Instruction, 46*(3), 197-221.
- Mowen, G. G., & Mowen, C. (2004). To block-schedule or not?. *Education Digest, 69*(8), 50-53
- National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2014). Title I- Helping disadvantaged children meet high standards. Retrieved from <http://www.naeyc.org/policy/federal/title1>
- National Conference of State Legislatures. (2014). *Hot topics in higher education reforming remedial education*, Denver, C.O.: publisher not identified.
- Nichols, J.D. (2005). Block-scheduled high schools: Impact on achievement in English language Arts. *The Journal of Educational Research, 98*(5), 299-309.
- O'Neil, J. (1995). Finding time to learn. *Educational Leadership, 53*(3), 11-15.
- Olinghouse, N. N., & Wilson, J. (2013). The relationship between vocabulary and writing quality in three genres. *Reading & Writing, 26*(1), 45-65.

- Park, H., Lawson, D., & Williams, H. E. (2012). Relations between technology, parent education, self-confidence, and academic aspiration of Hispanic immigrant students. *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 46(3), 255-265. doi:10.2190/EC.46.3.c
- Pemberton, J. B., Rademacher, J. A., Tyler-Wood, T., & Cereijo, M. (2006). Aligning assessments with state curriculum standards and teaching strategies. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 41(5), 283-289.
- Printy, S. M., & Marks, H. M. (2006). Shared leadership for teacher and student learning. *Theory Into Practice*, 45(2), 125-132. doi:10.1207/s15430421tip4502_4
- Quenemoen, R. F., Lehr, C. A., Thurlow, M. L., Massanari, C. B. (2001). Students with disabilities in standards-based assessment and accountability systems: Emerging issues, strategies, and recommendations. *National Center on Educational Outcomes*, 2(00). 4-22.
- Ramalho, E. M., Garza, E., & Merchant, B. (2010). Successful school leadership in socioeconomically challenging contexts: School principals creating and sustaining successful school improvement. *International Studies in Educational Administration (Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration & Management (CCEAM))*, 38(3), 35-56.
- Ramos, K. (2014). Teaching adolescent ELs to write academic-style persuasive essays. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 57(8), 655-665.
- Reese, W. J.(2011). America's public schools: From the common school to “No Child Left Behind” *History of Education Quarterly*, 47(2), 257-261. doi:10.1111/j.1748-5959.2007.00098.x
- Reilly, E. D., Stafford, R. E., Williams, K. M., & Corliss, S. B. (2014). Evaluating the validity and applicability of automated essay scoring in two massive open online courses. *International Review of Research In Open & Distance Learning*, 15(5), 84-98.
- Riley, C. (2014). De-essentializing No Child Left Behind. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 13(4), 622-629.
- Rigolino, R., & Freel, P. (2007). Re-modeling basic writing. *Journal Of Basic Writing*, 26(2), 49-72.
- Roach, A. T., Niebling, B. C., & Kurz, A. (2008). Evaluating the alignment among curriculum, instruction, and assessments: implications and applications for research and practice. *Psychology in the Schools*, 45(2), 158-176.
- Ritchey, K. D. (2006). Learning to write: progress-monitoring tools for beginning and at-risk writers. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 39(2), 22-26.

- Rodríguez, B. A. (2014). The threat of living up to expectations: Analyzing the performance of Hispanic students on standardized exams. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 13*(3), 191-205. doi:10.1177/1538192714531292
- Roid, G. H. (1994). Patterns of writing skills derived from cluster analysis of direct-writing assessments. *Applied Measurement in Education, 7*(2), 159-170.
- Ruecker, T. (2013). High-stakes testing and Latina/o students: creating a hierarchy of college readiness. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 12*(4), 303-320. doi:10.1177/1538192713493011
- Saddler, B. (2006). Increasing story-writing ability through self-regulated strategy development: effects on young writers with learning disabilities. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 29*(4), 291-305.
- Saddler, B., & Asaro, K. (2007). Increasing story quality through planning and revising: effects on young writers with learning disabilities. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 30*(4), 223-234.
- Saddler, B., & Asaro-Saddler, K. (2010). Writing better sentences: Sentence-combining instruction in the classroom. *Preventing School Failure, 54*(3), 159-163.
- Salahu-Din, D., Persky, H., & Miller, J. (2008). The nation's report card: writing 2007. *National Assessment of Educational Progress*, (NCES 2008- 468). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C.
- Sanchez, C. (2009). Learning about students' culture and language through family stories elicited by dichos. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 37*(2), 161-169. doi:10.1007/s10643-009-0331-2
- Schumaker, J. B., & Deshler, D. D. (2003). Can students with LD become competent writers?. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 26*(2), 129-141.
- Shah, D. C. (1986). Composing processes and writing instruction at the middle/junior high school level. *Theory into Practice, 25*, 109-116.
- Shah, P. (2009). Motivating participation: the symbolic effects of Latino representation on parent school involvement. *Social Science Quarterly (Wiley-Blackwell), 90*(1), 212-230. doi:10.1111/j.1540-6237.2009.00612.x
- Shiel, G. (2003). Raising standards in reading and writing: Insights from England's National Literacy Strategy. *Reading Teacher, 56*(7), 692.
- Smith, M. (2015). Bill creating graduation panels passes Texas Senate. *The Texas Tribune*. 1.

- Sormunen, E., Tanni, M., Alamettälä, T., & Heinström, J. (2014). Students' group work strategies in source-based writing assignments. *Journal of the Association for Information Science & Technology*, 65(6), 1217-1231.
- Solórzano, R. W. (2008). High stakes testing: issues, implications, and remedies for english language learners. *Review of Educational Research*, 78(2), 260-329
- Sreckovic, M. M., Common, E. A., Knowles, M. M., & Lane, K. L. (2014). A review of self-regulated strategy development for writing for students with EBD. *Behavioral Disorders*, 39(2), 56-77.
- Stage, S. A., & Jacobsen, M. D. (2001). Predicting student success on a state-mandated performance-based assessment using oral reading fluency. *School Psychology Review*, 30(3), 407-419.
- Strizek, G. A., Pittsonberger, J. L., Riordan, K. E., Lyter, D. M., & Orlofsky, G. F. (2006). Characteristics of schools, districts, teachers, principals, and school libraries in the United States: 2003–04 schools and staffing survey (Publication No. NCES 2006-313 Revised). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Tanner, D. (2013). Race to the top and leave the children behind. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 45(1), 4-15. doi:10.1080/00220272.2012.754946
- Taylor, M. (2009). *Improving academic success for economically disadvantaged students*. Legislative Analyst's Office. Sacramento, CA. Retrieved from: http://www.lao.ca.gov/2009/edu/academic_success/academic_success_0109.pdf
- Texas Education Agency. (1999, September). Policy research: Block scheduling in Texas public high schools. Texas Education Agency Office of Policy Planning and Research Division of Research and Evaluation. Retrieved from www.tea.texas.gov/acctres/Spec_PRR_13_1999.pdf.
- Texas Education Agency. (2006). Dropout prevention frequently asked questions. Retrieved from http://tea.texas.gov/Texas_Schools/Support_for_At-Risk_Schools_and_Students/Droptou_Prevention/Dropout_Prevention_Frequently_Asked_Questions/.
- Texas Education Agency. (2010, September). The state of Texas Assessments of academic readiness (STAAR): A new assessment model. Retrieved from <http://www.esc20.net/users/gendocs/CurriculumForum/CCRS/ProposedNewAssessmentModel.pdf>
- Texas Education Agency (2011). Technical digest: Historical overview of assessment in Texas. Retrieved from <http://www.tea.texas.gov/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=2147494058>

- Texas Education Agency. (2012). Chapter 2: Test design and setting student performance standards for state of Texas assessments of academic readiness (STAAR), grades 3-8 and STAAR end-of-course (EOC). Retrieved from <http://www.tea.texas.gov/student.assessment/hb3plan/HB3-Sec1Ch2.pdf>
- Texas Education Agency. (2013, January). State of Texas assessment of academic readiness (STAAR) standard setting questions and answers. Retrieved from <http://www.tea.texas.gov/student.assessment/STAAR-Standard-Setting-QA.pdf>
- Texas Education Code (2014). (Cited in end notes as “Tex. Educ. Code”).
- Texas Education Agency. (2015, March). Redesign of the STAAR English I and English II assessments. Student Assessment Division. Retrieved from <http://www.tea.texas.gov/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=25769820586>
- Texas Education Agency STAAR resources. (2001-2015). Retrieved from <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/staar/>
- Thibodeaux, A. K., Labat, M. B., Lee, D. E., & Labat, C. A. (2015). The effects of leadership and high-stakes testing on teacher retention. *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal*, 19(1), 227-249.
- Tobin, T. (2010). The Writing center as a key actor in secondary school preparation. *Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 83(6), 230-234.
- Toch, T. (2011). Beyond basic skills. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 92(6), 72-73.
- Trenta, L., & Newman, I. (2002). Effects of a high school block scheduling program on students: A four-year longitudinal study of the effects of block scheduling on student outcome variables. *American Secondary Education* 31(1), 54-71.
- Tukey, J. W. (1977). *Exploratory data analysis*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.
- United States Department of Education. National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform: a report to the Nation and the Secretary of Education, United States Department of Education*. Washington, D.C.: The Commission.
- University of Texas Austin. (2015). Why evaluate programs?. Retrieved from <http://www.learningsciences.utexas.edu>
- University of Texas Rio Grande. (2015). The university of Texas Rio Grande Valley informed consent form. Retrieved from <http://portal.utpa.edu/portal/page/portal/1E9E4EAA418F0F6FE05400E7F4F739C>

- United States Census Bureau (2015, March). State and county quick facts. Retrieved from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/48/48215.html>
- Valle, M. S., Waxman, H. C., Diaz, Z., & Padrón, Y. N. (2013). Classroom instruction and the mathematics achievement of non-english learners and english learners. *Journal of Educational Research, 106*(3), 173-182. doi:10.1080/00220671.2012.687789
- Vogler, K. E. (2002). The impact of high-stakes, state-mandated student performance assessment on teachers' instructional practices. *Education, 123*(1), 39-55.
- Von Der Embse, N., & Hasson, R. (2012). Test Anxiety and High-Stakes Test Performance Between School Settings: Implications for Educators. *Preventing School Failure, 56*(3), 180-187. doi:10.1080/1045988X.2011.633285
- Wang, J., Hsu, S., Chen, S. Y., Ko, H., Ku, Y., & Chan, T. (2014). Effects of a mixed-mode peer response on student response behavior and writing performance. *Journal of Educational Computing Research, 51*(2), 233-256.
- Watts, G. D., & Castle, S. (1993). The time dilemma in school restructuring. *Phi Delta Kappa, 75*(4), 306-310.
- Weir, S., Archer, P., & McAvinue, L. (2010). Class size and pupil-teacher ratio: Policy and progress. *Irish Journal Of Education, 38*, 3-24.
- Wright, J. (2010). Academic Interventions 'Critical Components' Checklist. Retrieved June 28, 2015.
www.interventioncentral.org/sites/default/files/RTI_academic_intv_critical_components.pdf.
- Whitney, A. A., Ridgeman, M. M., & Masquelier, G. G. (2011). Beyond "Is This OK?": High school writers building understandings of genre. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 54*(7), 525-533.
- Ziolkowska, R. (2007). Early intervention for students with reading and writing difficulties. *Reading Improvement, 44*(2), 76-86.
- Zorbaz, K. Z. (2015). Effects of variables about reading-writing frequency on the education faculty freshmen's writing apprehension levels. *International Online Journal Of Educational Sciences, 7*(2), 71-80.
- Zoda, P., Slate, J. J., & Combs, J. (2011). Public school size and Hispanic student achievement in Texas: a 5-year analysis. *Educational Research for Policy & Practice, 10*(3), 171-188.
- Zumbrunn, S. S., & Bruning, R. (2013). Improving the writing and knowledge of emergent writers: the effects of self-regulated strategy development. *Reading & Writing, 26*(1), 91-110.

