

Writing Assignments and Student Responses:

Uptake in a Fifth-Grade Class

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**Abstract**

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Young students' genre knowledge and learning have been of interest to literacy researchers for some time. How students learn and recognize genres, how they deploy them, and how they learn the circumstances under which to deploy particular genres are key concerns for literacy educators and researchers. While the field of Composition Studies has long theorized and studied genres and genre learning, literacy research for the elementary grades has less frequently done so. This dissertation study draws on theories from Rhetorical Genre Studies, specifically the concept of uptake, in order to better reveal the complexities of genre learning and teaching. Uptake is drawn on to illuminate the relationship between genres as these are positioned relative to one another, in this case the writing assignments and student responses in two subject areas, social studies and science, in a fifth-grade setting. Employing qualitative case study methodology, this study made use of the data collection methods of extensive observations, participant interviews, and artifact collection as the basis for analysis. Findings revealed that the two subject area teachers, one in social studies and another in science, presented a wide range of cues for students to select from, and at time these cues were in tension with one another. Focal students

were drawn to a wide range of these cues, but their writing seemed to gravitate toward cues related to evaluative criteria, even when they had responded to their prompts in much richer ways in their discussions. These findings suggest implications for future research trajectories regarding genre knowledge and learning for young students. The field of literacy research for elementary grade students has much to gain from exploring the range of theories thus far elaborated in the field of Composition Studies. As regards writing specifically at this grade level range, studies of uptake hold great possibility to shed light on the multiple factors involved in how students make sense of and respond to writing tasks.

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Dedication

Para mi mamá,  
por supuesto

## Chapter 1 - Introduction

Given the important role that writing plays in academic achievement, professional duties, and in many daily needs, one of the essential tasks for schools is to help students learn to write well for a wide variety of situations. In fact, one of the articulated aims of public educational institutions is precisely the goal of preparing students to write for a variety of purposes, audiences and contexts. The Writing Program Administration (WPA), as the academic body charged with codifying the aims of freshman composition, articulates the larger conceptual aims of the freshman-writing requirement in place for most post-secondary institutions in the U.S. In its outcomes statement, the WPA highlights the need for students to gain rhetorical awareness, and to be able to write for a range of purposes: "As students move beyond first-year composition, their writing abilities do not merely improve. Rather, their abilities will diversify along disciplinary, professional, and civic lines as these writers move into new settings where expected outcomes expand, multiply, and diverge" (WPA, 2014, p. 1). And, as a key part of this ability to diversify writing abilities, the outcomes statement highlights rhetorical knowledge, which "is the ability to analyze contexts and audiences and then to act on that analysis in comprehending and creating texts. Rhetorical knowledge is the basis of composing. Writers develop rhetorical knowledge by negotiating purpose, audience, context, and conventions as they compose a variety of texts for different situations" (1). This is to say that one of the key markers for advanced academic achievement is the ability to write in an increasingly wider range of situations and to do so with the flexibility necessary to tailor writing to the particular situations involved.

In the context of K-12 public education, writing instruction is part of the language arts standards most recently codified as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which are currently adopted by 42 states. A key aspect of the CCSS is the College and Career Readiness

standards, which, in the language of the standards, "anchor the document and define general, cross-disciplinary literacy expectations that must be met for students to be prepared to enter college and workforce training programs ready to succeed" (Common Core State Standards, p. 10). This is to say, then, that the College and Career Readiness Standards constitute a key underlying focus for the subject matter standards across the document, and reflect an emphasis on preparing students to be in a position to succeed in post secondary educational settings. As regards writing instruction specifically, the CCSS identify a number of ways students are expected to write, including opinion pieces "which support a point of view with reasons and information"; informative/explanatory texts which "examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly"; and, narratives which "develop real or imagined experiences or events" (p. 21). A more overarching aim indicated in the Standards document is that students are expected to "Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience" (p. 21), thus echoing key aspects of the outcomes statement.

Both the WPA outcomes statement and the relevant sections of the CCSS English Language Arts (ELA) thus reflect the situated nature of writing tasks, and the flexibly adaptive stances students should take when completing them. Given these aims for post-secondary settings, and the outcome goals articulated in the CCSS ELA, it follows that research, theory, and practice in writing for high school, middle school, and elementary school should aim at preparing students for the writing requirements that accompany post-secondary study as well as everyday situations that require the use of writing. Above all, such research and practice should aim at supporting students in writing with an awareness of how writing should be adapted for a range of situations, audiences, and purposes, that is, for rhetorical awareness and knowledge.

However, writing and writing instruction, and the research base to support that instruction, while well-attended to for adults through the discipline of Composition Studies, have received proportionately limited attention in the K-12 settings, most notably in ways which try to account for the situated nature of writing tasks. This holds true for theory, research, and pedagogical practice, well-noted in analyses by Applebee and Langer (2006; 2009); in the comprehensive report by the National Commission on Writing by the College Board (2003); through survey data compiled across a number of grade levels (Gilbert & Graham, 2010; Graham, 2012) and in reviews of literature on the writing of younger students (e.g., Albertini, 2008; Chapman, 2006; Donovan & Smolkin, 2006; Hillocks, 1986; Tower, 2003). While the literacy research community which focuses on K-12 settings generally, and notably on the elementary grades, has established a vast and thorough empirical basis on reading and reading instruction, it has been less thorough in writing theory, instruction, and learning. The present study was intended specifically in response to this paucity of research and theory regarding the writing of students in the K-12 context, and specifically at the intermediate elementary grade levels, generally considered grades 4 to 6. In responding to this research need, I sought specifically to draw on theoretical concepts that have proved helpful in looking at writing as a situated phenomenon within the post-secondary context, but which have not yet been brought to bear in the studies of writing for younger students. I specifically draw on genre knowledge, acquisition, and theory as an area of focus and for a theoretical framework, as genre has come to be seen as a significant variable in literacy acquisition (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010), and has been conceptualized more and more as a social phenomenon rather than simply a set of textual features.

Considering genres as based on more than textual features is significant because genre knowledge is more than mastery of form or successful reproduction of textual features. Genre knowledge always involves situational knowledge. As theorists and researchers from the Rhetorical Genre tradition have argued persuasively, (Devitt, 1993; Johns, 2002; Reiff & Bawarshi, 2011, etc.) genre knowledge, more comprehensively understood, involves awareness of how genres function within specific communicative situations. These same theorists and researchers in Rhetorical Genre Studies have very helpfully defined genre in more comprehensive ways that reveal their situated nature. They have also detailed the ways in which genres are always parts of larger sets of groups of genres, and how these are interconnected. But one of the vital aspects of genres-in-practice which has yet to be sufficiently unpacked and accounted for is how the relationships between genres are constituted as these genres are drawn on in response to other genres. As Bawarshi (2015) and others have noted, uptakes - or genre performances - are informed not only by previous genre knowledge, but also by emotive, material, dispositional, and, above all, agentic factors that complicate the ways in which people take up various genres. At times people resist, appropriate, adopt innovatively, or misunderstand genres and the social situations that cue them. These enactments of genre, through the genre performances that take place, require better understanding.

In other terms, we could say that genres are invoked in relation to other genres. But, how does this happen? In some ways, Rhetorical Genre Studies, with its seminal conceptualization of genres as social actions, has done well to unpack a sort of genre infrastructure, one that allows us to see that social actions and social relations are largely coordinated by genres. But, as genres are called on time and time again for discursive and social interaction, we have yet to unpack how that infrastructure is reconstituted, in the process of its reconstitution. For this reason, I turn to

uptake theory, as this theory has been elaborated in Rhetorical Genre Studies, in order to better understand how the relationships between genres are formed, as students and teacher interact in the situated contexts of public school classrooms.

In order to develop more nuanced understandings of students' genre knowledge, then, we need to draw on theories that move us beyond mastery of form. We need to gauge how genres are invoked by classroom assignments and instruction, and then selected and produced by students. We need, as Anne Freadman proposes, a more comprehensive theory of uptake that draws attention to the complexity of student selection and the contexts that drive that selection. Above all, as Freadman (2002) reminds us, it starts with selecting from the available options for response, and hinges on recognition of actions realized by the initiating genre. If one does not recognize an invitation as such, for example, it is not an invitation.

Freadman's emphasis on the relational nature of genres highlights how genres are never unidirectional actions. Better understood, genres are social actions always and already in the midst of other actions. What Freadman's concept of uptake brings to the table, then, is concerted attention to the ways discursive production, in the classroom or elsewhere, is always involved with and driven by other discursive productions. The benefit of this subtle but important theoretical shift is that researchers can move beyond a structural assessment of genre, or in short, beyond the question, "Did the student write in this form successfully?" Uptake gives us room to consider not only whether a student successfully reproduced a given discursive form, but to take into account the complex situational cues framing and driving the attempted genre in the first place. Equally important, the concept of uptake helps researchers highlight and unpack the complexity involved in even the most seemingly trivial classroom writing tasks. Uptake helps us

understand how demands for writing are never neatly "located" in one place. For these reasons, as will be seen in the rest of this dissertation project, the concept of uptake plays a pivotal role.

This aspect of genre studies is especially relevant to the study of writing at all levels because it speaks precisely to the earlier-noted concern for students to develop rhetorical knowledge and awareness, something that largely includes being aware of the situated nature of writing. How genres are conceptualized, how people learn them, and the work that genres accomplish are all concerns of some of the scholars and researchers within composition studies. Traditions within composition studies have taken a linguistic framework, as in the case of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and the Sydney School approach; they have taken a literary framework, commonly formulating taxonomies for genres such as *poem*, *novel*, etc.; and, more contemporary conceptualizations have drawn largely on sociological theories to conceptualize genre as more than text types, but instead as social actions which respond to recurring events (Miller, 1984). Other than the pedagogical focus of the Sydney School approach, which specifically targeted the elementary school setting in Australia, relatively little attention has been given to genre study in the K-12 context. The notable exceptions to this will be detailed in the literature review section of this dissertation, but are noted briefly below.

The aim of the current study is to try to unpack some of the aspects of writing assignments in an intermediate grade elementary school classroom. In many ways, such assignments seem deceptively straightforward. "Did students meet the stated criteria?"; or, "In what ways did they do so or not do so?" are two common and legitimate questions we would have about students' writing in response to writing assignments. But these questions only reveal part of the complexity of writing tasks. Other questions which help reveal complexities include the following: "What is meant by the writing assignment?"; and, "What dispositions and

knowledge are required in order to meet the stated and implicit assignment expectations in satisfactory ways?" While these are not the specific research questions presented by this study, they are the overarching questions that drive the research questions. The study posits the idea that writing tasks are often if not always more complicated than they might seem on the surface, that they bring a host of implicit expectations or desires, and that responding to writing tasks in satisfactory ways is a complex literacy practice which always involves genres in some way.

The present study takes as its focus two writing assignments as presented to a group of fifth-grade students and the responses generated by a number of those students. From among the number of writing tasks presented to students during the data collection period of this study, these were selected because they presented major writing tasks. They also represented tasks that were more complex and took place over a longer span of time than other writing tasks. The intention of the study is to contribute to the knowledge base of the literacy research community of writing and writing instruction for students in the elementary school context. It is focused specifically on intermediate or upper grade students because of the correspondingly increasing complexity of the writing tasks presented to students in this age range, as well as the relative paucity of research on student writing for these grade levels (Chapman, 2006).

As various researchers have pointed out, many of the expectations around language use become implicit: "because the social processes implicated in reading and writing are so often tacit, and because those involved in the processes are typically unaware at a conscious level of the social dimensions of what they are undertaking, it remains for researchers, teachers, and scholars to cast some light on what is going on when we participate in the use of written genres" (Freedman & Medway, 1994, p. 4). Our collective knowledge about what is involved in student appropriation of written genres remains limited, however. As several researchers describe it, "We

are only now beginning to understand (and in rather limited ways) the extent to which children know about and come to know about different genres" (Donovan & Smolkin, 2002, p. 431); "we are only just beginning to understand how best to support children's genre development. Research has recently started to address the issues surrounding children's production of various genres" (Tower, 2003, p. 15).

In short, I seek to address the following research questions:

1. How are writing assignments understood by both teachers and students in intermediate grade elementary school contexts, as these are presented and responded to, respectively?
2. As teachers and students interact, what characterizes that interaction? What disruptions, fissures, congruences, etc. appear as students and teachers interact, with these interactions mediated by the writing tasks?

This second question is seen as a necessary corollary to the first, given that genres in interaction with each other mean people in interaction with others within social contexts. The meeting point, then, between these interlocutors provides a point of analysis for the interaction between genres. I most specifically draw on the concept of 'uptake,' as this is initially elaborated in John Austin's Speech Act Theory (1962), and later elaborated through the melding of Speech Act Theory and Genre Theory, namely by Anne Freedman. Briefly, uptake provides a lens through which to focus on the interaction between the genres of the writing assignment and the student response to it. As will be more fully elaborated in the theory section of this dissertation, such a focus allows for some unpacking of the implications that reside in writing tasks, but are not always more readily apparent.

The organization of the remainder of the dissertation follows the following format: a review of relevant extant literature and a discussion of theoretical concepts drawn on for the

study; a discussion of methodology and methods, including background on the site and the participants; a findings chapter on writing in Reading/Social Studies class; a findings chapter on writing in Writing/Science class; and, following, a chapter with discussion of findings and implications, as well as limitations of the study. The study revealed that what constituted writing tasks or assignments were best thought of as intentions that were embodied in the assignments themselves as well as the teachers' mediation of those assignments. These intentions were realized as various cues that were presented to students, some of which were attended to more than others. Also suggested was that even though the two teachers espoused and worked from similar ideas about writing, how they enacted writing tasks and instructional supports was closely tied to their overall pedagogical approach or beliefs. These pedagogical positions seemed to be grounded in epistemological orientations to the role of student and teacher and the role of literacy in education. Finally, the focal students demonstrated the use of a sort of "default approach" or strategy, through which they seemed to locate the more powerful framing of the assignments in their evaluation criteria. While the writing assignments were manifest in a range and number of cues, some of these had greater legibility for or pull on students.

## **Chapter 2 - Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

As indicated in the introduction, this study took place in an upper-grade elementary school context, with a focus on the relationship between writing tasks and the students' written responses, as the same group of students traveled across the two teacher participants for their social studies/reading instruction and their science/writing instruction. The aim of the study was to extend the collective understanding of the nature of school-based writing tasks for students in this grade range, in how these tasks are conceptualized, mediated, and taken up. What follows is a review of extant literature, which serves to highlight the continued need for further understanding in this field, by situating the current study against the backdrop of current practices and knowledge of writing, as well as methodological choices that have been made to study this issue.

The first body of literature reviewed here presents an overview of theory and practice related to contemporary teaching of writing in the K-12 context, and specifically at the intermediate elementary school level. This section serves to illustrate how the teaching of children's writing has been conceptualized, and to indicate which approaches to writing instruction most influence the field currently. This section responds to the questions, "What does K-12 writing instruction currently look like?" and, "How has it been conceptualized?" The second body of literature provides an overview of the empirical work undertaken to date examining genre and genre knowledge for elementary school-aged students. Because this study takes as its starting point the assertion that genres are "significant variables in literacy acquisition" (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010), this section of the literature review highlights the ways in which genre has been conceptualized and studied for students at the elementary school level. It

highlights in particular the types of research questions that have been posed to date and the types of methodological approaches taken, and reveals that little work has been done on children's writing that draws on more current rhetorical genre theories. Thus, this second section of the review responds to the question, "How has genre within the elementary school context been conceptualized and studied?" The third and final section of the literature review is a discussion of tenets and key examples of qualitative studies of writing grounded in sociocultural perspectives, presented in order to situate the present study design within such a tradition of empirical work. Consistent with key theoretical tenets of sociocultural approaches, the present study theorizes literacy practices as not only skill sets, but also as culturally and historically informed behaviors that are always situated within particular contexts. This section responds to the question, "In what ways have sociocultural theories of literacy been drawn on to study writing?"

The theoretical discussion highlights key concepts drawn primarily from rhetorical genre theory, namely the concept of *uptake*, as this idea has been articulated initially by John Austin, and later elaborated by Anne Freedman. Key concepts from this work form the theoretical framework for the current study and are discussed below. In addition to this background of uptake and genre, the theory section also highlights a model taken from Irene Clark, which brings ideas from uptake and genre to bear on the examination of student writing tasks and essay responses.

### **K-12 Writing Overview**

As revealed through a number of research reviews of the K-12 context, writing is a relatively neglected area when compared with reading and continues to be conceptualized largely in terms of either skills or process. A report issued at the request of the College Board by the National Commission on Writing in America's Schools indicated that across the K-12 spectrum,

students are, in overall terms, not required to write often enough, for extended enough periods of time, or in sufficiently varied ways (2003). The report's findings were such that it considered writing to be the "neglected R" and called for a "writing revolution" as a way to ameliorate young students' challenges in being able to learn to write across varied purposes. Other overviews, namely those of Applebee and Langer, reiterate the findings of the Commission's report. Drawing largely on National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data, Applebee & Langer have found that student achievement scores in writing increased over the last 20 years, but have also for the most part reached a plateau, with gaps between subgroups remaining intact (Applebee, 2000; Applebee & Langer, 2006, 2009). Their findings are consistent in a number of ways with those of the Commission's report, namely that students often report not spending much time writing overall, and not spending extended time writing in school. Applebee & Langer contend that a focus on high-stakes assessments in reading and math has contributed to the neglect of writing as an area of instruction.

While these reviews provide an idea of the amount of time and types of writing students are reported to engage in within the K-12 context overall, less is known about how writing is taught within the K-12 context and the intermediate elementary grades specifically. Referring to grades 4-6, Gilbert and Graham point out that "Unfortunately, very little attention has been devoted to how writing is currently taught in grades 4-6" (Gilbert & Graham, 2010, p. 496). In response to this paucity of knowledge, their survey study found that a large percentage of teachers "reported that they received minimal to no preparation to teach writing through their college teacher education program" (p. 511). The practices that were revealed included the fact that "a majority of teachers reported they establish writing goals, have their students engage in prewriting activities, and use the process approach to writing most of the time" (p. 504). Other

research reviews also indicate that process approaches to writing instruction are the most-widely reported ways of teaching writing (Applebee & Langer 2006, 2009; Cutler & Graham, 2008).

Largely considered the "gold standard" for writing instruction at the elementary grades (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006), process approaches to teaching writing have a history that traces back to post-secondary level composition theorists. As Tobin summarizes, "What made the process movement all the more remarkable was that it was not just occurring in college English departments; it was happening everywhere writing was taught and practiced, from preschool through the work place. What Murray, Elbow, Coles, Emig, Macrorie, and others were suggesting for college composition, educators like Donald Graves (*Writers: Teachers and Children at Work*); Lucy Calkins (*The Art of Teaching Writing*); Nancy Atwell (*In the Middle: New Understanding About Writing, Reading, and Learning*); James Britton (*The Development of Writing Abilities 11-18*); and Tom Romano (*Clearing the Way: Working with Teenage Writers*) were advocating for children in schools K-12" (Tobin, 2001, p. 6). The term itself, "process," has been used with multiple meanings. Boscolo helpfully distinguishes between "process approach and writing processes," wherein "The process approach indicates a method of teaching writing widely adopted in elementary school, emphasizing prewriting and revising. On the other hand, *process* suggests the cognitive approach to writing, which initially represented the process as divided into phases (planning, translating, and reviewing)" (Boscolo, 2008, p. 299).

Although process approaches to teaching writing continue to hold sway, there is great diversity in instructional practices under the umbrella term of process instruction. Some of this variability is captured in a study of fifth-grade teachers who all articulated a process approach method to teaching writing. In their yearlong study of eleven fifth grade teachers, Lipson, Mosenthal, and Daniels (2000) found that even though all the participants used what they called

a process approach, "they had different interpretations of the process approach, creating very different climates and purposes for writing" (p. 227). In that study, the variation of instruction ranged from a very skills-based approach, which focused on sentence construction and correctness to a more open-ended approach in which students were expected to determine topic and genre, and to self-monitor their progress. Across most of the teachers in this study was a view of process as a linear inclusion of steps such as pre-writing, drafting, and revision, as was there a consistent use across the cases of language such as *drafting*, *brainstorming*, *revision*, and *publishing*, all terms common to process approaches and workshop models for teaching writing.

The language associated with writing and writing instruction is a focus in a slightly different line of inquiry that tries to get at how teachers conceptualize writing instruction. McCarthy has drawn on Ivanic's framework of the discourses of writing, in order to help describe the sorts of approaches teachers take to writing and the possible sources of those approaches. McCarthy & Ro (2011) extend the findings of Cutler & Graham (2008), as well as the data analysis of Applebee & Langer (2006; 2009) through interview data with teachers and by drawing on a framework employed by Ivanic (2004) to describe discourses associated with writing and writing instruction: *process*, *creativity*, *skills*, *genre*, *social context*, and *socio-political*. Drawing on this framework, McCarthy & Ro look at data collected on 20 teachers who were part of a larger study to gauge not only their practices, but also the possible influences on those practices. They found three main types of discourses in their language: the discourses of process, of skills, and of genre. The discourse of genre is something that for McCarthy and Ro represents a significant shift taking place in writing instruction. This is to say that these researchers have highlighted a change in discourse around writing and writing instruction, a change that shifts away at least slightly from the hegemony of process or skills perspectives.

However, McCarthy and Ro also note that when a discourse of genre was apparent, it generally revealed a conceptualization of genre in terms of static forms.

### **Children's Genre Knowledge**

Even though genre has not been well attended to in matters of writing instruction for young students, as Amy Devitt reminds us, teachers "all must teach using genres, in the texts we have students read and in the assignments we have students write" (Devitt, 2009, p. 343). As Devitt's reminder signals, genres are always in play and at work in the teaching of literacy to students, including those in the elementary school context. Genres have traditionally been conceptualized primarily in terms of their textual characteristics, and genre knowledge has largely been measured by how students are able to replicate those textual features. And while knowledge and replication of textual features are important aspects of how students learn to write in given genres, these aspects are only part of the endeavor of writing. Especially over the past several decades, genre has been theorized in more varied ways, allowing literacy scholars to not only consider the textual features of genre, but also to highlight the kinds of social functions genres accomplish and the ways in which genres help frame our very thinking. As for the kinds of social functions genres help accomplish, rhetorical genre theorists have notably drawn attention to the work genres do. Rather than consider genres solely as textual forms, genre theorists have come to think of them as "social actions" (Miller, 1984), in which the forms serve as a sort of go-to place for people to respond in various discursive situations.

Studies focused on genre in one form or another have done much to contribute to an increasing knowledge base regarding young students' genre knowledge and acquisition. They have served to demonstrate that students' acquisition of written genres is developing and emergent (Chapman, 1994, 1995; Donovan & Smolkin, 2002; Kamberelis, 1999; Langer 1985).

They have also served to demonstrate that even very young students have a sense of genre difference even before being able to accurately transcribe their own writing independently (Donovan, 2001; Kamberelis, 1999). They have shown that students are able to acquire generic conventions differentially depending upon the type and amount of scaffolded support provided (Kamberelis & Bovino, 1999). They have also demonstrated that even young students are able to make modifications in their writing in ways that takes into account their audience, thus revealing some degree of rhetorical awareness (Burrell & Beard, 2010; Frank, 1992; Wollman-Bonilla, 2000, 2001). This body of research, taken in its totality, extends the work of earlier research into literacy acquisition and takes into account genre learning where genres are defined as more static forms (e.g., Bissex, 1980; Newkirk, 1987; Pappas 1993).

Of the empirical studies to date at the elementary school level that examine questions of genre, the majority continue to employ formalist definitions of genres to gauge genre learning. Some, such as Kamberelis (1999), take note of the ways in which recent theorizing has informed ideas about genre, yet still recognize the structural analysis these researchers invoke in looking at student work and students' genre acquisition. Of the cumulative body of research to date which employs concepts of rhetorical awareness and the social nature of genres, the work of Chapman and Wollman-Bonilla stand out. Chapman's examination of first-grade students (1999) is framed within her tripartite model of learning genres, learning about genres, and learning through genres. In some ways, this model highlights some of the principal concerns and foci of genre theorists, namely the idea of genre repertoire, genre awareness, and the cognitive/epistemic possibilities of learning through writing. In this study, Chapman frames the rhetorical and social nature of children's writing as being in response to the Writing Workshop employed in that classroom.

The work of Wollman-Bonilla employs, in one case (2000), concepts from Sydney School traditions of genre approaches, as she seeks to gauge whether such explicitness does or does not impede deep learning of genre. She argues that such explicitness does not in fact detract from students' ability to learn new genres, arguing in essence against the case for immersion in genres in context only. In another study, again with first graders, she attempts to see how students are able to "recontextualize" their genre knowledge as they meet the requirements of a new writing task. While her findings indicate that the students are, in fact, able to, the study provides evidence for how they do accomplish this feat with highly structured tasks outside the normal parameters of classroom instruction and practice. Her concepts, though, provide rich theoretical material for considering the concept of recontextualization on the part of elementary students.

Deborah Hicks' study (1997) provides another different and very useful approach to studying genres and genre learning on the part of young students. While primarily a theoretical essay, Hicks also presents evidence and findings from a case study with a working-class first-grade student that indicates the child's ability to, in Hicks' words, "appropriate" the school science genre of her grade level. Her analysis is based upon an examination of the ways in which the classroom teacher made such appropriation possible, through scaffolding and questioning within a context that employed hands-on science activities. The bulk of Hicks' theoretical discussion engages the question of non-mainstream students gaining access to school discourses. She argues that educational researchers have too often narrowly conceptualized literacy learning as the acquisition of formal or textual characteristics. Drawing on Bakhtinian literary theory, Hicks argues for a fuller appropriation of the more powerfully situated discourses by members of non-middle class groups.

Tower, in her review of studies using a genre perspective on informational texts (2003), found that the great majority of those on intermediate or upper grade elementary school students took what she labeled an "outside-in" approach. That is, those studies tended to measure how children's writing met a set of pre-established criteria, such as those of standardized or informal assessments. She found that most studies of students in the primary grades (K-3) took an "inside-out" approach, essentially applying a developmental perspective, which measured how students' writing demonstrated characteristics in line with a developmental trajectory.

In its totality, the extant body of empirical research on children's genre knowledge and awareness has generally been framed within concepts of acquisition, which has in turn led to a focus on textual forms and patterns. While this theoretical conceptualization of genres is helpful in demonstrating how students acquire these forms, it does less to demonstrate the ways in which young students are able to see writing requirements as calling for flexible application of their genre knowledge, as detailed in both the CCSS and the WPA outcomes statement. While it isn't clear to what degree young students are developmentally able to learn rhetorical awareness or to understand writing tasks as reflective of larger social practices, the work by Wollman-Bonilla and Hicks, among others, point to young students' ability to demonstrate audience awareness as well as the ability to more fully appropriate the discursive practices of school.

### **Sociocultural Theory and Writing**

This review of sociocultural theory and its relevance for the study of writing and writing instruction helps to situate the current study within an appropriate research paradigm. As will be more fully indicated in the methodology section of this dissertation, a theoretical orientation - and its epistemological assumptions - should align with the particular methodology and research methods chosen for any given study. I outline several principal tenets consistent across various

iterations of sociocultural theory, their relevance for the current study, and identify how some of these principles have been drawn on in studies of children's writing and writing instruction.

Paul Prior's overview of sociocultural theory in writing research provides a helpful shorthand to define some key aspects of this theoretical approach: "Sociocultural theory argues that activity is situated in concrete interactions that are simultaneously improvised locally and mediated by prefabricated, historically provided tools and practices, which range from machines, made objects, semiotic means (e.g., languages, genres, iconographies), and institutions . . ." (Prior, 2006, p. 55). These concrete interactions, such as those which take place daily in countless classrooms, are mediated, then, by historically provided tools such as curricula, professional development materials, or teaching practices promoted in teacher-preparation courses, for example.

It is because of this mediated quality that texts can be seen as co-authored and writing as distributed and mediated. As Prior reminds us, "teachers in schools are always coauthors (often dominant ones) in students' writing as teacher take up many roles in the authorship function" (p. 58). And later on the same page, "The fact that students are typically held fully accountable as authors is thus an interesting cultural practice." Prior's reminder is helpful to keep writing in mind as a co-construction, often influenced by student and teacher as well as other students. Here is where concepts from sociocultural theory are helpful - to highlight the fact that the writing that students do is not produced solely by them, nor does it emanate solely from their minds. Rather, that writing is mediated by their experiences reading texts and other semiotic means, by their histories in school, by their histories using language at home, with extended family, and in other aspects of the communities they inhabit.

The focus of sociocultural perspectives on interactions, then, has implications for where meaning lies. Englert, Mariage, and Dunsmore (2006) also indicate the focus of sociocultural perspectives: "Rather than viewing knowledge as existing inside the heads of individual participants or in the external world, sociocultural theory views meaning as being negotiated at the intersection of individuals, culture, and activity" (2006, p. 208). Much like the transactional theory of reading elaborated by Rosenblatt (1938; 1978), sociocultural perspectives on writing and writing instruction locate meaning in the interactions between those parties involved, as these same people employ tools such as language or ideas as they engage in the process of writing. This focus on the mediational role of tools draws clearly on ideas attributed to Vygotsky (1978) and the neo-Vygotskyan ideas of Wertsch (1991).

Sociocultural theories have been applied to the study of literacy in a wide range of ways. One of these ways draws heavily on anthropological methods, one of the most notable among them Heath's ethnographic study of three communities within the same general area (1983). Her work was especially important in revealing how social class and ethnicity had relevance for how members of these three communities engaged in language and literacy practices. Work carried out by Scribner & Cole (1981) has also used anthropologic means to reveal how people use literacy and orality in different ways. Some of the work on literacy within this tradition has looked at how people in workplaces and other settings use literacy (e.g., Bazerman, 1994; Beaufort, 1999). Much of this work has served to draw attention to the highly contextual nature of writing and the social influences on what counts as successful writing. Within the middle school and elementary context, recent work has begun to take on the issue of how young students learn to use language in more disciplinary or content-area ways (Cervetti & Pearson, 2012; Moje, 2008; Heller, 2010; Wineburg, 2001). Work has also been carried out to examine how people

engage in literacy practices across contexts such as home/community and formal school sites (e.g., Brandt, 2001; Moll, Amanti, Neef, & González, 1992; Hull & Rose, 1989). Some of the work in this area informs us that there is often more in common across these contexts than we might suspect. And, a body of work has taken place in formal educational contexts, including work by Dyson, Kamberelis, and Gutiérrez.

