THE IMPACT OF WRITING INSTRUCTION ON STUDENTS' ATTITUDE AND SELF-EFFICACY IN WRITING

by

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ABSTRACT

AMANDA STOCKETT. The Impact of Writing Instruction on Students' Attitude and Self-Efficacy in Writing. (Under the direction of DR. MEGHAN BARNES)

This qualitative study examined whether or not three different writing strategies affected students' self-efficacy beliefs and attitude towards writing assignments. The participants in this study were 9th grade students in an English 1 classroom in a public high school in Charlotte, North Carolina. The teacher (who also served as the primary researcher) implemented three writing strategies: graphic organizers, student examples, and peer-editing. After completing each writing strategy, the participants completed a four question open-ended questionnaire that asked the participants if their self-efficacy or attitude improved after completing each strategy and why. The data analysis for this study was centered on three research questions: When the 9th grade students enter English I, what are their self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes toward writing? How do the writing strategies of modeling, graphic organizers, and peer-editing writing strategies affect my students' self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes toward writing? Are there identifiable patterns across student demographic groups (e.g., race and gender identification) or student achievement levels in relation to writing strategies and students' self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes toward writing?

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to my students: past, present, and future.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ELA	English Language Arts
NC SCoS	North Carolina Standard Course of Study
CCSS	Common Core Standards
CMS	Charlotte-Mecklenburg School
SES	Socioeconomic Status
EOC	End-of-Course
EC	Exceptional Children
IEP	Individualized Educational Plans
ELL	English Language Learners

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As both a writer and a teacher, I have witnessed how powerful written expression can be for communicating ideas and perspectives, persuading audiences, and expressing emotions and feelings. However, for many students, writing evokes feelings of fear and apprehension. As children and young adults move through the educational system, they encounter various writing instructions, assignments, and activities that ultimately shape their understanding of themselves as writers. Writing experiences in an educational setting are meaningful and impactful far beyond the classroom because they are instrumental in developing a person's self-efficacy beliefs and attitude toward writing.

Self-efficacy beliefs, which are a person's beliefs that they have the skills and capabilities to complete a specific task, are vital in determining a student's willingness to engage with challenging tasks, such as writing (Bandura, 1977). As students encounter various writing experiences, their self-efficacy beliefs will change depending on how confident they feel about their writing capabilities. Working in conjunction with self-efficacy beliefs is attitude. A student's attitude, or the degree to which a person responds both positively and negatively to an object or idea, also influences how they approach writing tasks and assignments (Fishbein and Azjen, 2019). Students' attitudes towards writing, as with self-efficacy, will vary depending on their experiences with writing. Therefore, teachers need to be intentional about the writing instruction and writing tasks they ask their students to engage with.

Writing instruction, along with reading, speaking, and listening, is a fundamental aspect of the English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum and standards in US-based K-12 schools. In North Carolina, teachers' instructional decisions are guided by the North Carolina Standard

Course of Study (NC SCoS), which is a set of standards that outlines what students should master in each grade level and content area. For high school ELA, the standards are divided into 9th/10th grade and 11th/12th grade, with both groups addressing skills in reading fiction and non-fiction, writing, speaking and listening, and language use. According to the NC ELA SCoS for Grades 9-10, students should "learn how to offer and support opinions/arguments, demonstrate understanding of a topic under study, and convey real and/or imagined experiences," as well as "learn that a key purpose of writing is to communicate clearly and coherently" (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2019). To support those writing goals, all three writing standards (9-10.1, 9-10.2, 9-10.3) emphasize the writing process with a particular focus on pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing. These parts of the writing process can be found in almost every ELA classroom, but are these methods actually effective for fostering positive self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes in students regarding their writing?

When students enter high school, they bring with them a variety of experiences with and understandings of writing, as "composition takes place across a range of contexts and for a variety of purposes" ("Understanding and Teaching Writing", 2018). As a 9th grade ELA teacher, the writing instruction students receive in my class serves as their first experience with high school writing, which could determine how they approach writing in the rest of their classes going forward. According to the Standard Course of Study for 9th grade, it is my job to equip these students with a strong writing foundation by introducing them to the writing process through argumentative, informational, and narrative writing assignments. Although I address all aspects of the writing standards with my students, I never paused to consider how my instructional choices were affecting their perceptions of writing and their confidence in their ability to write successfully.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate how three research-based writing strategies impact students' self-efficacy beliefs towards writing and their attitudes concerning writing tasks. The research was conducted with 9th grade students in a standard English I classroom as the students moved through a literary analysis writing task. Students expressed their reactions to the writing strategies regarding self-efficacy and attitude through an open-ended questionnaire. To guide my investigation of the students' questionnaire responses, my analysis of the data is centered around the following research questions:

1. When my 9th grade students enter English I, what are their self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes toward writing?

2. How do the writing strategies of modeling, graphic organizers, and peer-editing affect my students' self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes toward writing?

3. Are there identifiable patterns across student demographic groups (e.g., race and gender identification) or student achievement levels in relation to writing strategies and students' self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes toward writing?

In order to situate my research and findings amongst other relevant studies, this paper begins with a brief literature review that discusses the definitions and current trends in research regarding self-efficacy and writing, attitude and writing, and effective writing strategies. I then outline my research methods and review findings based on the data collected. Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion of the implications of this research and suggestions for future study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The research and data collected in this study build upon a large body of research regarding self-efficacy, attitude, and writing strategies. In the following literature review, I will begin by defining self-efficacy to understand how self-efficacy is created and the importance of self-efficacy in education. Furthermore, I will investigate the relationship between self-efficacy and writing performance and examine the relevant studies for trends regarding race, gender, and student achievement level. By focusing on these three components, I will contextualize my research questions with the relevant literature. The second section of the review is dedicated to attitude, which will be defined and discussed following the same criteria as the self-efficacy section. The bulk of the research regarding attitude and self-efficacy comes from the late 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s. The foundational information regarding self-efficacy came from Albert Bandura's research from the 1970s when he coined the term self-efficacy. Unfortunately, there is a lack of current research on the topic of self-efficacy and writing and students' attitudes towards writing. The final section of the literature review will discuss current trends and research regarding effective writing strategies. In this section, emphasis will be placed on more recent research, as writing pedagogy is constantly evolving.

Defining Self-Efficacy

The idea of self-efficacy was first conceptualized by Canadian-American psychologist Albert Bandura, known for his work regarding the social learning theory. According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy is an individual's belief "that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcomes" (p. 193). Not only does self-efficacy affect a person's ability to produce the outcome of an attempted task, but it also affects whether or not a person will

attempt a challenging task in the first place (Bandura, 1977). Furthermore, once a challenging task is embarked upon, efficacy skills "determine how much effort people will expend and how long they will persist in the face of obstacles and aversive experiences" (Bandura, 1977, p. 194). The positive effects of strong self-efficacy beliefs are not limited to only the outcome of challenging tasks but can boost human achievement and well-being in various ways (Bandura, 1994). People with confidence in their abilities are more likely to take on difficult tasks as challenges to conquer rather than dangers to avoid (Bandura, 1994). Furthermore, Bandura (1994) found that people with strong self-efficacy set challenging goals for themselves, recover from setbacks and failures more efficiently, and have more desire to obtain knowledge and skills they find they have a deficit in.

It is important to distinguish self-efficacy from confidence, as the word confidence is often used in self-efficacy research. Bandura (1997) addresses the differences between the two terms by defining confidence as "a nondescript term that refers to the strength of belief but does not necessarily specify what the certainty is about" (p. 382). Bandura is asserting that confidence is merely the strength of belief, and does not account for specific skills or capabilities needed to complete a task. He continues his definition by saying that confidence does not ensure success, as a person could be confident that they will fail at a task. In contrast, self-efficacy refers to the belief in one's capabilities that they can "produce given levels of attainment" (Bandura, 1997, p. 382). In other words, self-efficacy differs from confidence as self-efficacy refers to a person's beliefs that they have the skills to *successfully* complete a task, whereas confidence is just the strength of the belief without regard to capability. Confidence is an aspect of self-efficacy, as self-efficacy assessments do measure the strength of an individual's belief in their ability to complete a task. However, to measure self-efficacy, specifically, the assessment must also

account for an individual's capacity to complete a task. For instance, in the self-efficacy scales provided in Bandura's (2006) *Guide for Constructing Self-Efficacy Scales,* the assessment tools list consist of a list of skills that are needed to achieve a goal or task. The participant completing the questionnaire is asked to select a number from 0 to 100 that best describes their confidence in their ability to complete a certain skill. In these scales, and other self-efficacy assessment tools, if the participant indicates a higher level of confidence in their ability to complete the skill, then it can be determined that they have the self-efficacy skills needed to achieve the goal. Bandura (1997) sums up this distinction by calling confidence a "catchword" while self-efficacy is a "construct embedded in a theoretical system"(p. 382).

When discussing self-efficacy, and particularly how to foster self-efficacy in students, it is essential to understand how efficacy beliefs are constructed. Bandura (1977) identifies four primary sources of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and affective state. The efficacy source of mastery experience is dependent on the successes and failures a person experiences when tackling a challenging task. As a person experiences success, their expectations for mastery increase. However, when a person experiences failure, particularly early in the course of events, it lowers their expectations for master experiences. However, after strong efficacy expectations are developed through repeated success, the negative impact of occasional failures is likely to be reduced. Bandura asserts that this source of efficacy is most influential because it is based on a person's direct experience. For example, a student's efficacy beliefs would benefit far more from successfully completing a challenging assignment because the student can build on their first-hand experience of accomplishing a difficult task. The second source of efficacy is vicarious experience, which comes from witnessing another person perform a task without negative consequences. Witnessing another person's success can instill in

observers the belief that if they work harder and longer, they, too, will improve. Although not as effective as mastery or vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion can be another source of efficacy. Verbal persuasion is when people are persuaded, by suggestion, that they can manage successfully with what has previously overwhelmed them. The final efficacy source is emotional arousal, which is a person's emotional response to a stressful situation. Moods, mental states, bodily reactions, and stress levels can all affect how a person perceives their competence in a given situation. However, not all emotional responses will have the same effect on efficacy. Bandura notes, "it is not the sheer intensity of emotional and physical reactions that is important but rather how they are perceived and interpreted" (p. 198). By understanding the importance of self-efficacy and the sources from which self-efficacy develops, we can better understand why schools and classrooms have a vested interest in creating environments that nurture positive efficacy beliefs in students.

Self- Efficacy and Education

Bandura's (1977, 1986, 1994) research on self-efficacy is the springboard for educational research regarding self-efficacy beliefs in students. The emphasis on students' self-efficacy as a critical component of academic motivation is based on the notion that the beliefs that students construct, develop, and believe to be accurate are essential factors of their academic success or failure (Pajares, 2003). Based on their findings, which showed a strong correlation between self-efficacy and student performance, Pajares and Johnson (1996) assert that it is the responsibility of teachers to provide instruction that increases students' competence in the subject and nurtures their confidence. This is particularly important when working with students that have experienced academic difficulties that have diminished their confidence. Pajares and Johnson (1996) continue by asserting that when teachers focus on increasing confidence, competence will

follow. This idea is grounded in theory from Bandura (1994), which argued that educational pedagogy should be based on both the skills and knowledge students gain and students' beliefs about their capabilities, which will impact how they approach the future.

Self-Efficacy and Writing

Understanding how students' overall educational self-efficacy is linked to academic success makes it easy to understand why education researchers wanted to further explore that connection in more specific content areas. In the 1980s and 1990s, self-efficacy became a prominent topic in writing motivation research due to its consistent relationship with writing performance. (Pajares & Johnson, 1996; Pajares et al., 1999; Pajares & Valiante, 1997; Shell et al., 1989, 1995). Because writing tasks require students to utilize a variety of subskills, writing performance should be influenced by the self-efficacy and outcome expectancy mechanisms suggested by Bandura (Shell et al., 1989). This means that in order to successfully complete a writing task, students must be equipped with a variety of different skills, like brainstorming, editing, organization, etc. Therefore if a student demonstrates strong efficacy beliefs toward their ability to complete those smaller skills, then they should demonstrate mastery of the larger writing task. As researchers began to study the relationship between self-efficacy and writing, they found that students' views about their own writing ability, or self-efficacy beliefs, are critical to their eventual success as writers, measured in this study through writing samples. (Pajares, 2003). In Pajares (2003), *Self-Efficacy Beliefs, Motivation, and Achievement in Writing: A Review of the Literature*, his findings concluded that "students' confidence in their writing capabilities influence their writing motivation as well as various writing outcomes in school" (p. 141).