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR™) Performance Level Descriptors

English I Reading Retrieved from TEA.

Performance Level Descriptors

When reading texts of increasing complexity, students achieving Level III: Advanced Academic Performance can:

- Evaluate how the author’s use of diction and figurative language creates meaning
- Make subtle inferences about literary and informational texts, supporting those inferences with specific and well-chosen textual evidence

When reading texts of increasing complexity, students achieving Level II: Satisfactory

Academic Performance can:

- Distinguish between the denotative and connotative meanings of words using context, structural analyses, and reference materials
- Analyze how the author’s use of diction and figurative language supports meaning
- Analyze literary texts by recognizing universal themes and the ways in which literary devices contribute to the development of linear and non-linear plots and complex, believable characters
- Demonstrate an understanding of informational texts by recognizing the controlling idea or argument, identifying the author’s purpose, and summarizing the text by determining which ideas are most important

- Recognize the logical connections and thematic links between texts representing similar or different genres
- Make reasonable inferences about literary and informationalLIDetermine the denotative meaning of words using context and reference materials
- Demonstrate a literal understanding of literary and informational texts and recognize a summary
- Make plausible inferences about literary and informational texts

*State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR™) Performance Level Descriptors
English I Writing*

Performance Level Descriptors

When writing essays in response to progressively demanding writing tasks and reading texts of increasing complexity, students achieving Level III: Advanced Academic

Performance can

- Write skillfully crafted expository essays with sustained focus, a logical organizing structure, and development that lends substance to the essay
- Choose sentences that are purposeful and well controlled
- Evaluate how the author’s use of diction and figurative language creates meaning
- Make subtle inferences about literary and informational texts, supporting those inferences with specific and well-chosen textual evidence

When writing essays in response to progressively demanding writing tasks and reading texts of increasing complexity, students achieving Level II: Satisfactory

Academic Performance can:

- Write expository essays that contain a clear thesis statement,
- use an appropriate organizing structure
- sufficiently develop ideas with specific details and examples
- choose words that reflect an understanding of the explanatory purpose
- demonstrate an adequate command of written conventions
- Use a variety of sentence structures
- Revise drafts to strengthen the introductory and concluding paragraphs, add information that enhances the supporting details, strengthen transitions within and between paragraphs, improve the effectiveness of sentences, and recognize appropriate style and word choice
- Edit drafts to correct errors in grammar, sentence structure, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling
- Distinguish between the denotative and connotative meanings of words using context, structural analyses, and reference materials
- Analyze how the author's use of diction and figurative language supports meaning
- Analyze literary texts by recognizing universal themes and the ways in which literary devices contribute to the development of linear and non-linear plots and complex, believable characters
- Demonstrate an understanding of informational texts by recognizing the controlling idea or argument, identifying the author's purpose, and summarizing the text by determining which ideas are most important
- Recognize the logical connections and thematic links between texts representing similar or different genres

- Make reasonable inferences about literary and informational texts, supporting those inferences with accurate, relevant textual evidence

When writing essays in response to progressively demanding writing tasks and reading texts of increasing complexity- students achieving Level I: Unsatisfactory Academic

Performance can:

- Write basic or limited essays that are only marginally suited to the expository task and minimally developed, with a partial command of conventions
- Demonstrate a minimal control of sentence structures
- Demonstrate basic skills in revision and editing
- Determine the denotative meaning of words using context and reference materials
- Demonstrate a basic understanding of literary and informational texts and recognize a summary
- Make plausible inferences about literary and informational texts

*The rigor of the expository writing task increases from grade 7 to English I in that the prompt is more demanding in English I, specifically with regard to the cognitive complexity of the stimulus (the synopsis or quotation students use in developing the essay) and the sophistication of the topic. In addition, the text complexity of the reading selections increases from grade 8 to English I. Texts can become increasingly complex for a variety of reasons: (1) vocabulary/use of language may be more varied and challenging because it is nonliteral/figurative, abstract, or academic/technical; (2) sentence structures may be more varied, dense, and sophisticated; (3) the author's use of literary elements/devices, rhetorical strategies, organizational patterns, and text features may be more nuanced or sophisticated; (4) the topic/content may be less familiar or more cognitively demanding; and (5) relationships among ideas may be less explicit and require more interpretation, reasoning, and inferential thinking to understand the subtlety, nuances, and depth of ideas. Texas Education Agency Student Assessment Division

State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR™) Performance Level Descriptors
English II Reading

Performance Level Descriptors

When reading texts of increasing complexity, students achieving Level III: Advanced Academic Performance can:

- Evaluate how the author’s use of syntax, diction, and sensory language creates voice, tone, and meaning
- Make discerning inferences about literary and informational texts, supporting those inferences with specific and well-chosen textual evidence

When reading texts of increasing complexity, students achieving Level II: Satisfactory Academic Performance can:

- Distinguish between the denotative and connotative meanings of words using context, structural analyses, and reference materials
- Analyze how the author’s use of syntax, diction, and sensory language supports meaning
- Analyze literary texts by recognizing universal themes and the ways in which literary devices contribute to the development of linear and non-linear plots and complex, believable characters
- Demonstrate an understanding of informational texts by analyzing the controlling idea or argument, determining the author’s purpose, identifying organizational patterns, and distinguishing between a summary and a critique of the text
- Identify the implicit connections and thematic links between texts representing similar or different genres
- Make logical inferences about literary and informational texts, supporting those

inferences with accurate, relevant textual evidence

When reading texts of increasing complexity, students achieving Level I: Unsatisfactory

Academic Performance can:

- Determine the denotative meaning of words using context, structural analyses, and reference materials
- Demonstrate a basic understanding of literary and informational texts and identify universal themes and controlling ideas
- Make plausible inferences about literary and informational texts

State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR™) Performance Level Descriptors

English II Writing

Performance Level Descriptors

When writing essays in response to progressively demanding writing tasks and reading texts of increasing complexity, students achieving Level III: Advanced Academic

Performance can:

- Write persuasive essays that maintain a convincing position and sustain focus with a skillful organizing structure, compelling evidence and support, purposeful and precise word choice, and an understanding and control of rhetorical techniques that enhance effectiveness
- Choose sentences that are purposeful and well controlled
- Evaluate how the author's use of syntax, diction, and sensory language creates voice, tone, and meaning
- Make discerning inferences about literary and informational texts, supporting those inferences with specific and well-chosen textual evidence

Well-chosen textual evidence- When writing essays in response to progressively demanding writing tasks and reading texts of increasing complexity- students achieving Level II: Satisfactory Academic Performance can:

- Write persuasive essays that contain a clear position, use a logical organizing structure, sufficiently develop relevant reasons and evidence, create an appropriate tone through clear and specific word choice, and demonstrate an adequate command of written conventions
- Use a variety of sentence structures
- Revise drafts to strengthen the introductory and concluding paragraphs, add information that enhances the supporting details, strengthen transitions within and between paragraphs, improve the effectiveness of sentences, and recognize appropriate style and word choice
- Edit drafts to correct grammar, sentence structure, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling
- Distinguish between the denotative and connotative meanings of words using context, structural analyses, and reference materials
- Analyze how the author's use of syntax, diction, and sensory language supports meaning
- Analyze literary texts by recognizing universal themes and the ways in which literary devices contribute to the development of linear and non-linear plots and complex, believable characters
- Demonstrate an understanding of informational texts by analyzing the controlling

- idea or argument, determining the author’s purpose, identifying organizational patterns, and distinguishing between a summary and a critique of the text
- Identify the implicit connections and thematic links between texts representing similar or different genres
- Make logical inferences about literary and informational texts, supporting those inferences with accurate, relevant textual evidence

When writing essays in response to progressively demanding writing tasks and reading texts of increasing complexity- students achieving Level I: Unsatisfactory Academic

Performance can:

- Write basic or limited essays that are only marginally suited to the persuasive task and minimally developed, with a partial command of conventions
- Demonstrate a minimal control of sentence structure
- Demonstrate basic skills in revision and editing
- Demonstrate a basic understanding of literary and informational texts and identify universal themes and controlling ideas
- Make plausible inferences about literary and informational texts

*Note:** The rigor of the writing task increases from English I to English II in that the prompt is more demanding in English II, specifically with regard to the cognitive complexity of the stimulus (the synopsis or quotation students use in developing the essay) and the sophistication of the topic. Persuasive writing, which is assessed on STAAR for the first time, also increases the rigor of English II writing. The persuasive task requires students to take a position on a specific issue and to develop an argument that not only supports this position but also convinces the reader of its merit. In addition, the text complexity of the reading selections increases from English I to English II. Texts can become increasingly complex for a variety of reasons: (1) vocabulary/use of language may be more varied and challenging because it is nonliteral/figurative, abstract, or academic/technical; (2) sentence structures may be more varied, dense, and sophisticated; (3) the author’s use of literary elements/devices, rhetorical strategies, organizational patterns, and text features may be more nuanced or sophisticated; (4) the topic/content may be less familiar or more cognitively demanding; and (5) relationships among ideas may be less explicit and require more interpretation, reasoning, and inferential thinking to understand the subtlety, nuances, and depth of ideas.

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B

Chapter 110. Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for English Language Arts and Reading

Subchapter C. High School

Statutory Authority: The provisions of this Subchapter C issued under the Texas Education Code, §§7.102(c)(4), 28.002, and 28.025, unless otherwise noted.

§110.30. Implementation of Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for English Language Arts and Reading, High School, Beginning with School Year 2009-2010.

(a) The provisions of §§110.31-110.34 of this subchapter shall be implemented by school districts beginning with the 2009-2010 school year.

(b) Students must develop the ability to comprehend and process material from a wide range of texts. Student expectations for Reading/Comprehension Skills as provided in this subsection are described for the appropriate grade level.

Figure: 19 TAC §110.30(b)

Source: The provisions of this §110.30 adopted to be effective September 4, 2008, 33 TexReg 7162; amended to be effective February 22, 2010, 35 TexReg 1462.

§110.31. English Language Arts and Reading, English I (One Credit), Beginning with School Year 2009-2010.

(a) Introduction.