Much of Dyson's work has highlighted the multiple interactions that young children (generally kindergarten and first grade) engage in with their teachers and peers as they engage in writing, as well as the influences from popular culture that students draw on for their writing. Working primarily with students from diverse backgrounds in urban contexts, Dyson has helped to reveal some of the complexities in these students' literacy. For example, even within what is described as a restrictive context - with high-stakes assessment and closely monitored curricula - children drew on popular culture and their interactions with peers to operate within an "unofficial space" as they engaged in writing (1997; 1999). By doing so, students exhibited degrees of agency to negotiate the literacy curriculum in ways that often went overlooked. George Kamberelis' work in formal education settings has also helped illuminate the work of young students. Focusing on young readers and writers (kindergarten and first), Kamberelis' study revealed how even students at this early age were clearly able to recognize and employ different uses of language according to various types of writing. In creating science reports and narratives, children in this study employed different lexical and rhetorical choices, even when not directly prompted to do so (Kamberelis, 1999; Kamberelis & Bovino, 1999). Kamberelis & Bovino employed sociocultural-oriented methods to gauge the ways in which artifacts - in this case, models of writing - serve a scaffolding function (1999), finding that overall students were much more able to generate forms of discourse when asked to create known forms with models. And

finally, Kamberelis has also drawn on sociocultural methods to look at how voiced-ness appears in the school work of students (Kamberelis & Greene, 1992). These two researchers found that during enactments of science instruction and learning, students often drew on a variety of voices from both school and popular culture influences. Kris Gutierrez' work has employed sociocultural perspectives in examining primarily the literacy learning experiences of Latino students in elementary school contexts. Her studies help reveal some specific ways in which school-favored discourses are often incongruent with the discourse practices of the minority students. (Gutiérrez, 1992; Gutiérrez, Morales, & Martínez, 2009; Gutierrez, Rhymes, & Larson, 1995).

## **Theory**

**Austinian speech act theory.** In his Speech Act Theory, John Austin identifies what he labels as *uptake* as a key concept in describing the rhetorical nature of language use. In his speeches that became compiled and known as *How to do things with words* (1962), Austin discusses uptake as a central part of efforts to discursively attain one's goals. As an example, should someone - an interlocutor - want to have his host close the window, he might comment about how cold the breeze feels coming in through the window. In speech act theory terms, the guest's articulation of the words, 'the breeze coming in is cold' constitutes a *locutionary* act, or the act of saying something. The fact that such a statement has some potential of enactment speaks to the *illocutionary* force of that act, be it an order, a supplication, etc. And, finally, the fully realized and intended result can be considered the *perlocutionary* effect. As Austin indicates, when locution serves an illocutionary force and certain conditions are met, perlocution is realized - it is that realization that constitutes *uptake* for Austin.

**Freadman's complication of uptake.** Anne Freadman draws on genre theory in order to better account for the multiple factors that inform uptake. There are three concepts elaborated by Freadman that prove especially useful in the present analysis. First is her complication of the more structuralist notion of Austinian uptake to better account for how uptake might be conditioned. A second is the way in which Freadman highlights the bi-directional nature of genres involved in instances of uptake. And, finally, Freadman highlights selection in ways that Austin's concept of uptake does not, and thus shifting attention from intention alone to both intention and response. This highlighting of selection also better accounts for what might constitute the range of possible responses.

Freadman's first step is to critique Austin's notion for being too structuralist and ahistorical. Freadman provides an example of her own father, who had earlier been involved in an important capital punishment case in Australia known as the Ryan Case. On previous occasions, Freadman informs us, she and her siblings had tried to get her father to speak about the case, but to no avail. On a later occasion, she asked her father not to narrate that story, but rather simply for permission to mention his name in conjunction with it. His response surprises her, for he says he will narrate his participation. Her father's response, then, is informed by previous questions, something not accounted for in Austinian concepts of uptake. Freadman's example helps highlight the ways in which uptakes have memory: "So I shall say right away that uptake - and not merely elderly men - have memories - long, ramified, intertextual, and intergeneric memories - much longer memories, I think, than Austinian speech act theory normally attributes to them"(2002, p. 40). Essentially, Freadman's notion of memory helps us to remember that discursive interactions, although they may happen within a relatively brief period

of time, are foregrounded and informed by many actions and patterns of actions that have come before them.

Another helpful complication provided by Freedman is to discuss uptake in terms of the relationship between at least a pair of genres. In her words, she discusses it as the "bi-directional relation that holds between, minimally, a pair of texts" (2002, p. 40). Because genres are always involved with other genres, it is helpful to think of them in what would be described in Bahktinian language as "dialogic." Genres can be seen as cultural templates or discursive 'go-to' spaces that people draw on in order to interact with others. Genres are socially constructed, flexible discursive means for responding to situations that become recognized as recurring. Thus, as interlocutors go to genres as they respond to other genres, their responses can become conditioned by their previous experiences with the same genres.

The third major way in which Freedman extends Austinian theory on uptake shifts focus to selection, that is, she highlights and elaborates on response, discussing some of the complications that might be involved. Freedman is quick to point out that uptake is not automatic, which is part of her dissatisfaction with Austin's description. Instead, for Freedman uptake starts with "selection," with the taking of an object and then responding. "Object" can be read as "objective," and as Freedman notes, the responding interlocutor chooses from a set of "possibles." Those possibles are informed by the "memory" of uptakes, which includes one's experiences with given situations and genres. In Freedman's example, uptake is "what happens when you accept an invitation to a conference." Such an acceptance includes recognizing the invitation as such, a phenomenon Freedman describes as "'taking it as'" - that is, where the interpretant or uptake text confirms the status of the initiating text by responding to it in a socially expected manner, such as the invitation acceptance responds to the invitation. Uptake,

then, is what happens between texts. Importantly, it also involves the multiple factors that are involved in generating those texts in the first place. In the case of writing assignments for fifth-grade students, these factors include state-requested assessment for purposes of evaluation, the previous experiences of students with similar requests for writing, and the interactions between students and teachers which establish or locate a common ground.

**Clark's application of genre theory to writing assignments.** Irene Clark's analysis of college-level writing assignments and student responses using Freedman's concept of uptake (Clark, 2005) presents a helpful model of analysis of precisely the relationship between writing task and response which forms the focus of this study. Focusing first on the writing prompt itself, Clark draws on a metaphor from rhetorician George Dillon: "a writing assignment more resembles a musical score than a computer program - that is, it consists of marks cueing or prompting an enactment or realization by the reader, rather than a code requiring deciphering" (np). The metaphor highlights the complexity of writing tasks, implying that by nature they can be ambiguous and are laden with assumptions. The challenge to a desired enactment or realization by the reader is how to interpret and act on the implications of writing assignments, and to thus demonstrate the rhetorical awareness and flexibility emphasized by the WPA outcomes statement and the CCSS expectations for writing.

Key in Clark's analysis is a careful examination of the writing prompts to unpack some of their implicit expectations. Clark's analysis is especially helpful in posing two central questions relevant to the present analysis: What are the implicit assumptions of a writing prompt?; and, as a corollary, What are the unexpressed expectations of a writing prompt? As Clark argues, the writing assignment "is a genre that seems more transparent than it actually is" (np). Although the following description applies to college-level writing tasks, it has relevance for writing at the

earlier grades: "Although students have encountered a number of writing assignments in high school, the college writing assignment contains unstated assumptions unfamiliar to students, particularly novice students who must, as Bartholomae terms it, 'invent' the university" (np).

While not reinventing the university, students at the upper grade elementary level are nonetheless left to determine what it is that a given writing assignment requires, and in this way are expected to interpret and construct the educational system in which they participate. As Clark puts in, "Presumably, writing assignments reflect the concept of university education at a particular historical moment, and therefore are influenced by how education is viewed within a political/social context." In a similar manner, writing assignments for students at the intermediate elementary grades are part of the concept of an appropriate elementary school education. As indicated in the CCSS, much of this concept is predicated on fostering the ability for students to succeed in a post-secondary context.

Clark's analysis also reveals other complexities involved in students meeting the expectations indicated and intimated in assignment prompts, complexities which are generally left unstated in analyses of intermediate grade students' writing: "to write an effective essay, the student needs to assume an appropriate textual self suitable for the writing task, project how that self will impact an intended audience, consider or perhaps fictionalize that audience, and adhere to suitable conventions of subject, approach, organization and style." This description of what is involved in student response reveals a key element of the complexity of writing tasks, by drawing attention to the fact that a writer must assume and construct a particular persona or identity; that the writer must attend to the contingencies of his/her audience; and, that the writer should do so using already-established linguistic conventions. It also complicates the idea of "voice" as this is typically conceptualized for students at the elementary grades. As Boscolo

notes (2008), the concept of voice is typically vaguely presented, and where more well-articulated, tends to emanate from personal growth models of writing.

Thus, from Clark's analysis, three salient aspects are most helpful in the present analysis. First is the idea that writing prompts bring implicit expectations, some of which are unfamiliar to many of the students they address. Second, that students engage in interpretation of writing prompts, attempts which are based largely on those students' understanding of the larger schooling system in which they function. And, third, that writing assignments require the construction of a type of identity as writer, an authorial performance that establishes a particular identity. These three aspects will be drawn on in the analysis chapters in order to help unpack the writing tasks that were presented to students.

In short, the review of literature of three areas - current knowledge and practices in K-12 contexts, genre learning for young students, and sociocultural studies of writing - provides a context and motivation for the current study. Writing is a relatively under-theorized and understudied phenomenon in the K-12 classroom context. Within that paucity, however, genre knowledge has been highlighted as a significant variable that bears empirical study for students at these grade levels. Sociocultural tenets and related empirical studies to date point to fitting methodologies for studying students' genre learning, and reveal that particular genre theories, while potentially illuminating, have yet to be drawn on in empirical studies of young students. Rhetorical genre theory provides theoretical concepts that can aid in the literacy research community's understand of genres in interaction in K-12 contexts, specifically Anne Freedman's interpretation of Austin's uptake theory. The intention driving this dissertation study has been precisely that attempt to bring this theory to bear on the writing of students in the 4-6 grade contexts.

## **Chapter 3 - Methodology and Methods**

### **General Theoretical Considerations Regarding Research**

I begin this section with a discussion of qualitative research methods in general, and some of the tenets of those methods. This is a key starting point because research endeavors always take place under a set of assumptions - about the phenomena they examine and about empirical knowledge itself - but often without an articulation of those assumptions. Carter & Little (2007) reference the much earlier work of Kaplan (cited in Carter & Little) to draw attention to a distinction between "logic-in-use" and "reconstructed logic" (p. 1318-1318), the latter referring to the conscious attempt to describe why particular methods are considered appropriate for a given study, and the former term referring to the underlying assumptions which are taken for granted. While Carter & Little draw on this distinction as a way to narrate their discussion of qualitative empirical work more generally, such a distinction aids in any research endeavor to help unpack its sets of assumptions, and it is within this spirit of reconstructing logic that I attempt to highlight theoretical assumptions. Therefore, by articulating the epistemological orientation undergirding this study, and linking that orientation with the methodological tradition I draw on, and to then align those methodological choices to the actual methods employed, I am establishing an alignment of those aspects, and to thus work toward greater rigor in the endeavor of empirical qualitative research (Carter & Little, 2006; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005). Borrowing again from Kaplan, Carter & Little note how methodology can be defined as "the study - the description, the explanation, and the justification - of methods, and not the methods themselves," (Kaplan, cited in Carter & Little, p. 1318) first to distinguish between methodology and methods and then to describe what methodology includes.

As Carter & Little (2006) and Kamberelis & Dimitriadis (2005) remind us, in qualitative

research studies, there should exist an appropriate "alignment" of epistemological assumptions, the methodological tradition(s) drawn on, and the actual methods employed. Such an alignment serves to promote rigor in qualitative research, an issue that has had particular relevance in discussions about empirical studies, especially as referring to qualitative work (See, for example, the discussion of this point in the special issue on scientific research and education in a 2008 issue of *Educational Researcher*). Part of rigor, as these authors would argue, rests in the theoretical consistency or alignment from epistemological orientation to the methods chosen to engage in empirical study. Qualitative research often reflects this epistemological starting point, and is often premised, therefore, upon the meaning that participants make or construct of their situations.

A qualitative case study approach is an appropriate methodological approach given the research questions of this study as well as the epistemological premises upon which it is predicated. A case study approach first and foremost privileges what can be termed "naturalistic settings," (Denzin, 1978; Guba & Lincoln, 1994), that is, those places and contexts in which research subjects or participants are actively engaged, such as schools and classrooms or workplaces and offices, and in a way which also aims to present the participants' perspectives. A "naturalistic" setting might be best contrasted with an experimental one, such as when a researcher might present writing prompts for students, which have been designed to test specific variables. A case study approach is also a sound methodological fit because of its non-generalizable nature. By definition, the small sample sizes and data collection and analysis methods of case studies locate and thus limit discussion and findings to the subjects or participants studied. Case studies, in their cumulative nature, serve to fill out the research field and knowledge base by cumulatively developing a body of knowledge. Flyvbjerg presents a very

helpful discussion of the value of qualitative case studies. Rather than work towards a type of predictive or universal knowledge, qualitative case study research helps to generate "concrete, context-dependent knowledge" helpful in its totality to the understanding of human affairs (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 224).

It is in this vein of attempting to generate context-dependent knowledge that the current study was conceptualized and undertaken. The specific steps taken are indicated below, and are consistent with case study methodology that includes participant interviews, extended observation in classrooms, and the collection and analysis of numerous artifacts. The epistemological orientation I draw on is best understood as consistent with a sociocultural approach, as outlined previously in the literature review. Essentially, this approach is predicated on the idea that constructs such as "writing" or school itself, in addition to having a discrete and tangible reality, are social constructs, often established over time and as a result of complex sets of human and material interactions.

### **Context for the Study**

**The school site: selection.** The school in which the study was conducted was selected in part as a sample of convenience but also as a purposive choice given the focus of my study. As multiple researchers have pointed out, there continues to be a relative dearth of research on students from diverse backgrounds, an especially relevant need given the shifts in demographics which have occurred in public schools (e.g., Albertini, 2008; Ball, 2002; Ball & Ellis, 2008; Chapman, 2006; Gutiérrez, 1992). Therefore, I consciously sought a site with a diverse student body make up in order to contribute to a growing body of research looking specifically at students of color, and students from working-class backgrounds. While the present study does not provide for data collection that target variables such as ethnicity or social class, its analysis

does take into account the students' backgrounds as potentially revealing for the research questions. The demographic information about the school site, detailed below, reflect this sampling purposefulness. The site was the same in which I conducted an earlier, small-scale study on teacher perceptions of a then-current writing curriculum, and therefore provided a readily-accessible site. While teachers in the earlier study were not a part of the current study, one of them served as a link to her grade level colleagues about the possibility of locating my study in the school site. The principal of the school was familiar with my research questions from conversations related to the earlier study, and was supportive of my efforts. He eventually forwarded my inquiries to the appropriate district personnel in order to request district approval.

**The school: description.** Cherry Creek Elementary is located within the Ridge View school district in the Pacific Northwest, outside a major city but within the greater metropolitan area (Again, all names for sites and participants are pseudonyms). Student demographics for the school site for the year of this study were as follows: Total student count: approximately 700; Asian: 16%; Pacific Islander: 8%; Black: 19%; Hispanic: 35%; White: 16%; bi-racial: 6%. Indicators of socio-economic and language minority status: qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch: 80%; transitional bilingual: 32%.

The general area is considered a major "receiving" location for immigrants from some African countries as well as a destination for families from Samoan and other Pacific Islander categories. Overall, then, the population is literally quite diverse ethnically and culturally. While many of the children themselves are first-generation U.S. born, many of their parents are immigrants. The median sale price for homes for the year of the study was approximately \$160,000, whereas the median price home in the larger metropolitan city was about \$330,000. From information given by the teachers, a good number of the students in their classes lived in

rental dwellings, many of those in large apartment complexes within the attendance boundaries of the school. During the home visits, it was clear that many children and families knew each other not only from school, but also from living nearby in these buildings. Families with greater financial means also rented homes in the area, sometimes sharing the costs among several families. And yet others were homeowners. The school site is located about two miles from a major international airport, with a major corridor of hotels, restaurants, and other service-oriented businesses. According to informal information provided by parents and students, a number of family members of students worked in the service-industry related to airport business. The school district was beneficiary of bonds passed within the last decade or so, resulting in a good number of new schools being built. Cherry Creek was a relatively new school, with construction completed three years prior to this study.

**School site: background.** There were three fifth-grade teachers for the school during the year of my study. As part of a "departmentalization" approach, each of the three teachers taught one or two subject areas: one teacher taught math; another reading and social studies; and the third writing and science. Given my focus on writing, I originally intended to locate the data collection only in the writing/science teacher's classroom. However, in order to gather data across a greater range of writing tasks and teaching methods, I eventually solicited the participation of the reading/social studies teacher, as that class involved a fair amount of writing as well. In order to get a sense of the teachers, their classrooms, and the students they worked with, I observed several class sessions to gain a general impression of the setting in the sense of Dyson and Geneshi's idea of "casing the joint" (Dyson & Geneshi, 2005). In addition to conducting several informal observations, I began serving in a volunteer capacity, first by accompanying two of the teachers (the math and writing/science teacher) as they made home

visits during the first several weeks of the school year, serving as an interpreter for Spanish language families<sup>1</sup>. In addition to their more immediate purpose, these interpretation activities helped me become more familiar to a number of families and the students themselves. I informed the science/writing teacher of my general study proposal, what was involved for participants, and asked if she would consider participating, which she did. Ms. Thompson, the social studies/reading teacher, later agreed to participate in the study.

As the process for formal institutional approval took place, from the university as well as the district, I continued in a volunteer capacity by not only observing during the writing/science teacher's homeroom class, but by providing assistance to students as they individually worked on tasks. Again, this engagement allowed me to not only participate in a general way, but began to give me an emerging sense of the children as individuals and as literacy learners. Once approval was granted, I began to solicit the writing/science teacher's suggestions for possible focal students for her subject area, informing her that I sought students who she felt would be willing participants, who might be able to verbalize their writing processes, and who generated sufficient writing to produce samples that could be analyzed. Rather than focus on particular categories such as "average achieving" or "high achieving," I sought students who would generate a data set that lent itself to analysis, and students who would be inclined to participate. As this was not an intervention study, I was not necessarily interested in students who would serve as exemplars for any particular range of performance. That is, the study was not intended to capture the writing habits or abilities of high-achieving students or students with significant struggles. The study was instead intended to describe the writing activities of students more generally, and a robust data

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<sup>1</sup> As a certified interpreter and former teacher, I was qualified and certified to do so, requirements consistent with the ethical principles of the major interpretation governing bodies.

set was the primary criterion. Once the Social Studies teacher, Ms. Thompson, agreed to participate, I also asked her to nominate several students according to the same criteria.

Ms. Bass served, in essence, as the homeroom teacher of this group of students. Also, as I initiated the study with her as participant, it was there that she announced my role to students, my longer-term intentions, and then allowed me to address students once institutional approval was received. Ms. Bass (a pseudonym, as are all names for sites and participants) agreed to allow me to carry out an initial interview, and to continue in some classroom volunteer duties as I carried out data collection. Because of the "departmentalized" nature of instruction for the fifth graders that year, students began the day in what was considered their "homeroom" class with their teacher of record, rotated to each of the other two subject area teachers during the day as well as to "specialist" teachers such as music and physical education, and then ended their day in their homeroom class.

## **Participants**

### **Teachers**

#### ***Ms. Thompson***

*General background.* Ms. Thompson - the social studies/reading teacher - had taught for 12 years prior to the beginning of the school year of this study. She had worked all of those years at Cherry Creek, including prior to the construction of the new school site. She had taught in primary grades as well as the intermediate elementary grades, and reported enjoying teaching third grade the most, but also enjoying working with the older students. Ms. Thompson studied literature and writing for her undergraduate degree and was quite invested in ideas of having children find books they loved and could thus immerse themselves in.

*Classroom and curriculum.* Ms. Thompson's classroom was very organized, with books clearly labeled by genres in plastic containers on shelves; other containers were labeled and used for purposes such as collecting student work, storing student journals, and keeping books for reading groups. One section of the classroom was designated for all students to come sit down for lessons, discussions, and other such activities. Ms. Thompson's class was also well-organized in terms of routines and procedures. Students were given a clear sense of expectations for where they should be at given times in the classroom, procedures for getting and putting away materials and lining up for their next class or making transitions within the classroom. For example, students came to the rug area in front of the teacher daily during part of the class time. They were aware of the protocols for such transitions - they knew just where to sit, what materials to bring, if any, and to be ready quickly for the lessons. Students were clear on who they were partnered with for discussions in dyads or small group discussion on the rug. The teacher had protocols in place for students to line up for transitions, lunch, recess, and other such things.

Ms. Thompson's curriculum or classroom instruction was organized around various themes and practices. One theme that was evident across a number of weeks was the idea of citizenship. This idea was part of the discussion within a social studies unit on the colonial United States as well as the Classroom-Based Assessment which students engaged in toward the end of the school year, and which is discussed at further length in the findings section of this dissertation. Under the broader concept of citizenship, Ms. Thompson's lessons, discussion, and prompts appeared linked to two guiding questions: What are the rights of individuals?; What are those individuals' responsibilities to the larger society in which they reside?

*Pedagogy.* Ms. Thompson's pedagogical orientation reflected an array of practices, and she proved to be overall more directive than Ms. Bass. During the reading block, for example,

Ms. Thompson had a number of students reading independently, and they were to follow norms of maintaining quiet, and selecting a text of interest. At the same time, she worked directly with small groups of students in a guided reading approach. There she guided a discussion on a common reading selection, working to have students provide an interpretation supported by evidence from the text. A common move was to ask students what specific section of the text led them to their conclusion or claim.

*Lovin' it: Ms. Thompson's ethos.* A significant aspect of her pedagogical orientation was the way Ms. Thompson valued a particular orientation to reading and writing. She sought a type of investment from students that could be described as organic in nature. That is, she sought a type of disposition towards reading and writing that emanated from an inherent and naturally-occurring interest in these activities, consistent with a humanist standpoint. As indicated, Ms. Thompson revealed in her interview having studied writing and literature as a university student, and that she personally enjoyed reading and writing: "I was a writing major in college, so I value it, obviously, and I also was an English major so I obviously value reading and writing, I love it" (Interview, Thompson). She sought a similar type of enthusiasm or excitement on the part of her students toward the language arts. During reading time, as students began engaging with their reading material, she asked at times, "Are you loving it?" or, "Are you feeling it" (FN 2-12-12). She was a cheerleader of sorts for the language arts, trying to motivate students toward the intrinsic reward of engaging in reading material that might prove compelling for them. This ethos was further echoed in other interview data:

I think for me, as a human, it's reading poetry and reading things I'm interested in, like historical fiction and getting like excited about it. You know, I don't have to like graphic

novels, but, man, I will pretend I'm excited about them for the kids' sakes. So, just finding things that you love and trying to convey it" (Interview, Thompson).

Ms. Thompson found interest and value in the language arts, and sought or hoped for students to do the same. Even in considering writing pedagogy, when asked about possible influences on her teaching of writing, Ms Thompson responded in a similar manner: "So, you know, training, great - but, love of reading and writing I think that's kind of important" (Interview, Thompson). In essence, Ms. Thompson hoped to have students take on a particular identity as literate subjects - she wanted them to be drawn into their reading and writing tasks and to willingly engage in ideas. This desire to have students invest themselves in certain ways in their writing held true in her teaching of the major writing assignment to be discussed in this dissertation. She wanted students to be invested in the underlying purposes of the writing assignment, while also wanting them to be aware of the scoring criteria and how to respond to it, which created tensions in the uptake of the writing assignment.

***Ms. Bass***

*General background.* At the time of the study, Ms. Bass - the science/writing teacher - had been a teacher for about 15 years, all of that time within the same district. As she narrated her professional career, before transferring to the newly opened Cherry Creek Elementary, she had worked for a number of years at another school in the same district, one known as a small, community school in a nearby yet more affluent section of the district. It prided itself on relatively high parental involvement. This school merged with Cherry Creek once the new school was built and the older site was closed.

While she had not originally planned a career in teaching, once completing her undergraduate studies, Ms. Bass decided to pursue a teaching credential and a teaching position,

a job she described as challenging but rewarding. She was excited about the departmentalizing concept, hoping it would give her an opportunity to work through lessons several times, and therefore help her to improve those lessons and reduce her time preparing for them. She also demonstrated enthusiasm for going on home visits with the math teacher, as a way to work collegially and to get to know the students' families better. She was very receptive to my conducting the study in her classroom and was thankful for the interpretation support during home visits and for assisting one student in particular during my time in the classroom.<sup>2</sup>

Ms. Bass also reported being excited about teaching writing as part of her science/writing block - a subject she said she had not been able to focus on too much in recent years because of district emphasis on other curricular areas - as well as an approach she'd been reading about for using writing in science instruction. Ms. Bass was recognized as taking the lead on some of the school activities related to science, and had attended a number of additional in-service training modules on teaching science. Additionally, she had coordinated the school's science fair in the past and did so this academic year as well. In short, then, Ms. Bass was an experienced teacher who embraced teaching writing and, within the school context, was seen as knowledgeable about science and science instruction.

*Pedagogical Orientation.* Ms. Bass embraced an approach in which students were largely expected to take responsibility for significant aspects of the activities they engaged in and, thus, their learning. Through her instruction, the idea of the responsible student was a central motif for Ms. Bass. This stance was revealed through interview data and observations of interaction patterns, classroom procedures, assignments, homework, writing tasks, and science activities. Ms. Bass seemed to work purposely to not be overly directive with students. Sometimes, she provided reminders for students about the expectations for behavior in the classroom. At other

times, she posed questions that seemed intended to have students think about what behaviors were expected or what students should be focused on in their assignments. Sometimes, in lieu of overly prescriptive directions for how to complete writing, Ms. Bass provided a block of time that she felt necessary for the students to complete the assignments. While Ms. Bass also told students what they should be doing and disciplined students as she felt necessary, overall her teaching style could be described as one in which she worked to be minimally directive. Given that she saw the role of teacher largely as one of providing well-thought out assignments and providing feedback to students as they engaged in these, she also seemed to interpret the role of student as a correspondingly responsible person.

*Pedagogy and writing instruction.* As part of her pedagogical orientation, Ms. Bass favored a workshop model for writing, at least for writing that she considered "personal writing" or creative writing, such as personal narratives and poetry. She discussed having a vision of an active workshop model, during which students would be working on stories and she would be able to circulate to provide suggestions for how they might "tweak" their writing in order to improve it. Ms. Bass also talked about personal writing as a way to give students an easily accessible place to engage in writing. As Ms. Bass described it, "at the start of the school year I want the students to feel comfortable with writing and so I begin with, um, more confidence building writing, where I allow everything and I'm not critical of anything. Um, I'm just trying to get them to write and so we begin with personal narratives" (Bass, Interview 1). Ms. Bass' discussion of having students begin with personal writing, and her ideas of a workshop structure, echo very strongly the tenets of certain process-oriented approaches to the teaching of writing. These approaches, and notably as articulated in the works of Donald Graves (1983), Lucy Calkins (1986), Nancy Atwell (1998), and others in that vein, stress the importance of student

choice, of students writing about topics they are knowledgeable about and come generally from their own experiences, and the role of students as decision-makers over how to proceed in their writing. In short, this approach highly values expressivist orientations to writing, the fostering of greater student autonomy in writing, and a "voice" that reflects spontaneity, individuality and originality (Albertini, 2008; Crank, 2010).

In her classroom, process writing was enacted through a series of steps, which were reinforced with several reminders posted at one end of the room. A photo accompanied each heading for the stages of writing process (Appendices A & B). For example, "Drafting" was accompanied by a picture of someone's hand writing with a pen on paper; and, "Nurturing and developing a seed idea" was represented with a picture of someone planting a seed. The other steps in writing included "Editing," "Revising [Radical Surgery]," and "Publishing." The photos in Appendices A & B also reflect how students were asked to monitor their current status in reference to the writing process steps. Each student's name was written on a Post-it, and each name was placed under the step or stage, such as Publishing. Students were directed to move their names as they were engaged in a new step in the writing process. The visual created for the teacher by the Post-its provided her with a very convenient snapshot of how many students might be nearing the conclusion for a given assignment; it also let her know who was taking long to move on to another stage. The requirement for students to move their names is not only an effective classroom management strategy, but it is also consistent with an approach that encourages personal responsibility for student writing.

Ms. Bass attributed some of the influence on her adoption of the workshop model to trainings provided in the district that she had attended about 5 to 6 years previously. Specific aspects about teaching writing from this training include the use of a writer's notebook and using

the writing process, especially noting the role of revision. A key point that emerged in the initial interview was Ms. Bass' concept of her preferred model for writing in the classroom: "I wanted to teach short stories. In my ideal version of my class I really saw myself teaching short stories and working on developing characters and setting and having this workshop going on in my classroom where I could meet with different students and see what they're working on and given them suggestions for how to add twists and turns in their stories that would make it interesting but I think I haven't gotten to that place yet" (Bass, Interview 1). Ms. Bass' description of her ideal model mirrored those models described in numerous whole language based approaches to teaching writing.

### **Students**

With few exceptions, all students in the class demonstrated willingness to serve as participants in the study, which required their assent. After consulting with Ms. Bass to seek candidates for focal students, three students were identified as good candidates as focal students from the writing/science class: Berta, Joshua, and Alexis. Once Ms. Thompson agreed to participate in the study, the same process was used, and it was agreed that three students would be good focal students in the reading/social studies class: Luna, Alexis, and Kristy. Alexis was the one student for whom data was collected across the two subject area contexts, and there were five focal students in all.

### ***Berta***

Berta had been born in the U.S. to parents who had emigrated from Mexico. At the time of the study, she had an older sister and a recently born baby brother. In her home, Berta spoke in Spanish with her parents and other family members. Berta is bilingual, and received all instruction in English. She spoke in English during most of the class, although she would speak

to her friends in Spanish in class when grouped with them, or with her friends on the recess yard. Berta was, overall, a compliant student who seemed to mostly make a concerted effort to complete and do well on her work. During the "partner talk" which the writing/science teacher had students engage in, Berta consistently engaged in discussion on the topic given by the teacher. When given the opportunity to write on topics of her choice, she generally wrote about her family, especially her brother.

### *Alexis*

Alexis, in some ways, demonstrated characteristics consistent with young people taken by goth culture. While he did not dress in ways favored by "goth kids," he did articulate a fascination with gore, death, and horror. He was a self-described "under-achiever" and had what would be considered a dry sense of humor. Alexis was quite open about some aspects of his family life, though I did not elicit comments from him about what I saw as personal matters. His mother was present at a student-led conference and related her concerns about one of Alexis' older siblings to both me and the classroom teacher. Following that conference, Alexis would tell me about his sibling from time to time. Alexis' parents are from Honduras, though he and his siblings were born in the U.S. His mother seemed comfortable talking with me in Spanish, and I interpreted for Ms. Bass when she was present at the student-led conference. Alexis was thought of as highly intelligent by all three of his teachers, but also as a student who required "pushing" or motivating. He interacted with numerous students in the class. Two of his three teachers commented on his seemingly advanced vocabulary. Alexis used only English in the classroom, and, from his interaction with his mother, seemed to understand her when she spoke in Spanish, though he responded to her in English.

### *Joshua*

I am not certain about Joshua's ethnic background was, as the homeroom teacher indicated that she did not inquire, and it was not within the realm of the study's protocols to make such inquiries. He did mention during the class that he had "Indian" background and wanted to know more about that part of his family. Joshua was a well-liked student, and was generally quiet and respectful during class lessons, yet also contributed to class discussions. At times he became what seemed to be intensely shy or easily embarrassed. His face would turn red, and he became suddenly quiet on certain instances. He enjoyed football, following televised professional games and playing in a league himself. During his interview, Joshua revealed that he did not like to write, and his disposition seemed to be toward task-completion. Joshua was what could be considered a compliant student who worked conscientiously to complete the tasks presented by his teachers. When Joshua did not understand completely either the concept presented or the procedural steps, his tendency was to make-due, or complete tasks as best he could, as opposed to asking questions of his teachers. He was much more likely to ask other students in the class if he sought clarification.

