

RESOURCES AND RELATIONSHIPS: THE EFFECTS OF UNIVERSITY
RESOURCES ON THE WRITING SKILLS OF
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

by

Rebecca F. Hughes

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates how two Texas universities affect local high school students' writing skills. The research covers published best practices within the field of writing, the effects of high-stakes testing on composition instruction, and the complex relationships between universities and local school districts. Survey and interview responses from university faculty, public librarians, and high school teachers elucidate the role of local universities in secondary education. Ultimately, the author emphasizes the need for trust between universities and school districts in order to combat the negative effects of high-stakes standardized testing.

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Approved:

[Chairman, Thesis Committee] [Date]

[Member, Thesis Committee] [Date]

[Department Head/Direct Supervisor] [Date]

[Dean, Academic College] [Date]

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INTRODUCTION

Perhaps now more than ever before, politics infringe upon the public classroom. Although the government always has played a significant role in the education of its youth, today's preoccupation with repairing a supposedly broken educational system too often pits key players like educators, parents, and students against one another. Often, it seems that educational reforms, research, and extant data about American schools and students only serve to assign blame and transform our school system into a battleground. In such a climate, constructively addressing issues and seeking solutions become a challenge.

One primary area of concern within schools today centers around writing. Our world demands competent writers, and yet according to the vast pool of data, American students continually fall short of expectations. The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) indicates that less than one-third of all middle and high school writers compose proficiently (1); educators within English/language arts, composition, and other related fields frequently discuss this dilemma in professional literature; and government leaders habitually tackle the problem with various legislation. In 2002, legislators rolled out the *No Child Left Behind Act* and began legislating the *Common Core State Standards* in 2009 in an attempt to rectify students' academic shortcomings, but all too often the

resulting instruction and outcomes clash with agreed-upon best practices from educators within the field of writing. Students often graduate with inadequate skills, and student texts read as inauthentic and formulaic, which does not bode well as students enter higher education or the workforce. Too often, these students enter college or begin careers ill-equipped to meet the demands they face.

Instead of looking into the past to allocate culpability about who failed to teach these individuals the necessary skills, we must seek solutions; when we look backward (often blaming past teachers), we find fault, but when we look forward, we find solutions. The local college or university represents a venue ripe with potential for finding solutions to this writing predicament. While various statistics exist to demonstrate how students perform in writing, less data exists to explore the impact of external resources on student achievement, and information that connects student achievement to university resources is basically nonexistent.

Do the resources provided by local universities hold the potential to benefit high school students' writing? To answer this question, this study examines the effect that two public universities in a relatively rural part of Texas have on their surrounding communities. The information presented here stems from standardized testing data published by the Texas Education Agency (TEA); universities' and cities' websites; and interviews and electronic survey responses from twenty-five teachers at six public high schools in six cities, six public library librarians, and three university faculty members at two universities. The survey and interview questions address the types of resources

available to local teachers and local students and perceptions about whether these resources actually benefit high school student writers.

Numerical data from the TEA provides minimal insight, except that it indicates that these two “college towns” have higher percentages of high school and college graduates. The increased number of graduates may be due simply to the demographics of the selected cities, but I believe the presence of the universities contributes to the city’s identity to such an extent that their presence accounts for at least part of the higher percentage of diplomas and degrees. The teachers interviewed and surveyed typically lack knowledge about available university resources, but they overwhelmingly believe university resources *could* greatly benefit their students. Ultimately, the information from this research reveals the intricate relationships that exist between local universities and their surrounding communities. These two universities are inextricably linked to the surrounding cities, although several factors limit their influence.

The interviews consistently focus on the state’s standardized test, the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)—not because any of the interview questions broached the topic of high-stakes testing, but because all the individuals with whom I spoke focus so much of their attention on testing. The testing overwhelms teachers with demands, and it results in inauthentic student writing. However, all hope is not lost: universities can (and do) make a difference for local high school students. The primary points of impact include programming such as tutoring programs, professional development, guest speakers, and community engagement. The success of these resources, however, depends on the relationships between the universities and local

school districts. The university faculty with whom I spoke all echo this idea with comments about the importance of trust. With trust and effective relationships, along with local districts' ability and the willingness to form relationships, universities can make a positive difference on local high school education.

CHAPTER I

CONTEXT: THE CURRENT STATE OF WRITING

In order to be competitive, students at every level must meet with the demands of twenty-first-century writing. Being college- or career-ready requires strong composition skills. These requisite skills, which impact high school grade point averages, scores on college entrance exams, and success in college admissions, are invaluable in postsecondary education. Globally, prospective and current employees likewise must meet writing demands in the workforce in order to secure and maintain a job, because, while employment opportunities for individuals with poor writing skills certainly exist, generally speaking, writing is an indispensable skill in the workforce, especially for job seekers who desire a salaried position. As many as “two-thirds of salaried employees in large American companies have some writing responsibility” (*Writing* 3), and writing is a job responsibility in most sectors, from finance to real estate, from construction to manufacturing, and beyond (7); employees need to be proficient communicators in order to compose the requisite emails, instructions, reports, and other documents that most jobs in the United States and across the globe require. Adequate composition skills also factor into promotions, perhaps because good writers are cost-effective for companies who could potentially lose billions of dollars (3) due to employees’ lack of skills. As the National Committee on Writing explains, “Writing today is not a frill for the few, but an

essential skill for the many” (*The Neglected “R”* 11); employees in every sector and at every level should possess strong composition skills.

Stakeholders, such as legislators, corporate leaders, and other community members, recognize this need, as is evidenced by the myriad educational reforms that have occurred at the statewide and nationwide levels over the past few decades. One of the most notable reforms occurred in 2001 when then President George W. Bush pushed forward the *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* educational plan, which was intended to strengthen American schools and ensure that all American students achieve success (*The No Child Left Behind*). The “four pillars” of the *NCLB*, which went into effect in 2002, include “Stronger Accountability for Results,” “More Freedom for States and Communities,” “Proven Education Methods,” and “More Choices for Parents” (“Four Pillars”). While the *NCLB* both directly and indirectly impacts writing instruction across the country with a call for improved standards, highly qualified teachers, and research-based methods, writing is not a key component of the Act; instead the educational plan places “a stronger emphasis on reading” (*Executive Summary*). The passing of the *NCLB*, which was the result of bipartisan legislative efforts, has received praise for its focus on increased accountability and research-based methodology, but also criticism for its failures to meet its promises and for the (arguably excessive) emphasis it places on testing. The *NCLB* leaves bipartisan constituents advocating for further reform.

In 2009, Americans witnessed another dramatic change in educational reform, as education chiefs and state governors from 48 states across the nation collaborated to create the *Common Core State Standards (CCSS)*, “a set of clear college- and career-

ready standards for kindergarten through 12th grade” (*Common Core*) Education leaders and politicians specifically designed the *CCSS* to address concerns in English/language arts and math instruction. In many ways, the *CCSS* serves as a means of revamping the *NCLB* after the 2002 reform plan failed to fulfill its promises. “The development of the *Common Core Standards (CCSS, 2010)* has made writing a central part of the school reform movement” (Graham, et al. 1), a movement that seeks “a broad and potentially systematic overhaul in how writing is taught and used in most classrooms and schools” (2). Like the *NCLB* that preceded it, the *CCSS* receives praise, as well as criticism. Critics argue that the standards and benchmarks of the *CCSS* “lack precision and accuracy,” while many stakeholders simply feel exasperated at the continuing legislative changes to local classrooms’ academic instruction.

Not all states have chosen to adhere to the new standards set forth as part of the *CCSS*; states that have not adopted the *CCSS* include Alaska, Indiana, Nebraska, Minnesota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia, as well as the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico (*Common Core*). The state of Texas has rejected the *CCSS* entirely from the inception of the reform, choosing instead to continue utilizing its own state standards, called the *Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)* which cover a variety of academic subjects, including “English Language Arts and Reading” and “English Language Arts Electives” (“Texas Essential Knowledge”). Like the *CCSS*, the *TEKS* emphasize the importance of strong compositional skills, and the Texas Education Agency (TEA) continually adapts its standards and assessments to challenge students in their skills.

The TEA oversees 1,039 independent school districts (ISDs) statewide and has implemented numerous educational reforms throughout its history (“An Overview”), including the “sweeping reforms” of the 1984 House Bill 72 and Senate Bill 1 in 1995. The bills passed in the Texas State Senate even served as the “model” for the *NCLB*. According to the TEA, “Texans have long been concerned about the education of their children,” and the state seeks to hold educators and students to “ever-increasing accountability standards through more rigorous curriculum and graduation requirements, and implantation of a new, tougher statewide assessment test.” Whether the implementation of standards and assessments is successful or not, clearly policymakers and leaders from both the state of Texas and the United States are cognizant of the need for such standards and testing in order to produce the type of writers that today’s world demands.

As teachers nationwide labor to meet the external demands of the current “contradicting and shifting” sociopolitical environment (“Professional Knowledge”), they nevertheless maintain relatively steadfast ideals and widely agreed upon best practices about writing. Foremost among these is that, “Everyone has the capacity to write; writing can be taught; and teachers can help students become better writers” (“Professional Knowledge”). This type of mentality about writers’ potential ensures that students achieve the kind of success necessary in the twenty-first century. Further, according to best practices in teaching, instructors and students must understand that writing stems from a variety of purposes, is social in nature, is a process (though not necessarily a formulaic one) and utilizes different technologies; and while writing is often conceived of

as a product, effective instructors know that it is also a valuable “tool” (Graham, et al. 3). Good writing occurs as the result of frequent practice (8), as well as with a Vygotskyian-type scaffolding in which teachers provide just the right amount of support (10) to improve students’ skills. Also, in alignment with the idea of the pithy adage, “You get what you expect,” setting high expectations yields increased student growth. Effective teachers adhere to these ideas and implement these best practices in instruction, but just as students require support from their teachers, so teachers also need support. The Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), a professional organization dedicated to teaching composition, echoes many ideas similar to other those of other organizations in its position statement but further adds that teachers “need regular professional development opportunities” (“Writing Assessment”). Teaching writing—like the actual process of writing—is challenging.