(1) The English Language Arts and Reading Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) are organized into the following strands: Reading, where students read and understand a wide variety of literary and informational texts; Writing where students compose a variety of written texts

with a clear controlling idea, coherent organization, and sufficient detail; Research, where students are expected to know how to locate a range of relevant sources and evaluate, synthesize, and present ideas and information; Listening and Speaking, where students listen and respond to the ideas of others while contributing their own ideas in conversations and in groups; and Oral and Written Conventions, where students learn how to use the oral and written conventions of the English language in speaking and writing. The standards are cumulative--students will continue to address earlier standards as needed while they attend to standards for their grade. In English I, students will engage in activities that build on their prior knowledge and skills in order to strengthen their reading, writing, and oral language skills. Students should read and write on a daily basis.

(2) For students whose first language is not English, the students' native language serves as a foundation for English language acquisition.

(A) English language learners (ELLs) are acquiring English, learning content in English, and learning to read simultaneously. For this reason, it is imperative that reading instruction should be comprehensive and that students receive instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding, and word attack skills while simultaneously being taught academic vocabulary and comprehension skills and strategies. Reading instruction that enhances ELL's ability to decode unfamiliar words and to make sense of those words in context will expedite their ability to make sense of what they read and learn from reading. Additionally, developing fluency, spelling, and grammatical conventions of academic language must be done in meaningful contexts and not in isolation.

(B) For ELLs, comprehension of texts requires additional scaffolds to support comprehensible input. ELL students should use the knowledge of their first language (e.g., cognates) to further vocabulary development. Vocabulary needs to be taught in the context of connected discourse so that language is meaningful. ELLs must learn how rhetorical devices in English differ from those in their native language. At the same time English learners are learning in English, the focus is on academic English, concepts, and the language structures specific to the content.

(C) During initial stages of English development, ELLs are expected to meet standards in a second language that many monolingual English speakers find difficult to meet in their native language. However, English language learners' abilities to meet these standards will be influenced by their proficiency in English. While English language learners can analyze, synthesize, and evaluate, their level of English proficiency may impede their ability to demonstrate this knowledge during the initial stages of English language acquisition. It is also critical to understand that ELLs with no previous or with interrupted schooling will require explicit and strategic support as they acquire English and learn to learn in English simultaneously.

(3) To meet Public Education Goal 1 of the Texas Education Code, §4.002, which states, "The students in the public education system will demonstrate exemplary performance in the reading and writing of the English language," students will accomplish the essential knowledge, skills, and student expectations in English I as described in subsection (b) of this section.

(4) To meet Texas Education Code, §28.002(h), which states, "... each school district shall foster the continuation of the tradition of teaching United States and Texas history and the free enterprise system in regular subject matter and in reading courses and in the adoption of

textbooks," students will be provided oral and written narratives as well as other informational texts that can help them to become thoughtful, active citizens who appreciate the basic democratic values of our state and nation.

(b) Knowledge and skills.

(1) Reading/Vocabulary Development. Students understand new vocabulary and use it when reading and writing. Students are expected to:

- (A) determine the meaning of grade-level technical academic English words in multiple content areas (e.g., science, mathematics, social studies, the arts) derived from Latin, Greek, or other linguistic roots and affixes;
- (B) analyze textual context (within a sentence and in larger sections of text) to distinguish between the denotative and connotative meanings of words;
- (C) produce analogies that describe a function of an object or its description;
- (D) describe the origins and meanings of foreign words or phrases used frequently in written English (e.g., *caveat emptor*, *carte blanche*, *tete a tete*, *pas de deux*, *bon appetit*, *quid pro quo*); and
- (E) use a dictionary, a glossary, or a thesaurus (printed or electronic) to determine or confirm the meanings of words and phrases, including their connotations and denotations, and their etymology.

(2) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Theme and Genre. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about theme and genre in different cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.

Students are expected to:

- (A) analyze how the genre of texts with similar themes shapes meaning;

(B) analyze the influence of mythic, classical and traditional literature on 20th and 21st century literature; and

(C) relate the figurative language of a literary work to its historical and cultural setting.

(3) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Poetry. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of poetry and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to analyze the effects of diction and imagery (e.g., controlling images, figurative language, understatement, overstatement, irony, paradox) in poetry.

(4) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Drama. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of drama and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to explain how dramatic conventions (e.g., monologues, soliloquies, dramatic irony) enhance dramatic text.

(5) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Fiction. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of fiction and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to:

(A) analyze non-linear plot development (e.g., flashbacks, foreshadowing, sub-plots, parallel plot structures) and compare it to linear plot development;

(B) analyze how authors develop complex yet believable characters in works of fiction through a range of literary devices, including character foils;

(C) analyze the way in which a work of fiction is shaped by the narrator's point of view; and

(D) demonstrate familiarity with works by authors from non-English-speaking literary traditions with emphasis on classical literature.

(6) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Literary Nonfiction. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the varied structural patterns and features of literary nonfiction and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to analyze how literary essays interweave personal examples and ideas with factual information to explain, present a perspective, or describe a situation or event.

(7) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Sensory Language. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about how an author's sensory language creates imagery in literary text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to explain the role of irony, sarcasm, and paradox in literary works.

(8) Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Culture and History. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about the author's purpose in cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding. Students are expected to explain the controlling idea and specific purpose of an expository text and distinguish the most important from the less important details that support the author's purpose.

(9) Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Expository Text. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about expository text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to:

- (A) summarize text and distinguish between a summary that captures the main ideas and elements of a text and a critique that takes a position and expresses an opinion;
- (B) differentiate between opinions that are substantiated and unsubstantiated in the text;
- (C) make subtle inferences and draw complex conclusions about the ideas in text and their organizational patterns; and

(D) synthesize and make logical connections between ideas and details in several texts selected to reflect a range of viewpoints on the same topic and support those findings with textual evidence.

(10) Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Persuasive Text. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about persuasive text and provide evidence from text to support their analysis. Students are expected to:

(A) analyze the relevance, quality, and credibility of evidence given to support or oppose an argument for a specific audience; and

(B) analyze famous speeches for the rhetorical structures and devices used to convince the reader of the authors' propositions.

(11) Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Procedural Texts. Students understand how to glean and use information in procedural texts and documents. Students are expected to:

(A) analyze the clarity of the objective(s) of procedural text (e.g., consider reading instructions for software, warranties, consumer publications); and

(B) analyze factual, quantitative, or technical data presented in multiple graphical sources.

(12) Reading/Media Literacy. Students use comprehension skills to analyze how words, images, graphics, and sounds work together in various forms to impact meaning. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater depth in increasingly more complex texts. Students are expected to:

(A) compare and contrast how events are presented and information is communicated by visual images (e.g., graphic art, illustrations, news photographs) versus non-visual texts;

(B) analyze how messages in media are conveyed through visual and sound techniques (e.g., editing, reaction shots, sequencing, background music);

(C) compare and contrast coverage of the same event in various media (e.g., newspapers, television, documentaries, blogs, Internet); and

(D) evaluate changes in formality and tone within the same medium for specific audiences and purposes.

(13) Writing/Writing Process. Students use elements of the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) to compose text. Students are expected to:

(A) plan a first draft by selecting the correct genre for conveying the intended meaning to multiple audiences, determining appropriate topics through a range of strategies (e.g., discussion, background reading, personal interests, interviews), and developing a thesis or controlling idea;

(B) structure ideas in a sustained and persuasive way (e.g., using outlines, note taking, graphic organizers, lists) and develop drafts in timed and open-ended situations that include transitions and the rhetorical devices used to convey meaning;

(C) revise drafts to improve style, word choice, figurative language, sentence variety, and subtlety of meaning after rethinking how well questions of purpose, audience, and genre have been addressed;

(D) edit drafts for grammar, mechanics, and spelling; and

(E) revise final draft in response to feedback from peers and teacher and publish written work for appropriate audiences.

(14) Writing/Literary Texts. Students write literary texts to express their ideas and about real or imagined people, events, and ideas. Students are responsible for at least two forms of literary writing. Students are expected to:

(A) write an engaging story with a well-developed conflict and resolution, interesting

and believable characters, and a range of literary strategies (e.g., dialogue, suspense) and devices to enhance the plot;

(B) write a poem using a variety of poetic techniques (e.g., structural elements, figurative language) and a variety of poetic forms (e.g., sonnets, ballads); and

(C) write a script with an explicit or implicit theme and details that contribute to a definite mood or tone.

(15) Writing/Expository and Procedural Texts. Students write expository and procedural or work-related texts to communicate ideas and information to specific audiences for specific purposes. Students are expected to:

(A) write an analytical essay of sufficient length that includes:

(i) effective introductory and concluding paragraphs and a variety of sentence structures;

(ii) rhetorical devices, and transitions between paragraphs;

(iii) a controlling idea or thesis;

(iv) an organizing structure appropriate to purpose, audience, and context; and

(v) relevant information and valid inferences;

(B) write procedural or work-related documents (e.g., instructions, e-mails, correspondence, memos, project plans) that include:

(i) organized and accurately conveyed information; and

(ii) reader-friendly formatting techniques;

(C) write an interpretative response to an expository or a literary text (e.g., essay or review) that:

(i) extends beyond a summary and literal analysis;

(ii) addresses the writing skills for an analytical essay and provides evidence from the text using embedded quotations; and

(iii) analyzes the aesthetic effects of an author's use of stylistic or rhetorical devices; and

(D) produce a multimedia presentation (e.g., documentary, class newspaper, docudrama, infomercial, visual or textual parodies, theatrical production) with graphics, images, and sound that conveys a distinctive point of view and appeals to a specific audience.

(16) Writing/Persuasive Texts. Students write persuasive texts to influence the attitudes or actions of a specific audience on specific issues. Students are expected to write an argumentative essay to the appropriate audience that includes:

(A) a clear thesis or position based on logical reasons supported by precise and relevant evidence;

(B) consideration of the whole range of information and views on the topic and accurate and honest representation of these views;

(C) counter-arguments based on evidence to anticipate and address objections;

(D) an organizing structure appropriate to the purpose, audience, and context; and

(E) an analysis of the relative value of specific data, facts, and ideas.

(17) Oral and Written Conventions/Conventions. Students understand the function of and use the conventions of academic language when speaking and writing. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity. Students are expected to:

(A) use and understand the function of the following parts of speech in the context of reading, writing, and speaking:

(i) more complex active and passive tenses and verbals (gerunds, infinitives,

participles);

(ii) restrictive and nonrestrictive relative clauses; and

(iii) reciprocal pronouns (e.g., each other, one another);

(B) identify and use the subjunctive mood to express doubts, wishes, and possibilities; and

(C) use a variety of correctly structured sentences (e.g., compound, complex, compound-complex).

(18) Oral and Written Conventions/Handwriting, Capitalization, and Punctuation. Students write legibly and use appropriate capitalization and punctuation conventions in their compositions.

Students are expected to:

(A) use conventions of capitalization; and

(B) use correct punctuation marks including:

(i) quotation marks to indicate sarcasm or irony;

(ii) comma placement in nonrestrictive phrases, clauses, and contrasting expressions; and

(iii) dashes to emphasize parenthetical information.

(19) Oral and Written Conventions/Spelling. Students spell correctly. Students are expected to spell correctly, including using various resources to determine and check correct spellings.

(20) Research/Research Plan. Students ask open-ended research questions and develop a plan for answering them. Students are expected to:

(A) brainstorm, consult with others, decide upon a topic, and formulate a major research question to address the major research topic; and

(B) formulate a plan for engaging feelings

§110.32. English Language Arts and Reading, English II (One Credit), Beginning with School Year 2009-2010.

