

THE USE AND IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERACTIVE WRITING AS AN  
INSTRUCTIONAL METHOD FOR PRIMARY TEACHERS IN TEXAS EDUCATIONAL  
SERVICE CENTER REGION 2

A Dissertation

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi  
Corpus Christi, Texas

May 2013

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## **ABSTRACT**

This doctoral study investigated the use and implementation of interactive writing as an instructional method for primary teachers in Texas Educational Service Center Region 2. The descriptive study involved 152 survey respondents and eight interview participants. The primary instrument was a questionnaire (Interactive Writing Survey) that solicited data from teachers on their definition of interactive writing, the use of interactive writing, and variations on the implementation of interactive writing. Additionally, an interview protocol was used to allow participants to expand on the use of interactive writing and how interactive writing supported the reading and writing connection. Data were collected during the spring 2010 semester and analyzed by frequency and cross-tabulations. In addition, a Chi-analysis was conducted on two of the survey questions.

The analysis of data suggested that primary teachers understood elements of interactive writing and were able to define interactive writing as an instructional method. The data also suggested that primary teachers implemented interactive writing during a weekly timeframe. Additionally, there was no statistically significant relationship between how often interactive writing was implemented and grade level taught. The data also indicated that participants had complete freedom with the implementation of interactive writing. However, the analysis indicated that there was no statistically significant relationship between the extent of freedom on the implementation of interactive writing and grade level taught. In addition, the data suggested that primary teachers used pre-planned schedules for interactive writing and primarily implemented interactive writing during whole group instruction.

The findings suggest that those teachers who responded are knowledgeable about interactive writing and are consistent in the way they use it. Further research is needed to explore other grade levels' use and implementation of interactive writing, identify various types of literature used to support interactive writing, and investigate the implementation of technological elements during interactive writing lessons.

## **DEDICATION**

*To my wonderful family, my amazing friends, and my loving husband, I am forever grateful for your support.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I was lead down this journey through the guidance of my very dear friend, Roxanne. Although she is not physically with me, her spirit and inspiration has always been by my side. She was always determined and motivated to continue her education, and I believe her passion inspired me to pursue mine.

I would like to thank my committee: Dr. Daniel Pearce, Dr. Corinne Valadez, Dr. Faye Bruun, and Dr. Jose Flores for providing insight, support, and guidance. A special thanks to chair members, Dr. Daniel Pearce and Dr. Corinne Valadez, who always pushed me towards my goals. You supported and guided me just as a mentor should, and I am forever grateful for you believing in me and my ability to conquer and achieve this academic milestone. I would also like to thank the wonderful students, teachers, and administrators who I have had the privilege of working with and knowing. A special thanks to Cindy, Kathleen, and Karen for being the most amazing mentors and friends.

I am eternally grateful for the love, patience, and understanding of my family and friends. My husband, Dominic, constantly motivated and supported me during every obstacle that was placed in my path. You are truly my biggest fan and my forever soul mate...thank you for always being by my side. I would also like to thank my wonderfully supportive parents. My mom, who has loved and adored every word that I have ever written...you believed in me even when I didn't believe in myself. My dad, who inspired me to purse my degree...you indirectly showed me the importance of a solid education. I want to also thank my brother, J.D., for being the greatest big brother and for always giving me a very subtle nudge of support. A special thanks to my wonderful friends and sisters, Erica, Corina, and Jennifer. Your encouraging words were extremely motivational. A final thanks to my doctoral sisters, Christie, Carmen, Kim, and

Deb for all of the emotional and technical support. Christie, I am forever grateful for your heartwarming friendship and guidance...we are finally finished!

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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

Writing is a critical skill and intricate element of daily communication. It is through writing that we express messages, solidify our thoughts, and capture feelings and expressions. Writers formulate the ideas for their messages as they cycle through the various steps of the writing process and convey their thoughts through a unique written form. As children enter school, they are determined to express their print knowledge and oral language development by making marks on paper to represent their thoughts. Children are eager to draw, write letters, and produce scribble marks as they connect to the paper (Graves, 1983). Young writers structure and modify their writing to closely mimic the written pieces that encompass their surroundings. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to provide effective writing instruction during the beginning stages of the writing process and transform young thinkers into young writers.

### **Writing Development**

Children begin experimenting with the beginning stages of writing as they play at home, interact outside, and investigate their surroundings. Chomsky (1971) emphasized that young children start writing before they receive formal writing instruction. In fact, Graves (1983) suggested that children express the beginning stages of the writing process by marking objects and expressing their thoughts through scribbles. The product of these beginning writing marks can be seen on walls, cars, sidewalk, paper, and chalkboards.

Children develop as writers as they structure and communicate their thoughts into a written form. Past researchers (Calkins, 1994; Clay, 1975; Graves, 1983) maintained that young children progress in their writing as they cycle through and experiment with the various stages of the writing process. In fact, it has been noted that children pass through the stages of the writing

process naturally and not necessarily in order (Clay, 1975). Writing theorists (Gentry, 2005; Teale & Sulzby, 1986) emphasized that the stages of writing are often predictable and developmental in nature. According to Gardner (1980), some written elements produced during the beginning stages of the writing process are scribbles, marks, and letter-like symbols. As children progress in their writing, they begin to create drawings or pictures to represent their writing. As emergent writers develop through the drawing phase, they capture thoughts and imitate writing through illustrations.

The next stage of the writing process is the act of labeling and providing strands of letters. During this stage, children may use mock letters or alphabetic representations to create a message. Clay (1975) suggested that when children produce letters or mock letters during this stage, those letters convey meaning, express personal thoughts, and often resemble formal written pieces. As children develop as writers, they begin to apply letters and create words by hearing and recording sounds. This stage of writing is transitional in nature. Ehri (1987) purported that children practice and invent words during this stage, as they segment and decode words phonetically. Invented spelling allows children to produce words based on their understanding of the written language (Fountas & Pinnell, 1999). Clay (1975) emphasized that during this developmental stage, children will purposefully write messages based on their knowledge of language, letters, letter sounds, and whole words.

Ultimately, young writers become proficient in their writing as they progress through and experiment with each stage of writing. Dahl and Farnan (2003) maintained that novice writers investigate aspects of the writing process as they convey their thoughts and transform their writings into conventional pieces.

## **Writing Instruction for Young Children**

Children develop strong connections to what they learn when they are provided with powerful instructional methods and opportunities to apply their own learning. Graves (1991) emphasized that, “When writing is taught well, we allow children to discover the place of writing in their lives right now, not at some abstract future time. We also explore and confirm together the relationship of writing to speaking and reading” (p. 48). For decades, writing theorists (Cunningham, 2000; Morrow & Strickland, 2000; Read, 1971) have observed and documented effective writing methods used to support the developmental needs of young emerging writers. In addition, most of these instructional writing methods have focused on language development and the personal experiences centered around writing, while others have focused on spelling, stretching out words, and handwriting skills (Clay, 1991; Goodman, 1993; McKenzie, 1985; Pinnell & McCarrier, 1994). Some of the instructional writing methods structured and designed around the developmental needs of young writers include the language experience approach, shared writing, writer’s workshop, and interactive writing. Regardless of the selected writing method, the common thread that is interwoven among these forms of writing instruction is the idea of the teacher providing modeling, scaffolding, and ongoing support. In fact, Clay’s (1975) research confirmed the notion that when children are given powerful writing instruction and the opportunity to write, they develop crucial elements of writing such as letters and sounds, concepts of print, concepts of words, and the structure of their writing.

Thus, teachers become the key component to the establishment of strong writing skills and the development of young writers. They must model strategies for writing in a structured framework that is conducive to the development of their students (Routman, 2000). Hence, it is crucial that educators utilize various instructional approaches to writing and implement powerful

writing strategies that support student success and produce strong, proficient writers and thinkers.

### **Interactive Writing**

Interactive writing, an instructional writing method used for young children, derived from the language experience approach (LEA). The concept of an LEA lesson is centered on oral language development and personal experiences (Ashton-Warner, 1963; Smith, 2002). During an LEA session, children freely dictate their ideas and experiences on a particular topic as the teacher acts as the scribe (McCarrier, Pinnell, & Fountas, 2000). Elements from LEA were utilized to develop the writing method known as shared writing (McKenzie, 1985). Shared writing lessons are grounded in an event or a shared experience. A shared writing lesson enables the teacher to write the text while the children orally negotiate the written piece and are engaged in the structure of the writing process (Button, Johnson, & Furgerson, 1996).

Shared writing experiences were used as the framework for the development of interactive writing (Pinnell & McCarrier, 1994). Interactive writing instruction is grounded by Vygotsky's (1978) idea of scaffolding and working at the child's zone of proximal development. An interactive writing lesson is the collaboration of ideas where children have the opportunity to express their thoughts and interact with language and the fluid nature of the writing process. Teachers and students act as a team of writers while the pen is shared between the two (Boroski, 2004). One of the main features of interactive writing that distinguishes it from shared writing is the process of the children contributing to the writing by sharing the pen (Button et al., 1996). In addition, interactive writing involves the idea of the teacher making purposeful scaffolding decisions that support each child's academic needs (Wiley, 1999). Together, these features of interactive writing allow teachers to provide explicit, student-driven writing instruction.

Interactive writing is a powerful instructional approach to writing that was specifically designed for primary children. Interactive writing involves the collaboration, organization, structure, and meaning of a written piece (Button et al., 1996). More specifically, interactive writing has been defined as a writing event that is collaborative in nature and actively involves the composition of sentences, the phrases of words, and the layout of a written piece (McCarrier et al., 2000). With the implementation of interactive writing, children have the opportunity to become proficient and knowledgeable as independent writers.

Collom (2004) explained that during interactive writing lessons, teachers and children meaningfully construct text by collaboratively working through the written message and writing the text as a team. Together, with the support of the teacher, children negotiate the text, hear sounds, and practice the conventions of spelling and writing. The goal of interactive writing is to scaffold writing instruction so that students have the opportunity to be successful while the teacher gradually releases instructional support. Through this process, students develop a strong understanding of writing and are able to incorporate the instructional elements of interactive writing into their own individual written pieces. In turn, interactive writing becomes what Boroski (2004) referred to as a “bridge” (p. 4) to the development of a young proficient writer.

Interactive writing lessons can be structured in various ways. Often, lessons are conducted in either a whole group setting or with a small group of children. During an interactive writing lesson, the teacher will often sit near an easel as the children surround her on the carpet. The teacher is positioned so that each child is able to view the writing and participate in the process. Scholars (Atwell, 1998; Calkins, 1994) suggested that writing in front of children improves both oral and written language. Before the writing begins, the teacher and the children discuss ideas and thoughts about the composition of the written piece. The writing is centered on

a shared experience and the teacher and children collaboratively reflect on the experience as they write (Williams, 2011).

Interactive writing is an important and powerful writing method. To begin with, interactive writing supports the activation of prior knowledge through the implementation of shared experiences. When teachers encourage children to activate prior knowledge, they enable them to make connections to the writing process. In addition, interactive writing allows teachers to plan out their writing lesson to support the academic needs of each student. Interactive writing lessons can be divided into segments to further highlight various elements of the writing process such as hearing and recording sounds and concepts of print.

Teachers can explicitly guide and support children through the writing process during an interactive writing lesson (Sherry, 2010). The ongoing support provided by teachers enables children to practice skills that they may find more challenging at an independent level. During a lesson, children are given the opportunity to practice the mechanics of writing, word application, and the concept of directionality. Thus, interactive writing lessons allow children to practice writing strategies and transfer those skills into their own independent pieces (McCarrier et al., 2000).

### **Statement of the Problem**

In the past, researchers have investigated various aspects of interactive writing. Some of the research has been qualitative in nature and has described lessons and interactions between both teachers and students (Howell, 2008; Patterson, Schaller & Clemens, 2008; Williams & Lundstrom, 2007). One study in particular described the discourse and interactions that occurred in a preschool classroom during interactive writing lessons (Howell, 2008). After 13 weeks, the researcher concluded that the discourse and interactions occurred as the students progressed

through the writing process. More specifically, students had meaningful interactions as they transcribed, composed, and read pieces during interactive writing lessons (Howell, 2008). Other research (Filippini, 2009; Jones, 2008; Pinnell & McCarrier, 1994; Roth, 2009) has focused on the effects of interactive writing as an instructional method for beginning writers and the impact interactive writing has had on the phonemic development of young children. In one study, researchers (Button et al., 1996) observed kindergarten children during 30 minute sessions of interactive writing instruction. To measure academic growth, Clay's (1993) *Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* was used at the beginning and end of the school year. The study concluded that children made the most academic growth in their ability to hear and record sounds in words (Button et al., 1996).

Other researchers (Craig, 2006; O'Connor, 2004; Roth, 2009) have documented the effects of interactive writing as an instructional method and the impact interactive writing had on letter recognition, sound knowledge, print awareness, and the phonemic development of beginning writers. However, there is a limited understanding on how teachers define interactive writing as a writing strategy. Therefore, the current research warrants a description on primary teachers' use and implementation of interactive writing as an instructional method. This descriptive study examined how primary teachers in the Educational Service Center (ESC) Region 2 used interactive writing and described variations on the implementation of interactive writing. The uniqueness of ESC Region 2 must be considered when discussing the problem. Residents in the ESC Region 2 area have been reported to have an increase in at-risk youth, and the poverty rate was noted as being high (Castro, 2011). More specifically, a large number of economically disadvantaged students were documented in The Office of the Texas Comptroller's report for the 2009-2010 school year (Window on State Government, 2010). Considering the

large number of at-risk students in the region, it is crucial to learn if teachers are implementing instructional methods, specifically in writing, that support the academic needs of these students. Thus, the acquisition of interactive writing as an instructional method is valuable for curriculum supervisors, administrators, and literacy coaches, as it will provide an insight on the use and implementation of interactive writing.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this inquiry was to determine if primary teachers in the ESC Region 2 area were implementing interactive writing as an instructional method and reveal any variations on the definition of interactive writing that may have existed among primary teachers. The principal objective was to describe how primary teachers in ESC Region 2 defined and implemented interactive writing as part of their curriculum. The second objective was to describe how interactive writing supported the reading and writing connection for primary teachers in ESC Region 2. The final objective of this study was to conduct follow-up interviews to further describe the teachers' perceptions regarding the implementation of interactive writing as a method for writing instruction. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the variations on the definition of interactive writing among primary teachers in the Education Service Center Region 2 area who are implementing interactive writing?
2. How are primary teachers in ESC Region 2 implementing interactive writing?
3. How does interactive writing support the reading and writing connection for primary teachers in ESC Region 2?

## **Significance of the Study**

Although a wealth of research has investigated interactive writing and the effects of interactive writing as an instructional method, research has not examined primary teachers' knowledge and understanding of interactive writing. More specifically, no research has explored the extent to which primary teachers in ESC Region 2 implemented interactive writing and how they defined interactive writing as an instructional method. The acquisition of such knowledge will contribute to the existing body of research by focusing on the use and implementation of interactive writing. This information is valuable for teachers, literacy coaches, principals, and curriculum supervisors, as it will deepen the understanding and usage of interactive writing as part of literacy development.

## **Definition of Terms**

Education Service Centers	20 educational centers across the state of Texas developed to increase student performance and school operations.
Guided Reading	Small group reading instruction based on reading abilities. During guided reading instruction, children read leveled books while the teacher takes notes, provides support, and offers strategies for reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).
Independent School District	Public school districts for primary and secondary education which are controlled by the state or local government.
Interactive Writing	A writing strategy that enables teachers and students to collaborate ideas, hear sounds in words, and implement conventions of writing in order to compose a written piece by sharing the pen throughout the process (McCarrier et al., 2000).
Invented Spelling	Independent writing where the child stretches out words by hearing and recording sounds.
Language Experience Approach	A learner-centered approach to reading based on the student's personal experiences. The experiences are developed by the student and written by the teacher. The stories are then reread by the student and the teacher until the learner understands written language (McCormick, 1988).
Low SES	A district or campus with a low socioeconomic status. These schools often have fewer resources and a higher poverty rate.

Primary Teacher	An educator who teaches kindergarten, first grade, or second grade.
Reading First	A government mandated reading program that focused on five areas of reading instruction. Phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension are the five areas of reading instruction included under the Reading First program.
Region 2	An Educational Service Center region located in South Texas
Shared Writing	An instructional approach to writing that allows children to dictate their thoughts in a message or story like form as the teacher acts as the scribe and writes the message (McKenzie, 1985).
South Texas	A region in Texas situated between San Antonio and the Rio Grande Valley.
Title One	A government funded program for high poverty schools. The program was designed to support students who are considered academically at risk.
Writer's Workshop	Writing instruction for beginning writers in which the teacher provides explicit instruction during mini-lessons. Children write independently as the teacher purposefully confers with specific children (McCarrier et al., 2000).

## **Summary**

Interactive writing is an instructional method that supports letter sound recognition, sentence structure, and the layout of a written text. It is a powerful instructional method that allows teachers to share the writing with the students and focus on specific writing skills. This study examined how primary teachers in ESC Region 2 described and implemented interactive writing as part of their writing framework. The exploration of the understanding and implementation of interactive writing has implications for teachers, principals, literacy coaches, and curriculum supervisors in the preparation and creation of professional development for primary teachers.