While investigating how efficacy informs writing performance, researchers often choose to focus on one of two areas. The first research focus is on examining student's confidence that they possess specific writing skills such as mastery of grammatical conventions, structure, and compositions, as well as narrative techniques like setting and character description (Pajares & Johnson, 1994, 1996; Shell et al., 1989, 1995). Another common lens researchers use to examine writing and efficacy is assessing the confidence that students possess when asked to complete writing tasks, such as essays and short stories (Pajares & Johnson, 1996; Shell et al., 1989, 1995). Both approaches inform the research on self-efficacy and writing, the first is focused on specific writing and language skills, while the second focuses on larger skills students need to create, draft, and organize longer writing pieces.

Some studies choose to examine both specific writing skills and overall confidence towards writing assignments, such as Bruning et al. (2013). This study examined how 563 high school students from two different schools' fondness for writing, self-reported writing grades, and statewide writing assessment (SWA) scores compared to scores based on the three writing self-efficacy criteria. The three writing self-efficacy criteria that they measured were ideas generation, writing conventions, and writing self-regulation. Not only did Bruning et al. show that the three aspects of writing self-efficacy all had somewhat favorable associations with self-reported writing performance, but it also demonstrated that students with strong efficacy beliefs about writing ideation and self-regulation were shown to be considerably more strongly associated with enjoying writing.

The research conducted by the leading researchers in the field of self-efficacy (Pajares, 1996, 1997, 1999, 2003, 2007; Bruning, 2013; Shell, 1989, 1995) has demonstrated that self-efficacy has a clear relationship with writing performance. However, the examination of writing

self-efficacy cannot end there, as researchers have determined that self-efficacy beliefs are not evenly distributed amongst all student demographic groups.

Effect of Gender, Race, and Student Achievement on Self-Efficacy Beliefs

Throughout his research regarding self-efficacy, Pajares (1989, 1996, 2007) has examined how students' efficacy beliefs regarding writing differ depending on the gender[1] of the student. Pajares' 1989 study reported that "the girls in our sample were as capable and wrote as well as the boys but reported lower writing self-efficacy" (p. 172). When speaking on the benefits of students overestimating their writing capabilities versus the negative consequences of underestimating them, in Pajares and Johnson (1996), researchers evaluated data collected from writing samples and student responses to the Writing Skills Self-Efficacy Scale (developed by Shell et al., 1989). This study found that girls were just as capable and produced similar writing samples as the boys, but often underestimated their beliefs in comparison to the boy students (Pajares & Johnson, 1996). These findings were supported by Pajares et al.'s (2007) more current study, which examined the sources and levels of self-efficacy beliefs in elementary, middle, and high school students and found that at the elementary level (fifth-grade), girls' self-efficacy beliefs are stronger than boys. At the elementary level, the girl students noted stronger mastery experience, vicarious experience, and social persuasions coupled with lower levels of writing anxiety (Pajares et al., 2007). However, while studying the ninth-grade students, Pajares et al. (2007) discovered that although the girl students' writing performance remained the same, they reported lower writing self-efficacy skills. Pajares did not comment on the reason behind the girl students' lower efficacy beliefs. Yet, in Bruning and Horn's (2000) examination of motivation and writing, they asserted that female student's change in efficacy could be attributed

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[1] The terms boy/girl will be used to refer to the student's perceived gender, rather than male/female, which is representative of sex.

to how secondary and postsecondary schools value a "male[2]-biased form of discourse" which forces girl students to adapt to learning environments that are "less intuitive, interesting, or intrinsically motivating" (p. 29). For example, as students move through school, writing becomes more focused on informational and argumentative writing, rather than narrative writing. Students are also asked to use increasingly formal and academic tones, and exclude the use of personal experience and anecdotes. This writing focus is what Bruning and Horn (2000), who are building on the research of Cleary (1996), classify as "male-biased forms of discourse." Nevertheless, the difference between girls in elementary school and girls in high school self-efficacy levels make including gender as a lens by which to examine self-efficacy all the more pertinent.

Although the literature on writing and self-efficacy is prolific, very few researchers have discussed disparities between racial groups in regard to efficacy. Graham's (1994) review of the research on African-American students' expectation beliefs found that African-American students maintain a strong efficacy belief even if experiencing academic setbacks. However, in her review, Graham acknowledged that African-American students' efficacy seems to be more heavily impacted by external factors than White students. Furthermore, Pajares and Johnson (1996) found that the writing self-efficacy of Hispanic students was significantly lower than that of their non-Hispanic peers, and the Hispanic students expressed more apprehension about their writing. At the conclusion of her review, Graham recognized that self-efficacy is a vital component in motivation research but highlighted that it has been understudied in both racially homogeneous and heterogeneous efficacy studies.

Examining efficacy beliefs among achievement levels provides insight into the belief systems of both low and high achievers. Achievement levels are most commonly determined by

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[2] The use of "male" rather than "boy" is used here to remain consistent with the terminology used in Bruning and Horn (2000).

standardized test scores and common assessments (Bruning 1995, 2013; Pajares & Johnson, 1996). Shell et al. (1995) found significant disparities between the self-efficacy beliefs of high and low performers. Low achievers expressed lower self-efficacy beliefs towards reading and writing while also indicating that external or uncontrollable factors would be far more impactful on their ability to successfully complete a challenging reading and writing task. These students referenced external factors such as feeling lucky, receiving help, and the easiness of the task as having a strong effect on their writing abilities. Average achievement students had self-efficacy scores that were halfway between high and low achievers, but their responses about the effects of external factors were more similar to those of high achievers.

Bruning et al. (2013) investigated how self-efficacy related to student's fondness towards writing and writing performance and discovered that students in more advanced English Language Arts classes had greater levels of all three characteristics of writing self-efficacy (writing conventions, idea generation, and writing self-regulation) This is supported by the findings of Pajares and Johnson (1996), which suggested that writing aptitude (which, for this study, included the level of the student's English class, teacher's ratings, and statewide test data) directly influenced students' self-efficacy beliefs towards writing. Both of Bruning's studies (1995, 2013) indicated that lower-achieving students' beliefs are the most fragile, as these students are more likely to lack confidence in the skills and are more impacted by external, unpredictable factors.

Writing Strategies that Encourage Self-Efficacy

Prior to identifying what type of writing instruction fosters the strongest sense of efficacy in students, it is essential to understand which source of efficacy is most impactful for students. Pajares et al. (2007) reported that students indicated mastery experience as the most effective

source of efficacy towards the beliefs about their capabilities in writing, both positively and negatively. Additionally, the high school students in the study also noted that social persuasions were instrumental in creating a sense of self-efficacy towards writing assignments, although far less influential than mastery experiences. Vicarious experiences did not show any significant impact on students' efficacy beliefs. After investigating the sources of efficacy, Pajares et al. found a strong correlation between students' anxiety and stress towards writing tasks and lowered levels of writing self-efficacy. He asserts that a teacher's writing instruction can have an effect on students' efficacy beliefs. He asked teachers to "frame writing feedback in terms of gains rather than shortfalls" and to "reflect on the writing process rather than their writing deficiencies," which will allow students to develop efficacy skills based on "growth and perseverance" (p. 117). In order to maximize the impact of teacher feedback, which is classified as a verbal persuasion, one of Bandura's (1977) sources of efficacy, Pajares et al. (2007), suggest giving the feedback in a "personal encounter" to ensure that the "experiences are interpreted optimally" (p. 115).

Bruning and Horn (2000) also wrote about how teacher feedback can increase students' writing self-efficacy. To create a safe environment where students feel confident to attempt complex writing tasks, Bruning and Horn suggest that teachers should devote as much time praising quality writing as they do to pointing out mistakes and making suggestions for improvements. This type of feedback emphasizes what the students have to say, which fosters students' motivation and attitude towards challenging writing tasks. Bruning and Horn also recommend that teachers give students ample time during the writing process, emphasizing assisting students in planning and organizing their writing process to increase task engagement.

When a teacher breaks down the writing task into smaller and more manageable pieces, the students are more likely to view complex assignments as challenging rather than overwhelming.

Defining Attitude

While self-efficacy is centered around a student's beliefs about their capacity to complete a challenging task, attitude accounts for the student's perceptions and beliefs about the task itself. According to Fishbein and Ajzen (2009) attitude can be defined as "a latent disposition or tendency to respond with some degree of favorableness or unfavorable to a psychological object" (p. 76). This definition can be further explained through the words of McLeod (1991), who sought to accurately create working definitions for the psychological aspect of the writing process. McLeod states that "attitudes are psychological states acquired over a period of time as a result of our experiences; these attitudes influence us to act in certain ways and to respond to the world in a relatively consistent fashion" (p. 99). McLeod continues by explaining that sometimes attitudes are accompanied by negative and positive emotions, and the way we think and act might change as a result of an attitude. However, she draws a clear distinction between emotions and attitudes, calling them "distinct affective states" (McLeod, p. 99). An attitude may lead to a certain emotional response, such as a student's negative attitude resulting in anger and frustration when assigned a writing task. Fishbein and Ajzen were purposeful in differentiating attitudes from beliefs but did acknowledge that the attitudes people form are often a result of the beliefs regarding the object. In Fishbein and Ajzen's conclusion on their chapter about attitude, they noted that the strength with which an attitude is held is a crucial factor for belief formation. Furthermore, the more positive or negative a person's attitude will dictate their behavior towards that object (Fishbein & Ajzen).

Attitude and Writing

In Alice Brand's (1991) *Social Cognition, Emotions, and the Psychology of Writing*, she asserts that writing is "one of the most common, observable results of cognizing" making it vital for researchers to "reconcile the cognitive and the emotional structures of written discourse" (p. 403) in order to better formulate a writing framework that addresses the complexities of writing. While the research regarding students' attitudes towards writing is not nearly as prolific as the research surrounding self-efficacy, there are several key studies that have examined this important aspect of education. Graham et al. (2007) investigated the relationship between writing attitude and writing achievement in first and third-grade students and found that students' attitudes toward writing are less stable than a personality characteristic and more susceptible to change, but they are more stable than a situationally-driven, fleeting emotion. Although the research of Graham et al. is focused on a different grade level than my interests, their research was one of the more insightful and current articles available. The findings of Graham et al. indicated that children who have a good attitude toward writing may put forth more effort when composing and prefer to write even when other alternative activities are available. In contrast, children who have a negative attitude toward writing may avoid writing whenever feasible and expend minimal energy when forced to do so. The second model in Graham et al. which measured writing attitude concerning writing performance, found that poor writing performance or difficulties with writing may contribute to a negative attitude toward writing, whereas consistent writing success may create a positive attitude toward writing.

The Effect of Gender, Race, and Student Achievement on Attitude

As with self-efficacy, students' attitudes towards writing demonstrated some variance among student demographic groups. The findings from Graham et al. (2007), which investigated writing attitude as it relates to motivation and performance, found that girl students were shown

to have a more favorable attitude toward writing than boys. However, the gender differences in writing attitude did not appear to be related to writing achievement, as the writing performance of girls and boys did not differ statistically. In Knudson's (1993) study that examined the effects of gender, grade level, and ethnicity on writing attitude, he discovered that girls had significantly more positive attitudes towards writing than boys. More specifically, Knudson found that there was a lack of gender difference for Black and Asian students, whereas gender differences were found in Anglo-American and Hispanic students.

In regard to racial disparities among students' attitudes towards writing, Knudson (1993) concluded that there was no significant difference in writing attitudes between ethnicities and only marginal differences among grade levels. However, the Knudson study did reveal that there was a significant difference between the Anglo-American students' and Hispanic students' perceptions about themselves as writers, a concept separate from attitude and self-efficacy, even though this did not impact their overall attitude towards writing.