### ***Kristy***

Kristy was a White student from a working-class background. She mentioned informally on several occasion having several younger siblings that she "had to take care of" sometimes, when her mother worked. Kristy was an astute yet often quiet student who, though reluctant to made unsolicited comments during group time, often responded quite articulately when called on to do so. Kristy was capable of completing many tasks in a thorough and thoughtful manner, but did not consistently complete and turn in her homework assignments, as least in Ms. Bass' class.

### ***Luna***

Luna's family was from the African nation of Eritrea, and she commented a number of times that her parents held high expectations for her and her older sister, who had graduated from Cherry Creek two years earlier. Luna was socially very confident. In the classroom context, she was, at times, quite confident and, at other times, was quite self-effacing. She at times would give responses in the whole-class context in a very quiet voice and would sometimes say, "I forgot what I was going to say." Luna was very willing to participate as a focal student, and would greet me regularly when seeing me on campus.

**Data Collection**

Data sources consist primarily of observations with field notes, artifact collection, and participant interviews. During the data collection, I took a stance of interested observer and volunteer but not that of teacher (Dyson & Geneshi, 2005). Data collection also included analytic memos (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). The table below outlines data collection procedures, duration, and frequency:

<b>Procedure</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Initial observations; general classroom volunteer duties	2 – 4 weeks	Daily
Ongoing observations with field notes	20 weeks	2-3 times weekly
Interviews with both teachers	45-60 minutes	Once for the social studies/reading teacher; two times for the science/writing teacher
Interviews with three of the focal students	5-15 minutes	1 time across study for 3 of 5 focal students
Artifact collection	Entirety of study	Ongoing
Informal brief discussions with	Majority of study	Intermittent

students		
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**Observations.** Because the aim of this study requires descriptions of how writing is presented to students and students' responses to instruction, a central part of data collection consisted of structured observations, accompanied by field notes (Dyson & Geneshi, 2005; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Following Merriam (1998), field notes were recorded using a simple two-column T-chart format, with one column used to indicate activities, to record paraphrases or exact quotes of students and/or teachers, and the other column to record questions, reflective notes, or possible topics to pursue. The field notes were scanned into digital format to facilitate archiving and analysis. In keeping with Merriam's advice (1998), I allocated a significant amount of time for reviewing and reflecting on notes during the data collection. During classroom sessions, I observed and recorded notes in order to gain a sense of how writing was presented and how it was received.

**Teachers.** I looked specifically for overall pedagogical patterns or tendencies, and specifically how teachers presented or discussed writing. These were manifest in such ongoing routines as whole-class groupings, small group work, individual student work, and dyadic discussions. The guiding questions for general instructional methods were these: What patterns and routines emerge in the teacher's strategies and pedagogical approaches?; and, What patterns and tendencies emerge in the teachers' discourse about writing assignments, requirements, and expectations? During presentational segments related to writing, I recorded notes based on the following guiding questions: How do these presentational segments present writing expectations, including formal aspects such as length of writing, formatting, or organizational methods?; how do they present rhetorical expectations, such as how to address an audience, or the purpose of the task?; how do they present institutional requirements such as assessments? From those guiding

questions, reflection followed in reviewing notes and in generating memos to glean the conceptualizations of writing that were inherent in these teacher actions.

*Students.* During instructional periods, I looked for and recorded instances of student questions regarding the presentation of writing assignments; comments reflecting dispositions toward writing; comments which demonstrate confusion about or resistance to stated objectives; as well as instances of engagement or non-engagement during writing instruction. Field notes were generated based upon the following guiding questions: What kinds of engagement are suggested through students' actions or comments?; What sort of understanding of tasks is suggested by students' action or comments? What sorts of dispositions are indicated through student comments and actions?

**Document collection.** Because this study is concerned with students' uptake of writing instruction, it was important to look at textual artifacts in addition to the processes involved in generating those texts. This data collection step follows the precept articulated by Prior, that it is important to see where texts come from in order to better understand them (Prior, 2004). To gauge some of the influences in text production, then, it was necessary to look at texts that were created as well as some of the other textual resources drawn on for that creation. Therefore, the following document collection for student participants as well as teacher participants was:

*Students.* 1. Written drafts, including preliminary and final versions as well as versions with teacher comments for various assignments; 2. Charts, guides, templates, and other similar materials intended to serve as references for their writing.

*Teachers.* 1. Artifacts from lesson presentations, including images of guidelines presented to students, heuristics, samples, models, etc.; 2. The writing assignments or prompts as presented to students in written or other visual form; 3. Rubrics or other evaluation heuristics

used to gauge the appropriateness of student responses in meeting the writing expectations or criteria

Where possible, digital scanned copies of student writing were created and archived. Where necessary - such as in bound logs or journals - photocopies of student writing were taken and then transferred to digital format. Presentational materials were sometimes recorded verbatim or photographed and then transferred to digital format. All artifacts were labeled, dated, and filed for analysis.

### **Interviews**

The addition of interview data to the two other principal sources, observation and document collection, helped provide for data triangulation (Denzin, 1978) and for insight into participants' perspectives. One key benefit of data triangulation is that it helps in providing information for disconfirming evidence, thus supporting reliability within qualitative work (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Erickson, 1986). Interview data also served to provide greater insight into the ways in which the teachers conceptualized writing and the ways in which students understood writing requirements. In the case of the present study, interview data served to help examine assumptions that may have been present for teachers. Semi-structured interviews (Irving, 1998) were employed in order to better gain a sense of teachers' perceptions of how students learn to write in targeted ways; they also serve to highlight how students perceive the writing requirements of the classroom and how they understand those. Interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed for analysis. Following are the types of interviews undertaken with teachers and students.

*Teachers.* Semi-structured interviews (Irving, 1998) with the teachers at some point in the study served to provide an overall sense of how they conceptualized writing and writing

instruction, how they went about planning for writing instruction, and the factors they took into account when they did so (Appendix C).

***Students.*** Brief semi-structured interviews with focal students were designed to elicit how they understood their writing assignment, what they believed it required of them, and how they planned to meet these requirements (Appendix D). The interview protocols are intended to be consistent with the types of discussions held between teacher and students in writing conferences or as checks on understanding. Although protocols for student interviews were established and one student interview was carried out for each of three focal students, the process of interviewing students became logistically very challenging. Students could not participate in interviews during instructional time, and making arrangements to conduct interviews in a neutral area (away from either of the two study teachers), yet under school site supervision proved unfeasible for more interviews. Therefore, data analysis includes interview data with three focal students, those suggested by Ms. Bass in the science/writing class.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis took place both during data collection and following its completion. Glesne highlights the fact that simultaneous coding allows for a focus to take place even as data collection proceeds (2006). Two recommendations of Glesne's were heeded as a way to both manage data and engage in early analysis: memoing and the creation of analytic files. Memos were generated approximately each three weeks, and following Saldaña (2009), I generated memos as a way to reflect on what was occurring at the moment and how I made sense of it. As he states, "The purpose of analytic memo writing is to document and reflect on your coding process and code choices; how the process of inquiry is taking shape; and the emergent patterns, categories and subcategories, themes, and concepts in your data" (p. 32). These memos were thus

reflective pieces and consistent with Charmaz' comparisons of them to "free-writes" (2001). The creation of analytic files served as an ongoing organizational strategy and method, and consisted primarily of creating folders for storing and organizing data. Folders included teacher comments on writing, examples of report writing, and a combination of field notes, artifact collection, and interview data about the same event. The organization of folders changed as new data were incorporated.

Data analysis after the completion of data collection happened primarily through coding processes. These coding processes can be considered iterative (Patton, 1980; Merriam, 1998), during which data were organized into broad categories, and then re-categorized through subsequent coding passes. Coding was conceptualized as a process through which to ask questions of the data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Emerson, et al., 1995) and thus served, as Coffey & Atkinson discuss, a heuristic function. Given that data coding poses questions of the data, my interpretive frames became significant.

### **Drafting the Dissertation**

As indicated, coding was an iterative process, and continued even as drafting the dissertation took place. Chapters were drafted and were read by two other doctoral candidates, who provided feedback orally and in writing through regular meetings. Feedback was also provided by the supervising committee member on various sections of the dissertation as these were being written. Feedback was provided by another committee member, most notably on theoretical concepts, both in written form and in-person conversation. Feedback from these sources was taken into consideration and often informed subsequent drafts of the dissertation. In some ways, the feedback and drafting process provided an additional iterative analytic dimension to the data analysis.

## **Chapter 4: Findings - Social Studies**

### **Introduction to Data Chapters**

This dissertation study was intended to respond to two research questions, the first of which was how writing tasks were conceptualized and presented to students in a fifth grade class, including the genesis of those writing assignments. The second was how students interpreted these assignments and responded to them, or in other words how they "took up" those assignments. These research questions stem from larger fundamental questions regarding literacy practices and teaching within school sites. Essentially, the larger questions regarding writing tasks could be summarized as such: "What is a writing task?" or "What does a writing assignment mean?" And, whereas for Speech Act Theory, the paradigmatic question is, "How does saying make it so?" (Freadman, 2002, p. 42), the paradigmatic question for uptake of writing tasks could be thought of as, "How does requesting (assigning, requiring, mandating, facilitating) a written response bring about the desired outcome?" Therefore, the analysis of the data included careful textual analysis of writing prompts or assignments, an analysis that sought to go beyond asking what formal, textual qualities were sought in responses to writing tasks, and also to identify what other implications resided in writing tasks, especially when these expectations are occluded from students. It also included analysis of textual responses generated by students, as well as coding of observational data to reveal how the assignments were presented to and mediated for students.

Ultimately, this study focused on what can be considered some of the major writing tasks for these classes or, in other words, writing tasks that required students to generate multi-paragraph responses, that went on over at least several instructional days, and that required a level of student writing commensurate with fifth-grade standards or expectations. At a minimum,

the task expectations were that students would be able to use conventions such as vocabulary appropriate for a report or essay, organizational structures such as paragraphs, and grammatical conventions such as appropriate punctuation and spelling; that students would establish an appropriate "voice" or persona that conveyed a fitting sensibility or ethos, such as that of an invested democratic participant or a knowledgeable person with an interest in natural phenomena; and, that they would appropriately take into account an audience to whom their writing was directed. This is to say that the study focused specifically on longer writing tasks presented to students at the intermediate elementary grades (4-6) that present a set of rhetorical complexities not apparent in all grade-level writing tasks.

### **Social Studies/Reading Class**

I begin with a discussion of the ways in which Ms. Thompson conceptualized writing, including a review of her ethos about literacy. This conceptualization of writing is important because of its role in how she presented writing and writing instruction to students, the initiating step of uptake. I then move to an analysis of the prompt itself, including its impetus, and then to a description of Ms. Thompson's mediation of the assignment, and finally to an examination of several focal students' written essays. Included in that description of the presentation of the assignment are data from classroom observations, both during and prior to the assignment, which are helpful for revealing how writing was conceptualized, discussed, and presented to students, as well as interview data and textual samples.

Although writing was employed in a number of ways and for varied purposes in the reading/social studies classroom, such as to record information as notes and as a heuristic tool to prompt reflection on selected quotes from books, I chose to focus on the Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA) writing assignment - described in the analysis which follows - because of the

following rationale: not only was this assignment more involved than the majority of writing tasks in the class, its subject matter was also part of the principal theme of citizenship mentioned earlier, in the methodology section of this dissertation. This writing task was also reflective of the fact that intermediate grade elementary students are challenged with increasingly more difficult writing tasks as they advance across the grade levels, and these writing tasks require not just a minimal linguistic competence, but instead at least a budding rhetorical knowledge and awareness, consistent with the WPA outcomes statement and the Common Core State Standards literacy objectives. In addition, writing serves as an essential vehicle in learning subject matter, both as a way to gain "subject-matter knowledge" and as a way to learn how subject-matter areas or disciplines use language (e.g., Heller, 2010; Moje, 2008; Wineburg, 2001). This task was representative of one of these more challenging writing assignments. Finally, because the CBA writing task took place across a span of approximately ten instructional days, it presented a rich context for looking at both what a writing task means and how students interpreted and responded to that task.

### **Writing and writing instruction for Ms. Thompson**

In the methods section of this dissertation, a brief introductory section on the two teacher participants began to reveal Ms. Thompson's ethos or orientation with regards to literacy practices. Essentially, she hoped her students would be invested in reading and writing largely through an internalized enjoyment or pleasure in these acts, and that they would become organically invested in those practices. Described earlier as her stance toward reading of "lovin' it," the ethos she valued for writing was similar. It was not only a love of reading and writing on the part of teachers that mattered to Ms. Thompson, but also teachers' ability to convey that

enthusiasm to the students in their charge, with the apparent expectation that students might take up the practices of an intrinsically motivated reader and writer.

When asked how she conceptualized the purposes of writing, Ms Thompson said, "well, communication, obviously." Speaking specifically to what she saw as the role of teachers in assigning and teaching writing, Ms. Thompson stated that it was ". . . helping kids communicate. Really it's just us trying to help them communicate and get their point across and understand others" (Interview, Thompson). Her comments reflect Ms. Thompson's value of language use as a way to engage in an exchange of ideas, consistent with her comments during the unit on democracy and the U.S. colonial period. Within that same segment of interview data, Ms. Thompson also commented on students' reception of writing prompts. Regarding the idea of communication or the expression of ideas, she said, "I think they forget that they can. They think that this is just like a math formula and they just have to plug things in" (Interview, Thompson). Ms. Thompson's comments in fact speak to questions at the heart of uptake, especially as this concept concerns itself with the relationship between genres. In Freedman's theoretical terms, uptake involves the relationship between an initiating genre and its respondent text, in this case a writing assignment and student responses. Employing Freedman's language, we can say that Ms. Thompson is speaking to how students "take it as," that is, what they take the writing task to mean and to require. In a prototypical example, to take an invitation to a conference as such prompts a respondent to employ particular generic traits in responding, an act which solidifies the role of the initiating genre. Ms. Thompson's comments imply that students do not necessarily interpret an initiating text (in this case a writing prompt) as a catalyst for a genuinely communicative purpose, but rather as a call for a formulaic response. In her comments, she reveals how anticipated uptake is not realized on the part of students. Instead of reading the

assignment as a prompt to committed commentary, students read it as a prompt to formulaically completing an assigned task. Such uptake patterns will be further discussed in the following analysis.

### **The Classroom-Based Assessment**

**Institutional motives of the assignment.** The assignment was motivated specifically by a non-standardized grade-level writing assessment which, although developed and disseminated by the state, was not technically required by the state for the grade level during the year of this study. The Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA) is generated by Washington state's governing educational agency, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). The OSPI's data indicate that for the year during which the present study was conducted, approximately 95% of the state's school districts participated in administering the Social Studies CBA. This assessment is aimed at soliciting evidence of students' ability to write an argument-based essay, and as a way for students to engage in civic participation. The CBA calls for students to write on a political issue, demonstrating a clear position on this issue, citing the positions of several others on this same issue, and providing rationale for the student's position. Also known as the "Take a Stand CBA," this assessment is considered part of the civics subcomponent of standards-guided social studies instruction and learning, with teachers given the leeway to select the particular political topic. The OSPI website cites the legislation which calls for such an assessment, and it provides the rationale for administering the assessment, part of which reads as follows: "Given the broad, conceptual nature of our Social Studies EALRs, the OSPI-Developed Social Studies Assessments are a valid way to assess the learning of these standards and to help students gain the knowledge and skills authentic to engaged, informed citizenship" (OSPI Website). The OSPI description reveals the pedagogical nature as well as the evaluative nature of the assignment, as

the CBA task is intended not only to gauge students' learning of the standards, but as a way to help them gain these skills of citizenship.

The institutional consequences of the assessment were ambiguous, however. The OSPI data, while indicating the percentage of districts administering the assessment, do not indicate the percentage of classes in which it was administered. At the local level of the school site for this study, when Ms. Thompson was asked whether administering the assessment was a requirement, she responded, "We were asked to give the assessment. The district wants it" (Interview, Thompson). Ms. Thompson also indicated that she was required to submit student scores and to keep students' finished papers on file, but that the scores did not form part of the students' records. In this way, the institutional consequences of the writing task as an assessment remained ambiguous at best. However, Ms. Thompson, in her role as teacher, took the task quite seriously, both as an assessment as well as for its teaching and learning objectives. As the data analysis revealed, she made concerted efforts to meet both assessment and learning objectives.

**The writing assignment.** The assignment includes the prompt as well as a scoring rubric, which were provided to teachers and then to students. In addition to these assignment materials, the OSPI website provides other resources for teachers, such as scored sample essays with a rationale for those scores. The prompt (Appendix E) reads as follows: "Citizens in a democracy have the right and responsibility to make informed decisions. You will make an informed decision on a public issue after researching and discussing different perspectives on this issue." As part of the prompt, directions to the students are indicated in bulleted format:

- State a position on a public issue.
- Provide background on the issue by explaining two stakeholders' positions on this issue.

- Include an explanation of how EITHER a right OR the common good relates to the position on the issue.
- List two sources including the title, author, type of source, and date of each source.

The language of the assignment instructions for teachers allows the teachers the leeway to select the specific public issues that their students will write about, as well as how to guide students to carry out that writing. The language of the prompt also serves to establish a general set of expectations or constraints, some of which are expressed more explicitly and some more implicitly. For example, the prompt spells out the formal requirements for student responses, such as the number of sources needed, the inclusion of others' arguments, statement of a position on the issue, and whether a common good or individual right relates to the issue. This list of directions identifies the aspects of the writing task that map onto a scoring rubric or checklist, but doesn't establish or identify the presumed driving purpose for the writing. Instead, the first part of the prompt speaks to that driving purpose through a sort of invocation to democratic participation: "Citizens in a democracy have a right and responsibility to make informed decisions. You will make an informed decision on a public issue . . . ". Thus, the language of the prompt positions students as citizens within a democracy, with an obligation to consider issues of public import carefully, and to come to a reasoned and informed decision on such political issues, and to voice that position. This is the underlying motive expressed for the writing task, and the aspect that is likely to present the greatest complexity for student writers. Said another way, it is this aspect of the assignment that is the least readily legible or the least textured requirement. That is, in the language of the theoretical framework used for this dissertation study, this is the aspect of the assignment that presents the greatest challenge to securing uptake,

or, said another way, the expectations which inhere in the writing prompt itself and in the expectations that the school and teacher bring to that prompt.

In order to generate a rhetorically successful essay, in fact, students would more accurately need to engage in the complexities that Clark describes in her analysis of writing assignments: "to write an effective essay, the student needs to assume an appropriate textual self suitable for the writing task, project how that self will impact an intended audience, consider or perhaps fictionalize that audience, and adhere to suitable conventions of subject, approach, organization and style" (Clark, 2005, np). What Clark terms a "knowledgeable student" would need to know how to present him or herself through the persona of an invested self, someone who sees himself or herself as authorized to generate an opinion on such matters, as an "engaged social commentator" (Clark). Or, as Clark puts it, "in some instances, the genre of the writing prompt requires the student to assume the role of a thoughtful novice scholar who is genuinely concerned with the topic in the writing prompt, and that the resulting essay must give the impression that it was generated from the student's own concerns, not because the student was responding to a prompt" (Clark).

Not only would the knowledgeable student need to perform an appropriate persona, he or she would need to do so for an appropriately imagined or intended audience. In the case of the CBA, this audience would presumably be other like-minded, civically engaged persons, perhaps such as in a letter-to-the-editor format or an opinion article. However, the writer must be aware that the actual audience will most likely consist solely of the teacher. In this way, the student writer needs to simultaneously perform a certain type of persona for both the larger imagined audience as well as the teacher. This maneuver refers to the discursive or rhetorical feat of signaling a teacher that the student knows how to appropriately address an imagined audience.

More significantly, being able to pull off his type of rhetorical or discursive feat is not simply a matter of linguistic mastery. Instead, this rhetorical feat - part of the rhetorical knowledge advocated by the WPA outcomes statement and the CCSS document - requires the discursive performance of a particular type of persona, in this case that of an engaged democratic citizen. This is part of the complexity of writing tasks such as these, a complexity difficult to encourage or to assess with a rubric. These tasks begin to more and more approximate the writing tasks students would face later in a high school or post-secondary academic settings.

**Rubric.** As indicated, the bulleted directions in the prompt map well onto a criteria checklist or scoring rubric and, in fact, one of the key components of the CBA is the rubric that accompanies the prompt (Appendix E). As do many rubrics of this type, this one establishes a demarcation between proficiency or passing and non-proficiency or not-passing. The scores of 3 and 4 reflect a proficient paper, while those of 1 and 2 reflect a non-proficient response. The rubric distinguishes difference between the 3 and 4 scores based largely on the number of sources invoked and whether the student invokes a "call to action." Overall, though, the rubric aligns well with the language of the prompt and provides a point-by-point list of those elements that should be included in student responses needed to merit a given score. The rubric provides, then, a type of 'messaging' to students as well as teachers regarding how the response to the prompt should work. The messaging of the prompt is focused on task-completion and provides a language to make scoring criteria clear. For example, in the language used to describe the difference between a 3 and 4 score regarding outside references, the 3 reads, "Provides background on the issue by explaining **Two** stakeholders' positions on this issue," while the description for a score of 4 requires background on "**Three or more** stakeholders' positions on this issue."

## **Pedagogical Mediation of the Assignment**

**Selection of the topic.** As previously indicated, the nature of the assessment was not to simply present the task for students to accomplish as best they could on their own. Instead, it more broadly provided impetus for both performance and for instruction on how to generate an appropriate response. Thus, the CBA, although technically an assessment, was better understood as a subject-area writing assignment for the social studies classroom. In the case of the social studies CBA, Ms. Thompson gave careful consideration to selecting an appropriate topic for consideration. She strove to select a topic that would prove relevant to her students. As she indicated in her interview, "I chose it. I was looking around, and I was thinking 'current events' and I wanted something that they could sink their teeth into, I wanted it to be relevant." "Well, I mean, they are im-, most of them are immigrant children, or children of immigrants, uh the Dream Act probably applies to not only their families or they are community members who are being impacted by other immigrants and it's something that they probably hear" (Interview, Thompson). Her interview comments reflect the fact that she saw the assignment as resonating for both students whose parents had immigrated to the United States as well as other students who may have heard discussion about immigrants to the region.

While Ms. Thompson indicated that selecting the topic was fairly easy, she also lamented the difficulty she had in locating materials to support its instruction, principally that it was hard "to find materials on the topic that were good for the grade level. Most of the things available were beyond their reading ability" (Interview, Thompson). After a number of internet searches, she ultimately decided on an article in the Washington Times by Catherine Poe, supportive of the Dream Act, and from TownHall.com, a web-based publication and print magazine with a conservative perspective, a position piece against the Dream Act by the director of FAIR

(Federation of American Immigration Reform), Ira Mehlman. The text from each has been transcribed and these are provided as appendices (Appendices F & G).

Essentially, the arguments put forth by Mehlman are that the Dream Act constitutes a form of amnesty for those who entered the US illegally; that such entrance was counter to U.S. law and could not be excused; and that the Dream Act would reward parents for such violations and only draw more illegal immigration. Poe's piece took the form of a response to numerous comments she had received about the issue via e-mail, in which she responded to the most common comments. In these responses, she declared that the Dream Act is not amnesty and instead includes clear provisions and procedures; that it avoids punishing children for their parents' transgressions; and that it promises more rewards than drawbacks in the form of taxes and other social contributions. Across the two selections, though primarily Poe's, the writers give some background information on the Dream Act that includes its specific provisions and restrictions. Other than the supplemental information Ms. Thompson presented orally to students about the Dream Act - discussed below - these two sources formed the principal means of information about the Dream Act.

**Pedagogical practices.** To mediate the CBA writing task, Ms. Thompson largely used the teaching strategies and techniques that she had used through much of the school year in teaching social studies, which included whole-class discussions, small-group work, student discussion in partners, the use of T-charts, and brief writing exercises. Ms. Thompson used the whole-class format to read aloud to students, discuss texts with them, and to model reading and writing for them. With the whole class at the rug area, she often presented questions or issues for them to discuss in partners, with students accustomed to an interactive discussion pattern; in small independent groups during the school year, students engaged in activities such as reaching

consensus on appropriate definitions for concepts such as "civic responsibility" and "freedom of religion." Either independently or in small groups, students often used multiple-column T-charts to record such things as quotes from texts in one column and their significance in another. Ms. Thompson also prompted students to write brief entries into a type of learning log, generally reflections on what they learned during a particular class session. For the CBA, there were several pedagogical practices that were observed that were not observed during the rest of the school year: whole-class discussion in a debate-like format; short one-to-one conferences with students on their writing; and the use of multiple writing samples from similar writing tasks. These practices may have in fact been used during the school year, but were simply not observed.

**Assignment timeline overview.** Ms. Thompson in effect began the assignment on Wednesday, the 23rd of May, just about three weeks before the end of the school year. Ms. Thompson indicated in her interview that having such a short period of time was one of the few qualms she had about the assignment. In other regards, she felt the assignment was relevant to the issues discussed in social studies, that it was grade-level appropriate, and that students should in fact be challenged with completing such writing tasks. The writing task concluded on June 6, nearly two weeks after beginning, with students required to turn in their final version on that day. During that two-week period, Ms. Thompson summarized the main points of the Dream Act as well as arguments for and against the proposed legislation. She also fostered discussion between students through a sort of town hall meeting on the subject. She had students meet in small groups to write down the arguments of each of the two sources. She provided time for students to write, and she held brief conferences with most students in the class. She also provided what can be called templated support for students' writing. This templated support refers to summarized

instruction for students to follow in order to complete the assignment, as well as modeled sentence starters that students could use as templates for their writing. Although Ms. Thompson was consistent in referring to these as simply models to provide ideas for how someone could meet the requirements of the assignment, ultimately, these templated supports were taken up by the three focal students as well as a good number of the other students in the class.

**Introducing the assignment.** When preparing to present the task to students, Ms. Thompson worked to relate the writing task to the social studies unit she had already presented. In her interview, she had emphasized how these were related: "Yeah, I mean, god, we just had that whole big unit on the Declaration of Independence and a bit of the Constitution and wanting to form this gorgeous country and make it all democratic and wonderful and, all right guys, this is democracy, let's hear your voice, communicate" (Interview, Thompson). She embraced the idea that expressing an informed opinion on a political issue equates to the democratic participation that her students should engage in. As she expressed to her students, "Look, there's no right or wrong. This is **you** gathering information, weighing it, and then making your own choice, what do **you** think? You have to be an active member in this community, that's what citizenship means" (FN 5-23-12). And then later in her interview: "I wanted them to understand you don't just lay back and let everyone else do the dirty work. And you don't get to complain unless you roll up your sleeves" (Interview, Thompson).

At the start of the unit, Ms. Thompson posted a chart to serve as a sort of summary of what students would be doing for the assignment: "The Dream Act. Are you for it or against it? Defend your position on a public policy issue. Prove you understand opposing points of view. Then persuade others your position benefits the common good" (FN, 5-23-12). During that class session on the 23rd, Ms. Thompson began elaborating on the CBA assessment. She told the

students, "As I told you before, we are going to write an essay that is related to the whole unit we've been doing on democracy" (FN 5-23-12). She had students come to the rug area in the whole-class format and then used the end of the session to show students the prompt on the projector, and to talk briefly about the topic. She asked students to "go home and think about it" in order for them to begin describing their ideas about the issue. On the second instructional day for the assignment, Ms. Thompson spent a good portion of that day's social studies session discussing the Dream Act (FN 5-24-12). Some of the highlights from that discussion included the following: 1. She identified some of the stipulations of the proposed legislation, including the fact that those brought to this country as children had to either complete two years of post-secondary education or military service; they had to have a clean police record; they needed to demonstrate having resided in the US for a certain number of years. 2. She summarized opposition to the Dream Act as grounded in the idea that those who would be eligible had committed an illegal act and would be in fact "cutting in front of the line" for the process of legally staying in the United States; 3. She summarized support for the Dream Act as the idea that children should not be punished for the transgressions of their parents. This discussion served to introduce the readings.

That same day, Ms. Thompson then introduced the reading selections, by both Mehlman and Poe. Ms. Thompson had students gather on the rug area and gave copies to each pair of students, for them to follow along on while she read aloud, stopping to comment at particular points. In this way, she read the text much as she did for numerous read-alouds of texts for students, especially when these were beyond their own independent reading level. For example, she took time to discuss the following excerpt from Mehlman's piece: "The DREAM Act carves out a single exception to this universal tenet of the social contract," working to explain and

unpack some of the language and the concept of the "social contract." She did not discuss all challenging aspects of the text to this degree, but instead chose to highlight some that she thought were most important. At times, Ms. Thompson read quickly over some passages, as though skimming the passage. She summarized sections of the text, and highlighted their key points. She had students "turn-and-talk" with their regularly assigned partners while at the rug, during which students took turns talking about the questions or issues posed by Ms. Thompson. One such question was the following: "What is the main point that Ira Mehlman makes against the Dream Act? Why does he think it is a bad idea? Use the text" (FN, 5-24-12). Ms. Thompson went through Poe's article in much the same way. Following the whole-class discussion format, she had students go to their desks to independently complete the following sentence frames for the authors' main points: "The point \_\_\_\_\_ is trying to make is ...; I understand \_\_\_\_\_ is saying \_\_\_\_\_ even if I don't agree with it" (FN, 5-24-12). This final activity continued until nearly the end of class session, at which time students turned in their writing and prepared as usual for the transition to their next class.

**Generating discussion: Town hall debate.** On Friday of that first week of the assignment, May 25, Ms. Thompson used a town hall debate format to foster discussion on the issue of the Dream Act. Within this format, all students who wished to voice their opinion would have an opportunity to do so. She simply had students group themselves into one of three groups - those opposed to the Dream Act, those in favor, and those undecided. She moderated the discussion, guiding students to provide support for their views and to gear their comments to trying to persuade others, specifically those who held opposing views. Ms. Thompson indicated that while she had originally considered a group discussion such as this one, the idea of a "Town Hall meeting" (Interview, Thompson) was not one she was sure about putting into place. She

reported to me having decided that morning to implement it to see what results it might generate. Although I was not present during the very first part of the class session, she later told me that she reviewed the previous day's writing with students, as a way to refresh them on the points made by Poe and Mehlman.

Students during this sort of town hall meeting engaged in very lively discussion, and several of the points from the two background pieces - Poe's and Mehlman's - were included in their comments, such as the idea of the violation of laws as well as the positive impacts immigrants have in their host country. The range of the students' discourse was quite wide. Alexis, for example, expressed the idea that no one should be denied an education because everyone, after all, "was a human being," and should be treated as such (FN, 5-25-12). He pointed out a number of students in the room, saying that they would directly benefit from such legislation, and that these students would be able to get an education should the Dream Act be enacted. Another student, Silvia, addressed the issue of the violation of laws, arguing that "following the rules" or laws was not always the only option, because laws and rules are broken all the time. "It doesn't mean it's right," is how she talked about the idea that laws were in place to prevent the type of immigration Mehlman opposed (FN, 5-25-12). Another student in the class, Isaiah, espoused the question of whether it was constitutional to deny education based on immigrant status. He apparently responded to Ms. Thompson's comments on the constitutionality of provisions of the Dream Act. He was the one student in favor of the Dream Act to bring up such a point with the language of whether it was constitutional, but there was no response to his comments. Berta made a comment that linked the issues in the Dream Act to the previous unit, when she said that the desire to seek better opportunities was "like the colonists" who left England (FN, 5-25-12).