This chapter provided an overview on the importance of writing instruction for young children. In addition, the history of interactive writing, the structure and implementation of interactive writing, and the importance of interactive writing instruction in primary classrooms was addressed in this chapter. Past and current research on interactive writing was also discussed and reviewed in the chapter. Finally, an explanation was provided on how the research would add to the body of knowledge about interactive writing and how it is being used in primary classrooms.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Review of Literature**

This review of literature presents a brief description on writing development, writing instruction for young children, and the history of interactive writing. This section also addresses how researchers have defined interactive writing. Variations on the use and implementation of interactive writing in the classroom are also discussed in this chapter. Additionally, a description of how interactive writing supports the reading and writing connection is addressed in this chapter. Finally, this section includes a review of studies that have investigated various aspects of interactive writing. These studies have been both qualitative and quantitative in nature and have examined interactive writing as an instructional method and the discourse and interactions that occur during interactive writing sessions (Craig, 2006; Howell, 2008).

For years, researchers have discussed the importance of teaching writing to young children (Clay, 1991; Cunningham & Allington, 2003; McCarrier et al, 2000). Scholars (Calkins, 1994; Kissel, 2008) have investigated various writing methods and discussed how these methods support the instructional needs of young writers. One writing method in particular, is interactive writing. In many instances, interactive writing was found to support letter and sound knowledge, concepts of print, and conventions of spelling. Researchers (Craig, 2006; Jones, 2008; Pinnell & McCarrier, 1994; Roth, 2009) focused on the effects of interactive writing as an instructional method for beginning writers and the impact interactive writing had on the phonemic development of young children. More recently, researchers investigated interactive writing from a qualitative perspective. Howell (2008) examined the discourse and interactions that surfaced during daily interactive writing lessons. Although interactive writing has been

studied and examined for years, it is still uncertain how primary teachers define and implement interactive writing as part of their daily curriculum.

### **Stages of Writing for Young Children**

Writing is a developmental process that enables children to translate and express their thoughts and ideas. It is a way for children to gain their voices as writers and share personal meaning. Writing enables learners to express, discover, and clarify personal connections to events and interactions. In addition, writing contributes to the development and realization of one's personal self. From an early age, children learn to connect and communicate with their world by talking, interacting, marking, and drawing (Gardner, 1980). In fact, children learn aspects of writing prior to entering the school setting (Calkins, 1994; Graves, 1983). These writing experiences are encountered through their exposure to books and various literary elements within their environment (Ferreiro, 1978; Heath, 1983).

Past research (Dyson, 2002; Ehri & Roberts, 2006) has focused on alphabetic elements of writing, physical features of writing, and how children reread their written pieces. Researchers (Calkins, 1994; Gentry, 2005) suggested that young writers develop as they progress through linear stages of the writing process. Gardner (1980) suggested that children engage in elements of beginning writing as they experiment with symbols, marks, and scribbles. Gentry (2005) described this early stage of writing as a pre-writing state that is consistent with random marks and scribble formations. These written forms allow children to develop an awareness of the writing process as they experiment with written marks.

As early writers experiment with the beginning stages of writing, they develop concrete experiences that support alphabetic features and mimic proficient writing. Children begin to develop as writers as they express their thoughts by creating drawings or pictures. These

drawings are used to represent feelings, thoughts, and convey meaning. Children often read their drawings and discuss the meaning behind their illustrations. The graphic representation of thoughts and ideas allows children to develop as writers and encourages confidence in their writing abilities (Schickedanz, 1999).

The next stage of the writing process is the act of labeling and providing strands of letters. This phase of writing is based on an experimental process where children begin forming intentions for their written pieces. Early writers think, organize, reflect, and record personal events. Often, children at this stage begin expressing their knowledge of print by producing symbols or the continuation of random letters (Calkins, 1983). The symbols or strands of letters produced by children during this stage are represented by mock letters, scribble marks, and letter formations. Additionally, young writers begin recognizing the relationship between sounds and symbols.

During the next stage of the writing process, children apply letters and create words based on the sounds they hear. Invented spelling is a developmental process in writing where children practice the process of writing by hearing sounds and recording them as they write their message (Clay, 1991). Read's (1971) study on the examination of preschool children's writing abilities was the pioneer study for invented spelling. Read's study identified spelling patterns and spelling behaviors of young writers. Additionally, Chomsky (1971) suggested that during the process of invented spelling, children record words based on their knowledge of letters, their understanding of sounds, and their understanding of words and language. When children practice invented spelling, they record the word based on sound knowledge or the way in which they believe the word is spelled (Morrow & Strickland, 2000; Read, 1971). During the developmental process of invented spelling, a child may use a single letter to represent an entire word or a

syllable. Ehri (1987) described this stage of writing as being “semi-phonetic” (p. 10). At this stage, words are phonetically written and are often represented with the beginning and ending sounds (Ehri, 1987). Additionally, as children practice the process of invented spelling, they begin to analyze their understanding of language, print, and letter sounds.

Wilde (1999) suggested that children who used invented spelling benefited from the process of analyzing sounds and were noted as being more independent in their writing. Invented spelling allows children to focus on the process of writing by enabling them to develop phonetic elements. The development of phonemic awareness and the understanding of sounds and symbols become crucial elements for children to use as they convey their thoughts into a written form. Henry (1999) suggested that children grow and develop as writers as they stretch out sounds and develop an awareness of phonics.

The final stages of the writing process are the conventional and proficient stages. During the conventional stage of the writing process, children understand most elements of writing and are able to structure their writing in a formal manner. Often, children at this stage are able to develop more complex forms of writing and will apply punctuation marks and spelling principles to their written pieces (McCarrier et al., 2000). When children enter the proficient stage of writing, they are formal in their writing abilities and are able to write personal, complex pieces. In addition, proficient writers develop written pieces for multiple purposes and are proficient with the mechanics of writing (Calkins, 1994). Ultimately, children become proficient in their writing as they cycle through and experiment with each stage of the writing process.

### **Teaching Writing to Young Children**

Writing is a complex process that enables children to construct and develop pathways to support alphabetic principles, conventions of print, and learn how words work. During early

writing experiences, children begin to understand the structure of language and how words represent thoughts and ideas. As young writers progress, they establish connections between the visual features of letters and the meaning behind the composed piece.

Children develop as writers when they are strategically and purposefully taught the foundations of writing and when they are able to apply the learned features of writing (McCarrier et al., 2000). Through ongoing writing experiences, children gain the ability to transfer learned strategies and writing features into their own independent writing. Richards and Hawes (2003) maintained that children must be given opportunities to write and practice aspects of the writing process. They further explained that writing opportunities allow children to grow as writers and develop writing strategies as they experiment, edit, and revise learned writing features. Stellakis and Kondyli (2004) purported that writing instruction should be structured around daily interactions, meaning based experiences, and interactive activities. Children, in turn, become stronger and more proficient in their ability to write as they are continuously given occasions in which to practice the writing process. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to provide writing opportunities that instructionally support the needs of beginning writers.

During early writing experiences, teachers must focus on meaningful opportunities that support the developmental progression of the writing process. Teachers must go beyond the identification of letters and sounds to support emergent writers. Instead, writing instruction must be multifaceted and explicit to support the developmental needs of emergent writers (McCarrier & Patacca, 1999). To support the theory of explicit, multifaceted instruction, researchers (Cunningham & Allington, 2003; Routman, 2005) focused on various elements and key features of early writing instruction. Extensive writing experiences, purposeful modeling, and explicit

teacher support are a few of the key elements that teachers must include during early writing instruction (Kissel, 2008).

Clay's (1975) study revealed specific developmental writing elements that children obtained when they were provided with opportunities for developmentally appropriate writing instruction. More specifically, her observations of young writers suggested that during early writing opportunities, children develop the understanding of print, the understanding of letter and sounds, and the understanding of words and how words convey meaning (Clay, 1975).

Kissel (2008) described a framework for early writing instruction. The framework emphasized the importance of basing the writing on a shared experience, so that all children have the opportunity to contribute in the writing. Kissel suggested that teachers must model and demonstrate elements of writing during each stage of the writing process. An additional feature of the framework included the idea of students sharing their writing and contributing to the composition of the written piece (Kissel, 2008).

Writing instruction for emergent learners must include instructional elements that are developmentally appropriate. The instruction must be based on personal experiences to allow children to develop oral language and phonological awareness. Scholars (Clay, 1991; Routman, 2000; Cunningham & Allington, 2003; Kissel, 2008) emphasized the importance of modeling, sharing, and communicating thoughts and ideas during writing instruction. Additionally, emergent writing instruction must actively foster strategies to support print concepts, letter and sound knowledge, and the mechanics of writing (Henry, 1999; McCarrier & Patacca, 1999). Overall, the teacher must provide explicit, multifaceted instruction that supports the developmental needs of emergent writers.

## **Interactive Writing**

While several different people utilized elements of language experience (Smith, 2002), Sylvia Ashton-Warner (1963) put the components into what is today called the language experience approach (LEA). This writing method provides children with the opportunity to create a written piece based on their own experiences (Button et al., 1996). With the LEA, the structure and oral language of children are written by the teacher in hopes of capturing the experience (McCarrier et al., 2000).

From the LEA, McKenzie (1985) developed a writing method known as shared writing. Shared writing is grounded in an experience or an event shared by each of the students. It involves children as active members of the written composition. With shared writing, the teacher and students devise a plan for the writing and negotiate the text as the piece is written by the teacher. In addition, shared writing lessons allow children to notice patterns within the writing and connection between letters and sight words (Pinnell & Fountas, 1998). Ultimately, each shared writing piece becomes reading material for students to go back and revisit (McCarrier et al., 2000).

Researchers from Ohio State University reevaluated elements from McKenzie's (1985) writing framework and developed interactive writing (Pinnell & McCarrier, 1994). Like the LEA, teachers demonstrate the use of oral language and model reading and writing behaviors. However, with interactive writing, children contribute to the writing by sharing the pen (McCarrier et al., 2000). According to McCarrier et al. (2000), "Interactive writing is a cooperative event in which teacher and children jointly compose and write text. Not only do they share the decision about what they are going to write, they also share the duties of scribe" (p. 1). This process allows children to actually write portions of the piece and become active members

of the writing process (Button et al., 1996). Williams & Pilonieta (2012) suggested that the process of sharing the pen during the writing allows for students to be further connected and focused on particular concepts within the written piece. In addition, the process of sharing the pen provides opportunities for children to discover aspects of phonemic awareness, letter and sound recognition, and spelling patterns (Williams, Sherry, Robinson, & Hungler, 2012). Researchers (Boroski, 2004; Collom, 2004) emphasized that the process of sharing the pen provides children with the opportunity to practice specific elements of writing with the instructional support of the teacher.

An important facet of interactive writing which is unlike LEA is the idea that the writing lesson involves an increase in scaffolding decisions made by the teacher. The teacher makes these scaffolding decisions by specifically selecting students based on their academic and developmental needs. The scaffolding decisions implemented during interactive writing lessons are grounded in Vygotsky's (1978) theory of working at each child's zone of proximal development. At this level of development, the teacher makes purposeful decisions and releases support during the interactive writing lesson. When teachers provide explicit instruction and scaffold learning, they establish essential opportunities for students to develop and grow as learners (Williams et al., 2012). Williams et al. described how the concept of having students practice writing elements prior to writing on the interactive writing chart enables teachers to explicitly scaffold instruction while asking students questions as they practice the writing. The process of asking questions and providing instructional support enabled students to develop more challenging writing skills. Furthermore, as the teacher challenges the students and works beside them, she allows them to practice aspects of writing with support and guidance (McCarrier et al., 2000).

These instructional decisions provide strategic, purposeful support for children to accomplish challenging, more difficult tasks. Wiley (1999) suggested that teachers should use interactive writing as a carefully planned writing experience to enable children to learn at a level above their independent abilities. To support the idea of a carefully planned interactive writing lesson, teachers must develop an instructional plan to use as a guide during the lesson. Scholars (Crippen, 2004; McCarrier & Patacca, 1999) emphasized the importance of using anecdotal notes or documentation to select students during writing lessons. Other researchers (Button et al., 1996; Pinnell & McCarrier, 1994; Williams & Lundstrom, 2007) used assessment data to guide and support the instructional decisions made during an interactive writing session. Pre-planned schedules, assessment data, and teacher observations allow teachers to scaffold instruction and purposefully select students based on their academic needs (McCarrier et al., 2000). Thus, interactive writing is a powerful instructional method that allows teachers to explicitly hone in on each child's academic strengths and needs.

In addition, with the implementation of interactive writing, teachers have the ability to provide students with powerful writing strategies that enable them to become proficient writers. Interactive writing is a collaborative writing experience where the teacher and the students work as a team to create a piece of writing which holds meaning and truth to the children who created the piece. This type of writing instruction can be utilized to support various curricular aspects within the classroom, and in turn, can become the bridge to support independent writing, shared writing, and other forms of writing instruction (Patterson et al., 2008). Interactive writing is guided by the teacher with the support and ideas of the children who are involved in the process of the written piece. The goal of interactive writing is to provide children with the power to capture and extend their ideas through a written statement. Interactive writing lessons enable

children to gain a greater understanding of the structure and organization of various types of writing genres (Pinnell & Fountas, 1998).

Interactive writing allows young children to become connected to the various stages of the writing process. With the teacher's support, children build upon their oral language, gain stronger phonemic abilities, read the created piece, and apply learned writing skills. McCarrier et al. (2000) stated the following:

Through interactive writing, children become apprentices, working alongside a more expert writer, their teacher. Everyone in the group has the opportunity to see a clear demonstration of the process of producing a piece of writing—from thinking about and composing the message to using the written product. (p. 8)

This form of early writing instruction enables children to take risks with their writing. During an interactive writing lesson, children are given an opportunity to try and apply new things to their writing. Dorn, French, and Jones (1998) purported that interactive writing is a powerful writing technique that allows children to gain and apply crucial concepts in both reading and writing. Interactive writing provides instructional writing interactions that emphasize problem solving writing strategies.

With an apprenticeship approach to writing, such as interactive writing, the teacher and the students work as a team to build and construct meaningful writing experiences (McCarrier et al., 2000). The teacher acts as a guide and supports each child as they experience new tasks throughout the writing process. An interactive writing experience provides opportunities for children to apply learned knowledge about the writing process into meaningfully constructed pieces. As children construct a written piece during interactive writing, they build upon their literacy knowledge and experience the concept of writing for practical purposes (Sipe, 2001).

For years, researchers (Roth, 2009; Schaefer, 2004; Williams & Hufnagel, 2005) suggested that interactive writing should be implemented as part of the daily or weekly reading and writing curriculum. Schaefer (2004) purported that the implementation of daily or weekly interactive writing sessions supported the development of oral language, listening skills, and writing skills. Daily or weekly interactive writing opportunities enabled young writers to practice and apply learned writing patterns and features. Button et al. (1996) implemented daily interactive writing lessons during a yearlong study with kindergarten students. The findings for the study suggested that the application of daily interactive writing lessons increased the development of phonemic awareness, letter recognition, sound recognition, and word recognition (Button et al., 1996).

For the implementation of interactive writing, teachers and students gather together as a whole group at the meeting area of the classroom. Researchers (McCarrier et al., 2000; Williams & Pilonieta, 2012) suggested that whole group interactive writing sessions should be based on a shared experience to enable all children to participate in the discussion and organization of the text. Williams and Pilonieta (2012) suggested that the incorporation of a shared experience during whole group interactive writing lessons motivates children to become active members of the writing process. Together, during whole group sessions, teachers and children work to create class lists, stories, notes, messages, labels, and signs for the class. During the interactive writing session, the teacher purposefully selects students based on their needs and abilities to come up and write letters or portions of the message. Often, students become impatient while waiting for their turn during the writing lesson. To help keep students focused during interactive writing lessons, McCloskey (2004) suggested that teachers provide students with individual dry erase boards or chalkboards. The individual writing boards allow students to focus on the formation of

letters, word families, and left-to-right progression, while individual students write with the teacher. The use of individualized writing boards and other personal writing tools during whole group interactive writing lessons encourages students to practice elements of writing and remain focused. Whole group interactive writing lessons allow for the teacher to model to the entire class and provide explicit teaching opportunities for the class as a whole.

Additionally, teachers have modified whole group interactive writing lessons by incorporating small group writing sessions into their daily curriculum. McCloskey (2004) suggested that small group interactive writing lessons allow for teachers to easily monitor and engage students during the writing process. Small group interactive writing lessons have also been noted as being more effective in meeting the academic needs of students and more direct in highlighting specific teaching points. In fact, small group interactive writing experiences allow students to share individual ideas and develop strong writing strategies. Wiley (1999) described how small group interactive writing lessons allowed teachers to work with children who are at the same reading and writing level and focus on the instructional elements that are more meaningful for the children within the group.

Interactive writing has also been implemented as an intervention model for children who are struggling with concepts about print, phonemic awareness, and the application of letter and sounds. O'Connor (2004) examined interactive writing as an intervention model for five first-grade students. The students involved in the study were identified as struggling learners. The five students were divided into two separate intervention groups. The results for the daily 30 minute intervention sessions indicated academic growth in phonemic development, print concepts, and letter and sound identification (O'Connor, 2004). In addition, Craig (2006) investigated the effects of two intervention models. Interactive writing was one of the interventions implemented

with an additional component of letter and sound instruction. The study included 87 kindergarten students. Craig documented that the students who received interactive writing as an intervention showed greater improvement in word identification and word reading when compared to those students who received the more structured intervention model.

The length of an interactive writing lesson often varies from teacher to teacher. The suggested time frame is 10 to 15 minutes, or as long as the children can remain focused and connected to the writing (McCarrier et al., 2000). Pinnell and Fountas (1998) emphasized the importance of maintaining short, powerful interactive writing lessons. They suggested that the lessons be brief to better highlight important aspects of the writing process. McCarrier et al., suggested the implementation of short, purposeful interactive writing sessions to support whole group instruction, small group instruction, and intervention instruction. Button et al. (1996) documented the implementation of short, daily interactive writing lessons to support kindergarten whole group writing instruction. The yearlong study revealed that there was academic growth in the identification of letters and sounds, phonemic awareness, and print awareness (Button et al., 1996).