There was minimal research regarding student achievement levels and writing attitudes, but one study produced meaningful observations. A study conducted by Graham et al. (1993) examined how the knowledge of writing and the composing process, attitude toward writing, and self-efficacy differed between students with and without learning disabilities. Among the 4th, 5th, 7th, and 8th graders that the researchers interviewed they found that students with learning disabilities were less positive about writing than the students without a learning disability. Graham et al. (1993), were intentional to note that the students with learning disabilities were not negative about writing but rather lacked eagerness and fondness toward writing the students without learning disabilities exhibited. Understanding how students' attitudes towards writing differ amongst demographic groups can help teachers understand the variance among their

students' willingness and desire to engage in writing tasks, and encourage writing pedagogy that cultivates positive attitudes amongst all learners.

Writing Practices That Foster Positive Attitudes

If attitudes are developed in response to experience, then selecting and implementing writing strategies that provide students with positive writing experiences can improve a student's attitude towards writing. Musgrove (1998) suggests that educators give students vocabulary to express their attitudes, and encourage them to recount their writing experiences. He suggests using partner texts that exemplify attitudes, so they can understand the impact (both negatively and positively) that attitudes can have on writing. He suggests the use of portfolio writing in combination with having students (with guidance from the teacher) set learning goals and consistently asking students to monitor their progress towards those goals. He believes that this methodology will help students understand how their attitude towards writing can impact their writing achievement. Whereas Musgrove recommended writing practice focuses on the individual, McLeod (1991) asserts that since attitudes are constructed both socially and privately, students' negative attitudes towards writing are due to both individual and social factors. To address the social aspect of attitude construction he recommends using collaborative classroom activities that address both the writing skills and the attitude skills at a whole-class level. Although McLeod does not make any specific recommendations, activities such as peer-editing, group or whole class brainstorming activities, or examining student examples could address both writing and attitude skills.

For students with learning disabilities, Graham et al. (1993), suggested that the writing instruction should focus on helping them develop strong foundational knowledge about writing, confidence in using the cognitive processes considered necessary for effective writing, a desire to

write, and realistic self-evaluations of their strengths and weaknesses as writers. On a much broader note, Kear et al. (2000) reflected on research from Knudson (1993) that demonstrated that children's attitudes towards writing decrease as they move up in grade levels by stating that this attitudinal decline can be combated with effective and engaging teaching strategies.

Importance of Writing Instruction

In order for students to be successful in future educational endeavors, as well as professionally and personally, they must learn how to write effectively (Graham, 2019). According to Rogers and Graham (2008), writing remains a critical skill even in our rapidly advancing technological society. It is vital that students receive effective writing instruction through their schooling, as writing is a complex task that does not come naturally for most (Graham, 2019). Furthermore, teaching students how to write effectively across a variety of mediums (e.g., letters, short stories, poems, speeches) provides students with the skills needed to make connections with people, construct imagined worlds, tell stories, exchange information, learn more about themselves, cope with loneliness, and keep track of their experiences (Graham et al., 2006). Effective writing can increase reading comprehension, reading ability, and overall academic success in school settings (Zumbrunn et al., 2016). However, even for seasoned writers, the act of writing can be cognitively challenging.

Based on data from the four-year-long National Study of Writing Instruction, which collected data from 260 classrooms in 20 middle schools and high schools, interviews with 220 teachers and administrators, with 138 students in these schools, and a national survey of 1,520 randomly selected teachers, Applebee and Langer (2011) were able to assess the current trends of writing instruction. They found that teachers are emphasizing a variety of research-based instructional practices, such as:

clearly specifying what is required in a particular type of writing, teaching specific

strategies for prewriting, writing, and revision, using models of successful responses for

students to analyze, critique, and emulate, and treating computers and word processors as

important tools that support students' learning to writing (Applebee & Langer, p. 24).

Regardless of the subject area, teachers expressed knowledge of how writing may help learning

and viewed writing as a vital method for measuring students' comprehension.

In Graham et al.'s (2013) review of why writing is important, how it develops,

and effective writing practices, they asserted that implementation of Common Core Standards

(CCSS) in 2010 led to a revolution in writing practices in the classroom. Due to the installment

of CCSS, teachers and schools began to place a higher focus on learning how to write and how to

use expository language, particularly persuasive and informational texts, to fulfill CCSS writing

goals. Furthermore, the role of thinking in writing also became more important as CCSS

"stresses the role of analysis, reflection, and research when using writing as a tool for learning"

(Graham et al, p. 2). Writing instruction is constantly evolving as research about effective

educational practices continues to develop. To equip students with the best writing skills

possible, it is important to evaluate which writing strategies are the most effective.

Effective Writing Strategies

Alber-Morgan et al. (2007) argued that in order to truly equip students with writing skills

that can be transferred across writing tasks and genres, teachers must engage students in

meaningful instruction following the five steps of the writing process. They defined the writing

process as: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. For the prewriting step, Alber-

Morgan et al. advocated for teaching strategies such as high-interest topics, brainstorming,

graphic organizers, and outlining. For drafting, they suggested ideas like co-writing, model texts,

sentence and stems/starters, whereas for revising and editing, they suggested peer-editing, mini-lessons, check-lists, editing groups, and selective skill-based grading.

The ideas from Alber-Morgan et al. (2007) of basing writing instruction on the writing process are further supported by the research conducted by Rogers and Graham (2008). Due to a concern that students do not receive adequate and effective writing instruction, Rogers and Graham examined 88 different single-subject design studies and identified nine writing strategies that were found to be successful. The nine strategies were: instruction for planning/drafting, teaching grammar, and usage, productivity goal-setting, instruction for editing, writing with a word processor, reinforcing specific writing outcomes, prewriting activities, teaching sentence construction skills, and strategy instruction for paragraph writing. Due to the focus of this research study, I will further elaborate on the strategies of prewriting, planning and drafting, and editing.

Based on the instructional strategies in the studies reviewed by Rogers and Graham (2008), prewriting activities were described as when "students used graphic organizers, including story maps and outlines, for generating ideas prior to writing" (p. 883). Of the sixteen studies that examined the impact of prewriting strategies on the quality of students' writing, the participants' ages ranged from grades 3-5, 8, and 12 and indicated that prewriting had a small effect on improving writing quality. For the writing strategy of planning and drafting, Rogers and Graham defined this category as when "students were taught strategies for planning, drafting, and/or revising stories, persuasive essays, and/or expository essays. This included modeling of the strategy and guided practice to facilitate independent use of it" (p. 883). In the twenty-five studies that examine the effectiveness of teaching strategies of planning and drafting, a commonality amongst the instruction was teaching students about the goals of the target writing

genre to help them organize their ideas. Of the 108 students who ranged from Grades 2-8, strategies for planning and drafting were effective in increasing students' written output, quality of writing, and adherence to specific genre elements. Instruction for editing was defined as when "students were taught a strategy for editing their papers. This included modeling of the strategy and guided practice to facilitate independent use of it" (Rogers & Graham, p. 883). Five studies investigated how effective editing strategies were in decreasing the errors in students writing in Grades 4 and 8-12. After examining the data from these studies, Rogers and Graham concluded that teaching editing strategies has a large to moderate effect on decreasing the number of errors in student writing.

Another writing strategy that was not mentioned in the two previous studies is teacher feedback. In Zumbrunn et al. (2016), they surveyed almost six hundred students, grades 6-10, using the Student Writing Feedback Scale (developed by Ekholm et al., 2015) to assess how teacher feedback impacts students. Of the 598 students, 482 students indicated that they liked receiving feedback on their writing from their teachers. Additionally, students noted that feedback allowed them to improve their writing, see and fix their mistakes, and plan for future writing assignments. Students also indicated that when receiving positive feedback, the students felt successful, happy, and overall more confident in their writing.

On a much broader scale, Graham (2019) offers several suggestions for how to improve writing instruction to better serve and support students. Although his suggestions are more philosophical and less tangible, there are several similarities between his ideas and that of the previous three studies. For example, he recommends that teachers are intentional about teaching the specific purposes and features of different types of writing, promote constant editing and revisions and focus writing towards specific audiences. Graham also emphasizes that what

students believe about writing will influence how engaged they are, how much effort they exert, and how well they use their resources. He also acknowledges that writing is a skill that is developed in many different ways, noting the importance of mentoring, feedback, collaboration, and direct instruction.

It is noteworthy that most of the writing strategies recommended in both the self-efficacy and attitude sections align strongly with the recommendations from Alber-Morgan et al. (2007), Graham et al. (2008), Graham (2019), and Zumbrunn et al., (2016). For example, strategies such as collaboration, teacher and peer feedback, drafting, and planning were recommended by both self-efficacy and attitude researchers, as well as proven to be effective writing instructional methods for improving students' writing. Additionally, both Graham (2019) and Zumbrunn (2016) place a strong emphasis on students' beliefs, attitudes, and self-perceptions.

The current research regarding both self-efficacy and attitude has illuminated several areas that could benefit from further research. By investigating my data for trends among gender, race, and student achievement in relation to self-efficacy and attitude, I will be able to confirm or challenge the limited research that has been conducted with these sub-groups of students. Additionally, because the nature of my research is based on the student's perceptions of writing strategies rather than effectiveness and performance measured by teachers, my study will illuminate the often overlooked student voice. Furthermore, because most of the research is focused on either self-efficacy or attitude, by assessing self-efficacy and attitude together, I will have a more comprehensive idea of the factors that affect students' writing.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

For this study, I collected and analyzed data that is categorized as qualitative research. Qualitative research was appropriate for this study because it provides a depth and complexity that may not be evident with numerical, quantitative data. Since this study explores the complex ideas of efficacy and attitude, using open-ended questions allowed the participants to more fully explain their beliefs and experiences in relation to the writing strategies I integrated into my teaching. Qualitative research methods gave the participants more freedom for self-expression, which provided a more comprehensive understanding of their response to the writing instruction. In this Method section, I provide information about the participants and context of the study, outline the classroom instruction that occurred during this study, and describe the data collection and analysis methods.

Participants and Context

For this study, I acted as both the principal investigator and the teacher of record for the participants. I have been teaching for five years, all of which have been at Providence High School. I currently teach inclusion English I (9th grade) and standard English III (11th grade), but I have taught honors English III in prior years. My racial identity is White, and my gender identification is female.

The participants in this study attend Providence High School. Providence is a public high school in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School (CMS) system in Charlotte, North Carolina, with about 2000 students enrolled. The student population is predominantly White and affluent. According to the CMS 2020-21 Diversity report, out of the 2003 students, approximately 12% identify as Asian, 8% as Hispanic, 9% as Black, 3% as two or more races, and 69% as White

(Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, 2020). The Socioeconomic Status (SES) Distribution Report

shows only .35% of students are labeled as low SES, 23.25% as medium SES, and 76.25% as

high SES (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, 2020).

More specifically, the participants in this study are ninth-grade students in my Standard

English I class whose parent/guardian consented to their participation in the research. This class

was chosen because of the variety of representation amongst student demographic groups (race,

perceived gender, and student achievement). For the race and perceived gender, I used the

demographic information made available to me through the student information system,

Powerschool. To determine the students' achievement levels, I used the scores from their eighth

grade End-of-Course (EOC) Language Arts test. These scores were also available through

Powerschool. Regarding gender, of the twelve participants, there are six boys and six girls. The

participants also represent three different racial groups: White, Black, and Latinx. Additionally,

this class is co-taught with an Exceptional Children (EC) teacher serving as the co-teacher for

thirty minutes every other class period. Because this is a co-taught class, there is a more

significant percentage of students served under learning plans. Of the twelve students whose

parent/guardian consented to be part of the study, four students are served under Individualized

Educational Plans (IEP), and two students are supported with monitoring and accommodations

as English Language Learners (ELL).