The town hall discussion was significant in a number of ways. For one, it revealed the issue was quite relevant for students and generated animated discussion that was directed to a real and concrete audience. It revealed that students used a range of discourse in their comments, some more focused, for example, on human rights and others on the moral legitimacy of laws. The very nature of the event was a type of democratic participation in itself, as students were free to express their views in a format open to all. The discussion of ideas served as a sort of component of pre-writing, as reflected in Ms. Thompson's interview comments: "I thought that made them think, you know. Before you put your ideas on paper, talk about them, try to, you know, not just brainstorm. I think the kids were able to hear their arguments and help form them by taking about them" (Thompson, Interview). And, while pleased with the discussion, Ms. Thompson came away feeling as though she needed to help guide students' use of the points made by Mehlman and Poe in their written responses. Near the end of the class session, she told students, "I will need to help you read these arguments" (FN, 5-25-12), an indication that she felt students may not be capturing the authors' comments or ideas sufficiently.

**Writing time.** Ms. Thompson provided several periods of time for students to generate drafts of their writing assignment. During these periods, she went about the room, checking in on students as they engaged in their writing, in what can be called very brief conferences. During these sessions, she sometimes posed questions to students, asked students to look back at their notes or the reading handouts, and at times was more directive and might ask a student to begin a sentence in a particular way. Most of the student writing took place on four different days, although for different periods of time on each day - the 29th and 31st of May, and then the 4th and the 6th of June.

**The use of samples.** As indicated, Ms. Thompson employed the use of sample writing as a mediating step for the Dream Act CBA, a step not observed with other writing tasks during the school year. These were writing samples accessible through the OSPI website and specific to the "take-a-stand" CBA, though not written on the same topic of the Dream Act. With students in the whole-class grouping on the rug area, she used a projector to display the general CBA prompt again as well as the specific topic of a mandatory school uniform assignment, and student sample papers. Ms. Thompson showed students four sample papers, one which had earned a 1, two which had earned a 2, and one which had earned a 4. For each response, she discussed why the paper earned its score. For example, the 2 did not present two views on the subject; the 3's each did, as well as a clearly identifiable student position; and the 4 included a more sophisticated rationale, citing an individual's right to free expression. In short, Ms. Thompson used the state-supplied samples to present a range of responses, to discuss the rationale for their scores, and thus employed another method for students to understand how to meet the scoring criteria. She made these samples available, along with a number of others, by placing them inside a folder on one of the library shelves.

**Spirit and letter of the assignment.** As noted, the Dream Act CBA in some ways embodied the ethos Ms. Thompson brought to her work as a language arts and social studies teacher. Civic participation, civic engagement, becoming informed and involved in a public policy matter through reading and writing - these were all activities that resonated with her, and that she sought to foster in her students. But, she also had to work within the requirements of completing the assignment. She commented to students, "I can't let you fail in this task" (FN, 6-6-12), and made similar comments on several other occasions. Over the course of the completion of the writing assignment, she increasingly focused on the scoring criteria of the rubric, and

presented students with cues that drew their attention to the formal traits of the essay responses. This shift was marked by greater reliance on scaffolding supports such as summaries of the two writers' arguments, sentence frames, and increased cues for students to look to the scoring guide criteria.

On the Tuesday following Friday's town hall discussion, Ms. Thompson had students write a draft of their essay responses. As an aid to those responses, she posted the following text on a large sheet of chart paper, The Public Policy Issue Chart, that read as follows:

- Public Policy Issue: The Dream Act

- My Position:

- Stakeholder #1:

Ira Mehlman is the Media Director of the Federation for American Immigration Reform. He argues that ...

- Stakeholder 2#:

Catherine Poe writes for the Washington Times. She argues that ...

- My position on this policy is \_\_\_\_\_ because ...

- This benefits our society because ...

Students had time to work on their first draft of the responses on this day. The following day, Wednesday, was a shortened class session, the majority of which was taken with reading tasks not related to social studies and a school-wide assembly. On Thursday, May 31 students again had time to write, being directed by Ms. Thompson to make changes to their original version: "Revise; Edit" (FN, 5-31-12). In addition, Ms. Thompson provided students with a list of guidelines or instructions, referred to here as Dream Act Writing Guidelines, for their writing:

- Declare Your Position
- Explain what the DREAM Act is. Give Ira's reasons against it. Give Catherine's reasons for it.
- Now explain how you feel about it. Be persuasive.
- Is it going to benefit society or harm it?

- Bonus: Is it constitutional?

**Completion of the assignment.** Between Friday, May 31 and Thursday, June 6, time was allocated for the writing task in a more piecemeal way. Some of those days did not lend themselves to observational data collection. Time was spent with a reading assessment, as well as some school-wide events and assemblies. Students had a period of time to write on June 4 and another on the day they were to have completed the task, June 6. That final day was spent largely with students who had not yet completed the assignment doing so, while Ms. Thompson called students individually to her desk area for one-to-one conferences. Those students who had sufficiently completed the assignment were reading independently, on a computer program, or completing other reading tasks. One of the focal students, Alexis, had a conference with Ms. Thompson that was audio recorded as part of the data collection (Appendix I).

During this approximately five minute long interaction between Ms. Thompson and Alexis, she had him read his writing aloud while she listened. In response, she primarily posed questions that seem intended for Alexis to be more precise and specific in his thinking and writing. An example is taken from the transcribed interaction (A = Alexis; T = Ms. Thompson):

A: The dream act is a bill giving a chance for an illegal child to become legal by finishing two years of high school and college or military service.

T: Are these children illegal?

A: Huh?

T: Did they break the law, what did these children do, why are they illegal?

A: Because they're just not citizens

T: So, they're illegal immigrants?

A: Yeah

T: You need to write that down. Write it down now, quickly.

And, from a separate section of interaction:

T: When you say "one opponent of the Dream Act, Ira Mehlman, thinks that bringing illegal immigrants will cause much messes," what does that mean?

A: I don't know.

T: If you don't know, how are we supposed to know?

A: Uh.

T: What could you say instead of "bring much messes?" What do you mean, "much messes?"

A: Like, too much people, like society's overgrowing, like there's too many people. There's not going to be much, like, there's not going to be much room.

T: Does Ira actually say that there's going to be too much, not enough room?

On that day, June 6, Ms. Thompson conducted conferences with a number of other students as well, and met with some student more than once. She had held brief, informal conferences with students at other points during the writing periods, but on the 6th she intended to meet with all students who had not completed the assignment, in order to help them do so. With the exception of several students who were absent that day, all were required to submit their final draft to Ms. Thompson.

### **Student Responses to the Assignment**

#### **Berta**

Berta's first draft (part of Appendix J) reflects her strong reliance on the Public Policy Issue Chart. She draws nearly verbatim on the language of that chart to guide her writing, including headings, such as "My position:" and "Stakeholder #1." She uses the template about Ira Mehlman to set up her summary of his points: "Ira Mehlman is the Media Director of the Federation for American Immigration Reform. He argues that..." Although Berta uses the templates provided by Ms. Thompson for Catherine Poe as well, in her first draft she erroneously summarizes Poe's arguments, such as that DREAMERs would take away jobs from American citizens. Because Poe presented common conceptions about the effects of the Dream Act, and

then responded to them, it is likely that Berta read those conceptions as Poe's arguments and recorded them. The draft reflects the fact that Berta came to cross out these incorrectly attributed arguments and her final version is a more accurate reflection of Poe's arguments, but the first draft reveals confusion on Berta's part about the principle arguments for and against the Dream Act.

Berta's final version (in Appendix J) reflects the input she received from Ms. Thompson as well as her own decision to make changes in her draft. The first body paragraph of her final revision reads, "One opponent of the DREAM Act is Ira Mehlman who is the Media Director of the Federation for American Immigration Reform. He argues that the illigal (sic) people's situation doesn't excuse them for being illegal immigrants." She continues, "He also argues that if more people start to come then America will be forced to give them green cards too. And last he argues that the message the immigrants are saying is that it's okay to break the laws and to don't care about the laws." Between the final and initial drafts, Berta demonstrated greater fluency in her sentences and a greater ease with the crafting of the essay. The language of her presentation moved away from the verbatim use she demonstrated in the first draft, but her essay continued to very strongly demonstrate its debt to the templated support Ms. Thompson offered.

While uptake can be gauged by looking at the resultant text, it is also made apparent through what does not make its way into the text. That is, where have intentions which resided in the prompt and with the teacher not been realized in the respondent text? In Berta's case, one of the shortest sections of the final essay is her paragraph providing rationale for her position: "After hearing both sides, I agree with Catherine Poe because illegal children should have the education they need because maybe if they don't they could become criminals when they grow up." Berta was the same student who drew a comparison between the colonialists and the

potential Dream Act beneficiaries. She was also pointed out by Alexis as one of the people in the classroom who stood to benefit from the provisions of the legislation. But these more powerful and persuasive arguments do not make their way into Berta's essay. Instead of a more heartfelt and compelling argument and a corresponding sense of a persona of invested citizen, the essay meets the requirements in a much more perfunctory manner.

### **Joshua**

Joshua's first draft (Appendix K) also reveals a strong reliance on templated language, as he also wrote, "My position:" and "Stakeholder #1" and "Stakeholder #2," along with the introductions to both Mehlman and Poe. For example, the beginning of his second paragraph reads, "Catherine Poe write (sic) for the Washington Times. She argues that ... the illegal immigrants should get to go to school because they shouldn't pay up for what their parents did and they will not take from society and to give them a second chance because their parents brang (sic) them" And whereas Berta's revision demonstrated a notable improvement in how she incorporated Mehlman's and Poe's ideas into her own language, Joshua was more persistent in his reliance on templated language. His revised paragraph about Catherine Poe's arguments read, "Catherine Poe writes for the Washington Times. She argues that the illegal immigrants should get to go to school because they shouldn't pay for the bad things their parents did and if they have a chance to go to college they can make a great benefit to society." While he did add some ideas to his paragraph, especially that the Dream Act beneficiaries could benefit society, and he has shed the heading language of "Stakeholder," his language is still closer to the templated language than Berta's is.

His position paragraph of his final draft reads, "After hearing both sides, I feel I agree with Catherine Poe that illegal immigrants should get to go to school because they didn't have

the choice to come." This final statement of his position reads very much like Berta's in that it draws on the same language of "after hearing both sides," but also in that it does not reflect a strong voice of engaged citizen that Ms. Thompson and the prompt sought. The paragraph reads more as though Joshua were presented with two choices to select from, and he chose to favor passage of the Dream Act, but without establishing a thorough and supported rationale.

Ultimately, his essay, much like Berta's, did not demonstrate uptake of one of the key aspects of the take-a-stand CBA, that is, the persona of someone who demonstrates an interest in public policy. Also like Berta's, his reflects an attempt to minimally meet criteria for proficiency.

### **Alexis**

Alexis' first draft (Appendix L) includes the concept underlying the template of presenting Mehlman's and Poe's arguments and declaring his position, though he does not replicate the language of the template verbatim. His summary of Mehlman's points reads, "One opponent of the Dream Act, Ira Mehlman, thinks that bringing illegal citizens will make a big mess. More of them will come too. Bringing children is even worse than grown people." While his language is more flexible in that it does not replicate the template, Alexis was quite vague with his summary, such as a "big mess" and that bringing "children is even worse than grown people," an idea not expressly articulated in Mehlman and nothing that Alexis fleshes out, if it is that he reads Mehlman's argument as such.

Aside from the vagueness of parts of his essay, Alexis' work nicely demonstrates uptake of the evaluative criteria that were made available as cues for the completion of the assignment, across his three drafts of which the last two show little revision. The final draft does reflect the comments made by Ms. Thompson during their conference, where she had him better describe "illegal immigrants" as opposed to simply "illegal" people.

As with Berta's and Joshua's final essays, Alexis' paper reveals uptake through what does not make its way into the writing. During the town hall meeting, Alexis provided arguments for how all people should be treated with dignity, as human beings, an idea that he could have easily incorporated into his justification for supporting the Dream Act. Instead, he employs a strategy similar to Joshua and Berta, in writing "I think, after observing their opinions, that it would be great to be given a chance." He then invokes the reader to "just think about how many lives the Dream Act will change." Again, this assignment was an invitation to participate in the literacy practices of engaged, participatory citizenship, as defined in the CBA take-a-stand prompt, and as encouraged by Ms. Thompson. And, while Ms. Thompson embraced such an ethos and efforts to engage in this way, she also made available cues that were related to task-completion and attention to the scoring rubric. Alexis' work demonstrated his privileging of those cues over the cues to construct a more committed persona, and the result was a proficient yet uninspired essay response.

### **Ms. Thompson's Response to their Writing**

As will be detailed in Chapter 5 of this dissertation, the science/writing teacher, Ms. Bass, provided a measure of uptake through the rubric and the scores she gave students on their final research project, as well as through some of her written comments. However, in Ms. Thompson's case, she gave scores between one and four, and the majority of her comments to students were made orally. Her interview comments also provided a measure of her perspective on student uptake, though. For example, she indicated that she found the students' writing to be overall formulaic, and that she was somewhat disappointed by their written performance: "Their writing seemed to be, not nearly as vibrant as their discussion"; and, "It's almost like sometimes when they write they turn everything off. It depends, you have to catch them, you have to catch them

right there while that spark is hot. Otherwise, yeah, they go back to their desks and I think they, all sorts of things happen, they get distracted ... which is why we have sentence stems and things like that."

To begin with, her comments reflect the fact that she did not see a transfer of ideas or the comments from the discussion to their written essays. In other words, it seems that Ms. Thompson did not see the mediation of the assignment in the form of the town hall debate turned in to something that helped in students' writing, in spite of what she called its vibrancy. She characterized the lack of carry over from town hall to written essay as a lack of timeliness in taking comments from the discussion into the writing. It is because of the lack of timeliness that Ms. Thompson attributes the need to draw on template such as sentence stems. Ultimately, Ms. Thompson recognizes that her role was not solely to foster the spirit of democratic expression through the CBA, but also to help students successfully accomplish an academic task: "I did not relent. I must have been such a pain to work with. But I couldn't give up, I couldn't stop. I was on a mission at some point. Anyway, I wasn't sure if we were required to let them fail. I was like, how can you let all these kids fail and then turn that in, so we just kept going at it until we got most folks passing" (Thompson, Interview).

Ms. Thompson's assessment of student uptake is also revealed in her comments about specific students' writing. When asked what Berta would have needed to do in order to have produced a more satisfactory paper, Ms. Thompson discussed how Berta chose a checklist-like manner to complete the assignment: "I can tell by her writing that she's going through the motions, that she's checking off the list of things to do" (Thompson, Interview). She laments not only Berta's performance, though, but also what she sees as the rigid nature of the state rubric: "that's another thing, with the rubric that was given out by the state, it's really cut and dry, like

either you did this or you didn't." In essence, Ms. Thompson highlights two key aspects of the assignment and student responses. Berta's response demonstrates a hyper-attentiveness to the rubric and the scoring criteria and a response that simultaneously seems perfunctory yet sufficiently meets the scoring criteria. That is, Berta's response attends to the basic rubric requirements, but fails to demonstrate the passion or thinking that Ms. Thompson sought. In Ms. Thompson's terms, Berta took a checklist approach to task completion, in spite of having demonstrated and been witness to a greater approximation of the democratic engagement sought by the assignment.

After listening to her recorded conference with Alexis, Ms. Thompson discussed some of what she had sought from him in his response: "I remember wanting him to be more articulate. I remember reading some of the sentences and thinking, okay, you left out some key words that I've heard you say a hundred times ... you're supposed to have a point of view, and it didn't feel like he was convincing, that he gave enough" (Interview, Thompson). When asked what she wanted Alexis to take away from the overall writing task, she said "we'd discussed this so many times and he was probably the one who brought it up in the conversation, so I was surprised he just decided not to mention the burden on society ... I wanted him to see Ira Mehlman clearly, pick it apart the way Alexis can." In short, then, Ms. Thompson's estimation of the uptake that took place from several students indicated that she felt they were overly formulaic in their responses. She also seemed to feel that one of the students she saw as the most astute and insightful did not break down the argument of others, nor did he articulate his ideas sufficiently.

## **Discussion**

The data from the three focal students revealed that their responses favored certain aspects of the assignment over others. In short, over the course of the assignment - across the

prompt, its mediation through instruction, and in the creation of student responses - conflicting cues emerged, and it seemed as though students resorted to standard means of responding to these sometimes conflicting calls for their written responses. Instead of responding to calls for rehearsing democratic participation, students seemed to look primarily for evaluative criteria and responded to these as a way to engage this writing assignment. This finding is consistent with the body of the longitudinal work done on writing which found that even post-secondary students often think of their writing requirements in terms of identifying what the teacher wants in order to complete those assignments, as opposed to adopting a disciplinary perspective or as a learning tool (e.g., McCarthy, 1987; Chiseri-Strater, 1991). In the end, student writing in the CBA assignment was not indicative of invested democratic participants, not in how arguments were formulated, nor in how students adopted a persona or considered their audience. Instead, the majority of student papers began in a way very close to the response frame or identical to it in some cases, and they represented a type of assignment-fulfillment rather than an expression of reasoned ideas.

## Chapter 5: Findings - Science

### Introduction

As with the social studies section, this analysis focuses primarily upon one major writing task, in this case the science research report known as "Micros and Me," a report on microorganisms. Much as in the social studies/reading class, writing in the science/writing class was used in various ways, in Ms. Bass' class it was used for activities such as recording observations of objects, note-taking, word study, and for assessment purposes. A focus on the research project provided, however, an opportunity to examine an extended subject-matter writing task which took place over approximately four weeks, and which was presented with a formal prompt and scoring rubric. The project required the use of outside sources and bibliographic citations and was designed specifically with subject-matter learning in mind. The project was encapsulated in a multi-page handout, which is discussed below. As with the Dream Act assignment discussion, I begin with a section on how the subject matter teacher, in this case Ms. Bass, viewed writing and the teaching of writing, elaborating on the initial sketch provided in the methodology chapter, by drawing on observational as well as interview data. This section also includes data that predate the Micros and Me research project, primarily because these data help provide a sense of how Ms. Bass specifically engaged the teaching of expository writing. As will be shown, a clear demarcation of a focus on this type of writing began with the new calendar year. I also examine the writing prompt, in this case a multi-page handout with a due-date timeline as well as instructions for completing the project, again drawing on concepts employed in Irene Clark's analysis of writing prompts - which will be reviewed within this chapter - and student essays, in an effort to highlight its intentions. Following, I attempt to depict how the Micros-and-Me project was pedagogically mediated by Ms. Bass, primarily through her

comments to students and through classroom activities. This attempt to trace mediation or support of uptake proved, as with Ms. Thompson's class, the most challenging aspect of trying to gauge the uptake of classroom writing assignments. I also looked at a number of students' essays, in their final versions as well as elements of their composition such as graphic organizers, due-date checklists, and initial drafts. These artifacts were the most tangible evidence of what was taken up from the intentions represented in the writing assignment and its mediation.

### **Ms Bass' Orientation to Writing Instruction**

There were several key aspects that characterized Ms. Bass' views of writing and teaching writing, namely the idea of a writing process with clearly delineated stages, the concept of a writers' workshop model, the idea of having students gain confidence in their writing, and the idea that students should take on a particular role as writers, through which they exhibit a significant degree of autonomy. To begin, a number of Ms. Bass' interview comments revealed her emphasis on aspects of a process approach: "I also want kids to understand the *process* of writing, . . . writing is something that, well that you abandon at some point but the first time you write something down isn't the most perfect thing that you'd want to publish. So, teaching the process was another goal of mine"; and, "I really want students to understand that your first draft it's not finished and that's really hard for kids this age to understand" (Bass, Interview 1). When asked about the formation of her views on writing, Ms. Bass responded, "Another place where my influence comes from is I took a class at CELL, which was taught by Kendrick Perkins and Brandi Wickstead. It was basically the writers workshop model and the writing process that you see in the class that I've been following comes from this training, which I took about six years ago" (Bass, Interview 1).

As noted in the methods section, artifacts in the classroom also highlighted the value she placed on a process writing approach. On each of these cabinet doors there was also space for students to place Post-its with their names on them, to indicate where each student was in the writing process. Students were expected to move their nametags to different stages, such as when they moved on to the 'revision stage,' as opposed to drafting. This provided a convenient and readily accessible visual representation of the class at a glance. In addition to the classroom visuals, student use of stages in a writing process were also part of the scoring criteria Ms. Bass employed in the rubric for the Micros project, as will be detailed in the following sections.

The idea of a workshop model was also an especially appealing one for Ms Bass, as she describes: "I really saw myself teaching short stories and working on developing characters and setting and having this workshop going on in my classroom where I could meet with different students and see what they're working on and give them suggestions for how to add twists and turns in their stories that would make it interesting" (Bass, Interview 1). Her description echoes tenets of workshop models for writing instruction, such as those espoused by early children's writing researcher Donald Graves (1983), namely the focus on conferring with students to guide their uptake as well as the pedagogical practice of providing "suggestions" as opposed to strictly mandating the kinds of changes that students might realize in their writing. In this sense, teachers are seen as collaborative partners with students as opposed to authoritative figures, almost in the sense of working as a fellow writer alongside the student doing the writing. This mode of thinking also highlights ideas of ownership of writing and student autonomy, reflected in Ms. Bass' comments that students may need to "abandon" a given piece of writing, a decision left for the writer to determine. Comments Ms. Bass made to her students during class sessions also highlighted this mode of writing: "You have to work with that piece, change words, move things

around. So, your draft gets messy" (FN, 2-10-12). Her comments reflect not only her emphasis on revision as part of a writing process, but also her pedagogical stance toward the teaching of writing. With her comments she evokes an ethos consistent with writers workshop approaches advocated by educators such as Graves, in which students took ownership over their work, and worked almost intuitively and artistically. Because of its inherent flexibility, the workshop model approach lends itself well to a pedagogy of student self-directedness.

This workshop orientation coincided with a focus on the decision-making role of students as writers. As Ms. Bass reiterated to her students, she wanted and expected them to have oversight over their writing. At one point she told students, "I'll let you be the writers who make those decisions" (FN, 1-25-12), when students were locating sources of information to include in their reports. She reiterated these sentiments several days later: "You guys are the authors. You are the researchers. You'll have to make those decisions yourselves. I'm not going to tell you to use *x* sources, or ask you, 'what are your main ideas from what you read?'" (FN, 1-31-12). Ms. Bass' comments were issued as both encouragement and admonishment. She seemed to want to reiterate her basic philosophical approach to teaching and learning, namely that much is driven by a type of internalized and intrinsic motivation on the part of students. Her comments reflected an approach predicated on premises that reject the ideas of knowledge transfer - from teacher to student - and which instead embraced notions more consistent with a discovery pedagogy.

Ms. Bass also articulated a desire to begin with writing forms, subjects, and tasks that her students were comfortable with or accustomed to, and to then move to other, less-familiar types of writing. Her intention seemed to be to have students begin with the more familiar types of writing such as personal narratives and poetry, as a way to build confidence, and to then move to less familiar writing such as more extended expository text. As she commented in the first

interview, "So I guess at the start of the school year I want the students to feel comfortable with writing and so I begin with more confidence-building writing, where I allow everything and I'm not critical of anything. Uh, I'm just trying to get them to write and so we begin with personal narratives. Your personal stories are really easy to access and I don't require any certain lengths and I just want kids to feel comfortable with writing and let them know that this is not a hard thing to do and that their ideas are valued." Her comments reveal the idea that she favors a 'starting point' in writing for students, one characterized by personal topics for students and a lack of teacher critique. The comments also reveal her disposition toward writing more generally, as a place for personal narratives or interests of students as legitimate topics for writing. While Ms. Bass highly valued students' writing on topics of personal interest and relevance and used personal writing as a starting point, she articulated a desire to help students move successfully to writing expository prose. The following description of the shift to expository writing marks the transition that she sought to achieve, predicated largely on the introduction of a structured format for writing paragraphs from a curriculum she had received training in a number of years before the year of this study.

### **Groundwork for Expository Writing**

The new calendar year marked a notable shift to expository writing from narratives and poetry in Ms. Bass' class. On January 4, she announced to students that they would undertake a new focus on "expository writing with a focus on a paragraph" (FN, 1-4). Letting students know that they would "learn the meaning of this word [expository]," Ms. Bass began by guiding students to organize their binders, giving them directions for which pages from previous writing they should set aside to take home, and how to label the new expository writing section. She asked students to title this section "expository writing" and to "create the subtitle of 'giving

information." She let the students know that they would see topic sentences, explanations, and reasons, details, and facts. She announced to students that they would need "to be smart about how you give information to your reader - you'll need transitions and a closing or a clincher - it might make your reader want to know more" (FN, 1-4-12). On this day, Ms. Bass also introduced the "Handy Pages," a resource which served as a reference and which was taken from the Step up to Writing curriculum (Auman, 2003). The handy pages made use of a traffic signal system for structuring or organizing writing. Green signified "go" and indicated a topic sentence; Yellow signified slow down, and meant it was time to include a reason, a detail, or a fact, and to use a transition; red meant to stop and to give an example. When green was presented again, it signaled to go back, and "remind the reader of your topic" (FN, 1-4-12). On 1/10 Ms. Bass modeled the creation of a paragraph using the traffic signal system, and referred to it as "our model accordion paragraph" (FN, 1-10-12).

In the first interview, Ms. Bass related her preparation for shifting to expository writing, and her concerns about her students' ability to write it: "I'm feeling like we really need to focus more on their expository writing. A lot of my students don't know what a complete sentence is, and when they write to a prompt they don't get into the head of someone who doesn't know what they're talking about or they're thinking about." Because of this concern, Ms. Bass indicated her intention to provide a certain type of structure: "So, I need to teach them how to write clearly and how to write in an organized way so that their ideas are clearly communicated" (Bass, Interview 1). She identified the specific curricular materials she would draw on: "So, I'm just starting to teach a very simple structure for writing paragraphs. It's called the Step Up to Writing program and it begins with traffic signals that help students think about how to structure a paragraph" (Bass, Interview 1). Ms. Bass' intention seemed to be to have students learn this structure for a

paragraph and move on to the larger essay: "from there once they understand that structure we can expand that to writing essays. So, once they get the hang of the structure of the paragraph I have a plan for them to write a report" (Bass, Interview 1). Thus, she initiated a transition to expository writing early in January and later that month introduced the research project. In her interview comments, Ms. Bass signaled a concern both with how students structured their writing as well as their ability to account sufficiently for their audience. Her approach seemed to rest on the idea that providing a certain type of organizational structure would make their writing clearer to a given audience. She seemed to assume that structure in this case would translate into clarity to readers. She also seemed to assume that such a structure would transfer to the report they would undertake.

### **The Science Research Report**

**Impetus for the assignment.** Whereas the impetus for the social studies Dream Act CBA writing task came from a readily identifiable institutional source, the impetus for the science research report was less of an institutional requirement, and instead represented Ms. Bass' planned approach to meeting grade level standards and expectations. As she described the assignment, "we had been studying microorganisms and I wanted them to take some science learning and apply it to writing their research report. Research reports are something we want 5th graders to do, particularly the research piece of it" (Bass, Interview, 2). This emphasis is consistent with the state standards in place at the time of the study, articulated as Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs): "Writes to analyze informational text or data (e.g., explains the steps of a scientific investigation)" (EALR 2.2.1). In this case, Ms. Bass took a grade level English Language Arts expectation and connected it with her subject matter instruction: "So I thought that was a nice tie-in of, combining some of the science that we had

been learning with doing research" (Bass, Interview 1). Ms. Bass took steps to connect these state requirements to the English Language Arts work of her classroom: "my goals were to reinforce the writing process because we had been through that a couple of times and I wanted them to work on this with non-fiction. They had been reading non-fiction, so it would be a nice complement to what they had been reading and being able to produce that kind of writing for themselves" (Bass, Interview 1).

Although there was no specific grade level requirement to write a research report, the use of writing within content areas was a standards-based expectation. Thus, Ms. Bass in this case brought her own professional preparation and disposition to interpreting the larger expectations of the state standards, and orchestrated a research project as a longer writing and learning task. As indicated in the earlier background section on the classroom teachers, Ms. Bass had attended a number of science training sessions, and saw herself as especially invested in the teaching of grade level science. For example, she was in charge of organizing the annual Science Fair during the year of the study, a task she reported having done for a number of years. In informal conversations during data collection, she also indicated having read and been influenced by the curricular materials and the published text of a science teacher from a neighboring school district. Ms. Bass indicated that she had read the text, was influenced by it, and had sought to secure curricular materials for her own district (Bass, Interview 2). The *Micros and Me* report, then, provided an opportunity to look at a writing task which was designed with heuristic purposes in mind, that is to have students think about a particular topic and to learn from writing about it. It presented an opportunity to see how students might understand it rhetorically as well, that is to see how writing was to be used to achieve particular purposes.

**The assignment prompt.** The assignment for the science research report was quite lengthy, presented originally in a six-page handout. Ms. Bass later decided to eliminate one of the major original requirements, the Public Service Announcement (PSA), and thus the relevant handout pages were reduced to about four and one-half. These pages outlined the focus of the "Micros and Me Research Project," which was to generate a report on a microorganism (Appendix M). The handout begins with an overview or general introduction, which announces the project's focus on microorganisms, and includes some general parameters, including the fact that students would choose the specific topic, and could choose to work with a partner during parts of the process. The first page then provides some general guidelines, such as posing questions about the topic, locating resources, creating a bibliography, and following the steps of the writing process.

The second page consists primarily of a list of possible research topics. The third and fourth pages are made up of a checklist, with various "parts of the project," along with dates for completion of each of these sections or steps. Page 5 focuses on generating and focusing on a specific topic and set of questions and is labeled, "Collecting/Finding a Seed idea in Expository Writing." Page 6 provides a list of possible resources for information about given topics, with several of these, such as *kidshealth.org*, targeted specifically for a young audience. Ms. Bass eliminated the PSA requirement because she felt that it was overwhelming for students, given time constraints: "I think I had taken on too much. We, the time, there were time constraints. The PSA had come from the pilot curriculum later, and it was a microorganism curriculum, so then the new curriculum added this inquiry piece ..." (Bass, Interview 2). Ms. Bass put together the assignment, drawing from her experiences as well as ideas from the professional development text previously mentioned (Fulwiler, 2011).

As with the social studies prompt, the cues the science project presented can be thought of as being both implicit and explicit. Returning to Irene Clark's adopted metaphor "from George Dillon, a writing assignment more resembles a musical score than a computer program - that is, it consists of marks cueing or prompting an enactment or realization by the reader, rather than a code requiring deciphering" (Clark, 2005, np). The research report assignment presented by Ms. Bass was much like Clark's description, most notably in that a number of cues, some more directly and some more indirectly, were presented to students for them to interpret and bring to bear on their writing. For example, the handout clearly identifies explicit, formal requirements of the assignment, such as questions be posed regarding the topic, a minimum of two resources be included and duly noted in a bibliography, that students follow the steps of a writing process, such as pre-writing and drafting, and that data be included to support student points. These are all part of the minimal steps required in fulfilling the writing assignment obligation, similar to the list of instructions presented in the social studies writing task. The third page of the handout - the most clearly articulated organizational component of the packet - was in fact a project checklist, and was designed to help students "keep track of all the parts of the project" (FN, 1-23). The checklist not only included the various elements of the larger project, such as choosing a research topic and a bibliography, but also target dates for each of these elements, presented in a checklist format, with a column to record the date completed and whether the completed component had been checked by either Ms. Bass or the school librarian, Ms. Beale. The scoring rubric (Appendix N) also worked as an important part of the Micros and Me assignment, even though Ms. Bass did not review it until February. It served to complement the project checklist and to provide more detail about the minimum requirements of the assignment. Whereas the Checklist served to announce recommended completion or due dates, the rubric identified some of the

criteria for products or activities that Ms. Bass' assignment valued. One feature on the scoring rubric, for example, was that "the draft shows evidence of revisions and edits." Another was, "I found multiple pieces of evidence to answer my questions and took clear notes." The requirement to produce multiple drafts reflected Ms. Bass' emphasis and valuing of a writing process, and the evidence requirement highlighted the value of outside sources for information for the report.