In classrooms across the nation, ideals, best practices, standards, and assessments collide. Data from these classrooms reveal a wealth of information about the efforts made by teachers and students, yet comparing schools across the nation based on statewide testing provides heterogeneous results since different states utilize different assessments for their students. With this in mind, the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) provides what they call a “report card” that demonstrates 8th and 12 grade students’ academic performance, based on a NAEP-administered assessment. As a means of demonstrating the efforts of teachers across the nation, The National Study of Writing Instruction (NSWI) recently has provided reports about their findings, based on

interviews with teachers. Combined, the information provided by the NAEP and the NSWI offer a glimpse of national trends in secondary writing instruction.

The Department of Education's National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) boasts that it is "the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America's students know and can do in various subject areas" ("National Assessment"); it serves as a "common yardstick" for measuring the nation's academic progress. The NAEP has been administering assessments and reporting its findings since 1969. The latest available assessment report, "The Nation's Report Card," for Writing was published in 2012 (National Center for Education Statistics). In the 2011 "Report Card," the NAEP publishes its findings after administering an assessment consisting of two thirty-minute composition tasks to 24,100 8th grade students and 28,100 high school seniors (1); the samples were scored holistically (6). Of the tested high school seniors, only 27% score "proficient" or "advanced," while an alarming 52% score "basic" and 21% score "below basic" (1). Demographic information among test-takers reveals that the highest-scoring students identify themselves as "white," "Asian," or "2 or more races" (2), rather than other racial groups. Females score higher overall, and so do suburban students, whose scores surpass those of their peers in cities or rural environments. Students with computers at home score higher (38) and students whose parents are college-educated score higher. In addition to race, gender, and socioeconomic factors, two other factors prove significant: students who claim to enjoy writing score higher (35) than their peers, and students who edit their drafts with a computer score

higher (34) than those who do not. This NAEP-provided data reveals a great deal about students' writing ability, but it fails to indicate what takes place in terms of instruction.

However, the National Study of Writing Instruction (NSWI), a four-year project based out of the University of Albany and led by Arthur Applebee and Judith Langer, provides insight into writing instruction at the secondary level. The NSWI research findings come from surveys, interviews, observations and preexisting data. More limited in span than the efforts undertaken by the NAEP, the NSWI includes approximately 2,000 participants (not including participants from preexisting data), from five states: California, Kentucky, Michigan, New York, and Texas. The study follows up on some of Applebee's previous research from the late 1970s and early 1980s in which he investigated writing instruction in secondary classrooms.

The NSWI findings indicate that instruction in the classroom has evolved in some respects but that in most ways it has remained "much the same" (24) over the past few decades. Applebee and Langer report that secondary teachers today include more technology (23) than they did a past few decades ago, but that technology in the classroom has progressed at a disproportionately low rate compared to the rapid pace of technological advancement. In fact, the implementation of technology in English classrooms frequently only includes the use of word processing. Writing across the curriculum (WAC) also occurs more frequently in secondary schools now than in the late 1970s and early 1980s. WAC aligns with the best-practice concepts that writing is a valuable tool and that it stems from a variety of purposes. While students typically write more in their English classes than in their non-English classes, collectively, "they write

more for their other subjects combined than they do for English” (15). The NSWI research findings also indicate that teachers in the twenty-first century devote more class time to peer response and editing (17) and provide more non-graded responses to students, which according to research-based methods and best practices, benefits students. The research findings also reveal an increase in “process-oriented writing instruction,” that “reflects a much more sophisticated understanding of writing instruction than was evident in 1979-80” (21).

However, that “more sophisticated understanding” yields little change in practical application: “If notions of good instruction have changed, for a variety of reasons the typical classroom does not provide much of it” (24). Writing instructors understand that students need frequent practice writing, and today’s students write more than students in the past did. Unfortunately time spent writing has increased only marginally: the “overall amount of time devoted to writing remains distressingly low” (16). More specifically, students engage in very little “extended writing” (15) and often complete “pages of exercise and copying” (24) instead of composing their own texts “of even a paragraph in length.” Perhaps time constraints account for this lack of writing practice since in order to provide adequate feedback (another instructional best practice) on student work, teachers must limit the number of writing assignments they give to students. However, various other “competing priorities” (21) vie for teachers’ time.

Among these “competing priorities,” preparation for high-stakes exams ranks at the top of “the list” (17). The NSWI findings acknowledge the substantial influence that high-stakes testing and other legislative requirements have in the classroom and concedes

that the advent of the *NCLB* and other similar legislation can bring benefits—such as the implementation of more research-based strategies (24). However, these findings also conclude that, “Unfortunately, the importance placed on these exams does not augur well for the teaching of writing” (17). As teachers scramble to prepare their students for the demands of high-stakes testing every year, they inevitably engage in “test prep” (18). As they align their teaching materials and expectations with those presented as part of standardized tests, students’ frequently develops a definite “tendency toward formulaic writing” (25), a problem that has been noted, not just by the NSWI, but by many researchers and educators in the field of writing instruction.

These reports from the national level indicate that the majority of American students are unprepared for the academic rigors of the university and the quotidian demands of the workforce and that they lack the skillset necessary to produce authentic texts because they have been inculcated by an educational system that imposes a method of formulaic writing. Furthermore, despite the best efforts of educators and legislators alike, many children are in fact being left behind in terms of writing—specifically, male students, minority students, and financially disadvantaged students (*The Nation’s Report* 2). Meanwhile, teachers frequently fail to adhere to the best practices and professional standards of their trade because of time constraints and the restrictions caused by high-stakes testing. These reports read like a foreboding omen about the future in the United States. The numerical data parallels the concerns of professionals within the field of writing.

The conversation surrounding American students' writing deficiencies is nothing new. During a 2007 interview, Kenneth Bruffee, Brooklyn College professor emeritus who has been hailed as the "father of peer-tutoring" (Eodice, Bruffee 40), debunks the idea that America's problem is some sort of new epidemic and argues that, due to "many historical, social, ethnic, racial, and economic reasons," (34) the quality of college writing began to decline around the 1950s, prior even to the Open Admissions era ¹that began in the 1960s and 1970s (36). Yet, academic discourse about these shortcomings predates the 1950s. Articles such as of 1896 "The Growing Illiteracy of American Boys," (qtd. in Hitchings) by editor E.L. Godkin's reference young Americans' writing deficiencies. Godkin's Harvard study about the underpreparedness at the university level demonstrates how this writing problem has plagued educators for a very long time. This longtime problem seeps into other academic areas, as well; as Bruffee explains, other fields of study are "handicapped by the inability of 80% of American college graduates to write effectively at the college level" (40). Students' lack of proficiency is troubling, and it affects various other academic sectors and the workforce as well.

Stakeholders in education frequently engage in a sort of blame game in which everyone seeks for the source of this problem: Why are American students not able to compose text more proficiently, and whose fault is it? All too often the burden of these questions rests on the shoulders of teachers, who tolerate an unjust amount of criticism

¹ The Open Admissions era describes a time period when two- and four-year colleges and universities modified their entrance requirements and opened their doors to more students, essentially allowing anyone with a high school diploma or GED to enroll (Crain, "Open Admissions"). By eliminating previous academic requirements (such as certain entrance exams), a more diverse group of students—specifically, more minority and disadvantaged students—entered college. The result was an influx of often underprepared students, for whom universities and colleges frequently supplied remediation.

from students to legislators—most of whom have no teaching experience—, but as Bloomsburg professor Cassandra Sacher points out, “it is important to figure out how to *address*” these issues, “rather than simply assigning culpability” (49). Sacher, who specializes in developmental instruction, suggests that the answer lies in the university—in “designing and implementing effective developmental writing programs; knowing the needs of the student populations . . . and using effective teaching strategies.” For professors like Sacher, the answer indeed lies in the university, because that is where she and other professors encounter and combat the “writing crisis” (56), but perhaps non-university professionals also need to look to the university for ways to remedy the crisis.

It may sound counterintuitive to assert that universities could make a difference in the academic abilities of students who have not graduated high school yet and who are too young university admittance, but universities—where educators lament the underpreparedness of student writers and struggle to help those students improve—possess resources that have the potential to benefit students who are not yet college-age. However, while there is ample data about how students are performing academically and research about what types of classroom instruction benefit writing, there is less information about the impact of external resources on student achievement in writing. Specifically, there is virtually no information that links student achievement to the resources provided by a local university. This research study seeks to do just that—to determine if there is a link between the local university and student achievement in adjacent communities. More specifically, this study aims to determine if the local university is able to benefit the writing skills of local ninth- through twelfth- grade

students in those communities. The breadth of this study encompasses a region of Texas² that is mostly comprised of small towns and rural areas—although two of its cities have populations over 175,000.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) reports that the state of Texas houses 146 separate institutions of higher education: thirty-seven public universities, thirty-eight private universities, over fifty colleges with multiple campuses, eleven health-related institutions, four technical college systems, two chiropractic schools, and three state colleges. (Note that the THECB only counts institutions with multiple locations or branches once in their tally of 146.) The region selected for this study, however, only contains two public universities and one private university, as well as a handful of community college campuses and health-related institutions. While these smaller public institutions of higher education and the private university undoubtedly provide benefits to local high school students, this study specifically focuses on the region's two public universities.