The writing strategies that this study examined took place in Unit 1: Telling Details of the

English I SpringBoard curriculum. The SpringBoard curriculum, created by The College Board,

is the district-wide curriculum that all English I classes must implement. Unit 1: Telling Details

is centered around short stories, focusing on how authors use details, literary devices, and word

choice to create and enhance meaning. The final assessment for this unit is writing a literary

analysis paper, where the students are asked to examine how the author uses characterization to advance a theme in the short story "Martha, Martha" by Zadie Smith. At this point in the semester, this is the longest writing assignment that the students have completed. Prior to this assignment, they have written (and received feedback on) a short literary analysis paragraph and completed several text-dependent tasks that required short written responses. By conducting this research in the students' first unit of study, before submitting their first major writing assignment, the data will reflect the students' attitudes and efficacy beliefs upon entering high school, which addresses my first research question: *When my 9th grade students enter English I, what are their self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes toward writing?*

Classroom Instruction

Prior to teaching the first writing strategy, the students read the short story "Martha, Martha," which they would use to write their literary analysis paper. The first writing strategy was using graphic organizers to help prepare students for the writing task. The students completed two graphic organizers: one was a characterization chart for the two main characters, and the second was an outline that helped them organize their paper (see Appendix A for the graphic organizer). For the second writing strategy, the students read two different student examples and assessed them based on the rubric used to grade their papers (see Appendix B for both student examples). Additionally, for the first example, which had several errors, the students identified the mistakes and corrected them. For the second example, which was free of mistakes, the students answered questions about how the paper was an effective example. The third writing strategy occurred after the students had written a rough draft of their paper. The students engaged in a peer-editing workshop where they read two different students' papers, evaluated their peers' writing based on the rubric and checked over the paper for the required

components, correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation (see Appendix C for the peer-editing handout). After each writing strategy, the students completed the open-ended questionnaire, which provided the data for this study.

These three writing strategies (graphic organizers, student examples, and peer-editing) were chosen because they were similar to the writing activities within the Unit 1 SpringBoard curriculum and were supported by the research regarding writing instruction, self-efficacy, and attitude. All three writing strategies were identified by Alber-Morgan et al. (2007) as practices that promote the transference of writing skills across genres and tasks, as well as identified by Rogers and Graham (2008) as strategies that are effective in improving writing quality, organizing students' ideas, and decreasing errors in student writing. The use of graphic organizers during the planning and pre-writing process is a writing strategy supported by efficacy researchers Bruning and Horn (2000). The writing strategy of peer-editing is classified as a collaborative, whole-class activity, which McLeod (1991) argues is crucial in fostering positive attitudes at both an individual and whole-class level. Furthermore, all three writing strategies used in this study were listed in Applebee and Langer's (2011) National Study of Writing Instruction as research-based writing practices used commonly in classrooms across the country.

Data Collection

The data was collected using an open-ended questionnaire. Although most self-efficacy research (Bruning, 2013; Pajares 1996, 2007; Shell, 1989) utilizes a Likert scale questionnaire, by using an open-ended questionnaire, I was able to incorporate questions regarding attitudes toward writing along with self-efficacy and better assess how the students' beliefs were or were not affected by the specific writing strategies. Deviating from the typical Likert scale

questionnaire is supported by Bandura's (2006) key belief that "there is no all-purpose measure of perceived self-efficacy" and, more specifically, that "efficacy items should accurately reflect the construct" (p. 307). To apply this concept to my research, the measure I used to collect data needed to allow the participants to fully explain the complexities of attitude and efficacy in order to be an accurate reflection of those concepts. Therefore, an open-ended questionnaire provided a better understanding of the development of efficacy and attitude.

I developed the open-ended questionnaire using language and terminology that reflects the definitions of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) and attitude (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2009; McLeod, 1991) but with language that would be easily understandable by ninth-grade students. Each questionnaire included four open-ended questions:

1. Did (insert writing strategy) make you feel more confident about your writing? Why or why not?

2. After completing (insert writing strategy), do you feel like you have the skills to successfully complete your writing assignment? Why or why not?

3. After completing the (insert writing strategy), what is your attitude towards writing assignments? Did it improve? Why or why not?

4. If you were to have a writing assignment in the future, would it help you to use (insert writing strategy)? Why or why not?

The data for this study was collected over three weeks, beginning on September 13th, 2021, and concluding on October 4th, 2021. Although all students completed the questionnaires, only those questionnaires completed by the twelve consenting participants were analyzed for this study. Prior to the writing-focused portion of the unit of study, the students completed their first questionnaire. The second, third, and fourth questionnaires were administered throughout six

class periods. The second questionnaire was administered after the students completed two different graphic organizers to guide their writing. The third was administered after the modeling lesson with student examples. The fourth was administered after students completed a peer-editing workshop. By administering the first survey prior to any writing instruction, I addressed my first research question, which was centered around the attitudes and self-efficacy my students possess upon entering English 1. By administering the questionnaire immediately after each writing strategy was taught and practiced in class, I measured how those strategies did or did not affect the students' attitudes and self-efficacy beliefs, which is the focus of my second research question: *How do the writing strategies of modeling, graphic organizers, and peer-editing writing strategies affect my students' self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes toward writing?*

Data Analysis

I followed the qualitative data analysis process found in Privitera and Ahlgrim-Delzell's (2019) *Research Methods for Education.* I began by coding the open-ended responses from the questionnaires by identifying the keywords and phrases in each response amongst all four sets of questionnaires. After coding all of the responses, I looked for commonalities amongst the codes and assigned each code to a category. For example, in response to the question "What is your attitude towards writing assignments?" one student wrote, "I am not really fond of them unless I understand what we are writing about and have a lot to work with." From this answer, I coded the answer by identifying the keywords and ideas such as "not really fond", "unless I understand" and "a lot to work with." I placed these codes into the category of student responses that indicated their attitude depends on the assignment or

resources.

After organizing the data from all four questionnaires, I investigated the categories for trends. To address my second research question, I investigated if the prevalence of specific categories changed after implementing each writing strategy. To address the third research question, I analyzed the coding categories for trends across both demographic groups (race and perceived gender) and academic achievement groups. The purpose of this data analysis is to examine the categories for trends regarding how (or if) students' attitudes and efficacy changed in relation to the writing strategies and to discover if there are any identifiable trends among student demographic groups.

To address my third research question regarding trends among student demographic groups, I used information about the participants' perceived gender, race, and achievement level, as described previously, to organize the participants. I examined each demographic group's data to look for patterns and trends among the students' responses. The analysis of the data based on student demographic groups can be found in the Discussion and Implications section of this paper.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

To derive meaning and establish trends across the data I collected from the four questionnaires, I began by finding the code frequency distributions for each category, for each of the four questionnaires. Because each questionnaire prompted students to respond to a different writing strategy, the categories differed for each question and each questionnaire. To address my first research question, I looked at the frequency of the codes in each category (for each questionnaire) to look for trends regarding students' self-efficacy and attitudes towards writing when they enter 9th grade and English I. By tracking the frequency of codes in each category, I was able to see if the writing strategies had any potential effects on the students' attitudes or self-efficacy beliefs towards writing, which addressed my second research question. Furthermore, noting the code frequency across the categories allows me to examine the categories for trends amongst the student demographic groups, which addressed my third research question. For this section, I explain the data I collected for each questionnaire. I also provide tables that show the code frequency of the various categories for each question on each questionnaire. I explain the code frequency for the category and provide a student example from each category. To conclude this section, I examine the data for trends among student demographic groups (race, perceived gender, and student-achievement level) and discuss any key findings in order to address my third research question.

Questionnaire #1

The first questionnaire that I administered in this study was slightly different from the other three questionnaires. I was interested in collecting data about students' self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes towards writing when they entered English I in 9th grade before any formal writing

education in my class. I used the same question stems as the other three surveys for this survey, but the questions were worded differently for clarity. This survey was administered before the writing strategies, approximately three weeks into the school year. The questions, codes, categories, and code frequencies for Questionnaire #1 can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: Code Categories from Questionnaire #1

Question #1 Do you feel like you have the skills to successfully complete a writing assignment?	Question #2 Do you feel confident in your ability to write?	Question #3 What is your attitude towards writing assignments?	Question #4 What writing strategies (prewriting, brainstorming, editing, drafting, students examples, revisions, etc…) help you approach challenging writing assignments?
Code Categories with the frequency of code indicated: Yes: 4 Yes, with resources: 3 Yes, if I try: 2 No: 3	Code Categories with the frequency of code indicated: Sorta/kinda of/a little bit/yes and no: 7 Depends on understanding: 2 Yes: 3	Code Categories with the frequency of code indicated: Depends on the assignment/resources: 3 Don't like it/can be hard: 4 Don't mind them/Enjoy them/excited: 5	Code Categories with the frequency of code indicated: Editing/Revisions: 9 Research:2 Brainstorming/prewriting: 3 Drafting: 2

The first question on the first questionnaire was, "Do you feel like you have the skills to successfully complete a writing assignment?" I organized students' responses to question one into four categories: *Yes*; *Yes if I have resources*; *Yes if I try hard enough*; and *No*. On this question, four students responded by saying "Yes," with answers such as "Yes, I have good ideas, so it is not difficult" or "Yes, I have done well in the past." The second predominant category was "Yes if I have the resources." Three of the students included words or phrases that I

placed in this category, such as "Yes, if I am able to use resources to help me." The third

category was "Yes, if I try hard enough," which included three students' responses. In this

category, one student noted that "Yes, I can do anything if I really try." Finally, the last category

consisted of students who stated "No," representing three of the students' responses. In

explaining why they responded no, one student noted that "English is the hardest class for me."

From this question, it seems as if the participants generally feel that they have the skills to

complete writing assignments; however, several students did note that their abilities are

dependent on resources and effort.

For the second question of the first questionnaire, I asked students, "Do you feel

confident in your ability to write?" I organized the codes from the students' responses into three

different categories which were: *Sorta/kinda of/a little bit/yes and no; Depends on*

understanding; and *Yes*. Seven of the twelve students responded with some variation of "A little

bit," "Kind of," or "Yes and No." I grouped these responses together because they all

demonstrated that students felt confident in some areas and not in others. For example, one

student wrote, "Yes and no, I have been writing forever, but I haven't liked anything I've

written" whereas another student said, "Sorta, I'm not a good speller but I'm creative." The

second category was similar to the first category; however, rather than indicating specific areas

where they did or did not feel confident, the students indicated that their confidence "Depends on

their understanding." I placed two of the students' responses in this category as they wrote that

"Depends on how much I understand the topic and how much information I have" and "Depends,

The things I don't understand or enjoy I won't have confidence in." The last category for this

question represents answers that indicated "Yes" they feel confident in their writing ability. This

category accounted for three of the twelve students, with one student remarking that "I do feel

confident because I have resources if I need help." The majority of student responses in this category demonstrated feelings of doubt in their confidence towards writing assignments, with only a very small number of students expressing full feelings of confidence.

On the third question of the first questionnaire I asked students, "What is your attitude towards writing assignments?" After organizing the codes from this question, I found three main categories among the student's responses: *Depends on the assignment/resources; Don't like it/can be hard;* and *Don't mind them/enjoy them/excited about them.* The first category included responses where the students wrote that "it depends," which accounted for three of the twelve responses. In this category, two students noted that "it depends on the assignment," and the other student said their attitude is dependent on "having the resources." The second category accounted for four of the students' responses, as they indicated either that they "don't like it [writing]" or that "it [writing] can be hard." One student explained that they "Don't like doing them [writing assignments] because I'm bad at writing," while another student said that it can be hard "knowing what to write about." The final category for this question was students that responded that either they "don't mind them [writing assignments]," they "enjoy them," or they are "excited for them." Of the five students whose answers I placed into this category, one student said that "I love them because I never got to do them in past ELA classes and they're fun," while another student said that "I'm usually excited [about writing assignments]." The data from this question showed that most of the participants had either a positive or neutral attitude towards writing upon entering 9th grade, with only four students expressing a negative attitude.