While some of these aspects of the Micros and Me assignment were more like a code - and thus more legible to students - some aspects of the handout were more like marks cueing a particular type of enactment. Most notably, page five of the handout is titled, "Collecting/Finding a Seed Idea in Expository Writing." In addition to alerting students to the fact that they will need to take a seed idea "all the way through the writing process," this page announces to students that they must "become an expert on your seed idea by doing research. You will need to locate resources you can read and understand so that you can **become the expert**. Your 'expertise' will be shared with others in your writing" [emphasis in original]. This notion of expertise is consistent with earlier class sessions, in which Ms. Bass encouraged students to take a scientist-like stance and approach, when she highlighted the importance of accessing previous work of a larger scientific community (the session on Pasteur and Jenner), and when she generally encouraged students to bring an orientation and stance of acute observation (for example, the observation of onion cells and feathers). In aiming for students to speak as experts or knowledgeable subjects on their topics, Ms. Bass sought, in essence, a particular type of identity performance for students as they engaged in their writing. Much as Clark discusses teachers wanting students to present themselves as invested and interested parties, Ms. Bass provides cues that she wants students to present themselves as knowledgeable

and credible personae who would be informative and credible to their audience. She wanted them to at least take on some of the practices of those working in the sciences - careful and diligent observation and recording of data; thorough and comprehensive review of available information on a subject; and writing in a spirit of sharing or contributing to an extant knowledge base.

There are two key points here. First, the concept of the "seed idea" was taken from instruction for writing personal narratives and poems earlier in the school year. The idea was that from multiple possible topics - seeds of a watermelon - one would be selected as a focus for a piece of writing. The seed metaphor also implies that students would need to tend to their topic, cultivating and caring for it, so that it might develop. The idea of the material for writing being conceptualized as the cultivating of a seed is consistent with writing workshop models and the concept of the student as a writer/creator who takes ownership over the gestation of writing topics. This period of cultivating a seed idea also implies investment - that the individual writer is somehow emotionally and/or intellectually invested in the topic and process of writing. These assumptions, then, were codified in the writing prompt and were present in Ms. Bass' pedagogical orientation to teaching writing to her students.

A second key aspect of the expertise requirement is that it became in some ways the central purpose or motive for writing the report, other than for the purposes of assessment. The PSA requirement provided the closest approximation to an authentic purpose for writing. It asked students to present information either in a poster or a video ad to a specific audience, as well as to elicit feedback regarding the efficacy of the ad or poster. This built-in feedback loop generated a need to account for audience and purpose in ways consistent with the rhetorical knowledge aims of the WPA outcome statement and the CCSS expectations. In other words, the PSA

requirement created the most pressing rhetorical purpose within the Micros and Me assignment. With its elimination, gaining expertise and presenting oneself as a knowledgeable subject took on a heightened importance for the assignment, other than as a school assessment task. However, the lack of a clear and detailed plan or model for how students might create and take on the persona of expert made the Micros and Me project an even more challenging writing task.

To reiterate, there are aspects of the completion of the writing task that are more concrete or textured for students. They knew they needed to include elements of a writing process, for example. They knew that they needed to include bibliographic references; they knew the topic needed to be on a microorganism. But elements and aspects of the writing task that were less apparent, less textured, are the more difficult to interpret and to demonstrate to students. It is much more complex to help young students begin to appropriate the perspective or voice of an invested democratic citizen or that of an expert on a topic related to science. Writing tasks such as the Micros project serve an important epistemic function in that they help students to gain knowledge about phenomena in the natural world. But, as indicated in both the WPA statement and the CCSS, learning to write is more than acquiring forms. It is about acquiring knowledge of the situated and rhetorical nature of writing, and thus being able to attend to the situation, the audience, and the purposes for writing.

**Teacher mediation of the assignment.** Part of the difficulty in studying uptake is that it becomes something of a moving target. In Austin's original discussion, the communicative situation is relatively isolated, and his intention is to draw a link between the utterances of one interlocutor and the actions of another. And, much as conduit metaphors in communication theory have been largely discredited because of their lack of attention to context (e.g., Reddy, 1970), Austin's theories have benefited from the fleshing-out afforded by Freedman. As she

reminds us, a large part of uptake is "taking it as," that is, taking a writing assignment as an initiating document which presents a set of intentions cast within a set of cues. Just as an academic learns to take a conference invitation as such and responds in socially sanctioned discursive ways, so too are students expected to take a science writing assignment as cause for appropriate essays or reports.

While this study is focused on the central question of how assigning a particular writing task results in an anticipated or desired response from students, such a phenomenon takes place across time and through multiple interactions between the people involved. Students are being instructed in how to complete such a task while they are required to write it. They draw on previous experiences and knowledge about how to complete the task. They interpret the cues that are presented to them to determine how they might respond. The assignment is always mediated, then, and how it is mediated has implications for uptake, or, more accurately, is part of uptake. These implications involve the pedagogical approach of a teacher, his or her conceptualization of writing and writing instruction, the prior experiences of students and their dispositions, among other factors. Ultimately, understanding the mediation or support of uptake requires multiple studies, multiple theories, and multiple settings in order to be made more clear. The present study attempts to partially account for some of the disruptions in the straight line theory (from utterance to perlocution or enactment) inherent in Austin's theory of uptake. The description and analysis that follow serve to partially reveal how the assignment was mediated, how the intentions of the handout, of the writing task, and of the teacher were made more or less legible to students. These intentions can originate with the state, local control, or the individual classroom teacher. In any case, they are ultimately mediated through the teacher's presentation and coordination of cues for students to follow.

Ms. Bass introduced the Micros Project assignment on a Monday, January 23rd, by first handing out copies of the assignment packet to each student, while projecting the same documents onto a screen through a digital projector. The students had begun their morning instructional session by taking a test in the computer lab before starting in on the science material, leaving about 30 minutes for reviewing the assignment handout. Ms. Bass read aloud sections of the handout, asking students to follow along on their own sheets, and she elaborated on various points. One example was the second step of the directions for the research project: "2. Find at least **2 resources** to help you answer questions and **take notes** from those resources." After reading aloud this point, she then highlighted the importance of having at least two bibliographic sources by stating that a person "wanting to publish in the field would be laughed at" for not including sufficient references. With this comment, Ms. Bass seemed to want to encourage students to recognize the practices of those in the field of science and thus motivate students to engage in an early simulation of scientific research. This was consistent with a number of comments that Ms. Bass made to students as they engaged in activities during science class, urging them to think of themselves as scientists and to engage in the practices of scientists, such as careful observation and detailed recording of observed phenomena.

In addition to a particular persona, Ms. Bass also sought student uptake of a writing process that followed the steps of pre-writing, drafting, editing/revising, and publishing, much as she had discussed this process during instruction, notably of poetry and personal narrative. In fact, referring to the idea of how students should select topics for the science research project, she refers to these processes as "collecting" and "nurturing," as well as the concept of a "seed" idea, terminology largely popularized in more recent iterations of writing process instruction: "Collecting, nurturing. The steps you'll have to do, pre-writing, outlining. We will go through the

steps in the process and will publish" (FN, 1-23). Ms. Bass closed the session on the research report by assigning as homework the task of reading through "all parts of the assignment" and recording the dates on students' notebook calendar. She did not provide other guidelines or parameters for completion of the homework task. Ms. Bass spent the closing period of the class session by highlighting the handout's page 3, the "Micros and Me Research Project Checklist."

The instruction and instructions provided to students by Ms. Bass on the first day of the Micros and Me unit were characteristic of her instruction throughout the school year. Again, her pedagogical orientation was such that her instruction largely consisted of providing guideposts for students, while also providing students with resources such as time, materials, and teacher feedback, in order for students to carry out their roles. Coding across the observational data, in fact, revealed numerous instances of what can be called "providing guideposts," in which Ms. Bass made comments such as, "scientists could not be taken seriously with a lack of sufficient resources." The intention, it seemed, was that students would see it as their responsibility to take their roles seriously and to thus engage in thorough research for writing their reports. As an example, the assignment to record due dates in student planners, without elaboration on this expectation, was consistent with her practices. As indicated earlier, Ms. Bass did not want to "have to nag" students about fulfilling their obligations as students. The act of transferring dates to the planner could have been assigned to students in a more obviously regulated way, but to do so would not have been consistent with Ms. Bass' pedagogy generally or for writing specifically.

The following day was the students' standing library class. This particular session was allocated to using the library computers to search internet sites for possible report topics. Ms. Bass instructed students to use their "knowledge of how to look things up on the internet" (FN, 1-24-12), and she and Ms. Beale, the librarian, referred students to the assignment packet's

second page, the list of possible topics, as a source for identifying topics. This time period and activities constituted a large part of the pre-writing - locating or generating material for writing - for the report. And Ms. Bass orchestrated this session using the pedagogical principles she had employed previously, best described as providing guideposts for students as well as time and materials. In this case, those guideposts consisted primarily of referring students to the topics list, to prompting them to use their internet skills, and providing time on the computers. Although Ms. Bass issued reminders to students to use their time well, and she provided specific search terms for some students to use, she largely did not impose herself upon the research session. The result was that students identified or generated material across a wide spectrum of ways. A few used the time to identify relevant websites such as *kidshealth.org* and took notes on diseases they found interesting. A number of students, though, were drawn to web pages because of interest in visuals for things such as bed bugs or lice. Students accessing these pages excitedly said to their partners and other students, "Oh, look at this; how cool!"; "disgusting!"; "oh my god!"; and, "I'm doing my report on this" (FN, 1-24-12). However, the majority of students did not record information or save website URLs or website addresses.

During the next day's session, Wednesday the 25th, students worked on previous science tasks, notably writing a paragraph about Blepharisma, and Ms. Bass reminded students that the following day was the deadline for selecting their research paper topic. The manner in which Ms. Bass issued this reminder was consistent with her "guideposts" for the assignment overall. That is, as students were preparing to transition to their next class, she announced orally that the due date was coming up, but did not issue a written reminder or have students record the announcement in their planner. On the 26th, the discussion focused on scientific knowledge. Specifically, Ms. Bass read aloud a selection on Louis Pasteur, his work on germs, and the

process which would come to be known as pasteurization. The reading included information about the scientist Edward Jenner, a predecessor of Pasteur's who had also done significant work in the same area. One of the main points of the article was that Pasteur did not have ready access to Jenner's work, which was quite relevant to his own. Ms. Bass commented, "Jenner's ideas would have been important to Pasteur"; and, "it's so much easier now to know what scientists are doing compared to back then" (FN, 2-26-12). The implicit point Ms. Bass seemed to be working towards was that the sharing of information was a key part of the work of scientists, and thus suggested to students that the work they were doing should convey clearly and thoroughly the information they located. That is, Ms. Bass presented some ideas which had the potential to serve as a framework for the students' own writing, but often did not flesh out these concepts. These moves were consistent with Ms. Bass' articulated pedagogy and with her orientation towards teaching and learning and her interactions with students overall.

On the Friday of that week, the 27th, Ms. Bass had reserved a laptop cart and reviewed the use of the laptops, emphasizing that students should locate one of their minimum two sources, and should develop research questions and notes. Some of the classroom time on that day was devoted to other, ongoing science activities, the research report in fact taking place on a sort of parallel track with those activities. In this case, limited time was provided to continue research. Ms. Bass provided a guidepost in the form of written directions - "continue to locate sources and take notes." But note-taking and task-completion became an issue of concern, and during the subsequent week, Ms. Bass provided further guidance on the completion of the research project. On Tuesday, the 31st, she discussed issues which were relevant to both the research paper and the students' shorter, in-class writing and note-taking. She reminded students that they "need to take notes," and implored them to be more self-guided in their work: "I'm not

going to tell you to use X source or ask you, 'what are the main ideas from what you read?'" (FN, 1-31-12). Ms. Bass had students work in dyads to share their ideas about good notes, and comments from the students included the idea of not including unnecessary information, and the inclusion of important ideas. Ms. Bass again implored students to take a certain level of initiative or self-direction, reminding them, "You guys are the authors. You decide what goes in there" (FN). Earlier in the school year, especially with narrative and poetry writing, she had consistently drawn on the refrain of authors making their own decisions about what to include in their writing. With regards to the research report, she made a similar comment about their researching topics: "You are the researcher, so you'll have to make those decisions for yourself," (FN, 1-31-12) regarding what information to include.

By the 31st of January, though, it was becoming clear that students were not successfully meeting the timeline dates as these had been established in the Checklist. According to the timeline, she wanted students to have chosen a topic, developed research questions, and located two resources by the 30th. On the 31st, she announced to the class that she had "only about one-half of the yellow sheets," which were the forms on which students should have indicated their topic, questions, and sources. Of those which had been turned in, she indicated that a number were incomplete: "Those I've seen have some sources, but many are not in the form I need. You are writing 'books' or 'website' - but, you need to put down the exact website. You need to include the date and the year" (FN, 1-31-12). In this instance, then, Ms. Bass' expectation was that bibliographic information be recorded according to certain norms or a certain format. However, as evidenced in the observational field notes, these expectations had not been highlighted and emphasized for students.

On the 2nd of February, the daily learning goal for science read: "We will read and take notes on our research topics" (FN, 2-2-12). Ms. Bass found her students to be off-task and unfocused, and she asked them, "What will it take for you to be on topic, focused on your topic?" and after a short discussion, she established the parameters of students engaging only in "on-task conversations" and maintaining the volume at a "level 2." With this, she had students go to their desks to work individually or in partners to locate information on their research topics. On this same day, Ms. Bass also modeled for students how to record the title of articles from websites, and where to record notes. Into the following week, on the 6th and the 8th of February, Ms. Bass continued to demonstrate her dissatisfaction with the completion of tasks by given dates. She used a visual projector to share with the class one student's planner (in which students at the grade level recorded all homework assignments and due dates), in which the due dates from the research project were to have been recorded but were not. On the 8th, she gave students one final session to use computers in class to locate information for their reports.

On February 9 Ms. Bass focused on what she called big ideas, that is, on students identifying the bigger ideas as categories in their report writing. Using one student volunteer's writing as an example, she identified his larger question, "How do I prevent salmonella for pets?" Ms. Bass uses this as an example of a big idea: "So, I'm going to put a circle around it and highlight it - it's a big idea" (FN 2-9-12). It seemed as though what Ms. Bass wanted students to do was to distinguish between smaller, supporting details, and larger ideas. She used as an example a web about lice (Appendix O). In the center circle is the word lice; four circles branching out from this word include, "What are they?"; "What is their life cycle?"; "How can people prevent them?"; and, "If you get them." The subsequent discussion by Ms. Bass seemed to be geared to having students identify a main idea or larger concept, and not to present smaller,

supporting details in its place. These larger ideas seemed to be appropriate for a paragraph or several paragraphs each.

On the following day, Ms. Bass provided students with some general comments regarding expository writing, comments which echoed comments she'd made earlier in the school year regarding this type of writing. In February she reminded students, "In writing you don't want to bore your reader. Bring your voice into it. Expository writing does not have to be boring" (FN, 2-10-12). Early in the school year she had spoken about expository writing in a similar way: "It has a different purpose [than narratives]; it's to explain" (FN, 1-14-12). She also spoke then about structure, noting that "it begins with an introduction, includes the body - the meaty part - and ends with a conclusion." She also reminded students that it still needed to be creative: "Good writers of expository writing need to be creative," and that students would need to be "smart about how you give information to the reader - you'll need transitions" and "a closing or a 'clincher' - it might make your reader want to know more" (1-14-12).

A key component of the research project was discussed on this day. Ms. Bass announced on that day that she had not yet let students know how they would be graded for the project. She then reviewed the grading criteria indicated on the rubric, highlighting especially the idea of students using the writing process. Her discourse seemed to highlight two points, in fact. One was that students should engage in the steps of the writing process and that they should be somewhat self-guided in doing so. During the session, she discusses the pre-writing step of the process, saying "that's all nurturing and developing," and asking student, "did you know that?" As she emphasizes the relationship between writing for science and their previous creative writing, Ms. Bass also calls for self direction: "I don't want to monitor your sticky notes. I want

you to do that. You've got to monitor your own name tag," referring to the Post-it notes with students' names on them (Appendix A).

Pointing out that students were often not making significant revisions, she announced, "Sometimes, the published version is the same as the draft" and asked, "What does that tell you about that student?" When no one responded to her query, she asked, "Are they following the writing process?" Ms. Bass emphasized the purpose of the report and of revision: "When you publish and present your work to other people, that how you communicate." Ms. Bass' comments were an accurate assessment of students' revision efforts. As will be reflected in the student writing samples, students tended to make only limited if any revisions between drafts. Ms. Bass clearly held on to the expectation that they would realize significant changes in the content of their writing

In short, Ms. Bass provided a number of supplications for students to engage their writing. She wanted students to choose topics they were personally invested in; to gain thorough knowledge or expertise; to convey or express that knowledge with creativity; to make significant revisions to different versions of their written drafts; and, most significantly, to take on the persona of a committed, self-directed student with regards to writing.

**Student writing.** Although contemporary genre theory concerns itself quite intensely with situation and context, literally seeing genres as "social actions" (Miller, 1984), genres of course always include a textual aspect, one which bears analysis. The textual production of students in Ms. Bass' class provides such a point for analysis here, but is always considered in relation to the context of the classroom, and the intentions indicated by the prompt and the teacher. Excerpts of the samples from Ms. Bass' students are included here in the analysis, and facsimiles of the samples themselves are included as appendices. Before discussing three sample

textual response to the assignment prompt, and then some general tendencies across the class samples, I return briefly to Freedman's theory of uptake. Specifically, one of the key fundamental points of her framework is the idea that uptake does not consist of an automatic response, but that it is, in her words, "first the taking of an object; it is not the causation of a response by an intention. This is the hidden dimension of the long, ramified, intertextual memory of uptake: the object is taken from a set of possibles" (Freedman, 2002, p. 48). This taking of an object or objective is a key aspect of selection. As interlocutors respond to one another, they can draw on previous experiences with similar situations. When respondents respond through discursive means - through language - they can draw on typified or patterned forms such as genres in order to respond. How they draw on those sources depends largely on the stock of experiences and language uses, how they interpret the initiating text, and their own disposition towards the endeavor. All of these factors influence uptake. For younger students, such as those in the upper grade classroom studied here, much of that repertoire is in-formation. That is, what constitutes the set of possibles is not only what they have learned previously, but what they are presented with during the moment, or, as in this case, the moments of instruction. As relative neophytes to certain types of writing, these students are drawing on previous knowledge as well as what is presented to them. As they act to interpret the cues informing that uptake, they are drawn to different cues. In some sense, then, teachers are helping to make students aware of what sorts of uptake are available, and do so in a number of ways. Some of these can be through direct modeling, other times through more indirect example, and other times through suggestion.

Going back to Freedman's terms, uptake is always about taking something as such. For example, taking the invitation to a conference as such, and thus establishing the social expectation that the interlocutor would respond within the range of acceptable responses,

whether or not these expectations are stated directly. The expectations for the writing assignments presented to 5th-grade students, and the science research report specifically, are similar in that they bring a set of expectations, sometimes clearly articulated and at other times not. Part of Ms. Bass' expectations for the Micros research project was that students would demonstrate a degree of knowledge about the topics they chose to research, presumably by writing about these topics accurately. This is the part of uptake which is more clear or apparent. What is not as apparent, particularly for students, is the performative identity required or implied in such a knowledgeable stance.

*Luna.* Luna was a confident student who was at the same time quite concerned about her performance in school. Two of the three 5th-grade level teachers at Cherry Creek commented that Luna's older sister had been a stellar student at the school, and that Luna was also talented, bright, and driven, but did not consistently demonstrate the same kind of academic achievement as her older sister. Her family was from the African nation of Eritrea, but Luna had either been born in the U.S. or had spent most of her life in this country. She indicated that she understood but did not speak Eritrean, but that her parents did so at home. Luna was socially quite adept, and had numerous friends from her homeroom class as well as from other classes. She was very open to participating in the study and she sought my support in the classroom on a number of occasions as I filled my volunteer duties. She at times informally told me anecdotes about her sister and her family's recent travels to Eritrea.

For the Micros report, Luna worked with another student, Rene, during part of the time, although each student was required to generate her own research report. As the first page of her report (Appendix O) indicates, Luna completed the questions page with Rene, on which they used a T-chart, as Ms. Bass had guided them to do. Their questions/categories on one column

included, "What is it?" and "description," for which they provide bullet points such as "parasite," "ectoparasite," "almost transparent" and "6 legs with claws." There are other T-chart entries, such as "treatment," and "food."

The textual sample includes an outline for the research report, including an introduction, and "body paragraphs" that consist of a description, discussion of the life cycle of lice, a definition, what they feed on, and how people can prevent getting them; and a conclusion. Following, Luna generated a draft that followed the outline very closely, and then what appears to be a final draft, which is a more neatly printed and cleaned-up version of the initial draft. The samples of her work indicate that Luna did in fact employ a writing steps process, using questions, notes, all of which constituted pre-writing. While her various drafts reflect process-writing, the earlier and later draft versions show very little change, however, and she thus does not seem to incorporate revision in a way that realizes significant changes between the two drafts. But Ms. Bass' intentions were for students to realize significant changes between iterations of their writing. These intentions are revealed in the cues she presented - her discussion of differences between drafts, the inclusion of process as a requirement on the rubric, and the posters on the cabinet walls, for example.

Ms. Bass clearly worked to have students generate what might be considered expository writing that served to inform, recognizable in certain formal characteristics. . For the most part, Luna generated a text which conformed to the expected textual features of such a genre. Previous research (e.g., Kamberelis & Bovino, 1999) has demonstrated that even very young students such as those in kindergarten and first grade employed in their oral and/or written text clear linguistic and organizational differences between their story writing and science writing. One of the key markers revealed from this research are the factual, present-tense tendencies of

expository writing in children's work. Luna's text sample demonstrates this same predominately present-tense, factual quality, such as in the following examples: "Lice is a parasite a ectoparasite" and "Lice is almost transparent." In addition, Luna's writing demonstrates a clear organizational pattern, as Ms. Bass had sought, as it began with an introduction, included several body paragraphs, and ended with a conclusion paragraph. She has written on an appropriate topic for the assignment, has located and cited appropriate bibliographic information, and has used language patterns consistent with expository writing. This is to say that Luna's textual performance - her written response to the assignment - conforms in a number of ways to the formal or textual uptake expectations which reside both in the assignment itself and in Ms. Bass' mediation of the task.

But, Luna's work also demonstrates characteristics that in some ways violate the normal expectations for such a genre. She includes questions for her headings, such as "What is the life cycle of head lice?" This use of questions, while not atypical for children's books that deal with informational material such as animal life, would not be anticipated on a research report. Another key divergence from expected norms is that Luna brings a conversational tone to her writing at times. For example, in the second paragraph of her rough draft, Luna, in her description of head lice, writes, "Did you know that adult head lice is 2mm or 3mm long. So small!" Then, when discussing treatments, she writes that "The other way is to use mayonnaise. Eww!! I know, mayonnaise in your hair kills head lice but you have to put it in your hair, eww!!" In these instances the tone of the writing and how it is addressed to a reader is quite informal, and in marked contrast to the earlier tone.

In overall terms, Luna's response seems to take the assignment as a request to include information about head lice, and to address that information to an imagined reader who may

encounter head lice him/herself. The evidence indicates that she takes it as a request to generate at least two iterations of a drafted essay, even if these two versions are virtually the same. Luna's slight of the genre conventions of maintaining a serious tone throughout provides a key point for analysis. On the one hand, she did create a straightforward, informational, serious tone, but she also interjected comments that address the audience overtly and overly directly, and in a conversational tone. As Clark notes in her analysis, directing oneself to a reader in this way is one of the common ways in which students unfamiliar with a genre's expectations violate those expectations. Along with the examples above, she also addressed the reader to say, "I hope you like my research project about lice. Thank you."

As indicated earlier, Ms. Bass guided students to take a scientist-like stance toward natural phenomena, and to the writing of the research report. But, she also presented cues to encourage students to bring their "own voice" to the project, reminding them that even though this was a science report, it did not need to be boring. The idea of "voice" in young students' writing has largely been conceptualized as something leaning toward creativity, individuality, and uniqueness (Boscolo, 2006). Voice is largely conceptualized as a means for a writer to leave a sort of signature, and thus a reflection of individual expression. Luna's essay - especially the personal tone of expressions such as "eww" and "thank you" - leaves such a personal marker. But, Luna's adoption of voice in this way also detracted from the creation of an informative report that demonstrates expertise and the seriousness of a person trying to engage in science-like literacy activities. In short, the range of cues presented in the assignment and its mediation were so wide open as to allow Luna to read cues in a way that made sense to her. As a result, her work reflected an effort to respond to as many if not all the cues presented in the context of the Micros

research project, the result being a sort of eclectic or comprehensive response to the cumulative set of cues presented.

As part of that comprehensive response, Luna also demonstrated traces of the signal light structure that Ms. Bass had presented when introducing expository prose. On her original draft copy, Luna highlighted with different colors the various sections of her paper (Appendix O). The title and first paragraph were highlighted in green; the four body paragraphs were highlighted in light red; and the final concluding paragraph was highlighted in green. In this way, her writing followed the format of the Step up to Writing program (Auman, 2003) as the first and last pieces were highlighted in green. She had highlighted in yellow the questions and other headings for her paragraphs: What is it, What is lice?; How do you describe lice?; treatment; and life cycle.

The scoring rubric represents another key way in which uptake was measured. In Ms. Bass' evaluation of the work, she awarded Luna 20 of 25 possible points. In her comments, Ms. Bass calls attention to the fact that one of the forms is missing, "Yellow sheets? Where are your questions?" as well as highlighting proper note-taking practices: "Use notes, not complete sentences." That is, Ms. Bass draws attention to particular and specific acts or steps that she wanted Luna to engage in. In this sense, the teacher sees a lapse in uptake of procedural steps that Ms. Bass presumably believes are helpful in preparing to write a research report. She also provides positive comments and recognition to Luna: "Good job," as well as recognizing Luna's efforts following the writing process and organizing information. The general or end comments also provide areas to improve upon: "Make sure that every sentence makes sense and you've used apostrophes correctly!" as well as a concluding question, "How can you prevent lice?" Ms. Bass' reminder to make sure sentences sound right or make sense is a reminder to revise and edit her work. The comment is consistent with the expectation for students to take seriously their role in

self-editing their work and to engage in process steps meaningfully. And finally, Ms. Bass ends the comments by asking how getting lice can be prevented, a question presumably intended to have Luna recognize that she omitted a key aspect of the report. The use of a question is consistent with Ms. Bass' pedagogical moves to that point, wherein she endeavors to provide guideposts for students to see and use to self-direct their writing.

In what ways, then, is Luna's response an example of successful uptake? Or, perhaps better phrased, in what ways is it an example of the outcome meeting the intentions of the teacher and the prompt? I would say that Luna's writing represents an earnest effort to respond to what she understood to be the most salient cues presented in both the writing assignment itself as well as the mediation of the task presented by Ms. Bass. Luna was a diligent student who made a conscientious effort to do well in school across the subject areas. What proved more accessible for Luna were the signals to include as least the trappings of revision, to include both an authoritative tone and a unique voice, and to draw on structural aspects which for Ms. Bass served to help students access expository writing. In this way, Luna responded in a sort of all-encompassing manner to the cues presented to her, related both to procedures and content. Where Luna's response falls short is that it doesn't capture the personally-invested sensibility Ms. Bass hoped-for, but did not highlight. Neither did it fulfill the construction of a writerly persona who has expertise over the topic.

*Alexis.* Alexis' research report provides another example of the student uptake of the major writing assignment. Alexis' report (Appendix P) includes his completed "Finding a Seed Idea" sheet, three pages of questions and notes, one page each for an outline and web, then a rough draft followed by a cleaned-up version of that draft to comprise his final draft. Also included is the scored rubric for the project, on which Alexis earned 16 of 25 possible points. As

indicated earlier, Alexis was a student whose grade-level teachers spoke of as especially bright and verbally gifted, but who demonstrated a lack of consistent and thorough commitment to completing his assignments diligently. In fact, he made comments about himself during the school year as being an "underachiever."

This underachieving disposition shows in the notes and preparation for writing the report. For example, in the Finding a Seed worksheet he completed the section asking him to list "Resources with information about this topic" with his written response of "book's about lice." Alexis was aware that Ms. Bass wanted students to list specific references, but his general orientation was to make a minimal effort that might still earn him a proficient score. His questions included, "What is it?", "What does it feed on?", "What is its habitat?", and "How does it spread?" His outline is minimally detailed as well, and he indicates his body paragraphs as four - what are they, where do they live, what do they eat, and how do they spread. The outline also indicates that the report would include an introduction and a conclusion. His web is essentially a visual representation of the outline, with one large oval in the center labeled "lice," and four circles branching off labeled, "what are they," "what their habitat," "how they spread," and "what do they feed on?" In partial response to the question in the "What are they?" circle, are two connecting circles, with "insects" and "tiny parasites." Thus, the web, the outline, and the questions as posed, instead of serving heuristic purposes of Alexis laying out a set of genuine questions to respond to, are more accurately simply re-workings of the same terms in different formats. Alexis pretty straightforwardly transfers these points into paragraph format for the body of the draft.

Alexis' initial draft includes five paragraphs. The first begins, "Ouch," and while partly illegible, the rest of the paragraph addresses the reader directly, asking if he/she has itching or

bites. His second paragraph describes lice as tiny parasites that live in one's hair or in fur because they get warmth from the hair. The third paragraph indicates that lice spread quickly if one shares "hair products such as combs, hats, pillows and blankets," and if someone has shared these things, Alexis advises, "then might I suggest that you go to the clinic." The fourth paragraph indicates that lice feed on blood and the fifth closes by warning the reader to take care of lice or it will be a problem.

His revised version eliminates the opening paragraph that addressed the reader directly, and instead simply describes lice as parasites. The next paragraph describes how they spread with the sharing of products, and the third where they live, being in hair and fur. The fourth reads, "Lice feed on your blood because that's the only food source there. They won't eat it repeatedly but still it might be important to know." And the last, "So make sure you take care of your hair or lice will cause trouble." The drafts, therefore, show minimal significant changes, other than the elimination of the original paragraph addressed directly to the reader. So, Alexis' text also demonstrates signs of revision, as did Luna's, but similarly there is not much in the way of significant re-working of the draft.