(a) Introduction.

(1) The English Language Arts and Reading Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) are organized into the following strands: Reading, where students read and understand a wide variety of literary and informational texts; Writing, where students compose a variety of written texts with a clear controlling idea, coherent organization, and sufficient detail; Research, where students are expected to know how to locate a range of relevant sources and evaluate, synthesize, and present ideas and information; Listening and Speaking, where students listen and respond to the ideas of others while contributing their own ideas in conversations and in groups; and Oral and Written Conventions, where students learn how to use the oral and written conventions of the English language in speaking and writing. The standards are cumulative--students will continue to address earlier standards as needed while they attend to standards for their grade. In English II, students will engage in activities that build on their prior knowledge and skills in order to strengthen their reading, writing, and oral language skills. Students should read and write on a daily basis.

(2) For students whose first language is not English, the students' native language serves as a foundation for English language acquisition.

(A) English language learners (ELLs) are acquiring English, learning content in English, and learning to read simultaneously. For this reason, it is imperative that reading instruction should be comprehensive and that students receive instruction in phonemic

awareness, phonics, decoding, and word attack skills while simultaneously being taught academic vocabulary and comprehension skills and strategies. Reading instruction that enhances ELL's ability to decode unfamiliar words and to make sense of those words in context will expedite their ability to make sense of what they read and learn from reading. Additionally, developing fluency, spelling, and grammatical conventions of academic language must be done in meaningful contexts and not in isolation.

(B) For ELLs, comprehension of texts requires additional scaffolds to support comprehensible input. ELL students should use the knowledge of their first language (e.g., cognates) to further vocabulary development. Vocabulary needs to be taught in the context of connected discourse so that language is meaningful. ELLs must learn how rhetorical devices in English differ from those in their native language. At the same time English learners are learning in English, the focus is on academic English, concepts, and the language structures specific to the content.

(C) During initial stages of English development, ELLs are expected to meet standards in a second language that many monolingual English speakers find difficult to meet in their native language. However, English language learners' abilities to meet these standards will be influenced by their proficiency in English. While English language learners can analyze, synthesize, and evaluate, their level of English proficiency may impede their ability to demonstrate this knowledge during the initial stages of English language acquisition. It is also critical to understand that ELLs with no previous or with interrupted schooling will require explicit and strategic support as they acquire English and learn to learn in English simultaneously.

(3) To meet Public Education Goal 1 of the Texas Education Code, §4.002, which states, "The

students in the public education system will demonstrate exemplary performance in the reading and writing of the English language," students will accomplish the essential knowledge, skills, and student expectations in English II as described in subsection (b) of this section.

(4) To meet Texas Education Code, §28.002(h), which states, "... each school district shall foster the continuation of the tradition of teaching United States and Texas history and the free enterprise system in regular subject matter and in reading courses and in the adoption of textbooks," students will be provided oral and written narratives as well as other informational texts that can help them to become thoughtful, active citizens who appreciate the basic democratic values of our state and nation.

(b) Knowledge and skills.

(1) Reading/Vocabulary Development. Students understand new vocabulary and use it when reading and writing. Students are expected to:

(A) determine the meaning of grade-level technical academic English words in multiple content areas (e.g., science, mathematics, social studies, the arts) derived from Latin, Greek, or other linguistic roots and affixes;

(B) analyze textual context (within a sentence and in larger sections of text) to distinguish between the denotative and connotative meanings of words;

(C) infer word meaning through the identification and analysis of analogies and other word relationships;

(D) show the relationship between the origins and meaning of foreign words or phrases used frequently in written English and historical events or developments (e.g., *glasnost*, *avant-garde*, *coup d'état*); and

(E) use a dictionary, a glossary, or a thesaurus (printed or electronic) to determine or

confirm the meanings of words and phrases, including their connotations and denotations, and their etymology.

(2) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Theme and Genre. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about theme and genre in different cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.

Students are expected to:

(A) compare and contrast differences in similar themes expressed in different time periods;

(B) analyze archetypes (e.g., journey of a hero, tragic flaw) in mythic, traditional and classical literature; and

(C) relate the figurative language of a literary work to its historical and cultural setting.

(3) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Poetry. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of poetry and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to analyze the structure or prosody (e.g., meter, rhyme scheme) and graphic elements (e.g., line length, punctuation, word position) in poetry.

(4) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Drama. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of drama and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to analyze how archetypes and motifs in drama affect the plot of plays.

(5) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Fiction. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of fiction and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to:

- (A) analyze isolated scenes and their contribution to the success of the plot as a whole in a variety of works of fiction;
- (B) analyze differences in the characters' moral dilemmas in works of fiction across different countries or cultures;
- (C) evaluate the connection between forms of narration (e.g., unreliable, omniscient) and tone in works of fiction; and
- (D) demonstrate familiarity with works by authors from non-English-speaking literary traditions with emphasis on 20th century world literature.

(6) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Literary Nonfiction. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the varied structural patterns and features of literary nonfiction and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to evaluate the role of syntax and diction and the effect of voice, tone, and imagery on a speech, literary essay, or other forms of literary nonfiction.

(7) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Sensory Language. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about how an author's sensory language creates imagery in literary text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to explain the function of symbolism, allegory, and allusions in literary works.

(8) Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Culture and History. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about the author's purpose in cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding. Students are expected to analyze the controlling idea and specific purpose of a passage and the textual elements that support and elaborate it, including both the most important details and the less important details.

(9) Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Expository Text. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about expository text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to:

- (A) summarize text and distinguish between a summary and a critique and identify non-essential information in a summary and unsubstantiated opinions in a critique;
- (B) distinguish among different kinds of evidence (e.g., logical, empirical, anecdotal) used to support conclusions and arguments in texts;
- (C) make and defend subtle inferences and complex conclusions about the ideas in text and their organizational patterns; and
- (D) synthesize and make logical connections between ideas and details in several texts selected to reflect a range of viewpoints on the same topic and support those findings with textual evidence.

(10) Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Persuasive Text. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about persuasive text and provide evidence from text to support their analysis. Students are expected to:

- (A) explain shifts in perspective in arguments about the same topic and evaluate the accuracy of the evidence used to support the different viewpoints within those arguments; and
- (B) analyze contemporary political debates for such rhetorical and logical fallacies as appeals to commonly held opinions, false dilemmas, appeals to pity, and personal attacks.

(11) Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Procedural Texts. Students understand how to glean and use information in procedural texts and documents. Students are expected to:

- (A) evaluate text for the clarity of its graphics and its visual appeal; and

(B) synthesize information from multiple graphical sources to draw conclusions about the ideas presented (e.g., maps, charts, schematics).

(12) Reading/Media Literacy. Students use comprehension skills to analyze how words, images, graphics, and sounds work together in various forms to impact meaning. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater depth in increasingly more complex texts. Students are expected to:

(A) evaluate how messages presented in media reflect social and cultural views in ways different from traditional texts;

(B) analyze how messages in media are conveyed through visual and sound techniques (e.g., editing, reaction shots, sequencing, background music);

(C) examine how individual perception or bias in coverage of the same event influences the audience; and

(D) evaluate changes in formality and tone within the same medium for specific audiences and purposes.

(13) Writing/Writing Process. Students use elements of the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) to compose text. Students are expected to:

(A) plan a first draft by selecting the correct genre for conveying the intended meaning to multiple audiences, determining appropriate topics through a range of strategies (e.g., discussion, background reading, personal interests, interviews), and developing a thesis or controlling idea;

(B) structure ideas in a sustained and persuasive way (e.g., using outlines, note taking, graphic organizers, lists) and develop drafts in timed and open-ended situations that include transitions and rhetorical devices used to convey meaning;

- (C) revise drafts to improve style, word choice, figurative language, sentence variety, and subtlety of meaning after rethinking how well questions of purpose, audience, and genre have been addressed;
- (D) edit drafts for grammar, mechanics, and spelling; and
- (E) revise final draft in response to feedback from peers and teacher and publish written work for appropriate audiences.

(14) Writing/Literary Texts. Students write literary texts to express their ideas and feelings about real or imagined people, events, and ideas. Students are responsible for at least two forms of literary writing. Students are expected to:

- (A) write an engaging story with a well-developed conflict and resolution, interesting and believable characters, a range of literary strategies (e.g., dialogue, suspense) and devices to enhance the plot, and sensory details that define the mood or tone;
- (B) write a poem using a variety of poetic techniques (e.g., structural elements, figurative language) and a variety of poetic forms (e.g., sonnets, ballads); and
- (C) write a script with an explicit or implicit theme and details that contribute to a definite mood or tone.

(15) Writing/Expository and Procedural Texts. Students write expository and procedural or work-related texts to communicate ideas and information to specific audiences for specific purposes. Students are expected to:

- (A) write an analytical essay of sufficient length that includes:
 - (i) effective introductory and concluding paragraphs and a variety of sentence structures;
 - (ii) rhetorical devices, and transitions between paragraphs;

- (iii) a thesis or controlling idea;
- (iv) an organizing structure appropriate to purpose, audience, and context;
- (v) relevant evidence and well-chosen details; and
- (vi) distinctions about the relative value of specific data, facts, and ideas that support the thesis statement;

(B) write procedural or work-related documents (e.g., instructions, e-mails, correspondence, memos, project plans) that include:

- (i) organized and accurately conveyed information;
- (ii) reader-friendly formatting techniques; and
- (iii) anticipation of readers' questions;

(C) write an interpretative response to an expository or a literary text (e.g., essay or review) that:

- (i) extends beyond a summary and literal analysis;
- (ii) addresses the writing skills for an analytical essay and provides evidence from the text using embedded quotations; and
- (iii) analyzes the aesthetic effects of an author's use of stylistic and rhetorical devices; and

(D) produce a multimedia presentation (e.g., documentary, class newspaper, docudrama, infomercial, visual or textual parodies, theatrical production) with graphics, images, and sound that conveys a distinctive point of view and appeals to a specific audience.

(16) Writing/Persuasive Texts. Students write persuasive texts to influence the attitudes or actions of a specific audience on specific issues. Students are expected to write an argumentative essay to the appropriate audience that includes:

- (A) a clear thesis or position based on logical reasons supported by precise and relevant evidence;
- (B) consideration of the whole range of information and views on the topic and accurate and honest representation of these views (i.e., in the author's own words and not out of context);
- (C) counter-arguments based on evidence to anticipate and address objections;
- (D) an organizing structure appropriate to the purpose, audience, and context;
- (E) an analysis of the relative value of specific data, facts, and ideas; and
- (F) a range of appropriate appeals (e.g., descriptions, anecdotes, case studies, analogies, illustrations).

(17) Oral and Written Conventions/Conventions. Students understand the function of and use the conventions of academic language when speaking and writing. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity. Students are expected to:

- (A) use and understand the function of the following parts of speech in the context of reading, writing, and speaking:
 - (i) more complex active and passive tenses and verbals (gerunds, infinitives, participles);
 - (ii) restrictive and nonrestrictive relative clauses; and
 - (iii) reciprocal pronouns (e.g., each other, one another);
- (B) identify and use the subjunctive mood to express doubts, wishes, and possibilities; and
- (C) use a variety of correctly structured sentences (e.g., compound, complex, compound-complex).