In addition, interactive writing lessons have been structured to support specific literary elements. Wiley (1999) mentioned specific components that structured and outlined a purposeful interactive writing lesson. These areas were included throughout the entire writing process. The components included authentic writing, composition and planning, word construction, and rereading. As teachers and students cycled through the various interactive writing stages, students' ideas and thoughts were negotiated and discussed as a team. Boroski (2004) suggested that teachers should have students repeat each sentence before the writing process begins. In addition, she emphasized the importance of having students count each word on their fingers

before writing. The concept of counting words clarifies the idea that sentences are composed of separate words (Boroski, 2004). During interactive writing students are encouraged to say words slowly before they begin writing any letters. The process of analyzing new words by saying them slowly allows children to link sounds and letters together (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). As children work to figure out the letters and sounds in words, the teacher encourages them to use the word wall or other class generated pieces to support their letter/sound knowledge.

Interactive writing has been used to support various subject areas and to help teachers hone in on the academic strengths and weaknesses of young writers. Researchers (Christenson, 2004; Herrell, 2004; Leonard, 2004; Schaefer, 2004) emphasized that interactive writing should be used as an extension to various academic subjects, topics, and instructional methods. Some teachers have used interactive writing as an extension of a science experiment, a math unit, or after an interactive read aloud. Biddle (2007) used interactive writing as an opening exercise to support daily calendar instruction. During the writing lesson, children planned and negotiated important events that occurred within their week. Then they discussed and decided how they would write and document the events on the calendar. Together, with the teacher's guidance, the students came up individually to interactively write portions of the calendar (Biddle, 2007). Patterson et al. (2008) emphasized the importance of using interactive writing as an extension for various subjects and topics. They suggested that interactive writing should be used to support class books, class graphs, word problems, story maps, and class charts. Williams and Pilonieta (2012) discussed how interactive writing lessons are used to enhance a shared reading experience. Large shared reading books were used to emphasize the language of literature and structure of a story. The teacher supported oral language and early writing strategies by purposefully supporting elements of shared reading during an interactive writing lesson.

One subject in particular where interactive writing is most commonly used is after science lessons. Christenson (2004) emphasized the importance of using interactive writing during experiments, investigations, and after reporting scientific procedures and conclusions. In her classroom, students gathered around the easel and used interactive writing lessons to create science based charts, graphs, and graphic organizers. Additionally, she used interactive writing to describe the needs and habitats for her classroom animals. She also explained how she implemented interactive writing after science based read-alouds. After a read-aloud, each student identified science facts and wrote their own page for a science big book. The class generated big book was then added to the classroom library for students to go back and reread. Christenson concluded that interactive writing supported science based lessons and highlighted science content while strengthening and supporting students' reading and writing skills.

### **Research on Interactive Writing**

Past studies (Craig, 2006; Jones, Reutzler & Fargo, 2010; O'Connor, 2004) examined the effects of interactive writing on the academic development of primary children. Pinnell and McCarrier (1994) investigated a framework of instructional elements used to support small group and whole group instruction. The study involved the implementation of six instructional methods that most effectively supported kindergarten and first grade children. Interactive writing was a key element utilized during the yearlong study. The other five instructional elements used for the framework of the study included read alouds, shared reading, independent reading, independent writing, and the use of extended texts. The researchers evaluated the kindergarten children at the beginning and end of the school year (Pinnell & McCarrier, 1994). Clay's (1993) *Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* was used as both the pre- and post- test measure. The data

revealed academic improvement in the tasks of dictation, concepts of print, letter to sound correspondence, writing vocabulary, and an increase in reading levels.

Similarly, Button et al. (1996) studied the effects of interactive writing on kindergarten children in Texas. The study consisted of 17 students from various ethnic backgrounds. During the yearlong study, interactive writing sessions were observed daily along with 30-minute independent writing sessions. Teacher documentation and developmental checklists were used to guide and support scaffolding decisions made during interactive writing sessions. Clay's (1993) assessment was used to measure academic growth and progression at the beginning and end of the school year. After a year of implementing daily interactive writing sessions, the children involved in the study exhibited academic growth on the six tasks measured by the assessment. Further, the data for the study supported the researchers' conclusions about interactive writing and the effects of interactive writing as an instructional method (Button et al., 1996).

O'Connor (2004) examined the impact of interactive writing on the academic development of first-grade students. The study included five students who had been identified as struggling learners. The students involved in the study were placed into two separate intervention groups. Daily 30 minute intervention sessions were delivered to both groups for 40 days. Clay's (1993) *Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* was used as both the pre- and post-tests. Results from the interactive writing intervention sessions indicated academic progress for all five struggling learners. Each student showed academic improvement in phonemic development, print concepts, letter and sound identification, and word writing and recognition (O'Connor, 2004).

Williams and Lundstrom (2007) examined scaffolding decisions and prompts used during word study and interactive writing lessons. Six students were included in the study. These

students were struggling in both reading and writing and met with a Reading Recovery teacher five days a week for 30-minute time slots. One day each week was strictly devoted to word study instruction, while the remaining four days included a 10-minute word study lesson and a 20-minute guided reading lesson. In addition, the researchers implemented 30-minute interactive writing sessions twice a month. The study was conducted for a period of seven months.

During this time, several types of artifacts were collected. Lesson plans, reflective notes, post-lesson field notes, field notes, and journal entries from the children were used and analyzed for this investigation. Each interactive writing lesson was coded and evaluated by the researchers. A coding sheet was developed, which allowed the researchers to document scaffolding prompts and student responses. The research revealed 61 prompts used by the teacher during the 15 interactive writing lessons. With these prompts, students showed an increase in their ability to apply spelling words and practice word solving strategies. To conclude the study's findings, William and Lundstrom (2007) recommended that "primary-grade teachers embrace interactive writing as a powerful context for guided practice with strategic cultural tools and also as an instructional activity that will build a bridge between word study lessons and students' independent writing endeavors" (p. 210).

Jones (2008) investigated the effects of interactive writing on 151 primary-aged students' early reading abilities. Additionally, this study examined the relationship between reading and writing with the implementation of interactive writing sessions and writer's workshop. The researcher measured academic growth at four different time points. Results of the study indicated that interactive writing sessions and writer's workshop, as reading and writing instruction, increased academic growth in phonemic development, letter recognition, and word recognition (Jones, 2008).

Howell (2008) examined interactions that took place during preschool interactive writing lessons. She conducted a qualitative study in which she investigated the discourse that occurred between literacy coaches, preschool children, and two preschool teachers. Four questions served as the focus for this research study and guided the researcher as she observed interactive writing sessions. The interactive writing sessions occurred twice a week for a period of 13 weeks. During the interactive writing lessons, the researcher observed growth and development in each child's ability to create and structure their own writing, read their writing, and transcribe a written piece (Howell, 2008). Field notes, video tapes, and emails were collected during the study. At the end of the study, the researcher concluded that the children demonstrated an increase in emerging literacy knowledge, and the teachers adjusted and modified support as they interacted with the children. The literacy coach also provided ongoing support by modeling and interacting with both the teachers and the children. The researcher determined that there were powerful benefits from the conversations and debriefing sessions that occurred before and after interactive writing lessons (Howell, 2008).

Filippini (2009) evaluated students' attitudes towards writing and how they viewed themselves as writers. Five kindergarten students were used for the study. Each of the five students was noted as having difficulties in both reading and writing. The researcher conducted 30-minute intervention sessions four days a week for a duration of seven weeks. During each intervention session, the researcher used read-alouds and interactive writing to support each student's academic needs. Student surveys, observations, and progress assessments were used as the data collection instruments. Students were surveyed at the beginning of the study to evaluate their feelings about writing and how they viewed themselves as writers. As a result of the intervention sessions, the students showed an increase in their ability to apply adjectives and

prepositional phrases in their writing. Additionally, the data revealed an improvement on students' views of themselves as writers (Filippini, 2009).

Sherry (2010) investigated the implementation of interactive writing as an instructional method for kindergarten English Language Learners (ELL). The researcher investigated the use of interactive writing lessons and the instructional implementation of print concepts. The researcher also reviewed each student's journal writing entries and documented the application of print concepts within their writings. The study concluded that the majority of students applied the print concepts learned during interactive writing lessons. More specifically, the students showed academic growth in the use of directionality, concepts of words, and conventions of writing (Sherry, 2010).

Most recently, Williams et al. (2012) investigated the use of a specific writing tool during interactive writing lessons. The five week study involved a primary teacher and her students. The teacher implemented 20-minute daily interactive writing lessons. For the purpose of this particular study, a section was allocated at the top of the interactive writing chart paper for students to practice aspects of writing prior to writing on the actual interactive writing piece. The primary teacher's training in Reading Recovery supported the concept of using a portion of the paper to practice the writing. The teacher also introduced individual dry-erase boards, notebook paper, and clipboards on which the students could practice during interactive writing lessons. Students were encouraged to practice difficult or challenging letters, word endings, or spelling patterns on the dry erase boards or notebook paper prior to writing their portion on the class interactive writing piece. At the end of the school year, the researchers noted the use of a practice page as being a powerful tool to mediate aspects of writing instruction during interactive writing lessons. The students involved in the study became more connected to their writings and

implemented the concept of practice material as they individually wrote in their journals (Williams et al., 2012).

### **Interactive Writing and the Reading and Writing Connection**

In the past, writing as an instructional framework was not included as part of early childhood curriculum (Morrow & Strickland, 2000). Writing was perceived as a process that was developed after a child had acquired strong reading abilities (Calkins, 1983). In most early childhood classrooms, writing instruction was not connected to reading instruction, and the two processes were often taught as separate instructional frameworks. Research has since shifted the philosophies of writing instruction and has focused on the connections that occur when reading and writing are taught together. Currently, a body of research suggests that reading and writing are continuously connected and that the skills of both are strongly related (Adam, 1991; Cunningham & Allington, 2003; Graves, 1994; Williams & Pilonieta, 2012). The stages of reading and writing are fluid in nature. As children grow and develop as readers and writers, they cycle between stages as they encounter challenges in their progression. Clay (1975) emphasized the significance of teaching the reading process with the writing process. Her research suggested that reading involves the knowledge and understanding of written language. Clay (1991) further suggested that children develop a strong awareness of sounds and letters by hearing and recording words in print. Chomsky (1971) documented the development of early writing in young children and concluded that emergent writing contributed to the understanding of print. Additionally, Chomsky suggested that children attempted to stretch out words based on their sounds before they were able to read. Read (1986) emphasized that writing served as a path towards the knowledge of alphabetic principles and the understanding of the written language. In turn, children learn many concepts about reading through writing.

Reading and writing are dynamic and connected processes. Children develop strong connections to the decoding and encoding process of written language when reading and writing are taught together. Holdaway (1984) emphasized the importance of linking reading and writing together during daily instruction. He suggested that the two processes be presented in an interconnected manner as instruction is delivered. Additionally, Williams and Pilonieta (2012) indicated that the relationship between reading and writing may be an important element to establish as the early literary foundation is being implemented. When children practice reading and writing together, they develop the ability to hear sounds, segment words, and reread their written piece. Further, as children engage in opportunities that support reading and writing, they begin to understand how the two are interrelated.

There are many ways in which interactive writing supports the reading and writing connection. To begin with, during an interactive writing lesson, students are asked to generate thoughts and ideas as the teacher guides them through the writing process. Students are then asked to reread each word as they continue to write their text. This process allows each student to become connected to their writing and build upon their reading skills. Students are actively engaged in the writing and are able to connect to the writing by reading and thinking as the text is being written. Interactive writing lessons are a collaborative connection between the process of reading and the structure of writing. Furthermore, interactive writing allows children to develop stronger skills in reading, writing, thinking, and processing.

During interactive writing lessons, children have the ability to construct knowledge, build upon thoughts, and develop a deeper understanding of a written piece. The nature of interactive writing allows children to actively engage in both the reading and writing processes. Children are encouraged to construct their own thoughts and build upon their writing skills as the written

piece is created. At the same time, the teacher's explicit guidance and support during interactive writing encourages children to further develop their understandings of both reading and writing. Clay (1998) purported that reading and writing are complex processes in language that support and complement one another. She suggested that writing is the process of taking apart language, whereas reading involves the act of building up language (Clay, 1998). Reading and writing are inseparable processes that are closely connected (Cramer, 1998). Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to implement instruction, such as interactive writing, that supports the processes of both reading and writing.

With interactive writing, children have the ability to experiment with language, and practice elements of both reading and writing. During this process, children are able to compose and construct a written piece and then read their writings back to themselves. Williamson and Pilonieta (2012) suggested that the process of rereading the text during an interactive writing lesson allows students to confirm reading and writing comprehension. Children develop stronger oral language skills and improve their development of word reading. Reading and writing work strategically together to build upon a young learner's letter knowledge, sound knowledge, and syntax structure. Jones (2008) suggested that instructional methods, such as interactive writing, which support the reading and writing connection significantly increased the academic development of young children. Sherry (2010) purported that interactive writing lessons increased academic development in word concepts and directionality. Interactive writing, as an instructional method, allows teachers to build upon emergent reading and writing skills.

Children learn to form connections between reading and writing when the two processes are taught and supported by one another. Interactive writing instruction fosters the understanding of reading and allows the learner to build upon the reciprocal nature of both reading and writing

(Clay, 1998). More specifically, interactive writing provides rich and meaningful opportunities for children to construct sentences and reread their written thoughts. Routman (2005) emphasized that when reading and writing are taught together, it stimulates a powerful connection that allows the learner to become more proficient in both areas. Ultimately, interactive writing connects reading and writing and provides the opportunity for children to develop language skills, writing strategies, print concepts, and word recognition.

### **Summary**

This chapter presented a review of literature that examined the development, structure, and implementation of interactive writing as an instructional method. The first section reviewed writing development and how writing has been taught to young writers. Additionally, the history of interactive writing and how it has evolved throughout the years was discussed. This section also reviewed how teachers have implemented interactive writing as part of their curricular framework and how interactive writing has been evaluated and examined throughout the years. The final section discussed how interactive writing supported the reading and writing connection.

In summary, past research (Craig, 2006; O'Connor, 2004; Sherry, 2010) examined the effects of interactive writing on phonemic awareness, letter knowledge, sound knowledge, and language development. However, research has not explored primary teachers' knowledge and understandings of interactive writing. This study investigated how primary teachers in ESC 2 of South Texas defined and implemented interactive writing in their curriculum.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Method of the Study**

This chapter describes the methods used to gather the data for the study. The following sections are explained in this chapter: Purpose, Researcher Questions, Research Design, Pilot Test, Instrumentation, Participants, Procedures for Data Collection, Data Analysis, and Summary.

#### **Purpose**

Interactive writing is a writing method used to assist young writers as they learn the elementary principles of the writing process. By utilizing interactive writing, teachers have the ability to model hearing and recording sound, concepts of print, and grammatical elements (Craig, 2006; O'Connor, 2004). Additionally, interactive writing connects reading and writing and builds upon each child's reading and writing strengths.

Interactive writing lessons encourage children to take risks and try new things as novice writers. As interactive writing lessons develop and progress, teachers have the ability to observe and support each child's strengths and weaknesses in writing. As a result, the implementation of interactive writing provides teachers with the ability to guide and support the writing development of young children, allowing them to reach higher levels of understanding about the writing process. This study examined the understanding and implementation of interactive writing among primary teachers.

The purpose of this inquiry was to describe how primary teachers in South Texas, specifically Educational Service Center Region 2 (ESC), are implementing interactive writing as an instructional method and identify any variations on the definition of interactive writing that exists among primary teachers.

## **Research Questions**

This descriptive study was designed to explore to what extent primary teachers in ESC Region 2 are implementing interactive writing and describe how primary teachers define interactive writing. Follow-up interviews were used to expand and clarify survey responses.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the variations on the definition of interactive writing among primary teachers in the Educational Service Center (ESC) Region 2 area who are implementing interactive writing?
2. How are primary teachers in ESC Region 2 implementing interactive writing?
3. How does interactive writing support the reading and writing connection for primary teachers in ESC Region 2?

## **Research Design**

This study utilized a mixed model approach. Through the use of a mixed model method, researchers have the ability to describe, explore, compute, and confirm by using both qualitative and quantitative data. Mixed model studies allow researchers to gather, describe, and analyze data by mixing qualitative and quantitative approaches (Johnson & Christensen, 2004).

Multiple surveys were used as the quantitative instruments for this study because they allowed for ease in distribution and efficiency in data collection and scoring regarding primary teachers' use and implementation of interactive writing. The principle survey was the Interactive Writing Survey, which was designed by the researcher. This survey was descriptive in nature and consisted of a demographic section, five open-ended questions, four multiple-choice questions, and one yes or no question. Additionally, an Administrator Survey was sent to school

administrators for this study. This survey was designed by the researcher and consisted of three open-ended questions and one yes or no question.

Interviews were used as the qualitative element for the research study. The interviews were used as a follow-up to the questionnaires which allowed participants to describe, explain, and further define aspects of interactive writing. The face-to-face interviews consisted of three focus questions. These questions were open-ended in nature and allowed the researcher to gain a more in-depth understanding about the implementation of interactive writing and how primary teachers defined interactive writing as an instructional method.

### **Pilot Test**

A pilot test was used to support the development of the questionnaire and to evaluate the Interactive Writing Survey as a research instrument. Johnson and Christensen (2004) purported that a pilot test is a preliminary evaluation of a questionnaire's wording and structure. Pilot tests allow researchers to verify if the proposed questionnaire is appropriate and transparent in nature.