For the fourth question, I asked students, "What writing strategies (prewriting, brainstorming, editing, drafting, students' examples, revisions, etc.) help you approach challenging writing assignments?" Several students indicated multiple writing strategies in their

responses, so the code frequency for each category exceeds the number of participants for this question. The categories that I developed for this question were: *Editing/Revisions; Research; Brainstorming/prewriting;* and *Drafting.* While most students selected a writing strategy from the list I provided, two students mentioned that research was helpful when approaching challenging writing assignments. One of the two students who indicated the writing strategy of research said, they like to "do some research then write." The next category of codes from the students' answers was responses that mentioned "brainstorming" or "prewriting." I chose to categorize these codes together, as brainstorming activities can be considered a prewriting exercise, and often prewriting activities help students brainstorm. Three students mentioned that these strategies were helpful, with one student saying that they liked "using things around me for ideas." Two students indicated that "drafting" was a writing strategy that helped them, making up the third category for this question. The largest category for this question was students' responses that mentioned either "revisions" or "editing," which occurred nine times. One student remarked that they like to "go for it and then do heavy editing." For this question, students seemed to find value in the revision and editing process, with 75% of the students indicating that strategy in their answer.

Questionnaire #2

I administered the second questionnaire after completing two different prewriting graphic organizers with my students. Both graphic organizers were completed during class time with supervision and guidance from me. The first graphic organizer guided students through characterization analysis and data collection, and the second graphic organizer broke down the required elements of the writing assignment into small pieces. One student was absent for the

administration of this questionnaire, so there is only data from eleven of the twelve students. The

questions, codes, categories, and code frequencies for Questionnaire #2 can be found in Table 2.

Table 2: Code Categories from Questionnaire #2

Question #1 Did the graphic organizers make you feel more confident about your ability to write? Why or why not?	Question #2 After completing the graphic organizers, do you feel like you have the skills to successfully complete your writing assignment? Why or why not?	Question #3 After completing the graphic organizers, what is your attitude towards writing assignments? Explain. Did it improve? Why or why not?	Question #4 If you were to have a writing assignment in the future, would you use graphic organizers to help you? Why or why not?
Code Categories with the frequency of code indicated: Yes, breaks it down: 3 Yes, helpful with understanding what was required: 2 Yes, with other reasons: 3 No, did not increase confidence: 2 Helped with time management, but also did not encourage hard work: 1	Code Categories with the frequency of code indicated: Yes, because it helped me plan/brainstorm: 2 Yes, because it helps with breaking it down/structure: 4 Yes and no/Maybe/don't' know: 3 Yes, other reasons: 2	Code Categories with the frequency of code indicated: Yes, feel more prepared/confident/made it easier: 7 Like the assignment: 1 Did not improve but did help attention: 2 Did not improve (already positive): 1	Code Categories with the frequency of code indicated: Yes, would use graphic organizers because it helps them write: 7 Maybe: 1 No, don't need it: 3

For the first question on the questionnaire, I asked the students, "Did the graphic

organizers make you feel more confident about your ability to write? Why or why not?" After

coding the student's responses to this questionnaire, I organized the codes into five categories: *Yes, it breaks it down, Yes, it is helpful with understanding what was required; Yes, (with other reasons); No, it did not increase confidence;* and *Yes, it helped with time management, but also did not encourage hard work.* The first category was students that responded, "Yes, it breaks it down" which represented three student responses. One student elaborated on this idea saying, the graphic organizers "made me feel more confident because it breaks it down for you." The next category contained responses that noted that "Yes" the graphic organizers made them feel more confident, but there was no consensus among the reasons why. Of the three students in this category, one student said that the graphic organizer was helpful "because once I was done all I had to do was revise it." The third category was two responses that said "Yes [the graphic organizers] were helpful with understanding what was required." Some of the language used in this category was that the use of graphic organizers "lined it up for me so I knew what was expected of me." The last two categories are representative of student responses that mentioned that this writing strategy did not increase their confidence. Two students said, "No, it did not increase confidence" with one student noting that he had "done better graphic organizers that I liked" and another saying, "I don't think that they made me more confident but they didn't make me less confident." The last category included one student that remarked that while the graphic organizer did help with time management, "it doesn't force me to put my best foot forward." It is noteworthy that the majority of students indicated that the use of graphic organizers made them feel more confident towards their writing assignment, with only two students indicating that their confidence did not improve.

To obtain data about self-efficacy beliefs, I asked the students the second question which was, "After completing the graphic organizers, do you feel like you have the skills to

successfully complete your writing assignment? Why or why not?" I organized the codes from this question into four categories: *Yes, because it helped me plan/brainstorm; Yes, because it helps with breaking it down/structure; Yes and no/Maybe/don't know;* and *Yes, other reasons.* The first category of codes from this question consists of answers that said, "Yes because it [graphic organizers] helped me plan and brainstorm", which two students mentioned in their answers. An example of this answer is "I feel like I have the skills because it helped me plan and process what I need to say." The most predominant category, with four students, was responses that indicated "Yes because it [graphic organizers] help with breaking it down and structure." Students noted that "it sets it up for you" and "because now I know how to break down a paragraph." I placed three of the students' responses into the category of saying either "Yes and no" or "Maybe" because they demonstrated a level of uncertainty towards the questions. These students used phrases like "I don't really know, the writing assignment is different and maybe harder" and "Maybe if I cared about the story more then I might like it." The final category was students that noted "Yes" graphic organizers helped them feel like they had the skills to successfully complete their writing assignment, but wrote about different reasons than any other students. One of these two students said that it "makes me more prepared, relieves the sense of chaos and questioning." The data from question two showed that several students (6) discussed how the graphic organizers helped with the structural aspect of writing; however, it is noteworthy that three students indicated that they did not see a direct connection between the graphic organizer and their writing assignment.

The third question addressed the students' attitudes asking, "After completing the graphic organizers, what is your attitude towards writing assignments? Explain. Did it improve? Why or why not?" For this question, I put the codes into four categories: *Yes, feel more*

prepared/confident/made it easier; Like the assignment; Did not improve but did help attention; and Did not improve (already positive). Seven students responded using words or phrases that I placed into a category of responses that said "Yes, I feel more prepared and confident," and the graphic organizer "made it easier." I chose to group these responses together since they all indicated that graphic organizers helped improve their attitude towards writing assignments. In this category, one student's response was, "now that I have done the graphic organizer, I feel more positive toward the writing assignment." Only one student mentioned that "yes" their attitude improved because before "I did not like it." Another category with only one response was a student that said their attitude "did not improve" as she "already enjoyed it [writing]." The final category of student responses was two students who indicated that their attitude "did not improve" but that the graphic organizers did help them stay focused. For example, one student said, "I don't think it improved but I'm able to get stuff done with them." Although most of the students indicated that their attitude did improve after completing the graphic organizer, it is important to recognize that for three students even though the graphic organizer might have kept them focused it did not make them like writing any better.

For the last question for Questionnaire #2, I asked the students, "If you were to have a writing assignment in the future, would you use graphic organizers to help you? Why or why not?" The responses for this question fell within three main categories: *Yes, I would use graphic organizers because it helps me write; Maybe;* and *No, don't need it.* The first, and most prevalent category, included seven of the students' responses that indicated that "Yes, I would use graphic organizers because they help me write." Some of the students in this category said that "Yes they help me write because without them I would be lost" and "I would use a graphic organizer because they enhance my performance because it makes everything less stressful." Only one

student's response was categorized as "maybe" noting that it would "depend on what I'm writing about." The final category was students that indicated "No, I don't need it", which accounted for three of the eleven responses. These students gave various reasons for not needing the graphic organizer such as, "it's not my favorite way to help me write a paragraph" and "the graphic organizer gives me a reason to slack off." Once again, most students did say they would use a graphic organizer again, yet four of the eleven students conveyed some hesitation towards using this strategy, mostly indicating that they did not believe it was helpful.

Questionnaire #3

I administered the third questionnaire after reviewing two different student examples with my students. One example had common student errors, which the students had to identify and correct. The second example was free of errors, and the students analyzed how the example effectively completed various components. For both examples, the students graded the papers using the rubric that would be applied to their literary analysis papers. The students reviewed and analyzed the student examples during the class period prior to writing their rough draft. The questions, codes, categories, and code frequencies for Questionnaire #3 can be found in Table 3.

Table 3: Code Categories for Questionnaire 3

Question #1 Did reviewing the student examples make you feel more confident about your ability to write? Why or why not?	Question #2 After reviewing the student examples, do you feel like you have the skills to successfully complete your writing assignment? Why or why not?	Question #3 After reviewing the student examples, what is your attitude towards writing assignments? Did it improve? Why or why not?	Question #4 If you were to have a writing assignment in the future, would it help you to review student examples prior to writing to help you? Why or why not?
Code Categories with the frequency of code indicated: Yes, helped see/fix mistakes: 6	Code Categories with the frequency of code indicated: Yes, I can review work for mistakes: 5	Code Categories with the frequency of code indicated: Yes, understand mistakes: 4	Code Categories with the frequency of code indicated:

Yes, helped with knowing what to do/understand structure: 3 Yes, helped with understanding citations and previewing the rubric: 2 A little: 1	Yes, understand what it should look like: 2 Yes, other reasons: 2 Don't know/maybe: 2 No: 2	Yes, know what to do: 4 No: 2 A little bit (no reason): 2	Yes, it helps me understand my errors: 3 Yes, gives a better idea of what to do/not do: 6 Yes, various reasons: 3

    The first question that I asked the students was "Did reviewing the student examples make you feel more confident about your ability to write? Why or why not?" I placed the codes for the question into four categories: *Yes, it helped see/fix mistakes; Yes, it helped with knowing what to do/understand structure; Yes, it helped with understanding citations and previewing the rubric;* and *A little.* The first category was responses that included words and phrases that I classified as "Yes, the student examples helped me see and fix my mistakes" which accounted for six of the twelve student responses. One student's answer in this category was "Yes because it [student examples] helped me see, recognize, and correct mistakes that I could easily make." The next category consisted of student's answers that said "Yes" and attributed that answer to knowing what to do and knowing the structure. Of the three student responses in the category, one student explained their thinking saying, "It made me more confident because I have a better grasp on the assignment and I know what to do and not to do." The third category consisted of two students who indicated "Yes" but referenced specific examples that were not repeated in any other answers. Those examples were "I know what to do for grammar and citations" and "now I know what the rubric wants me to do." The last category represents only one student who said that "A little, it just made it easier." It is interesting that almost every student found reviewing

the student examples to increase their confidence, even if it was just a small increase. Furthermore, the students indicated a variety of specific ways the student examples helped their confidence levels.

I asked the students the second question, which was "After reviewing the student examples, do you feel like you have the skills to successfully complete your writing assignment? Why or why not?" I categorized these students' answers into five main categories: *Yes, I can review work for mistakes; Yes, I understand what it should look like; Yes, other reasons; Don't know/maybe;* and *No.* The first category was the most prominent with five of the twelve students' responses using similar words and phrases that indicated, "Yes, I can review my work for mistakes." One of the students explained their reasoning saying, "I do feel like I have the skills to successfully complete my writing assignment because I have a better idea of what I need to look for when reviewing my own paper." Two students used words and phrases that I categorized as "Yes, because I understand what it [writing assignment] should look like." One student's response in this category said, "Yes because after reviewing example #2 I know what the writing assignment should look like." Another two students indicated that "Yes" I have the skills to successfully complete my writing assignment, but indicated reasons that were not found in any other students' answers. Those two responses were "Yeah, I feel confident in myself that I can" and "Yes, Looks pretty simple, Also done something like this before." The next category consisted of responses where the students used language like "Don't know" and "Maybe." Of the two student responses in this category, one student said, "I don't know yet because I think I can get so much better." The final category for this question was students that responded "No" which consisted of two of the twelve responses. Only one student elaborated in their answer saying, "No, I still feel that writing could improve before the assignment." The students' responses from

this question showed that the students felt like reviewing the examples helped them identify mistakes and get an idea of the structure of their paper. In contrast, the students that said no or maybe, indicated that they believed their work could still improve.