(18) Oral and Written Conventions/Handwriting, Capitalization, and Punctuation. Students write legibly and use appropriate capitalization and punctuation conventions in their compositions.

Students are expected to:

- (A) use conventions of capitalization; and
- (B) use correct punctuation marks including:
 - (i) comma placement in nonrestrictive phrases, clauses, and contrasting expressions;
 - (ii) quotation marks to indicate sarcasm or irony; and
 - (iii) dashes to emphasize parenthetical information.

(19) Oral and Written Conventions/Spelling. Students spell correctly. Students are expected to spell correctly, including using various resources to determine and check correct spellings.

(20) Research/Research Plan. Students ask open-ended research questions and develop a plan for answering them. Students are expected to:

- (A) brainstorm, consult with others, decide upon a topic, and formulate a major research question to address the major research topic; and
- (B) formulate a plan for engaging in research on a complex, multi-faceted topic.

(21) Research/Gathering Sources. Students determine, locate, and explore the full range of relevant sources addressing a research question and systematically record the information they gather. Students are expected to:

- (A) follow the research plan to compile data from authoritative sources in a manner that identifies the major issues and debates within the field of inquiry;
- (B) organize information gathered from multiple sources to create a variety of graphics and forms (e.g., notes, learning logs); and

(C) paraphrase, summarize, quote, and accurately cite all researched information according to a standard format (e.g., author, title, page number).

(22) Research/Synthesizing Information. Students clarify research questions and evaluate and synthesize collected information. Students are expected to:

(A) modify the major research question as necessary to refocus the research plan;

(B) evaluate the relevance of information to the topic and determine the reliability, validity, and accuracy of sources (including Internet sources) by examining their authority and objectivity; and

(C) critique the research process at each step to implement changes as the need occurs and is identified.

(23) Research/Organizing and Presenting Ideas. Students organize and present their ideas and information according to the purpose of the research and their audience. Students are expected to synthesize the research into a written or an oral presentation that:

(A) marshals evidence in support of a clear thesis statement and related claims;

(B) provides an analysis for the audience that reflects a logical progression of ideas and a clearly stated point of view;

(C) uses graphics and illustrations to help explain concepts where appropriate;

(D) uses a variety of evaluative tools (e.g., self-made rubrics, peer reviews, teacher and expert evaluations) to examine the quality of the research; and

(E) uses a style manual (e.g., *Modern Language Association*, *Chicago Manual of Style*) to document sources and format written materials.

(24) Listening and Speaking/Listening. Students will use comprehension skills to listen attentively to others in formal and informal settings. Students will continue to apply earlier

standards with greater complexity. Students are expected to:

- (A) listen responsively to a speaker by taking notes that summarize, synthesize, or highlight the speaker's ideas for critical reflection and by asking questions related to the content for clarification and elaboration;
- (B) follow and give complex oral instructions to perform specific tasks, answer questions, solve problems, and complete processes; and
- (C) evaluate how the style and structure of a speech support or undermine its purpose or meaning.

(25) Listening and Speaking/Speaking. Students speak clearly and to the point, using the conventions of language. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity. Students are expected to advance a coherent argument that incorporates a clear thesis and a logical progression of valid evidence from reliable sources and that employs eye contact, speaking rate (e.g., pauses for effect), volume, enunciation, purposeful gestures, and conventions of language to communicate ideas effectively.

(26) Listening and Speaking/Teamwork. Students work productively with others in teams. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity. Students are expected to participate productively in teams, building on the ideas of others, contributing relevant information, developing a plan for consensus-building, and setting ground rules for decision-making.

Note. Source: The provisions of this §110.32 adopted to be effective September 4, 2008, 33 TexReg 7162.

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C

Reporting Category 1: Understanding and Analysis Across Genres

The student will demonstrate the ability to understand and analyze a variety of written texts across reading genres.

(1) **Reading/Vocabulary Development.** Students understand new vocabulary and use it when reading and writing. Students are expected to

(A) determine the meaning of grade-level technical academic English words in multiple content areas (e.g., science, mathematics, social studies, the arts) derived from Latin, Greek, or other linguistic roots and affixes; ***Supporting Standard***

(B) analyze textual context (within a sentence and in larger sections of text) to distinguish between the denotative and connotative meanings of words; ***Readiness Standard***

(D) describe the origins and meanings of foreign words or phrases used frequently in written English (e.g., *caveat emptor*, *carte blanche*, *tete a tete*, *pas de deux*, *bon appetit*, *quid pro quo*); ***Supporting Standard***

(E) use a dictionary, a glossary, or a thesaurus (printed or electronic) to determine or confirm the meanings of words and phrases, including their connotations and denotations, and their etymology. ***Readiness Standard***

(2) **Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Theme and Genre.** Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about theme and genre in different cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.

Students are expected to

(A) analyze how the genre of texts with similar themes shapes meaning;

Genres Assessed:

Literary • Fiction (Readiness)• Literary Nonfiction (Supporting)• Poetry (Supporting)• Drama (Supporting) • Media Literacy (Embedded, Supporting)

Informational • Expository (Readiness)• Persuasive (Supporting)• Procedural (Embedded, Supporting)• Media Literacy (Embedded, Supporting)

Supporting Standard

(9) Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Expository Text.

Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about expository text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to

(D) synthesize and make logical connections between ideas and details in several texts selected to reflect a range of viewpoints on the same topic and support those findings with textual evidence. ***Supporting Standard***

Reading/Comprehension Skills. Students use a flexible range of metacognitive reading skills in both assigned and independent reading to understand an author’s message. The student is expected to

(B) make complex inferences about text and use textual evidence to support understanding. ***Readiness Standard***

Reporting Category 2:Understanding and Analysis of Literary Texts

The student will demonstrate an ability to understand and analyze literary texts.

(2) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Theme and Genre. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about theme and genre in different cultural, historical, and

contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.

Students are expected to

(B) analyze the influence of mythic, classical and traditional literature on 20th and 21st century literature; ***Supporting Standard***

(C) relate the figurative language of a literary work to its historical and cultural setting.
Supporting Standard

(3) **Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Poetry.** Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of poetry and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to

(A) analyze the effects of diction and imagery (e.g., controlling images, figurative language, understatement, overstatement, irony, paradox) in poetry. ***Supporting Standard***

(4) **Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Drama.** Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of drama and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to

(A) explain how dramatic conventions (e.g., monologues, soliloquies, dramatic irony) enhance dramatic text. ***Supporting Standard***

(5) **Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Fiction.** Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of fiction and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to

(A) analyze non-linear plot development (e.g., flashbacks, foreshadowing, sub-plots, parallel plot structures) and compare it to linear plot development; ***Supporting Standard***

(B) analyze how authors develop complex yet believable characters in works of fiction through a range of literary devices, including character foils; ***Readiness Standard***

(C) analyze the way in which a work of fiction is shaped by the narrator's point of view.

Supporting Standard

(6) **Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Literary Nonfiction.** Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the varied structural patterns and features of literary nonfiction and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to

(A) analyze how literary essays interweave personal examples and ideas with factual information to explain, present a perspective, or describe a situation or event. ***Supporting***

Standard

(7) **Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Sensory Language.** Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about how an author's sensory language creates imagery in literary text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to

(A) explain the role of irony, sarcasm, and paradox in literary works.

Supporting Standard

(12) **Reading/Media Literacy.** Students use comprehension skills to analyze how words, images, graphics, and sounds work together in various forms to impact meaning. Students are expected to

(A) compare and contrast how events are presented and information is communicated by visual images (e.g., graphic art, illustrations, news photographs) versus non-visual texts;

Supporting Standard

(D) evaluate changes in formality and tone within the same medium for specific audiences and purposes. ***Supporting Standard***

Reading/Comprehension Skills. Students use a flexible range of metacognitive reading skills in both assigned and independent reading to understand an author’s message. The student is expected to

(B) make complex inferences about text and use textual evidence to support understanding. *Readiness Standard* (Fiction) / *Supporting Standard* (Literary Nonfiction, Poetry, Drama, Media Literacy)

Reporting Category 3: Understanding and Analysis of Informational Texts

The student will demonstrate an ability to understand and analyze informational texts.

(8) Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Culture and History. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about the author’s purpose in cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.

Students are expected to

(A) explain the controlling idea and specific purpose of an expository text and distinguish the most important from the less important details that support the author’s purpose.

Readiness Standard

(9) Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Expository Text. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about expository text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to

(A) summarize text and distinguish between a summary that captures the main ideas and elements of a text and a critique that takes a position and expresses an opinion; *Readiness Standard*

(B) differentiate between opinions that are substantiated and unsubstantiated in the text; *Supporting Standard*

(C) make subtle inferences and draw complex conclusions about the ideas in text and their organizational patterns. *Readiness Standard*

(10) **Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Persuasive Text.** Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about persuasive text and provide evidence from text to support their analysis. Students are expected to

(A) analyze the relevance, quality, and credibility of evidence given to support or oppose an argument for a specific audience; *Supporting Standard*

(B) analyze famous speeches for the rhetorical structures and devices used to convince the reader of the authors' propositions. *Supporting Standard*

(11) **Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Procedural Texts.** Students understand how to glean and use information in procedural texts and documents. Students are expected to

(A) analyze the clarity of the objective(s) of procedural text (e.g., consider reading instructions for software, warranties, consumer publications); *Supporting Standard*

(B) analyze factual, quantitative, or technical data presented in multiple graphical sources. *Supporting Standard*

(12) **Reading/Media Literacy.** Students use comprehension skills to analyze how words, images, graphics, and sounds work together in various forms to impact meaning. Students are expected to

(A) compare and contrast how events are presented and information is communicated by visual images (e.g., graphic art, illustrations, news photographs) versus non-visual texts; *Supporting Standard*

(D) evaluate changes in formality and tone within the same medium for specific audiences and purposes. *Supporting Standard*

(13) Reading/Comprehension Skills. Students use a flexible range of metacognitive reading skills in both assigned and independent reading to understand an author’s message. The student is expected to

(B) make complex inferences about text and use textual evidence to support understanding. *Readiness Standard* (Expository) / *Supporting Standard* (Persuasive, Procedural, Media Literacy)

Reporting Category 4: Composition

The student will demonstrate an ability to compose a variety of written texts with a clear, controlling idea; coherent organization; sufficient development; and effective use of language and conventions.

(13) Writing/Writing Process. Students use elements of the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) to compose text. Students are expected to

(B) structure ideas in a sustained and persuasive way (e.g., using outlines, note taking, graphic organizers, lists) and develop drafts in timed and open-ended situations that include transitions and the rhetorical devices used to convey meaning; *Readiness Standard*

(C) revise drafts to improve style, word choice, figurative language, sentence variety, and subtlety of meaning after rethinking how well questions of purpose, audience, and genre have been addressed; *Readiness Standard*

(D) edit drafts for grammar, mechanics, and spelling. *Readiness Standard*

(14) Writing/Literary Texts. Students write literary texts to express their ideas and feelings about real or imagined people, events, and ideas. Students are expected to

(A) write an engaging story with a well-developed conflict and resolution, interesting and

believable characters, and a range of literary strategies (e.g., dialogue, suspense) and devices to enhance the plot. ***Readiness Standard***

(15) **Writing/Expository [and Procedural] Texts.** Students write expository [and procedural or work-related] texts to communicate ideas and information to specific audiences for specific purposes. Students are expected to

(A) write an [analytical] essay of sufficient length ***Readiness Standard*** that includes

- (i) effective introductory and concluding paragraphs and a variety of sentence structures;
- (ii) rhetorical devices, and transitions between paragraphs;
- (iii) a controlling idea or thesis;
- (iv) an organizing structure appropriate to purpose, audience, and context;
- (v) relevant information and valid inferences.

