

Executive Summary: Exploration of Teachers' Perceptions

This study determined whether preparation courses offered at universities and school district workshops prepared the teachers to teach writing to middle school students. The researcher implemented a convergent parallel design study with a random selection of middle school language arts teachers in a central Florida school to determine if the teachers perceived their teacher preparation programs prepared them to teach writing.

The purpose of the study was to determine what courses had been most effective in preparing teachers to teach writing. The purpose was also to provide the school district and university with suggested professional development topics for teachers to help improve students' writing. Teachers in this study responded to the interview questions concerning their preparation courses or school district workshops that prepared them to teach writing to middle school students.

Based upon the teachers' responses, they believed their experiences as teachers helped them to prepare to teach writing to middle school students. They also indicated that the school district workshops on Common Core Connections also assisted them in preparing to teach writing to middle school students. Overall, they believed that there needs to be courses developed at universities that are aligned to the new state standards on writing as well as school district workshops that match the skills tested.

The seven middle school teachers who volunteered for the study all went to various colleges around the United States and abroad. Three of the teachers attended a university in Florida, two attended a university in another country, one attended a religious institute out of state, one attended a prestigious university, and one attended a preparatory institute. Some of the universities had some preparation courses for writing, but, for the most part, not any of them had formal writing preparation with the exception of one at the prestigious university. The teachers

expressed that they took one or two classes through the school district on Common Core Connections that did help prepare their students for writing. They shared that the preparation was useful for the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) and Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT) for which they prepared. Overall, they believed that they were prepared to teach writing from the experiences they have had as teachers and through writing programs they previously taught such as the Write for the Future program. They also expressed the new FSA writing test was much more rigorous, and it would take time before the students were used to it. The findings in this study will assist universities and school districts in providing courses and training for their teachers that match the standards and the type of test given.

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