In the case of Ms. Bass and the Micros project, she genuinely anticipated students choosing topics that were of personal relevance or significance to them. For example, in the follow-up interview, Ms. Bass was asked what Alexis would have needed to include in order to have completed the assignment more in line with her expectations, a question she answered more for the classes overall: "the kids really had a problem with this ... they weren't drawing upon their own personal experiences either." She mentions specifically a student from another homeroom class, "Tomás, I think it was Tomás, whose mom had suffered from something, when your brain swells ... it's not a disease or anything." Instead, he "did his on something like encephalitis. And

he never brought up the fact that his mother had suffered from it [her condition]." She was incredulous that students did not choose topics that had some kind of personal connection for them. She also mentioned that Joshua suffered from asthma, but he and other students "kept it so the information that they brought in only came from the resources" (Bass, Interview 2). Regarding Alexis, Ms. Bass said, "Alexis, not even that much. I mean lice, everyone know kids who have had lice, and oftentimes kids themselves have had lice, and the fact that he's not writing about that was concerning." She expressed disappointment over the fact that he did not bring in personal knowledge or information into his report. She laments this lack overall on students' part, as she describes it, "And it's something that we talked about too. It isn't something that I put in the rubric, and maybe that was the problem."

Although there were no recorded observations on my part of Ms. Bass encouraging students to lean toward topics of personal relevance or knowledge for the science research report, it is credible she encouraged them to do so, given how she guided these kinds of topic selections earlier in the year. Personal relevance was something that Ms. Bass valued in students' writing, and it is reasonable that she also provided them cues to write on these kinds of personal connections in their science work as well. Ms. Bass valued the personal in writing for a number of reasons. As she indicated in her interview, she saw personal narratives and poetry as excellent starting points for writing, in part because they tap into the personal stories of students. Although the idea of topics of personal relevance was significant for Ms. Bass, students largely did not heed this cue. Ms. Bass clearly valued personal interest and personal investment in writing generally and in her students' writing. The writing at the beginning of the school year privileged these types of dispositions toward writing and she reported having highlighted personal relevance for the science writing tasks as well. But student work demonstrated little uptake of

this intention, as revealed in Alexis, Luna's, and Kristy's writing, as well as the classes as a whole. The students did attend to revision processes, be they cursory, as well as to addressing their writing to a given audience, reflected in their use of "voice," and varying degrees of "expertise." But Ms. Bass points out that although she highlighted the idea of personal relevance, she did not include this trait on the scoring rubric. This begs the question of what conditions uptake, in the writing of young students such as those in this study, and more generally in classrooms.

Turning to the issue of how an audience is addressed and what sort of subject position the students took, the examples of Luna and Alexis add light. In the case of Luna's writing, she seemed to address the issue of audience by including a personal tone, which in significant ways clashed with the more knowledgeable and serious tone she had constructed previous to that. When Alexis was asked to comment on how he thought about audience regarding a different science writing task, I asked him, "who do you have in mind when you write this?" and then, "do you have somebody in mind?" Alexis responded, "Not really. I just think of it as something I have to write down and my teacher will grade it" (Alexis, Interview). Speaking again about the scientific conclusion writing, Alexis was asked what he aimed for in terms of a grade: "Well, my expectation, a lot of people expect from me, would be getting a four, but I wasn't really going for a four, like making it too perfect" (Interview). In a brief classroom interaction specifically about the Micros project Alexis had told me that he "wasn't too motivated about this project, I really didn't want to do it" (FN, 4-12-12). His comments and the writing he generated for the Micros project were consistent with his overall disposition to the two subject matter area classes in which I observed him. Whereas Ms. Bass and the writing task valued careful revision and a topic to be thoroughly researched, Alexis valued having the task done in the most expedient way

possible that would still allow him to generate a proficient paper. In other terms, whereas Ms. Bass sought the performance of a student role of self-motivated, invested, and knowledgeable persona, Alexis sought to perform his role as a gifted but underachieving student who sought the minimally proficient work possible.

In what ways, then, was Alexis' written work an example of successful uptake? As with Luna's work, the rubric scoring sheet provides us with one measure of uptake. Alexis was awarded 16 of 25 possible points for the project. Just as significantly as the point total, Ms. Bass' comments reflect how she laments what she considered a missed opportunity: "you have all the elements for a good report," and, "You found such great articles! What happened when you were taking notes?" While the comments recognize some of Alexis' efforts they also highlight the fact that he did not turn them into a successful research project. More than anything else, Ms. Bass seemed disappointed with his lack of drawing on outside resources. Regarding supporting details, she tells him there are "not enough any in your plan."

Pulling on outside resources and presenting himself as knowledgeable would have been two principal aspects of creating a sort of expertise for Alexis. However, he instead presented an understated report in which he almost half-heartedly informed the reader about lice, as in this example: "They spread quickly when you share hair products, for example hats and pillows. It not a good idea to share those kinds of things." He has not taken on the persona of a thoroughly knowledgeable person who seeks to convincingly convey information to an audience. Instead, he resorts to taking a practical and pragmatic approach of including just enough information and completing just enough of a report to minimally meet the expectations of the class and his teacher. As suggested previously, and especially as highlighted by Clark, what we see with school-based writing assignments such as these is the need for students to direct their work to an

evaluator - namely the teacher - but simultaneously feign directing the work to a larger or otherwise specified audience. This sort of double-play in some ways either makes the rhetorical act of writing more complex in school settings, or it leaves it quite removed from real-life situations, in which the actual results are what drive the writing. In some ways, the interview data available for Alexis help to reveal that he is aware of this rhetorical feat, and in fact he declares that he is directing his work to his teacher, and for the purposes for evaluation. Uptake in this writing assignment, be it of a particular persona or of a set of revision practices, clearly involved a disposition as well as a set of abilities.

Much as with Luna's paper, there is an absence of significant revision between drafts with Alexis' work. One notable exception is the elimination of the first paragraph, which originally began with "Ouch!," and a description of someone being bitten by lice, apparently as a way to draw a reader into his paper. With the elimination of this approach, Alexis' paper remains more consistent in tone and in his manner of addressing the audience. But in any case, he has not taken on the practices of careful revision that Ms. Bass envisioned. There is a lack of uptake of those practices and a lack of uptake of the resultant revisions on paper. What might have been necessary for Alexis' work to reflect the uptake or the results Ms. Bass - and the assignment prompt - sought? This is where the complexities of uptake begin to reveal themselves and where its pedagogical implications surface, as we return to the same question of how does a teacher secure uptake, or, how does a teacher get the intended result from the students she works with? Uptake is helpful in that it allows us to focus upon language or discursive means, but the question is one of the principal questions at the heart of the schooling process. In the case of Alexis, it might have been in fact necessary for him to have seen more examples of substantive revision; it may have been helpful for him to have had more clearly directive instruction, in

which he was to complete a given sub-task by a particular date; it may have been that he would remain reluctant to assume the writerly persona Ms. Bass so earnestly anticipated from students.

*Kristy.* Whereas Luna's response revealed an effort to be comprehensive in responding to cues, and Alexis' presented more a tale of underachievement, Kristy's seemed to be more of an ad-libbed response to the assignment. Kristy was a bright student who often remained quiet during class sessions, but could be heard to murmur under her breath relevant questions to discussion topics, and who was an excellent task-master when working with one or more other students.. From my interaction with her and my observations of her over the course of the school year, it seemed to me that Kristy was capable of realizing more of the aims of the research project assignment than she did. Kristy in fact seemed to have fallen behind in meeting the checklist dates, and produced most of the writing for the project over a few class sessions.

In terms of her writing and pre-writing, Kristy generated a number of questions and notes relevant to her report (Appendix Q). Questions that she recorded were typical for the class and reflective of the examples given by Ms. Bass and included the following: What is it? What does it look like?, What is its life cycle?, and, How can they be prevented? Her web, with "bed bugs" in the center circle, elaborates a little on the original questions, and she includes information about how to get rid of bed bugs by exposing them to high temperatures, and how to know if one has bed bugs. And while Kristy listed as a reference the Centers for Disease Control's website with FAQ's about bed bugs, it was not clear where she got the information she presented to Ms. Bass as fact.

In any case, Kristy first generated what she titled a "Body Paragraph" in which she covered how to know if one has bed bugs, what to do in case of bed bugs, and how they are attracted. She is consistent across her drafts in writing that keeping a messy home can attract bed

bugs. Kristy moves to a complete draft of the report with the addition of an introduction and conclusion, labeled as such on her "Bed Bugs Body Draft" page. In this version she uses the introduction to inform the reader of how to know if he/she has bed bugs, with the sign of red dots on one's body. She then declares that maintaining a clean home is the way to prevent them, how bed bugs know where people are, and ways to kill bed bugs. In her conclusion, she reiterates that having a messy home can draw bed bugs.

Between this version and the following, labeled "Bed Bugs Draft/Revise," Kristy did make a number of changes. To begin with, the introduction no longer begins with how to know if there are bed bugs. Instead, it begins with the question of whether the reader feels something watching them. And although the reader might think it's "your big sister or brother," "it's not! The bed bugs are watching you!" This addition very much adds some of what Ms. Bass might refer to as not boring the reader, or injecting some personality into expository writing. That is, she takes up some of the cues to infuse her writing with a kind of unique imprint or to exhibit voice in the sense consistent with SixTraits and other such writing curricula.

In what ways, then, is Kristy's written response indicative of her uptake of the intentions of Ms. Bass and the writing assignment? To begin with, Kristy earned 18 of the possible 25 points for the project, fewer than Luna did but more than Alexis did. Aside from the points, Ms. Bass' comments give insight into how that uptake was evaluated. She seems to have taken issue especially with two aspects of Kristy's writing, first that she had not been accurate in her information about bed bugs and second that she did not realize significant changes to her revisions. Ms. Bass' evaluative comments begin with a positive tone, telling Kristy she had done a "nice job." However, she also took Kristy to task for inaccuracies, writing in her comments that she was "sharing misinformation. It's not true that you can get them by keeping your house

messy. That's often misunderstood by people who don't do the research." Ms. Bass also wrote that she would like to see Kristy's notes, because she wanted to see how such misinformation may have been located. As relates to the expectations of the assignment, Ms. Bass' comments indicate that she especially took issue with Kristy's unwillingness or poor effort in becoming more knowledgeable and more expert on the subject matter, an apparently significant violation of the ethos of the assignment. Whereas Ms. Bass' comments to Alexis were more along the lines of, "you should have tried harder," with Kristy these comments were more along the lines of, "this information is incorrect" or, "you did not do your due diligence." And considering the tone of Ms. Bass' comments, the second seemed to be a more significant violation for her.

Kristy, like Luna, was a conscientious student who seemed to make a concerted effort to meet the requirements of the writing assignment. Unlike Luna, however, although Kristy endeavored to do well on assignments and in the class generally, she did not put herself under the same onus to excel. It was consistent with Kristy's demeanor in the classroom that she might resort to what can be called "common knowledge" or commonly held ideas about head lice in her report. For whatever reasons, Kristy completed very little of her work on this assignment outside of the classroom context, and when Ms. Bass issued reminders that the final due date was approaching, Kristy completed most of her work, including the various drafts, over the course of a few days. In doing so, she seemed less cautious in how she drew on and presented substantiated knowledge about bed bugs.

In short, Kristy did not take up the onus to establish credibility as a knowledgeable speaker on her topic. She did not include any of the personal connection which Ms. Bass had hoped to see in the students' writing. She did not engage in significant revision, but instead presented very similar versions of her drafts. She did adopt a unique or compelling voice to some

degree, notably when she asked whether the reader might have imagined someone watching them; she labeled later drafts as revised versions of earlier ones; and she did cite two bibliographic sources for her paper.

## **Discussion**

One key point that emerged across the analysis of the student responses in light of the assignment and its presentation was that Ms. Bass was consistent in her pedagogical orientation, and that this orientation informed the steps she took to mediate the science research report, and had implications for uptake of the writing assignment. To reiterate, she demonstrated an approach in which the onus for learning in many ways was located in the students, and she valued a disposition of student as a naturally curious and responsible persona. In short, she sought a particular type of identity performance on the part of the students. There was one incident in particular during the school year which was especially revealing regarding this expectation. Although quite distant from the sessions on the science research report, in March of that year, Ms. Bass and her students had a class discussion during which she clearly demonstrated both frustration and disappointment in how her students engaged in school tasks. During this discussion, she sat in a circle with her students to have a sort of heart-to-heart talk about their then-recent behaviors, which she saw as unacceptable. During this discussion, Ms. Bass highlighted the idea that as a student herself, she took responsibility as a student in a way which meant she completed her homework without being reminded or "nagged to do so" (FN, 4-22-12). She also indicated that she did as much because she had a clear vision of going to college and saw completing her work as part of her duties. Although this session was quite removed from the sessions more immediately connected to the research project, it provided a fuller

glimpse into her approach to learning and teaching, and the expected role she had for students, all of which seemed to inform uptake of writing tasks in her classroom.

There was a particular set of intentions that came along with the Micros research project. Some of these intentions resided primarily in the prompt itself - the packet given to students - and some were revealed through Ms. Bass' commentary in the interviews and directly to the students. Uptake, as a concept originating in speech communication theory, provides a way of thinking about these intentions, how they are presented to students, and how students then act upon those cues. Because speech communication in this sense concerns itself with how language is used to try to achieve certain aims (and thus, rhetorically), a theory of speech communication is quite appropriate for the examination of writing tasks in a classroom. Again, in drawing on the concept of uptake, this study goes back to an essential guiding question: How does assigning a writing task generate a desired response? The answer is not straightforward, however, and begins with unpacking what is meant by a writing assignment. It also must take into account how students positioned themselves relative to the assignment, whether they invested themselves in the task, what prior experiences they have had with writing, their relationship with the teacher and with school more largely. An answer would also have to account for how the teacher pedagogically mediated these tasks. In the case of the Micros research project, intentions ranged from true revision to taking on the persona of an expert. And in the cases of Luna, Alexis, and Kristy, there was a range of uptake which made itself apparent. Luna attempted to be more all-inclusive, Alexis more minimalist, and Kristy drew on her assumptions about bed bugs to complete the task. They engaged in revision cursorily, and to differing degrees attempted the use of unique "voice." Largely, they seemed to respond as they saw appropriate to the cues that were highlighted for each. Alexis read the prompt as a task to be completed for his teacher as reader;

Luna read it as something to be covered comprehensively; and Kristy came to read it as something to be done on the fly.

## **Chapter 6: Discussion and Implications**

### **Chapter Overview**

The purpose of this study was to examine the sets of expectations that were presented to students in selected writing assignments in an intermediate grade elementary (grades 4-6) school context, and how the students "took up" or responded to those expectations. This study was undertaken as a way to better understand the interaction between writing assignments and student responses to those assignments, specifically at this grade level. The literacy research community has yet to fully account empirically for this in-between space, although greater collective understanding of it would aid in future research trajectories and has implications for pedagogy as well. As part of looking at the interaction between the assignments and student responses, the two teacher participants' conceptualizations of writing and writing instruction were examined. In addition, the writing assignments themselves were analyzed in order to better unpack the motivations and requirements they represented. Pedagogical mediation of the assignments - instruction, or support for completing the assignments - was gauged as well, in order to attend to the assignments in the process of their completion. And finally, student writing was analyzed to help reveal the ways in which student essays reflected students' decisions regarding how they should respond to these writing assignments. It was a specific methodological choice to draw on the concept of uptake, specifically as elaborated by Anne Freadman, as a relevant theoretical tool to help unpack some of the complexities that take place between assignment and response. In previous chapters, namely Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, I discussed the ways in which teachers conceptualized, presented, and mediated writing. I also provided an analysis of the ways in which students responded to those moves. In this final chapter I discuss the findings from the previous two chapters and, where the data sources allow,

talk across the two chapters and those classroom contexts. I then discuss some of the limitations of the current study as well as a few of the issues that surfaced during its completion. I conclude with a discussion of directions for continued research and relevance for pedagogy.

## **Findings**

### **Social Studies/Reading Class**

Ultimately, the cues about writing presented by Ms. Thompson revealed tensions, primarily between writing for purposes of evaluation and for purposes of "communication." On the one hand, Ms. Thompson emphasized the importance of being able to communicate with others, to express one's point of view on a particular subject or issue, and to understand the points of view of others. In this sense, she seemed to value a communicative purpose for writing consistent with providing and refuting arguments, and for purposes of participatory democratic citizenship. This was a communicative purpose consistent with her personal values and views, as well as with the principles of the curricular unit immediately preceding the CBA writing task. At the same time, though, she also emphasized the notion that students' writing served to display comprehension or proficiency, notably for evaluative purposes. In her words, she "could not let them fail" (Thompson, Interview). That is, Ms. Thompson appeared to present cues about writing consistent with the concepts of personal expression, civic engagement, and communication and to also present cues about writing consistent with evaluative aims, cues which were not always compatible. This presentation of cues made its way to students in a variety of forms across the writing assignment. Cues were made available to students in the presentation of the writing prompt, in the pedagogical steps leading to the writing of the essay, and in the pedagogical mediation of the assignment completion. Cues about completing writing tasks were presented to students prior to the CBA as well, across other assignments, some of which were discussed in

Chapter 4. The focal students' work on the CBA task seemed to indicate that these students prioritized cues related to evaluative aims over the other aims, or that those cues were at least the most legible to them. In the language of Freadman's uptake, students' selection from the set of possibles presented by Ms. Thompson revealed their preference for template-like language that met the scoring criteria while not necessarily meeting other expectations or intentions.

One of the most notable issues in the Social Studies/Reading writing task was the absence of the language of the town hall style discussion from the focal students' final written work. This was a consistent tendency across the vast majority of the students in the class, in fact, and not restricted to the focal students. Alexis, considered a hesitant but articulate student, presented strongly expressed arguments in favor of the Dream Act during the discussion, while Berta, a conscientious and willing student, also made relevant and insightful comments. Drawing on their discourse from the debate for their writing would have achieved a greater sense of a committed, knowledgeable citizen who valued participatory democratic expression. Implicitly, such a move was part of Ms. Thompson's hopes or intentions for students for the Dream Act CBA. In terms consistent with uptake theory, those intentions were part of the uptake she hoped to secure, in the writing generated by students. In lieu of taking the CBA writing assignment as an invitation, a request, or a petition to cultivate a persona consistent with engaged citizen, the focal students in this case took it as a requirement to complete the task with their teacher in mind as principal reader who would, in fact, read for evaluative purposes.

### **Science/Writing Class**

Whereas in the case of Ms. Thompson the most salient finding was that different cues presented to students were often in tension with each other, the most salient finding in Ms. Bass' case was that much of her intentions for student uptake was occluded from them. Students

seemed to not recognize what turned out to be subtle invitations to engage in self-guided actions of discovery learning. In short, Ms. Bass' approach of largely allowing students to work through tasks on their own - consistent with a "discovery" model of learning and presumably predicated on the assumption that such a type of self-directed engagement led to the best outcomes - resulted in relatively limited uptake of some of the writing prompt's principal intentions. For example, of the various emphases of the assignment, most of the students readily demonstrated the adoption of the writing process as this was emphasized and demonstrated in the classroom, although they did not realize significant revisions to their original drafts. Ms. Bass expected that students would generate a text reflecting significant and major revision, revealed in comments in the teacher interview as well as in the scoring rubric, and she provided cues to students that they should do so. The result was that students presented the trappings of revision, but as revealed in the students' writing samples, these did not represent significant changes or rethinking of the earlier drafts, neither for the focal students nor for the majority of the others.

There were other aims inherent in the Micros and Me research report prompt that were also not realized. Ms. Bass expected that students would invest themselves personally in topics of interest to them, and that they would gain a level of knowledge commensurate with that of an "expert." In the case of personal investment, this expectation was quite tacit, however, and did not make its way into the writing assignment prompt. In spite of that, Ms. Bass later expressed disappointment that students did not write about issues that she felt would be of personal interest or connection for them. She expressed disappointment that Tomás, a non-focal student, did not write about a condition his own mother suffered from. She was also disappointed that Alexis did not bring personal experiences about lice to his writing as well.

As mentioned, Ms. Bass also sought from students the cultivation of a sort of "expertise" about their topics for the report. This notion was included in the handout presented to students. It was also implied in comments she made about how scientists needed to be thorough in their preparation. But Ms. Bass did not further unpack what steps would be necessary for students to gain - and, by extension, rhetorically portray in their writing - a persona of expert. This pedagogical orientation on Ms. Bass' part was consistent throughout the observations and was evident in comments she made about the role of students. The elimination of part of the assignment - the Public Service Announcement - in fact made purposes of attaining expertise more nebulous. She did announce on a number of occasions that she wanted students to take ownership of their work, akin to the notion of gaining expertise. These steps again seemed to be cases of Ms. Bass wanting to avoid being overly directive and to allow students to take up their corresponding and expected roles.

### **Commonalities Across the Two Contexts**

*The pull of the rubrics.* There were general tendencies that revealed themselves in the writing of the focal students in each of the two classes. Principal among these was the fact that students were most acutely drawn to cues presented in evaluative materials. These materials consisted primarily of the rubrics that accompanied each assignment. While it might seem like a given that students would be drawn to these evaluative criteria, it became clear that each teacher, Ms. Thompson and Ms. Bass, also had expectations of student performance that were not limited to the letter of the rubric language. For example, Ms. Bass expected expertise and personal connection, although neither of these was codified within the respective rubric. Ms. Thompson also expected something that was perhaps within the scope of the rubric, but which remained implicit - that is, the construction of an identity as an invested citizen. Cues for each Ms. Bass'

and Ms. Thompson's preferred student identities were present in the respective classrooms. In the case of the social studies class, the most apparent instance of an activity that prompted the construction of the identity of a citizen was the town hall debate, in which "vibrant" discussion and ideas did not make their way into students' writing. Rather than resulting in a failure on the part of students, the vast majority of them met the criteria for a proficient score on the CBA writing assignment.

*Lack of rhetorical awareness or meta-awareness about writing.* As described in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, and as applied at various other point, uptake as a theoretical concept within Freadman's definition provides a way to think about the ways in which genres are positioned relative to other genres. It also allows a way to consider some of the multiple factors that inform genre knowledge, genre enactment, and the ways in which interlocutors interact discursively with one another. Because of this focus of uptake on the ways in which discursive forms are situated relative to one another, it privileges the ways in which discursive acts influence and inform one another, that is, it is ultimately concerned with how language and language forms are used rhetorically. Referencing Freadman's example, once again, of the invitation to attend a professional conference, such an invitation is presented with particular goals in mind. It is intended to secure a particular type of uptake, in other words. Rhetorical awareness is a consciousness of how language is used to achieve particular aims or goals. Writing with rhetorical awareness in the Social Studies/Reading and Science/Writing classes would not only mean being able to satisfactorily meet assessment criteria or even other more implicit criteria, it would also mean an awareness of how such a feat was accomplished through the use of language.

Across the two classes, very little of the coding realized during the data analysis revealed moves to cultivate such a rhetorical awareness or meta-awareness. Those moves that did do so were generally moves to have students take into account their audience. However, even these moves were generally vague, and primarily along the lines of providing a type of hook to draw a reader into the writing. At moments, students were encouraged to make their writing lively, in order to avoid boring a reader. But, these encouragements remained vaguely articulated, and were not further developed with examples or discussion. Instead, they seemed articulated as commonplace expressions that should be transparent. At one point during Ms. Bass' instruction on a writing task other than the Micros Report, she guided students to imagine readers from the State, who would be reading their science conclusions as a state assessment. She provided a more detailed and concrete idea of what sorts of evidence convinced these readers, what these readers were looking for in the science conclusions, and the purposes of these readers. Such an example was one of the few instances when a meta-awareness about using writing rhetorically was made clear.

Alexis, in his interview, revealed a type of rhetorical awareness, when he said his audience really consisted of his teacher, and his aim was to get a sufficient grade (Alexis, Interview). But, he wasn't guided to identify his teacher as the sole reader. Instead, the writing assignments each called for imagined audience or reader. In the case of Ms. Bass, an imagined audience was someone interested in natural phenomena. In Ms. Thompson's case, it was a like-minded civically active citizen. In both of these cases, students would have needed to present an identity which directed itself to an appropriately imagined audience, while simultaneously addressing itself to the teacher. This is the type of rhetorical knowledge and awareness that the standards speak to, and the type of knowledge that was rarely emphasized.

## **Limitations**

### **Data Collection**

A number of limitations surfaced as this study was conducted and then written about, the first dealing with data collection. Although two willing teacher participants were secured and numerous students volunteered to participate, data collection was at times uneven. Although I was able to observe in the two classes on quite a number of occasions across the school year, on a number of days the events of the classroom did not lend themselves to data collection that shed light upon this project's central concerns, even as much of that data provided rich contextual cues for how the classroom functioned and how students and teachers interacted. In addition, with the multiplicity of demands on teachers' time and energy, it became unrealistic to secure the ongoing, numerous interviews I initially sought in the original study design of this project. It also became quite difficult to record interviews with students, given that these generally needed to take place outside of instructional time, yet in the presence of a certificated school employee who was not one of the teachers in the study. In addition, practical matters such as my own work schedule on occasion generated schedule conflicts that did not allow me to be present to collect data at what were opportune moments. Qualitative research in which the researcher is the "instrument" of data collection and in which theory, data collection, and analysis are reshaped and reformed during the planning and enactment of research studies (Prior, 1998) become what are anecdotally thought of as "messy." The current study was no different in this regard. As such messiness relates to data collection, the data collected for this study did provide a rich corpus from which to generate findings based upon the theoretical lens I brought to this study, but was not without its shortcomings.

As an example, the Social Studies/Reading teacher was not part of the original research design, and her participation was a month after the Science/Writing teacher's was. And while the opportunity to take into account a second teacher's presentation of writing was seen as invaluable, her teaching manner presented both opportunities and challenges from the perspective of a researcher. For example, Ms. Thompson had a more organized and controlled teaching method, making it more difficult to have informal conversations with students in the Social Studies/Reading class. As an addition to the original research study, it was not viable to conduct an early and later interview, as with Ms. Bass, and only one interview was realized with Ms. Thompson. In addition, this second teacher presented, facilitated and completed the CBA assessment in a relatively short period of time. The effort was especially notable given that the time frame for the assignment was so near the end of the school year. This time of the school year was especially busy, and students had not long before completed their annual testing. So, while there are perhaps never any ideal moments in elementary schools for data collection, this period of time was quite challenging for students and their teachers. Her organizational methods, though, made it more efficient to gain access to the students' work in order to secure facsimile copies of it.

Already mentioned, the inability to secure multiple interviews with the focal students presented a significant limitation to gauging how they thought about their own processes while responding to both the Micros Report as well as the Dream Act CBA assignments. This limitation made it impossible to discuss student perception in great depth across the two contexts, thus leading to the need to rely more heavily upon textual sample to discern students' understandings. A greater data set consisting of student interviews can begin to shed light on some of the rationale in decision-making on the part of students. Even though self-reports are not

without their limitations, they can begin to provide a more defined portrait of how a central concept in the theoretical framework for this study works, that of selection. The limited student interview data proved a limitation because uptake - in Freadman's theory - largely hinges on selection, that is, the selection engaged in by the respondent to an initiating interaction, as in the responder to an invitation to a professional conference.

### **Research Design**

Another limitation to this study was that it deviated from its original and still-relevant intention. The genesis of this study was rooted in my desire to look specifically at variables related to ethnic background and social class and school-based writing. These are motives that originated in my own work as a classroom teacher, with questions that pre-date even that work experience. Even though I situated this study within a school that would clearly be considered diverse in terms of the socio-economic backgrounds of students, the data collection methods I ultimately adopted did not provide a way to specifically account for these variables.

### **Generalizability**

The researchers who undertake small-scale qualitative studies are often wont to identify as a limitation the fact that their study results are not generalizable beyond the small sample size. Such a disclaimer, however, reflects an orientation to empirical research predicated on the assumption that studies should be generalizable in some way. A more tenable assumption is that small-scale studies such as these by definition do not generalize to larger populations, and instead serve to contribute to what Flyvbjerg (2006) would consider more akin to a larger quilt made up of case study research that in its totality contributes to the knowledge base of various research communities. Therefore, the lack of generalizability is not seen as a limitation in this study, but rather as a methodologically inherent aspect of the qualitative case study approach.

## **Implications**

### **Theory**

The present study draws on theoretical concepts that presently hold greater currency within Composition Studies than within literacy research focused on K-8 settings. The theories drawn on are intended to help shed light on a phenomenon within literacy instruction in 4-6 grade contexts specifically. The relevance of *uptake* as such a concept is largely predicated on the notion that speech communication is an integral part of how the work of elementary school teaching and learning gets done. The application of theoretical concepts from Rhetoric and Composition has the potential to illuminate writing in the intermediate elementary grades by expanding how we think about writing tasks, and by conceptualizing these as rhetorical processes. While theories that may be applicable in adult contexts may not always travel well to the study of literacy of K-12 students, the literacy research community would be well-served by drawing on a greater range of theories to both examine young students' writing and to consider new curricular approaches to the teaching of writing for young students and teachers-in-training.

As indicated in the literature review of this dissertation, the teaching of writing has long been informed by writing process theories. But, alternative models for theory, research, and pedagogy for students in early grades have yet to be fully proposed and put into play to see what benefits they might provide.

### **Research**

*Rhetorical aspects of writing.* As reflected in the discussion section above, rhetorical awareness was an aspect of writing that was little highlighted or promoted in the classrooms that formed part of this study. Cultivating rhetorical knowledge on the part of students, or greater meta-awareness of their writing as they are engaged in it, has obvious

implications for pedagogy. Questions suggested in such a line of investigation could include these: What is necessary to cultivate the rhetorical knowledge encouraged in the standards guiding school writing across the K-college spectrum? Or, How can the ability for developing rhetorical knowledge by children be researched?

***Student populations.*** In addition, the majority of students in the study's school setting were ethnic minority students and students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. A body of theory and research has revealed some of the ways in which students from such backgrounds tend to engage in non-mainstream discourse practices (e.g., Heath, 1983; Delpit, 1987; Gutiérrez, 1992; Hicks, 2000), therefore pointing to the need to carry out more research which looks specifically at the intersection of race/ethnicity, social class and school-based writing. Specifically, there is room to look at the connection between uptake and issues of identity, be it as informed by social class, race/ethnicity, or other similar factors. Questions that invite research include the following: What relationship exists between social class and ethnicity and the uptake of intentions in school writing tasks? How do various uses of language of non-mainstream students (Heath, 1983; Gee, 2012) relate to the ways in which they respond to school-based writing tasks?

***Feedback.*** To date, relatively little empirical evidence has illuminated the efficacy of feedback practices for the writing of young students. Although feedback through the form of one-to-one conferences with students became popularized as a suggested practice for students in a workshop model with the pioneering work of Donald Graves (1983), there is little evidence to indicate how feedback through conferences is realized in classrooms, much less how efficacious it is for improving students' writing. In theory, feedback provided through one-to-one conferences provides an ideal model for tailoring teacher input to the specific needs of students,

there is little empirical works that demonstrates such practices are worth the investment of time in them. As demonstrated in the recorded interactions between Alexis and Ms. Thompson, conferences such as these provide an opportune moment to guide student uptake. Uptake, as a theoretical concept, provides a fitting framework through which to examine feedback, the forms and shapes it takes, and how it helps shape student writing. Questions along this line of research might include the following: What gets taken up through one-to-one teacher-student conferences on their writing? What practices facilitate uptake of teacher and institutional intentions as these are mediated through individual conferences?

