Preservice Teachers as Writers: Examining the Self-Efficacy, Writing Processes, and
Pedagogical Transference of Preservice Teachers

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Abstract

The central objective of this research project is to study how a specific classroom assignment that is focused on teaching undergraduates about the writing process can influence a) student self-efficacy related to writing, b) the transference of written communication knowledge to other courses, and c) student intentions to carry learning forward into future K-6 classrooms. The assignment is called The Multigenre Project and this study will explore three key questions within the assignment:

1) What effects does The Multigenre Project have on students' self-efficacy related to writing? Specifically, how do students' views of themselves as writers change from the beginning of the semester to the end of the semester as influenced by this project?

2) What do students learn about writing process by completing The Multigenre Project?

3) In what ways do students intend to carry their knowledge about writing gained from The Multigenre Project forward into their other courses at UNCC and into their future classrooms with K-6 students?

The questions will be addressed by collecting data that include: pre- and post-surveys, written reflections, and focus group interviews. Using a mixed methods approach (Creswell, 2007), we aim to quantitatively analyze surveys (Pinsonneault & Kraemer, 1993; Norland-Tilburg, 1990) and qualitatively code the written reflections and interviews using a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1988).

This research will contribute to a knowledge base about curriculum innovation that influences students' writing self-efficacy, increases knowledge about writing process, and students' abilities to integrate writing skills and strategies into other UNCC courses and future K-6 classrooms.

Budget Request for SOTL Grant
Year _____ 2017 _____

Joint Proposal?   __X__ Yes   _____ No

Title of Project   Preservice Teachers as Writers: Examining the Self-Efficacy, Writing Processes, and Pedagogical Transference of Preservice Teachers

Duration of Project   1 Year

Primary Investigator(s)   Brian Kissel and Erin Miller

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UNC Charlotte SOTL
Grants Previously Received   Pre-Service Teacher's Preparedness to Teach African American Boys: The Impact of an Urban
(please names of project,   Collaboration on the Development of Afro-Centered Cultural Knowledge in an Elementary
PIs, and dates)   Education Program. PI: Erin Miller, June 2014

Allocate operating budget to Department of   Reading and Elementary Education

		Year One
Account #	**Award**	**January to June**
Faculty Stipend	Transferred directly from Academic Affairs to Grantee on May 15	$7700 ($3850 for Kissel, 3850 for Miller)
911250	Graduate Student Salaries	$468.75
911300	Special Pay (Faculty on UNCC payroll other than Grantee)	
915000	Student Temporary Wages	
915900	Non-student Temporary Wages	
920000	Honorarium (Individual(s) not with UNCC)	
921150	Participant Stipends	$250
925000	Travel – Domestic	$2200
926000	Travel – Foreign	
928000	Communication and/or Printing	
930000	Supplies	
942000	Computing Equipment	
944000	Educational Equipment	
951000	Other Current Services	
	GRAND TOTAL	$ 10618.75

Attachments:

1.   Attach/provide a narrative that explains how the funds requested will be used.

2.   Has funding for the project been requested from other sources? ___ Yes   __X__No.
       If yes, list sources.

Budget Narrative

Faculty Stipends ($7700)

Summer stipends of $3850 for the Co-Principal Investigators, Brian Kissel and Erin Miller. This will provide the resources necessary to complete data analysis, prepare reports, plan presentations, and write a manuscript during Summer 2017. This is a one-year budget.

Graduate Study Salary ($468.75)

The budget includes a salary for a Graduate Student to contribute to the transcription of focus group interviews. A total request of $468.75 will allow for 25 hours at $18.75 per hour, consistent with doctoral student graduate assistant rates in the College of Education.

Participant Stipends subject incentives ($250)

This study will include a token incentive of $10 gift cards (e.g. Target or Amazon) given to students who complete survey and participate in focus group interviews. This is a standard amount of compensation in the field to thank participants for their time in completing the surveys and interviews. We anticipate 25 students will participate in this study for a total of $250 in gift cards.

Travel (Domestic) ($2200)

We are requesting $1100 for Dr. Kissel and $1100 for Dr. Miller to travel to St. Louis in 2018 to present their findings at the National Council of Teachers of English conference.