The pilot test for the study began with a panel of 13 doctoral students who reviewed the survey for clarity and ambiguity of each question. They reviewed the survey to verify that each of the questions was appropriate, easy to read, and easy to follow. Once the panel of doctoral students reviewed the survey, it was given to a class of 18 graduate students who agreed to take the survey online. These students responded to the survey and provided the researcher with information on the clarity of the survey questions.

### **Instrumentation**

#### **Interactive Writing Survey.**

The Interactive Writing Survey was used as a quantitative measure to investigate how primary teachers in ESC Region 2 defined interactive writing and how it was being implemented

in the classroom. The questionnaire was created by the principal researcher and was input into an online data gathering mechanism (Appendix A). It included a brief description of the study and an informed consent document (Appendix B). The consent form described the purpose for the study and explained that participation in the study was strictly voluntary.

The questionnaire consisted of 11 questions. The first question was a yes or no question that asked participants if they implemented interactive writing. Five of the questions asked participants to check as many answer choices that applied and included a separate (*other*) section for participants to further explain. The last five questions were open-ended and allowed participants to expand upon and explain their answers in their own words.

The final portion of the survey focused on demographic information. This section included 10 statements and questions. For each question, participants were asked to report descriptive information about themselves.

***Definition of interactive writing.***

One question related to the definition of interactive writing and provided insight on how participants learned about interactive writing. This section included an open-ended question that asked participants to provide their definition and understanding of interactive writing.

***Acquired knowledge on interactive writing.***

One question provided information on how primary teachers first learned about interactive writing. This question allowed participants to select the answer choices that best reflected how they first learned about interactive writing.

***Use of interactive writing.***

Three questions ascertained the extent to which interactive writing was being implemented in the classroom. For the first question in this section, participants were asked to

select the answer choices that best reflected how often they used and implemented interactive writing into their curriculum. The second question in this section asked respondents to select answer choices that best indicated the amount of freedom they were given in implementing interactive writing. The last question in this section asked participants to mark the answer choices that described when they implemented interactive writing.

***Student selection during interactive writing.***

One question described how teachers selected students during interactive writing lessons. For this question, participants were asked to mark the answer choices that revealed how they selected students to share the pen and write portions during interactive writing lessons.

***Interactive writing as an instructional method.***

Four questions provided information on primary teachers' feelings and opinions about interactive writing as an instructional method. These four questions were open-ended and allowed participants to elaborate and expand on how they felt about interactive writing as an instructional method. For the first question in this section, participants were asked to explain how they felt about interactive writing as an instructional method. The second question asked participants to compare interactive writing to other instructional writing methods. For the third question, respondents were asked to explain the advantages of using interactive writing. For the final question, participants were asked to describe the disadvantages of using interactive writing as part of their curriculum.

***Demographic data.***

The survey instrument included a demographic section which focused on a series of statements and questions. For this section, participants were asked to answer and report

descriptive information about themselves. The questions and statements presented in the demographic section included the following:

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Ethnicity
4. What is the highest level of education you received?
5. How many years of teaching experience have you had?
6. What grade level do you currently teach?
7. What other grade levels have you taught?
8. In what type of classroom do you teach?
9. School demographics
10. School district

### **Administrator Survey.**

An Administrator Survey was sent out to school administrators for this study. This quantitative survey was created by the primary researcher and was implemented into an online data collecting mechanism (Appendix E). The survey consisted of four questions and was used to further investigate if primary teachers in ESC Region 2 used interactive writing and if professional development opportunities were available to support the implementation of interactive writing.

The questionnaire consisted of four questions. The first question was an open-ended question. It allowed administrators to explain if their primary teachers implemented interactive writing. This question also allowed administrators to explain the reasons why they did or did not implement interactive writing into their curriculum. The second question was also an open-ended

question. This question asked administrators to describe how long their primary teachers had implemented interactive writing. The third question was an open-ended question that asked administrators if they provided professional development opportunities for their primary teachers on the implementation of interactive writing. The final question was a yes or no question. This question asked if administrators would be willing to have their primary teachers participate in an online survey about the use and implementation of interactive writing.

### **Interviews.**

Face-to-face interviews were used as the qualitative method for this study. The primary researcher developed a series of three open-ended questions to help participants elaborate and expand on their survey responses (Appendix C). The first question asked participants to describe what a typical interactive writing lesson looked like in their classrooms. The second question asked participants to explain how interactive writing connected the process of both reading and writing. The final question asked participants to describe the challenges associated with the implementation of interactive writing.

### **Participants**

This study utilized a purposeful sample, and only primary teachers within the ESC Region 2 area were included in the study. Located in South Texas, ESC Region 2 is comprised of 42 school districts. However, for the purpose of this study, only independent school districts were included. A total of 40 independent school districts were invited to participate in the study.

School email addresses were obtained for primary teachers within ESC Region 2. The researcher sent a description of the study and a link to the Interactive Writing Survey to the primary teachers in ESC Region 2. A survey code was attached to the email, and teachers accessed the Interactive Writing Survey via SurveyMonkey (SurveyMonkey LLC, 2010).

The questionnaire and survey code were distributed to 1,325 primary teachers within the ESC Region 2. However, only primary teachers in independent school districts which stated that they were implementing interactive writing were included in the study. Those teachers who indicated that they did not implement interactive writing were not included in the study. A total of 152 primary teachers indicated that they implemented interactive writing and agreed to participate in the study, but not all of the questions on the Interactive Writing Survey were completed by all of the participants. A total of 135 participants responded and completed the majority of the questionnaire. Incomplete surveys were still included in the study. The item number and the amount of participants who responded to each question are presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

*Number of Participants Who Responded*

Item	Number of Participants Who Responded
Question 1	152
Question 2	119
Question 4	118
Question 5	119
Question 8	106
Question 9	111
Question 10	114
Question 11	111

*Note.* Questions 3, 6, and 7 required participants to select as many answer choices that applied and were not included in the table

Interview participants were selected on a volunteer basis. Participants were asked to include contact information on the online survey if they were interested in participating in a face-to-face interview. A total of 10 survey participants provided contact information and indicated that they would participate in the interview process. However, the researcher was unable to contact two of the participants due to inaccurate contact information. Therefore, a total of eight interviews were conducted for this study.

### **Procedures for Data Collection**

The researcher first mailed a cover letter to administrators within the 40 independent school districts in ESC Region 2 (Appendix D). The letter identified the researcher, the researcher's educational affiliation, the purpose of the study, and information regarding the survey they received via school email. In addition, the letter encouraged administrators to participate in the survey and thanked each administrator for their participation in the study. One week after the contact letter was mailed, an email was sent, via school email, to administrators within the 40 independent school districts. The email included a brief description of the study and a four-question administrator survey on the use and implementation of interactive writing. In addition, a consent form (Appendix F), a copy of the teacher survey, and a link to the online teacher survey were attached to the email. However, no administrators responded to the administrator survey. Due to the lack of responses, the administrator survey was not used for this study. When the researcher did not receive emails from teachers, she went online and located the webpages for the primary campuses in the ESC Region 2 area. The researcher gathered the web addresses from the ESC Region 2 webpage and located others by calling those campuses that were not listed. The researcher then acquired names and email addresses for kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers and sent an invitation to participate and the survey link directly to

those teachers. The email included a brief description of the study, a link to the online questionnaire, and a code for participants to enter at the survey site. In order to participate in the study, teachers were required to indicate that they implemented interactive writing. If a teacher noted that they did not implement interactive writing, they were unable to complete the survey and were not included in the study. Additionally, a reminder notice was sent out one week before the survey was due to help increase the number of responses.

Once the surveys were submitted, they were reviewed and analyzed by the researcher. Survey participants who provided contact information and volunteered to participate in the follow-up interview were included in the interview process. A total of eight interviews were conducted by the researcher, and a general interview guide approach was utilized as the framework for the interview sessions. According to McNamara (2009), a general guide approach allows researchers to adapt pre-structured questions as participants provide more in-depth responses.

An interview protocol was created prior to beginning the interview process. The interview protocol allowed the primary researcher to establish a questionnaire to record and document interview data (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). Additionally, practice interview sessions were conducted with a second researcher before teacher interviews were scheduled. The mock interview sessions allowed the researcher to practice the establishment of a natural conversation-based interview environment. Once the mock sessions were conducted, the researcher contacted the interview participants to schedule a face-to-face interview session. The interview sessions were conducted in quiet meeting rooms, classrooms, and school libraries to avoid distractions and interruptions. The researcher used the open-ended interview questions she created as a guide and asked participants to elaborate and expand on their initial survey

responses during the interviews. The responses and conversations were audio recorded for clarity and accuracy. The researcher then analyzed the interview responses and sorted them into multiple categories before the transcription process began.

### **Data Analysis**

Data was analyzed to answer the research questions for the study. The following paragraph provides a more in-depth understanding on how data was analyzed.

#### **Analysis of Survey.**

For this study, data was collected over a period of five weeks. The Interactive Writing Survey was used as the quantitative measure, and descriptive statistics were used to analyze how primary teachers used and implemented interactive writing as part of their curriculum.

The researcher used The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to analyze the data for each item on the Interactive Writing Survey. The first research question examined the variations on the definition of interactive writing among primary teachers who implemented interactive writing as part of their curriculum. The data obtained for research question one was analyzed by using the following methods: content analysis, frequency, mean, and cross-tabulation. A content analysis was used as a guide to review and analyze the open-ended responses for research question one. Content analysis utilizes various methods and techniques to analyze the data (Krippendorff, 2004; Neuendorf, 2002). Krippendorff (2004) purported that content analysis is a research method used to establish valid connections between the content and the text. The primary researcher independently reviewed the written responses and developed an emergent coding design. An emergent coding design allows the researcher to develop categories after reviewing and examining the data (Krippendorff, 2004). Recurring phrases and key words were used to create the categories for research question one. Four categories were established for

research question one: writing done with teachers and students, the process of sharing the pen, a process similar to shared writing, and a method used to support letters/sounds/words.

The second research question examined how primary teachers implemented interactive writing as part of their curriculum. Four questions from the Interactive Writing Survey were used to answer research question two. The first question asked, *How often do you use interactive writing?* The second question asked, *To what extent do you have the freedom to implement interactive writing into your curriculum?* The third question asked, *When do you use interactive writing?* The fourth question asked, *How do you select students during interactive writing lessons?* The data obtained for research question two was analyzed by using the following methods: frequency, mean, cross-tabulation, Chi-square analysis, and effect size. Chi-square analysis was used to compare frequencies between categories.

Each open-ended question was reviewed by the researcher. Additionally, a second researcher reviewed the responses and categories as suggested by Creswell (2003). In total, the second researcher reviewed 561 responses and the survey categories that applied to each of the responses (Appendix G). However, there were several responses that required additional conversations between the second researcher and the primary researcher, as to which survey category they applied to. Once the categories were set for each of the questions, they were assigned a number and those numbers were then entered into an SPSS database.

### **Analysis of Interviews.**

As previously noted, data was collected over a period of five weeks. Interviews were used as the qualitative measure for the study. Interviewing survey participants provided a more in-depth understanding about how they used and implemented interactive writing as part of their curriculum. A total of eight primary teachers volunteered to be interviewed for the study. The

face-to-face interviews were semi-structured (Brenner, 2006) and were guided by the following open-ended questions:

1. What would a typical interactive writing lesson look like in your classroom?
2. In your opinion, how does interactive writing support the reading and writing connection?
3. Have there been any challenges with the implementation of interactive writing?

Interviews were audio taped and conducted on average for 10 to 15 minutes. Brenner (2006) purported that the process of audiotaping during interview sessions provides clear, accurate data and enables the researcher to devote attention to the conversation with the interviewee. Each interview was reviewed several times and typed into separate files.

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and were structured line by line into detailed sentences, as described by Gee (2005). Thematic categories were established for the purpose of summarizing participants' interview responses about interactive writing as an instructional method. Open-coding and a thematic analysis approach were used to analyze interview responses and identify commonalities regarding the use and implementation of interactive writing (Grbich, 2007). According to Grbich, a thematic analysis approach enables researchers to focus on themes, patterns, recurring statements, words, and phrases. The themes and categories were used as the framework for the interpretation process of the study.

Themes and categories were developed for the three interview questions. Interview question one asked, *What would a typical interactive writing lesson look like in your classroom?* Three themes emerged from interview question one: (1) teachers described the subject or topic they used to implement interactive writing (2) teachers described the process of sharing the pen and (3) teachers described notes/ assessments/schedules. Interview question three asked, *Have*

*there been any challenges with the implementation of interactive writing?* Two themes emerged from interview question three: (1) time and (2) distractions during lessons/attention span of children. Emerging themes for questions one and two are presented in Table 3.2.

Research question three examined how interactive writing supported the reading and writing connection. The data obtained from interview question two was used to answer research question three. Interview question two asked, *In your opinion, how does interactive writing support the reading and writing connection?* Two themes emerged from interview participants' responses on how interactive writing supported the reading and writing connection: (1) reading and writing are connected when the writing is reread and (2) reading and writing are connected as language development, sentence structure, and print awareness are supported. Emerging themes for interview question three are presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2

*Themes: Interview Questions*

Interview Question 1	Interview Question 2	Interview Question 3
Subject or topic	Time	When writing is reread
Sharing the pen	Distractions/Attention	Language development, sentence structure, and print awareness
Notes/Assessments/Schedules		

**Summary**

This chapter defined the methodology used to conduct, gather, and analyze the data for this study. The purpose of the study, the research questions, and the design of the study were described in this chapter. Additionally, this chapter described and defined elements of the Interactive Writing Survey. The sections discussed in this chapter on the Interactive Writing Survey included questions on the definition of interactive writing, acquired knowledge on

interactive writing, the use of interactive writing, student selection during interactive writing, and interactive writing as an instructional method. In addition, this chapter discussed the methods used to analyze the data. Content analysis, frequency, mean, cross-tabulation, Chi-square analysis, and effect size were several of the methods used to analyze the data for the study. Additionally, this chapter discussed the three follow-up interview questions used to support the Interactive Writing Survey. Finally, this chapter reviewed the procedures used to transcribe and analyze the interview questions.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Findings**

This chapter presents the findings for the study. The Interactive Writing Survey and interview questions were used as the two forms of data for the study. The data was analyzed to investigate how primary teachers in the ESC Region 2 area defined and used interactive writing as part of their curriculum.

#### **Demographic Profiles**

Demographic data was analyzed by frequencies to describe the sample for the study. Frequency distribution of the subjects is presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

*Demographic Distribution: Gender, Age, Ethnicity, Grade Level, Teaching experience, and School Demographics*

Title	N	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	132	97
Male	3	2
<b>Age</b>		
20-25	1	0.7
26-31	40	29
32-35	38	28
36-above	56	41
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
African American	4	3.3
Caucasian/White	41	34
Hispanic/Mexican	66	55
American	9	7.5
<b>Grade Level</b>		
Kindergarten	45	38
1st grade	48	40
2nd grade	26	22
<b>Teaching Experience</b>		
1-2 years	3	2.2
3-5 years	33	25
6-10 years	50	38
11-15 years	20	15
16 plus	27	20
<b>School Demographics</b>		
Low SES	19	24
Title 1	34	43
Reading First	1	1.2
N/A	26	33

Table 4.1 depicts the participants' demographic data in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, number of years taught, and grade level. In total, 152 primary teachers indicated that they implemented interactive writing and agreed to participate in the study. However, not all of the items of the demographic section were completed by all of the participants. A total of 135 participants responded and completed the majority of the questionnaire and the demographic section. Approximately 97% of the survey respondents were female participants. The age of the teachers ranged from 20 to 36 and above, with most teachers (41%) identifying themselves as 36 and above. A slightly higher percentage of Hispanic teachers, 55%, elected to participate than any other ethnic group. The grade level with the most participants was first grade (40%), followed by kindergarten teachers (38%), and finally second grade with 22% participation. The majority of participants (67%) identified their school as being either a Title 1 campus or a low socioeconomic campus.

### **Interactive Writing Survey**

The Interactive Writing Survey consisted of 11 questions. Item one on the questionnaire required each respondent to confirm that they used and implemented interactive writing as part of their curriculum in order to continue the completion of the survey. Participants who did not indicate that they used interactive writing were not included in the study. The data obtained from the Interactive Writing Survey was analyzed by frequencies and cross-tabulations in order to determine how participants defined and implemented interactive writing into their daily curriculum.

Survey question two on the survey addressed how participants defined interactive writing. Participants were asked to provide their definitions of interactive writing. The open-

ended survey question read, *What is your definition/understanding of interactive writing?*

Responses to this survey item are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

*Survey Question 2: What is your definition/understanding of interactive writing?*

Definition	N	%
Sharing the Pen	42	35.2
Writing done with teacher and student	41	34.4
Hearing sounds/ letters/sight words	21	17.6
Similar to shared writing	15	12.6
Total	119	100

Table 4.2 shows the variations of the definition of interactive writing. Approximately 35% of respondents defined interactive writing as a method where the teacher and the students share the pen to complete a written piece. Almost the same percentage, 34%, of participants defined interactive writing as writing done with teachers and students, while only 13% defined interactive writing as a writing process similar to shared writing.

The data obtained from the survey question was also analyzed by cross-tabulations to examine how each grade level defined interactive writing. The results are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

*Grade Level: What is your Definition of Interactive Writing?*

Grade level	Writing done with teacher and student		Sharing the Pen		Similar to shared writing		Hearing sounds/ letters/ sight words		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Kindergarten	15	33.3	15	33.3	6	13.3	9	20.0	45	100
1 <sup>st</sup> grade	16	33.3	16	33.3	6	12.5	10	20.8	48	100
2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	10	38.5	11	42.3	3	11.5	3	7.7	26	100
Total	41	34.5	42	35.3	15	12.6	21	17.6	119	100

Table 4.3 shows how each grade level defined interactive writing. The results indicated that the majority of kindergarten respondents (67%) defined interactive writing as either writing done with the teacher and students (33%) or the process where the teacher and the students share the pen (33%). The data also indicated that 33% of first grade respondents defined interactive writing as writing done by the teacher and the students. Similarly, 33% of first grade respondents also defined interactive writing as the process where the teacher and the students share the pen. Additionally, 42% of second grade participants defined interactive writing as the process where the teacher and the share the pen during the writing.