***Studying uptake.*** The above-listed research considerations all have implications for the study of uptake, a phenomenon which to date calls for considerable continued study. As Bawarshi notes, genre research "has not accounted as fully for what Anne Freadman (1994) has called genre uptake - the taking up or performance of genres in moments of interaction and innovation" (2015, p. 187). In addition to this need for further research, Bawarshi also notes some of the complexities of uptake: "while genre uptake is informed by genre knowledge, it is also informed by one's sense of self, one's memory of prior uptakes, the timing and stakes of a discursive event and its participants (Freadman, 2012), as well as by other affective and material factors that make uptakes, while to some extent habitual, also momentary, unpredictable, and subject to relations of power" (p. 189).

Given the multiplicity of complex factors that are involved in uptakes, it is clear that a research agenda for uptake would call for a wide range of methodological approaches and data collection methods to better unpack this phenomenon. Methodologically, a wide range of qualitative case studies across a number of various contexts for the 4-6 grade range are called for, with a diversity of student populations as well as teachers to be included. In addition, a

number of writing curricula, approaches to writing, and a range of writing assignments should be included in order to generate an ample cumulative range of study samples. In addition to case studies, the study of uptake calls for ethnographic approaches that can better unpack the often unseen factors that are part of uptake. These ethnographic approaches, by the nature of their extensive timelines and data collection, could better provide a glimpse into students' dispositions to school generally and writing tasks specifically. The ongoing participant-observer observations that are part of ethnographies are invaluable in revealing some of the dispositional natures of students as they go through their school day and as they engage in writing tasks.

Data collection methods appropriate to both case study and ethnographic methodologies and which would help reveal the complexities indicated by Bawarshi include the following: detailed ongoing observations which are recorded with detailed field notes; interviews with students and, when possible, family members who could speak to their experiences with literacy in school; interviews with students that include artifacts, such as writing prompts and student drafts at different stages, which aim to inquire into students' understanding of their assignments and their rationale for their responses; artifact collection that would include writing tasks and student responses in years previous to that of the study, in order to gain perspective into the discursive resources at students' disposal; an inventory of student and class reading habits, to help better account for students' genre repertoires and their exposure to various forms of writing.

The acquisition of data across more than one school year responds to calls such as that of Paul Prior, who highlights the need for "much more extensive historical tracing of artifacts, practices, and institutions" (1998, p. 274), and suggests the value of longitudinal studies. Longitudinal studies provide the advantage of long-term data collection, something that could be invaluable in trying to account for influences in writers' selection processes over a number of

years. Longitudinal studies have been carried out to try to examine student writing over time for adult writers (e.g., McCarthy, 1987; Chiseri-Strater, 1987), but are relatively limited for younger students.

These data collection methods and methodological approaches are often difficult to implement, because of limitations on resources and because of the intrusive nature some could present into the curricular day. Collaborative efforts between teachers and researchers would present an ideal model for facilitating such data collection, however. One advantage to studying uptake at the grade level is that school genres are still being acquired by students at this age. As a result, depending on the types of writing students are asked to engage in, they are often asked to engage in new types of writing, and this new types of genre learning and acquisition. Such novelty can present in and of itself disruptions that help to highlight the process of genre performances, and thus allow us a better look at the intricacies of these performances.

### **Pedagogy**

One of the pressing points here is that writing and writing instruction for students in grades 4-6 seems to have labored under the influences of process approaches or skills-based approaches. While process approaches to writing and writing instruction are far more ample than their principle predecessor of the Current-Traditional model (Berlin, 1987), or product-driven conceptualization of writing, these views have not been sufficiently complicated through the application of a wider range of theoretical models. As a result, the theorizing of writing and writing instruction for younger students has remained underdeveloped and unchallenged. While not all theories of composing are appropriate for the research, theory, or instruction of younger students - especially given that these theories tend to be developed and applied with adults in mind - one of the tremendous values they bring is that they often focus on rhetorical knowledge

and view writing as an intrinsically situated phenomenon. Questions along this line of inquiry are broader, and might include the following: How can writing curricula serve to better foster rhetorical awareness or knowledge for students in elementary schools? What pedagogical and/or writing activities best serve to cultivate an appropriate identity or persona for a variety of writing situations?

## **Concluding Comments**

### **Contributions of the Current Study**

If the present study makes a contribution to the empirical study of children's writing, it does so by bringing theoretical concepts from rhetorical genre theory, specifically that of uptake, to students in this grade level to examine a phenomenon that continues to be key in the teaching of writing. While composition theorists have drawn on a range of theories and frameworks that include the concept of uptake, such a theoretical view has largely been absent from the research on intermediate elementary grade students. While not an original contribution, the present study was also intended to add to the body of empirical work that looks at students as they write across subject areas. Whereas some of this work has taken place on students in post-secondary contexts, and even with participants who bridge school and work writing, a far smaller body of work has looked at writing for upper grade elementary school students as they write for different subject areas. The present study site was atypical for an elementary school setting in that students received instruction from three teachers for the majority of their subject areas, but this arrangement allowed for a look into the ways in which students were presented with different tasks for different subject areas, and the ways in which they interpreted those tasks.

### **Concluding Acknowledgement**

This study was informed by many people and ideas, too numerous to name. In addition to the citations and references listed in the text of this dissertation, it was also informed by conversations with committee members as well as members of the writing group in which I participated over the past six years. Like most written texts, it is indebted to those people and ideas, which often cannot be precisely named. All omissions or errors are my responsibility, however, as primary author of this dissertation.

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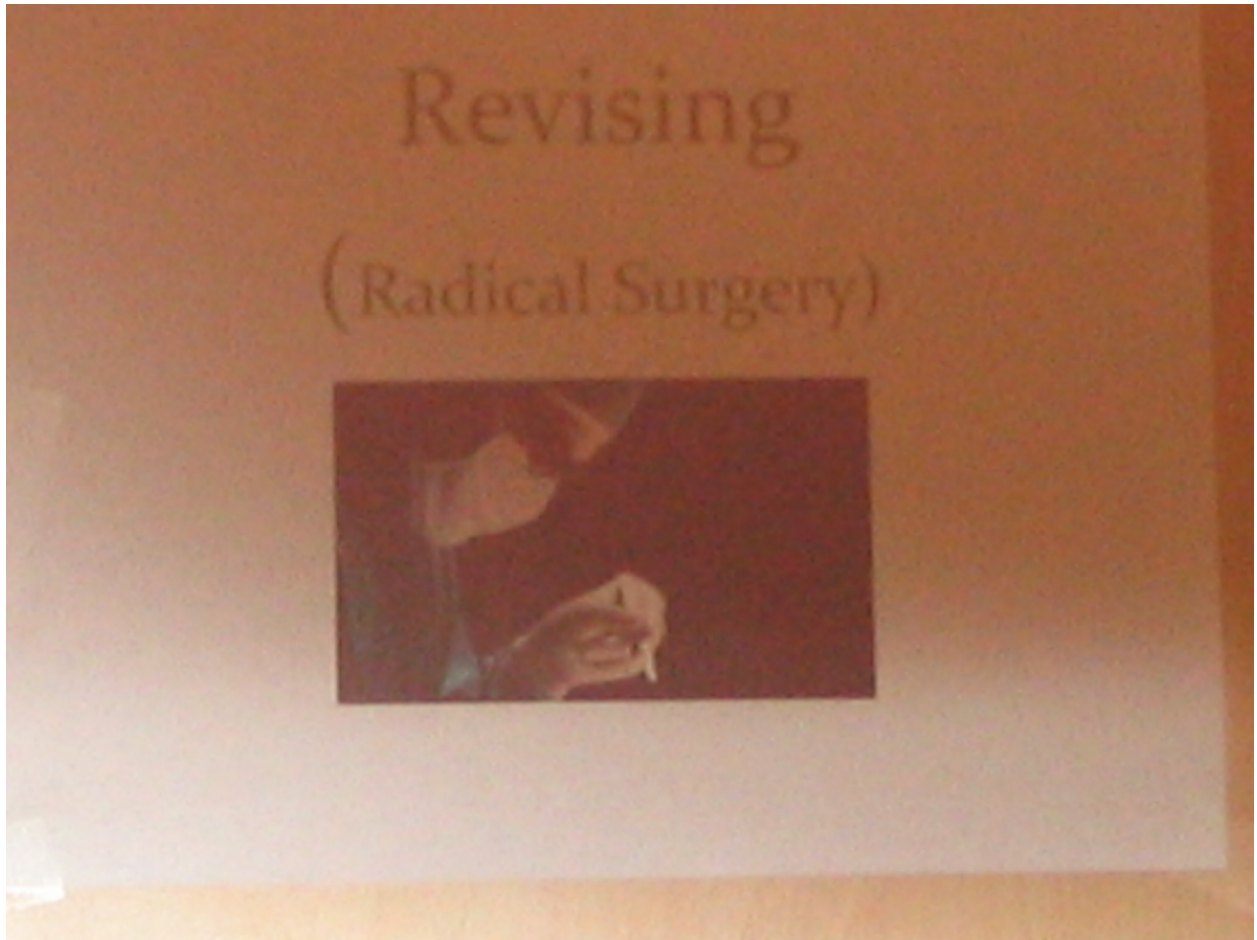
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**Appendix A - Photo of classroom cabinet, "Revising"**



## Appendix B - Photo of classroom cabinet



## **Appendix C: Interview Protocol for Teacher Participants**

### **Initial Interview:**

- 1       What is your approach to teaching writing?
- 2       How do you determine what kinds of writing to assign?
- 3       How do you go about planning to teach the different writing tasks you want students to learn?
- 4       What other factors do you take into account as you consider writing and teaching writing to young students?
- 5       How do you evaluate or assess the students' work?

### **Assignment Interviews:**

- 1       How did you go about designing this specific writing project or assignment?
- 2       What would the students need to be able to do to do well on this assignment?
- 3       What factors did you take into account as you considered how to design and teach this assignment?
- 4       How will the students' work be assessed on this project?

What skills, strategies, or previous writing experiences would be beneficial for a student to successfully meet the requirements of this writing assignment?

## **Appendix D: Student Interview Protocol**

### **Assignment Interview:**

Intro:

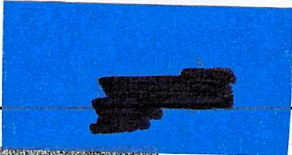
A. How do you feel about writing? For example, do you really enjoying writing, do you hate having to write, do you like some kids of writing but not others? What kinds of writing do you enjoy? Why do you think you like those kinds of writing? On a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being something you really love to do, and 1 being something you can't stand, what rating would you give writing overall?

B. Tell me about one writing assignment that you remember well - what were you supposed to do; what class was it for; how did you do on this assignment?

C. When you get a writing assignment - what do you do? How do you figure out how you will write the assignment?

D. When you get assignments during class by the teacher - what do you do to respond to them?

## Appendix E: CBA Handout



Elementary  
School  
Recommended  
for 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

# You Decide CBA

Citizens in a democracy have the right and responsibility to make informed decisions. You will make an informed decision on a public issue after researching and discussing different perspectives on this issue.

---

### *Directions to Students<sup>1</sup>*

#### **In a cohesive paper or presentation<sup>2</sup>, you will:**

- State a position on a public issue.
- Provide background on the issue by explaining two stakeholders' positions on this issue.
- Include an explanation of how EITHER a right OR the common good relates to the position on the issue.
- List two sources including the title, author, type of source, and date of each source.

---

<sup>1</sup> This directions page guides students towards the "proficient" level (level "3") for this CBA. To help students reach "excellent" (level "4"), please refer to the rubric or, if available, the graphic organizer.

<sup>2</sup> Students may do a paper or presentation in response to the CBA provided that for either format, there is documentation of this response that someone outside their classroom could easily understand and review using the rubric (e.g., a videotaped presentation, an electronic written document).

## Appendix F: CBA Rubric

**Elementary – You Decide CBA Rubric** (Recommended for 5<sup>th</sup> Grade)

GLE (EALR)	← PASSING NOT PASSING →			
	4 - Excellent	3 – Proficient	2 - Partial	1 - Minimal
5.4.1. Researches multiple perspectives to take a position on a public or historical issue in a paper or presentation. (5 <sup>th</sup> Grade) (EALR 5.4. Creates a product...)	States a position on a public issue and concludes with a call to action***.	States a position on a public issue.	States a position on a public issue that is unclear.	Provides reasons for a possible position but does not state a position.
5.3.1. Engages others in discussions that attempt to clarify and address multiple viewpoints on public issues based on democratic ideals. (EALR 5.3 Deliberates public issues.)	Provides background on the issue by explaining**: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three or more stakeholders' positions on this issue.</li> </ul>	Provides background on the issue by explaining**: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two stakeholders' positions on this issue.</li> </ul>	Provides background on the issue by explaining**: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One stakeholder's position on this issue.</li> </ul>	Provides background on the issue without explaining any stakeholder's position on the issue.
1.1.2. Evaluates how a public issue is related to constitutional rights and the common good. (5 <sup>th</sup> Grade) (EALR 1.1. Understands key ideals and principles...)  1.4.1. Understands that civic participation involves being informed about how public issues are related to rights and responsibilities. (5 <sup>th</sup> Grade) (EALR 1.4. Understands civic involvement)	Provides reason(s) for the position supported by evidence.  The evidence includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An explanation of how a right relates to the position on the issue.</li> <li>AND</li> <li>• An explanation of how the common good relates to the position on the issue.</li> </ul>	Provides reason(s) for the position supported by evidence.  The evidence includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An explanation of how a right relates to the position on the issue.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>• An explanation of how the common good relates to the position on the issue.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides reason(s) for the position with supporting evidence but WITHOUT relating the position to a right or the common good.</li> </ul>	Provides reason(s) for the position without any supporting evidence.
5.4.2. Prepares a list of resources including the title, author, type of source, date published, and publisher for each source and arranges the sources alphabetically. (5 <sup>th</sup> Grade) (EALR 5.4. Creates a product...)	Lists three sources including the title, author, type of source, and date of each source.	Lists two sources including the title, author, type of source, and date of each source.	Lists one source including the title, author, type of source, and date of the source.	Lists source(s) but does not include the title, author, type of source, and date of the source for any of them.

\* OSPI recommends that this CBA be used at a particular grade level and thus, the GLEs included in the rubric are for that grade. However, if the CBA is used at another grade level within the grade band (3-5, 6-8, or 9-12), the GLEs may need to change to match the appropriate content.

\*\* For the purposes of this rubric, "explaining" requires students to provide specific details AND commentary for each stakeholder's position.

\*\*\* If a student chooses a historical issue to analyze, she/he can include "a discussion of how this issue helps understand current issues" rather than "a call to action."

## Appendix G: Mehlman Article

Ira Mehlman

Media Director, FAIR (Federation for American Immigration Reform)

It's back. Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) is once again pushing the DREAM Act amnesty. Before a packed room (mostly of illegal aliens), the Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing earlier this week stacked with witnesses who favor granting amnesty to millions of illegal aliens.

Leaving aside all of the deceitful provisions that have been built into the bill that makes it a much broader amnesty than proponents let on, it is important to address the fundamental premise that passing the bill is a moral imperative because the people who would benefit are blameless for being here illegally.

**The DREAM Act fulfills the parents' principle reason for breaking the law in the first place.** Ask the typical illegal alien why he or she came to United States illegally, and invariably the answer is, "I wanted to do better for my family." This is a perfectly rational and understandable response, but not a justification for violating the law. In essence, what the DREAM Act does is provide the parents precisely what they sought when they brought their kids illegally to the United States: a green card and all of the benefits that America has to offer. Even if the bill were to include a provision that DREAM Act beneficiaries could never sponsor the parents who brought them to the country illegally, it would still fulfill the parents' primary objective for bringing them here.

**The DREAM Act would touch-off an even greater wave of illegal immigration.** Because the DREAM Act is being marketed as a moral imperative – as opposed to a more general amnesty,

which is sold as bowing to reality – it comes with an absolute assurance that it will be repeated. If we have a moral imperative to provide amnesty to the current population of people who were brought here as kids, won't we have the same moral imperative for the next generation of people who arrive under similar circumstances? The unmistakable message to people all around the world is: Get over here and bring your kids. America will feel morally obligated to give them green cards too.

**The DREAM Act absolves illegal aliens of their fundamental responsibilities as parents.**

There is a fundamental principle that parents are responsible for the consequences that their actions and choices have on their kids. Unfortunately, children inevitably pay a price when parents make bad decisions or break laws. The DREAM Act carves out a single exception to this universal tenet of the social contract. The message it sends is that if you violate U.S. immigration law, American society is responsible for fixing the mess you created for your kids.

**The absence of a reward or benefit is not the same as a punishment.** DREAM Act proponents repeatedly argue that by not granting legal status to targeted beneficiaries we are, essentially, punishing children for the sins of their parents. This is an absolutely specious claim. By no stretch of the imagination are the children of illegal aliens being punished. Not rewarding them with legal residence and expensive college tuition subsidies is simply withholding benefits to which they never had any entitlement in the first place.

**Adults have the obligation to do the right thing, even if their parents have done the wrong thing.** Society glorifies people who do what is right, especially when doing what is right comes at some significant cost. Yes, many would-be DREAM Act beneficiaries have been dealt a bad hand (by their parents). As difficult (even unfair) as it may be, upon reaching adulthood they have the responsibility to obey the law. When, for example, Jose Antonio Vargas proclaims on

the pages of The New York Times Magazine, that he knowingly engaged in illegal activities in order to remain and work in the United States illegally, he became culpable in his own right. While he, and others like him, may be more sympathetic than the people who committed the predicate offense, their situation does not excuse their own illegal acts.

from TownHall.com, a web-based publication and print magazine with a conservative perspective. Published 7/2011

## Appendix H: Poe Article

**Catherine Poe:**

**EASTON, Md, July 14, 2011** — Why does the very thought of the DREAM Act (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors) frighten so many Americans?

After reading the 200 plus comments last week, I realized that despite my laying out the case for the DREAM Act, that there were many misconceptions as well as real questions out there that deserve answers and clarification.

There were also readers who wrote insightful comments, sometimes even using their own experiences to highlight what the DREAM Act would mean. And I encourage more of you to write in.

A thank you to all who left comments.

I hope to further the dialogue by tackling ten points made by readers who showed real concern or didn't have all the facts about DREAMers, the young people this bill would affect.

### **1. Illegal immigrants flooding over our borders are the problem.**

Actually the problem is more complicated than that.

Out of the estimated 11 to 12 million undocumented aliens living in America, 40-45% came here on visas from places as diverse as India, Russia, or Ireland and then never returned home. They arrived on tourist, student, business, and temporary worker visas. (*Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Committee Report and GAO*)

Since 2007, more than 300,000 people each year have remained on our shores after their visas expired. (*ICE report to Congress*)

By the way, an interesting side fact: six of the 9/11 hijackers had overstayed their visas.

## **2. DREAMers will take away jobs.**

There is no evidence that citizenship for DREAMers would cost jobs for American workers. Instead it has been found that immigrants actually expand and enrich the economy as these young people become productive, tax paying individuals. (*Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco Report*)

America needs as many talented college graduates that it can muster. Right now, we are encouraging people from abroad to come to America to go to college with majors in science and technology.

DREAMers are also desperately needed in the fields of medicine, medical technology, and teaching

## **3. DREAMers will bump American students from colleges and act as a magnet for more illegal immigrants to come here.**

According to the DREAM Act, DREAMers would pay in-state tuition but would be listed as out-of-state students. Thus no state resident would be bumped from a seat at a state college.

The DREAM Act only applies to young people brought here as children or babies and not anyone coming after the DREAM Act is law. So it is NOT a magnet, encouraging others to come.

## **4. The DREAM Act would allow illegal immigrants who are criminals to become citizens.**

Nope, the DREAM Act very specifically says that criminal activity (including misdemeanors) would bar that individual from being eligible. All DREAM Act applicants would be subjected to a rigorous criminal background check and review.

## **5. DREAM Act will weaken the military with illegals.**

On the contrary, former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates wrote Congress that non-citizens serving in the military have been a boon to the armed services and has encouraged the passage of the DREAM Act.

He added, *“The DREAM Act represents an opportunity to expand [the recruiting] pool to the advantage of military recruiting and readiness.”*

#### **6. The DREAM Act is amnesty.**

Not so. The DREAM Act insists upon responsibility and accountability for young people before they are even able to embark upon the program.

Then they face a long and exacting process of over six years to complete it before being able to apply for citizenship. (See *Ad Lib* on [July 4<sup>th</sup>](#) for details of the requirements.)

Nor does it give it amnesty or even a green card to the families of DREAMers. Their parents and siblings must adhere to the same strict standards for citizenship as if their children were not DREAMers.

#### **7. Presidents Hoover, Truman and Eisenhower deported millions upon millions of illegal immigrants to save jobs.**

This half-baked rumor has been flying all over the internet. The fact is we have always deported illegals when they are apprehended. Here’s the lowdown on these three presidents:

**Hoover** – deported or ordered to leave 121,000 people. He never used US immigration policy to create jobs.

**Truman** – did not create jobs for returning vets by ordering the deportation of illegal immigrants. Instead he signed legislation that protected the rights of migrant, seasonal workers in the US who were recruited to work here.

He sought to crack down on employers who hired illegal workers, but Congress would not agree to hold businesses responsible.

During his eight years as President, 127,000 illegal immigrants were deported and about 3.2 million left on their own under threat of deportation. But they did not leave to help free up jobs.

**Eisenhower** – rumor has it that over two years he deported 13 million Mexicans under something called, odiously, I might add, “Operation Wetback.”

Actually about 1/10 of that number probably were deported while 2.1 million of all illegal immigrants who returned home repatriated themselves because of the threat. The operation took all of five months, not two years. And it was not to preserve jobs. (*Fact Check, [Anneburg Public Policy Center](#) on all three presidents*)

**8. The DREAM Act is just another example of President Obama coddling illegal immigrants.**

A little girl looks with hope at a DREAM Act banner.

When people are apprehended who came here illegally, they are returned home.

In fact, Obama has been equally tough on deporting people who came here illegally, and according to Jorge Ramos, a news anchor for Univision, the Spanish-language TV station, Obama “deported more people in his first year in office than George W. Bush in his last year in office.”

Since Obama took office, according to Dept. of Homeland Security, until December 2010, more than 1 million illegal immigrants have been [deported](#).

**9. Dream Act students will take away federal grants like the Pell Grant that should go to American citizens.**

Nope. According to the Immigration Policy Center: “The DREAM Act states that undocumented youth adjusting to lawful permanent resident status are *only* eligible for federal student loans (which must be paid back), and federal work-study programs, where they must work for any benefit they receive. They are *not eligible* for federal grants, such as Pell Grants.”

#### **10. We can’t afford the DREAM Act.**

Actually we can because it’s cost-effective.

According to the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office, if passed as it’s now written, the DREAM Act would ultimately cut the deficit by \$1.4 billion and increase government revenues by \$2.3 billion over the next 10 years.

A UCLA study found that DREAMers becoming well-educated and securing high level jobs as the result of their schooling would have a significant impact on our economy over their life times. It’s estimated they could add between \$1.4 and \$3.6 trillion to the economy.

Sorry I could not answer all of your concerns, but these were the ones I heard time and again.

While the DREAM Act is only a baby step in immigration reform, it is one that will ultimately pay high dividends to our country.

*To contact Catherine Poe, see above. Her work appears in [Ad Lib](#) in the Communities at the Washington Times. She can also be heard on the [Democrats for America's Future](#).*

#### **9. Dream Act students will take away federal grants like the Pell Grant that should go to American citizens.**

Nope. According to the Immigration Policy Center: “The DREAM Act states that undocumented youth adjusting to lawful permanent resident status are *only* eligible for federal student loans

(which must be paid back), and federal work-study programs, where they must work for any benefit they receive. They are *not eligible* for federal grants, such as Pell Grants.”

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## Appendix I: Transcription of Conference between Ms. Thompson and Alexis

T = Ms. Thompson

A = Alexis

T: Are you ready?

A: Do I just read it?

T: Uh huh

A: Okay. I am in favor of the Dream Act. The Dream act is a bill giving a chance for an illegal child to become legal by finishing two years of high school and college or military service

T: Why are they illegal?

A: Huh?

T: What, are these children illegal?

A: **Huh?**

T: Did they break, what did these children do, why are they illegal?

A: Because they're just not the citizens ( )

T: So, they're illegal immigrants?

A: Yeah

T: You need to write that down. Write it down now, quickly. It sounds like they robbed a bank or something.

A: Yeah. How do you spell immigrant?

[T points to it on paper]

A: Oh yeah. Okay.

T: OK, Read it again.

A: I am favor of the dream act. The dream act is a bill giving a chance for an illegal immigrant child to become legal by finishing two years of high school and college or military service. One opponent of the dream act, Ira Melman, thinks that bringing illegal immigrants will cause too messes. One of them will come to. Bringing children is even worse than grown-ups. However, Katherine Poe, who writes for the Washington Times, believes that a child should be given a chance. Illegal children should be well educated to grow up successfully. I think after observing these opinions is that it will be great to be given a chance. Just think about how many lives the dream act will change. The dream act benefits society because if more people have a good education they just might make a difference by making more businesses and might make a living [turns paper over]. This is just the bibliographies.

T: You said they **might** make a living. You really need to convince me that this is good for society. They **might** make a living - convince me.

A: They **will** make a living.

T: And how is that beneficial to society?

A: Because it would make more businesses, more, like, um, like just more things new, like upgrading things, like to the old from new, old to new, and all that.

T: What if they **don't** get an education?

A: Probably then I guess they're just going to not grow up that successful.

T: Um, one thing I noticed is you didn't tell me who Ira Melman was. You told me Katherine Poe wrote for the Washington

A: because I know ( ) I, it just had a blank and I didn't know what to write

T: Okay, well it's written. Go find it on his, on the source. Hang on, there's more. When you say, 'one opponent of the dream act, Ira Melman, thinks that bringing illegal immigrants will cause much messes' - what does that mean?

A: I don't know.

T: If you don't know, how are we supposed to know?

A: Uh.

T: What could you say, instead of 'bring much messes'?

A: Cause. I don't know. It's all I could think of.

T: But what do you mean, much messes?

A: Like, too much people, like society's over, overgrowing, like there's too many people - there's not going to be much, like there's not going to be much room, and, yeah.

T: Does Ira actually say that there's going to be much too much, not enough room?

A: I don't know. It's just says something like that.

T: It says that illegal immigrants will flood it, but does that mean there's no room for them, or are there other implications?

A: ( )

T: Why don't you go look? Thank you.

# Berta

I am in favor of the DREAM Act. The DREAM Act gives illegal immigrant children (16 years and under) a chance to earn American Citizenship by having no criminal record finished high school and did 2 years of military service or 2 years of College.

One opponent of the DREAM Act is Ira Melman who is the Media Director of the Federation for American Immigration Reform. He argues that the illegal people's situation doesn't excuse them for being illegal immigrants. He also argues that if more people start to come then America will be forced to give them green cards too. And last she argues that the message the immigrants are saying is that it's okay to break the laws and to don't care about the laws.

However, Catherine Poe who writes for the Washington Times. She argues that illegal children should have the education they need and want. She also argues that it's not fair for the children to come here and get sent back. Cause they may be living in a bad situation. They can pay back society by pay taxes.

After hearing both sides, I agree with Catherine Poe because illegal children should have the education they need because maybe if they don't they could become criminals when they grow up.

The DREAM Act benefits because if the children get a good education then they could have good jobs and pay taxes.

# Berta

Poe, Catherine. DREAM Act sparks debate, misinformation, and fear. The Washington Times. July 13, 2011.

Melmen, Ira. Five Moral Arguments Against the DREAM Act. Townhall.com May 25, 2012.

Berta

You Decide CBA

5-29-12  
Banding

Public Policy Issue: The DREAM Act

My position: I am for the DREAM Act.

Stakeholder #1:

Ira Mellman is the Media Director of the Federation for American Immigration Reform.

He argues that the illegal peoples' situation does not excuse them for being illegal <sup>immigrants</sup>.

The message that is sending is that ~~it is okay~~ to break the laws be adults fault by being illegal in another country and all over the world. He also argues that if more illegal people start to come then American will be forced to give them green cards.

Stakeholder #2:

Catherine Poe writes for the Washington Times. She argues that ~~DREAMers will take away American citizenships jobs away. And that the DREAM act will allow illegal immigrants who may be animals to become citizens. Also that the DREAM act will weaken our military service with illegals.~~

Appendix K: Joshua CBA

Joshua

3

5/31/12

Social studies

I am in favor of the dream act  
The dream act is letting kids get citizenship even though they came here illegally. you have to do 2 years of college or military service.

Ira mehlman is media director of the federation for american immigration reform he argues that they shouldn't get education because they broke the law and people in other states will come because that family came so they think they can to and there will be alot of people here.

Catherine poe writes for washington times.  
She argues that the illegal immigrants should get to go to school because they shouldn't pay for the bad things there parents did and if they have a chance to go to college they can make a benefit to society.

After hearing both sides, i feel i agree with Catherine poe that illegal immigrants should get to go school because they didn't have the choice to come.

The dream act benefits society because the people might go to college and make inventions or help people and there will be more tax payers.

mehlman, Ira. five moral arguments against the dream act. townhall.com July 7, 2011

poe, Catherine the Washington Times Dream act sparks debate misinformation and fear July 13, 2011

Joshua

you decide CBA

5/24/12

Social studies

public policy issue: the dream act

my position: with it

Stakeholder #1

Jra mekham is media director of the federation for American immigration reform. He argues that... that shouldn't get education because they broke the law so they can be here. And it's bad because a whole bunch of people might come.

Stakeholder #2

Catherine pce writes for the Washington Times. She argues that... the illegal immigrants should get to go to school because they shouldn't pay up for what their parents did and they will not take from society and to give them a second chance because their parents wrong them.

Appendix L: Alexis CBA

3

I am in favor of the DREAM Act. The DREAM Act is a bill giving a chance for an illegal immigrant child to become a legal citizen by finishing two years of high school and college or military service.

One opponents of the DREAM Act, Ilya Mehlman who is the director of the Federation for American Immigration Reform thinks that bringing illegal immigrants is terrible. First off it's too much money to pay for their education. If one comes it could lead to many of them to come.

However, Catherine Poe who writes for the Washington Times believes that a child should be given a chance. Illegal immigrant children should be well educated to grow up to be a professional and help pay taxes.

I think, after observing the two opinions is that it will be great to be given a chance. Just think about how many lives the DREAM Act will change.

The DREAM Act benefits society because when more illegal immigrants get a good education it will provide us with many professionals. And besides there is nothing wrong with more citizens in the US. society.

Mehlman, Ilya. Five Moral Arguments Against the DREAM Act. Townhall.com. May 25, 2012

Poe, Catherine. DREAM Act Sparks Debate, Migration Information and Feature Washington Times. July 13, 2011

Alexis

### DREAM Act

I am in favor of the DREAM Act. The DREAM Act is a bill giving a chance for an illegal immigrant child to become legal by finishing two years of high school and college or military service.

One opponent of the DREAM Act, Ira Melman, thinks that bringing illegal immigrants will cause too much messes. More of them will come too. Bringing children is even worse than grown ups.

However, Catherine Poe who writes for the Washington Times believes that a child should be given a chance. Illegal children should be well educated to grow up successfully.

I think, after observing these two opinions is that it will be great to be given a chance. Just think about how many lives the DREAM Act will change.

The DREAM Act benefits society because if more people have a good education they just might make a difference by making more business and might make a living.