The third question on Questionnaire #3 was "After reviewing the student examples, what is your attitude towards writing assignments? Did it improve? Why or why not?" I classified the codes from the students' responses into four categories: *Yes; helped me understand my mistake;, Yes; now I know what to do;* and *A little bit, No.* Four students wrote answers that I categorized as "Yes, it [student examples] helped me understand my mistakes." An example of a student response in this category was "I feel good about the writing assignment because I liked knowing the common errors and being aware of my mistakes." The second category represents four students' answers that included words or phrases that indicated "Yes, now I know what to do." One student's answer in this category explained this by saying, "I feel that I can be better because I'm no longer confused about the things I have to do." Two of the twelve student responses demonstrated that their attitudes towards writing did improve "a little bit", with one student saying "it [his attitude] improved a little bit but I still hate writing." The final category of responses for this question was representative of students that responded "No." Two students included no in their answer. One student said "No, it didn't change my attitude as I usually enjoy writing assignments" and another student said "No, I still don't like them but I'm more confident." Once again, the majority of students wrote that this writing strategy helped improve their attitude towards writing, and only one student wrote that he still possessed a negative attitude towards writing.

The final question I asked the students on Questionnaire #3 was "If you were to have a writing assignment in the future, would it help you to review student examples prior to writing to

help you? Why or why not?" I organized the codes from the students' responses into four

categories: *Yes, it helps me understand my errors; Yes, gives a better idea of what to do/not*

do; and *Yes, other reasons.* The first category of student responses was three answers that

included words and phrases I classified as "Yes, it helps me understand my errors." One student's

answer in this category was "it [student examples] will help me in the future because it helps me

understand my writing errors." For this question, the most prevalent category, with six different

responses, included answers that indicated, "Yes, it gives me a better idea of what to do/not do."

An example of a response in this category was "it would help me to review student examples

because I would feel more confident knowing what not to do and what to look for." I organized

the remainder of the student responses into the final category which was students that indicated

"Yes" but provided different reasons from any other students. These three answers were "Yes

because it makes me more confident in my ability to write", "Yes because I'm bad at writing on

my own" and "Yes, 100%, it was really fun and I feel it really helped." I found it interesting that

although the students demonstrated a difference in reasoning, all the students responded with

some form of "yes" they would use this writing strategy again if given another writing

assignment.

Questionnaire #4

  I administered the fourth questionnaire after the students completed a peer-editing

activity where they exchanged papers with a classmate and completed a series of editing tasks

and answered questions analyzing how the paper met the requirements of the assignments.

Unfortunately, two students were absent when we peer-edited in class, and another student did

not have his rough draft completed, so he was not able to participate in the activity. Therefore,

there are only nine students' responses to this questionnaire. The questions, codes, categories,

and code frequencies for Questionnaire #4 can be found in Table 4.

Figure 4: Code Categories for Questionnaire #4

Question #1 Did peer-editing make you feel more confident about your writing? Why or why not?	Question #2 After completing the peer-editing exercise, do you feel like you have the skills to successfully complete your writing assignment? Why or why not?	Question #3 After completing the peer-editing exercise, what is your attitude towards writing assignments? Did it improve? Why or why not?	Question #4 If you were to have a writing assignment in the future, would it help you to peer-edit with a classmate prior to submitting? Why or why not?
Code Categories with the frequency of code indicated:

Yes, because it helped identify/fix mistakes: 4

Yes, showed what was missing: 2

Yes, offered a second opinion: 2

Yes, showed the difference between formal and informal writing: 1 | Code Categories with the frequency of code indicated:

Yes, helps find mistakes: 3

Yes, makes me feel more confident in my work: 4

Yes and no/Not really still have more areas to work on: 2 | Code Categories with the frequency of code indicated:

Yes, feel more confident about work: 4

Yes, peer helped: 2

Yes, change to improve: 2

No, always enjoyed writing: 1 | Code Categories with the frequency of code indicated:

Yes, it helps fix mistakes: 4

Yes, it helps to work with peers: 3

Yes, it helps: 2 |

The first question on the fourth questionnaire was "Did peer-editing make you feel more

confident about your writing? Why or why not?" After coding the students' responses, I

organized the codes into four categories: *Yes, because it helped show/fix mistakes; Yes, it showed*

me what was missing; Yes, it offered me a second opinion; and *Yes, it showed the difference*

between formal and informal writing. For this first question, there were four students who answered "yes" peer-editing made me feel more confident "because it helped me identify and fix my mistakes." An example of a student response in this category was "it did make me feel more confident because I could correct things I did not see myself and it showed me common mistakes and how to change and edit them." For the second category, I identified two of the nine student responses that I classified as saying "Yes, it showed me what was missing." This category is slightly different from the previous category because rather than focus specifically on mistakes, these students mentioned ideas such as "I could see what I was missing because my partner helped me" , noting that the peer-editing exercise made them aware of missing requirements. The third category also only included two students' responses with words and phrases that said "Yes, it offered me a second opinion." An example of this type of response was "Yes because when you get feedback from someone you feel good because they give you their view on it which might help." The final category of codes for this question consisted of only one student response, which said "Yes, I got good advice and it helped me realize the difference between informal and formal writing." Of the nine student answers for this question, all students responded with some form of "yes" peer-editing did help them feel more confident toward writing assignments.

For the second question on the fourth questionnaire, I asked the students "After completing the peer-editing exercise, do you feel like you have the skills to successfully complete your writing assignment? Why or why not?" I organized the student's responses to this question into three categories: *Yes, it helps me find mistakes; Yes, it makes me feel more confident in my work; Yes and No;* and *Not Really.* The first category consisted of words and phrases from three students' responses that said "Yes, it [peer-editing] helped me find mistakes." An example of a response from this category was "I feel that I have the skills to successfully

complete my writing assignment because my peer helped me find problems and mistakes in my writing." The next category contained four of the nine students' responses that said "Yes it [peer-editing] makes me feel more confident in my work. One student in this category explained this idea by saying, "I do feel I have the skills to successfully complete the writing assignment because when peer editing I learned more skills and grew more confident in the ones I already had." For the final category I grouped together student responses that demonstrate some level of confidence and some level of doubt. Of the two students in this category, one said that "Not really because I need to learn much more" while the other student said "Yes and no, There is always room for improvement." While seven of the nine students wrote that peer-editing was helpful in making them believe they had the skills to be successful, two students still expressed hesitation towards the ability to successfully complete the writing assignment.

To collect data on the potential effect of this strategy on students' attitudes towards writing, I asked the third question which was "After completing the peer-editing exercise, what is your attitude towards writing assignments? Did it improve? Why or why not?" I categorized the codes from the students' answers into four categories: *Yes, I feel more confident about work; Yes, peer helped; Yes, I made changes to improve;* and *No, I always enjoyed writing.* The first category of student responses represented answers that said, "Yes" my attitude towards writing assignments did improve because the students "feel more confident about my work." Of the four students that indicated this response, one student said "I felt a little bit more confident because [student's name redacted] said my writing was good." The next category contained two students' responses as they both said that "Yes, my peer helped me." For this category, one student further explained this idea saying, "my attitude towards writing is that I feel better about it because my peer helped me fix my paper." The next category also encompassed two students that wrote in

their responses that "yes" my attitude improved because they "made changes to improve." An example of one student's response in this category was "peer editing helps me understand my mistakes and gives me a chance to fix them." The final category for this question represents only one student who responded that "No, I always enjoyed writing assignments" so therefore her attitude towards writing assignments was not affected by this peer-editing exercise. Eight out of the nine students indicated that peer-editing improved their attitude toward writing, with only one student disagreeing with this claim. However, it is noteworthy that this student consistently responded across all four questionnaires that she already had a positive attitude towards writing prior to any writing instruction.

The final question on the fourth questionnaire was "If you were to have a writing assignment in the future, would it help you to peer-edit with a classmate prior to submitting? Why or why not?" For this question, I placed the codes from the student answers into three main categories of responses: *Yes, it helped me fix my mistakes; Yes, it helped to work with peers;* and *Yes, it helps (without indicating a reason why).* For the first category, I examined the student's responses for words or phrases that demonstrated the idea of "yes." I would use peer-editing for future writing assignments as "it helps me fix my mistakes." Of the four student answers in this category, one student wrote that "I would use peer editing again because it's a fun and efficient way to review your mistakes." The second category of student responses was three answers that said "yes" they would use peer-editing because it "helps to work with peers." An example of a response in this category was "Yes, comparing and giving advice to one another helps everyone be more ready." The final category was students that agreed that peer-editing was helpful saying "Yes, it helps" but did not explain specific reasons why. Two students provided this type of answer, with one student saying, "Yes, peer-editing could help me prior to submitting." All nine

students indicated that they would like to peer-edit before submitting a writing assignment in the future; however, very few students could articulate exactly why the peer-editing process was helpful in regard to improving their writing.

Trends Among Student Demographic Groups

To address my third research question, *Are there identifiable patterns across student demographic groups (e.g., race and gender identification) or student achievement levels in relation to writing strategies and students' self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes toward writing?* I looked for trends in students' questionnaire responses based on race, gender, and academic achievement level. This final section of my Findings is organized by these three demographic groups.

Race

The first student demographic group that I will discuss is race. In this group of participants, two were Black, three were Latinx, and seven were White, as listed in the student management system, Powerschool. It is important to note and acknowledge that the racial groups do not have an equal distribution of participants, making it more challenging to identify trends among the less represented racial groups. Furthermore, the majority (seven) of the students identify as White, so the trends for this racial group are very similar to the overall trends, regardless of racial grouping. Several trends emerged for the first questionnaire, which focused on students' attitudes and self-efficacy beliefs towards writing when they enter 9th grade and English 1. Both Black participants noted that "yes" they do have the skills needed to be successful on writing assignments. This was similar to the responses of six of the seven White students who also indicated that they have the skills for writing successfully. While the two Black students said that "yes" they are confident about their ability to write, all three Latinx

students and all seven White students expressed some level of hesitancy when writing about their confidence levels. The final trend that I noticed was in the responses from the third question, which asked students about their attitude towards writing. There was not a noticeable trend among the Black students, but all three Latinx students indicated that attitude was not entirely positive or negative. There was almost an even split among the White students, with four students expressing a more negative attitude and three students expressing a positive attitude.

I administered Questionnaire #2 after the students completed two different graphic organizers to prepare them for the literary analysis writing assignment. For this second questionnaire, one of the Latinx students was absent, so there were only two student responses that represented the Latinx racial group. While there was a unanimous "yes" for question one (which asked if the graphic organizers increased confidence) among the White students, the same could not be said for either of the other racial groups. The Black students and most of the White students agreed that their attitude toward writing increased after completing the graphic organizer, which was the focus of question two. On the third question, both Latinx students wrote answers that showed they did not believe their attitude improved after completing the graphic organizers. In contrast, a majority of the other students indicated that their attitude did increase. The last notable trend came from question four, where the White students unanimously agreed that they would use graphic organizers again when tasked with a writing assignment. This is in contrast to the Latinx students, who both said they would not use graphic organizers, while the Black students were split down the middle in their opinions about using graphic organizers.

For Questionnaire #3, the students reviewed and examined two different student examples prior to completing the questionnaire. For the first question, which asked about confidence levels, all three Latinx students indicated that their confidence increased because it

helped them identify errors that they might use in their own writing. While all of the students answered with some variation of "yes" to this question, the Latinx students were the only racial group that responded with the same type of reasoning. In the response for question two, all of the White students said that the use of student examples helped them feel like they had the skills to be successful on writing tasks, whereas there were students in the other two racial groups that indicated they felt they still lacked some needed skills. When asked about their attitude towards writing, both Black students and two of the Latinx students noted that while their attitude did improve, they felt like it could still get better, which was in contrast to the White students where the majority indicated they felt more positive towards writing and did not indicate areas of improvement. Finally, all twelve students indicated that they would benefit from reviewing student examples before approaching a writing assignment in the future.