Two types of data help to ascertain whether the resources from these two local universities in any way improve the writing skills of local high students: first, quantitative data in the form of TEA-provided standardized testing data and second, the qualitative data that comes from talking with educators who are familiar with local resources and students. The quantitative standardized testing data is readily available, as the TEA publishes it on their website in the form of a report for every school in every ISD in the

² In order to provide confidentiality to study participants, no identifying information is provided. All names of participants have been changed.

state; the TEA publishes these publicly available reports as part of the TEA's Texas Performance Reporting System on the TEA website. In addition to the test scores from state standardized tests, as well as the SAT and ACT tests, these reports include various demographic information about the students, information about school and class sizes, graduation rates, and a wealth of additional information helpful for assessing a school's overall performance and characteristics.

Of course, numbers on reports only reveal so much, so this study also includes survey and interview responses from various educators. I have interviewed faculty from both of the region's public universities about the types of writing resources provided to local teachers and high school students; these interview responses provide insight about who utilizes available resources, as well as attitudes about the resources. The university websites provide additional useful information about the type of programming and tools available to local public school teachers and students. I also have interviewed librarians from public libraries in the towns selected for the study. Libraries provide invaluable literacy resources for community members, but libraries also frequently serve as liaisons between schools and universities and community members. Again, websites provide supplemental information, as the libraries' webpages provide information about programming and tools, such as online databases, electronic test prep programs, and available materials. High school English teachers offer perhaps the most fundamental information for this research study, because only they can answer pivotal answers about whether or not university resources are actually disseminated throughout the schools and if teachers and students actually take advantage of the resources.

UNIVERSITY DATA

University A is a mid-size regional public university that serves just under 10,000 students and currently offers about sixty undergraduate degrees, forty masters' degrees, and one doctoral degree. It has a teacher education program, as well as various student services that include academic tutoring and first-year programs. University A sits in a suburban setting with a relatively small geographical area; for the purposes of this study, we will call it City A. The majority of the city's residents are white, although about 15% are Hispanic, and about 5% are African-American/black, Asian, or 1% American Indian ("Fast Facts"). The median household annual income is in the low \$40,000s. Approximately 90% of City A's inhabitants are high school graduates, and over 40% have attained at least a bachelors' level education.

University B is a large public university that serves over 36,000 students and offers 150 undergraduate degree, 100 masters' degrees, and fifty doctoral degrees. Like University A, University B has a teacher education program, as well as various student services that include academic tutoring and first-year programs. University B, though, sits in a much larger urban setting that covers a much larger geographic area; we will call this city City B. Greater ethnic diversity exists in this city; approximately 56 % of the city's residents are white, 32% Hispanic, 9% African-American/black, 2% Asian, and under 1% American Indian/Alaska Native ("Fast Facts"). The median household income is in the mid-\$40,000s annually. Close to a quarter of the city's population speaks a language other than English in the home. Approximately 85% of inhabitants in the town are high school graduates, and close to 30% have attained at least a bachelors' level education.

HIGH SCHOOL DATA

As part of my query as to whether the resources from University A and University B impact student writing, I have included six high schools, from five separate ISDs, in this study. These schools represent the communities directly attached to the two public universities, as well as communities without universities in the same geographic region. The first ISD, which will be called District A, houses two high schools. School A1 is located inside the city limits of City A and serves students who live in the city limits, as well as some who live outside the City A city limits. According to the 2015-16 TEA's Texas Performance Reporting System, there approximately 1,150 students in the school. The average English/language arts class size is slightly larger than the 17.1-student average Texas class size. School A1 is predominantly white, with close to 80% of its students identified as white, 18.6% as Hispanic, and all other students identified as African-America/black, American Indian, Asian, Pacific Islander, or two or more races.

The 2015-16 Texas Performance Reporting System also provides data about students' academic performance, based on several assessments and information from the school. School A1 has an impressive 0% dropout rate, and the TEA deems that School A1 has "met standard," based on its statewide standardized testing, the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness, or the STAAR. The STAAR annually assesses reading and math in grades three through eight, writing at grades four and seven, science at grades five and eight, and social studies at grade eight, and the high school courses English I, English II, Algebra I, biology, and U.S. history through end-of-course (EOC). The English I and II tests assess reading and expository and persuasive writing skills, and

it is these two STAAR tests that provide pertinent data for this purposes of this study. School A1 surpasses the state average for students who met standard in 2015-16: 67% of English I students and 75% of English II students met standard, compared with the respective 65% and 67% of students statewide who met standard. Likewise, School A1 students surpassed other students in the state in terms of being college-ready, which the TEA defines as “graduates that meet or exceed the college-ready criteria on the TAKS [which preceded the STAAR] exit-level test, the SAT test, or the ACT test” (*Glossary 7*): about half of School A1 students are considered by the TEA to be college-ready, compared to the state average of 42%. Overall, white students at School A1 have higher scores than African-American/black and Hispanic students, and scores are also lower for economically disadvantaged students and English Language Learners (ELL). Both of these observations are on par with NAEP findings about ethnic and socioeconomic impact on achievement.

District A also has a second high school, School A2, which is located at the edge a neighboring city. Most students who attend this school either live in the sparsely populated area between the two cities or at the edge of the neighboring city. The population and land area of this neighboring city are much higher than those of University A. Approximately 60% of the city’s residents are white, close to 30% Hispanic, 7% African-American/black, 3% Asian, and under 1% American Indian/Alaska Native (“Fast Facts”). Close to a quarter of the city speaks a language other than English in the home. The median household income is in the mid-to-high-\$40,000s. 83% have graduated high school, and about 29% hold at least a bachelor’s degree.

According to the 2015-16 TEA's Texas Performance Reporting System, there are approximately 1,600 students in School A2. The average English/language arts class size is comprised of nearly twenty students per class, making it slightly larger than the average size throughout the state. Like School A1, School A2 is predominantly white, with over 70% of students identified as white, about 3% as African-American/black, close to a quarter Hispanic, with the remaining identifying as American Indian, Asian, 0.1% Pacific Islander, or two or more races. School A2 has also "met standard" on the STAAR exams, and 75% of English I students and 77% of English II have satisfactory scores on the English sections. Likewise, School A1 students also surpassed other students in the state in terms of being college-ready: the TEA considers 54% of its most recent graduates to be college-ready. White students at School A2 have marginally higher scores than African-American/black and Hispanic students. Economically disadvantaged students also have lower scores.

School B, District B's only high school, sits partially in City B, the same city as University B, but it also extends past City B's city limits, into a rural area that is not served by any surrounding ISDs. Agriculture predominates in this area. School B is small, with just over 300 students. The average ELA class size at just under fourteen students, making it smaller than the state average, and the dropout rate is smaller too, at just 0.6%. About half the school population is Hispanic, 43% of students are white, and 5% are African-American/black. Nearly 70% of School B is considered economically disadvantaged, and over 10% of the students receive special education services. The number of college-ready graduates is significantly lower too, at just under 20%, but

despite this low college-ready rating and high percentage of economically disadvantaged students, School B has some of the highest STAAR scores. 76% of English I students and 78% of English II students met standard. Low ACT and SAT scores help account for the apparent discrepancy between the low college-readiness percentage and the high success on the STAAR test.

District C's only high school, School C, also serves part of City B, but instead of a rural area, it also serves a small, affluent suburb, where the median income is about \$75,000. Approximately 62% of the population identifies themselves as white, 31% Hispanic, 5% black. About 87% of this suburb population has graduated high school, and an estimated 33% of adults have obtained a bachelor's degree or higher. School C is the largest of the high schools in this study, with nearly 2,500 students. Its English/language arts class size is also the largest, at an average of 22.6 students per class. The dropout rate is a 0.1%, and the college-ready rating is 53%. Although the students identified as white is at 52.4%, the school has a fairly diverse population, with 37% of its students identifying themselves as Hispanic, over 4% as African-American/black, over 3% as Asian, American Indian, or Pacific Islander, and over 4% as two or more races. While the English I and English II scores of 78% and 81% are—along with School B—some of the highest, the school's other EOC subject tests scores are even higher; English/language arts is the school's lowest achieving area.

District D's only high school, School D, is not directly adjacent to University A or University B; in fact, it is close to a hundred miles away from University A and even farther from University B. The city served by School D has a population of just over

8,000 and covers just about five square miles. Sixty-two% identify of the city's residents themselves white, 34% as Hispanic, with all others identifying with another race; close to 30% of the residents speak a language other than English in the home. The median household income is in the mid \$40,000s. Seventy-nine% of adults have graduated high school, and close 20% have at least a bachelor's degree. School D has the advantage of having a local community college branch. With a population of just under 500, this rural high school has small class sizes and only a 0.2% dropout rate, along with the smallest average English/language arts class size out of the schools in this study. Its college-readiness rating is 35%, and its ethnic makeup is unique in that it is almost divided into half by students who identify as either white or Hispanic. Close to 40% of the school is economically disadvantaged, and 5% of its population is classified as ELL. School D's English I score is 62, and its English II score is 65, making this the second lowest-achieving school in terms of STAAR testing in this study.