UNC CHARLOTTE
College of Education

Office of the Dean
9201 University City Blvd.,
Charlotte, NC 28223-0001 (704) 687-8722,
http://www.uncc.edu

October 25, 2016
Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Grants Committee
Center for Teaching and Learning
UNC Charlotte
9201 University City Boulevard
Charlotte, NC 28223

Dear SoTL Grant Selection Team,

I enthusiastically support the project designed by Brian Kissel and Erin Miller called, "Preservice Teachers as Writers: Examining the Self-Efficacy, Writing Processes, and Pedagogical Transference of Preservice Teachers." The focus on writing skills is a critical goal of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and the College of Education in particular. It is essential for teachers to become good writers, and even important for them to develop a metacognitive understanding of their writing processes and learned skills. This project will contribute to that end.

Both Dr. Kissel and Dr. Miller are outstanding teachers, and I have no doubt they will uphold their responsibilities of the grantees, including being excellent stewards of UNC Charlotte funds. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.
Sincerely,

Ellen McIntyre, Dean
College of Education

Project Narrative

Specific Aims

Elementary Education majors within the College of Education complete a series of methodology courses that prepare them to become teachers in schools. One of their required classes, *ELED 3226 Language Arts for the Elementary School Learner,* is a methods course that specifically prepares preservice teachers (also referred to as teacher education candidates) to teach writing to children in grades K-6 using a research based strategy called Writing Workshop (Graves, 1994; Ray, 2001). Surprisingly, an undergraduate methods course specifically focused on writing instruction through a Writing Workshop approach is a rarity in many Colleges of Education across the country (Norman & Spencer, 2005). This mirrors a nation-wide marginalization of a workshop approach to writing despite nearly forty years of research that illuminate the positive impact of Writing Workshop on academic achievement across subject areas (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). The University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC) is an exception to this nation-wide trend in that it specifically prepares undergraduate students to become better writers themselves as they learn to teach writing to K-6 students. We strive to use UNCC's pioneer model as an opportunity to conduct empirical research about the impact of a particular assignment within the course.

Within ELED 3226, students complete a personal writing assignment entitled *The Multigenre Life Story Project* (Kissel, Wood, & Kiser, 2008). This project is grounded in research that shows the importance of teachers learning how to teach writing by learning to write well themselves (Graves, 1983; McDonald, Buchanan, & Sterling, 2004; Morgan, 2010; Murray, 1999). To complete the project, students create a published product about a significant person, place, or event from their lives. Drawing on research that demonstrates the importance of choice

in writing (Ray, 2001) it is critical that students pick specific topics, purposes, and audiences that are meaningful and significant to them. Students engage in a Writing Workshop during class throughout the semester wherein they are taught to craft texts (through the planning, drafting, revision, editing, and publishing writing processes) and study genres (narrative, informational, persuasive, poetry) to help them write about their topic in multiple and different ways. They receive on-going feedback during Writing Workshop through a conferencing approach from the course instructor and peers. At the conclusion of the semester, students select their favorite pieces about their topic and share them with audiences—both inside and outside the classroom.

Over the years, students have chosen highly personal topics (i.e. the choice of giving a baby up for adoption, the births or deaths of loved ones, traumatic events in their lives, weddings, etc.). They write multiple pieces of writing centered on their chosen theme. For example, one student who took the course had recently experienced lost her mother to cancer. Her Multigenre Project focused on her mother and included a biographical sketch, a poem written in two voices - the author and her mothers' - that expressed their close relationship, a board game of their life experiences together, an informational report about the devastation of cancer on the lives of those who experience it, a persuasive essay about the bond between mothers and daughters, and a memoir that recalls her mother's last breath. It was a powerful book and, during the sharing experience with classmates, several peers broke down in tears. Several others called their mothers as soon as the class ended. Upon completion the student described her writing experience as the most significant event of her college experience. More important, she explained, "for the first time, I felt like I was taught how to write. And this is something I can bring to all my future classes and my own classroom."

This project supports the university's commitment of Communication Across the Curriculum (CAC). CAC's mission is to, "promote the idea that students who *write to learn and learn to write* think more critically and creatively, engage more deeply in their learning, and are better able to transfer what they have learned from course to course, and from context to context."