I administered the fourth questionnaire after the students completed a peer-editing workshop where they evaluated their peers' papers prior to finalizing and submitting their final drafts. Three students did not participate in peer-editing, so I only collected nine students' questionnaires. Only one Black student completed this questionnaire, and he indicated that peer-editing increased his confidence and self-efficacy because working with his peers helped him identify and fix his errors. However, because he was the only student in his racial group, there were no trends to identify among the Black students. On question one and question four, all three Latinx students indicated that the use of peer-editing helped increase their confidence by helping them identify and fix their mistakes, and they would choose to use this strategy again for the same reasons. While the five White students that completed the peer-editing questionnaire agreed that the strategy increased their confidence and they would choose to use it again, there were no trends regarding reasoning. One difference among the students' responses was around

the question of if the students' attitudes towards writing improved as a result of this strategy, to which four of the five White students indicated yes, it did improve. However, two of the three Latinx students indicated that their attitude did not change.

Gender

The second demographic group that I investigated for trends was perceived gender. I divided up the participants into two groups: boys and girls. Based on the gender indicated in the student management system, Powerschool, there were six boys and six girls that participated in the study. For the first questionnaire, there were some apparent differences between the responses of the boys and girls. For example, for the first question, which asked about students' beliefs that they had the skills to write successfully, while only one boy responded that he did not feel like he had the skills, two girls indicated their belief that they lacked the necessary skills. For the second question, about their confidence in writing, while only half of the boys (three out of six) indicated a lack of confidence, the majority (five of the six) of the girls wrote the same type of responses. However, when it came to the student's attitudes towards writing, only two girls wrote that their attitudes were dependent on the writing assignment, whereas four of the boys said they had a negative attitude or they did not like certain assignments.

For questionnaires two, three, and four, which I administered after each writing strategy, there were only identifiable trends among the gender groups for questionnaire two. The students completed questionnaire two after completing the two graphic organizers. For this strategy, the girls seemed to respond more positively to this writing strategy than the boys did. For example, on the first question, three of the boys said that the graphic organizers did not increase their confidence, whereas all the girls indicated that it did. For question two, two boys wrote that after completing the graphic organizers, they still did not feel like they had the skills to write

successfully, while only one girl noted her skills could use improvement. On the final question, which asked students if they would use graphic organizers in the future, three boys expressed hesitation, but only one girl indicated that they would not choose to use a graphic organizer again. The students' responses to questionnaires three and four did not contain any identifiable trends among the gender groups.

Student Achievement Level

The final demographic group that I used to analyze the data was student achievement levels, which were based on the student's eighth-grade reading End-Of-Course (EOC) scores which are categorized by level. Students who score below a level three, which is considered proficient, I classified as below-grade level, as the state classified these scores as "not proficient." Students who scored a level three, I classified as at-grade level, and students who scored a level four or five, I classified as above-grade level. For this group of participants, five students were identified as below-grade level, three students were identified as on-grade level, and four students were identified as above-grade level.

For the data I collected from questionnaire one, one noticeable trend emerged among the student achievement levels. For all four questions, the students that are considered on-grade level consistently expressed hesitancy about their confidence, skills, and attitudes towards writing. While students in the other achievement levels also expressed some of the same concerns, it was not at the same frequency as the on-grade level students. For example, for the question about their attitudes towards writing, all three on-grade level students either said they did not have a positive attitude, or they thought that writing was hard. In comparison, the below-grade level students said their attitude depends on the type of writing assignment or they like writing, and three of the above-grade level students said they had a positive attitude towards writing, with

only one student saying they disliked writing. Interestingly enough, the answers of the students below-grade level were more similar to the students above-grade level and contrasted more with the students categorized as on-grade level.

I gave the second questionnaire after completing the graphic organizers with the students. For this strategy, the below-grade level students and the at-grade level students responded more positively to the use of graphic organizers, with several of the students mentioning that the graphic organizers helped them understand the requirements. For every question, the majority of the below-grade level and on-grade level students responded saying yes, the graphic organizers helped in some way to increase their feelings of confidence and positivity towards writing. However, almost half of the above-grade level students responded no or maybe to each question, indicating that the use of graphic organizers was not helpful for their feelings of confidence, efficacy, and positivity towards writing. For example, one above-grade level student wrote that "No" she would not use a graphic organizer again because it "gives me a reason to slack off."

The third questionnaire, which the students completed after reviewing the student examples, exhibited similar trends. The students below or on-grade level responded more positively to the use of student examples, whereas some of the above-grade level students expressed that the student examples did not believe that the student examples helped boost their efficacy, confidence, or attitudes towards writing. The only exception to this claim was on the last question, where all twelve students indicated that they would like to review student examples prior to completing a writing assignment in the future. For questionnaire four, there were no identifiable trends among the student achievement groups because almost all students answered with some form of yes to all of the questions. However, it is noteworthy that two of the students

in the category of below-grade level were not able to complete the peer-editing workshop because they did not complete their rough drafts during the class period before.

In the following Discussion and Implications section, I address all three research questions while contextualizing my findings with the research presented in the Literature Review. I also offer implications for others who teach English Language Arts, and specifically writing, to secondary learners.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this Discussion and Implications section, I discuss the trends that I found across the data from all four questionnaires. The discussion of data is organized according to my three research questions. While I use the data I collected to address my research questions, I contextualize my findings with the relevant research identified in the Literature Review. Finally, I discuss the implications of this study to the field and examine both the limitations of this study and recommendations for further research.

Research Question One

My first research question was: *When my 9th grade students enter English I, what are their self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes toward writing?* To address this question, I administered the first questionnaire (see Appendix A for the questionnaire) prior to any writing instruction in my English 1 class. While a majority (nine out of twelve) of the students indicated that they had the skills to successfully complete a writing assignment, only three students indicated full confidence in their ability to write well. The discrepancy between these two questions illuminates an interesting dilemma. Although most students believe that they have the skills to write, they do not feel confident in using those skills. To address this gap, it could be beneficial for teachers to use some of the writing strategies that promote self-efficacy as suggested by Bruning and Horn (2000), such as providing positive feedback, utilizing the writing process, and breaking down writing tasks into small chunks.

On question three, which asked students about their attitudes towards writing, five of the twelve students indicated that they held a positive attitude towards writing. Furthermore, the five students that indicated they had a positive attitude towards writing also indicated that they felt

they had the skills to write successfully. This data supports Bruning et al.'s (2013) assertion that students with strong efficacy beliefs about writing are more strongly associated with enjoying writing. For question four, which asked students which writing strategies they like to use, editing and revision was the most common answer with nine students mentioning this strategy in their answer. Editing and revision was one of the nine writing strategies that Rogers and Graham (2008) identified in their examination of 88 different single-subject design studies about writing instruction as being helpful in reducing student errors and improving the quality of writing. The data from the first questionnaire suggests that students enter high school with a variety of different experiences and understandings of writing in an academic setting. While some students feel confident and self-assured in their writing, other students approach writing with fear and apprehension. The students' responses on this first questionnaire, which showcased a lack of confidence and positive attitudes towards writing in several students, guided my writing instruction over the remainder of the unit. I selected writing strategies that would (hopefully) foster feelings of confidence and positivity in students, and encourage them as they embarked on their first writing assignment of the semester.

Research Question Two

My second research question asked: *How do the writing strategies of modeling, graphic organizers, and peer-editing affect my students' self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes toward writing?* After reviewing the code frequencies for each category for all of the questionnaires, there is not one singular writing strategy that students indicated significant growth in feelings of confidence, efficacy, or positive attitudes in regard to writing assignments. However, there are trends and takeaways from each survey that are worth discussing.

After completing the two graphic organizers (see Appendix C for the graphic organizers), the students complete questionnaire two. The students' written responses to this writing strategy had the highest frequency of negative language. For each question, three students indicated that the use of graphic organizers did not increase their confidence, did not help them acquire needed skills for writing, did not improve their attitude toward writing, and they would not use graphic organizers again. These negative statements only accounted for one-fourth of the students' responses, with the other three-fourths of the students responding positively to graphic organizers. The higher percentage of negative responses for this writing strategy was surprising, as graphic organizers were one of the most frequently referenced writing strategies in the research regarding attitude, self-efficacy, and effective writing practices (Alber-Morgan et al., 2007; Bruning and Horn, 2000; Graham et al.,2008; Zumbrunn et al., 2016). While completing these graphic organizers, several students expressed that they did not think they needed this step of the writing process. These students, mostly higher achieving students, expressed a desire to write the paper without templates. It is possible that for students that are already stronger writers, graphic organizers are constricting and too formulaic.

I administered the third questionnaire after the students examined and graded two student examples (see Appendix D for the student examples). While this strategy elicited more positive responses from students, four students did respond with hesitancy when asked if the student examples helped them gain the skills they need to be successful. This is not surprising, as many students noted that the student examples were helpful in showing them common mistakes, with little mention of skill development. Furthermore, Bruning and Horn (2000) also found the use of student examples to help improve students' writing, which is consistent with the findings of this study.

The students completed the final questionnaire after completing a peer-editing workshop with another student's paper (see Appendix E for the peer-editing handout). The students' responses to this strategy were unanimously positive, with all students indicating positive responses to all four questions. However, in the students' explanations of why the peer-editing helped to build confidence, efficacy, or attitude, there was a lack of specific reasoning. The peer-editing strategy is one that closely aligns with the work of McLeod (1991) who asserted that whole-class, collaborative writing strategies, such as peer-editing, were best for fostering positive attitudes in students. The data from this questionnaire, showing that all participants indicated a positive attitude improvement, supports his ideas.

Although expressing some feelings of doubt and confidence about their writing abilities in the first questionnaire, most students indicated that their confidence, attitude, and efficacy beliefs improved while engaging in the writing process. This data analysis did not reveal any concrete takeaways about which writing strategies fostered the most positive attitudes and efficacy beliefs in students, as a majority of the students responded positively to all three strategies.

Research Question Three:

My third research question asked: *Are there identifiable patterns across student demographic groups (e.g., race and gender identification) or student achievement levels in relation to writing strategies and students' self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes toward writing?* While I already discussed the patterns and trends in students' responses in the Findings section, I use this section to discuss those trends in relation to the relevant research presented in the Literature Review.

The first student demographic group that I will discuss is race. The data from the first survey aligns strongly with Graham's (1994) study, which found that African American [3] students have strong self-efficacy. For the two questions addressing efficacy (questions one and two), both Black students responded that they believe they have the ability to write successfully. Furthermore, regarding the trends in the responses from the Latinx students, there was a similarity between my findings and that of Pajares and Johnson (1996), who noted that Latinx students expressed lower self-efficacy than other students. This is apparent in my data when all three Latinx students expressed hesitancy about their confidence in their ability to write successfully. In regard to attitude, while Knudson (1993) found some disparities between White and Hispanic[4] students in their perception of themselves as writers, this trend was not found in my data.

As I examined the data for trends among racial groups, I noticed that the White students demonstrated an overwhelmingly positive response to all three writing strategies. However, the same cannot be said for the Latinx and Black students who wrote that the writing strategies did not always increase their attitudes and self-efficacy beliefs, nor would they choose to use them in the future. This difference in the students' responses to the writing strategies might be because the Latinx students expressed lower confidence and self-efficacy in the first questionnaire, so it is plausible that their attitude and self-efficacy beliefs would remain behind their peers. Although that explanation does not account for the Black students' responses to the writing strategies, because the two Black students expressed attitude and self-efficacy beliefs on the first questionnaire that were similar to the White students. The exception to this trend was with the

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[3] The use of "African American" rather than "Black" is used here to remain consistent with the terminology used in Graham (1994).

[4] The use of "Hispanic" rather than "Latinx" is used here to remain consistent with the terminology used in Knudson (1993).

peer-editing strategy, where all three racial groups agreed that they felt peer-editing increased their attitude, confidence, and self-efficacy and said they would like to peer-edit again before turning in a writing assignment. Noting this trend is important, as it is possible that my instructional choices (and the writing strategies that are promoted by current research) are not the most effective pedagogical choices for the learning styles of non-White students. I believe that investigating what type of writing instruction is most effective for bolstering the attitudes and efficacy beliefs of non-White students is an important avenue for further research.