School E is also not directly adjacent to either of the region's universities, but it is within commuting distance of University A and has a local community college branch. The population of the city is about 15,000 and is spread over approximately six square miles. Agriculture also predominates this area. Around a quarter of the town's inhabitants are white, while over 70% identifies as Hispanic, with all other residents identifying themselves as African-American/black, American Indian, Asian, or two or more races. About half of the town's population speaks a language other than English. Around 70% are high school graduates, and about 15% have obtained a bachelor's or higher-level degree. The median household income is in the low \$40,000s. School E, with

approximately 1,100 students and English/language arts class sizes of about 20, its dropout rate is 0.4%, and its college-readiness percentage is 27%. School E has the largest non-white population of all six of the high schools in this study, with over 80% of its students identified as Hispanic, and only about 15% as white. School E also has the largest percentage (75%) of economically disadvantaged students, which is also higher than the state average. Only half of its English I and English II EOC test takers achieved satisfactory scores, making it the lowest achieving school in this study.

CHAPTER II

ANSWERS FROM EDUCATORS: INFORMATION FROM THE QUALITATIVE DATA

While gathering quantitative numerical data simply requires extracting information from websites and TEA reports, collecting qualitative data from educators presents a greater challenge, especially since educators already face an overwhelming set of demands. Additionally, many of these individuals reluctantly communicate this sort of information with someone they do not know for the purpose of a research study for which there is no direct impact. Nevertheless, many of the educators and librarians I contacted responded to my request for participation in this particular study.

Originally, I hoped to conduct interviews with at least two participants each from University A and University B and at least one librarian from each of the public libraries in the selected cities, and my goal was to receive interview and survey feedback from a minimum of one-third of the English teachers from each of the selected schools. Ultimately, after contacting several faculty and staff members from University A, two faculty members agreed to participate and completed the interviews. After making multiple contacts to numerous faculty and staff members via phone calls and emails, only one University B employee completed an interview. Undoubtedly, librarians regularly receive sundry miscellaneous requests from patrons, so this request elicited quick consent from all but one of the librarians I contacted. Out of the fifty-four English teachers from

the selected six participating schools, twenty-five participated in interviews and surveys. While an approximate 46% participation rate from the selected six schools surpasses my original goal of one-third of all English teachers, two additional ISDs declined to participate. The six schools from these two school districts would have represented a rural district without a local university, as well as all the schools fully within the boundaries of City B's city limits. The principal of the rural school district that declined cited increased pressures on English teachers as a reason for rejecting the request for research participation. The school district within City B declined to participate because this research study does not offer a direct advantage to their schools. Presumably, students and faculty at University B perform an exorbitant amount of research, and therefore the school district likely receives a bombardment of research requests.

Each university representative answers the questions in a similar manner by listing a few resources with which they are familiar, acknowledging that their respective universities could—perhaps *should*—provide more to local teachers and students, discussing the ways in which the STAAR test impacts writing instruction, and discussing their own goals and desires to implement increased and improved resources for area educators and students. The participating teachers indicate their lack of familiarity with the resources provided by local universities but also recognize the potential benefits that additional resources could bring. Because of the diversity of the populations the libraries serve, the librarians offer a range of information. All the educators, from those who declined to participate to those who openly share their sentiments about what takes place in today's classrooms, reveal a genuine desire for students to hone their skills and

succeed in their educational efforts. Like the NAEP data and the longstanding scholarly discourse about writing, the responses from these surveys and interviews indicate the need for improvement.

UNIVERSITY PARTICIPANT RESPONSES

Professor Barber represents University A in this study. As a member of the education department, she works to improve relationships between University A and local school districts. With a strong educational background in writing, Barber claims writing as “a passion,” and her enthusiastic conversation gives credence to this claim. Upon being asked about the type of resources offered by University A, Barber enumerates a variety of events and tools for teachers and students. These include teacher education programs for University A students who want to obtain licensure, continuing professional education programs (cpe) for practicing teachers, a distinguished lecture series for community members, library resources, and a summer “camp” for both pre-service and practicing teachers. Barber describes University A’s offerings as “not consistent” and “scattered all over” the university’s physical locale and website, but she explains that the seemingly inconsistent nature of these resources exists, not because of a failure on the part of the university, but because its faculty conduct research and then tailor resources to the specific needs of local educators and students. So, the same cpe course may not be offered more than once or with any regularity because area teachers’ needs change. In addition to the careful research that determines the type and frequency of programming and available tools, “professional networking” plays a crucial role in the

type of services University A offers local teachers and students. Barber explains that “professional networking” frequently entails a request for help that alerts university faculty to a need that they can address. Sometimes programming and resource development occurs simply because “a teacher friend calls and asks for help.” As *the* local university in the area, relationships with local educators and other educational entities are paramount for University A.

Based on what Barber shares, some of University A’s resources reflect collaborative efforts between the university and other entities. Specifically, University A collaborates with the local educational service center (ESC) to provide programming to benefit teachers and students. Under the management of the TEA, twenty ESCs exist in order to take “a unified approach to improve public education across the state in alignment with individual education service center strategic plans regionally designed to meet the unique needs of the school districts and charter schools within the region” (“Education Service Centers”). The “ESC’s” main focus is student, school district, and charter school performance, both academically and financially.” Partnering with the local ESC benefits a university because the administration and teachers from local ISDs know and trust the ESCs more so than they typically trust individuals at the local university. Barber praises the collaborative efforts made by the region’s ESC, the university, and area schools. The summer “camp” she describes serves as a prime example of the type of partnership that exists between the region’s ESC and University A. During that “camp,” approximately 200 educators attended the sessions that focused on literacy. However, Barber acknowledges that many teachers do not participate in these and similar events—

or take advantage of other available resources from University A—because perhaps they simply “don’t know what’s available.”

Despite less than desirable participation rates, Barber speaks of hope for the future partnerships between University A and local school districts. She discusses the possibility of honing the “common vernacular” so that secondary teachers and university professors both employ the same language during instruction and of a vision of co-teaching in which secondary teachers would be able to have the opportunity to assist in teaching at the university level and university instructors would be able to assist in teaching at the high school level, as a means of vertically aligning the curriculum at the various levels. She explains that, “We all have the same goals. We just need to align our mission to support each other in those goals.” She also recognizes that success for college and university students demands collaboration between the secondary and high school levels, “in order to ensure that secondary teachers are preparing students for the type of writing required at the university level and that the university is doing their part to ensure that K-12 teachers and students are well-prepared.” Barber’s view demonstrates the potential ways in which a university’s proactive approach benefits school districts, as well as universities; she points out that if a university provides exemplary resources to secondary teachers and students, then it creates “a very attractive student” for itself with the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed at the university level. This type of proactivity lies at the heart of this research study, and it certainly represents an improvement over the current sociopolitical atmosphere of assigning culpability for students’ shortcomings.

Professor Martinez, another Department of Education faculty member, also demonstrates University A's proactive dedication to improving resources for local teachers and students. As part of a team of University A faculty, Martinez is helping to establish a National Writing Project (NWP) site at University A. According to the NWP, these "sites focus on the core mission of improving the teaching of writing and improving the use of WAC by offering high-quality professional development programs for educators in their service areas, at all grade levels, K-16 and across the curriculum" ("What Sites Do"). Once University A successfully becomes a NWP site, it will be part of the NWP, which is "a network of sites" at various colleges and universities across the nation that serve teachers of early childhood education through postsecondary education" ("About NWP"). With over 200 sites, the NWP functions as a well-known and trusted "successful model customized for local needs."

Martinez details the plans for the University A NWP's first summer institute: participating teachers "with a burning question about teaching writing" will research, draft, and receive feedback from their NWP peers. At the end of the course, these teachers will become teacher consultants who then will be equipped to create professional development offerings completely tailored to the needs and desires of their own districts. Participation as an NWP site gives University A and its teacher consultants access to a library of books and mini-lessons from the NWP website, in addition to training, graduate credit hours, and a network of other teacher consultants. University A has reached out to sixty-two ISDs in the area, and Martinez reports that several ISDs in the area have indicated that they are "very, very interested" in the NWP program. The region's ESC

also expresses an interest in participating, which gives the University A NWP site a significant advantage. Like Barber, Martinez emphasizes the importance of trust: the administration and teachers within the ISDs “trust them . . . if we’re associated with them, it’s easier” to earn the ISD’s trust and encourage its teachers to participate. Martinez believes that area teachers currently utilize University A’s available resources, but she also believes that, “there’s not much right now” in terms of what University A offers educators.

In the interviews with University A professors, I sought information about the type of resources available from University A to high school students themselves. I posed the questions, “Can universities improve high school students’ skills by providing them with writing-related resources? Does University A provide writing-related resources directly to local students? How far does University A’s reach extend?” Martinez answers that first question by adamantly affirming the positive potential of university resources available to high school students. She believes that mentor texts provide the requisite impetus for improving student composition: “We know through research that mentor texts (like exemplar models) are the primary starting points for teaching great writing.” Students need to read quality texts in order to produce quality writing, but does University A currently provide any exemplar texts or other similar resources for use by area high school students? Martinez answers, “No,” but while she acknowledges a current lack of available resources for area students, she also expresses the goal of her team to create example portfolios, posters to explain genres, and other tools to assist student writers. With these tools, students will gain access to resources that demonstrate “a

variety of writing” and the flexibility of writing, instead of the current “canned, nonauthentic pieces of text” that high school students typically read as examples. The TEA provides “canned” examples in the form of samples and released test items, and students also likely encounter nonauthenticity in the “test prep” that the NSWI reports is commonplace. According to Martinez, the TEA likewise recognizes student writing on the STAAR tests often lack authenticity and that the STAAR EOC tests fail to adequately gauge (let alone challenge) Texas high school students’ abilities; the TEA currently has a pilot program to address these issues³. Martinez hopes that, as statewide testing requirements evolve, the resources that University A provides as an NWP site will demonstrate “how flexible writing becomes.” These goals bode well for the students in the sixty-two ISDs in University A’s service area, but while University A serves a wide area, Barber points out that twenty-first-century universities face few geographical limits; she suggests that a university with a high-quality website has “no geographical borders.” So, even though University A serves a radius of about two-hundred physical miles, anyone anywhere in the world could potentially utilize the online resources provided on the University A website.