Specific Objectives to be Achieved

The central objective of this research project is to study how this specific classroom assignment that is focused on teaching undergraduates about the writing process can influence a) student self-efficacy related to writing, b) the transference of written communication knowledge to other courses, and c) student intentions to carry learning forward into future K-6 classrooms. This study will explore three key questions:

1) What effects does The Multigenre Project have on students' self-efficacy related to writing? Specifically, how do students' views of themselves as writers change from the beginning of the semester to the end of the semester as influenced by this project?

2) What do students learn about writing process by completing The Multigenre Project?

3) In what ways do students intend to carry their knowledge about writing gained from The Multigenre Project forward into their other courses at UNCC and into their future classrooms with K-6 students?

Rationale

The overarching goal of this project is to research the impact of the The Multigenre Project. The results of this research can inform the field of teacher education and K-6 writing instruction. From a college standpoint, writing achievement is essential for teacher education candidates in part because of new and high stakes licensure tests that assess candidates'

knowledge of writing content and pedagogy. Contextualized in a state that is struggling to climb

out of low percentiles in K-6 standardized test scores with only 38% of North Carolina fourth

graders scoring Proficient or better in Reading in 2015, an emphasis on writing skills is

paramount in North Carolina public schools (where most of our candidates will soon teach). It is

widely known that writing skills are strongly linked to reading proficiency (Stotsky, 1983). Our

hypothesis is that if teacher education candidates have a strong sense of self-efficacy related to

their own writing developed through explicit, high quality writing instruction, they will transfer

their knowledge into other curricular areas within their undergraduate program, bolstering their

achievement as undergraduates, *and* feel more confident in teaching writing to future students

(Graham, Harris, MacArthur, & Fink, 2001). If our hypothesis is correct, findings from this

research could be instrumental in course and program design in teacher education across the

nation.

Impact of Study on Undergraduate Teaching and Learning

The Reading and Elementary Education program where ELED 3226 is currently housed

is undergoing a major programmatic revision. Results of this study will help inform our

department about where it would be most beneficial to place ELED 3226 within our candidates'

programs of study. If they learn important, transferrable knowledge about writing, it may be

better to move ELED 3226 earlier in their education program before they are required to take

state licensure tests. In addition, the researchers intend to publish results of this study in

curriculum-based journals. In this way, this study has the potential to impact a much wider

educational community.

Literature Review

The way teachers see themselves as writers influences their classroom practice (Graham,

Harris, MacArthur, & Fink, 2001). Teachers who are confident in their own experience as writers can impact student learning—particularly student achievement in writing (Ross, Cousins, & Gaddalla, 1996). This view is based on social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) in which individuals are proactive and self-regulating rather than reactive. In the case of writing instruction, teachers' instructional practices are guided by their beliefs and capabilities; those who are confident in their capabilities as writers tend to be highly motivated and effective teachers of writing (Pajares, 2003).

Teachers as Writers

Teachers who write regularly build their self-efficacy as writers (Norman & Spencer, 2005). Researchers found there is great benefit to teachers writing personal histories and autobiographies because they serve as self-reflective evidence of their ideas, theories, and beliefs about teaching and learning (Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991; O'Brian, Stewart, & Moje, 1995). Likewise, teachers who become insiders to their writing processes, by writing themselves, become more knowledgeable about the practices they need to promote instructionally when teaching young writers (Colby & Stapleton, 2006; National Writing Project & Nagin, 2003; Stang & Street, 2011; Whyte et al., 2007). Our teacher education programs, particularly classes in Language Arts, need to include a focus on Teachers as Writers alongside the notion of Teachers as Writing Teachers.

The Multigenre Life Story Project

Multigenre writing came to prominence through the work of Tom Romano (1990; 1992; 1995; 2000; 2007). Romano's work envisioned the multigenre paper as a replacement for a traditional research paper. He explains, "A multigenre paper arises from research, experience, and imagination. It is not an uninterrupted, expository monolog nor a seamless narrative nor a

collection of poems. A multigenre paper is composed of many genres and subgenres, each piece self-contained, making a point of its own, yet connected by theme or topic and sometimes by language, images, and content. In addition to many genres, a multigenre paper may also contain many voices, not just the author's. The trick is to make such a paper hang together" (2000, x-xi).