Reporting Category 5: Revision

The student will demonstrate an ability to revise a variety of written texts.

(13) **Writing/Writing Process.** Students use elements of the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) to compose text. Students are expected to

(C) revise drafts to improve style, word choice, figurative language, sentence variety, and subtlety of meaning after rethinking how well questions of purpose, audience, and genre have been addressed. ***Readiness Standard***

(15) **Writing/Expository [and Procedural] Texts.** Students write expository [and procedural or work-related] texts to communicate ideas and information to specific audiences for specific purposes. Students are expected to

- (A) write an [analytical] essay of sufficient length that includes
- (i) effective introductory and concluding paragraphs and a variety of sentence structures; ***Supporting Standard***
 - (ii) rhetorical devices, and transitions between paragraphs; ***Supporting Standard***
 - (iii) a controlling idea or thesis; ***Supporting Standard***
 - (iv) an organizing structure appropriate to purpose, audience, and context; ***Supporting Standard***
 - (v) relevant information and valid inferences. ***Supporting Standard***

(16) **Writing/Persuasive Texts.** Students write persuasive texts to influence the attitudes or actions of a specific audience on specific issues. Students are expected to write an argumentative essay to the appropriate audience that includes

- (A) a clear thesis or position based on logical reasons supported by precise and relevant evidence; ***Supporting Standard***
- (C) counter-arguments based on evidence to anticipate and address objections; ***Supporting Standard***
- (D) an organizing structure appropriate to the purpose, audience, and context; ***Supporting Standard***
- (E) an analysis of the relative value of specific data, facts, and ideas.

Reporting Category 6: Editing

The student will demonstrate an ability to edit a variety of texts.

(13) **Writing/Writing Process.** Students use elements of the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) to compose text. Students are expected to

(D) edit drafts for grammar, mechanics, and spelling. *Readiness Standard*

(17) **[Oral and] Written Conventions/Conventions.** Students understand the function of and use the conventions of academic language when [speaking and] writing. Students are expected to

(A) use and understand the function of the following parts of speech in the context of reading, writing, [and speaking]: *Readiness Standard*

(i) more complex active and passive tenses and verbals (gerunds, infinitives, participles); *Supporting Standard*

(ii) restrictive and nonrestrictive relative clauses; *Supporting Standard*

(iii) reciprocal pronouns (e.g., each other, one another); *Supporting Standard*

(C) use a variety of correctly structured sentences (e.g., compound, complex, compound-complex). *Readiness Standard*

(18) **[Oral and] Written Conventions/Handwriting, Capitalization, and Punctuation.**

Students write legibly and use appropriate capitalization and punctuation conventions in their compositions. Students are expected to

(A) use conventions of capitalization; *Readiness Standard*

(B) use correct punctuation marks *Readiness Standard* including

(i) quotation marks to indicate sarcasm or irony; *Supporting Standard*

(ii) comma placement in nonrestrictive phrases, clauses, and contrasting expressions. *Supporting Standard*

(19) **[Oral and] Written Conventions/Spelling.** Students spell correctly. Students are expected to

(A) spell correctly, including using various resources to determine and check correct spellings. *Readiness Standard*

STAAR English II Assessment

Reporting Category 1: Understanding and Analysis Across Genres

The student will demonstrate the ability to understand and analyze a variety of written texts across reading genres.

(1) **Reading/Vocabulary Development.** Students understand new vocabulary and use it when reading and writing. Students are expected to

(A) determine the meaning of grade-level technical academic English words in multiple content areas (e.g., science, mathematics, social studies, the arts) derived from Latin, Greek, or other linguistic roots and affixes; *Supporting Standard*

(B) analyze textual context (within a sentence and in larger sections of text) to distinguish between the denotative and connotative meanings of words; *Readiness Standard*

(C) infer word meaning through the identification and analysis of analogies and other word relationships; *Supporting Standard*

(D) show the relationship between the origins and meaning of foreign words or phrases used frequently in written English and historical events or developments (e.g., *glasnost*, *avant-garde*, *coup d'état*); *Supporting Standard*

(E) use a dictionary, a glossary, or a thesaurus (printed or electronic) to determine or confirm the meanings of words and phrases, including their connotations and denotations, and their etymology. *Readiness Standard*

(2) **Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Theme and Genre.** Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about theme and genre in different cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.

Students are expected to

(A) compare and contrast differences in similar themes expressed in different time periods; *Supporting Standard*

(9) Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Expository Text.

Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about expository text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to

(D) synthesize and make logical connections between ideas and details in several texts selected to reflect a range of viewpoints on the same topic and support those findings with textual evidence. *Supporting Standard*

Reading/Comprehension Skills. Students use a flexible range of metacognitive reading skills in both assigned and independent reading to understand an author's message. The student is expected to

(B) make complex inferences about text and use textual evidence to support understanding. *Readiness Standard*

Reporting Category 2: Understanding and Analysis of Literary Texts

The student will demonstrate an ability to understand and analyze literary texts.

(2) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Theme and Genre. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about theme and genre in different cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.

Students are expected to

(B) analyze archetypes (e.g., journey of a hero, tragic flaw) in mythic, traditional and classical literature; *Supporting Standard*

(C) relate the figurative language of a literary work to its historical and cultural setting.

Supporting Standard

(3) **Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Poetry.** Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of poetry and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to

(A) analyze the structure or prosody (e.g., meter, rhyme scheme) and graphic elements (e.g., line length, punctuation, word position) in poetry. ***Supporting Standard***

(4) **Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Drama.** Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of drama and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to

(A) analyze how archetypes and motifs in drama affect the plot of plays.

Supporting Standard

(5) **Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Fiction.** Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of fiction and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to

(A) analyze isolated scenes and their contribution to the success of the plot as a whole in a variety of works of fiction; ***Readiness Standard***

(B) analyze differences in the characters' moral dilemmas in works of fiction across different countries or cultures; ***Supporting Standard***

(C) evaluate the connection between forms of narration (e.g., unreliable, omniscient) and tone in works of fiction. ***Supporting Standard***

(6) **Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Literary Nonfiction.** Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the varied structural patterns and features of literary nonfiction and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected

to

(A) evaluate the role of syntax and diction and the effect of voice, tone, and imagery on a speech, literary essay, or other forms of literary nonfiction. ***Supporting Standard***

(7) **Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Sensory Language.** Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about how an author’s sensory language creates imagery in literary text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to

(A) explain the function of symbolism, allegory, and allusions in literary works.

Supporting Standard

(12) **Reading/Media Literacy.** Students use comprehension skills to analyze how words, images, graphics, and sounds work together in various forms to impact meaning. Students are expected to

(A) evaluate how messages presented in media reflect social and cultural views in ways different from traditional texts; ***Supporting Standard***

(D) evaluate changes in formality and tone within the same medium for specific audiences and purposes. ***Supporting Standard***

Reading/Comprehension Skills. Students use a flexible range of metacognitive reading skills in both assigned and independent reading to understand an author’s message. The student is expected to

(B) make complex inferences about text and use textual evidence to support understanding. ***Readiness Standard*** (Fiction) / ***Supporting Standard*** (Literary Nonfiction, Poetry, Drama, Media Literacy)

Reporting Category 3: Understanding and Analysis of Informational Texts

The student will demonstrate an ability to understand and analyze informational texts.

(8) Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Culture and History. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about the author’s purpose in cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.

Students are expected to

(A) analyze the controlling idea and specific purpose of a passage and the textual elements that support and elaborate it, including both the most important details and the less important details. *Readiness Standard*

(9) Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Expository Text. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about expository text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to

(A) summarize text and distinguish between a summary and a critique and identify non-essential information in a summary and unsubstantiated opinions in a critique; *Readiness Standard*

(B) distinguish among different kinds of evidence (e.g., logical, empirical, anecdotal) used to support conclusions and arguments in texts; *Supporting Standard*

(C) make and defend subtle inferences and complex conclusions about the ideas in text and their organizational patterns. *Readiness Standard*

(10) Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Persuasive Text. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about persuasive text and provide evidence from text to support their analysis. Students are expected to

(A) explain shifts in perspective in arguments about the same topic and evaluate the accuracy of the evidence used to support the different viewpoints within those arguments.

Supporting Standard

(11) **Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Procedural Texts.** Students understand how to glean and use information in procedural texts and documents. Students are expected to

(A) evaluate text for the clarity of its graphics and its visual appeal; ***Supporting***

Standard

(B) synthesize information from multiple graphical sources to draw conclusions about the ideas presented (e.g., maps, charts, schematics). ***Supporting Standard***

(12) **Reading/Media Literacy.** Students use comprehension skills to analyze how words, images, graphics, and sounds work together in various forms to impact meaning. Students are expected to

(A) evaluate how messages presented in media reflect social and cultural views in ways different from traditional texts; ***Supporting Standard***

(D) evaluate changes in formality and tone within the same medium for specific audiences and purposes. ***Supporting Standard***

Reading/Comprehension Skills. Students use a flexible range of metacognitive reading skills in both assigned and independent reading to understand an author's message. The student is expected to

(B) make complex inferences about text and use textual evidence to support understanding. ***Readiness Standard*** (Expository) / ***Supporting Standard*** (Persuasive, Procedural, Media Literacy)

Reporting Category 4: Composition

The student will demonstrate an ability to compose a variety of written texts with a clear, controlling thesis; coherent organization; sufficient development; and effective use of

language and conventions.

(13) **Writing/Writing Process.** Students use elements of the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) to compose text. Students are expected to

(B) structure ideas in a sustained and persuasive way (e.g., using outlines, note taking, graphic organizers, lists) and develop drafts in timed and open-ended situations that include transitions and rhetorical devices used to convey meaning; ***Readiness Standard***

(C) revise drafts to improve style, word choice, figurative language, sentence variety, and subtlety of meaning after rethinking how well questions of purpose, audience, and genre have been addressed; ***Readiness Standard***

(D) edit drafts for grammar, mechanics, and spelling. ***Readiness Standard***

(15) **Writing/Expository [and Procedural] Texts.** Students write expository [and procedural or work-related] texts to communicate ideas and information to specific audiences for specific purposes. Students are expected to

(A) write an [analytical] essay of sufficient length ***Readiness Standard*** that includes

(i) effective introductory and concluding paragraphs and a variety of sentence structures;

(ii) rhetorical devices, and transitions between paragraphs;

(iii) a thesis or controlling idea;

(iv) an organizing structure appropriate to purpose, audience, and context;

(v) relevant evidence and well-chosen details;

(vi) distinctions about the relative value of specific data, facts, ideas that support the thesis statement.