Perusing University A’s website provides additional information about the programs and tools available to students and teachers. Available writing-related resources include several degree options from the education department, licensure programs for degree-seeking students and for students who already hold a degree, a variety of graduate programs, a distinguished lecture series, an Advanced Placement (AP) Summer Institute,

³ See Chapter II, page 57 for more information about the TEA’s pilot program.

occasional continuing professional education (cpe) courses, and a creative writing Writer's Academy available from the continuing education department. While several of these necessitate no further explanation, the AP Summer Institute and the writer's academy require additional explanation. The College Board endorses AP Summer Institutes across the county; these week-long summer sessions address a variety of issues related to teaching Advanced Placement (AP) and Pre-AP courses ("Workshops"). The writer's academy draws aspiring writers together to workshop their own texts and to hear published authors share wisdom about their craft. Registration is limited to participants eighteen and older. Participants pay around \$500 for the weeklong AP Institute and about \$600 to \$700 for the weeklong writer's academy. University A also hosts a writer-in-residence, who offers guidance to anyone who seeks her services. Additionally, University A's library provides print and electronic materials to community patrons. In order to gain access to print materials, community members access the TexShare program, which allows them to obtain a library card for checking out materials. Under the leadership of the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, "TexShare is a consortium of Texas libraries joining together to share print and electronic materials, purchase online resources, and combine staff expertise" (*TexShare*). Teachers in the ESC region can obtain special library cards, as well. The library also provides a brick-and-mortar instructional resource center, which houses educational software, sample lesson plans, and state-adopted textbooks that are available to both degree-seeking University A teachers and teachers in the community. For community members who wish to access the university's wealth of electronic materials, the library allows individuals to utilize their

databases within the walls of the library, after completing the requisite paperwork.

University A students utilize these materials more than outside individuals, but sometimes high school students—usually while working on a class assignment—visit the university library to access these resources.

Additional resources that University A provides directly to local high school students include summer programs and Upward Bound. While the summer programs fail to address writing specifically, they offer academic sessions for assorted topics such as engineering and speech that would naturally include at least some writing instruction and practice. Upward Bound, however, focuses specifically on writing. The program, which educates students about financial aid and college admissions, also provides mentoring and tutoring services that “may include instruction in reading, writing, study skills, mathematics, science, and other subjects” (“50th Anniversary” 5). Established in 1964, “The program provides opportunities for participants to succeed in their precollege performance and ultimately in their higher education pursuits.” As part of a larger program called TRIO, which despite its name, currently boasts eight total programs, Upward Bound serves high school students in low-income families and students whose parents have obtained less than a bachelor’s degree. “The goal of Upward Bound is to increase the rate at which participants complete secondary education and enroll in and graduate from institutions of postsecondary education” (“Upward Bound”). As of 2013-14, the U.S. Department of Education funds 218 TRIO sites, with University A among them, on a five-year cycle for a total of \$785,720,504 and a total of 758,352 participants.

University B also holds potential for serving writers on both a local and global scale. Director Brown of the academic writing center represents University B. Brown enumerates the resources available to local teachers and students from University B: the teacher education programs, professional development opportunities such as workshops for teachers, summer programs for students, Upward Bound, and UIL. Summer programs at University B include reading programs, as well as camps intended to provide “academic enrichment” available for school-aged children. University B also offers two scholar programs to which academically gifted high school juniors and seniors can apply; participants engage in college-level scholarship, recreation, and mentorship. University B also offers TRIO Upward Bound services to target schools that meet Upward Bound requirements in the university’s large service area. Further, University B hosts Texas’s University Interscholastic League (UIL) academic contests. (University A hosts UIL, too, although neither of the University A interviewees mention it.) The UIL organization boasts that it, “offers the most comprehensive program of academic competition in the nation” (University Interscholastic League) for its more than 500,000 participants. Aligned with TEKS, “these activities, which exist to complement the academic curriculum, are designed to motivate students as they acquire higher levels of knowledge, to challenge students to confront issues of importance, and to provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of specific skills.” Writing-related UIL competitions include journalism writing, ready writing (in which students compose expository texts based on provided prompts), and spelling and vocabulary; several other UIL academic contests also require students to compose texts. Hosting these UIL academic competitions

(and the non-academic competitions, too) goes a great distance in benefiting students, as these types of contests provide both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Ozturk 50) and offer a challenge that “is often difficult to create in a single classroom or school” (49).

Brown, who has worked in the field of education within the City B area for thirty years, knows both the resources of the university and the needs of local students. She refers to several events, such as a recent scholarship workshop for high school seniors and a presentation about résumés and cover letters, which the writing center directors and tutors have facilitated for local high school students, and she discusses the need for these types of resources. Like Professor Barber, she acknowledges the benefits afforded to students when instructors employ scaffolding techniques and vertically align the curriculum. Further, she cites poor reading skills as a primary cause of inadequate writing skills at the college level: she has noticed that students often seek help on writing assignments simply because professors ask students to respond to an assigned texts that they struggle to comprehend. These types of struggles prompt intervention: when high school teachers recognize a deficiency in student writing, they address it. Sounding like Barber again, Brown emphasizes the importance of professional networking as a means of providing solutions to students’ struggles. The writing center staff have created the high school events to which Brown refers based on needs they hear about from friends, family members, and former clients who teach high school. However, Brown encounters challenge similar to the challenges Barber and Martinez face. While Brown believes these events improve students’ writing skills “tremendously” and discusses the desire she and her colleagues and tutors have to “create some connections with your high school

students,” she also acknowledges that, “there’s always a little pushback. [The teachers seem to think,] ‘Don’t tell us how to do our jobs.’”

LIBRARY PARTICIPANT RESPONSES

University A and University B represent the only two public universities in a large, predominately rural area, which results in large service areas for both universities. Logically, then, we see the same as true for the libraries within this part of the state: the libraries in the communities directly adjacent to these universities also serve a large, predominately rural area. So, although the small regional libraries in the area benefit their communities exceptionally, they often rely on larger nearby libraries to provide certain services that simply do not exist in the smaller towns. As part of TexShare, these libraries all have access to various print materials from across the state, as well as to electronic databases, such as EBSCO, Gale, and Learning Express Library, which offers test prep, tutorials, ebooks, model résumés, and more (*TexShare*). Additionally, the libraries in the University A area belong to a regional consortium that allows them to share even more materials among themselves. Yet, community members seeking services like English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction or citizenship classes sometimes must turn to the larger libraries (those close to the universities) in the region.

Eager to assist, these librarians quickly responded to my requests for research participation, and they provide great insight into the services that exist in the communities of this study. Two libraries serve District A: Library A1 and Library A2. Like School A1, the first library sits in City A, and like School A2, the second library, is

in the larger neighboring city. The second library consists of five separate branches, but both libraries that serve District A share resources as part of the local consortium. Ms. Munsch, the library director from Library A1, explains that the library offers programs approximately six times a year in partnership with University A, and a story-telling class from University A performs about three to four times a semester. Munsch describes the collaborative efforts between the library and University A as “very random” and based on “a case-by-case situation.” For example, the University A writer-in-residence sometimes presents at the library, and sometimes professors utilize the library facilities for activities, but these and other similar collaborative events occur irregularly. Currently, three University A employees and one School A1 librarian serve on the library board. Munsch remarks that, while University A employees frequently serve on the board, having a local high school employee on the board is rare. Library A1 staff and the Friends of the Library group hosts summer reading programs for all ages, sporadic writing-related events such as book signings throughout the year, and regular preschool story time, but patrons who need services like ESL or citizenship classes make the short drive to the Library A2 in the neighboring city.

Library A2, with its larger staff and five separate branch locations, provides more services to community members, and it serves as the hub of the local consortium. Library A2 offers everything from GED training to craft classes and classes that help job seekers compose résumés and cover letters to “Battle of the Books” at local middle schools. Currently, one University A professor and two employees from the community college, as well as a representative from a local high school, serve on their board. As Library

Director Bandera explains, “We do quite a bit. ... We try to reach out to University A and the local community college as much as possible. We want to make sure we provide our participants with experts.” However, she and her staff tread carefully, because they do not want to “undermine the teachers ... We don’t want to interfere with TEKS.” For this reason, their programing frequently tends toward recreation rather than instruction.

Ms. Barton, the Youth Services librarian at Library A2, enumerates programs she and her staff provide: summer reading programs, an Everyone Reads program that includes speakers (sometimes from University A) and activities, a program designed just for kindergarten through fifth grade students who live in rural areas, among other programs. Programming for elementary-aged children generally draws a crowd, but Barton discloses that, “attendance is very low from high school students.” She attributes this to the fact that, “teens have a lot going on,” especially when they participate in dual credit classes, in which they simultaneously work toward high school and college credit hours in their high school classes. However, while busy teenagers rarely attend library programming, they frequent the library in order to obtain materials they need for class. Barton confidently states that the efforts to reach elementary-aged children benefits them as they get older, because “they will know there’s a library to go to when they’re older.” She recognizes that students of all ages take advantage of library resources in different ways, and she muses that, while the high school students “are a tough crowd,” she is “always impressed by the super-achievers,” which is the name she has for the older students that she sees working tirelessly at the library.