Survey question three asked participants to identify how they first learned about interactive writing. The multiple-choice question read, *How did you first find out about interactive writing?* Participants were asked to select as many answer choices that best reflected their overall response. The results are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4

*Survey Question 3: How did you first find out about interactive writing?*

Find out about IW	N	%
Professional Development	124	81.6
Outside Resources	35	23.0
University	30	19.7

Table 4.4 shows that out of 152 participants, approximately 82% indicated that they first learned about interactive writing through professional development opportunities (district trainings, onsite support, and classroom observations). Additionally, 23% of respondents noted that they first learned about interactive writing by accessing outside resources (internet, videos,

literature, and friends), while 20% of participants indicated that they first learned about interactive writing through university support (undergraduate courses and graduate courses).

Survey question four asked participants to evaluate how often they implemented interactive writing into their curriculum. The multiple-choice question read, *How often do you use interactive writing?* Participants were asked to select a box that best represented how often they used interactive writing within a typical week. The responses to the question are presented in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5

*Survey Question 4: How often do you use interactive writing?*

How often use IW	N	%
Whenever I can fit it in	28	23.5
Once a week	5	4.2
Twice a week	20	16.8
At least 3 times a week	33	27.7
At least once a day	24	20.1
More than once a day	9	6.7
Total	118	100

The results for the question indicated that approximately 28% of participants noted that they implemented interactive writing “at least 3 times a week,” while 24% of participants stated that they used interactive writing “whenever I can fit it in.” A small percentage of respondents revealed that they implemented interactive writing “more than once a day,” while an even smaller percentage noted that they used interactive writing “once a week” as part of their curriculum.

Cross-tabulation was used to analyze how often each grade level implemented interactive writing into their curriculum. The results for this question are presented in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

*Grade Level: How often do you use interactive writing?*

Grade level	Whenever I fit it in		Once a week		Twice a week		At least 3 times a week		At least once a day		More than once a day		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Kindergarten	8	17.8	1	2.2	8	17.8	14	31.1	12	26.7	2	4.4	45	100
1 <sup>st</sup> grade	14	29.8	3	6.4	7	14.9	10	21.3	8	17.0	5	10.6	47	100
2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	6	23.1	1	3.8	5	19.2	9	34.6	4	15.4	1	3.8	26	100
Total	28	23.7	5	4.2	20	16.9	33	28.0	24	20.3	8	6.8	118	100

A Chi-square analysis was conducted on frequency and use of interactive writing and grade levels. This analysis indicated that there was no statistically significant relationship between how often interactive writing was implemented and grade level taught,  $\chi^2(10) = 7.07, p = .719$ . The strength of the association between how often interactive writing was implemented and grade level taught revealed a small effect size, Cramer's  $V = .173$  (Cohen, 1988).

Table 4.6 shows how often each grade level used interactive writing as part of their curriculum. Among the kindergarten teachers who responded, 31% noted that they used interactive writing "at least 3 times a week," while only 2% of kindergarten participants revealed that they implemented interactive writing "once a week" as part of their curriculum.

Additionally, the table shows that 30% of first grade participants noted that they used interactive writing "whenever I can fit it in," while only 6% indicated that they implemented interactive writing "once a week." Among the second grade teachers who responded, approximately 35% indicated that they used interactive writing "at least 3 times a week," while 4% noted that they used interactive writing "once a week" or "more than once a day."

Survey question five asked respondents to indicate the amount of freedom they had with the implementation of interactive writing into their curriculum. The multiple-choice question read, *To what extent do you have the freedom to implement interactive writing into your curriculum?* Participants were asked to select the box that best reflected the amount of freedom they had within their curriculum. The responses are presented in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7

*Survey Question 5: To what extent do you have the freedom to implement interactive writing into your curriculum?*

Freedom to implement IW	N	%
Very little freedom	3	2.5
Some freedom	5	4.2
Quite a bit of freedom	51	42.8
Complete freedom	60	50.0
Total	119	100

Table 4.7 shows that 50% of participants indicated that they had complete freedom with the implementation of interactive writing into their curriculum. A slightly smaller percentage (43%) indicated that they had quite a bit of freedom with the implementation of interactive writing, and only 4% noted that they had some freedom with the implementation of interactive writing into their curriculum.

The data obtained for the question in Table 4.7 was further analyzed through cross-tabulation to evaluate each grade level's freedom on the implementation of interactive writing into their curriculum. The findings are presented in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8

*Grade Level: To what extent do you have the freedom to implement interactive writing into your curriculum?*

Grade level	Very little freedom		Some freedom		Quite a bit of freedom		Complete freedom		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Kindergarten	0	0	1	2.2	21	46.7	23	51.1	45	100
1 <sup>st</sup> grade	3	6.3	1	2.1	19	39.6	25	52.1	48	100
2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	0	0	3	11.5	11	42.3	12	46.2	26	100
Total	3	2.5	5	4.2	51	42.9	69	50.4	119	100

A Chi-square analysis was conducted on frequency and freedom on the implementation of interactive writing and grade levels. This analysis indicated that there was no statistically significant relationship between the extent of freedom on the implementation of interactive writing and grade level taught,  $\chi^2(6) = 9.10, p = .168$ . The strength of the association between freedom on the implementation of interactive writing and grade level taught revealed a small effect size, Cramer's  $V = .196$  (Cohen, 1988).

Table 4.8 shows each grade level's extent of freedom on the implementation of interactive writing. The majority of kindergarten respondents (51%) indicated that they had complete freedom with the implementation of interactive writing. A slightly smaller percentage (47%) revealed they had quite a bit of freedom with the implementation of interactive writing into their curriculum. Roughly 2% noted they had some freedom with the implementation of interactive writing. Additionally, the table shows that 52% of first grade respondents had complete freedom with the implementation of interactive writing. The table also shows that 40% of first grade respondents had quite a bit of freedom, while 2% had some freedom with the implementation of interactive writing into their curriculum. Among the second grade teachers who responded, approximately 46% indicated that they had complete freedom, while a slightly smaller percentage (43%) noted that they had quite a bit of freedom with the implementation of interactive writing into their curriculum.

Survey question six asked participants to note their use and implementation of interactive writing. The multiple-choice question read, *When do you use interactive writing?* Participants were asked to select the answer choices that best reflected when they used and implemented interactive writing into their curriculum. The results for the question are presented in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9

*Survey Question 6: When do you use interactive writing?*

Use IW	N	%
Whole group	110	72.4
Extension of lesson	101	66.4
Small Group	59	38.8
Differentiated instruction	35	23.0

Table 4.9 shows that out of 152 participants, approximately 72% noted that they used interactive writing for whole group instruction. Similarly, 66% revealed that they implemented interactive writing to support the extension of the lesson (after read-alouds, after science lessons, after math lessons, and for morning message). Additionally, 39% implemented interactive writing during small group instruction, while 23% of respondents used interactive writing for differentiated instruction.

Survey question seven asked primary teachers to indicate how they selected students during interactive writing lessons. The multiple choice question read, *How do you select students during interactive writing?* Participants were asked to select as many answer choices that best reflected their overall response. The results are presented in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10

*Survey Question 7: How do you select students during interactive writing lesson?*

Select students during IW lesson	N	%
Preplanned schedule/ Notes	67	44.1
Randomly	54	35.5
Students who raise their hands	49	32.2

Table 4.10 shows that out of 152 participants, 44% noted that they used preplanned schedules/notes (preset schedule, writer’s workshop notes, anecdotal notes, and assessment data) to select students during interactive writing lessons. Additionally, 36% indicated that they randomly selected students during interactive writing lessons, while 32% noted that they selected those students who raised their hands during interactive writing to participate in the writing.

Survey question eight asked participants to explain how they felt about interactive writing as an instructional method. The open-ended question read, *Explain how you feel about interactive writing as an instructional method.* Results for the question are presented in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11

*Survey Question 8: Explain how you feel about interactive writing as an instruction method.*

Feelings about IW	N	%
Hearing letters, sounds, sight words	33.9	36.0
Differentiation	17	16.0
Supports the writing process	17	16.0
Children take ownership of writing	17	16.0
Mechanics/concepts of print	13	12.2
Children develop as writers	6	5.6
Total	106	100

Table 4.11 shows participants’ feelings about interactive writing as an instructional method. Among those who responded, 36% noted interactive writing as a useful method for “hearing letters/sounds/sight words,” while 6% reported interactive writing as most useful for children to develop as writers.

In order to examine each grade level’s feelings about interactive writing as an instructional method, the data from the questionnaire was further analyzed by cross-tabulations. The results are presented in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12

*Grade level: Explain how you feel about interactive writing as an instructional method.*

Grade level	Children take ownership of writing		Differentiation		Hearing letters, sounds, sight words		Children develop as writers		Supports the writing process		Mechanics/ concepts of print		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Kindergarten	5	12.2	10	24.4	16	39.0	1	2.4	5	12.2	4	9.8	41	100
1 <sup>st</sup> grade	10	22.2	4	8.9	17	37.8	3	6.7	5	11.1	6	13.3	45	100
2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	2	10.0	3	15.0	3	15.0	2	10.0	7	35.0	3	15.0	20	100
Total	17	16.0	17	16.0	36	34.0	6	5.7	17	16.0	13	12.3	106	100

Table 4.12 shows how each grade level described their feelings about interactive writing as an instructional method. Among those who responded, 39% of kindergarten teachers felt that interactive writing was an instructional method that was best used to support “hearing letters/sounds/sight words,” while only 2% of kindergarten respondents noted interactive writing as an instructional method where children develop as writers. Similarly, 38% of first grade respondents indicated that interactive writing was useful for “hearing letters/sounds/sight words,” while a small percent of first grade participants (7%) noted that children developed as writers with the implementation of interactive writing. Additionally, the results show that 35% of second grade respondents described interactive writing as an instructional method that supports the writing process.

Survey question nine asked participants to compare interactive writing to other instructional writing methods. The open-ended survey question read, *In your opinion, how does interactive writing compare to other instructional writing methods?* Table 4.13 presents the responses to the question.

Table 4.13

*Survey Question 9: In your opinion, how does interactive writing compare to other instructional writing methods?*

Comparison	N	%
Positive/most effective	40	36.0
Letter Knowledge	18	16.2
Concepts of print/mechanics	17	15.3
Negative/not good	14	12.6
Sharing the pen/participation of children	11	9.9
Supports academic needs	7	6.3
Phonics/phonemic awareness	4	3.6
Total	111	100

Table 4.13 shows participants’ opinions on how interactive writing compared to other instructional methods. The majority of participants (36%) noted interactive writing as a “positive” or the “most effective” writing method, while only 4% of participants identified interactive writing as a writing method used to support phonics or phonemic awareness.

Cross-tabulation was used to analyze how each grade level compared interactive writing to other instructional writing methods. The results are presented in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14

*Grade Level: In your opinion, how does interactive writing compare to other instructional writing methods?*

Grade level	Letter knowledge		Phonics/phonemic awareness		Positive/most effective		Sharing the pen/participation of children		Concepts of print/mechanics		Negative/not good		Supports academic needs		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Kindergarten	10	23.3	0	0	13	30.2	2	4.7	7	16.3	7	16.3	4	9.3	43	100
1 <sup>st</sup> grade	4	8.9	3	6.7	21	46.7	7	15.6	3	6.7	4	8.9	3	6.7	45	100
2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	4	17.4	1	4.3	6	26.1	2	8.7	7	30.4	3	13.0	0	0	23	100
Total	18	16.2	4	3.6	40	36.0	11	9.9	17	15.3	14	12.6	7	6.3	111	100

Table 4.14 shows how each grade level compared interactive writing with other instructional writing methods. Among the kindergarten teachers who responded, approximately 30% noted interactive writing as “positive” or “most effective” when compared to other instructional writing methods. Additionally, 47% of first grade respondents reported interactive writing as “positive” or the “most effective” writing method. The results also showed that 30% of second grade participants reported interactive writing as most useful for teaching “concepts of print/mechanics” when compared to other writing methods, while a smaller percentage (26%) noted interactive writing as “positive” or the “most effective” writing method.

Survey question 10 asked participants to note the advantages of using interactive writing as part of their curriculum. The open-ended question read, *What are the advantages of using interactive writing?* The results for the question are presented on Table 4.15.

Table 4.15

*Survey Question 10: What are the advantages of using interactive writing?*

Advantages	N	%
Children take ownership	29	25.4
Differentiation	22	19.2
Supports hearing & recording sounds	19	16.6
Supports the writing process/mechanics	15	13.1
Teacher guidance/ modeling	13	11.4
Application	9	7.8
Sharing the pen	7	6.1
Total	114	100

Table 4.15 shows the advantages of using interactive writing as part of the writing curriculum. Approximately 25% of participants indicated that the main advantage of using interactive writing was that “children take ownership” of the writing, while 25% noted differentiation as an advantage. The table also shows that 17% of participants noted that interactive writing supports the process of hearing and recording sounds, while only 6% reported the process of the teacher and the students “sharing the pen” as an advantage of interactive writing.

A cross-tabulation was conducted to further examine, by grade level, the advantages of implementing interactive writing. The results are presented in Table 4.16.

Table 4.16

*Grade Level: What are the advantages of using interactive writing?*

Grade level	Children take ownership of writing		Differentiation		Teacher guidance/modeling		Supports the writing process/mechanics		Supports hearing & recording sounds		Sharing the pen		Application		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Kindergarten	8	17.8	11	24.4	4	8.9	5	11.1	9	20.0	4	8.9	4	8.9	45	100
1 <sup>st</sup> grade	13	28.9	5	11.1	6	13.3	5	11.1	8	17.8	3	6.7	5	11.1	45	100
2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	8	33.3	6	25.0	3	12.5	5	20.8	2	8.3	0	0	0	0	24	100
Total	29	25.4	22	19.3	13	11.4	15	13.2	19	16.7	7	6.1	9	7.9	114	100

Results for the cross-tabulation indicated that 24% of kindergarten participants noted “differentiation” as being a major advantage of interactive writing, while 20% indicated hearing and recording sounds as an advantage from the implementation of interactive writing. Among the first grade teachers who responded, 29% indicated that the major advantage of using interactive writing was that “children take ownership of the writing,” while only 7% reported sharing the pen as an advantage of interactive writing. Additionally, 33% of second grade respondents indicated that the major advantage of using interactive writing was that “children take ownership of the own writing.”

Survey question 11 asked participants to describe the disadvantages of using interactive writing as part of their writing curriculum. The open-ended question on the Interactive Writing Survey read, *What are the disadvantages of using interactive writing?* Responses to this question are presented in Table 4.17.

Table 4.17

*Survey Question 11: What are the disadvantages of using interactive writing?*

Disadvantages	N	%
Time & distractions	64	57.6
Children get impatient	15	13.5
Classroom management	14	12.6
Planning	12	10.8
No disadvantages	6	5.4
Total	111	100

Table 4.17 shows participants’ responses regarding the disadvantages of the use and implementation of interactive writing. Over 50% of respondents noted “time and distractions” as

being the major disadvantage when implementing interactive writing, while a very few (5%) reported “no disadvantages” when implementing interactive writing into their curriculum.

The data was further analyzed through cross-tabulation to evaluate the disadvantages noted by each grade level when implementing interactive writing. The results are presented in Table 4.18.

Table 4.18

*Grade Level: What are the disadvantages of using interactive writing?*

Grade level	Time & distractions		Children get impatient		Planning		Classroom management		No disadvantages		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Kindergarten	24	55.8	6	14.0	4	9.3	7	16.3	2	4.7	43	100
1 <sup>st</sup> grade	26	59.1	4	9.1	6	13.6	4	9.1	4	9.1	44	100
2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	14	58.3	5	20.8	2	8.3	3	12.5	0	0	24	100
Total	64	57.7	15	13.5	12	10.8	14	12.6	6	5.4	111	100

Table 4.18 shows that 56% of kindergarten respondents selected “time and distractions” as being the biggest disadvantage when implementing interactive writing, while only 5% of kindergarten participants reported “no disadvantages” when using interactive writing. Similarly, 59% of first grade respondents indicated “time and distractions” as the major disadvantages when implementing interactive writing as part of their writing curriculum, while 14% noted the process of “planning” as being a disadvantage of interactive writing. Additionally, 58% of second grade participants specified “time and distractions” as the major disadvantages of using interactive writing as part of their instructional framework, while only 8% of second grade respondents noted “planning” as a disadvantage of interactive writing.

### **Interviews**

The interviews were used to expand upon the data previously obtained from the Interactive Writing Survey. Eight teachers participated in the interview segment of the study. Each interview participant completed the questionnaire, volunteered, and provided contact information for the primary researcher. The participants for the interviews consisted of eight female teachers. Three participants taught kindergarten, three taught first grade, and two of the interview participants taught second grade. Each interview was conducted in a classroom or a quiet environment and was audio taped and transcribed by the primary researcher. The overall format of the interview sessions was structured and guided by open-ended questions.

The interviews consisted of three open-ended questions that focused on features and aspects of interactive writing. The questions were:

1. What would a typical interactive writing lesson look like in your classroom?
2. In your opinion, how does interactive writing support the reading and writing connection?