Teachers have brought this idea of multigenre writing into various grade levels (Bailey & Carroll, 2010; Blasingame & Bushman, 2005; Danielson & Harrington, 2005; Gillespie, 2005; Hamblin, 2000) across various academic contexts (Allen & Swistak, 2004; Allison, 2005; Bowen, 1991; Cate, 2000) and within various mediums (Dziedzic, 2002), to address specific state standards (Davis, Lovell, Pambrun, Scanlan, & Handle, 1998).

In ELED 3226, the investigators re-envisioned the multigenre research paper as a personal writing project. Instead of writing a response to a piece of reading, students are asked to choose a personal topic and write about their theme using the multiple genres they study (Kissel, Stover, & Glover, 2014; Kissel, Wood, Kiser, 2008).

Methods

In Spring 2017 the investigators will recruit participants in ELED 3226 for the study. To prevent ethical concerns related to a teacher recruiting his/her own students as participants, Dr. Miller will recruit from Dr. Kissel's section of the course and vice versa. It is expected that a range of 20-24 preservice teachers will agree to participate in the study.

Those who agree to participate in the study will complete a pre-course survey focused on their self-efficacy as writers. Sample questions will focus on how they see themselves as writers, past experiences as writers, and their notions of writing process. At the end of the semester, students will complete a post-course survey which asks the same questions. The investigators will analyze those surveys to determine the effects of the project on their self-efficacy.

Participants will write one-page self analysis reflections that focus on the process they used to complete the Multigenre Project. Students will be asked to specifically address their planning, drafting, revision, editing, and publishing processes as they completed the project. This reflection is already a hallmark of the assignment. The investigators will code participants' responses to determine emerging themes.

In addition, Dr. Kissel and Dr. Miller will conduct a 30-minute focus group interviews with groups of 5-6 participants in each group. For example, if 20 students agree to participate in the study, Dr. Kissel and Dr. Miller will interview four focus groups using a semi-structured interview protocol. Questions will specifically address how students will carry forward the knowledge they gained from the project into other courses at UNCC and into their future K-6 classrooms.

Evaluation

To answer the research questions, we intend to gather and analyze data using quantitative and qualitative methods. For the survey data, we intend to examine the mean scores on the pre-course Likert scale survey and compare them with the mean scores of the post-course Likert scale survey to determine how students' self-efficacy changed (or didn't change) over the course of the semester. To address what students learned about their writing process, participants will write written reflections. Using a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), we will code written reflections and find emerging themes. Transcribed focus groups will be also be coded using a grounded theory approach. That is, each segment of data will be systematically compared with the data before it is lumped into constructed themes. Themes will be coded and collapsed until patterns begin to emerge and theories can be offered that are supported by

rigorous analysis. Table 1 is an overview of the correlation between research questions, data

collection and data analysis.

Research Question	Data Gathered to Answer Question	Data Analysis
1) What effects does this project have on students' self-efficacy	**Surveys:** • Pre-course self-efficacy survey • Post-course self-efficacy survey	Quantitative survey data analysis: Calculating mean scores on the pre-course survey and comparing them to mean scores on the post-course survey.
2) What do students learn about writing process by participating in this project?	**Written Reflections** • Student written one-page self reflections on their process	Create codes from reading written reflections and determine emerging themes.
3) In what ways do students intend to carry their knowledge about writing forward into their other courses at UNCC and into their future classrooms with K-6 students?	**Focus Groups** • 4-5 focus group interviews that address transference of knowledge into other courses and future classrooms.	Create codes from analyzing interview transcripts and using the codes to determine themes.

Table 1: overview of the correlation between research questions, data collection and data

analysis.

Knowledge Dissemination

In addition to the Department of Reading and Elementary Education, we will present

project results to the entire campus community at the February 2018 SoTL Showcase. We will

use the College of Education's weekly newsletter, *Connections*, to announce the findings of the

study. At the national level, we intend to prepare a proposal for the National Council of

Teachers of English Conference in November 2017. We will also prepare and submit a

manuscript of this work to *English Education*—a research journal focused on the teaching of

English Language Arts at the university level.

Human Subjects

     If funded, an IRB proposal will be submitted. Based on previous success gaining IRB

approval to study the impact of teaching practices (i.e., a 2015 and 2016 Chancellor's Diversity

Grant), we have confidence such a study would be approved.