School B sits on the edge City B's city limits and, unlike Schools A1 and A1, only belongs to City B's library district, which we will call Library B. School C, which bestrides the city limits of two towns, belongs to two library districts, but only personnel from Library B responded to requests for research participation. Library B participates in TexShare and grants access to the TexShare databases to its patrons, but unlike the other libraries in this study, Library B does not belong to a local consortium. Library B offers patrons various programming, some of which is writing-related; these include author presentations and book signings, book discussion groups for adults, summer reading programs for children and young adults, and "fun events and programs" during the summer. The library hosts a nonprofit group that provides ESL classes, but library personnel do not teach those classes. City B's City Council appoints the library board; currently one University B member serves on the board—out of coincidence, not as a general rule. A library representative, Ms. Kristoff, explains that, occasionally the library partners with University B to sponsor events, but adds that, "We frequently provide library informational programs with area school districts and some private schools. The purpose of this is to provide teachers and students with information on library resources."

Library Director Hammond represents Library D, which serves School D and its community. She admits that she and her staff, "don't work very closely with the schools and what they do there," but she describes their small one-month summer reading for children ages five through twelve and explains that the library staff typically refer students to TexShare's Learning Express for test prep. The local community college provides ESL and GED courses. Comprised of two counties, this library district lacks a

library board, so Hammond proposes new library policies directly to the Board of Commissioners for approval. Though small, Library D belongs to the local regional consortium and therefore boasts innumerable resources at its disposal.

Ms. Price represents Library E, which serves School E and the surrounding agricultural city of about 15,000 inhabitants. Library E lacks a governing board, but a Friends of the Library group assists the library in its endeavors as needed. The local community college has provided GED instruction since the library lost its grant funding. Ms. Price discusses the library's year-round preschool story hour, their summer reading program for participants aged four through eighteen, and their regular programs with the elementary schools. She admits that the library's programing efforts reach fewer secondary students than elementary students, but she refers to a group of high school students who recently visited the library to learn about resources, such as the databases available from TexShare. When I mention to her that every librarian has talked about TexShare, she remarks, "Everything's technology now. It seems like all we do now is related to that." In the past, Library E has hosted events intended to bring together the public library and local high school librarians, but "the schools kind of dropped that with all the state testing." She reports that the event in which the library staff presented research tools to the high school students who was a success and that she hopes the library can partner with the schools to offer similar events in the future.

HIGH SCHOOL PARTICIPANT RESPONSES

College faculty and public librarians seem naturally optimistic and ready to offer assistance whenever possible, and the communities in this study boast valuable resources, but for these to be effective, area high school teachers and students must know these resources exist and utilize them. In order to gauge teachers' knowledge and perceptions about specific the programs and tools available from University A and University B, I asked the following questions in a completely anonymous online survey ⁴and presented similar questions to volunteer interviewees.

1. Does University A/B offer any type of resources that you, as an English teacher, could use to improve your teaching of writing?
2. What type of resources does University A/B offer that you could use to improve your teaching of writing? (Select all that apply.)
3. Have you taken advantage of these resources either by participating in an even or by using the materials?
4. In your opinion, have these resources helped improve your writing instruction?
5. Does University A/B offer any type of resources that your students could use to improve their writing skills?
6. What type of resources does University A/B offer that could improve students' writing skills? (Select all that apply.)
7. Have your students taken advantage of these resources by participating in an event or using the materials?
8. Based on the student work you have read, have these resources helped improve students' writing skills?

Twenty-four ⁵teachers in District A—eleven at School A1 and thirteen at School A2—teach English. After obtaining enthusiastic approval from both schools' principals, I spoke with one of these English teachers from each school and received a total of thirteen

⁴ Survey response data is available in graphs in Appendix B.

⁵ The number of teachers presented here comes from individual school websites and high school principals.

surveys combined from the two schools. Out of the thirteen participants, only five answer “yes” to question one, indicating that teachers in District A do not realize that University A offers resources to English teachers. Perhaps some of the confusion stems from the fact that University A sometimes collaborates with the local ESC, and perhaps some stems from the irregularity of University A offerings. According to the responses to the second question, three respondents believe that University A offers no such resources, while five believe that University A offers continuing education classes; four, professional development; three, print or electronic materials; and one, other. Only one answers number three with a “yes”; the teacher’s notes in the comment section indicate that this teacher attended an AP summer institute within the past few years. That teacher answers that these resources have improved his/her writing instruction.

According to the sixth question, two teachers believe that University A offers resources directly to students to improve their writing, three think that University A does not offer resources, and eight “don’t know.” In the next question, two additional respondents answer that University A provides no resources directly to students, while three answer that University A provides writing workshops and print and electronic materials. None of the teachers believe that University A offers academic contests or other events, even though it hosts academic UIL competitions, summer camps, and Upward Bound events. Yet, UIL is not a University A-specific program or one that is completely facilitated by University A, the summer camps do not specifically address writing, and the schools in District A are not Upward Bound target schools, so perhaps District A teachers do not consider them to be University A writing-related resources.

The survey records no “yes” responses for question seven, indicating that if students have taken advantage of any of these University A resources, their English teachers are unaware of their students’ participation. According to the responses from question nine, most District A teachers believe that these resources could improve student writing. District A teachers wrote thirteen comments on their surveys; eight of the thirteen comments indicate they simply do not know about the available University A resources.

I interviewed Ms. Potter from School A1, and she admits to not knowing much about University A’s resources. As a Pre-AP teacher, she knows about the AP Summer Institute, but she states that other than that professional development offering, area teachers have few options, unless they are seeking a degree from University A. She further explains that most of District A’s professional development is “in-house” and that most teachers do not want to—or cannot—pay out of pocket to enroll in these courses. She cites a lack of “connection” between the university and her school as the reason why students do not know about or participate in programming catered specifically to high school students, but she believes that, “tutoring would be helpful,” especially if it were one-on-one for students struggling with writing. She witnesses the positive effects that University A tutors have had on their math students and would like to see something similar for English/language arts.

Ms. Holt from School A2 shares similar insight: other than the AP Summer Institute, she is not aware of any resources available from University A to local teachers or students. However, toward the end of our conversation, when she seems to feel more comfortable, she said, “I have a confession. I think we often get pamphlets and various

kinds of outreach through the mail or emails that says, ‘Here’s a writing contest.’ Delete. Delete. Delete. I’m too busy. I don’t have time to deal with this. ... And that’s probably wrong for us to do; it’s just easy for us to get overwhelmed.” She continues her so-called confession by explaining that students who wish to participate in extracurricular contests frequently ask for additional help, but English teachers face so many expectations in preparation for the STAAR tests that they are “too busy” to assist students with this sort of extracurricular project. She regrets the reality of what she has confided in me: “I wish we didn’t have that situation, but we do.” She describes her frustrations with the demands of the STAAR test, which constantly presents new challenges. A serendipitous knock at her door interrupts our conversation—and reinforces the point that she makes about the constant pressures of teaching—before she continues apologetically to explain why teachers often ignore emails for contests and other writing-specific activities for students.

I have chosen to combine School B and School C to represent City B, since both schools represent two sections of the city. School B’s principal enthusiastically responded to the research participation request, while School C’s principal indifferently consented. No teachers from either school volunteered to participate in the interview, but six teachers completed the online survey. With five English teachers at School B and twelve at School C, six surveys represents approximately 35% of the English teacher population at the two schools. Out of the six participants, none of the teachers’ responses indicate that University B provides any resources that could improve their teaching of writing, but half of the participants indicate that they do not know what is available. Despite that answer, participants seem to conjecture about the resources available, because only two

of them answer that University B offers no resources at all. None of them have taken advantage of what is available from University B, but three of them believe resources from University B *could* help improve their instruction. According to the responses of questions six and seven, two of the teachers know of writing-related resources, such as academic contests, directly available to students. None of the teachers respond affirmatively that their students have utilized available resources, but half of them believe these resources could benefit students. Two participants provide insight into the resources familiar to them: tools and information acquired during the teacher education program and the “writing help desk” (presumably at the writing center that Director Brown oversees).

Results from School D, which is not geographically close to either University A or University B, mirror those from School B and School C. Out of the five English teachers at School D, only two (40%) participated by completing the survey, and no one agreed to speak with me directly. One of the teachers answers question one negatively, while the other responds, “I don’t know.” However, like School B and School C participants, the School D teachers make conjectures about the type of resources available to teachers, assuming that University A or B must offer continuing education or professional development classes, print or electronic materials, or other resources of some sort. Unsurprisingly then, neither of the teachers has utilized university resources, although they both believe that these resources could improve their teaching. Question five responses indicate that one of the teachers knows about resources directly available to students from the universities, but the other claims not to know. They believe that the

universities offer writing workshops, print or electronic materials, and other resources for students, and they believe that these resources could help students improve their skills.