3. Have there been any challenges with the implementation of interactive writing?

The overall findings from the follow-up interviews are presented in the following section, organized and arranged by the interview questions.

**Interview Question One: What would a typical interactive writing lesson look like in your classroom?**

Interview respondents described what a typical interactive writing lesson would look like in their classrooms. Comments regarding how participants described a typical interactive writing lesson focused on the structure of the lesson, the instructional decisions made during lessons, and examples of how they had implemented interactive writing. Three recurring themes emerged as participants described how interactive writing looked in their classrooms. The first theme was that participants began their description of an interactive writing lesson with an example of the subject area they used to implement interactive writing sessions. One participant described how her lessons were used for various subject areas.

Sometimes I just come up with the topic and other times we work together to figure it out. Sometimes the topic is related to language arts and other times it's about math or science. Either way, the writing is always related to what we are studying about or discussing in class.

Another participant supported the idea of using interactive writing as an extension for other subject areas. She stated, "Most of our lessons are science based or written after a read aloud." A first grade participant shared how she implemented interactive writing to support other subject areas. She said, "...I will have them answer a question or a math problem." She expanded on the notion of using interactive writing as an extension to other lessons as she described how she used interactive writing to teach features of an author and an illustrator. She

stated, “We might even do an author study and have them write questions or ideas to the featured author...last week we wrote to Eric Carle. They had so many questions for him.” Finally, a first grade participant further explained how she implemented interactive writing to support author studies or to practice various literary elements.

When the interactive writing begins, I would remind the children about the things they saw in the book. Like for example, I might have them use rhyming words like the author uses, or I might have them use alliteration like the author used.

Another common theme that transpired as participants described a typical interactive writing lesson was the concept of the teacher and the students sharing the pen to complete a written piece. The majority of interview participants described how they had students participate in the writing and the process of sharing the pen during the lesson. One participant described the process of the children coming up to share in the writing. In her description she said, “The children might be writing either part of a word or the whole word itself. They also might write new high frequency words.” Another participant explained how her students shared in the writing. “I would make sure that I hand over the pen to different students to help them practice what they need with my assistance.” One participant stated, “I call on students one at a time to help me write parts of the message.” A first grade participant further described the concept of having the students write portions of the message during an interactive writing lesson.

For example, I might call on one of my students to help me write a particular word, maybe even a sight word. I would have that student write the portions that they hear, or that they can stretch out, and then I would write the remainder of the word. Together, we would complete the word and then as a group we would all go back and reread the entire written piece.

Another participant described how interactive writing allowed students to share in the writing of sight words. In her description, she made the following statement:

...and we would do the writing together, sharing the pen...kids who are having difficulty with sight words, maybe I would have them come up and maybe find a word on the word wall and they would write that and we would just continue to work on it together until we have completed what we want to write.

An additional theme that emerged was the concept of participants using preplanned notes, assessments, or schedules to guide instructional decisions and select students during interactive writing lessons. The majority of interview participants mentioned the use of notes or schedules as tools used to select students to help with the writing. A first grade participant stated, "I use the notes I take during writer's workshop or as they are working independently. These notes really help me figure out what I need to address and who I need to call on." She further expanded on the process of using instructional notes during interactive writing as she mentioned the following:

Without my notes, there is no way I could figure out who to call on. I literally refer to my notes around two to three times during my interactive writing lessons. And the kids just know that they have to wait to see what my notes say.

Another participant described how she used notes and observations to help guide the instructional decisions she makes during interactive writing lessons.

I really try to use my notes from writer's workshop to decide who I'm going to call on but it sometimes gets hard to manage. So, I rely on my mental notes or things that I have recently observed to help me with who to call on.

A second grade participant described how she used assessments to decide which students she selected during interactive writing. “Well really I use the spelling tests that we take as a way to see who needs what during the writing lessons. And sometimes I use my own personal notes that I take while I work with my students.”

**Interview Question Two: In your opinion, how does interactive writing support the reading and writing connection?**

Interview participants described their thoughts on how interactive writing supported the reading and writing connection. Statements regarding how interactive writing supported the reading and writing connection focused on how reading and writing are both taught through an interactive writing lesson and how the written piece is reread during the writing. There were two recurring themes that emerged as participants described how interactive writing supported the reading and writing connection. The first theme that emerged was that interview participants described how reading and writing are connected during interactive writing as students write and reread the written text. In describing how interactive writing supported the reading and writing connection, one participant made the following statement:

It really impacts their level of understanding. And then there is a bigger connection when they go back and reread what they have written. That’s where I really see how interactive writing supports the reading and writing connection because kids go back to read their writings and that further connects them to their writings. And then in turn, students become stronger in both reading and writing because they get the opportunity to do both with the support of the teacher.

Another participant expressed the same belief that interactive writing supported both the reading and writing processes as students reread the written piece.

Well, reading and writing are both such a big part of interactive writing, and when the teacher includes the children in reading and the writing, like with interactive writing, she kind of connects the processes together. Like for example, children can see and hear the structure of writing by actually helping with the writing and they can see and hear the process of reading by helping the teacher read the writing.

A veteran participant shared how her students enjoyed the process of writing and rereading the text after an interactive writing lesson.

They think it's so cool to become part of the writing and use the cool markers and come up and write and read back what they wrote, and you can really see how there is a strong connection between the reading, the writing, and the child.

The second theme that emerged was the idea that reading and writing are connected during an interactive writing lesson through the development of language, sentence structure, and print awareness. One participant described how interactive writing supported print awareness and how words convey meaning. "This way the children practice language skills and see how their words create a message and how we can work as a group to change and revise the writing." A first grade participant further described how interactive writing supported the reading and writing connection as students developed the concept of how words convey meaning. "We are constantly reading the words that we have written and then the kids are able to see how their words can form a written piece."

Another interview participant explained how interactive writing connected reading and writing, as it supported the development of correct sentence structure.

Ultimately, it allows children to hear sentences written correctly because so often these children enter kindergarten with the inability to recognize complete sentences. So, I really feel that interactive writing helps children develop the concept of a complete sentence. One participant further described how interactive writing connected reading and writing as students are exposed to print and speech.

Interactive writing supports the reading writing connection by connecting speech and thought together. Interactive writing shows how the two relate and support one another. This happens when children understand that speech can be written down and then read. Then with writing, they can take ownership to their understanding of a concept, the concept of reading and writing.

**Interview Question Three: Have there been any challenges with the implementation of interactive writing?**

Interview participants described the challenges involved with the implementation of interactive writing. There were two recurring themes that emerged from the findings. The first theme was that participants stated that interactive writing lessons were challenging to implement because they took too long to complete. Statements that supported this theme included, “Time is a big challenge for me when I implement interactive writing...it’s hard to find the time to do the writing and other times it’s just finding time to cover what you want to cover during the lesson” and “...one of the challenges with interactive writing that I have faced is the amount of time it takes to finish a piece.” One participant identified time as a distraction of interactive writing as she stated, “...I get frustrated with children who are constantly talking and interrupting the writing process...it just seems too long for them. Sometimes it is too long for me.” Another participant described how the lack of time caused challenges with the implementation of

instructional elements. She stated, "...you know there is always a time factor thing. As I mentioned earlier, it always seems as if there is not enough time in the day to get everything done or completed." One kindergarten participant further described the challenge of finding the time to implement interactive writing into her daily curriculum.

Because you know so much happens during the day, and it just doesn't allow for you to incorporate writing into the day. Honestly, sometimes I feel like I am having to do so much, and then writing is the last thing that I worry about.

Another participant explained how she is often challenged with the time she has to manage and fit in various instructional writing methods. She stated, "I also find it challenging to decide and juggle interactive writing with writer's workshop, so I often pick writer's workshop over interactive writing and I just try and make my mini lessons more like interactive writing."

The second theme that emerged was the challenge of the students becoming distracted during interactive writing lessons. Participants stated that students would often become unfocused and distracted during the writing lesson. One participant described the challenge of keeping students engaged in the writing. "Yes it can be very challenging getting them to sit down and pay attention and just fitting interactive writing into the daily schedule." Another participant expanded on the challenge of having the students stay focused and engaged during an interactive writing lesson.

Probably the most challenging issue with interactive writing is keeping the whole class engaged while one student is up at the front actually doing the writing. They sometimes get very chatty and unfocused when they are not the ones doing the writing, and that and gets very frustrating from a teacher's perspective.

A kindergarten participant also described how she is challenged with redirecting students during interactive writing lessons.

However, when I implement interactive writing I would say the most challenging aspect of the entire process is getting the kids to stay focused. They always seem to pay more attention to what everyone else is doing and with who is coming and going. I feel like I'm always having to redirect the children, and sometimes I feel that it's just too long to have them sit on the floor.

One participant further described the frustration with keeping children focused during an interactive writing lesson.

...it can also be difficult when the children begin to talk, especially when the lesson begins to unravel and they become more interested in what their classmates are doing and not with what is being learned through the writing.

Another participant described the elements within the classroom that caused distractions during interactive writing lessons.

The kids who are easily distracted tend to pick items from the carpet and can be distracting to other children. Also, a lot of my students are easily distracted by individuals who are going to the restroom or those who are coming in and out of the room...seems like the longer we are on the carpet, the more distractions come up and they become less focused on the lesson.

## **Summary**

The purpose of this research study was to determine if primary teachers in ESC Region 2 used interactive writing, describe how they defined interactive writing, and explain how primary teachers implemented interactive writing. The results indicated that respondents in the ESC

Region 2 area are using interactive writing and described how they defined and implemented interactive writing as part of their instructional framework. Narrative responses further captured what a typical interactive writing lesson looked like in a primary classroom, how respondents felt interactive writing supported the reading and writing connection, and the challenges that occurred with the implementation of interactive writing.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

This chapter is divided into three major sections and presents an overall discussion of the study. A summary of the Interactive Writing Survey, a discussion of the follow-up interviews, a discussion of the findings, and a final summary will be presented at the end of the chapter to review the discussions of the major sections.

#### **Overall Findings**

The overall findings for this study suggested that respondents understood the elements of interactive writing and were able to provide a definition for interactive writing as an instructional method. Second, the participants noted that they discovered interactive writing through various forms of professional development opportunities and reported that they implemented interactive writing either during a weekly timeframe or when they had the opportunity to integrate it into their curriculum. Third, there was no statistically significant relationship between how often interactive writing was implemented and grade level taught. Fourth, participants noted that they had complete freedom with the implementation of interactive writing. The analysis indicated that there was no statistically significant relationship between the extent of freedom on the implementation of interactive writing and grade level taught. Fifth, respondents reported that they used interactive writing for whole group instruction and to support content-area lessons. The extension areas mentioned by participants were the following: read-alouds, science lessons, math lessons, and with morning message instruction. Sixth, the study revealed that participants most often selected students based on preplanned schedules or notes. Examples of the pre-planned schedules were the following: preset schedules, writer's workshop notes, anecdotal notes, and assessment data. Seventh, participants noted that interactive writing was an effective

instructional method useful for hearing letters, sounds, and sight words. Finally, respondents indicated that an advantage of interactive writing was that children took ownership of their writing, while time and distractions were noted as being the major disadvantage when implementing interactive writing.

This study was guided by three research questions. The following sections review the research questions, discuss the findings, identify limitations for the study, and provide suggestions for further research. The discussion for this chapter will be arranged by the research questions, additional findings, and a summary of the findings.

**Research Question One: What are the variations on the definition of interactive writing among primary teachers in the Education Service Center (ESC) Region 2 area who are implementing interactive writing?**

The number of survey respondents represented 11.5% of primary teachers in ESC Region 2 and thus the discussion is limited to those who responded. In addition, the uniqueness of the region examined must be considered when discussing the findings for the study. South Texas residents, including those in ESC Region 2, have been reported to have a high poverty rate and an increased number of at risk children (Castro, 2011). For the 2009-2010 school year, The Office of the Texas Comptroller reported ESC Region 2 as being one of four regions in Texas with a large number of economically disadvantaged children (Window on State Government, 2010).

**Survey.**

The results of this study showed that respondents defined interactive writing as an instructional process that involves “sharing the pen” to complete a written form of text. This finding coincides with Button et al. (1996) definition of interactive writing and the process of

sharing the pen during the writing process. Button et al. purported that teachers provided instructional opportunities during interactive writing lessons and that "...children take an active role in the writing process by actually holding the pen and doing the writing" (p. 447). In a recent study, Williams et al. (2012) investigated the effects of using a practice form as a tool during interactive writing lessons to mediate instructional aspects of writing. Williams et al. defined interactive writing as an approach to writing that explicitly allows the teacher to demonstrate letter to sound correspondence, concepts of print, and spelling patterns. An additional aspect of their definition was the idea that interactive writing involved the process of the teacher and the children sharing the pen during the writing lesson. The definitions noted in the research were consistent with how respondents from the current study defined interactive writing. Researchers and respondents from the current study both included the concept of sharing the pen in their definitions of interactive writing.

The findings from the current study also suggested that participants defined interactive writing as "writing done with the teacher and students." This finding was supported by the research and the idea of the teacher and the students working together to complete a writing piece during an interactive writing lesson. In fact, Pinnell and McCarrier (1994) defined interactive writing as a writing strategy that enables teachers and students to collaborate thoughts and ideas, implement conventions of print, and hear and record sounds in words as they compose a written piece. Jones et al. (2010) investigated the effects of interactive writing and writer's workshop on kindergarten children's reading abilities. Jones et al. defined interactive writing and indicated that "During interactive writing, the students and the teacher negotiate the writing topic and the details of the text to be written" (p. 328). These definitions supported the idea of the

teacher and the students working together during the writing process and align with how respondents in ESC Region 2 defined interactive writing as an instructional approach.

Other researchers (Craig, 2006; O'Connor, 2004; Roth, 2009) investigated the effects of interactive writing and how it impacted language structure, print related concepts, and identifying sounds within words. However, no research has explored how primary teachers defined and implemented interactive writing. Therefore, the data for the current study provided insight on how primary teachers defined interactive writing. The findings suggested that the primary teachers who responded were knowledgeable in the understanding of interactive writing and were able to define interactive writing as an instructional writing method. The results further indicated that participants were able to provide key words and phrases in their definitions of interactive writing.

Although respondents defined interactive writing and provided key terms and phrases in their definitions, only 11.5% of the primary teachers in ESC Region 2 responded. Therefore, it cannot be assumed the majority of primary teachers in this region would define interactive writing in a similar manner. It is probable that those teachers who did respond were already vested in its use and had a conceptually useful definition and understanding of interactive writing.

### **Interviews.**

For the current study, respondents defined interactive writing as either an instructional method where the teacher and the students work together on the writing or the process where the teacher and the students work at sharing the pen to complete the writing. Both of these definitions are common phrases found in the literature of interactive writing. Williams and Pilonieta (2012) emphasized the process of sharing the pen during an interactive writing lesson

and explained how the teacher scaffolds instruction and selects students to write portions of the text that are specific to their academic needs. Interview participants further elaborated on their definitions of interactive writing as they described a typical interactive writing lesson in their classrooms. Responses such as, “the children would then come up and help me with the writing” and “I call on students one at a time to come and help me write parts of the message” were similar statements made by interview participants. One participant provided examples and further expanded on the process of the teacher and the students sharing the pen during an interactive writing lesson.

Sometimes my lessons begin with me using the pen to model a specific teaching point. For example, I may focus on using the “ing” ending on words. So, I would have certain children come up to help me complete sentences that include words or phrases with the “ing” ending.

Another participant’s statement supported the finding that interactive writing is an instructional writing method where the teacher and the students share the writing and the pen during the lesson. She explained how she focused on specific instructional areas as she selected students to participate and help with the writing.

We would write together sharing the pen...maybe if we had been discussing sharks I would start out by calling those kids who need help with beginning sounds or letters. Those kids would be called up to help me share the pen. I may call on a student to come write the /sh/ sound for shark. So they would come up and I would help them write that, and then I would help them with the rest of the word.

Overall, the findings from the survey and the interview responses suggested that the participants involved in the study were knowledgeable, had similar understandings, and were able to define interactive writing. These findings were consistent with past researchers (Boroski, 2004; Collom, 2004) and their definitions of interactive writing as an instructional writing method. The definitions provided by the respondents were often simple and short. However, the overall understanding and knowledge of interactive writing was demonstrated through the terms and phrases used in their definitions.

**Research Question Two: How are primary teachers in ESC Region 2 implementing interactive writing?**

**Survey.**

The data suggested that participants had complete freedom with the implementation of interactive writing. Additionally, the data indicated that there was no statistically significant relationship between freedom on the implementation of interactive writing and grade level. These findings cannot determine if complete freedom on the implementation of interactive writing enabled participants to use interactive writing more frequently. It can only be assumed that participants in ESC Region 2 were given the freedom to implement interactive writing during their daily curriculum. However, because the number of respondents represented 11.5% of primary teachers in ESC Region 2, it cannot be assumed that all primary teachers share a similar freedom of implementation.

The results suggested that respondents implemented interactive writing at least three times a week. The analysis also indicated that there was no statistically significant relationship between how often interactive writing was being implemented and grade level. Although the findings did not determine a statistically significant relationship, the data did support the premise

of implementing interactive writing throughout the week. In fact, Schaefer (2004) suggested that daily and weekly interactive writing opportunities allowed children to develop writing strategies, language patterns, listening skills, and speaking skills. Button et al. (1996) described the implementation of daily interactive writing lessons with kindergarten students during whole group literacy instruction. In their study, daily interactive writing lessons were implemented throughout the entire school year. Although the findings for the current study only described interactive writing as being implemented at least three times during the week, the idea of consistent, interactive writing lessons was a common element described in both the literature and the current study.