Extramural Funding

     We are not currently seeking extramural funding for this project; however, we intend to

seek extramural funding in the future. The Walter S. Johnson Foundation provides grant funding

for studies focused on educators who reflect on their teaching and revise their practice

accordingly. Additionally, the National Writing Project has several Site Grant opportunities that

we will likely pursue. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) also offers grant

opportunities through the NCTE Research Foundation which supports projects related to the

teaching and learning of language, literacy, and culture.

Timeline

Date	Project Task
January 2017	• Identify participants for the study • Submit addendum information for a pre-approved IRB submission • Distribute permissions for the study
February 2017	• Collect pre-course survey data about students' self-efficacy.
May 2017	• Collect post-course survey data about students' self-efficacy • Collect written reflections • Conduct focus group interviews
Summer 2017	• Analyze data • Create presentation based on data • Write manuscript of research findings
January 2018	• Submit presentation for NCTE 2018
November 2018	• Present research findings

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Appendix

Perceived Writing Self-Efficacy Beliefs Rate Scale

Directions: On a scale from 0 (no chance) to 100 (completely certain), Please rate how sure you are that you can perform each of the writing skills described below by writing the appropriate number. Of course, there are no right or wrong answers, so do not spend too much time on any one statement. Thank you for your cooperation. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential, and you will not be identified by name.

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
cannot					moderately can do					completely
do at all										certain can do

1.	I can write a fluent paragraph.	
2.	I can write a fluent essay.	
3.	I can write a poem.	
4.	I can write a memoir	
5.	I can write an informational text.	
6.	I can write a persuasive text.	
7.	I can correctly spell all words in a piece of writing.	
8.	I can correctly punctuate a piece of writing.	
9.	I can write simple sentences with academic grammar.	
10.	I can use a wide range of vocabulary in my writing.	
11.	I can use synonyms instead of repeating the same words over and over again.	
12.	I can easily generate ideas to write about.	
13.	I can write a strong paragraph that has a good topic sentence or main idea.	
14.	I can write paragraphs with details that support the ideas in the topic sentences or main ideas.	
15.	I can write for authentic audiences.	
16.	I can write for purposes other than writing assignments in college.	
17.	I can write proper beginnings.	
18.	I can write proper endings.	
19.	I can revise my writing.	
20.	I can edit my writing.	
21.	I can write on an assigned topic without difficulty.	
22.	I can get ideas across in a clear manner.	
23.	I can write something that affects my intended audience.	
24.	I can get my ideas across in a clear manner by staying focused without getting off topic.	
25.	I can complete a writing task without difficulty by the due date.	

Self-Regulatory Learning Strategies for Writing Rate Scale

Directions: *On a scale from 0 (never) to 100 (always), please rate how sure you are that you can perform each of the writing skills described below by writing the appropriate number. Of course, there are no right or wrong answers to such questions, so do not spend too much time on any one statement. Thank you for your cooperation. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential, and you will not be identified by name.*

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
never	rarely/seldom			sometimes/occasionally			often/usually			always

1.	I brainstorm for ideas before I write	
2.	I use graphic organizers to organize my ideas.	
3.	I fee-write to get out my thoughts.	
4.	I create an outline or mind-map before I write.	
5.	I create a draft before writing the final product.	
6.	I revise my paper if I'm not content with it.	
7.	I proofread my work.	
8.	I ask my peers to edit my writing.	
9.	I ask tutors to evaluate my writing and give suggested revisions.	
10.	I reread my work several times to find errors in my writing.	

Focus Group Interview Protocol

Overall Experiences with the Project

1. What were your overall experiences creating your Multigenre Life Story Project?

2. What did you learn about yourself by writing this project?

Writing Process

3. Describe your brainstorming process.

4. Describe your planning process.

5. Describe your drafting process.

6. Describe your revision process.

7. Describe your editing process.

8. Describe your publishing process.

Connections to other Undergraduate Courses

9. What did you learn as a writer in this class that you will carry forward into other classes?

10. Can you give a specific example of something you learned in this class that you carried forward into other classes?

Connections to Future Teaching Environment

11. What are some specific things you learned through this project that you will carry into your future classroom?

Other Insights

12. Are there any other insights you would like to share with me about this project?