The School E principal agreed to allow me to conduct research with the teachers at his school, and the teacher, Ms. Green, whom he recommended I contact quickly arranged a time for an interview; however, only one additional teacher completed the electronic survey. Out of eight total English teachers from School E, only two (25%) participated. The surveyed teacher reports that she is unaware of the resources from University A to local teachers and has not utilized any of the resources. She is aware of programming, such as writing workshops and academic contests, available from University A directly to students. Though she is unsure whether her students have accessed these resources, she believes in the potential of these resources for enabling student growth. Ms. Green also reports that she is unaware of resources available to teachers, but because her School E is a target school for University A's Upward Bound program, she knowledgeably answers the questions about resources available to students. She discusses how the Upward Bound staff have tutored School E's students in science, math, social studies, and English, and she describes her firsthand observations about Upward Bound participants' academic progress: "The kids I recommended as freshmen I now have as seniors. They're definitely more skilled writers [now]." When I ask Ms. Green what resources students and teachers need the most, she begins discussing balance—the balance between "ensuring that kids can pass the STAAR" and the type of authentic writing that they need in order to succeed in their postsecondary endeavors, because, "A twenty-six line [STAAR] essay is not a good indicator of anything other than

what’s going to help them pass the test.” She explains that students need something to aid them in “real essay” composition, something to help them with “maintaining focus, writing a thesis, developing their thoughts.” Her frustrations reflect the reality of the high-stakes testing situation across the nation, but in some ways—despite the resources the local universities provide, or could provide, to help teachers and students—she feels limited in what she can teach in her own classroom. Regarding the STAAR test, she tells me, “It totally controls everything that we have to do or can do in class.”

CHAPTER III

THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIPS AND RESOURCES: RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

In the genesis of this project, I anticipated discovering an extant correlation between the presence of the universities and the writing skills among local high school students in this region of Texas. Ultimately, though, the research findings complicate my original assumptions and reveal a rather complex relationship between these universities and their adjacent communities. First, the universities themselves help define the communities in which they reside and alter the demographic makeup of local residents. Additionally, the selected universities serve a remarkably large geographic area. While the resources available to local teachers and secondary students provide benefits, many area educators remain unaware of these resources, and educators who *are* aware of them often downplay the role of the university in providing them. Further, the high-stakes nature of current standardized state testing encumbers educators and students to such a degree that it prevents them from fully utilizing what the universities offer. Finally, while University A and University B provide ample opportunities for teachers and students to hone their skills in writing and teaching writing, these opportunities only meet the needs of local teachers and students when strong relationships exist between the universities and the students and educators at the local ISDs.

In many ways, colleges and universities shape the cities in which they exist. Geography scholar Dr. Blake Gumprecht describes the “extroverted and expansive” (Turner qtd. in Gumprecht 40) nature of American college campuses and the longstanding “ideal of community” that pushes American universities to become “an integral part of the [surrounding] town” (41). University A and University B exemplify this reality. Founded in the early parts of the twentieth century, their longstanding physical presence alters the landscapes of City A and City B. This alteration of physical space is especially true for University A, which comprises a large portion of the small city in which it resides. Gumprecht further explains that, “American colleges and universities spend millions of dollars to maintain their campuses and provide a range of activities for students, staff, and people with no direct connection to the university” (41). University A and University B both host recreational and social events, including athletic events, which are “a central component of student life at American colleges and universities” (227) and draw large numbers of spectators and participants.

In addition to modifying the social and cultural aspects of their cities, University A and University B alter the demographic composition of their communities. According to online reports published by both cities, University A represents the second largest employer in City A, and University B represents the number one employer in City B. Further, the influx of students, athletes and sports spectators, and all other visitors to campus increase revenue for businesses in the area. These two universities directly alter the economics of their respective cities.

The universities also increase the percentage of local degree-holders because of faculty and staff who hold advanced degrees and because of the students who earn bachelors' and advanced degrees. Even though college students often are not permanent residents of the cities in which they attend college (and therefore do not increase the official census populations of these cities), having a local university nevertheless increases the population of its respective city: university employees, who otherwise might not live in the city if it were not for their careers, increase the city population, as do all the students who choose to remain in the city after graduation. These and other changes that the universities cause affect the makeup of the general population, and as data (like that from the NAEP and NSWI) continually demonstrates, students of different demographic populations perform at different levels in the classroom and on standardized tests.

Perhaps, then, by altering the demographic makeup of its adjacent cities, local universities improve writing skills and overall academic performance. Compare School A1 and School E. While all six of the schools in this study share the same geographic region, similar religious and political values, and ties to agriculture, they differ in size and classification as a rural area, suburb, or urban city. Among these six schools and their communities, though, the cities of School A1 and School E perhaps resemble each other the most. Both schools' cities have around 15,000 residents and median incomes in the low \$40,000s; only about thirty miles separate these two cities. However, analyzing educational background reveals just how disparate these two cities are. About 90% of residents in City A are high school graduates, and over 40% of City A's residents hold at

least a bachelor's degree. In contrast, in the city in which School E exists, only 70% of residents are high school graduates, and only about 15% hold at least a bachelor's degree. Students at School A1 perform markedly better than students at School E. In addition to ethnic, racial, and linguistic differences, the differences in educational background account for at least some of the performance gap between students of School A1 and School E. Possibly, then, the mere presence of University A and University B have the largest impact on their adjacent communities' academic skills. This information serves to contextualize the overall effect of the university's presence and accounts for some of the differences between the six cities in this study, but while this information explains the numerical data, the interview and survey responses are necessary to determine whether these universities provides the requisite resources to improve local high school students' writing skills.

The university representatives I interviewed reveal a genuine sense of responsibility, not just for the students in their own cities, but for those throughout their large service regions. For example, Professor Martinez talks about the sixty-plus districts with whom she and her team communicate as they prepare to become an NWP site, and Professor Barber discusses the approximately two-hundred-mile radius that University A serves. Director Brown admits that University B "mostly" focuses on the students in City B, but the ease with which she recalls visiting schools in nearby cities reveals that University B also routinely serves an expansive area. The TRIO programs at both universities target several schools, some of which are in their own cities, others in nearby communities; other grants that the universities have sought and implemented likewise

include their immediate cities, as well as other nearby cities. University A and University B both represent the primary higher education institutions within their own ESC regions. Likewise, they offer important services within their UIL regions. Because the College Board Summer Institutes take place at only a handful of locations throughout the state of Texas, University A offers an important service for AP/Pre-AP teachers over a large area. The knowledge that these universities accept responsibility for such a large geographical area redefines this study: while universities may provide benefits to their immediate community by improving socioeconomic factors and elevating the level of educational attainment among their cities' residents, the benefits provided in terms of academic resources extend to all teachers and students in its (sometimes expansive) service area.

However, the teachers participating in this survey share a general lack of knowledge about University A's and University B's resources, especially those available to teachers. As Ms. Holt from School A1 explains to me, most of what is available directly to teachers comes in the form of classes for degree-seekers. She even suggests that I contact another teacher from her school who is working toward a Master's degree and might therefore know more about offerings for teachers. Interestingly, though, the same teacher she suggests actually contacted me after I initially asked for survey participation from all the English teachers at School A1. She sent an email, telling me that the survey questions helped her realize that she knows little about the resources University A offers to teachers, despite her own experiences at University A as a graduate student.

In fact, most of the teachers in this study also demonstrate a lack of knowledge about resources available from the universities and directly available to students, but often they are cognizant of the resources themselves, yet unaware of the university's role in providing these resources. For example, when asked about professional development opportunities, continuing education courses, workshops, or other similar offerings provided by University A, Ms. Holt responds, "I am not aware of anything at all," but she then describes the AP Summer Institute that she attended a couple summers in the past; she remarks that it was an "indirect" affiliation with University A and that, "We just used their [University A's] facilities." Similarly, when asked about university-provided programming for students to improve their writing skills, Ms. Green inquires, "Does the Upward Bound program count?" Both teachers' perspectives reveal the ways in which teachers and other community members underestimate what their local universities provide and frequently attribute university resources to other entities, the way Ms. Holt does when describing the AP Summer Institute. The universities play an important role in providing these resources, but unfortunately for the universities, they seem to go unnoticed as conduits that bring together programming and tools for teachers, students, and other community members. The type of programs that assist students as developing writers require university employees to plan and collaborate with representatives from the College Board, TRIO, and UIL, as well as local librarians, guest speakers, and other individuals. Perhaps, sometimes community members take the presence of the local universities for granted, but the physical and intellectual resources they provide are invaluable nevertheless.

The teachers who share their experiences with me via survey or interview, like their counterparts who teach across the nation, often are incognizant of the resources available to them from their local universities simply because these teachers focus so much attention on the immediate needs of their students and the demands placed on them by the state and federal governments. The emphasis placed on the STAAR test in Texas, as well as tests like it across the nation, indeed “does not augur well for the teaching of writing” (Applebee, Langer 17). Although none of the interview questions for this research study address statewide STAAR testing, two-thirds of the teacher interviewees validate this prognosis of writing in American schools. Ms. Green’s comments about finding a balance between “ensuring that kids can pass the STAAR” and the “types of writing” that will benefit them in college and Ms. Holt’s “confession” about her relentless efforts to help students get “ready for the STAAR” resonate with educators nationwide. Similarly, several of the interviewed librarians address the challenges presented by the STAAR test and the single-minded obsession that the testing culture creates among local educators and students. Most of the librarians report that they encounter increasing obstacles when working with the secondary schools; Ms. Barton from Library A2 explains, “It’s really tough for us to get into the public school systems. I think it’s just the pressure that’s brought to bear—[for] teachers and students.” Ms. Price attributes the loss of collaborative programming between Library E and School E to high-stakes testing: when enumerating programs she has facilitated, she remarks that the local secondary schools “dropped” their participation in library programming years ago because of “all the state testing.”