Mehlman, Ifa. For Catherine. Five Moral  
Arguments Against the DREAM Act.  
Townhall.com. May 25, 2012.

Poe, Catherine. DREAM Act Sparks Debate,  
Misinformation and Fear. Washington  
Times. July 13, 2011

5/31/12  
Social Studies

one TP

I am not for the Dream act because ~~its~~  
~~not fair for illegal children to be left behind.~~

The Dream act is a ~~bill~~ <sup>bill</sup> if whether  
or not illegal children should get a chance to  
become a legal citizen by finishing  
2 years of high school and college or military  
service

one opponent of the DREAM  
Act, Ira Meiman, thinks that bringing  
illegal citizens will make a big mess.  
More of them will come to. Bringing children  
is even worse than grown people.

however, Catherine Poe who writes for  
the Washington Times believes that a  
child should be given a chance. Illegal  
children should be well educated to grow up  
successfully.

I think, after observing their opinions  
is that it will be great to be given a  
chance. Just think about how many lives

the DREAM Act will change.

The DREAM Act could benefit society because with more citizens could equal more businesses, more tax paying for more supplies.

## Appendix M: Micros Report

Micros and Me Research Project – Due February 17<sup>th</sup>

For your final project, you will do a research report about a topic related to microorganisms or micro particles. I have a list of topics you can choose from. If you have a topic idea that's not on this list, we can talk about it. You may work with a partner (that means **one person**) or you may work on your own. Read the information below to find what you have to do:

Your research project has **two parts**:

1. A written research report
2. A public service announcement

### Directions for Research Report:

1. Ask **questions** about your topic.
2. Find at least **2 resources** to help you answer your questions and **take notes** from those resources.
3. Create a **bibliography** from your resources, using the format taught by Ms. Drum and Ms. Bell.
4. Follow all steps in the writing process:
  - Pre-writing plan or outline
  - First draft
  - Revising - using suggestions given by others and you
  - Editing - using suggestions given by others and you
  - Publishing – incorporating revisions and edits

5. Your report must include **data** that serves as **evidence** for the points you are making.

**Directions for Public Service Announcement:**

1. Create a **television ad or poster** that tries to convince your family, friends, and community to do something related to your research topic. If you are making a TV ad, you must write up a **script**.
2. Make sure that your ad contains **factual information** that will help others to make healthy decisions.
3. Write a **paragraph** explaining your ad.
4. **Test your ad** by presenting it to a family member, guardian, or someone in your community, and then **interview** them to determine the effectiveness of your ad.

## **Possible Research Topics**

### **Beneficial Microorganisms (Microbes)**

Treating our water using microbes

Composting using microbes

Making foods, such as yogurt, cheese, and bread

Research other microbe you know that helps us

The story of how penicillin was made

### **Managing health conditions related to microorganisms, micro particles, or tiny insects**

Allergies

Lice

Bed bugs

Blood and blood donation

Diseases and illnesses such as asthma, influenza, mumps, measles, chicken pox, whooping cough, tetanus, rubella, diphtheria, meningitis, and hepatitis B.

### **Staying healthy or preventing illness**

Brushing your teeth

Getting shots to prevent diseases (for example, immunizations for 6<sup>th</sup> grade)

Hand washing

Using antibiotics correctly (taking the right dose, and using them until they're gone)

Your immune system and how to keep it strong

First aid treatment to prevent infections

### **Reducing microbes in your food**

Refrigerating or freezing food

Preserving food

E Coli poisoning (including cooking foods completely and washing your hands)

Salmonella poisoning (why we don't eat raw cookie dough)

### **Healthy streams, rivers, lakes, and oceans**

Treating our sewage

Using "green" cleaning products (environmentally friendly)

Salmon anemia virus

Toxins endangering our Puget Sound orca population

You will research a topic about micros and how they relate to our health. This is a checklist to help you keep track of all the parts of the project:

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Topic to be researched: \_\_\_\_\_

All the parts listed below are required.

	Parts of the projects	Stay on track for completing the project <b>on time</b>	Date completed	Checked by Ms. Bass or Librarian
Research	Choose a research topic	Thursday, Jan. 26		
	Locate 1st resource with information about your topic	Thursday, Jan 26		
	Develop research questions	Friday, Jan 27		
	Take notes	On-going*		
	Locate 2 <sup>nd</sup> resource	Monday, Jan. 30		
	Take more notes	On-going*		

	Bibliography	Tuesday, Jan. 31		
Report Writing	Pre-write plan/outline	Tuesday, Jan. 31		
	First draft	Tuesday, Feb. 7		
	Revise and edit	Friday, Feb. 10		
	Final draft/publishing	Monday, Feb. 13		

\*Note-taking must be completed before draft is written.

	Parts of the projects	Stay on track for completing the project <b>on time</b>	Date completed	Checked by Ms. Bass or Ms. Bell
Public Service	Identify important points to make to the public		Thursday, Feb. 2	
	Determine medium for delivering the message (poster or TV ad)		Monday, Feb. 6	

Plan PSA with a sketch or outline (this is your pre-write)	Friday, Jan. 10		
Draft poster or script for TV ad	Tuesday, Feb. 14		
Revise and edit	Wed., Feb. 15		
Make final draft of poster or film your TV ad	Friday, Feb. 17		
Write paragraph explaining PSA	Friday, Feb. 17		
Present PSA to a family member and conduct interview	Wed., Feb. 22		
Write about the results of your interview	Friday, Feb. 24		

Name(s):

### Collecting/Finding a Seed Idea in Expository Writing

The stages of the writing process are very similar when doing expository writing. You'll still need to *collect* ideas and *find a seed idea* you're interested in taking all the way through the writing process. But, you are working with a deadline- February 17<sup>th</sup>- and you must become an expert on your seed idea by doing research. You will need to locate resources you can read and understand so that you can **become the expert**. Your "expertise" will be shared with others in your writing. Use this form to help you *find your seed idea*.

Research Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

I/We want to research this topic because:

Interesting facts I/we know about this topic:

Questions I/we have about this topic:

Resources with information about this topic:

## Online Resources

1. [www.kidshealth.org/kids/](http://www.kidshealth.org/kids/)

KidsHealth is available in Spanish! It will also read the articles to you. Read the article that explains what germs are: <http://kidshealth.org/kid/talk/qa/germs.html>

2. [www.bam.gov](http://www.bam.gov)

This site is from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It also has a disease database:

[http://www.bam.gov/sub\\_diseases/diseases\\_immuneplatoon\\_noflash\\_diseasedatabase.html](http://www.bam.gov/sub_diseases/diseases_immuneplatoon_noflash_diseasedatabase.html)

3. [http://www.kids.gov/k\\_5/k\\_5\\_health\\_issues.shtml](http://www.kids.gov/k_5/k_5_health_issues.shtml)

Find a long list of links to websites that will make you an expert in a number of different health related topics.

4. [www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/kids/html/vaccines.htm](http://www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/kids/html/vaccines.htm)

The Food and Drug Administration has a wealth of information. The reading level is quite a bit higher than the other sites.

5. <http://www.foodsafety.gov/>

This site is also in Spanish! You will find lots of information about how to keep foods at safe temperatures to avoid food poisoning.

6. [www.biology4kids.com](http://www.biology4kids.com)

This site has lots of great information about what microbes are. It will explain bacteria, viruses, good microbes and bad microbes.

## Appendix N: Micros Rubric

### Research Report Scoring Rubric

Research reports are due February 17<sup>th</sup> !!

Points Possible	Self-Evaluation	Score	Features
<b>Pre-write</b>			
1			Finding a Seed: I asked researchable questions about the topic.
2			Collecting: I found multiple pieces of evidence to answer my questions and took clear notes that I paraphrased in my own words.
3			Pre-write plan/outline: I developed an organized plan for presenting my ideas, facts found in my research, supporting details, and examples.
<b>Draft, Revise, Edit</b>			
3			The draft follows the plan I developed. Changes I made were thoughtful and intentional.
3			The draft shows evidence of revisions and edits.
<b>Published Report – Content, Organization, and Style</b>			

3			The research report is organized. The report begins with an introduction, and ends with a conclusion. Each of the body paragraphs has a main idea, with supporting details, and a topic sentence.
3			The research report is informational. The content and ideas discussed in the report are important for other readers to understand.
3			The writer demonstrates a style that is unique and conveys the author's voice, while communicating clearly and effectively.
2			The research report includes a bibliography, citing at least two resources.
<b>Published Report - Conventions</b>			
2			The research report uses 5th grade appropriate spelling, grammar, and conventions.
<b>Total Points</b>			
20			Comments:

Head Lice

# Luna and Rene

What it is?

- parasite
- ectoparasite
- psocodea
- diognous

description

- almost transparent
- adult head lice is about 2-3 mm long
- 6 legs with claws
- tan to grayish-white
- as big as a sesame seed

# Luna and Rene

reproduce

- Babys

feed

- Blood several times a day  
to stay if not in 1 or 2 days  
the louse or Lice will die ✓

Parasites Lice -  
head lice  
2/16/12  
2/17/12

Hygiene-related-diseases CDC  
CDC head lice

treatment

- mayonnaise
- doctors shampoo that they give to you

movement

- crawls
- ectoparasite

# Luna

## Outline

21/7/12  
Science

Head lice

Introduction

Head lice is a parasite a ectoparasite which is related to an insect. hope you like my research project,

Body paragraphs - what is important?

1) Description

Lice is an almost transparent parasite. Adult head lice is 2 to 3 mm long. it has

2) Life cycle

First head lice have eggs then turn to their 1st nymph then 2nd nymph then 3rd nymph

6 legs and a tan to grayish-white, also as big as a sesame seed.

3) What is it?

Lice is a small insect called a parasite. it has

Diagnos and psocoda and ectoparasite.

4) food

head lice like to eat your scalp's blood and animals blood too.

5) how to prevent it?

You can prevent lice by using mayonnaise or a doctors shampoo.

## conclusion

Now you know about head lice and how to prevent head lice and what is head lice

# Head lice

## introduction.

Have you ever itch so hard that you think you have lice. If so there's a 50% chance you have it. If so you have it there not just one in your hair there's more.

## What is it

What is lice? Lice is a parasite a ectoparasite. Ectoparasite is a part of the parasite family. Lice is part of the phylum ~~Arthropoda~~ ~~Arthropoda~~ And its Diagnosis. and that's ~~a~~ <sup>one</sup> microorganism. one micro. Description

how do you describe lice? Lice is almost transparent. Did you know that adult head lice is 2mm or 3mm long. ~~That's~~ So small! It has 3 pairs of legs which means lice have 6 legs WOW! The color of head lice is tan and a grayish-white. The size of head lice is as big as a <sup>colony</sup> sesame seed. So small, right.

## treatment

head lice how can I prevent lice? You can prevent lice by using two different things. One way is to use shampoo that a doctor prescribed for you. The other way is to use mayonnaise eww!! I know mayonnaise <sup>in your hair</sup> kills <sup>head</sup> lice but you <sup>have to</sup> put it in your hair, eww!!

## Life cycle

what is the life cycle of lice? The life cycle of <sup>head</sup> lice is put in several parts. First head lice have babies as they reproduce. Then they turn to there 1st nymph then to there second and third. then turn to an adult or a pediculus humanus capitis. Awesome! right!

## conclusion

So if you itch so hard or so much check out my research and find out if you have lice. I hope you like my research project. Thank you.

# Head Lice

## Introduction

Have you ever itch so bad that you think you have lice. If so there's a 50% chance you have it. If so you have lice there's not just one in your hair there are more.

## What is Lice?

Lice is a parasite a ectoparasite. Ectoparasites are a part of the parasite family. Lice are psocodea. Lice have diagnos. That's one microorganism.

## How can I describe Lice?

Lice is almost transparent. Did you know that adult head lice are 2mm to 3mm long. So small! Lice have 3 pairs of legs which means lice have 6 legs WOW! The color of head lice is tan and a grayish-white color. The size of head lice is as big as a sesame seed. So small!

How can I prevent head lice?

You can prevent head lice by using two different things. One way is to use shampoo that a doctor prescribed for you. The other way is to use mayonnaise. EWW!! I know mayonnaise in your hair kills head lice. And you have to have it in your hair. EWW!!!

What is the life cycle of head lice?

The life cycle of head lice is put in several parts. First head lice have babies as the adults reproduce. Then they turn to there 1st nymph then turn to there second and third nymph. Then they turn to adults or a pediculus humanus capitis. Awesome right?

Conclusion

So if you itch so hard or so much check out my research and find out if you have lice. I hope you liked my research project about lice.

thank you

by:

Luna

**Luna**

### Research Report Scoring Rubric

Research reports are due February 17<sup>th</sup>!!

Points Possible	Self-Evaluation	Score	Features
<b>Pre-write</b>			
1	1	0	Finding a Seed: I asked researchable questions about the topic. <i>Yellow sheets? where are your questions?</i>
2	2	2	Collecting: I found multiple pieces of evidence to answer my questions and took clear notes that I paraphrased in my own words.
3	3	2	Pre-write plan/outline: I developed an organized plan for presenting my ideas, facts found in my research, supporting details, and examples. <i>Use notes, not complete sentences</i>
<b>Draft, Revise, Edit</b>			
3	3	3	The draft follows the plan I developed. Changes I made were thoughtful and intentional.
3	3	2	The draft shows evidence of revisions and edits.
<b>Published Report – Content, Organization, and Style</b>			
3	3	3	The research report is organized. The report begins with an introduction, and ends with a conclusion. Each of the body paragraphs has a main idea, with supporting details, and a topic sentence.
3	3	2	The research report is informational. The content and ideas discussed in the report are important for other readers to understand.
3	3	3	The writer demonstrates a style that is unique and conveys the author's voice, while communicating clearly and effectively.
2	0	2	The research report includes a bibliography, citing at least two resources.
<b>Published Report - Conventions</b>			
2	2	1	The research report uses 5 <sup>th</sup> grade appropriate spelling, grammar, and conventions.
<b>Total Points</b>			
20	19	20	Comments: Good job, [redacted]. You did a nice job following the process and organizing your information. Make sure that every sentence makes sense and you've used apostrophes correctly! How can you prevent lice?

## Appendix P: Alexis Micros

Name(s):

Alexis

### Collecting/Finding a Seed Idea in Expository Writing

The stages of the writing process are very similar when doing expository writing. You'll still need to *collect* ideas and *find a seed idea* you're interested in taking all the way through the writing process. But, you are working with a deadline- February 17<sup>th</sup>- and you must become an expert on your seed idea by doing research. You will need to locate resources you can read and understand so that you can **become the expert**. Your "expertise" will be shared with others in your writing. Use this form to help you *find your seed idea*.

Research Topic:

Lice

★ Great topic!

I/We want to research this topic because:

the thought of that microbe and its job is sooo fascinating

Interesting facts I/we know about this topic:

it is a parasite that crawls in fur or hair

Questions I/we have about this topic:

how do they look

Resources with information about this topic:

books about lice  
what books about lice?

# Alexis

What is  
a Lice

a tiny parasite (super tiny)



how  
do they  
spread

it spreads fast when you  
use hats that have been ~~used~~<sup>used</sup>  
~~and~~ and mostly comb

U

what do they  
eat or drink

blood p

U

how does their  
life-cycle go

U

Alexis

- 2/2

"Lice aren't so nice" Kids Health.org

Lice



You need more categories and more info.

What it eats

It feeds on blood

What's its habitat

anywhere warm but most likely found in hair/fur.

Alexis

Outline  
Lice

2/7  
writing

Introduction

Body paragraphs - what is important?

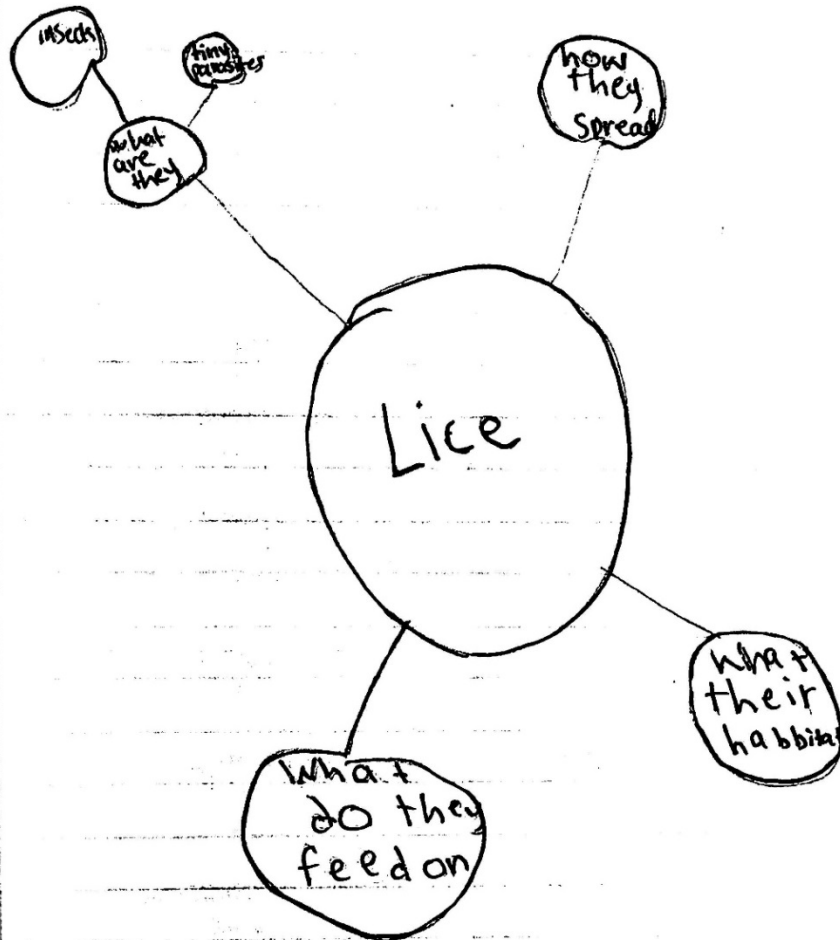
1) what are they

2) where do they live

3) what do they eat

4) how do they spread

conclusion



Alexis

2/16

## Lice

Ouch!!!! My head itches. What if it happened to you if so, then

Lice are tiny parasites that live on your head. They also live on your hair and fur because the hair gives them warmth. It's possible to get lice from your pet. Share your pet.

Lice spread quickly when you share hair products such as combs, hats, pillow and blankets. It's not a good idea to share those kind of things. But if you have them might I suggest - that you go to the clinic.

Lice feed on blood because that's the only food source there. they are icky but it's good to know.

So make sure you take care of it or it will be one of your

## Alexis

Lice are tiny parasites that live on your head. They also live in fur. They live because the hair gives them warmth.

They spread quickly when you share hair products, ~~for example~~ hats and pillows. It's not a good idea to share those kind of things. But if you have them, I suggest going to the clinic.

They live in hair and fur because they need warmth. The warmth keeps them alive. If they didn't live there, then they're dead.

Lice feed on your blood because that's the only food source there. They won't eat it repeatedly, but still, it might be important to know.

So make sure you take care of your hair or lice will cause trouble.

Alexis

## Research Report Scoring Rubric

Research reports are due February 17<sup>th</sup>!!

Points Possible	Self-Evaluation	Score	Features
<b>Pre-write</b>			
1	0	1	Finding a Seed: I asked researchable questions about the topic.
2	1	1	Collecting: I found multiple pieces of evidence to answer my questions and took clear notes that I paraphrased in my own words.
3	3	1	Pre-write plan/outline: I developed an organized plan for presenting my ideas, facts found in my research, <u>supporting details,</u> and examples. <i>NOT enough any in your plan</i>
<b>Draft, Revise, Edit</b>			
3	3	2	The draft follows the plan I developed. Changes I made were thoughtful and intentional.
3	0	1	The draft shows evidence of revisions and edits.
<b>Published Report - Content, Organization, and Style</b>			
3	3	3	The research report is organized. The report begins with an introduction, and ends with a conclusion. Each of the body paragraphs has a main idea, with supporting details, and a topic sentence.
3	2	2	The research report is informational. The content and ideas discussed in the report are important for other readers to understand.
3	1	2	The writer demonstrates a style that is unique and conveys the author's voice, while communicating clearly and effectively.
2	2	2	The research report includes a bibliography, citing at least two resources.
<b>Published Report - Conventions</b>			
2	1	1	The research report uses 5 <sup>th</sup> grade appropriate spelling, grammar, and conventions.
<b>Total Points</b>			
25	16	16	Comments: <i>Alexis, you have all the elements for a good report, you just need more information. You found such great articles! What happened when you were taking notes? Question - Do people have fur??</i>

## Appendix Q: Kristy Micros

Kristy

### Collecting/Finding a Seed Idea in Expository Writing

The stages of the writing process are very similar when doing expository writing. You'll still need to *collect* ideas and *find a seed idea* you're interested in taking all the way through the writing process. But, you are working with a deadline- February 17<sup>th</sup>- and you must become an expert on your seed idea by doing research. You will need to locate resources you can read and understand so that you can **become the expert**. Your "expertise" will be shared with others in your writing. Use this form to help you *find your seed idea*.

Research Topic:

Bed Bugs

★ Looks great!

I/We want to research this topic because: I know alot about bed bugs.

Interesting facts I/we know about this topic: I know bed bugs feed on human & animal blood while they are sleeping.

Questions I/we have about this topic: How do bed bugs reproduce?

Resources with information about this topic: Cdc gov 1/31/12, Bed bugs FAQs,

Kristy

We are doing a poster.

important details:

what is it?

what it looks like?

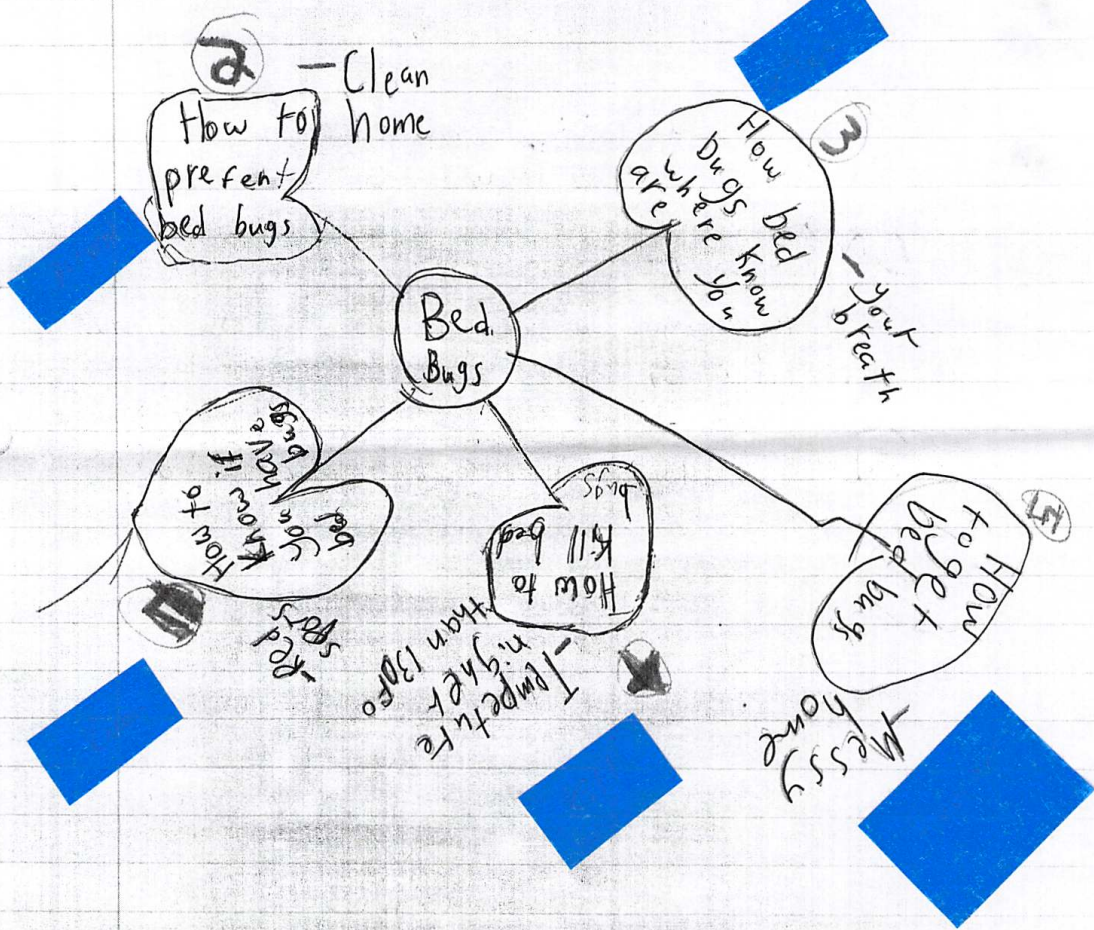
what it eats?

what is its life cycle?

how to prevent  
bed bugs.

Kristy

2/4/12  
science/writing



Kristy

2/8/12

Science

## Body Part photagraph

- (1) Mouth- The mouth of the bed bug is very small but can drink out blood.
- (2) Sense- A bed bug can smell your breath every time you breath.
- (3) Eyes-
- (4)

Kristy

2/9/12

# Body phatagraph

How to  
prevent  
Bed bugs

1. Keep a clean home because if you have a dirty home you will get bed bugs.
2. You know if you have bed bugs, if you see red spots on you or your ~~family~~ family.
3. You can kill bed bugs by raising the temperter by 130<sup>FO</sup> or higher or squis them or bug killer spray.
4. Bed bugs can know where you are if you breathe.
5. You can get bed bugs by having a messy home, or if you are moving & the house or apartment you rent or buy might have bed bugs.

Kristy

## Bed Bugs Body Draft

2/9/12

science/writing

Intro: You will know if you have bed bugs by having red dots on you or your family and they are bed bug bites.

You can't get bed bugs if you have a clean home so bed bugs have no where to hide.

Bed bugs know where you are in any home that has bed bugs when you breath they smell your breath and go to that room.

Some ways to kill bed bugs are raise the tempture to  $130^{\circ}\text{F}$  or higher, call a exterminator, or use bug killer spray.

Conclution: You can get bed bugs by having a messy home, the house you move into has them already.

Kristy

2/14/12

Science/writing

# Bed Bugs Draft/Revise

## Introduction

When you are in bed do you feel someone or something watching you? You think its your big sister or brother. But its not! ~~Its~~ the bed bugs watching you!

How to know if you have bed bugs. ~~Scared~~  
You ~~wont~~ know if you have bed bugs by ~~having~~ red dots on you or your family. You or your family will see black dots on your wood ~~bed~~ bed frame.

## How to prevent bed bugs.

You ~~house~~ won't get bed bugs if you have a clean home by vacuuming often. change your bed sheets once a week, make sure to put ~~stuff~~ things for bed bugs to have no where to hide.

## How bed bugs know where you are.

Bed bugs know where you are, by smelling your breath when you exhale bed bugs smell your breath they smell it and go to the room you are by them smelling your breath.

### How to kill bed bugs.

You can kill bed bugs by squishing them, call a exterminator if you have ~~them~~, raise the temperature to 130<sup>OF</sup> or higher.

### How to get bed bugs.

You can get bed bug by having a messy house, the house you move into might have bed bugs ~~in it~~, the hotels that say the hotel does not have bed bugs or other bugs but they might ~~bring them~~ bring them to you!

### Conclusion

The next time you're in bed you might not be alone. You might be in a bed with bugs home with is out beds!

Kristy

## Bed Bugs Edit

2/16/12

Science/writing

### Introduction

When you are in bed, do you feel someone or something watching you? You think it's your big sister or brother. But it's not! The bed bugs are watching you!

### How to know if you have bed bugs

You will know if you have bed bugs by seeing red dots on you or your family. You or your family will see black dots on your wood bed frame.

### How to prevent bed bugs

You won't get bed bugs if you have a clean house by vacuuming often, change your bed sheets once a week, make sure to put things away for bed bugs to have no where to hide.

### How bed bugs know where you are

Bed bugs know where you are, by smelling your breath when you exhale bed bugs smell your breath they smell it and go to a room by them smelling your breath.

### How to kill bed bugs

You can kill bed bugs by squishing them, call an exterminator if you have them, raise temperature to 130°F or higher.

### How to get bed bugs

You can get bed bugs by having a messy house. The house you move into might have bed bugs. The hotels that say the hotel does not have bed bugs or other bugs but they might lie to you.

### Conclusion:

The next time your in bed you might not be alone. You might be in a bed bugs home your bed!

Kristy

# Research Report Scoring Rubric

Research reports are due February 17<sup>th</sup>!!

Points Possible	Self-Evaluation	Score	Features
<b>Pre-write</b>			
1	1	1	Finding a Seed: I asked researchable questions about the topic.
2	2	0	Collecting: I found multiple pieces of evidence to answer my questions and <u>took clear notes</u> that I paraphrased in my own words. <i>where are your notes?</i>
3	2	2	Pre-write plan/outline: I developed an organized plan for presenting my ideas, facts found in my research, supporting details, and examples. <i>more details from notes</i>
<b>Draft, Revise, Edit</b>			
3	2	2	The draft follows the plan I developed. Changes I made were thoughtful and intentional. <i>notes are needed</i>
3	3	2	The draft shows evidence of revisions and edits.
<b>Published Report - Content, Organization, and Style</b>			
3	2	3	The research report is organized. The report begins with an introduction, and ends with a conclusion. Each of the body paragraphs has a main idea, with supporting details, and a topic sentence.
3	3	2	The research report is informational. The content and ideas discussed in the report are important for other readers to understand. <i>Misinformation</i>
3	1	2	The writer demonstrates a style that is unique and conveys the author's voice, while communicating clearly and effectively.
2	2	2	The research report includes a bibliography, citing at least two resources.
<b>Published Report - Conventions</b>			
2	2	2	The research report uses 5 <sup>th</sup> grade appropriate spelling, grammar, and conventions.
<b>Total Points</b>			
20	18	18	Comments: Nice job, <b>Kristy</b> . What happened to your notes? I would like to see the information you collected regarding how you get bad bugs because you are sharing misinformation. It's not true that you can get them by keeping your house messy. That's often misunderstood by people who don't do the research. Remember that your draft is the place where you make revisions - <i>don't copy the draft</i>

and write "revise" or "edit" up at the top. Revise and edit your draft.

## Micros and Me Research Project Checklist

You will research a topic about micros and how they relate to our health. This is a checklist to help you keep track of all the parts of the project:

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Topic to be researched: \_\_\_\_\_

All the parts listed below are required.

	Parts of the projects	Stay on track for completing the project on time	Date completed	Checked by
Research	Choose a research topic	Thursday, Jan. 26	1/25/12	ms. Bass or ms. Beale
	Locate 1st resource with information about your topic	Thursday, Jan 26	1/25/12	
	Develop research questions	Friday, Jan 27	1/31/12	
	Take notes	On-going*	1/31/12	
	Locate 2 <sup>nd</sup> resource	Monday, Jan. 30	1/31/12	
	Take more notes	On-going*	1/31/12	
	Bibliography	Tuesday, Jan. 31	2/2/12	
Report Writing	Pre-write plan/outline	Tuesday, Jan. 31	2/3/12	
	First draft	Tuesday, Feb. 7	2/6/12	
	Revise and edit	Friday, Feb. 10	2/16/12	
	Final draft/publishing	Monday, Feb. 13	2/17/12	

\*Note-taking must be completed before draft is written.