In contrast, the findings for the current study also indicated that participants implemented interactive writing on an occasional basis or “whenever I can fit it in.” This finding was not consistent with the literature or how often researchers suggest to implement interactive writing. Williams and Hufnagel (2005) documented the implementation of daily interactive writing lessons for kindergarten children. Williams and Hufnagel suggested that daily interactive writing sessions improved kindergarten children’s use of alphabetic principles and their ability to implement writing strategies. In fact, scholars (Filippini, 2009; McCarrier et al., 2000) purported that interactive writing should be implemented throughout daily or weekly instruction. Therefore, this finding was not supported by the literature. The data suggested that some respondents simply used interactive writing as an instructional filler and were not consistently using interactive writing as a daily or weekly instructional writing method. This finding may be related to the strict schedule guidelines placed on teachers. Based on the researcher’s experience as a consultant in districts within the ESC Region 2, primary teachers often have specific areas of literary instruction they are expected to implement into their curriculum. These areas of

instruction include writer's workshop, guided reading, shared writing, and shared reading. Although these literary areas are crucial for the academic development of young children, they are often lengthy and time consuming to implement. In addition, it may be a challenge for teachers to decide which literary area to include within their daily curriculum. Therefore, interactive writing may not be an instructional method selected by teachers to be implemented on a daily basis.

The results for the study revealed that participants used interactive writing in whole group settings. This result is an element of interactive writing that was supported by the literature. Interactive writing lessons are suggested to be conducted during whole group sessions. McCloskey (2004) explained that during whole group interactive writing "...everyone in the class receives explicit instruction and modeling at the same time" (p. 9). Collom (2004) emphasized the importance of implementing interactive writing as a collaborative whole group writing experience. It has been suggested to conduct whole group interactive writing sessions at the large meeting area of a classroom. Button et al. (1996) documented the implementation of daily whole group interactive writing sessions with kindergarten children. Button et al. further described how children were seated near the teacher and the easel at the large meeting area of the classroom during interactive writing sessions. Similarly, respondents from the current study also indicated that they used interactive writing during whole group instruction.

The analysis of data also indicated that participants used interactive writing to support the extension of lessons or subject areas. Respondents noted the following extension lessons: read alouds, science lessons, math lessons, and during morning message. The research reviewed suggested that interactive writing can be used to support various subject areas, and it can be integrated into daily curriculum to deepen the understanding of complex instructional elements

(Christenson, 2004; Kasner, 2004; McCarrier et al., 2000). This finding coincides with the existing literature as it suggested that participants used and implemented interactive writing to support various instructional elements. Christenson (2004) emphasized that interactive writing lessons can be used to support science experiments, to report classroom science observations, to generate science based graphic organizers, and for labeling classroom pets. The integration of interactive writing into various instructional settings allows children to practice elements from various subject areas while strengthening their language skills, writing skills, and reading abilities.

In examining how teachers selected students to participate in the writing during interactive writing lessons, the findings from the current study indicated that respondents selected students based on pre-planned schedules or notes. The areas selected by participants included preset schedules, writer's workshop notes, assessment data, and anecdotal notes. As discussed in the literature, prior studies (Button et al., 1996; Clay, 1991; McCarrier et al., 2000; Williams & Lundstrom, 2007) suggested the use of data and artifacts to guide the teacher's scaffolding decisions during interactive writing and other forms of writing instruction. Button et al. (1996) explained that "...the *Observation Survey*, anecdotal notes, and writing checklists" (p. 453) were used as an instructional guide during interactive writing lessons. This coincides with the findings of the current study in which pre-planned schedules or notes were noted to support student selection during interactive writing lessons. In fact, McCarrier et al., (2000) suggested that without the use of data or anecdotal notes, interactive writing instruction is unstructured and "hit or miss" (p. 191). Therefore, the use of data and documentation during an interactive writing lesson allows teachers to model specific literary elements and focus on each child's instructional needs.

## **Interviews.**

According to the findings from the survey, respondents indicated that they implemented interactive writing at least three times a week, and a slightly smaller percentage of respondents indicated that they implemented interactive writing whenever they were able to fit it into their curriculum. Interview participants noted the implementation of interactive writing on a daily basis or several times during the week. In this case, interview responses only supported the survey finding of interactive writing being implemented at least three times a week and not the concept of interactive writing being implemented “whenever I can fit it in.” In fact, the majority of interview participants mentioned the use of daily or weekly interactive writing lessons. One respondent indicated that she used interactive writing in her classroom “at least a couple of times a week,” while another interview participant mentioned that she always begins her day with an interactive writing lesson that she incorporates into her morning message. Another interview participant stated, “I typically begin my daily language block with some form of an interactive writing lesson.” The statements made by interview participants about the implementation of daily interactive writing lessons were supported by the literature. In fact, scholars (Becker, 2004; Roth, 2009) emphasized that interactive writing should be utilized as part of a daily curriculum. Williams and Hufnagel (2005) purported that daily interactive writing lessons provided opportunities for children to develop various literary elements and independent writing skills.

The majority of participants interviewed for the current study described their interactive writing lessons as a whole group interaction that occurred at the meeting area of their classrooms. Whole group interactive writing lessons and the idea of conducting lessons at the carpet or meeting area are common elements of interactive writing found in the literature. Button et al. (1996) documented how children should be seated at a large meeting area, such as the

carpet, for whole group interactive writing lessons. Similarly, in the current study, one participant explained how she gathered all of her students to the carpet for interactive writing lessons. She stated, “For interactive writing I always bring the kids to the carpet, it’s our meeting area, and I have them face the easel.” Another respondent explained, “I have the children at the carpet and I call on them one at a time to come up and write part of the message.” Additionally, one respondent indicated that she had students gather at the carpet to set the tone for their discussions during interactive writing lessons. She explained, “Interactive writing lessons in my class are like a social event. Everyone gathers at the carpet, and together we discuss the plan for the writing and express our thoughts and ideas associated with the writing.”

The data from the current study also indicated that participants implemented interactive writing as an extension to other subjects or lessons. They described how they implemented interactive writing after science lessons, math lessons, and to support read alouds. Leonard (2004) described an interactive writing lesson where the students retold familiar stories and focused on story plots, literary themes, and repetitive patterns within the stories. Clark (2004) described the importance of using interactive writing to teach poetry elements. She explained how students brainstormed, generated, and published their poetry pieces. Similarly, when describing how they implemented interactive writing, interview participants explained how they used interactive writing to support other subject areas or as an extension of a lesson. One participant stated, “Sometimes we do what I call daily news, where the children help me write a piece back to the author...like from a book we just finished reading.” Other statements that supported the idea of implementing interactive writing as an extension to other subject areas included, “...the writing is usually based on something that we have read together” and “most of

our lessons are science based or written after a read aloud.” Another participant described how she used interactive writing as an extension to read alouds.

I often use read alouds to point out certain things that the author uses as a writer, and those are the things that I want the students to be aware of...when the interactive writing lesson begins I would remind the children about the things they saw in the book. Like for example, I might have them use rhyming words like the author uses or I might have them use alliteration like the author used.

Overall, the data from the survey and the interview showed that participants involved in the study incorporated interactive writing as an extension to other subject areas or lessons. The responses from both the survey and interviews support one another and are consistent with the literature.

The results of this study revealed that respondents selected students during interactive writing lessons based on pre-planned schedules or notes. Past research (Button et al., 1996; Clay, 1991; McCarrier et al., 2000; Williams & Lundstrom, 2007) emphasized the importance of using anecdotal notes or ongoing data to support the teacher’s instructional decisions during an interactive writing lesson. In addition to the use of pre-planned schedules or notes, interview participants also noted that they used observations and documentation to select students during interactive writing lessons. One interview participant mentioned that she used anecdotal notes from her writer’s workshop conferences to guide the instructional decisions she made during her interactive writing lessons. She stated, “I try to use the notes I take during writer’s workshop or as they are working independently. These notes really help me figure out what I need to address and who I need to call on.” Additional statements to support the notion of using pre-planned schedules or other forms of data during interactive writing lessons included, “I use the spelling

tests that we take as a way to see who needs what during the writing lesson,” and “I look at my notes and I call them according to their needs.” One participant provided an example and further elaborated on the idea of using preplanned schedules or notes during interactive writing lessons. She said, “I also select students to come up and write with me if it’s something that they need to work on. For example, I may call on little Johnny to write a particular blend if it’s something that I know he has been struggling with.”

The statements made by participants on both the survey and interviews revealed how respondents implemented interactive writing into their curriculum. Overall, the data suggested that participants in ESC Region 2 utilized interactive writing at least three times a week or whenever they could fit it into their curriculum. Additionally, respondents suggested that their interactive writing lessons were conducted in a whole group setting and were used as an extension to various subject areas. Participants further described the use of pre-planned notes, schedules, and documentation to select students during interactive writing lessons.

### **Research Question Three: How does interactive writing support the reading and writing connection for primary teachers in ESC Region 2?**

#### **Interviews.**

Overall, a large majority of interview respondents described how interactive writing supported the reading and writing connection. These participants viewed interactive writing as an instructional writing method that connected both the reading and writing processes. In fact, one respondent provided examples on how interactive writing allows children to think, read, write, and connect to the piece they are constructing. She explained, “Interactive writing allows children to connect the reading and writing processes, and when children go back and reread their writings, they are becoming better readers.” Another respondent further explained how

interactive writing supported the reading and writing connection as she provided an example of this process.

Well, reading and writing are both such a big part of interactive writing, and when the teacher includes the children in the reading and the writing, like with interactive writing, she kind of connects the two processes together. Like for example, children can see and hear the structure of writing by actually helping with the writing, and they can see and hear the process of reading by helping the teacher read the writing.

Other studies (Calkins, 1983; Cramer, 1998; Shanahan, 1984) have investigated the reading and writing connection. Clay's (1975) study documented five year old children and their writing abilities. Her observations concluded that writing contributes to the development of early reading skills, and when children write, they develop crucial literary skills such as letter and sound correspondence, sentence structure, concepts about print, and thinking strategies. Clay's findings were evident in one interview participant's comment which indicated that interactive writing supported the concept of how words convey meaning as she stated, "We are constantly reading the words that we have written and then the kids are able to see how their words can form a written piece." Another participant described how interactive writing allowed children to make a connection between reading and writing as they are guided by the teacher through both processes.

So I think they are able to write what we are working on because we are working on it together, and I can show and guide them with writing strategies as we go through the writing lesson. And in turn, there becomes more of a connection between reading and

writing because as they become better readers, they are also becoming better writers and they become very proud of themselves.

One participant expressed the same belief that interactive writing supported both the reading and writing processes. When asked how interactive writing supported the reading and writing connection, she made the following statement.

It really impacts their level of understanding. And then there is a bigger connection when they go back and reread what they have written. That's where I really see how interactive writing supports the reading and writing connection because kids go back to read their writings and that further connects them to their writings. And then in turn, students become stronger in both reading and writing because they get the opportunity to do both with the support of the teacher.

The statements provided by the interview participants in regards to how interactive writing supported the reading and writing connection were consistent with the findings documented in the research. Additionally, these comments supported the findings from Read's (1971) study which provided an understanding of how children used the process of stretching out sounds in words to develop a stronger understanding towards language development. In fact, the majority of interview participants expressed the concept of stretching out words in writing to develop oral language. Read's findings were evident in one participant's comment which expressed how interactive writing supported the concept of stretching out words based on the sounds heard during the writing process. She articulated the idea of stretching out sounds when she stated, "So those kids who come up would maybe work on the formation for each letter they hear or how to write that letter. They may also be asked to write letters based on sounds or blends." This explanation of how interactive writing supported the process of hearing sounds in

words was consistent with the findings from Read's (1971) study on language development and writing words based on sounds.

Bissex's (1980) case study further documented how writing and reading are supported by one another. In her study, she discovered that her son was able to read as he spelled words in his writings. This same concept of supporting reading through writing was described by several interview participants as they explained how children would reread the messages they created during interactive writing lessons. In fact, Bissex's findings were evident in one teacher's comment, which illustrated how children go back and reread the written message during an interactive writing lesson. She stated, "With interactive writing, they are able to develop an idea and support one another throughout the writing process. Then, they in turn love to go back and read the writing they helped create." Another participant captured the concept of developing reading skills through the process of writing as she described how interactive writing supported the reading and writing connection.

Interactive writing supports the reading/writing connection by connecting speech and thought together. Interactive writing shows how the two relate and support one another. This happens when children understand that speech can be written down and then read. Then with writing, they can take ownership to their understanding of a concept...the concept of reading and writing.

These descriptions on how interactive writing supported the reading and writing connection as children write and go back to reread the written piece are consistent with the observations documented in Bissex's study. Her study described how writing words helped to support her son through the reading process. Participants illustrated this same finding as they explained how interactive writing supported both reading and writing.

## **Additional Findings**

Additional findings for the study included how participants developed an understanding of interactive writing, how participants felt about interactive writing as an instructional method, how they compared interactive writing to other instructional writing methods, and the advantages and disadvantages of implementing interactive writing. The research suggested that respondents developed an understanding of interactive writing through professional development opportunities. District trainings, onsite training support, and classroom observations were the three forms of professional development noted by teachers. These forms of professional development were consistent with how researchers have suggested the development and understanding of interactive writing should be supported. In fact, McCarrier et al. (2000) suggested that teachers meet as a team of learners to build a greater understanding of interactive writing as an instructional method. During these meetings, teachers share interactive writing lesson plans with grade-level members and learn strategies from others. Self-reflecting interactive writing rubrics, colleague observations, curriculum alignment discussions, and self-reflecting interactive writing journals are examples of professional development opportunities that researchers have proposed for teachers to implement on their campuses (Crippen, 2004; McCarrier et al., 2000).

An additional finding suggested that participants felt that interactive writing was most effective in supporting the concepts of hearing letters, sounds, and sight words. These literary concepts are supported by the research and the impact interactive writing has on academic development. In fact, Craig (2006) emphasized how interactive writing lessons can be used to support letter to sound correspondence, letter recognition, concepts of print, and elements of phonemic awareness. Further, interactive writing sessions are used to instructionally support

children with aspects of the writing process. Overall, the instructional elements described by survey participants were consistent with the literature and the idea that interactive writing can be implemented to effectively teach various literary elements.

The majority of survey and interview participants identified time and distractions as being the greatest challenges and disadvantages with the implementation of interactive writing. Participants believed that interactive writing lessons took too long to complete and that children often would become distracted during the lesson. Statements that supported this notion included, “Time is a big challenge for me when I implement interactive writing...it’s hard to find the time to do the writing and other times it’s just finding time to cover what you want to cover during the lesson” and “...one of the challenges with interactive writing that I have faced is the amount of time it takes to finish a piece.” These statements and beliefs were not supported or documented in the research. In fact, McCarrier et al. (2000) suggested that interactive writing lessons should be short, powerful, and based on instructional needs. Button et al. (1996) explained that interactive lessons were not intended to be lengthy and time consuming. They also noted that interactive writing lessons should last for 15 minutes at the beginning of the year and gradually increase to 20-30 minutes at the end of the school year (Button et al., 1996).

Participants also described how they felt interactive writing compared to other instructional methods. The majority of the respondents felt that interactive writing was a positive writing method and the most effective in teaching aspects of writing. This finding coincides with the literature and the effective elements of interactive writing described by scholars (Becker, 2004; Schaefer, 2004; Williams & Pilonieta, 2012).

In this study, a large majority of participants noted “differentiation” and “children take ownership” of the writing as the two major advantages of implementing interactive writing. The

concept of differentiation during interactive writing is an instructional element that aligns with the literature. In fact, McCarrier et al. (2000) maintained that interactive writing supported various academic needs by differentiating the instruction during a lesson. McCarrier et al. described interactive writing as a transition tool used to support the developmental needs of early writing instruction. In addition, researchers (O'Connor, 2004; Sherry, 2010) have used interactive writing as an intervention model or as a method to differentiate instruction for struggling learners.

### **Implications**

This study shows that teachers' insights and understandings about a particular instructional method, such as interactive writing, can provide useful information on the implementation and understanding of the method. Through the surveys and interviews, administrators and literacy coaches can identify areas of weakness, or a lack of understanding, with regard to the use of interactive writing. This information can then be used as a framework to further understand strategies and techniques to implement during interactive writing lessons. Primary teachers can then use the information to guide professional conversations or develop support teams that aim to focus on elements of interactive writing.

The data obtained from this study suggested that participants are able to provide a knowledgeable definition of interactive writing. Participants in this study had specific phrases and terms that were included in their definitions. Respondents defined interactive writing as writing done with the teacher and the students and the process of sharing the pen during. This information is useful for administrators and literacy coaches, as it means that participants have a knowledgeable understanding about interactive writing and are able to define the key terms and phrases associated with an interactive writing lesson.

Respondents also indicated that they first learned about interactive writing through professional development opportunities. Therefore, it can be assumed that professional development opportunities are effective on the initial introduction of interactive writing for the 11.5% of primary teachers who responded. It is crucial for teachers to be provided with training opportunities that are professionally supportive and informative. Teachers should organize professional development opportunities with colleagues. These professional training sessions, must enable teachers to observe, plan, and review elements of interactive writing with their peers. The establishment and continuation of professional development opportunities that focus on aspects of interactive writing can be useful and effective for both novice and experienced teachers.

Participants also noted that they had complete freedom with the implementation of interactive writing, and that they engaged in interactive writing at least three times a week. With this information, it can be assumed that participants are incorporating interactive writing several times a week into their curriculum. McCarrier et al. (2000) purported that daily interactive writing sessions are most effective for primary aged children. Therefore, this information can be used to design professional development trainings that focus on structuring daily interactive writing sessions into classroom curriculum. The establishment of professional trainings and ongoing support may enable teachers to develop and implement a schedule that incorporates daily interactive writing sessions.