The second student demographic group that I examined was perceived gender. The trends that I identified from this study regarding gender do share some similarities with the research referenced in the Literature Review. For example, in the responses to the questions about their confidence towards writing and self-efficacy beliefs in writing, more girls than boys expressed a lack of confidence in their skills and abilities. This trend is similar to the findings of Pajares (1989), Pajares and Johnson (1996), and Pajares et al. (2007), who found that girls express lower self-efficacy beliefs when compared to boys. In regard to the students' attitudes towards writing, my data showed a similar trend to both Graham et al. (2007) and Knudson (1993), who both found that girls have a more positive attitude towards writing when compared to boys. This trend was found in my data when the majority of girls (four out of six) expressed that they had a positive attitude towards writing, whereas the majority of the boys (four of six) expressed they had a negative attitude.

The final student demographic group is student achievement level. The findings and trends from questionnaire one are in contrast to the findings of Shell et al. (1995), Bruning et al. (2013), and Pajares (1996), who all found that low achievers expressed lower self-efficacy beliefs towards reading and writing when compared to their on-grade level or above grade level

peers. However, there was some evidence that coincided with an aspect of Bruning's studies (1995, 2013). Bruning found that lower-achieving students' beliefs are the most fragile and more easily impacted by external, unpredictable factors. This finding was evidenced in some of the below-grade level student's answers when they indicated that writing made their "fingers hurt" or they did not like writing because they "thought the story was boring." These external factors heavily influenced the students' overall attitude towards writing.

The trends and findings from the data, when organized by student achievement levels, demonstrate how challenging it can be for teachers to provide writing instruction that is effective and appropriate for all levels of students. Other than peer-editing (which two below-grade level students did not participate in), the other two writing strategies were not as helpful for the above-grade level students as they were for the on or below-grade level students. It seems like above-grade level students do not need as much structure and guidance in their writing, as the on-grade level and below-grade level students do. To address this challenge, teachers should focus on providing writing instruction that is differentiated by achievement levels, so students can receive instruction that is tailored to their specific writing needs.

Limitations and Implications

One of the major limitations of this study was the number of participants. Due to the small number of students that participated, the student demographic groups were not large enough to accurately represent any possible trends within those groups. Additionally, to provide further clarity about the students' self-efficacy and attitudes, the questionnaires could have asked students more specific questions, perhaps about specific skills and abilities. However, there are several key takeaways from this study that can further inform the research and discussion regarding efficacy, attitude, and writing instruction.

From the first questionnaire, I was able to gain insight into the students' efficacy beliefs and attitudes towards writing when they enter high school. This information helped me better understand both the apprehensions and concerns they held as well as their perceived strengths and interests. Not only did these insights help me plan my instruction, but they can also provide others with an understanding of the complex relationship between students and writing.

From the second, third, and fourth questionnaires, I was able to understand how students responded to various research-based writing strategies. By focusing my research entirely on the students' voices, I was able to add much-needed student perspectives to a field of research that is dominated by test scores and teachers' observations. Furthermore, the student's responses to the writing strategy questionnaires were overwhelmingly positive, with a majority of students indicating that all three writing strategies helped improve their attitude, confidence, and self-efficacy skills. This solidifies the importance of teaching all the steps of the writing process, with particular emphasis on using strategies that help bolster students' confidence and attitudes.

This study illuminated several areas that would benefit from further study. As mentioned above in the discussion of race, current research on writing instruction would benefit from further investigation on how to provide writing strategies that help foster confidence and efficacy in non-White students. In regard to writing strategies, I believe incorporating teacher feedback into a study similar to this one would provide the field with a student-centered discussion of how impactful teacher feedback can be on students' beliefs. The discussion of teacher feedback and efficacy from Pajares et al. (2007) found that feedback centered around the students' strengths can positively impact their efficacy beliefs. However, I would be interested to know whether or not students find all teacher feedback (both focused on strengths and weaknesses) to be helpful in building their confidence, attitude, and efficacy beliefs towards writing assignments.

Furthermore, there is room for continued research regarding how teachers can create a writing curriculum that both motivates and encourages struggling students while also challenging and stimulating higher-ability students.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

By completing this research study with my ninth-grade students, I have a renewed understanding of how impactful writing instruction can be for students. Reading through their responses on the questionnaires demonstrated that students of all levels have a deeply personal response to writing instruction and writing assignments. As I began analyzing the data, there were responses that both surprised me and challenged some of the beliefs I held about my teaching. This study allowed me to analyze how my writing instruction was affecting my students, rather than just operating on the assumption that it was effective because of my own perceptions.

As educators, we often feel so much pressure to show growth on standardized tests and cover all of our standards that we forget that we are molding students' beliefs and attitudes towards subjects and disciplines. By taking time to evaluate how my writing instruction impacts students' self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes towards writing, I was able to use my findings to create a more student-centered writing curriculum that fosters confidence and positive attitudes in my students while simultaneously addressing the writing standards for my grade level.

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APPENDIX A: PAPER-PENCIL QUESTIONNAIRE #1

Directions: Answer the following questions IN COMPLETE SENTENCES about your writing experiences.

1. Do you feel like you have the skills to successfully complete a writing assignment? Why or why not?

2. Do you feel confident about your ability to write? Why or why not?

3. What is your attitude towards writing assignments? Explain.

4. What writing strategies (pre-writing, brainstorming, editing, drafting, student examples, revisions, etc…) help you approach challenging writing assignments?

APPENDIX B: PAPER-PENCIL QUESTIONNAIRE #2-4

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences about the writing strategy we just completed.

1. Did (insert writing strategy) make you feel more confident about your writing? Why or why not?

2. After completing (insert writing strategy), do you feel like you have the skills to successfully complete your writing assignment? Why or why not?

3. After completing (insert writing strategy) exercise, what is your attitude towards writing assignments? Did it improve? Why or why not?

4. If you were to have a writing assignment in the future, would it help you to complete (insert writing strategy) prior to submitting? Why or why not?

APPENDIX C: GRAPHIC ORGAINZERS

PAM

Pam's Attributes (Traits)	Text Evidence/Citation (Smith ____).	What does this quote reveal about the character?
Character's Appearance	**Chunk #3**	Pam is _____. (Be sure to fully explain.)
	Chunk #7	Pam is _____. (Be sure to fully explain.)
Character's Words	**Chunk #6**	Pam is an honest real estate agent. She wants Martha to know that she will do her best to find her what she wants, but wants her to know the obstacles up front.
Character's Thoughts	**Chunk #3**	Pam is _____. (Be sure to fully explain.)
Character's Actions	**Chunk #6**	Pam is _____. (Be sure to fully explain.)
What Others	There is no evidence of what others	There is no evidence of what

Say/Think About the Character	think or say about this character.	others think or say about this character.

Martha

Martha's Attributes (Traits)	Text Evidence/Citation (Smith ____).	What does this quote reveal about the character?
Character's Appearance	**Chunk #1**	Martha is _____. (Be sure to fully explain.)
	Chunk #3	
Character's Words	**Chunk #5**	Martha is _____. (Be sure to fully explain.)
	Chunk #6	
Character's Thoughts	There is no evidence of what others think or say about this character.	There is no evidence of what others think or say about this character.
Character's Actions	**Chunk #5** "She looked serious again, began enlisting her hands in her speech, drawing out these 'levels' in the air, 'It's about stepping a bit further…'" (Smith).	Martha is _____. (Be sure to fully explain.)
What Others Say/Think About the Character	**Chunk #5**	Martha is _____. (Be sure to fully explain.)

APPENDIX D: STUDENT EXAMPLES

Literary Analysis Example #1

In the short story, <u>the first day</u>, Edward P. Jones advances the theme of education through the

character development of the mother. After being rejected from enrolling her daughter in the first

school, the mother says to her daughter: "One monkey don't stop no show" (Jones). Through the

mother's words to her daughter, it is clear that the mother is determined to enroll her daughter

into school and begin her daughter's education. "I don't know how to read or write" (Jones para.

18). By asking for help and admitting that she cannot read, the reader sees how vulnerable the

mother is at this moment. Furthermore, the reader begins to understand that enrolling her

daughter in school is extremely important to the mother, since she did not receive an education.

As the mother works to complete the paperwork, the daughter remarks how prepared the mother

was with all of the correct paperwork noting, it was "as if she has been saving them up for just

this moment" (jones para. 21). This shows the reader just how prepared and persistent the mother

is about enrolling her daughter in school. I believe that education is important and the story

shows me this by characterizing the mother as determined, prepared, and vulnerable.

Task #1: Follow directions for marking the text.

Task #2: There are nine major errors in this paragraph. Identify and explain how to fix

them:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

Task #3: What grade (from a 0 to an 100) would you give this paper? Why? Consider all categories of the rubric.

Literary Analysis Example #2

In the short story, "The First Day", Edward P. Jones advances the theme of the importance of education on a person's life through the character development of the mother. After being rejected from enrolling her daughter in the first school, the mother says to her daughter: "One monkey don't stop no show" (Jones para. 7). Through the mother's words to her daughter, it is clear that the mother is determined to enroll her daughter into school and begin her daughter's education. When the mother and daughter arrive at the second school, the mother admits that "I don't know how to read or write" (Jones para. 18). By asking for help and admitting that she cannot read, the reader sees how vulnerable the mother is at this moment. Furthermore, the reader begins to understand that enrolling her daughter in school is extremely important to the mother, since she did not receive an education. As the mother works to complete the paperwork, the daughter remarks how prepared the mother was with all of the correct paperwork noting, it was "as if she has been saving them up for just this moment" (Jones para. 21). The daughter's perception and commentary about the mother in this moment show the reader just how prepared and persistent the mother is about enrolling her daughter in school.

Through the characterizing the mother as determined, prepared, and vulnerable the reader can better understand why education was so important to the mother, and how impactful education can be throughout a person's life.

Task #1: Follow the directions for marking the text.

Task #2: How does each example support the claim?

1. Example #1 supports the claim by

   _____

2. Example #2 supports the claim by

   _____

3. Example #3 supports the claim by

   _____

Task #3: Text Evidence

1. How does this writer embed their text evidence into a sentence?

2. Which quote is most effectively embedded? Why?

Task #4: Language

1. Is the language used formal or informal? How do you know? Explain.

Task #5: What grade (from a 0 to an 100) would you give this paper? Why? Consider all categories of the rubric.

APPENDIX E: PEER-EDITING WORKSHOP

Your name: _____Partners name:_____

Step #1: Check for required components:

Topic Sentence/Claim:
   a. Did they include the title and author? Yes or No
   b. Did they include the theme? Yes or No
   c. Did they include something about characterization? Yes or No
2. Text Evidence #1
   a. Is the quote embedded into a sentence? Yes or No
   b. Is the quote cited correctly? Yes or No
   c. Does the quote support the topic sentence Yes or No
3. Explanation
   a. Is there an explanation for each quote that explains how the quote supports the claim? Yes or No
   b. Is the explanation clear and specific? Yes or No
4. Text Evidence #2
   a. Is the quote embedded into a sentence? Yes or No
   b. Is the quote cited correctly? Yes or No
   c. Does the quote support the topic sentence Yes or No
5. Explanation
   a. Is there an explanation for each quote that explains how the quote supports the claim? Yes or No
   b. Is the explanation clear and specific? Yes or No
6. Text Evidence #3
   a. Is the quote embedded into a sentence? Yes or No
   b. Is the quote cited correctly? Yes or No
   c. Does the quote support the topic sentence Yes or No
7. Explanation
   a. Is there an explanation for each quote that explains how the quote supports the claim? Yes or No
   b. Is the explanation clear and specific? Yes or No
8. Summative Sentence
   a. Does their paragraph end with a summary sentence that recaps the main ideas? Yes or No

Part 2: Evaluating Content-- Questions 2-5 require thoughtful, complete sentences!

1. How does the data support the topic sentence?

      a. Text Evidence #1:

      b. Text Evidence #2:

      c. Text Evidence #3:

2. Does the writer use formal or informal language? How do you know?

3. What did the writer do well?

4. What does the writer need to fix?

5. What is your overall impression of your partner's paragraph?