Two out of three of the university faculty members I interviewed also discuss “all the state testing,” but they go beyond expressing frustration to discuss the need for an overhaul of the current testing model. Professor Barber emphasizes the irony that the current STAAR test (which is similar to tests nationwide) assesses *product*, while best instructional practices stress the need to teach writing as a *process*. Professor Martinez imparts some important knowledge by sharing that the TEA is in the process of revamping the STAAR so that Texas students will produce “more authentic writing pieces” as part of their assessment. This overhaul stems from the 2015 Texas House Bill 1164, focuses on writing as a process, and measures improvement from the beginning to the end of the academic school year (“House Bill 1164”). The 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 implementation of this pilot program requires students to produce texts of varying genres (narrative, informative, persuasive, and analytical) and confers more “ownership” (2) back to students by allowing them to select from several prompts. Assessment in this pilot program includes one timed-writing sample at the beginning of the academic year and one at the end, three “process samples,” and an instructional portfolio with at least five writing samples from the course of the academic year. This new “alternative method” (1) assesses student work digitally, but school districts may submit pencil-and-paper portfolios if they lack the ability to test electronically. This pilot program, in which the TEA, ESCs, higher education institutions, and teachers collaborate, aligns with the CCCC’s position statement, in that such assessments should engage students “in contextualized, meaningful writing” and “include multiple measures,” be solidly grounded in the latest research on learning, writing, and assessment” and be “undertaken

in response to local goals, not external pressures” (“Writing Assessment”). This TEA pilot program aims to capture authentic writing, thereby adhering to the recommendation to “not distort the nature of writing or writing practices” that many individuals and organizations like the CCCC demand.

Certainly, various stakeholders in Texas, as well as out-of-state observers, eagerly await the results from these changes that promise not only to assess students’ abilities more accurately, but also to create an assessment tool that will (hopefully) encourage more authentic composition from students and instruction from teachers. In the meantime, the teachers from the “up to 12” (“ESC Participation” 2) ESCs in the participating ISDs face new demands: guiding students in an exploratory process with its accompanying challenges, participating in TEA scoring training, collecting and recording new types of data, and possibly learning to utilize the “cloud-based digital platform” that the TEA plans to use for this new alternate assessment. While many teachers look forward to the prospect of a statewide test that more accurately assesses student writing, the transition brings new burdens. As Bruffee quips, “Only panicked freshmen and politicians hope for quick fixes” (36). Teachers understand, though, that no “quick fix” exists. Ms. Holt from School A2 recalls a time when the TEA confronted District A about their students’ shortcomings on a portion of the English I and English II STAAR EOC tests, a portion she claims was “the hardest part of the test.” The teachers in her district consequently focused their efforts on helping students improve in that particular area, but then the TEA removed that section of the test. Frustrated by focusing so much on a

portion of the test that was then removed, Ms. Holt tells me, “You just never get set in a routine. They’re always changing something.”

Even though the pressures of teaching remain omnipresent and resources often go unnoticed, universities still maintain a great deal of influence in their communities; their programming and tools directly and indirectly benefit student writers. If universities want local educators and students to utilize the programs and tools they provide, universities must focus on building relationships. The interview participants validate this truth in their responses. Ms. Potter from School A1 admits, “There’s not a lot of connection” between University A and School A1; her belief that this lack of “connection” exists possibly explains why she is unaware of some of the programs and tools available to her colleagues and her students. The university faculty I interviewed also all seem cognizant of the importance of relationships between themselves and local educators. Director Brown at the University B writing center enjoys a large network that has naturally evolved over the course of her career working in and around City B. She has built relationships with family, friends, previous students, and acquaintances, who all trust her and know that they can contact her if they or their students need the type of help that Brown and her staff provide. In fact, because of the relationships that Brown fosters in her work, this study includes a University B faculty perspective. Although I contacted numerous faculty and staff at University B via email or phone call, none of them except Brown agreed to participate; most of them never responded. However, I know Brown from a time when I visited her writing center, and when I called her, she quickly agreed to answer my questions. Similarly, because of an established rapport with individuals in

City A, I easily obtained assent for interview and survey participation and received the most responses from University A and District A. What Professor Barber terms “professional networking” has played out practically, as well as theoretically, in this study.

The responses and other research I have compiled overwhelmingly support the need for relationships between stakeholders, and meeting this need could satisfy other needs, as well. For example, improved relationships between the high school and university levels could help eliminate the so-called “writing crisis” (Sacher) that college professors and students face. Barber illuminates the correlation between relationships and a potential improvement in college students’ composition skills: “There needs to be a lot of collaboration in order to ensure that secondary teachers are preparing students for the type of writing required at the university level and that the university is doing their part to ensure that K12 teachers and students are well-prepared.” She claims that, “We all have the same goal,” and while she refers to secondary teachers and college professors with the word “we,” it could include students, parents, teachers, professors, employers, legislators, and any other stakeholders in our educational system.

However, university faculty, such as Barber, Martinez, and Brown, recognize collaboration sometimes functions better in theory than in practice, and in order to achieve a collaborative relationship, “We need a trust factor” (Barber). Martinez understands this need, which is why she and her NWP team partner with the local ESC: “It’s a trust thing. They trust them ... If we’re associated with them, it’s easier.” Other educational researchers confirm this need for “relational trust” and the ways in which

relationships between stakeholders stand to benefit students and result in “school improvement” (Bryk, Schneider xiv). In *Trust Matters*, educational leadership scholar Megan Tschannen-Moran explains that, “Schools once enjoyed the implicit trust of their communities” (xi), from both “internal and external constituencies,” but in today’s heated sociopolitical environment, “We live in an era in which all of our social institutions and their leaders have come under unprecedented scrutiny... This trend away from trust poses a special challenge for school leaders because trust is so vital for schools in fulfilling their fundamental mission of teaching students” (x). Tschannen-Moran further argues that, “Without trust, schools unlikely to be successful in their efforts to improve and to realize their core purpose.”

Based on the findings of this study, universities indeed offer the types of resources necessary to assist schools in “their efforts to improve,” and universities’ reach into nearby communities often extends a great distance. However, the current trends in high-stakes testing limit their influence over education at the pre-collegiate level and often hinder secondary teachers’ ability to seek and discover these valuable resources. While legislators and other stakeholders seek to reform state testing, and while this type of reform promises to improve student writing, trust and collaboration could bring even greater changes. The old adage that “it takes a village to raise a child,” or rather in this case “to educate a child,” stands true. In order for university resources to truly benefit teachers and students, universities must focus their efforts on creating stronger relationships with local school districts, who must be free to collaborate with and learn from their local universities.

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APPENDIX A: TABLES WITH NUMERICAL DATA FROM SELECTED SCHOOLS

Table I

Basic TEA-Provided Information for Selected Schools

	Total # of Students (2015-16)	Avg. ELA Class Size (2015-16)	Dropout Rate % (2014-15)	Met Standard (2016)	College-Ready % (2014-15)
State	5,284,252	17.1	2.1	N/A	42
School A1	1,149	18.6	0	Yes	50
School A2	1,632	19.6	0.2	Yes	54
School B	311	13.8	0.6	Yes	19
School C	2,471	22.6	0.1	Yes	53
School D	493	15.2	0.2	Yes	35
School E	1,096	20	0.4	Yes	27

Table II
 Ethnicity Data by Percentage for Selected Schools

	African- American/Black	Hispanic	White	American Indian	Asian	Pacific Islander	2+ Races
State	12.6	52.2	28.5	0.4	4.0	0.1	2.1
School A1	1.2	18.6	78	0.5	0.2	0	1.5
School A2	2.7	22.5	72.2	0.3	1.1	0.1	1.1
School B	5.1	50.2	43.1	1	0	0	0.6
School C	4.4	37.1	52.4	0.2	3	0.1	4.4
School D	0.4	49.9	49.9	0.6	1.8	0	0.4
School E	0.6	82.3	15.8	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.5

Table III
Special Populations for Selected Schools

	Economically. Disadvantaged.	ELL	Special Education
State	59	18.5	8.6
School A1	19.3	0.5	8
School A2	20.6	1	8.8
School B	68.5	0.6	12.2
School C	32.7	1.2	7
School D	37.7	4.9	5.9
School E	75	8.5	7.6

Table IV
STAAR EOC Performance for Selected Schools

	Overall Score	African-American/black	Hispanic	White	American Indian	Asian	Pacific Islander	2 + Races
State Eng. I	65	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
State Eng. II	67					--	--	--
School A1 Eng. I	67	56	67	67	-	-	-	88
School A1 Eng. II	75	64	64	78	-	83	-	-
School A2 Eng. I	75	-	65	77	-	-	-	71
School A2 Eng. II	77	84	84	85	-	-	-	-
School B Eng. I	76	-	79	77	-	-	-	-
School B Eng. I	88	-	85	92	-	-	-	-
School C Eng. I	78	77	71	82	-	91	-	95
School C Eng. I	81	67	75	85	-	94	-	89
School D Eng. I	62	-	56	68	-	-	-	-
School D Eng. II	65	-	57	77	-	-	-	-
School E Eng. I	50	-	47	70	-	-	-	-
School E Eng. II	50	-	47	71	-	-	-	-

APPENDIX B: TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS

1. Does University A/B offer any type of resources that you, as an English teacher, could use to improve your teaching of writing?
2. What type of resources does University A/B offer that you could use to improve your teaching of writing? (Select all that apply.)
3. Have you taken advantage of these resources either by participating in an even or by using the materials?
4. In your opinion, have these resources helped improve your writing instruction?
5. Does University A/B offer any type of resources that your students could use to improve their writing skills?
6. What type of resources does University A/B offer that could improve students' writing skills? (Select all that apply.)
7. Have your students taken advantage of these resources by participating in an event or using the materials?
8. Based on the student work you have read, have these resources helped improve students' writing skills?