The data also suggested that participants used interactive writing during whole group instruction. A slightly smaller amount indicated that they utilized interactive writing to support the extension of a lesson. Therefore, it can be assumed that participants use interactive writing for multiple writing purposes. With this information, primary teachers can organize peer training

sessions that offer support and examples on how to implement interactive writing into multiple subject areas. Administrators and literacy coaches can then design and organize grade level trainings that further support and model strategies and ideas for the implementation of interactive writing.

Participants in the study indicated that they used preplanned schedules and notes to select students during interactive writing lessons. It can be assumed that respondents are knowledgeable and understand the importance of preplanning interactive writing instruction and the importance of selecting students to write based on their academic needs. This information can then be used to structure professional training opportunities that focus on the most effective forms of data to use for the selection of students during interactive writing lessons. During these trainings, teachers can offer insight and provide examples of the data forms or preplanned schedules that are most useful for them.

Based on the survey and the statements made by participants about interactive writing being too long and time consuming, it can be assumed that respondents are implementing their interactive writing lessons longer than 15 minutes, and as a result, have become frustrated with the distractions that arise from lengthy whole group lessons. Therefore, further professional development trainings should be implemented to instruct and guide primary teachers on the importance of providing short, instructional based, interactive writing lessons. Additionally, teachers should be provided with trainings on the implementation of instructional tools, such as individual whiteboards, as a method to prevent distractions during interactive writing lessons. The implementation of shorter writing sessions and the use of instructional tools during lessons may ultimately enable teachers to become less frustrated with the implementation of interactive writing.

Overall, with information regarding the understanding and implementation of interactive writing, administrators and literacy coaches have the ability to design and organize staff development opportunities to support the professional needs of the teachers. Therefore, the more information curriculum supervisors, administrators, and reading coaches know about primary teachers' understandings and implementations of interactive writing, the more background information and modeled examples they can provide on specific areas of interactive writing.

### **Limitations**

This study examined how primary teachers in ESC Region 2 defined and implemented interactive writing as part of their curriculum. There were several limitations for the study. First, the survey used for the study was designed by the primary researcher and is subject to a question of reliability. A second limitation was the small sample size. The number of respondents represented 11.5% of primary teachers in ESC Region 2, and was not a strong representation of the population.

A third limitation for the study was the time frame used to collect and analyze the data. Participants were given a five-week time frame to complete the online survey. Although reminders were distributed to encourage participation, a small percentage of primary teachers participated in the study. Additionally, teacher emails were obtained through district webpages and by contacting the campuses directly; however, some primary teachers may have been overlooked due to outdated webpages or inactive email accounts.

An additional limitation was that the open-ended responses were analyzed and categorized by the primary researcher and reviewed and checked by a second researcher. Although each response was thoroughly reviewed and analyzed, it is still subject to a question of reliability. Additionally, upon reflection of the instrument, the survey choice "whenever I can fit

it in” can be interpreted as a choice that refers to as often as I can fit interactive writing into a daily or weekly timeframe. Finally, some sections of the survey were not completely filled out; therefore incomplete surveys were a limitation for the study.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The following suggestions should be investigated for future research:

- This study focused on primary teachers’ understanding and use of interactive writing as an instructional method. Further research would benefit from exploring other grade levels’ use and implementation of interactive writing.
- A teacher survey and face-to-face interviews were the instruments used to collect data for this study. Additional forms of data collection, such as teacher observations, would further explain the extent to which interactive writing is being implemented and used as a part of daily writing curriculum.
- This study focused on how knowledgeable primary teachers within ESC Region 2 were with the implementation of interactive writing. Future research would benefit from focusing on how knowledgeable primary teachers are in general with the implementation of interactive writing. More specifically, primary teachers from different regions with varying socioeconomic statuses.
- Data collection for this study did not involve case studies or student created artifacts. Additional layers of data would further describe how primary teachers implement interactive writing into their writing curriculum.
- This study examined how primary teachers defined and implemented interactive writing as part of their curriculum. Further research on the various types of literature

used to support interactive writing lessons would be beneficial in understanding how interactive writing is implemented.

- Technology was not examined in this study. Therefore, it would be informative to investigate how primary teachers have implemented interactive writing with technological elements.

## **Summary**

This chapter discussed the findings and reviewed the research questions used to guide the study. The outline for this study was structured and based upon a sufficient amount of information about primary teachers' understanding of interactive writing and how primary teachers used and implemented interactive writing as part of their curriculum. The reviewed research was both qualitative and quantitative in nature and focused on interactions during lessons, scaffolding decisions, and the effects of interactive writing as an instructional method. However, the research did not examine how teachers defined and implemented interactive writing as part of their curricular framework. Therefore, this study adds to the existing body of research about interactive writing and how participants defined and implemented interactive writing as an instructional element. The findings for the study indicated that participants in ESC Region 2 defined interactive writing as being an instructional writing method where the teacher and the students work together in the writing process while sharing the pen. In addition, the findings suggested that participants implemented interactive writing at least three times a week or whenever they are able to fit it into their curricular schedule. The findings also indicated that participants involved in the study used interactive writing in a whole group setting, with the guidance of a pre-planned schedule or notes, and implemented interactive writing as an extension

for other subject areas. Additionally, interview participants described challenges with the use of interactive writing and how it supported the reading and writing connection.

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Appendix A

INTERACTIVE WRITING SURVEY

1. Do you implement interactive writing as part of your curriculum? Yes  No

2. If you answered yes, what is your definition/understanding of interactive writing?

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3. How did you first find out about interactive writing? (check those that apply)

from district training  from undergraduate courses  by observing an interactive writing lesson   
from onsite training support  from graduate courses  from a friend   
By watching videos  from literature  from the internet

Other \_\_\_\_\_

4. How often do you use interactive writing?

more than once a day  at least once a day  once a week   
twice a week  at least 3 times a week  whenever I can fit it in

Other \_\_\_\_\_

5. To what extent do you have the freedom to implement interactive writing into your curriculum?

no freedom  very little freedom  some freedom   
quite a bit of freedom  complete freedom

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**6. When do you use interactive writing? (check those that apply)**

- after read-alouds       after science lessons       after math lessons   
to support at-risk students       for advanced writers       for whole group   
for small group       for morning message       for writer's workshop

**Other** \_\_\_\_\_

**7. How do you select students during interactive writing lesson? (check those that apply)**

- I have a preset schedule       I call on students randomly       I use assessment data   
I call on those students who raise their hand       I use writer's workshop notes       I use other anecdotal notes

**Other** \_\_\_\_\_

**8. Explain how you feel about interactive writing as an instructional method.**

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**9. In your opinion, how does interactive writing compare to other instructional writing methods?**

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**10. What are the advantages of using interactive writing?**

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**11. What are the disadvantages of using interactive writing?**

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For demographic information only:

A. Gender

Female

Male

B. Age

20-25

26-31

32-35

36-and above

C. Ethnicity

Native American

Asian

African American

Hispanic

White

Unknown

D. What is the highest level of education you received?

Bachelor's degree

Post bachelor's degree

Master's degree

Master's degree plus 15 hours

Doctorate

E. How many years of teaching experience have you had?

1-2 years

3-5 years

6-10 years

11-15 years

16 plus

F. What grade level do you currently teach?

Kindergarten

1<sup>st</sup> grade

2<sup>nd</sup> grade

G. What other grade levels have you taught?

Pre-kindergarten

3<sup>rd</sup> grade

4<sup>th</sup> grade

5<sup>th</sup> grade

6<sup>th</sup> grade

7<sup>th</sup> grade

\_\_\_\_\_ 8<sup>th</sup> grade

\_\_\_\_\_ 9<sup>th</sup> grade

\_\_\_\_\_ other

H. In what type of classroom do you teach in?

\_\_\_\_\_ Self- contained (where you have the same children all day long)

\_\_\_\_\_ Inclusion

\_\_\_\_\_ Co-teaching

\_\_\_\_\_ Departmentalized

I. School Demographics

\_\_\_\_\_ Low SES

\_\_\_\_\_ Title 1

\_\_\_\_\_ Reading First

\_\_\_\_\_ N/A

J. School District \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for participating in this survey. If you would like to further explain your survey answers and participate in an interview, please fill out the information below.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B**

### **CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

#### **The Use and Implementation of Interactive Writing as an Instructional Method for Primary Teachers in ESC Region2**

This study will describe the understanding and implementation of interactive writing as an instructional method for the literacy framework of primary teachers in a South Texas Educational Region. The study will be conducted by Rachele Fabela, a doctoral candidate in the Curriculum and Instruction department in the College of Education at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. She is conducting this study for her dissertation.

#### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this inquiry is to describe the extent to which primary teachers in a South Texas educational region are utilizing interactive writing as an instructional method and note any variations on their definitions of interactive writing.

#### **PROCEDURES**

You will be asked to complete an online survey that will take about 15 to 20 minutes of your time. The survey will include questions regarding your personal definition of interactive writing, the implementation of interactive writing, the trainings you received on interactive writing, and insight regarding how you learned about interactive writing. After you complete the survey, you will be asked if you would be willing to participate in a face to face interview. If you choose to volunteer, the interview will allow you to further expand upon your survey responses.

#### **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

There are no risks associated with the participation in this study.

#### **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

The potential benefit of this study is that it will provide valuable insight about the understanding and implementation of interactive writing. Knowing this information will be valuable for teachers, literacy coaches, principals, and curriculum supervisors, as it will deepen the understanding and utilization of interactive writing as part of the literacy framework.

#### **PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

There will be no payment for participation.

#### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

The information obtained from the study will remain confidential and kept under lock and key in a filing cabinet in the principal researcher's home/office. Pseudonyms will be used in place of actual names to protect each participant's identity.

**PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without any consequences.

**IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you are encouraged to contact Rachelle Fabela at (361) 774-0912 or email her at [fabchelle@yahoo.com](mailto:fabchelle@yahoo.com). You may also contact her committee chair members, Dr. Daniel Pearce or Dr. Corinne Valadez, at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi (361) 825-5881 or (361) 825-3336.

**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT**

**You will be provided with a copy of this information for your records.**

**I have read the above information. I have asked questions and received answers to my satisfaction, and I agree to participation in this study.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **Appendix C**

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

The following questions will be included during the follow-up interview. However, questions may be modified once the data from the surveys has been analyzed. Additionally, there may be changes during interviews as participants elaborate and expand on their answers. Elaboration and expansion may spark the need to ask additional questions.

1. What would a typical interactive writing lesson look like in your classroom?
2. In your opinion, how does interactive writing support the reading and writing connection?
3. Have there been any challenges with the implementation of interactive writing?

**Appendix D**  
**COVER LETTER**

Dear Respondent,

My name is Rachelle Fabela and I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Texas A & M–Corpus Christi. I am inviting you participate in a research project to investigate South Texas primary teachers’ use and understanding of interactive writing. What I am asking you to do is fill out an initial survey and forward a survey to your teachers. Participation will not take a large amount of either you or your teachers’ time.

You will be receiving an administrator questionnaire and a teacher survey attachment via email. The administrator questionnaire asks a few questions about your primary teachers’ use of interactive writing. I am asking you to look over the questionnaire, and if you choose to participate, complete it and send it back to me via email. It should take you about five minutes to complete. Once the administrator survey is complete and has been submitted, I am asking that you forward the teacher survey link to your campus’ primary (K-2) teachers. Your primary teachers will then click on the survey link, enter a code, and respond to a brief survey about the use and implementation of interactive writing. The teacher survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

The results of this project will deepen the understanding and use of interactive writing as an instructional method. Through your participation, I hope to understand the extent to which primary teachers in South Texas are implementing interactive writing. The results of the survey will be valuable for teachers, literacy coaches, principals, and curriculum supervisors.

Thank you in advance for your participation in this research study. If you have any questions or concerns about completing the questionnaire or participating in this study, please contact me by phone at 361-774-0912 or via email [fabchelle@yahoo.com](mailto:fabchelle@yahoo.com). You may also contact my faculty advisors, Dr. Daniel Pearce and Dr. Corinne Valadez, at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi (361) 825-5881 or (361) 825-3336.

Sincerely,

Rachelle Fabela

**Appendix E**

**ADMINISTRATOR SURVEY**

1. Do your primary teachers (K-2) implement interactive writing? Why or why not?

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2. If your primary teachers do implement interactive writing, is it a policy of your district?

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3. How long has your district had primary teachers implement interactive writing?

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4. Has your district provided professional development opportunities for your primary teachers to learn how to implement interactive writing?

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## **Appendix F**

### **CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

#### **The Use and Implementation of Interactive Writing as an Instructional Method for Primary Teachers in Region 2**

This study will describe the understanding and implementation of interactive writing as an instructional method for the literacy framework of primary teachers in a South Texas Educational Region. The study will be conducted by Rachele Fabela, a doctoral candidate in the Curriculum and Instruction department in the College of Education at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. She is conducting this study for her dissertation.

#### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this inquiry is to describe the extent to which primary teachers in a South Texas educational region are utilizing interactive writing as an instructional method and note any variations on their definitions of interactive writing.

#### **PROCEDURES**

You are being asked to complete a brief survey via email. This survey will include questions involving the implementation of interactive writing, professional development opportunities for interactive writing, and approval for your primary teachers to participate in an online survey. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to forward the survey link (via school email) to your primary (k-2) teachers. Your participation in this email survey indicates willingness for your primary teachers to participate in an online survey, with the understanding that teacher participation is strictly voluntary.

#### **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

There are no risks associated with the participation in this study.

#### **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

The potential benefit of this study is that it will provide valuable insight about the understanding and implementation of interactive writing. Knowing this information will be valuable for teachers, literacy coaches, principals, and curriculum supervisors, as it will deepen the understanding and utilization of interactive writing as part of the literacy framework.

#### **PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

There will be no payment for participation.

#### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

The information obtained from the study will remain confidential and kept under lock and key in a filing cabinet in the principal researcher's home/office. Pseudonyms will be used in place of actual names to protect each participant's identity.

**PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without any consequences.

**IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you are encouraged to contact Rachelle Fabela at (361) 774-0912 or email her at [fabchelle@yahoo.com](mailto:fabchelle@yahoo.com). You may also contact her committee chair members, Dr. Daniel Pearce and Dr. Corinne Valadez, at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi (361) 825-5881 or (361) 825-3336.

**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT**

**You will be provided with a copy of this information for your records.**

**I have read the above information. I have asked questions and received answers to my satisfaction, and I agree to participation in this study.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix G

### CATEGORIES FOR OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

#### *Survey Question 2: Definition of interactive writing*

Initial Categories	Emerging Categories
Writing done with the teacher	Writing done with the teacher and students
Writing done with the students	Sharing the pen
Writing with teacher and students	Similar to shared writing
Sharing the pen	Hearing sounds/letters/sight words
Teacher and students share in the writing	
Similar to shared writing	
Sight words	

*Survey Question 8: How do you feel about interactive writing as an instructional method?*

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<u>Initial Categories</u>	<u>Emerging Categories</u>
Children take ownership of writing	Children take ownership of the writing
How words work	Differentiation
Hearing sounds	Hearing letters, sounds, sight words
Supports the writing process	Children develop as writers
Children develop as writers	Supports the writing process
Sight words	Mechanics/concepts of print
Mechanics/concepts of print	
Letters and sounds	
Differentiation	

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*Survey Question 9: How does interactive writing compare to other instructional writing methods?*

Initial Categories	Emerging Categories
Letter sounds	Supports academic needs
Letter recognition	Letter Knowledge
Positive/most effective	Positive/most effective
Sharing the pen/participation of children	Sharing the pen/participation of Children
Concepts of print/mechanics	Concepts of print/mechanics
Supports academic needs	Negative/not good
Negative/not good	Phonics/phonemic awareness
Phonics/phonemic awareness	

*Survey Question 10: What are the advantages of using interactive writing?*

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Initial Categories	Emerging Categories
Children share in the writing	Children take ownership
Children take ownership	Differentiation
Differentiation	Teacher guidance/modeling
Teacher guidance	Supports the writing process/mechanics
Teacher modeling	Supports hearing and recording sounds
Supports sounds	Sharing the pen
Hearing and recording sounds	Application
Sharing the pen	
Supports writing process	
Application	

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*Survey Question 11: What are the disadvantages of using interactive writing?*

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Initial Categories	Emerging Categories
Time	Time and distractions
Distractions	Children get impatient
Children get impatient	Planning
Planning	Classroom management
Time and distractions	No disadvantages
Classroom management	
No disadvantages	

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## Appendix H

### TAMU-CC (IRB) APPROVAL 2010

## Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

### Compliance Office

6300 Ocean Drive, Unit 5844, Corpus Christi, Texas 78412-5844 361-825-2177 Fax 361-825-2755

March 23, 2010

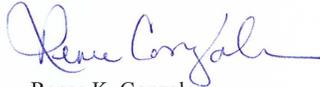
Ms. Rachelle M. Fabela  
P.O. Box 270146  
Corpus Christi, TX 78427

Dear Ms. Fabela,

I have reviewed your IRB application for your research project entitled "A Closer Look: Investigating the Use and Implementation of Interactive Writing as an Instructional Method for the Literacy Framework of Primary Teachers in a South Texas Educational Region" (IRB# 42-10). The project is consistent with Category 7.1.2(2) and is hereby deemed as Exempt. You are authorized to begin this project as outlined in your application.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 825-2497.

Sincerely,



Renee K. Gonzales  
Research Compliance Officer  
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi  
6300 Ocean Dr. Unit 5844  
Corpus Christi, TX 78412  
Tel: (361)825-2497  
[Renee.gonzales@tamucc.edu](mailto:Renee.gonzales@tamucc.edu)



The Island University

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