(16) **Writing/Persuasive Texts.** Students write persuasive texts to influence the attitudes or

actions of a specific audience on specific issues. Students are expected to write an argumentative essay to the appropriate audience ***Readiness Standard*** that includes

- (A) a clear thesis or position based on logical reasons supported by precise and relevant evidence;
- (D) an organizing structure appropriate to the purpose, audience, and context;
- (E) an analysis of the relative value of specific data, facts, and ideas.

Reporting Category 5: Revision

The student will demonstrate an ability to revise a variety of written texts.

(13) **Writing/Writing Process.** Students use elements of the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) to compose text. Students are expected to

- (C) revise drafts to improve style, word choice, figurative language, sentence variety, and subtlety of meaning after rethinking how well questions of purpose, audience, and genre have been addressed. ***Readiness Standard***

(15) **Writing/Expository [and Procedural] Texts.** Students write expository [and procedural or work-related] texts to communicate ideas and information to specific audiences for specific purposes. Students are expected to

- (A) write an [analytical] essay of sufficient length that includes
 - (i) effective introductory and concluding paragraphs and a variety of sentence structures; ***Supporting Standard***
 - (ii) rhetorical devices, and transitions between paragraphs; ***Supporting Standard***
 - (iii) a thesis or controlling idea; ***Supporting Standard***
 - (iv) an organizing structure appropriate to purpose, audience, and context;

Supporting Standard

(v) relevant evidence and well-chosen details; ***Supporting Standard***

(vi) distinctions about the relative value of specific data, facts, and ideas that support the thesis statement. ***Supporting Standard***

(16) **Writing/Persuasive Texts.** Students write persuasive texts to influence the attitudes or actions of a specific audience on specific issues. Students are expected to write an argumentative essay to the appropriate audience that includes

(A) a clear thesis or position based on logical reasons supported by precise and relevant evidence; ***Supporting Standard***

(C) counter-arguments based on evidence to anticipate and address objections;

Supporting Standard

(D) an organizing structure appropriate to the purpose, audience, and context;

Supporting Standard

(E) an analysis of the relative value of specific data, facts, and ideas; ***Supporting Standard***

(F) a range of appropriate appeals (e.g., descriptions, anecdotes, case studies, analogies, illustrations). ***Supporting Standard***

Reporting Category 6: Editing

The student will demonstrate an ability to edit a variety of texts.

(13) **Writing/Writing Process.** Students use elements of the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) to compose text. Students are expected to

(D) edit drafts for grammar, mechanics, and spelling. ***Readiness Standard***

(17) **[Oral and] Written Conventions/Conventions.** Students understand the function of and

use the conventions of academic language when [speaking and] writing. Students are expected to

(A) use and understand the function of the following parts of speech in the context of reading, writing, [and speaking]: **Readiness Standard**

(i) more complex active and passive tenses and verbals (gerunds, infinitives, participles); **Supporting Standard**

(ii) restrictive and nonrestrictive relative clauses; **Supporting Standard**

(iii) reciprocal pronouns (e.g., each other, one another); **Supporting Standard**

(C) use a variety of correctly structured sentences (e.g., compound, complex, compound-complex). **Readiness Standard**

(18) [Oral and] Written Conventions/Handwriting, Capitalization, and Punctuation.

Students write legibly and use appropriate capitalization and punctuation conventions in their compositions. Students are expected to

(A) use conventions of capitalization; **Readiness Standard**

(B) use correct punctuation marks **Readiness Standard** including

(i) comma placement in nonrestrictive phrases, clauses, and contrasting expressions; **Supporting Standard**

(ii) quotation marks to indicate sarcasm or irony. **Supporting Standard**

(19) [Oral and] Written Conventions/Spelling. Students spell correctly. Students are expected to

(A) spell correctly, including using various resources to determine and check correct spellings. **Readiness Standard**

English II Assessment Eligible Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills STAAR English II

Page 1 of 12 Texas Education Agency Student Assessment Division December 2013 STAAR

English II Page 2 of 12 Texas Education Agency Student Assessment Division December 2013

STAAR English II Assessment Genres Assessed: Literary Informational • Fiction

(Readiness) • Expository (Readiness) • Literary Nonfiction (Supporting) • Persuasive

(Supporting) • Poetry (Supporting) • Procedural (Embedded, Supporting) • Drama (Supporting) •

Media Literacy (Embedded, Supporting) • Media Literacy (Embedded, Supporting)

Reporting Category 1: Understanding and Analysis Across Genres The student will

demonstrate the ability to understand and analyze a variety of written texts across reading genres.

(1) **Reading/Vocabulary Development.** Students understand new vocabulary and use it when reading and writing. Students are expected to

(A) determine the meaning of grade-level technical academic English words in multiple content areas (e.g., science, mathematics, social studies, the arts) derived from Latin, Greek, or other linguistic roots and affixes; ***Supporting Standard***

(B) analyze textual context (within a sentence and in larger sections of text) to distinguish between the denotative and connotative meanings of words; ***Readiness Standard***

(C) infer word meaning through the identification and analysis of analogies and other word relationships; ***Supporting Standard***

(D) show the relationship between the origins and meaning of foreign words or phrases used frequently in written English and historical events or developments ***Supporting Standard***

(E) use a dictionary, a glossary, or a thesaurus (printed or electronic) to determine or confirm the meanings of words and phrases, including their connotations and denotations, and their etymology. *Readiness Standard*

(2) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Theme and Genre. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about theme and genre in different cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.

Students are expected to

(A) compare and contrast differences in similar themes expressed in different time periods; *Supporting Standard* STAAR English II Page 3 of 12 Texas Education Agency Student Assessment Division December 2013

(9) Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Expository Text. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about expository text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to

(D) synthesize and make logical connections between ideas and details in several texts selected to reflect a range of viewpoints on the same topic and support those findings with textual evidence. *Supporting Standard* (Figure 19)

Reading/Comprehension Skills. Students use a flexible range of metacognitive reading skills in both assigned and independent reading to understand an author's message. The student is expected to

(B) make complex inferences about text and use textual evidence to support understanding. *Readiness Standard*

Reporting Category 2: Understanding and Analysis of Literary Texts The student will demonstrate an ability to understand and analyze literary texts.

(2) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Theme and Genre. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about theme and genre in different cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.

Students are expected to

(B) analyze archetypes (e.g., journey of a hero, tragic flaw) in mythic, traditional and classical literature; ***Supporting Standard***

(C) relate the figurative language of a literary work to its historical and cultural setting.

Supporting Standard

(3) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Poetry. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of poetry and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to

(A) analyze the structure or prosody (e.g., meter, rhyme scheme) and graphic elements (e.g., line length, punctuation, word position) in poetry. ***Supporting Standard***

(4) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Drama. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of drama and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to

(A) analyze how archetypes and motifs in drama affect the plot of plays. ***Supporting***

Standard

(5) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Fiction. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of fiction and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to

(A) analyze isolated scenes and their contribution to the success of the plot as a whole in a variety of works of fiction; ***Readiness Standard***

(B) analyze differences in the characters' moral dilemmas in works of fiction across different countries or cultures; *Supporting Standard*

(C) evaluate the connection between forms of narration (e.g., unreliable, omniscient) and tone in works of fiction. *Supporting Standard*

(6) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Literary Nonfiction. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the varied structural patterns and features of literary nonfiction and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to

(A) evaluate the role of syntax and diction and the effect of voice, tone, and imagery on a speech, literary essay, or other forms of literary nonfiction. *Supporting Standard*

(7) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Sensory Language. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about how an author's sensory language creates imagery in literary text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to

(A) explain the function of symbolism, allegory, and allusions in literary works.

Supporting Standard

(12) Reading/Media Literacy. Students use comprehension skills to analyze how words, images, graphics, and sounds work together in various forms to impact meaning. Students are expected to

(A) evaluate how messages presented in media reflect social and cultural views in ways different from traditional texts; *Supporting Standard*

(D) evaluate changes in formality and tone within the same medium for specific audiences and purposes. *Supporting Standard* (Figure 19)

Reading/Comprehension Skills. Students use a flexible range of metacognitive reading skills in both assigned and independent reading to understand an author’s message. The student is expected to

(B) make complex inferences about text and use textual evidence to support understanding. *Readiness Standard* (Fiction) / *Supporting Standard* (Literary Nonfiction, Poetry, Drama, Media Literacy)

Reporting Category 3: Understanding and Analysis of Informational Texts The student will demonstrate an ability to understand and analyze informational texts.

(8) Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Culture and History. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about the author’s purpose in cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.

Students are expected to

(A) analyze the controlling idea and specific purpose of a passage and the textual elements that support and elaborate it, including both the most important details and the less important details. *Readiness Standard*

(9) Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Expository Text. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about expository text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to

(A) summarize text and distinguish between a summary and a critique and identify non-essential information in a summary and unsubstantiated opinions in a critique; *Readiness Standard*

(B) distinguish among different kinds of evidence (e.g., logical, empirical, anecdotal) used to support conclusions and arguments in texts; *Supporting Standard*

(C) make and defend subtle inferences and complex conclusions about the ideas in text and their organizational patterns. ***Readiness Standard***

(10) **Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Persuasive Text.** Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about persuasive text and provide evidence from text to support their analysis. Students are expected to

(A) explain shifts in perspective in arguments about the same topic and evaluate the accuracy of the evidence used to support the different viewpoints within those arguments.

Supporting Standard

(11) **Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Procedural Texts.** Students understand how to glean and use information in procedural texts and documents. Students are expected to

(A) evaluate text for the clarity of its graphics and its visual appeal; ***Supporting Standard***

(B) synthesize information from multiple graphical sources to draw conclusions about the ideas presented (e.g., maps, charts, schematics). ***Supporting Standard***

(12) **Reading/Media Literacy.** Students use comprehension skills to analyze how words, images, graphics, and sounds work together in various forms to impact meaning. Students are expected to

(A) evaluate how messages presented in media reflect social and cultural views in ways different from traditional texts; ***Supporting Standard***

(D) evaluate changes in formality and tone within the same medium for specific audiences and purposes. ***Supporting Standard*** (Figure 19)

Reading/Comprehension Skills. Students use a flexible range of metacognitive reading skills in both assigned and independent reading to understand an author’s message. The student is expected to

(B) make complex inferences about text and use textual evidence to support understanding. **Readiness Standard** (Expository) / **Supporting Standard** (Persuasive, Procedural, Media Literacy)

Reporting Category 4: Composition The student will demonstrate an ability to compose a variety of written texts with a clear, controlling thesis; coherent organization; sufficient development; and effective use of language and conventions.

(13) **Writing/Writing Process.** Students use elements of the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) to compose text. Students are expected to

(B) structure ideas in a sustained and persuasive way (e.g., using outlines, note taking, graphic organizers, lists) and develop drafts in timed and open-ended situations that include transitions and rhetorical devices used to convey meaning; **Readiness Standard**

(C) revise drafts to improve style, word choice, figurative language, sentence variety, and subtlety of meaning after rethinking how well questions of purpose, audience, and genre have been addressed; **Readiness Standard**

(D) edit drafts for grammar, mechanics, and spelling. **Readiness Standard**

(15) **Writing/Expository [and Procedural] Texts.** Students write expository [and procedural or work-related] texts to communicate ideas and information to specific audiences for specific purposes. Students are expected to

(A) write an [analytical] essay of sufficient length **Readiness Standard** that includes

(i) effective introductory and concluding paragraphs and a variety of sentence structures;

(ii) rhetorical devices, and transitions between paragraphs; (iii) a thesis or controlling idea;

- (iv) an organizing structure appropriate to purpose, audience, and context;
- (v) relevant evidence and well-chosen details; (vi) distinctions about the relative value of specific data, facts, ideas that support the thesis statement.

(16) **Writing/Persuasive Texts.** Students write persuasive texts to influence the attitudes or actions of a specific audience on specific issues. Students are expected to write an argumentative essay to the appropriate audience *Readiness Standard* that includes

- (A) a clear thesis or position based on logical reasons supported by precise and relevant evidence;
- (D) an organizing structure appropriate to the purpose, audience, and context;
- (E) an analysis of the relative value of specific data, facts, and ideas.

Genres Represented in the Revision and Editing Sections of the Test: Literary

Informational • Literary Nonfiction • Expository • Persuasive

Reporting Category 5: Revision The student will demonstrate an ability to revise a variety of written texts.

(13) **Writing/Writing Process.** Students use elements of the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) to compose text. Students are expected to

- (C) revise drafts to improve style, word choice, figurative language, sentence variety, and subtlety of meaning after rethinking how well questions of purpose, audience, and genre have been addressed. *Readiness Standard*

(15) **Writing/Expository [and Procedural] Texts.** Students write expository [and procedural or work-related] texts to communicate ideas and information to specific audiences for specific purposes. Students are expected to

- (A) write an [analytical] essay of sufficient length that includes

(i) effective introductory and concluding paragraphs and a variety of sentence structures; *Supporting Standard*

(ii) rhetorical devices, and transitions between paragraphs; *Supporting Standard*

(iii) a thesis or controlling idea; *Supporting Standard*

(iv) an organizing structure appropriate to purpose, audience, and context;

Supporting Standard

(v) relevant evidence and well-chosen details; *Supporting Standard*

(vi) distinctions about the relative value of specific data, facts, and ideas that support the thesis statement. *Supporting Standard*

(16) **Writing/Persuasive Texts.** Students write persuasive texts to influence the attitudes or actions of a specific audience on specific issues. Students are expected to write an argumentative essay to the appropriate audience that includes

(A) a clear thesis or position based on logical reasons supported by precise and relevant evidence; *Supporting Standard*

(C) counter-arguments based on evidence to anticipate and address objections;

Supporting

(D) an organizing structure appropriate to the purpose, audience, and context; *Supporting*

Standard

(E) an analysis of the relative value of specific data, facts, and ideas; *Supporting*

Standard

(F) a range of appropriate appeals (e.g., descriptions, anecdotes, case studies, analogies, illustrations). *Supporting Standard*

Reporting Category 6: Editing The student will demonstrate an ability to edit a variety of texts.

(13) **Writing/Writing Process.** Students use elements of the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) to compose text. Students are expected to

(D) edit drafts for grammar, mechanics, and spelling. *Readiness Standard*

(17) **[Oral and] Written Conventions/Conventions.** Students understand the function of and use the conventions of academic language when [speaking and] writing. Students are expected to

(A) use and understand the function of the following parts of speech in the context of reading, writing, [and speaking]: *Readiness Standard*

(i) more complex active and passive tenses and verbals (gerunds, infinitives, participles); *Supporting Standard*

(ii) restrictive and nonrestrictive relative clauses; *Supporting Standard*

(iii) reciprocal pronouns (e.g., each other, one another); *Supporting Standard*

(C) use a variety of correctly structured sentences (e.g., compound, complex, compound-complex). *Readiness Standard*

(18) **[Oral and] Written Conventions/Handwriting, Capitalization, and Punctuation.**

Students write legibly and use appropriate capitalization and punctuation conventions in their compositions. Students are expected to

(A) use conventions of capitalization; *Readiness Standard*

(B) use correct punctuation marks *Readiness Standard* including

(i) comma placement in nonrestrictive phrases, clauses, and contrasting expressions; *Supporting Standard*

(ii) quotation marks to indicate sarcasm or irony. *Supporting Standard*

(19) **[Oral and] Written Conventions/Spelling.** Students spell correctly. Students are expected to

(A) spell correctly, including using various resources to determine and check correct spellings. ***Readiness Standard***

Note. TEA, 2

APPENDIX D



McALLEN HIGH SCHOOL
2021 La Vista, McAllen, Texas 78501
(956) 632-3100 • Fax: (956) 632-3114

ALBERT CANALES
Principal

Attn: Mr. Albert Canales

Re: Approval for Dissertation Study



Mr. Albert Canales,

I am currently pursuing a doctoral degree with the University of Texas Pan American in Edinburg, Texas. I am working under the supervision of Dr. Shirley Mills in the College of Education at the University of Texas Pan American. As part of my dissertation, I am proposing to conduct an experimental research study on the writing courses for students who have taken, or will take the STAAR English I or English II End-of- Course exam. The study is intended to outline the students' progress as well as analyze pass rates for students who are labeled at-risk. The study will involve analysis of all data from previous STAAR English I and English II scores, as well as data from the December English I and English II scores. The writing courses were implemented two years ago and I feel that this study will thoroughly analyze all aspects of this course, and will provide further insight to possibly be used on other federally funded courses that are currently taking place within the district. This study will not pose any risk to these participants and the district, campuses, and participants' confidentiality will be protected with the use of pseudonyms. The school will de-identify the data prior to providing the data to the researcher Esmeralda Munoz.

The purpose of this letter is to seek your final approval to conduct this study with McAllen High School. As I will need your approval in writing, I would respectfully request you respond in that manner. I thank you in advance for your help in this endeavor. I am looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Esmeralda Munoz". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Esmeralda Munoz
McAllen High School, Dean of Instruction
Educational Leadership Doctoral Student



McALLEN HIGH SCHOOL
2021 La Vista, McAllen, Texas 78501
(956) 632-3100 • Fax: (956) 632-3114

ALBERT CANALES
Principal



Dr. Shirley Mills
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
College of Education
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
1201 West University Drive
Edinburg, Texas 78539

Dear Dr. Mills:

Please accept this letter as approval for Ms. Esmeralda Munoz, Educational Leadership Doctoral student at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley to conduct an experimental research study on the writing courses for students who have taken, or will take the STAAR English or English II End-of-Course exam(s). The study is intended to outline the students' progress as well as analyze pass rates for students who are labeled at-risk.

Ms. Munoz has my permission to conduct her study at McAllen High School and to analyze the data from previous STAAR English I and English II scores, as well as data from the December English I and English II scores. I understand that this study will not place any risk to any participants, the district, and campuses]. Also, students will not be identified by name or subject. The school will de-identify the data prior to providing the data to the researcher Esmeralda Munoz.

We look forward to this very important work and that Ms. Munoz share a copy of her study with us. If you have any questions, please call me at (956) 632-3100.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Canales", written over a horizontal line.

Mr. Albert Canales
Principal
McAllen High School



CONRADO ALVARADO, President
LAWRENCE (LARRY) ESPARZA, Vice-President
TONY FORINA, Secretary
JOHNATHAN T. BALL, Trustee
SAM SALDIVAR JR., Trustee
MARCO SUAREZ, Trustee
DANIEL D. VELA, Trustee

JAMES J. PONCE, Ed. D., Superintendent

June 4, 2015

Dr. Shirley Mills
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
College of Education
Department of Curriculum & Instruction
1201 West University Drive
Edinburg, Texas 78539

Dear Dr. Mills:

Please accept this letter as approval for Ms. Esmeralda Muñoz, Educational Leadership Doctoral student at University of Texas Rio Grande Valley to conduct an experimental research study on the writing courses for students who have taken, or will take the STAAR English or English II End-of-Course exam(s). This study is intended to outline the students' progress as well as analyze pass rates for students who are labeled at-risk.

Ms. Muñoz has my permission to conduct her study at McAllen High School and to analyze the data from previous STAAR English I and English II scores, as well as data from the December English I and English II scores. I understand that this study will not place any risk to any participants, the district, and campuses. Also, students will not be identified by name or subject.

We look forward to this very important work and that Ms. Muñoz share a copy of her study with us. If you have any questions, please call me at (956) 618-6027.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James J. Ponce".

James J. Ponce, Ed.D.
Superintendent

cc: Albert Canales, Principal at McAllen High School



• This message was sent with high importance.

NOTICE OF APPROVAL
Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects (IRB)
FWA#00000805

Dear Researcher,

This email is regarding your UTPA IRB study titled "The Effect of a Writing Course on the English Language Arts State Assessment Examination in a South Texas High School" – IRB# 2015-073-07.

The IRB protocol referenced above has been reviewed and APPROVED.

Basis for approval: Expedited, Category #5

Approval expiration date: August 10, 2016

Recruitment and Informed Consent: You must follow the recruitment and consent procedures that were approved. If your study uses an informed consent form or study information handout, you will receive an IRB-approval stamped PDF of the document(s) for distribution to subjects.

Modifications to the approved protocol: Modifications to the approved protocol (including recruitment methods, study procedures, survey/interview questions, personnel, consent form, or subject population), must be submitted in writing to the IRB at irb@utpa.edu for review. **Changes must not be implemented until approved by the IRB.**

Approval expiration and renewal: Your study approval expires on the date noted above. Before that date you will need to fill out, sign and submit the continuing review form to irb@utpa.edu. If you will be interacting with subjects or working with individually identifiable private information, you need to have active IRB approval. Failure to return the form will result in your study file being closed on the approval expiration date.

Data retention: All research data and signed informed consent documents should be retained for a *minimum* of 3 years after *completion* of the study.

Reports: Submission of a status report to assess the study's progress, or a final report when a study has been completed (*this applies to all IRB approved protocols*) is required. For exempt protocols, a status report should be submitted on a yearly basis, unless the study has been completed in which case a final report will be required. For expedited and full review protocols, the continuing review request form is equivalent to a status report. A final report should be submitted for completed studies or studies that will be completed by their respective expiration date.

Closure of the Study: Please be sure to inform the IRB (irb@utpa.edu) when you have completed your study, have graduated, and/or have left the university as an employee.



Approved by: _____
Chair, Institutional Review Board

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Esmeralda V. Muñoz was born October 11, 1979 in McAllen, Texas, daughter of Quirino and Maria Gloria Villarreal. She graduated with honors from McAllen High School in 1998 and attended the University of Texas Pan American. She graduated from the University of Texas Pan American with a Bachelor of Arts in English in 2003. She received her master's degree, also from the University of Texas Pan American, in Educational Leadership in 2010. She continued her studies receiving certifications for PK-12 principalship and superintendency. Throughout the course of her twelve years of experience in education, she has served as a high school English teacher, lead teacher, and assistant principal. Currently, she serves as dean of instruction for McAllen High School; the same high school from which she graduated. Mrs. Esmeralda Muñoz resides in 5008 W. Tamarack Avenue. McAllen, Texas, 78501. Mrs. Munoz completed the requirements for the Doctor in Education degree at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in December of 2015.